

Handout 1: Luke Lesson 10

St. Luke begins chapter 12 by linking Jesus’ next teaching to the events at the banquet and Jesus’ judgment of the Pharisees and Scribes.

1. St. Luke sets the time of the next event to show the association with the last event in the previous passage by opening with the word “meanwhile” (literally “at that time” in the Greek text).
2. Jesus’ characterization of the Pharisees and Scribes as “hypocrites” is a concise summary of His indictment against them at the banquet in the previous part of the narrative.

In a series of sayings, Jesus offers both a warning and encouragement. In the first series of sayings, each saying is a doublet (12:2-3) that contains a warning:

concealed → revealed
secret → will be known
said in the darkness → heard in the light
whispered behind closed doors → proclaimed on the housetops

Luke 12:35-38 The Parable of the Master’s Return

The master	Jesus
The servants	The disciples
The master’s house	The Church
The wedding	The wedding supper of the Lamb prepared in heaven
The banquet the master prepares for the servants	The eschatological banquet in the heavenly kingdom in which all of the Master’s servants of every age will take part

Luke 13:6-9 ~ In the symbolic images of the Old Testament prophets, a fruitful fig tree represents Israel in covenant unity and fidelity with God, but an unfruitful fig tree represents Israel’s covenant failure in her mission to serve God and to produce the “good fruit” of her service.

Jesus’ Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

The fig tree	God’s Old Covenant people—the Jews
the orchard	The holy land of Israel
The owner of the orchard	God
The vinedresser	Jesus

The fig tree is the only fruit bearing tree named in Eden (Gen 3:7) and the Sanctuary garden in Eden was an orchard (Gen 2:8-9). The fruitful fig tree was a sign of the good things promised the covenant people in the Promised Land (Dt 8:8). Proverbs 27:18 advises that the person who produces good “fruit” in his life will be blessed by God: *He who tends a fig tree eats its fruit, and he who is attentive to his Master will be enriched.* And the prophet Jeremiah compared an Israel under the curse of divine judgment to a fruitless fig tree: *I shall put an end to them, Yahweh declares, no more grapes on the vine, no more figs on the fig tree only withered leaves ...* (Jer 8:13 NJB)

THE SYMBOLIC IMAGES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

The reoccurring images of the Old Testament prophets are marriage, domesticated animals, the vine or fig tree, and drinking wine. Each of the symbolic image groups consist of four parts that reflect God's relationship (for good or bad) with His covenant people:

- ◆ Part I: Yahweh and his people enter into a Covenant relationship. Yahweh will bind this people to Himself in the blessings of security and prosperity in return for obedience to the laws of the Sinai Covenant.
- ◆ Part II: Israel, the Covenant people ignore the Laws of the Covenant; they rebel by going their own way.
- ◆ Part III: God sends His holy prophet to call His people back to Him. Failing in this mission the prophet calls down a Covenant Lawsuit which results in Covenant curses—punishment meant to bring about repentance and restoration.
- ◆ Part IV: In response to repentance, Yahweh reaches out to restore and to take His people back into the Covenant relationship they had first enjoyed.

It is significant that the restoration in Part IV is only promised in the writings of the Old Testament prophets. Restoration does not take place until the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and is accomplished in His sacrificial death and victorious Resurrection.

Marriage:

Part I: God takes Israel/the Church as His bride.

Part II: God's bride chases after other "lovers"—false gods—and becomes an adulteress.

Part III: God's wayward bride is punished—she is abandoned by her lovers.

Part IV: God takes back His repentant bride.

Jesus is the Bridegroom and the Church of the New Covenant His Bride (Mt 9:15; 25:1, 5, 6, 10; Mk 2:19-20; Lk 5:34; -35; Jn 3:19, 29, Rev 19:5-9).

Domesticated animals:

Part I: Israel is like domesticated oxen that are obedient to the Master's yoke, or the sheep of His flock that obediently follow their Shepherd.

Part II: Israel becomes disobedient like oxen that refuse to bend to the yoke or sheep that stray from the fold.

Part III: God's flock is ravaged by wild animals—the Gentile nations.

Part IV: God's flock returns to the Master and He takes them back.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who rescues His flock (Mt 11:29-30; 26:31 Jesus quotes Zec 13:7; Jn 10:1-16; Heb 13:20; 1 Pt 2:25; 5:4).

The vine or fig tree:

Part I: Israel flourishes like a well-tended vine or fig tree, bearing much fruit.

Part II: Weeds begin to grow in the vineyard, the vines bear wild grapes and the tree fails to produce good fruit.

Part III: The vineyard/fig tree is diseased and rotting.

Part IV: The Master Gardener restores the vineyard/fig tree that begins to bear good fruit again.

Jesus is the True Vine and the Cross is His sacrifice becomes the New Covenant sign of the fruitful Tree of Life that promises eternal life (Jn 15:1-5; Mt 16:24; 1 Cor 1:17-18; Eph 2:16; Col 1:19-20; Rev 22:1-5).

Drinking wine:

Part I: God provides the wine of the covenant for Israel.

Part II: Israel abuses her blessings of the wine.

Part III: Israel grows drunk on the wine of her covenant and the wine becomes a curse.

Part IV: God restores to Israel the best of the new wine in a new covenant.

Jesus provides the new wine of the new and eternal covenant—His blood in the Eucharist (Mt 26:27-28; Mk 14:23-24; Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25-26).

(Also see the chart "**The Symbolic Images of the Old Testament Prophets**" in the Chart section).