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**Citizens Bank, Henderson, N. C.**

**THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.**

Lesson V.—Third Quarter, For  
July 31, 1910.

**THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.**

Text of the Lesson, Matt. xviii, 21-35.  
Memory Verses, 21, 22—Golden Text,  
Matt. vi, 14—Commentary Prepared  
by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

Our last two lessons have set before  
us the building of the church and the  
subsequent setting up of the kingdom  
during this age and at the close of it.  
It is worth remembering that the  
church is said to be builded, never set  
up (Matt. xvi, 18; Eph. ii, 19, 22; 1  
Pet. ii, 5; Gen. ii, 22, margin, with  
Eph. v, 31, 32), whereas the kingdom  
is said to be set up, not builded (Dan.  
ii, 44). If we would walk worthy of  
God who hath called us unto His  
kingdom and glory (1 Thess. ii, 12)  
the two features of today's lesson, hu-  
mility and forgiveness, should be spe-  
cially manifest in us, remembering the  
first words of our Lord's discourse on  
the principles of the kingdom, "Bless-  
ed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is  
the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v, 3),  
and also that the ornament of a meek  
and quiet spirit is in the sight of God  
of great price (1 Pet. iii, 4).

As we are to have but one lesson in  
this chapter we must consider the  
first portion on humility as well as the  
last on forgiveness. What a trial it  
must have been to our Lord, who had  
so humbled Himself, to see these dis-  
ciples continually thinking and talk-  
ing about who should be greatest in  
His kingdom even up to the last night  
before He was crucified and to have  
the mother of two of them asking for  
special places of honor for her sons  
(verse 1; xx, 20, 21; Luke ix, 46-48;  
xvii, 24). What must He think of the  
same strife still between denomina-  
tions and societies and churches and  
individual believers, whose one aim  
should be to exalt Him, for one pe-  
culiar feature of the kingdom will be  
that the Lord alone shall be exalted  
(Isa. ii, 11-17). A little child is His  
object lesson, first in reference to en-  
tering the kingdom and then in refer-  
ence to greatness in it (verses 2-4), and  
the thought seems to be that of help-  
lessness, dependence, teachableness  
and a readiness to come to Him. In  
order to be saved we must come utterly  
empty of self righteousness, simply  
pleading guilty. In order to position  
in His kingdom we must in conscious  
meekness yield to Him that He may  
work His works in us. It must be  
"Not I, but the grace of God" (1 Cor.  
xv, 10). See verse 14 on His unwilling-  
ness that any should perish, and com-  
pare 11 Pet. iii, 9. As to the safety of  
little children who die before they  
know right or wrong, I find much  
comfort in the analogy of Deut. i, 39.  
As to the ministry of angels, see verse  
10, with Heb. i, 14. From verse 20  
learn never to ask the Lord to be  
present at our gatherings, but always to  
thank Him that He is present, accord-  
ing to this assurance. The instruc-  
tions of verses 15-19 concerning deal-  
ing with an offending brother seems  
to lead to Peter's question, Lord, how  
oft shall I forgive him? Till seven  
times? (verse 21).

No doubt Peter thought that he was  
suggesting a wide margin when he  
spoke of forgiving seven times, so  
blind and selfish and earthly were he  
and his fellows in all their thoughts.  
Just so are we also until filled with  
His Spirit. Well might He often say  
to us: "How is it that ye do not un-  
derstand?" "Have I been so long  
time with you, and yet hast thou not  
known Me?" (Matt. xvi, 11; John xiv,  
9.) Because His thoughts and ways  
are as far above ours as heaven is  
above the earth (Isa. lv, 8, 9), let us  
become so full of His thoughts, by His  
Spirit and His word, that ours shall  
find no place in us. Our Lord's reply  
to Peter, "I say not unto thee until  
seven times, but until seventy times  
seven" (verse 22), sends me away back  
to Gabriel's message to Daniel concern-  
ing the kingdom in Dan. ix, 24-26.  
R. V., where we hear him say that  
after seventy weeks or seventy the  
kingdom will come, bringing in ever-  
lasting righteousness. I therefore  
hear our Lord say to Peter Keep on  
forgiving till the kingdom comes. I  
always find the clearest light on Scrip-  
ture in Scripture, believing that the  
Spirit is the best interpreter of His  
own words. The 686 of Rev. xlii, 18,  
sends me to the 686 of 1 Kings, x, 14,  
and I learn that one feature of the  
power of the antichrist will be his  
control of gold and the use he will  
make of it. I expect that we will yet  
see some connection between the 153  
great fishes of the resurrection catch  
(John xxi, 11) and the 153,000 strangers  
of 11 Chron. ii, 17.

The kingdom is the key to and the  
fulfilling of many things, and many of  
our Lord's teachings can only be un-  
derstood in the light of the kingdom  
as distinct from the church. The full  
forgiveness of the debtor of verses  
24-27, like the forgiveness of the two  
debtors of Luke vii, 41, 42, is illustra-  
tive of the full and free forgiveness  
granted to every bankrupt sinner who  
comes to Christ, for of all such it can  
be truly said, "Justified freely by His  
grace through the redemption that is  
in Christ Jesus" (Rom. iii, 24). But  
this forgiven one afterward delivered to  
the tormentors (iii) he should pay  
all his debt in salvation by  
grace. Even the words of Isa. xliii,  
25, in reference to transgressions and  
sins are "blotted out," "not remem-  
bered." The necessity of freely forgiv-  
ing others if we ourselves would enjoy  
the forgiveness of God (verse 35) is  
also set forth in Matt. vi, 14, 15.

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