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SUNDAY SCHOOL

Lesson X.—Third Quarter, For
Sept. 4, 1910.

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Text of the Lesson, Matt. xxi, 32-46;
Memory Verses, 45, 46—Golden Text,
Matt. xxi, 43—Commentary Pre-
pared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

These parables of the last week of
His ministry must have been, in His
estimation, very important, closing, as
they did, His final appeals to the na-
tion. How much do they mean to us?
That of the two figs is recorded only
by Matthew. Those of our lesson are
found in Matthew, Mark and Luke.
In the vineyard parable of the last
chapter the topic was the laborers and
their wages, but here it is the ill treat-
ment of the servants and of the son
himself by those who ought to have
rendered the fruits to the house-
holder. How often the words come to
us as we write these notes: "He was
in the world, and the world was made
by Him, and the world knew Him not,
He came unto His own and His own
received Him not. But as many as re-
ceived Him to them gave He the
right to become the sons of God" (John
1, 10-12). The world by its wisdom
knew not God (I Cor. 1, 21). Israel,
chosen and dear to us as no other na-
tion, mocked the messengers of God
and despised His words and misused
His prophets until the wrath of the
Lord arose against His people till
there was no remedy (I Sam. vii, 23;
II Chron. xxxvi, 16). How much
worse will be the doom of those who
at the end of this age know not God
and obey not the gospel of our Lord
Jesus Christ (II Thess. 1, 7-9).

If you think of Israel as the vine-
yard of the Lord (Isa. v, 1-7) consider
how He could have done more for her
than He did and endeavor to answer
the question: Wherefore brought it
forth wild grapes? If you think of the
church of today or of this age and of
our Lord's saying, "Herein is my Fa-
ther glorified, that ye bear much fruit"
(John xv, 8), where is the much fruit,
the fruit unto God, the fruit unto holli-
ness, the fruit unto life eternal? (Rom.
vi, 22; vii, 4; John iv, 36.) Might He
not say of us, as He did of Israel, "An
empty vine bringing forth fruit unto
Himself?" (Hos. x, 1.) Last of all He
sent unto them His Son (verse 37).
"God, who at sundry times and in
divers manners spake in time past
unto the fathers by the prophets, hath
in these last days spoken unto us by
His Son" (Heb. 1, 1-3). The house of
Judah cast Him out and killed Him.
Today many who profess to be His
friends are saying, He was born like
other men, He did not know as much
as some who are now alive, He did
not suffer for our sins, He never rose
from the dead, He wrought no mira-
cles, He will never come again, there
is no devil and no hell. Which are the
worst—those to whom He addressed
this parable or those who in our day
take Him away from us, and His word
and His salvation, and leave us nothing
but the reason and wisdom of men?

We shall learn from the lessons fol-
lowing some of the things He will do
when He comes again, but here He
tells us how He was about to deal with
Israel as a nation. As before the cap-
tivity in Babylon He gave them forty
years, during which He pleaded with
them by Jeremiah the prophet, so at
the time of our lesson there were
scarce forty years before them until
Jerusalem should be destroyed and the
nation scattered, never to be a nation
again during this age. But as we
have watched the Zionist movement
of the past ten years and this very
year (1910) see the possibility of
Mesopotamia being occupied by the
Jews and Babylon being restored as a
commercial center and remember such
words as these—"He that scattered
Israel will gather him and keep him
as a shepherd doth his flock;" "They
shall call Jerusalem the throne of the
Lord, and all the nations shall be
gathered unto it, to the name of the
Lord to Jerusalem" (Jer. xxxi, 10; III
17)—we cannot but ask, Where are
we in the working out of His purpose,
and how near may we possibly be to
the end of this evil age? His ques-
tion to them ought to be a heart ques-
tion for us, "Did ye never read in the
Scriptures?" (verse 42). And it should
set us searching in this connection the
wonderful story of "The Stone of
Israel" from Gen. xlix, 24, on through
Ps. cxviii, 22, with its New T.
references besides the one in our les-
son, such as Acts iv, 11; Eph. ii, 20;
I Pet. ii, 7, 7. Then Isa viii, 14; xxvii,
16, and on to the stone of Dan, II, 34,
35, 44, 45, when He will come in His
glory break in pieces the nations and
set up His kingdom, which will fill all
the earth with His glory.

For the benefit of those who have
not a Scofield Bible I will quote His
note on verse 44 of our lesson: "Christ
as the 'Stone' is revealed in a three-
fold way—first, to Israel, Christ, com-
ing not as a splendid monarch, but in
the form of a servant, is a stumbling
stone and rock of offense (Isa viii, 14,
15; Rom. ix, 32, 33; I Cor. i, 23; I Pet.
ii, 8); second, to the church Christ is
the foundation stone and the head of
the corner (I Cor. iii, 11; Eph. ii, 20-22;
I Pet. ii, 6, 6); third, to the coming
world powers He is to be the smiting
stone of destruction (Dan. ii, 34).
Israel stumbled over Christ; the
church is built upon Christ; gentle
world dominion will be broken by
Christ." There was some phase of the
kingdom taken from Israel and given
to a nation bringing forth the fruits
thereof, I Pet. ii, 9, has a bearing
upon it. But in due time we shall see.

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