

# The Mind of Christ

## The Parable of the Talents

### INTRODUCTION:

- I. On Tuesday, during the final week leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus, the day was filled with a number of key.
  - A. On this day, Jesus taught a series of six parables.
    1. The first three parables were specifically directed at the immoral and corrupt religious leaders of Israel.
      - a. Those were the Parable of the Two Sons, The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers, and The Parable of the Wedding Feast.
    2. The second group of parables were specifically directed at His disciples – the apostles – who were confused and deeply troubled over a statement Jesus made earlier that day in which He said the day is coming when the great Temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed.
      - a. Since the DISCIPLES THOUGHT the destruction of the Temple would mark the end of the world (end of the age), they asked Jesus when these things would take place and

what sign they would see that would indicate the end of the world was at hand.

- b. Rather than attempt to correct their misunderstanding about the nature of the Lord's kingdom (which would have probably confused them even more), the Lord simply chose to teach them three vitally important lessons about the Lord's second coming and the final judgment.
  - c. Therefore, during the late afternoon on the Tuesday before Jesus would be crucified, He gathers with His disciples in the solitude of the Mount of Olives – very possibly in the garden of Gethsemane – and answered His disciple's question about the end of the age in the form of three parables.
  - d. These parables – all of which are recorded in Matthew chapter 25 – are The Parable of the Ten Virgins, The Parable of the Talents, and The Parable of the Sheep and Goats.
- B. The Parable of the Ten Virgins, which we looked at last week, differs in its focus from The Parable of the Talents.
- 1. In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, Jesus warned His disciples to be prepared for His COMING.
    - a. In that parable, Jesus wanted His disciples to understand that the Bridegroom may possibly delay coming for His bride – as most Bridegrooms did to test their Bride's readiness.

- b. The Lord wanted ALL His disciples to be ready at ALL TIMES.
  - c. Although the disciples of the Lord didn't grasp the significance of the parable at THAT time, Jesus wanted His followers to understand that He WILL return someday, and His return will be SUDDENLY and WITHOUT ANY FURTHER WARNING.
2. In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus encourages ALL His disciples to use the time WISELY.
- a. There is WORK to do and RESPONSIBILITIES to fulfill.
  - b. The Lord wanted His followers to make use of their ABILITIES, and to be PRODUCTIVE in His service.
- C. Therefore, with this background in mind, let's take a closer look at the Parable of the Talents and see how it applied to His disciples THEN, as well as how WE can make application of these timeless truths.
1. **Matthew 25:14-30** – *And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So he who had*

*received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And*

*cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

## **BODY:**

- I. To begin, we need to FIRST understand a few terms used here by our Lord, THEN look at the meaning of the parable, and FINALLY see how we can apply it today.
  - A. First, notice that Jesus began this parable by saying, "*... the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.*" **(Matthew 25:14)**
    1. As we mentioned in previous lessons, the term "*kingdom of heaven*" can either refer to heaven itself, or it can refer to the Lord's SPIRITUAL KINGDOM – the church that would be established following the Lord's death, burial and resurrection.
    2. Matthew uses the term "*kingdom of heaven*" both ways. And the only way we can determine whether it's speaking of heaven or the Lord's church is to examine the term in CONTEXT.
      - a. Jesus began the previous parable – The Parable of the Ten Virgins – with similar words: "*Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish.*" **(Matthew 25:1-2)**

- b. As we said earlier, the message of THAT parable was the need for the Lord's people – the church – to be prepared for the coming of the Bridegroom – clearly a reference to the second coming of Christ.
  - c. We need to be ready and prepared at all times for the Lord's return.
  - d. Therefore, the Lord used the term "*kingdom of heaven*" in this parable to speak of the spiritual kingdom – the Lord's church.
3. The term "*kingdom of heaven*" ALSO appears in the Parable of the Talents.
- a. The message of THIS parable is for the Lord's people – the church – to be PRODUCTIVE, making good use of our God-given abilities, until the Master returns.
- B. In addition to the term "*the kingdom of Heaven*," Jesus ALSO used the word "TALENT" in this parable. But, what IS a talent?
- 1. Most people think the "talent" in this parable is referring to a sum of money. But that's not quite correct.
  - 2. While a talent had monetary value, it was not a SUM of money. Rather, a "talent" is a unit of WEIGHT – in fact, it was the HEAVIEST unit of weight in the Hebrew system.

- a. In Biblical times the talent was used to measure the weight of gold, silver, iron, bronze, and many other commodities, and so the actual VALUE of the talent depended on what you were measuring.
  - (1). For example, one GOLD talent was said to be equal to 24 SILVER talents.
- b. According to the standards of weight in Biblical times, there were approximately 220 grains in 1 shekel, and 50 shekels in 1 maneh and 60 manehs' in 1 talent.
- c. If we were to use this formula to calculate a talent TODAY, a talent would weight approximately  $93 \frac{3}{4}$  lbs. (93.75 lbs).
- d. And, if we were to attach a MONETARY value to a talent of gold by today's standards (at roughly \$422 per oz.), it would be roughly \$633,000 dollars. A sizable amount of money.
- e. However, according to Smith's Bible Dictionary a talent was equal to 100 manehs', or approximately 156 lbs. If we use SMITH'S calculations, a talent of GOLD by TODAY'S STANDARDS (\$422 per oz.) would be over a MILLION DOLLARS (Approx. \$1,053,000 dollars). A VERY sizable sum of money.

220 grains = 1 shekel, 50 shekel = 1 maneh, 60 manehs = 1 talent  
220 grains = .5 ounce, 25 ounces = 1.56 lbs, 1.56 lbs x 60 = 93.75 lbs  
Smith's talent = 100 manehs or 156 lbs  
Gold quote approx. \$422 per oz. (01/17/05)

3. If we take the LESSER amount – one talent equals \$633,000 dollars, then by TODAY'S STANDARDS the master of these servants delivered:

- a. Five talents (nearly \$3.2 million dollars) to one servant.
- b. Two talents (almost \$1.3 million dollars) another servant.
- c. One talent (approximately \$633,000 dollars) to the third servant.

C. Third, I want you to take special notice of the way the THIRD servant DESCRIBED his MASTER, and how the MASTER DESCRIBED this SERVANT. The SERVANT said, "*Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed.*" **(Matthew 25:24)**

1. There are actually TWO things the servant says about his master.
  - a. First, he said his master was a "*HARD*" man. The Greek word used here would mean this master was harsh and stern, trying and demanding, brutal and arrogant.
  - b. Second, the master is described as a man who reaped where he had not sown, and gathered where he had not scattered

seed. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown say this is, "one whom it was impossible to serve, one whom nothing would please..."

- c. Keep in mind, this is the THIRD SERVANT'S ASSESSMENT of his master – apparently the first two servants didn't see their master this way at all.
  - d. In verses 26 and 27 the master isn't AGREEING with this servant's assessment, but is essentially saying, "If YOU BELIEVED I was this kind of master, why didn't you at least put my money in the bank so it would be SAFE and could EARN INTEREST?"
2. But also notice what the MASTER says about this SERVANT.
- a. The MASTER calls the servant "*wicked*," – a word that describes one who is morally and ethically worthless; one whose actions cause harm to others either by their accusations or by their acts.
  - b. He ALSO calls the servant "*lazy*," – a word that's translated "*slothful*;" a "*good-for-nothing*" laggard who not only procrastinates but who also avoids work at every opportunity.
  - c. I don't think ANYONE would disagree with the master's assessment of THIS servant. This man proved HIMSELF to be "*wicked and lazy*."

- II. When we listen to this parable, we're immediately struck by the fact that the story Jesus told was a very simple one.
  - A. Jesus tells the story of a master who intended to be away for a considerable period time, and didn't want to leave his estate idle.
    - 1. Therefore, he divided his investments among his three servants.
    - 2. After a long absence, the master returned and called together his servants for an accounting.
      - a. The first two servants had actually DOUBLED the investment that had been entrusted to them.
      - b. But the third servant began making excuses.
        - (1). He was AFRAID to risk what had been entrusted to him, and so he HID the money in the ground where it would be safe.
        - (2). NOW, he wants to simply RETURN the original investment to his master with no profit.
    - 3. The first two servants were praised – they were both given the promise of even GREATER things to come.
    - 4. But the THIRD servant was CONDEMNED, and was cast into *"outer darkness."* Where *"there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

III. So, what's the meaning of this parable? In trying to understand this parable and to make application to us, we're going to use the word "*Talent*" a little differently than it's used by Jesus. We're going to talk about our God-given TALENTS AND ABILITIES; and the FIRST thing we see here are FOUR GREAT TRUTHS about the talents and abilities the Lord has entrusted to us.

A. The FIRST GREAT TRUTH is that the servants were given DIFFERENT AMOUNTS – amounts that were within their ability to effectively manage. *"And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability."* **(Matthew 25:15)**

1. It seems this master was NOT expecting his servants do MORE than they were capable of doing.

a. He apparently KNEW the strengths and the weakness of each servant – he KNEW what they were capable of accomplishing AS WELL AS their limitations – and he didn't expect anything BEYOND their abilities.

b. In the same manner, the Lord never EXPECTS, nor DEMANDS, more than WE'RE capable of doing.

(1). The Lord knows OUR strengths and weaknesses. He knows the things WE are capable of accomplishing, as

well as our limitations. But he FULLY expects us to do what we ARE capable of doing.

2. Furthermore, this parable tells us that the master not only recognized the abilities of each servant, but that he was also willing to accept the fact that each man HAD differing abilities.
  - a. The master didn't expect his servant to have the SAME abilities. He knew some were capable of doing MORE than the others, but he was willing to allow each man to do the best he could with the abilities he had.
  - b. In the same manner, the Lord recognizes that YOU have abilities that DIFFER from others, and He ACCEPTS that fact.
  - c. The apostle Paul taught this principle in his letter to the church in Corinth and in his letter to the church in Rome..
    - (1). **1 Corinthians 12:12-27** – *For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is*

*it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all*

*the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.*

- (2). **Romans 12:3-8** – *For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

3. So what's the message for us?
- a. God has given each of us abilities that are MANAGEABLE (that are within our ability to perform), and He has given us abilities that are unique (that are suited to our own individual talents).

- b. So, we shouldn't wonder why we don't have the talents and abilities of OTHERS, nor should we WORRY that the Lord is going to expect us to do MORE than we're capable.
  - c. Rather, we need to be asking what really ARE our talents, and are we DOING the very BEST WE CAN with the talents and abilities the Lord has given US.
- B. The SECOND GREAT TRUTH we see here is that the RETURNS on the investments were in differing amounts. **Matthew 25:16-18** – *Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.*
- 1. Although these two servants were NOT given equal AMOUNTS, they each gave equal EFFORTS.
    - a. Each of THESE servants DOUBLED the investment that had been entrusted to them.
      - (1). The man given FIVE talents made five more (**v. 20**), and the man given TWO talents made two more (**v. 22**).
      - (2). Each man GAVE a hundred percent, and they GAINED a hundred percent in RETURN.
    - b. However, the THIRD servant put forth ZERO effort and GAINED zero in RETURN (**v. 25**).

2. Although the Lord hasn't given US abilities equal to everyone ELSE, He DOES expect us to give the SAME EFFORT as others.
  - a. The Lord doesn't expect ONE TALENT persons to do what TWO TALENT persons can do, nor does He expect TWO TALENT persons to do what FIVE TALENT persons can do.
  - b. But He DOES expect us to give 100 PERCENT in using the abilities He HAS entrusted to us.
- C. The THIRD GREAT TRUTH we notice here is that SOME servants NEVER TRY. **Matthew 25:24-25** – *Then he who had received the one talent came and said, "Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours."*
  1. Have you ever wondered WHY this servant never tried – BESIDE the fact that he was wicked and lazy?
    - a. In the parable of Jesus, he said he was "AFRAID."
      - (1). Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, in their commentary say, "This depicts the conduct of all those who shut up their gifts from the active service of Christ. . . [those] who, in the early Church, pleaded that they had enough to do with their own souls, and were afraid of losing them in trying to save others; and so, instead of being

the salt of the earth, thought rather of keeping their own saltiness, by withdrawing sometimes into caves and wildernesses, from all those active ministries of love by which they might have served their brethren."

2. Does this sound familiar? Does this describe OUR situation?
  - a. Are WE afraid of using the talents the Lord has invested in US?
  - b. Are WE so concerned with OUR OWN needs that we don't have the TIME, or the INTEREST, to serve others – to do OUR part in ministering to the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ, and OUR part in trying to reach the lost?
  - c. What are you AFRAID of? Of being LAUGHED at, SCOFFED, RIDICULED, being taken ADVANTAGE of?
  - d. Let's be REAL HONEST with ourselves. We don't use our talents and abilities for the same reason the third servant didn't use HIS.
    - (1). We're either LAZY and INDIFFERENT; and somehow we think we're going to GET BY with only minimal effort or no effort at all.
    - (2). OR, we're AFRAID – worried that we will somehow be embarrassed or mocked.

3. If we never learning anything ELSE from this parable, we need to learn THIS – God expects YOU and ME to use our talents and abilities to the FULLEST!
  - a. The Lord will no more accept a MINIMAL effort from US than the MASTER in this parable accepted from HIS wicked and lazy servant.
  - b. Therefore, we not only need to know WHAT our talents and abilities are, but we need to put forth a one hundred percent effort in USING them to the glory of God.
  - c. Don't expect the Lord to be please with YOU on judgment day if He finds that you buried YOUR talents, and now hope He'll be satisfied with simply accepting back what He gave you in the first place.
  - d. The Lord will be looking at what we DID with our abilities, and how much EFFORT we put forth. The Lord needs LABORERS in His vineyard, NOT SPECTATORS who admire the beauty of the vines and the grapes.
- D. And finally, the FOURTH GREAT TRUTH we see in this parable is the principle that if we don't USE it, we will LOSE it. **Matthew 25:29-30** – *"For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be*

*taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

1. The unprofitable servant never used what had been given to him.
  - a. As a result, he proved HIMSELF to be an unworthy servant, and lost everything.
2. When people tell me they can't imagine how a loving God could condemn someone to an eternal hell, I tell them He DOESN'T. He simply gives us the desires of our heart – He rewards us with the wages we've earned.
  - a. It's the timeless principle: *"If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat."* **(2 Thessalonians 3:10)**
  - b. We complain about a social welfare system that REWARDS those who CAN WORK, but WON'T!
  - c. And yet, there will be those on the day of judgment that will be expecting to receive the reward of HEAVEN, EVEN THOUGHT they NEVER ONCE labored for the Lord, or what labor they MAY have done was so INSIGNIFICANT that it really never BENEFITED anyone.
3. Please don't misunderstand what I'm saying here. I'm NOT saying we EARN our way to heaven by our WORKS.
4. Rather, what I AM saying is that those who REFUSE to labor for the Lord – those who DON'T use the talents and abilities the

Lord's has entrusted them with – WILL BE cast into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And in case your wondering, THAT'S a description of eternal torment in hell.

a. Those are the LORD'S words, not MINE.

## CONCLUSION:

I. Out of all the passages of Scripture in the Bible there is ONE passage that should SOBER US ALL of the REALITY of what it means to be a faithful, productive child of God.

A. The passage is found in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, where the Hebrew writer lists those faithful Old Testament saints who serve as examples of GENUINE FAITH.

1. After he gives us this list of Old Testament heroes, he says:

**Hebrews 11:32-38** – *And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others*

*were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.*

B. Brethren, these are people who GAVE IT ALL. They were the faithful servants who took what God had entrusted to them, and used it to His glory and His honor, EVEN THOUGH it cost them UNIMAGINABLE persecution and EVEN their LIVES.

1. But what should SOBER US is the fact that WE will be standing beside these great saints in the judgment.
2. The Lord will RICHLY reward them for all they did in His service – and THEN, the Lord will turn to YOU and me.
  - a. What will he say to YOU on that day?
  - b. Will He say, *"Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."* **(Matthew 25:23)**

- c. Or will He say, "*cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*"

**(Matthew 25:30)**

C. Always remember this. What the Lord says to YOU on that day will depend ENTIRELY on what you DO today.

1. If you've NEVER obeyed the gospel of Christ you still have time – you have RIGHT NOW. You have no guarantee of tomorrow.
2. And if you're a child of God, but you've been hiding your talents and have become indifferent toward the cause of Christ, you ALSO still have time – you ALSO have RIGHT NOW. And you ALSO have no guarantee of tomorrow.
3. So, what's keeping you from starting RIGHT NOW to faithfully serve the Lord?

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