

### The Parable of the Talents

#### Matthew 25:14-30

Matthew 25:14-30 - *"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. <sup>17</sup> And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. <sup>18</sup> But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. <sup>19</sup> After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.*

*<sup>20</sup> "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.' <sup>21</sup> 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.' <sup>22</sup> 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.' <sup>23</sup> 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.' <sup>24</sup> "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. <sup>25</sup> And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' <sup>26</sup> "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. <sup>27</sup> So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. <sup>28</sup> So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. <sup>29</sup> '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. <sup>30</sup> And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"*

#### Background Notes

The Parable of the Talents is the third parable in this section of the Olivet discourse. The Lord's teaching on the Mount of Olives is covered in Matthew 24 and 25. It was given to answer the disciples' questions about the future.

The Olivet discourse appears to be divided into three sections. In the second section there are three parables that obviously go together: the parable of the wise and evil servants (Matthew 24:45-51), the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), and the parable of the talents. All three parables are "parables of the kingdom of heaven" (v1).

Now look at verse 14: *“For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them.”* What is the “it” at the beginning of verse 14? The “it” is the kingdom of heaven, as other translations make clear. The kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country.

Remember, **the “kingdom of heaven” is Christendom, the form of the kingdom at the present time.** Christendom includes the wheat and the tares, the good and the bad, the wise and the foolish, the faithful and the unfaithful. In all three of these parables of the kingdom, the Lord is seen as being away on a journey. But He has promised to return, and He has left instructions for those who are waiting for His return.

In the parable of the wise and evil servants in Matthew 24, the emphasis seems to be on the attitude of the servants. In the parable of the ten virgins, the emphasis is on being ready and prepared for the return of the bridegroom: *“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.”* In the parable of the talents the emphasis is on the service of the servants.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Faithful servants will be rewarded in the kingdom of Christ.

In this parable, the *“talents”* were an amount of money (not a special ability or talent or natural gift). In fact, at that time a “talent” was a considerable amount of money. In the parable, the “talents” represent **responsibilities in the kingdom** - not spiritual gifts, but responsibilities. Notice that the different amounts of money were given according to the individual servant’s ability (v15).

In the same way, responsibilities in the kingdom of heaven are given according to a person’s ability. Some people have more ability than others, and thus they can handle more responsibility. This is an encouraging truth, isn’t it? The Lord is not going to give you responsibilities in the kingdom that you can’t handle! He knows your ability and you can be sure that the Lord will never load you down with responsibilities that are beyond your ability to fulfill. Now that doesn’t mean our service for the Lord will be easy, but it does mean that we can do it! That’s the point. Whether it’s the responsibilities that we have in our homes (moms, dads and children), or in the church (all believers), or in some specific ministry that the Lord has given to you – you can do it!

The faithful servants in the parable went out and traded with their money, and doubled their amount for the master. They were rewarded for their faithful service when the master returned. The meaning should be obvious. If we’re faithful in fulfilling the responsibilities that the Lord has given us, we will be rewarded.

Notice that both the “five talent servant” and the “two talent servant” received the same reward. *“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” (v21, 23).* The servants were rewarded for their **faithfulness** - not for the **amount** of success! Even though the “two talent servant” only earned two talents more, his reward was the same as the “five talent servant,” who earned five talents more for the master. The master’s reward was not based on amount, but on **faithfulness**.

Again, this should be an encouraging truth for all of us. Do any of you think, “I’m a ‘five talent Christian!’” (Let’s be honest about our abilities, right?) But we “two talent Christians” can receive the same reward as the “five talent Christians” if we are faithful in following through with the responsibilities that the Lord gives us!

What is the reward? The reward is entering into the joy of the Lord! Amazing! We will experience **the joy of the Lord** forever in heaven! An additional reward is being put in charge of “many things” (or ruler of many things), which indicates responsible position in the earthly kingdom of Christ. Believers will reign with Christ in His millennial kingdom here on this earth, and our reward then, in the kingdom, is determined by our faithful service now. Faithful service will be rewarded in the kingdom of Christ.

## **2. “Professing” servants will not enter the kingdom of Christ.**

Who is the “one talent servant” in this parable? Does he represent an unfaithful Christian? Or is he an unbeliever - a “Christian in name only”? We believe that he represents an unbeliever - not a true Christian, someone who only claims (or professes) to be a Christian - even though he also was given responsibilities in the kingdom. Remember that the talents in the parable don’t represent spiritual gifts, but responsibilities in the kingdom are given according to one’s ability. There are many “Christians-in-name-only” in Christendom. They have abilities, and they take on responsibilities in the realm of Christendom - but their unfaithful performance and false view of the Master is evidence of their false profession.

Notice that the unfaithful servant had a heretical view of the master. *“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” (v24).* This statement about the master was totally false! In addition, in the parable the unfaithful servant hid the money instead of putting it in the bank in the master’s name. The unfaithful servant didn’t really believe that the master would return, so he thought the money would eventually be his, with no record of it being the master’s. How selfish! And how typical of an unbeliever!

When the master returned, he condemned the false and unfaithful “servant.” His condemnation was based on the servant’s own evil testimony. The master basically said that the unfaithful servant didn’t even operate on the basis of what he claimed to believe about the master. If that was your position, the master said, and if that’s what you wrongly believed - that I was a hard man, that I reaped where I didn’t sow, and so forth - well then, you didn’t operate on that basis. If you had, you would have feared my possible return, and you would at least have put the money in the bank where it could have received some interest.

That passage may be confusing. The Lord didn't say that He is like the description of the master that was given by the evil "servant." False servants in Christendom today usually have a distorted, false understanding of God. The Lord was simply taking this wicked servant up on the basis of his own testimony. Therefore the worthless false "servant" was cast out into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This "servant" is not an unfaithful or backslidden Christian losing out on the rewards in the kingdom! No, this is the ultimate end of unbelievers who falsely profess to be Christians. The destiny of unbelievers is Hades, and ultimately hell. "Professing" servants will not enter the kingdom of Christ.

## Practical Application

### If you don't use it, you'll lose it!

*"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" (v29).*

This is a divine principle, and it applies to all servants in the kingdom - both true servants and false "professing" servants. If you're faithful in carrying out the responsibilities that the Lord gives you, you will be rewarded with more responsibilities and more opportunities to serve the Lord. That's the way it works!

If you're not faithful in your responsibilities in the kingdom, this may be an indication that you're not a true believer, and you need to make sure of your salvation. The responsibilities of unfaithful servants will be given to faithful servants.

If you're a true believer but you don't do your job well, you will lose that responsibility and that opportunity. It will be given to someone who is faithful - because **someone** needs to do the job! Don't lose out on the privilege of serving the Lord and your opportunity for reward. If you don't use it, you **will** lose it.