

The Parable of the Talents - Part I

Lesson # 33: (Mt. 25:14-30; Lk. 19:12-27; COL 325-333)

In the next two lessons we will study the parable of the talents. In the present lesson we will analyze the details of the parable as found in Matthew 25:14-30. In the next lesson, we will study Ellen White's assessment of the diverse gifts with which God has endowed each of His children. Let us begin by taking a look at the textual setting of the parable.

The Recipients and Setting

1. To whom was the parable of the talents particularly addressed? "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the _____ came unto him _____, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto _____, Take heed that no man deceives _____." (Mt. 24:3-4)
2. **Thought Question:** Though the parable applies to Christians of all ages, which generation does it particularly address? _____

Note: Though the principles of the parable apply to followers of Jesus from all generations, it especially addresses those who will be alive when Jesus comes. Matthew 24:4-44 presents the signs of the second coming. Then, in four parables, Jesus illustrates what His people should be doing while He tarries (Mt. 24:45-51; 25:1-13; 25:14-30; 25:31-45).

The Master of the Servants

1. Who is represented by the master of the servants and what is meant by his journey into a far country? "The man traveling into a far country represents _____, who, when speaking this parable, was soon to _____ from this earth to heaven." (COL 325-326)
 2. To whom did the master deliver his goods before he left? "The kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his _____ servants, and delivered unto them his _____." (Mt. 25:14)
- Note:** We should not overlook the fact that the parable is addressed directly to believers and describes the experience of believers. The servants of the parable have all entered the service of Christ. The word "own" is emphatic in the Greek. Jesus could have merely said: "he called his servants" but instead he said: "he called his **own** servants." Ellen White well remarks: "It is those who profess to have accepted Christ's service who in the parable are represented as His own servants." (COL 326)
3. What did the master deliver to His servants? _____ . (Mt. 25:14)

Note: None of what the servants received was theirs. The goods belonged to the master. The parable is not about ownership but rather about stewardship.

The Master's Gifts

1. What is especially represented by the goods which the master delivered to his servants? "The talents that Christ entrusts to His church represent especially the _____ and blessings imparted by the Holy _____." (COL 327)
2. What did Jesus give to His followers when He ascended to heaven? "When he [Jesus] ascended on high, he led _____ captive, and gave _____ unto men." (Eph. 4:8)
3. Make a list of the gifts which Jesus gave to His followers when He poured out the Holy Spirit. (ICor. 12:8-11, 27-28; Eph. 4:11-13; Rom. 12:6-8) _____

4. In a broader sense, what is represented by the talents? "It includes all gifts and endowments, whether _____ or _____, natural or spiritual." (COL 328)
4. What is the true object of life? "Christ's followers have been redeemed for _____. Our Lord teaches that the true _____ of life is ministry. . . . The law of service becomes the connecting _____ which binds us to God and to our fellow men." (COL 326)
5. How do our natural and acquired endowments become a blessing to others? "Learning, talents, eloquence, every natural and acquired _____, may be possessed; but without the _____ of the Spirit of God, no heart will be _____, no sinner be _____ to Christ." (COL 328)

Note: What Ellen White is saying is that our talents, time, strength, money, influence, speech, and other endowments will be of no avail unless they are sanctified by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. A worldly person may have all these endowments and gifts and use them for his own self-interest. But when they are baptized by the Holy Spirit they will prove to be a blessing to others. Regarding this, Ellen White remarks: "I becoming His disciples, we surrender ourselves to Him with all that we are and have. These gifts He returns to us purified and ennobled, to be used for His glory in blessing our fellow men." (COL 328)

Proportionate Bestowal of Gifts

1. Did all the servants receive the same number of talents? “And unto one he gave _____ talents, to another _____, and to another _____.” (Mt. 25:15)
2. What determined how many talents each servant received? “To every man according to his several _____.” (Mt. 25:15)

Note: God gives gifts according to the person’s capacity to receive and to use. Not everyone has the same degree of ability. Some people have less talents than others, due, partially at least, to inherited and cultivated tendencies. It would not be wise to put a Porsche engine in a Volkswagen Beetle. But you would expect a Volkswagen to function as a Volkswagen and a Porsche to perform as a Porsche.

3. What central lesson did Jesus seek to teach in this parable? “He that is faithful in that which is _____ is faithful also in _____: and he that is unjust in the _____ is unjust also in _____.” (Lk. 16:10)

Note: “The question that most concerns us is not, How much have I received? but, What am I doing with that which I have? The development of all our powers is the first duty we owe to God and to our fellow men.” (COL 329) We either use what God has given us or we will lose it. God expects more from those who have received more and less from those who have received less. By way of example, God will expect far more from Seventh-day Adventists than He will from those who have not received the light and the privileges which we have.

4. **Thought Question:** What is represented by the multiplication of the talents by the first two servants? _____

Note: As we use the gifts which God has bestowed upon us should improve and multiply them. That is to say, as we exercise His gifts, they are multiplied.

The Master’s Delay

1. What do you suppose is represented by the long time the master took to return? (Mt. 25:19)

2. What should we do while we are waiting for Jesus to return? “The time is to be spent, not in _____ waiting, but in _____ working.” (COL 325)
3. What did Jesus tell His servants in the parable of the pounds? “And he called his ten servants, and delivered them then pounds, and said unto them, _____ till I come.” (Lk. 19:13)

The Day of Reckoning

1. What is represented by reckoning day? “For we must _____ appear before the judgment seat of _____, that every one may receive the things done in his _____, according to that he hath done, whether it be _____ or _____.” (II Cor. 5:10)
2. Will Jesus expect much where little has been given or be satisfied with little where much has been given? “For unto whomsoever _____ is given, of him shall be much _____: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.” (Lk. 12:48)

Note: Jesus will not expect as much, say, from Martin Luther in the judgment as he will expect from a Seventh-day Adventist. Luther never kept the Sabbath or practiced health reform but he used and multiplied all the resources God gave him to the utmost. He wrote, preached, taught, debated, with all the knowledge and energy God gave him.

3. With what words did Jesus commend his faithful servants? “Well done, _____ and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a _____ things, I will make thee ruler over _____ things, enter into the _____ of thy lord.” (Mt. 25:23)

Note: These words will be as music to the ears! We cannot expect to reign with Jesus in the coming kingdom unless we have been faithful to His kingdom on this earth. If we have not been faithful here, how can we expect to rule there? Daniel and his three friends are an illustration of this principle. The Hebrew worthies were faithful in the matter of diet when they arrived in Babylon and therefore God placed them over greater responsibilities in the kingdom. If they had been unfaithful in the little things they would never have ruled over much! If we do not develop and multiply the resources God has given us in this life, how can God trust us to do so in the life to come?

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