

Episode #924 Matthew 25 Part 2-Parable of the Slaves and the Talents

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. In Matthew 25, the Lord was illustrating for His disciples the importance of watching and being ready as His second coming for His thousand-year personal presence on earth approaches.

III. Parable of the Slaves and the Talents. Matthew 25:14-30.

A. Verse 14. The words “the kingdom of heaven is” are supplied by the translators. The Greek simply reads “it is even.” If we look back to verse 1, the topic is the kingdom of the heavens, so this is not a bad addition from that standpoint, but in order to be faithful to the Greek we should read “it is even.” “Traveling to a far country” is the Greek word *apodemeo*, coming from the root *dem-*, having to do with the people, and *apo*, meaning away from: put together this means to travel away from one’s own people. “Called” is *kaleo*; here it means he bid them come to him. “Servants” is the Greek *doulous*, meaning slaves. “Delivered” or committed them to them.

B. Verse 15. He gives out talents.

1. Fives in Matthew are the five loaves (with the two fish), the five wise and five foolish virgins, and the five talents. Five, according to Bullinger, is the number of grace. We do not necessarily trace any importance in the “five” here, however.
2. Twos in Matthew are the two brothers Peter and Andrew, the two brothers James and John, go two miles with the one who compels you to go one, no man can serve two masters, two demon-possessed men, two blind men, do not take two coats for your journey, two sparrows are sold for a farthing, John sent two disciples to Jesus, two fishes, it is better to lose a hand or foot than be cast into the Gehenna of fire with two hands or two feet or two eyes, if your brother will not hear you regarding a matter, take with you one or two more to establish it before two or three witnesses, two disciples agree on earth regarding anything and the Father in heaven will do it, the two husband and wife become one flesh, the two sons of Zebedee’s wife, two blind men again, the two sons who would or would not work in the vineyard, the two greatest commandments, the two in the field and two grinding at the mill one is taken, the other left, the two talents, the Passover is after two days, two sons of Zebedee, two false witnesses, the two possibly to be released the Lord and Barabbas, two thieves crucified with Him, and the veil of the temple rent in two at His death. Two, according to Bullinger, is the number of division.
3. There are too many ones in Matthew to list, and that is probably of little value. According to Bullinger, one indicates unity and commencement (beginning).
4. He gave these talents to the slaves according to each slave’s own inherent ability, *dunamis*. The man knew his individual servants and knew how much ability each had. Thus he granted the right amount of responsibility to each one. Notice that even one talent was a great deal of responsibility. All three were given much to work with.
5. Immediately is Mark’s favored word.
6. “Went on a journey” is *apodemeo*, as in the previous verse.

- C. Verse 16. “Received” is the Greek *lambano*, as in chapter 24 when one was taken (received) and one left. He accepted this responsibility from his master, in other words. He worked with his talents and made this increase. Bullinger points out that the virgins wait, whereas the slaves work. Note that this did not involve “investing in the stock market,” where more investment would of course mean more gain. More money would mean more purchase and care of stock, for example, more conducting of trade, etc. The judgment is that the one with the most ability will be able to handle the most of this kind of work, the one with the least ability the least amount. It is not just like investing in a stock that doubles.
- D. Verse 17. This one no doubt put the money to work as well, and so gained from its use, thus showing that his master’s trust in him was accurate. He was able to gain proportional to what he had been given, whereas the one who was trusted with more was likewise able to gain proportional to what he had been entrusted with.
- E. Verse 18. What exactly was his problem? Was he lazy? Or did he fail to trust his own ability, like his master did? The master’s trust indicated he thought this servant could earn another talent with this talent he had been given. Yet the servant does not even try. “Money” literally this means “silver,” though what is meant is silver money.
- F. Verse 19. The master did not return quickly. The doubling of these funds took a “long time.” This was no easy process. “Came” is the Greek *erchomai*, which is the actual word for coming. “Settled accounts” is *sunairei logon*, to cast up or take up together, meaning they settled accounts together, in words (*logos*).
- G. Verse 20. Came is *proserchomai*, meaning approached, as to a king or lord. As we have pointed out, this is a much more common word in Matthew, the book of Christ as King, than in the other gospels. This slave has a happy report: the master’s trust in him has been justified, and he has used well what he had been given.
- H. Verse 21. “Well done” is what every follower of Jesus Christ should long to hear from his Lord someday. “I will make you ruler” or “I will set you over” many things. Having been faithful with a smaller trust, he will be trusted with much more. Faithfulness as a slave earns promotion. Remember that Matthew is the book of being “in Israel” and the typical person considered in Matthew is the slave or servant “in Israel.” Our glorious future position is granted graciously, not by being earned or deserved, but simply because we are “in Christ,” Ephesians 1. Our rewards are earned for endurance, not for performance, II Timothy 2:10-12. As for joy, the wise men rejoiced with great joy when the star miraculously went before them, and the women left the sepulcher after seeing the angel with fear and great joy, so this tells us the kind of feeling indicated. Was the master so greedy for gain? No, we do not think so. The master is filled with joy at the faithful and well-done performance of his slave. It is his pleasure with the work of his slave, not his greed for gain, that causes him joy.
- I. Verse 22. “Came” is approached again. This slave gained according to what he had been entrusted. God does not look for His servant to do more than he can do. He is aware of our individual abilities and grants us responsibility according to our abilities. He then expects results according to what He granted us, not according to what He did not. God is always very reasonable, fair, and individual in His expectations.
- J. Verse 23. This verse is nearly identical with verse 21. The praise is not less because he gained less, for he was entrusted with less. What he was entrusted with determined what his expected performance would be, and he lived up to it, thus earning just as

much praise as the first servant. VIII. Conclusion: No one knows the day and hour when Christ will come back except the Father. Yet, with prophecies like Daniel's seventy weeks, there will come a time when faithful people can know the year, though that time is not now. Those days will be like the days of Noah; not equal wickedness, but that the day will catch the unbelieving unawares. All faithful servants of the Lord at that time will be expected to watch. Do we live in such a way that, any time the Lord came to us, He would find us being faithful?

IV. Conclusion: The Lord gave each of these servants money to use, and He did so accurately according to their ability. We too have greater or less ability. If our Lord asked us what we did with the abilities and opportunities we had, could we show good results? We might not be servants in Israel, but we too should be faithful with what the Lord has given us. Let us strive to please Him with all that we have.