

Matthew Chapter 24-25 – The Olivet Discourse – Part 17
The Parables of the Olivet Discourse – Matthew 25:14-30 – Parable of the Talents

Introduction

In this section of the Olivet Discourse, Jesus teaches with parables. There are three parables in this section: Parable of the Fig Tree, the Ten Virgins, and Talents. The final section in this discourse (Matthew 25:31-46) informs the disciples about the judgment of the nations after His return.

These parables are in the purview of the kingdom of heaven, which is about the literal Messianic reign and the restoration of Israel. This discourse, although spoken to the disciples, concerns the Remnant, the final generation of Jewish believers during the Time of Jacob's Trouble.

In conjunction with the parables, we find three analogies: Days of Noah, Like a Thief, and Faithful and Evil Slave. These analogies concern the fact that the day of the Lord and the return of Jesus Christ are going to happen at an unknown time. Therefore, always be ready.

In the analogy of the faithful and evil slave, we saw that the leadership will be held specifically responsible for their faithfulness.

In the two parables of Matthew 25, we see how individuals will be held responsible for being ready, and the judge will come, those who are unfaithful will be judged. Those who are ready will be greatly rewarded.

Parable of the Talents

Matthew 25:14-30

We can see the connection between this last parable and the previous ones with the word *for*. Therefore, we know that this parable is also comparable to the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 25:1).

The story would have been a well-understood scenario in first-century Israel. The concept of leaving servants in charge of the business would occur when a wealthy man would travel. After his return, he would call the servants to account for what they were entrusted with while he was away. Since this is about the kingdom of heaven, and we know that Jesus is leaving, we can see the connection between The Messiah, King of Israel, leaving for a time and the Israelites were to remain on task while He was gone.

Since the administration of the church was as yet unknown during this teaching, we can conclude that this accounting does not involve current-day Israel. This accounting will happen at the end of Jacob's trouble when the administration returns to Israel.

As with the parable of the ten virgins, we must not attribute a broad spectrum "saved" designation to the slaves. This is not the point of the parable.

Matthew 25:14-15 – the master *handed over* (paradidomi) possessions to the slaves according to their own ability. Each person was given a responsibility with the master's great possession.

What is the *talent*? Most people, in an attempt to make this relevant, begin with a premise.

The talent is the gospel. The talent is personal resources. The talent is personal abilities, good works, or privilege. The word *talent* is a unit of measurement. It was about 70 pounds, and

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since we know it was money (verse 18), we presume it was silver. One talent of silver was about \$28,000. Two talents of silver equal \$56,000. Five talents of silver is \$140,000. A talent of silver is worth about 20 years of daily, unskilled labor. This is not an insignificant amount. These slaves have already proven themselves to one extent or the other since he gave to them according to their abilities.

Matthew 25:16 – The first slave went and traded with them and gained five more talents. He made a profit. The word *immediately* indicates the slave's promptness in investing the silver, knowing that the longer the investment, the better.

Matthew 25:17 – The second slave also traded with them and made two more talents. *In the same manner* indicates that he also acted immediately and saw the prudence of working with what he was given for the longest period of time.

Matthew 25:18 – The third slave did something very different. He went away, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master's money. Digging a hole was considered the most secure location where one could put money in the ancient world. There is a lot of speculation that follows this action. One commentator suggests that he did not expect the master to return, and hiding it indicates that he intended to keep the talent as his own.

The text itself provides the reason and the judgment displays his intent, therefore we will simply let the parable explain itself.

Matthew 25:19-21 - The first slave came bringing back ten talents. It would appear that he was eager to meet his master and show him what he had done with his master's resources.

The master gave him a verbal commendation that involved three things: first, he told him well done and called him good and faithful. The master's evaluation of him is that he was a good slave.

The man was evaluated according to the master and was told that he was *good*. "agathos" indicates a good that God has determined. He did according to the master's will.

He is also said to be *faithful*. This word is the main word in the parable. It is used four times.

It is the concept of "reliable, dependable." The first slave had shown himself as dependable and reliable because he had managed his master's possessions well.

Second, the master also gave him charge over many things. You were faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.

Finally, the master granted entrance to this slave – enter into the joy of your master. This language is directly related to the inauguration of the kingdom and the disciples would have understood the implication.

Matthew 25:22-23 – The second slave, although given less, had similar production. The response from the master is not according to the total amount but is proportional to the production in accordance with the ability. The declaration from the master is the same as that of the first slave.

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Matthew 25:24-28 – This is where we get to the slave who only had one. What the slave says to the master is intriguing. Rather than an accounting of his own responsibility, he comes with a condemnation of the master.

Master, I know you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed.

Was the master a hard man? Did he reap where he did not sow? This is inconsequential, but it seems unlikely since he would have accepted simple interest.

Regardless, this was the third slave's statement, and the slave was judged according to his own evaluation. The slave had the wrong evaluation, and the slave was held responsible for it.

He was afraid and went away and hid the talent in the ground. He was afraid of the master. Interestingly, neither of the two other slaves showed any fear of the master. Both had a healthy evaluation and respect for their master. They understood that the master held people to account, and so when they did well, they expected a good response from the master.

The master's response demonstrates the futility of the third slave's reasoning based on his evil evaluation of the master.

Wicked – πονηρός ponēros – bad by nature or conduct. Full of evil intent (Matthew 5:37, 6:13, 7:15-18, 9:1-4).

Even though we may not see it, the actions of the slave are called wicked. I think this is connected to the evaluation of the master. The slave did not understand that the master desired good for all and was not looking for a reason to destroy.

Lazy - ὀκνηρός oknēros – sluggish, not wanting to work, slothful.

The assignment was to take what was given and work. But instead, he did not want to do anything with it. This indicates to me that he buried the talent so he could do what he pleased, knowing that the money would be safe.

Regardless of what we think about this scenario, the parable is clear. He failed and is held accountable for both his laziness and his faulty evaluation.

Verse 28 describes the consequences. Take away the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. This is interesting.

The explanation in verse 29 is that there will be winners and losers when Jesus comes back. The winners will have everything, and the losers will have nothing. There are only those who are good and faithful, and there are those who are wicked and lazy. The wicked and lazy are not simply chastised, but what they had is given to another.

Then comes the punishment - throw the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

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The third slave did not enter into the joy of his master but was cast into the outer darkness. Previously, we have understood the outer darkness as being outside the kingdom altogether and weeping and gnashing of teeth as a place of suffering and torment.

	FURNACE OF FIRE	DARKNESS OUTSIDE	WEEPING
MATTHEW 8:12		●	●
MATTHEW 13:42	●		●
MATTHEW 13:50	●		●
MATTHEW 22:13		●	●
MATTHEW 24:51			●
MATTHEW 25:30		●	●
LUKE 13:28			●

1. All of these references directly say or imply that they are concerning the Messianic Reign.
2. All of the people involved are human.
3. The spiritual position before God is not mentioned in these passages.
4. Regardless of the terminology, the acts by God or the master are punitive.
5. This is related to those who are wicked.
6. This is eternal damnation – hell.

Conclusion

What does all this mean? As we have said before, this is about Israel. We know that those who enter into the kingdom as humans must have a behavioral rightness. This is not about righteousness before God but rather the Jewish requirement to be welcomed into His kingdom.

Obviously, the wicked slave is not only a bad slave but is also an unbeliever and evaluates God incorrectly. But the point of the passage is not belief but about the responsibility of those in the administration of Israel.

What do the talents represent? I believe that this is about the scenario, not the exactness of what a talent is. We can look throughout the Hebrew Text and Matthew and find the responsibilities of Israel.

What can we take away? There are so many passages about our responsibility and the reward for the saints that I think it is inappropriate to make this or any of the parables about us. Our main duty with Matthew is to understand God and how He holds people to account and is a rewarder (Matthew 16:27; Hebrews 11:6; 1 Peter 1:17-19; Revelation 22:12).