

SESSION 2:1 BACKGROUND NOTES TO MT 25:14-30

INTRODUCTION

1. Immediately following the parable of "**The Wise And Foolish Virgins**" (Mt 25:1-13), we find Jesus telling the parable of "**The Talents**" (Mt 25:14-30)
2. While both parables relate to the kingdom of heaven, and especially in anticipation of the Lord's return, note the key difference:
 - a. The first stresses the need to be "**prepared**"; the latter, the need to be "**productive**"
 - b. The first emphasizes "**watching**" for the Lord; the latter, "**working**" for the Lord
3. In both parables we learn what should characterize those who eagerly WAIT for the coming of the Lord

I. THE PARABLE AND ITS LESSONS

A. THE PARABLE ANALYZED...

1. A man, about to travel to a far country, distributes his goods ("talents") among his servants - **Mt 25:14-15**
 - a. A "talent" here is a monetary measure, amounting to 6000 denarii, which would take an ordinary laborer twenty years to earn (a denarius being a day's wage)
 - b. The number of "talents" was given "to each according to his own ability"
2. The use made of the talents is described - **Mt 25:16-18**
 - a. Two of the servants doubled their talents
 - b. One servant simply hid the money
3. The lord of the servants returns, and a reckoning is made – **Mt 25:19-30**
 - a. His return was after "a long time"
 - b. The first two servants describe how they doubled their amount...
 - 1) They stand before the lord with excitement (implied in the word "look")
 - 2) Their lord was pleased
 - a) He praises them for their work, saying "**Well done**"
 - b) He commends them both as "**good and faithful servant**"
 - c) He rewards them by promoting them: "**you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things**"
 - d) He invites them to share in his happiness: "**Enter into the joy of your lord**"
 - c. The servant who hid his money then faces his lord...
 - 1) He begins by making excuses
 - a) "**Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown...**"
 - b) "**I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground.**"
 - 2) He seeks to appease the lord by returning what he had been given: "**Look, there you have what is yours.**"
 - d. The lord's response...

- 1) He calls him a **"wicked and lazy servant"**
- 2) He tells him what was the least he should have done: **"you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers..."**
- 3) He takes away what he had, and gave it to the servant with ten talents, with this explanation:
 - a) **"For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance"**
 - b) **"But from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away"**
- 4) He has the **"unprofitable servant"** cast **"into the outer darkness"**, where **"there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"**

B. THE PARABLE APPLIED...

1. Main points of the parable:
 - a. Be faithful in using the opportunities for service which the Lord has given us
 - b. Diligence is rewarded; negligence is punished
2. Other points to be noted (adapted from Hendricksen's commentary):
 - a. Whatever we have, whether opportunities or abilities, belongs to God; we may possess, but God owns; we are simply stewards - **Mt 25:14**
 - b. The Lord grants opportunities for service in keeping with our ability to make use of them - **Mt 25:15**
 - 1) In the day of judgment, the number of "talents" will not matter
 - 2) The question will be, "Have you been faithful in your use of the talents?"
 - c. Jesus did not expect to return immediately - **Mt 25:19**; cf. **25:5**
 - d. Everything should be done with a view of the day of reckoning which is coming! - cf. **2 Co 5:10**
 - e. Our responsibilities here and now are important, but they will be surpassed by those in the life hereafter - **Mt 25:21**; cf. **Re 22:3-5**
 - f. To share in the Master's own joy is part of the glory of the life hereafter - **Mt 25:21**; cf. **2 Th 1:10-12** (where we are told we will share in His glory)
 - g. Those who make excuses are "wicked and lazy" servants - **Mt 25:25-26**
 - h. A place of punishment is reserved for the unprofitable servants! - **Mt 25:30**; cf. **13:41-42**
 - i. The sin of OMISSION is just as bad as the sin of COMMISSION
 - 1) Those who do evil will experience "wailing and gnashing of teeth" - **Mt 13:41-42**
 - 2) But also those who do nothing! - **Mt 25:30**

[Many are the lessons that can be gleaned from this parable of **"The Talents"**. The main lesson is simple:

Be productive where the Lord has given you ability and opportunity!

But this often raises a question: **What are my "talents?"** (used here not as a measure of money, but of ability and opportunity)

II. DETERMINING OUR "TALENTS"

A. REMEMBER THAT NOT ALL HAVE THE SAME "TALENTS"...

1. **The NUMBER of the talents may be different**
 - a. Some may have only "one" talent
 - b. Some may have "five" talents
 - i. Remember, the Lord gives "to each one according to his own ability"
2. **The NATURE of the talents may be different**
 - a. Paul made this clear in **Rom 12:3-8**
 - b. Some teach, others serve; some may do more than one
 - ii. But everyone has **"gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us"**

B. SOME "TALENTS" ARE EASIER TO DETERMINE THAN OTHERS...

1. **In some cases our abilities are evident**
 - a. E.g., inherited or gained wealth
 - b. E.g., positions of influence
2. **But some abilities might at first be "hidden"**

For example, teaching and preaching

 - iii. Some talents may therefore lie dormant, awaiting awakening

C. DETERMINING ONE'S TALENTS...

1. **Through trial and error**
 - a. Try different areas of service, to see which ones might come naturally
 - b. Try them again and again, for some talents may only develop through hard work
3. **Through seeking counsel from others**
 - a. Others can often see our strengths and weaknesses better than we ourselves
 - b. Solomon praised the value of receiving counsel - **Pr 11:14;12:15; 15:22; 19:20**
 - iv. Through such personal diligence and advice from others, one can gain insight into the abilities and opportunities that the Lord has given him or her

CONCLUSION

1. If we are in the kingdom, the Lord has given us all some ability in which to serve Him
 - a. One day, He is coming again and there will be a reckoning
 - b. If we are going to be **"prepared"**, we need to be **"productive"**
2. Are you productive? Or are you like the "wicked and lazy servant"?
 - a. Will the Lord say to you: **"Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your lord."**?
 - b. Or will he say: **"You wicked and lazy servant"**, and consign you to the place of torment?