

[R2764 : page 58]

**"TO EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS
SEVERAL ABILITY."**

– *MATT. 25:14-30.* – *FEB. 10.* –

**"So, then, everyone of us shall give an account of himself
before God." – Rom. 14:12.**

IT WAS ON the way from Jericho toward Jerusalem that our Lord gave the Parable of the Ten Pounds, delivered one each to ten servants. (Luke 19:11,12. See our issue of Dec. 1.) The Parable of the Talents which we are now considering is a different one in several particulars, tho bearing close resemblance to the other. It was part of our Lord's teaching to his disciples during the few days preceding his crucifixion, probably the Tuesday preceding it, on the evening journey from Jerusalem to Bethany. This parable illustrates to us the differing abilities of God's people in respect to his service, and how each is accountable according to his ability, and that the same results are neither required nor expected from all, but simply faithfulness by each in the use of that ability and opportunity which he possesses.

The Revised Version notes the fact that the words, "the Kingdom of Heaven," in the opening verse, are not found in the ancient MSS., but this does not interfere with the thought that it is the Kingdom of Heaven in embryo (the Church) that is discussed, and that is likened to these servants who receive the talents; for this parable, it is to be remembered, followed immediately the Parable of the Ten Virgins, which is declared to be an illustration of the Kingdom. The Parable of the Talents, therefore, merely continues the thought respecting the Kingdom class, making these fresh observations respecting it.

Altho a number of servants are implied, yet only a sample illustration of three is given, leaving it to be inferred that the

others were more or less distinctly represented in these three, without attempting to show or to teach which of the classes would predominate. In this respect also this parable corresponds to the Parable of the Pounds. This parable was evidently, like the other, to prepare the minds of the apostles for our Lord's departure from the present life – to the "far country," heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God to present on behalf of mankind the sacrifice for sins which he was about to accomplish at Calvary; and incidentally to be crowned, highly exalted and honored far above angels, principalities and powers, at the right hand of divine favor, and there to remain till the appointed time for him to take possession of his Kingdom under the whole heavens, to subdue it and to bring it into full accord with the divine government, that God's will should be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

The expression "far country," would give the thought of a considerable time to elapse between the Master's leaving and his return to establish his Millennial Kingdom. Meantime the apostles were to understand that they themselves were his servants to whom he entrusted his property, and that he would expect them to be faithful in guarding all of his interests and affairs, and promoting the same according to their several abilities. But since the parable covers the long period of eighteen hundred years, and looks down to certain servants living at the time of the Master's return, it is evident that it was intended to include, not the apostles only, but, as our Lord's prayer expressed the matter, "All those who shall believe on me through their word." We are to notice distinctly that the parable **[R2764 : page 59]** does not concern the world; nor do the decisions mentioned as taking place at the second coming of our Lord in any sense of the word represent decisions respecting the world, but merely decisions respecting the Church. Nor are we even to understand that the parable includes the general "household of faith;" but simply and only the specially consecrated servants of the Lord,

to whom he has committed certain responsibilities; *viz.*, those only who have been begotten of the holy spirit.

In the early Church, following the Pentecostal outpouring of the holy spirit, every consecrated believer received a gift or talent, and some received many of these, as the Apostle says: "The manifestation of the spirit [a portion, at least one talent] is given to every man [in this consecrated Church] to profit withal." Each had a responsibility in proportion as he had talents or gifts of the spirit, and hence the Apostle Paul, having more than the others, had a greater responsibility because he had greater opportunities; and we judge that he measured up to these responsibilities in a manner most acceptable to the Master. (1 Cor. 14:18.) But those gifts must have ceased within a short time after the death of the Apostles, because we most clearly find that the gifts of the spirit were imparted to believers only through the laying on of hands of the apostles – that they did not come supernaturally from God to every individual, – and that those who possessed the gifts themselves, except the apostles, could not communicate them to others. – Acts 8:12-20.

The object of those gifts, as we have already seen, was the establishment of the early Church, but with its establishment their necessity ceased, and hence the gifts ceased in that form, and have since continued with the Lord's people in a very different form; that is to say, since then the *natural* gifts or talents which each person possesses through birth, education and training are reckoned, when he is consecrated to the Lord and accepted by him, as being owned or possessed by the man's new or holy spirit, and hence are reckoned as talents or abilities committed to his care, and for the use of which he will be held responsible in the outcome. If he remained one of the world he would have other responsibilities, but no such as are implied in this lesson, which represents only the responsibilities of the consecrated servants in the use of their Master's spiritual goods.

We may safely say that there are comparatively few five-talent servants amongst the Lord's people: the majority of the saints may safely be considered as being of the one- and two-talent classes. There are not many five-talent people in the world anyway, and it would appear that the world, the flesh and the devil bid so high for the services of these few that the number of them to become the Lord's servants, and to make consecration of their five talents fully and exclusively to his service, is comparatively small – "not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble."

The parable shows that five-talent people amongst the Lord's servants are not to measure themselves with others and to say, I have done enough; certainly more than A., who has one talent, but as much as B., who has two talents. Rather, each disciple is to seek to know truthfully just what talents of natural ability and opportunity the Master has committed to his care, and to seek to use everyone of these as fully, as thoroughly and as constantly as possible, so that the results may be much fruit, much praise, much service, much honor to the Lord. And as this parable should be a check upon those servants who have five talents, to hinder them from taking a slothful view of the matter so it should also be an encouragement to those having fewer talents of ability and opportunity, showing them that the Lord will not expect as great things from them as he would expect from those having greater opportunities and greater natural talents. It teaches such that they should do with their might what their hands find to do, and realize that this reasonable service is what the Lord expects and what he proposed to reward in each. The servant who had only one talent of ability and opportunity should have felt equally his responsibility, and might equally have had the Master's approval had he been faithful, in which event, no doubt, his one talent would have increased to two.

Our Lord's arrangement of the parable, that the person who received the one talent was the one who digged in the earth and buried it, should not be understood to mean that the one-talented people are more likely than others of the Lord's servants with more talents to thus neglect and misuse them. So far as observation teaches, we might conclude that proportionately [R2765 : page 59] as many of the two-talented and five-talented dig in the earth and hide their talents, as of those who possess only one; and of course their so doing would be proportionately more blameworthy than that of the one-talented man. Why, then, is the one-talented man chosen as an illustration of these talent-burials? We answer, that it is to show the responsibility of those who have least – that the Lord expects even the least of his consecrated people to know of, and to use the talents he has in his possession, and that he will not hold guiltless even those who have the smallest ability to serve him and his brethren and his truth and who neglect to use it. As the responsibilities accompanying a larger number of talents would be greater, so the losses in their case would be greater, and thus the punishment more severe.

"After a long time the lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them." By these words our [R2765 : page 60] Lord gave to the disciples as clear an intimation as was proper of the fact that they were not to expect him to return and reckon with them in a very few days, a few months or a few years; but when they subsequently asked him respecting the particular time, he refused them, saying that it was not for them to know the times and the seasons, which the Father had put in his own power. And so for eighteen hundred years the Lord's people have been left without clear information on this subject. This, however, does not militate against the thought that it is the privilege of God's people *now* to know something of the times and seasons, because the due time has come in which the Father wishes to communicate these; – the time mentioned through the Prophet

Daniel, when the [truly] wise shall understand, as we saw in the preceding lesson. – Dan. 12:10; 1 Thess. 5:4; John 16:13.

There is no intimation in the parable that the disciples would die and *go to* their Lord, and be reckoned with and rewarded then, as many believe to have been the case. The Scriptures are harmonious and consistent with themselves in their teachings, and not only declare that "David is not ascended into the heavens," and that "no man hath ascended up to heaven" save Jesus, but they declare also that *our Lord will come* a second time, to receive his people unto himself and to then reward them. The Apostle Paul, who was one of these five-talented servants, declares respecting himself, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me [in reservation, in waiting] a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me *in that day*, and not to me only, but also unto all them that love his appearing." – 2 Tim. 4:7,8; John 3:13; 14:3; Acts 2:34.

To our understanding we are now living in "the days of the Son of Man," and he is now reckoning with his servants in this the day of his revelation. We understand, according to the Scriptures, by faith and not by sight, that the reckoning was to begin with those servants who had fallen asleep, and that "we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord" should not prevent or hinder them, nor take precedence to them in this matter of being reckoned with and rewarded. (1 Thess. 4:15-17.) To our understanding, as already shown in the MILLENNIAL DAWN series, 1878 marked the date for our Lord's assumption of Kingly authority and his judgment upon Babylon the Great, characterizing her as "fallen," and calling for all the people of God to come out of her: and that it marked also the date for the faithful overcomers of the past to have a share in the first resurrection – to enter into the joys of their Lord, and hear his words, "Well done, good and faithful servants." In harmony with

this, it is our understanding that all of this class are now enjoying the glory, honor and immortality promised to the faithful. This work of judging the *servants* is totally distinct from the judging of the *world* – the world's judgment is very different every way, and is to take place during the Millennial age, and is represented in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, the scene of which is located "when the Son of Man shall sit upon the throne of his glory," at which time the faithful servants of the present age, whose trial is now in progress, and whose reckoning and rewards are shown in the parable of the lesson, will sit with the Lord in his throne as he has promised. – Rev. 3:21.

As other Scriptures show, "we who are alive and remain unto the presence of the Lord" will not be omitted from the company of the glorified, altho our being alive will not give us precedence to them. The inspection and rewarding of the Lord's servants having begun in 1878 as respects those that had fallen asleep, is since progressing in respect to those who remain: these are granted a reasonable time in which to finish up their contract of full consecration, – to become *ripe* "wheat" – and to render up their accounts. Each of the elect now, as he finishes his course, reports immediately, and does not need to "sleep" in death, to wait for the coming of the King, but is immediately, in the moment of death, changed, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," experiencing fully and instantly the first resurrection blessing of glory, honor and immortality – in the moment of death.

Realizing from this view of the parable that the Lord's people of today are represented in it, it is for each one of the consecrated (while yet it is called day – before the night cometh) to make a full and thorough inspection of himself: and to determine to what extent he has talents, abilities, privileges, opportunities, to serve the Lord, and to what extent he is using these; and to remember that his share in the reward depends upon his faithfulness in the use of his talents. There may be instances in which persons of

five talents will use three of them faithfully in the Lord's service, and bury the other two in business and cares of this life – "in the earth," in earthly affairs. There may be instances in which those who have two talents use one for the Lord's service and bury the other one; but the fact that our Lord does not give such illustrations would lead us to question the probability of such a course. Some might *plan* certain things respecting two talents for heavenly things and three for earthly things; or of one for earthly things and the other for heavenly things; but the result probably would be either that he would become thoroughly immersed in the earthly things, and bury all his talents there, or else that his heart would become so thoroughly infused with the Lord's spirit [R2765 : page 61] and the desire to serve his cause that all of his talents would be thus employed. This tendency and result is implied by our Lord's statement on another occasion: "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." "No man can serve two masters." Experience and observation corroborate this; and hence as a rule we find that people are either cold or hot in spiritual things; either it is the Kingdom of heaven first and far above all other considerations, demanding and receiving the very best we have of time, energy and influence; or else the Kingdom of heaven is neglected and forgotten, and time and influence are spent in money-getting or other selfish and earthly occupations of mind and body.

The lesson of this to every one of the Lord's consecrated people is plain: we are to "seek first [chiefly] the Kingdom of God." It is to be our chief concern and to receive from us all the time, attention, thought, energy, influence and means we have – the things *needful* for the present life being understood to be excepted; and our love and zeal will be manifested by the proportion of these even, which we are willing to sacrifice in the interest of heavenly things.

The reward given to the faithful servants was the same in each case – the entering into the joys of the Lord; and we may reasonably understand that this will mean that the cup of joy to each will be full. In this, too, we have a great encouragement for all, and one which perhaps is specially needed by the majority of the Lord's servants, who possess only one or two talents of opportunity, etc. They have an equally good opportunity of entering into the joys of the Lord as tho they had five or ten talents; and the reward, "Well done, good and faithful servant," will be truly meant for, and as fully appreciated by the one as the other.

The reward to these servants is in full harmony with the foregoing application of the parable, and shows that during the Millennial age the faithful servants, the "elect" of this Gospel age, will be the rulers of the world, "joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord" in his Kingdom, and upon his throne of rulership; for the reward specifies, "Thou has been faithful over a few things; I will make thee *ruler over* many things." If the parable were intended to represent the world's judgment, such a conclusion would be inappropriate, because by the time the world's judgment will have ended there will no longer be necessity for rulership in this sense; for, as the Apostle declares, Christ shall reign [during the Millennium] until he shall have put down all authority, etc., and then he shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father. The *rule*, or reign of righteousness, the Mediatorial Kingdom, is to be established during the Millennial age, – thus to overthrow the rule of unrighteousness now prevailing amongst men, and to lift mankind in general out of the present condition of sin and death – to deliver as many of them as will accept the deliverance from the power of Satan into the liberty of sons of God. And with the accomplishment of this work the time for all such ruling will be at an end; hence this parable is a strong lesson in support of the pre-millennial coming of our Lord and exaltation of his faithful, the elect Church. [R2766 : page 61]

The servant who hid his talent in the earth, and who failed to use it, endeavored to justify his course by blaming the Master with being too hard and exacting. And so it is with many, who, having taken upon themselves the vows of consecration to the Lord, subsequently fail to perform them. They are disposed to blame the Lord rather than to blame themselves; and this course indicates what their real lack is, – Love. They do not love the Lord fully, truly, sufficiently, and their course reveals this fact. Had they loved him they would have delighted to do to their ability his will; and only such are blessed with rewards.

The punishment of those who failed to perform their covenant as servants, who failed to use the talents provided for them under this covenant, is shown to be great loss; – but not the loss which many suppose, whose minds are blinded by the theory that eternal torment is the wages for sin, and that it is visited upon all except the "overcomers" of this Gospel age. Such claim that the unfaithful servant would be delivered over to Satan and be tortured in flaming fire, and so blind are many of the advocates of this theory that they read all this into our Lord's statement in this very parable; but instead of mentioning flames of fire, which would surely make the place *light*, our Lord mentions *darkness* as his portion – "outer darkness." Neither does our Lord mention the demon-tormentors, generally believed in.

We offer another and much more reasonable, much more consistent, interpretation of our Lord's words. The servant who fails to use present privileges of consecration and service and sacrifice will find the opportunity taken from him. He will have it no more; neither will he have any share in the reward given to the overcomers; – he will suffer this great loss. He is represented as going into "outer darkness," implying that he had already been in the light of divine favor, blessing, privilege, knowledge of divine things; – that he would lose this enlightenment, and that his understanding would become darkened as respects spiritual

things. It is "outer darkness," because it is the darkness common to and resting upon the whole world of mankind; – only the consecrated, accepted of the Lord, being permitted to come fully into the clear light of the knowledge of the Lord and of his plan now shining. Any others than these, upon whom this light may temporarily fall, have it only in a secondary sense, at very most, and see not the glorious things themselves, but merely, so to speak, their reflections. The unfaithful **[R2766 : page 62]** servant is to be cast completely out of all favor; even the reflected light will be obscured from his vision, and he will find himself, now or shortly, in the darkness of the world as respects the divine plan, work, etc. And there he will share with the world in its great time of trouble with which this age is about to close, a time of trouble which is fittingly pictured in the parable by the weeping and gnashing of teeth.
