

"The Olivet Discourse"

Matthew 24-25

Part 26

**Introduction:** Tonight in our study of the Olivet Discourse we have come to a very familiar parable in Matthew 25:14-30. This is the Parable of the Talents. It is my desire to help you to understand this parable in the proper context and then make the correct application.

Now just as the Parable of the Ten Virgins, which we studied last week, there are many people who do the best they can to fit the church into this parable. Last week I told you that many people teach that the oil in the Parable of the Ten Virgins represents the Holy Spirit. There are 2 problems with that:

1. That is spiritualizing the parable and saying something which Jesus did not say.
2. The virgins are not the church but they are the people who are alive at the end of the Great Tribulation and the Bible does not tell us that the believers in the Great Tribulation will be possessed with the Holy Spirit. Most likely they will be like those in the Old Testament. The Spirit came upon them for specific ministries and then He departed. Those of the body of Christ (the church) are the only believers to be indwelt with the Spirit and when the rapture happens we will be snatched up to be with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit will be removed.

Let me show you some verses that will help with this thought.

**2 Thessalonians 2:3-8a**

<sup>3</sup> *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;*

<sup>4</sup> *Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

<sup>5</sup> *Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?*

<sup>6</sup> *And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.*

<sup>7</sup> *For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.*

<sup>8</sup> *And then shall that Wicked be revealed,*

The word "letteth" means "to restrain". Right now the holy Spirit is here on the earth within the believers and He is restraining the evil of this world but Paul tells us here that when the rapture happens He will be taken out of the way. Therefore, the Holy Spirit's ministry will be much different in the tribulation period.

Let me show you something which the Bible tells us about the two witnesses whom God will use during the last half of the tribulation.

### **Revelation 11:3**

<sup>3</sup> *And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.*

I have bolded and underlined the word "**power**" for a reason. It has been added by the translators. In your Bible you will see that the word "**power**" is in italics which means it was added. The phrase "**I will give**" means "to bestow a gift". The words "**unto my**" mean "of me". So here is what I want you to see: God says that He will bestow a gift of Himself to His two witnesses. Most likely this is speaking of giving them the Spirit for their mission. There would be no need for God to do this if they possessed the Holy Spirit.

Now let us get back to our study. The oil in the Parable of the Ten Virgins can simply be seen as "saving faith", 5 virgins had it and 5 did not.

In the Parable of the Talents a very similar mistake is made by teachers. It is taught by many that the "talents" given in Matthew 25:15 are spiritual gifts given to the church. Those who teach this point to Ephesians 4.

### **Ephesians 4:7-8**

<sup>7</sup> *But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*

<sup>8</sup> *Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*

But there is a problem with this teaching.

### **Notice Matthew 25:30**

The unprofitable servant who was given 1 talent was cast into outer darkness. Just to make it clear God would never cast any of His children into outer darkness. This distribution of the talents cannot be the gifts given to the church.

### **The Parable of the Talents**

#### **Part 1**

Now before we get into this parable let me give you something to consider. The Parable of the Ten Virgins was focused upon the oil in the lamps or we could say it was focused upon that which is inside the man or woman. On the outside they all looked the same but it was on the inside they were different and that is also true of believers and unbelievers. They can look the same on the outside at times but the difference is on the inside.

Now as we come to this parable the focus is going to be on the outside. This parable will show us a contrast between the believer and the unbeliever in their attitudes and actions.

#### **I. The Talents**

##### **Notice Matthew 25:14**

As the parable opens we see a parallel between the Kingdom of Heaven and a man traveling into a far country. Before the man leaves he called his own servants together and he entrusted unto them his goods.

##### **Notice Matthew 25:15**

He we see how he distributed his goods. He gave 5 talents to one man, he gave 2 talents to another man, and he gave 1 talent to another man. Now there are several points I want us to consider about the talents and the distribution of those talents.

##### **1. The value of the talents.**

A talent weighed anywhere from 58-80 pounds and many times they were made from precious metals, often they were silver and there were times when they were solid gold. A silver talent could be worth as much as \$2000 dollars and one of solid gold could be worth as much as \$30,000 dollars. That means the man with 5 talents could have received as much as \$150,000 dollars. That would have been the value in Jesus day. In our day the value would equal the millions of dollars.

The point we need to see here is that the talents were not to be treated with carelessness. They were very valuable and were to be handled with the greatest of care.

## 2. What do the talents represent?

Now before we go any further we need to get a picture of what these talents may parallel in this parable. We know that they are given to believers as well as unbelievers because the man who received one talent was an unbeliever. So how are we to understand these talents?

These talents can be seen as many things within the lives of all people. They can be opportunities to be saved, to serve, to reach out and help others. They can represent finances, a profitable job, good health, sharp minds with the great ability to learn, free time, and the list goes on and on. But the point is that God has given to all people what I will call "common gifts".

### **Romans 2:3-4**

<sup>3</sup> *And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?*

<sup>4</sup> *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

Here in verse 4 Paul references God's gifts to all men. They are longsuffering, forbearance, and goodness and they are for the purpose of bring the unbeliever to repentance.

### **Notice Matthew 25:41-45**

Here is a picture of opportunities set before the unsaved. Now we know that works do not save us but works do manifest our salvation.

So the talents could represent a multitude of different things and if we connect that with the first point which was their value we can understand that every "gift" from God is seen as something which is of great value through God's eyes.

I could apply that in many ways but I will let that to you but let me say that what God entrusts to us is not to be wasted.

Let me show you what Jesus said to His disciples after the feeding of the 5000.

### **John 6:11-12**

<sup>11</sup> *And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.*

<sup>12</sup> *When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.*

Even the fragments are to be used.

### **3. The way the talents are divided.**

#### **Notice Matthew 25:15**

The phrase "*to every man according to his several ability*" is a very important statement. This means that God gives to each individual according to the individual's ability to use what is given to him or her. That is why some people have more wealth than others. It is the way God distributed the wealth. To one man God gives much wealth and to another He gives very little. To one man He will give much authority and to another He places him in the world as a full time servant.

#### **Application:**

Let me just stop here and remind you and me that this is a truth which we need to grasp. I have heard people complain because someone has more than they have. Just so we know that complaint is against God for He is the One Who has given as He knows to give. Paul's words would be good to grasp onto.

#### **Philippians 4:11**

<sup>11</sup> *Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

#### **1 Timothy 6:6-8**

<sup>6</sup> *But godliness with contentment is great gain.*

<sup>7</sup> *For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*

<sup>8</sup> *And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.*

## **II. The Use of the Talents**

#### **Notice Matthew 25:16-17**

Here we see that the man who was given 5 talents and the man who was given 2 talents went and invested what was entrusted to them and they both doubled their talents.

**Application:**

Let me just stop here for a moment and point out something which we need to apply. These 2 men are examples of what we are to do with what has been entrusted to us. We are to invest all that has been entrusted to us. If God has blessed you with free time invest that free time into the lives of other people. If you have extra finances and there is an opportunity to invest the finances into the lives of other people then God wants you to do that. The point is that we all have something which we can invest for God in addition to our spiritual gifts.

The problem is that we can tend to gather "stuff" instead of investing it. One man said this:

*"Money is like cow manure. When it is in a pile it is worthless but if it is spread on the field it is of great value."*

Let me show you what Solomon said about sharing what we have.

**Ecclesiastes 11:1-6**

*Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.*

<sup>2</sup> *Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.*

<sup>3</sup> *If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.*

<sup>4</sup> *He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.*

<sup>5</sup> *As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.*

<sup>6</sup> *In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.*

I want to break this down so that we can see what the writer is saying here. This passage is absolutely wonderful.

**Ecclesiastes 11:1-6**

***Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.***

Here is an encouragement and a promise. Now think about this; to cast bread on the water you would think that you would never get it back again and that is why many people will not invest what God has entrusted to them. They believe if they invest it in the lives of people that they will never see it again. But Solomon tells us **WILL** find it after many days.

***<sup>2</sup> Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.***

Here Solomon tells us to take what we have and spread it around. This is the "manure idea". The reason he gives is because we do not know what tomorrow holds. In other words we may hang onto what we have and then something happens and it is all gone and we lost the opportunity to invest it.

**Matthew 6:19**

***<sup>19</sup> Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:***

***<sup>3</sup> If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.***

Here is Solomon's argument to those who are reluctant to give. He first points toward the clouds and how they are faithful in giving to those who are much lower than they are. They empty themselves and they are then filled up again. This is parallel with the first verse where he said "***Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days***", this is the same idea. Then he points to the tree that falls in the woods. While the tree is alive it is able to produce and scatter its seeds but when the day comes for it to fall it is finished. Where it falls is where it is in the sense that there will be no more casting of seeds. The same is true for us also. There is a window of opportunity to "cast our bread upon the water" but when this life is over the opportunities are gone. But like the tree we can send out seed while we are here that will live long after we are gone.

***<sup>4</sup> He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.***

Solomon's idea here is that we cannot allow circumstances to control our giving. If we look at circumstances there will always be something we can find that will keep us from giving. We can look ahead and think of needs that will come up tomorrow that will keep us from giving today.

***<sup>5</sup> As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.***

The idea here is that God works in ways that we cannot understand. His ways are beyond human reasoning so we are to give and to trust Him with what we give.

***<sup>6</sup> In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.***

Here is the conclusion. Solomon tells us to give in the morning and in the evening or whenever there is an opportunity. He reminds us we do not know how God will use.

Now back to the parable.

The two men in **Matthew 25:16-17** believed their lord would return and evidence of that was they invested what they what they had been entrusted with.

#### **Conclusion:**

Next week we will look at the reason why the other man dug a hole and buried his talent. But let me leave you with a thought. When a person is truly saved one of the evidences should be investing in the lives of other people. It may be teaching, witnessing, helping with needs, encouragement and the list can go on.

Now at the same time I need to also say that if we are not careful even as believers we can become greedy and cling to what we have. The person who is walking in the flesh will cling tightly to "stuff". The believer who is walking in the Spirit will be generous in their giving.