

Kingdom Parables

The Parable of the Pounds

XXII. The Parable of the Pounds - Luke 19:11-27

A. The Central Point of the Parable

God has given specific opportunities to his people during the Interim Kingdom. Their use of these opportunities determines the award they will receive when he comes again.

B. Significant Elements of the Parable

1. The Man

Luke 19:12 introduces us to the main character of this parable, a nobleman. When we are first introduced, we are told that this man as of yet did not have a kingdom. This was common in Jesus' day as the Romans would certify various men to serve as indigenous rulers from time to time. In fact, Herod Antipas was one of those certified by Rome to rule over part of Palestine. Until a man had been personally commissioned by Rome, he was not considered a ruler even though he might have the right to rule. Some Bible scholars think that Christ was referring to Herod Antipas, although the validity of this is not certain. It is probably best not to make this identification based on the scanty information given to us here.

2. The Servants

We are introduced to ten servants in Luke 19:13. We are not told specifically what position these servants held nor what their abilities were. It is safe to say that these are not the only servants this man had. If he was going away to receive a kingdom, he must have been a very wealthy and powerful individual. In any case, he chose ten of his servants for this particular stewardship test. Probably he was quite certain of receiving the kingdom and as a result he chose these ten servants to test them for possible places of leadership. It hardly seems that he would give rulership of ten cities on the spur of the moment. Undoubtedly, he planned this exercise to test the faithfulness and abilities of these ten servants before placing them in leadership roles.

3. The Pounds

The word translated "pound" is the Greek word *mina*. It was a unit of money equivalent to about 100 days wages in that time. Its modern value would be anywhere from 8,000 to 10,000 dollars.

Note that the nobleman gave the same amount of money to each of the ten servants. This is one of the main elements that differ between this parable, and the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30.

The word translated “occupy” in verse 13 is the Greek word *pragmateuomai*. It is used to refer to the act of trading for a profit. It occurs again in another form in verse 15 as *diapragmateuomai*. What the nobleman was actually telling his servants was to take the resource he had given them and trade with it to gain a profit.

4. The Citizens

The citizens are those who lived in this particular region who did not wish to have the nobleman made king. Whenever a prospective king would travel to Rome he would take along witnesses who would testify as to his abilities to rule. Many times, another delegation would go in order to dissuade Rome to grant the Kingdom. In any case, these citizens, for one reason or another, did not want this nobleman to become king.

5. The Reckoning

Verses 15 to 26 give us a description of the reckoning. Contrary to the wishes of the citizens, he was granted the kingdom. When he returned, the first logical thing he would do would be to set up his government. This would of necessity entail finding faithful men to serve under him as rulers of various cities or regions. Because of the importance of these positions, he would want to be very careful in selecting the right men for the job.

We are only given the account of three of the servants in this parable. We should be careful to understand that Jesus is only taking necessary elements of the parable to explain the point he is trying to make. Since the point of the parable is to explain the necessity of being good stewards of God's riches, he only needs to draw on a subset of the ten servants. It is reasonable to assume that all ten were examined and all ten were either commended by the nobleman or condemned.

Note that the position each of these servants were given depended on the faithfulness of each man. Those who were the most faithful received the highest positions.

6. The Judgment

We find the judgment on the rebellious citizens in verse 27. Note, interestingly enough, that they are no longer citizens, but enemies. More will be said on this in the following section.

Because of the citizens' refusal to accept the nobleman as their king, he had them killed.

C. Insignificant Elements of the Parable

None

D. Interpretation of the Parable

In order to interpret this parable correctly, it is essential to understand why it was given.

In Luke 19:11 we find Jesus on his way to the cross. In verse 1 of this same chapter we find Jesus passing through Jericho on his way up to Jerusalem. Verses 2-10 give us the account of Jesus meeting Zacchaeus and the subsequent salvation of Zacchaeus and his house.

It is at this point that Jesus relates this parable to try and get the message through to the disciples regarding the coming crucifixion and the postponement of the kingdom. This is explicitly stated in verse 11.

Therefore, the underlying theme of this parable is the postponement of the Kingdom, the activities of true believers in the meantime, and the coming time of reckoning each believer will make regarding the use of God's resources during the interim period.

1. The Nobleman

From the above contextual setting, it should be obvious that the nobleman refers to Christ himself. If that is not evident, note the following reasons:

- Jesus “went away” in a sense during the Church Age in order to receive a Kingdom.
- The citizens, Jews (see below), hated Christ and refused to have him as their ruler. They summarily rejected Christ as the Messiah.
- Christ will receive the Kingdom from God just as the nobleman received his kingdom.
- Christ will judge the faithfulness of each believer at the bema seat (1 Corinthians 3) just as the nobleman judged the faithfulness of his servants.
- Christ will condemn those who refuse his rule since God has committed all judgment to the Son just as the nobleman condemned those who refused his rule.
- No other identification makes sense given the context of the parable.

2. The Servants

The servants represent true believers. Evidence for this is as follows:

- Just as each of the servants received the same amount of money even so also does each believer receive the same Holy Spirit and the same capacity to be faithful with what God has given him.
- Each of these servants did not produce the same return on the money just as each believer does not produce the same amount of fruit. However, the servant who gained five pounds received the commendation of his lord just as the one who had gained ten pounds. The idea is faithfulness.

- Even the servant who did not do anything with his pound was not killed along with the citizens. This is one of the main differences between this parable and the Parable of the Talents.
- Each of these servants were called to give an account of their activities while the nobleman was gone just as each believer will give an account to God for their faithfulness while alive.
- Just as the time of the reckoning was upon the Lord's return, even so the time of our reckoning is at the Second Coming of Christ.

Note that these servants all did not produce the same amount of return. Not all believers will produce the same amount of fruit, but all are accountable for some. God's reward to the believer is not based on amount, but faithfulness.

Note the following about the third servant:

- He was unduly afraid of the nobleman. The construct of verses 20-21 give the idea that the man was searching for an excuse for his unfaithfulness.
- In verse 23 the above point is made even clearer by the fact that he could have deposited his money with the bankers. This would entail little, if any, risk and would have at least provided some return.
- If his comments regarding the nobleman were true, it should have prompted him to be even more diligent with his money. The knowledge that we will stand before God and give an account of ourselves ought to prompt us to more faithfulness, not less.
- No mention is given of this servant being cast into prison or killed as we find in the Parable of the Talents. The reason for this is that this parable deals only with true believers whereas the Parable of the Talents is dealing with true and false believers.
- Because of his sloth, the money that he had was taken away and given to the most faithful servant. Implied in this is that each of the men were allowed to keep the money they had gained.

In verse 26 we find one of the moral laws of God. Simply put, it teaches that whenever we turn from the truth, what little truth we had will be taken away. On the other hand, when we respond to the truth, we will be given more. Romans 1:18-32 elaborates on this principle to show that all men are guilty before God. When men reject the light, no matter how dim, God is not obligated to give them more. Conversely, when a man responds to the light, dim as it may be, God will give more light.

3. The Pounds

The pound refers to the package of talents and abilities which God gives to every believer. An equally valid interpretation would be that the pound refers to opportunities.

One major difference between God's evaluation of men and our evaluation of men is that God judges the heart whereas we judge results.

The above principle is found in the story of the Widow's Mite found in Luke 21:1-4. Jesus told his disciples that the two mites given by the widow were more precious in God's sight than the large sums of money given by the wealthy.

One of the most important lessons we can learn is that God calls us to faithfully use what he has given us. The results are up to him.

4. The Citizens

The citizens can only refer to the Jews who had rejected Jesus as their Messiah. This should be so obvious it hardly needs support. (However, in a more general sense, the citizens in this parable refer to all men who have rejected Christ as their ruler, whether they be Jew or Gentile).

- These citizens hated the nobleman just as the world hated Christ (John 15:18-25).
- We find that Christ will destroy all of the rebellious Jews at his second coming. (Zechariah 13:8-9)
- We find that Christ will also judge the nations at his second coming. (Matthew 25)

In a sense, all men who have ever lived are "citizens" of God's Kingdom for this simple reason that everything that exists is part of God's Kingdom.

5. The Reckoning

The reckoning referred to here is the Judgment Seat of Christ at which each true believer will be rewarded for his faithfulness while on earth.

Time does not permit a full development of this theme, however, note the following main points: (Scripture references can be found in 1 Corinthians 3, Romans 14, and Revelations 21).

- Our reward is based on our faithful service.
- The amount of the reward we each will receive differs depending upon the various levels of faithfulness each of us exhibited.
- A person can receive no reward because of slothfulness or indifference.
- Our eternal reward refers to the place we will occupy in God's Kingdom during eternity. Although each of us will receive the same eternal life and the same ability to enjoy heaven, we will all serve God in different capacities depending on our service in this life.

6. The Judgment

The judgment on the wicked mentioned in Luke 19:27 refers to God's judgment on those who have rejected his rule. The results of this judgment are of eternal consequence to those who have rejected God.

E. Application of the Parable

1. God has given every believer specific talents and opportunities for service. As a result, each believer is responsible for making the most of what God has given.
2. Each believer will someday give an account of how they have made use of the resource given them of God. Their eternal reward is based on the results of that accounting.
3. Men who reject Christ as King will be ultimately destroyed in an eternal Lake of Fire.
4. The time between Christ's leaving to receive the Kingdom and the time he actually receives it is an indeterminable period of time. During that time each believer is called to faithful service.