

Jesus' Parables in Chronological Order

Parable #37 ~ Luke 19:12-27 ~ Ten Servants and Minas ~ Scripture

¹¹ While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. ¹² He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. ¹³ So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'

¹⁴ "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.'

¹⁵ "He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.

¹⁶ "The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.'

¹⁷ " 'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.'

¹⁸ "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.'

¹⁹ "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.'

²⁰ "Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. ²¹ I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.'

²² "His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? ²³ Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?'

²⁴ "Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.'

²⁵ " 'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!'

²⁶ "He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. ²⁷ But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me.'

Parable #37 ~ Luke 19:12-27 ~ Ten Servants and Minas ~ Questions

1. Why did Jesus tell this parable of the ten servants and minas? (19:11)
[This is similar, but *not* the same parable, as the ten talents in Matthew 25:14-30.]
2. Where did the man of noble birth say he was going? What did he want his servants to do with the money he gave them? How much money was it? (19:12-13)
3. Verse 19:14 seems a bit odd until we know the players in this parable. To Jesus' audience, who was the "man of noble birth" (later called "the master")? Who were the servants? Who were the subjects (citizens, people, countrymen)? Who might they represent today?
4. In verse 19:21, was the third servant's description of his master accurate? Would you say the servants's response to his master was hypocritical?
5. Perhaps more than some others, this parable *directly applies* to us today. Why?
6. Is there another reason the third servant may have been a bad steward? What does this parable teach us about stewardship? What does it teach about the imminent return of the Lord?
7. What responsibilities and gifts has Jesus given to you (*to you personally*)?
8. Why is the master so hard on the man who did not use his mina to earn more? (A) he didn't share his master's interest in the kingdom, (B) he didn't trust his master's intentions, (C) his only concern was for himself, (D) he did nothing productive with the money, (E) he had a short-term mindset?
9. Jesus talks about two groups of people in this parable, the servants who each received a mina and the subjects of the kingdom. With which group do you more closely identify? Who would fall in the other group?
10. What can we learn from this story about neglecting to obey the truth that we already know? (James 2:14-17)
11. What can you expect from the Lord if you use the resources he has given to you for his glory? (Galatians 6:7-9)

Parable #37 ~ Luke 19:12-27 ~ Ten Servants & Minas ~ Leader's Guide

1. Why did Jesus tell this parable of the ten servants and minas? (19:11)
[This is similar, but *not* the same parable, as the ten talents in Matthew 25:14-30.]

Apparently the disciples think that the Kingdom of God (or heaven) is just around the corner. Jesus, on the other hand, sees problems in this mindset. He tells this parable in order to correct, or at least to put into perspective this short-term thinking. Many people today believe that the return of Jesus Christ is imminent and have predicted specific dates for this. In truth it could be tomorrow or 1,000 years from now. We just don't know.

In the case of people of Jesus' day, the people were both right and wrong. The entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem did present Israel with their Messiah, but as part of God's plan, he would be rejected, nailed to a cross, buried, and rise again, all to save men from their sins. It would not be until some time later that the kingdom of God would be established. Indeed, we still await the coming of that kingdom.

What, then, is wrong with looking for an imminent return of our Lord? Is Jesus trying to teach the people that they are wrong? Yes, in fact, he is doing that in our text. But it is not merely holding to an imminent return that is wrong, it is holding this view wrongly, in misapplying it, that we may err greatly.

The closer Jesus and his disciples get to Jerusalem (Jericho was about 17 miles away), the greater the expectation. Jerusalem was not only the capital of Israel, and the throne of the king, it was the place where they expected the kingdom to be established upon the arrival of Jesus.

They thought of the kingdom as but a few miles and a few hours away. They believed the kingdom of God was imminent. That was the problem, it would seem. That is the very reason Luke gives us for Jesus telling the parable which follows. So, somehow, this parable is to correct, or at least to clarify, the situation.

2. Where did the man of noble birth say he was going? What did he want his servants to do with the money he gave them? How much money was it? (19:12-13)

Most Bible translations say the man "went to far country to receive for himself a kingdom," rather than "to have himself appointed king" (NIV) or "to be crowned king" (NLT). This sounds unusual, but the five King Herods, Chaleis, Abila, Damascus, and others did exactly that when they went to Rome to be appointed rulers over the Jews. The Jews at the same time sent delegations to Rome to petition that none of the Herods be appointed king, but that the people might be permitted to live according to their own laws under authority of Rome.

Although the modern translation can sound like the noble man having himself appointed king, the earlier translation is better in representing Jesus' as the man of

noble birth whose kingship was not claimed by him but was bestowed on him by God (because of his obedience and surrender).

Each of the 10 servants was given one mina, which is equivalent to about 100 days' wages or 100 denarii or drachmas.

3. Verse 19:14 seems a bit odd until we know the players in this parable. To Jesus' audience, who was the "man of noble birth" (later called "the master")? Who were the servants? Who were the subjects (citizens, people, countrymen)? Who might they represent today?

The surface meaning that the man of noble birth was like other rulers of the day who treated those close to them very well and other subjects in an odious, brutal, and arbitrary manner seems unlikely, especially if we see this man who became a king as representing Jesus. More likely Jesus means the man of noble birth to be thought of as a benevolent ruler but one who has views the people might regard as strange (love your neighbor as yourself) and difficult to obey. Note that the master rewards his servants in a very kind and liberal manner. For the diligence and faithfulness they had shown in relatively small things, he entrusted to them much greater responsibilities. Also, it seems that he let them keep all of the money they had earned, although some portion was certainly his.

The ten servants represent the faithful members of Christ's kingdom, sometimes called disciples or Christ followers today. The subjects represent those who followed Christ just to see and be amazed at his miracles, those who regarded him as simply another prophet, and the unbelieving Jews who will not acknowledge Jesus as Messiah and King. ("We have no king but Caesar they answered" – John 19:15) Can you see who these groups are today?

The third servant, the lazy, fearful one that was called "wicked" is no different from lazy, idle people today looking for a handout rather than working with what they have, even though it's not as much as others might have. Okay, someone raking leaves or painting a house may not make as much as a neurosurgeon or computer programmer, but the Lord expects us to be good stewards of whatever he chooses to give us.

4. In verse 19:21, was the third servant's description of his master accurate? Would you say the servant's response to his master was hypocritical?

The third servant said, "...you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow." Interestingly, the master did not refute the viewpoint of the servant, but repeated it as a question. This does not mean that the servant was correct. Perhaps that was his perception of the master, correct or not. More likely, he was jealous and just looking for an excuse for not working.

The servant's words are hypocritical. The servant told his master that he feared

him, because he was exacting, but if the servant had truly feared his master, he would have made an effort to produce a profit for him, which he did not do. If the servant was truly fearful, he would have also been obedient.

5. Perhaps more than some others, this parable *directly applies* to us today. Why?

A. Some people think all the signs have been fulfilled and the end times are imminent. Others believe that we don't know when the end will be, that it is God's plan that we can't fully know or understand.

B. Some people today are like those who didn't like the noble man become king – they don't like Jesus and his crazy ideas of loving others, walking in the ways of the Lord, being humble and compassionate, working diligently, etc.

C. Some Christians do a better job than others. Some are blessed with more talents, more education, better family upbringing, etc than others. But it's up to each person to do the best with what he has been given by God.

6. Is there another reason the third servant may have been a bad steward? What does this parable teach us about stewardship? What does it teach about the imminent return of the Lord?

It is also possible that the servant may have failed to utilize his master's money simply because he felt that the time was too short to engage in business. At the beginning of this parable, Luke told us that Jesus told the parable because the people were looking for the kingdom, the final days, to come immediately. One of the things which a short-term mindset does is to discourage long-term planning and investing. If you receive a check for \$10,000 but know that you will have to write a check for that same amount a day later, you generally will not buy a savings bond or shares of stock, or even put the money in your savings account. You will deposit the money in your checking account, simply because you know that it will only be a short time before it will be gone.

Did the servant have the same mindset? Did he convince himself that doing business was foolish and unnecessary, since the kingdom was imminent? Did he feel that long-term investing of his master's money was just plain foolish? It may very well be so. Long-term investing is foolishness to those who have but a short-term mindset.

Here is a very real tension in Christian living. We must hold two truths in tension as we seek to apply them. On the one hand, we must live in the light of an imminent return. Christ may come at any moment, and we should both be ready and watching for His return. But we must also live wisely, making good investments for His kingdom, knowing that His return may not be as soon as we think or hope. Many foolish things have been done by those who felt that the kingdom was imminent. On the other hand, many foolish things have been done

by those who feel its coming is distant. We must hold both a short-term and a long-term view of life and ministry, and we must seek to hold these in tension (or balance).

The delay of the kingdom's arrival had at least two reasons. In the first place, the king had to go away in order to gain the right to rule. Our Lord had to lay the foundation for His kingdom by laying down His life for the sins of the world, by making a provision for righteousness on the basis of His grace, so that men could be pronounced righteous and be allowed to enter into His kingdom. Jesus had to go up to heaven to be crowned king (Philippians 2:9-11), and to wait for the Father's appointed time for Him to return and to reign.

In the second place, the delay of the kingdom provided a time for the king's servants to be proven, to be tested, so that those who were faithful could be rewarded by greater responsibilities in the kingdom. The delay in the coming of the kingdom enables the Master to test His servants in the use of the money that has been entrusted to them. To the degree that the servants are faithful in the use of money—a small thing—they will be given greater authority, the authority to rule in the kingdom.

And finally, while the disciples (especially) thought of the kingdom of God in terms of political revolution and of personal position and power, this parable reminded them that the coming of the kingdom would begin with a time of judgment. A judgment in terms of those who rejected Christ as Savior, and also a judging of the followers of the Lord as to their faithfulness in serving Him, which will be the basis of their rewards in the kingdom.

The text has an interesting lesson regarding Jews and Gentiles. Remember that the gospel of Luke is purposed to be an explanation of the gospel from a Gentile perspective. Now who do you think the "citizens" in this parable represent? They represent the Israelites, The mass of Jews in Jesus' day who rejected Him as their Messiah. And who would constitute the servants? Servants were most often foreigners—Gentiles if you would. Jesus has once again turned the world upside-down, for it is the (Gentile) servants who become rulers, while the Jews, the "citizens" do not even enter the kingdom, but are slaughtered outside. The Gentile thrust of this gospel is once again evident. The way to honor and position is not competition and self-assertion (as the disciples seem to have been doing), but faithful service as servants. To seek to preserve one's independence, however, is to invite divine judgment.

Commentary and notes on several questions above thanks to Bob Deffinbaugh, www.bible.org.

7. What responsibilities and gifts has Jesus given to you (*to you personally*)?

8. Why is the master so hard on the man who did not use his mina to earn more? (A) he didn't share his master's interest in the kingdom, (B) he didn't trust his master's intentions, (C) his only concern was for himself, (D) he did nothing productive with the money, (E) he had a short-term mindset?

9. Jesus talks about two groups of people in this parable, the servants who each received a mina and the subjects of the kingdom. With which group do you more closely identify? Who would fall in the other group?

10. What can we learn from this story about neglecting to obey the truth that we already know? (James 2:14-17)

11. What can you expect from the Lord if you use the resources he has given to you for his glory? (Galatians 6:7-9)

Another View

In the interest of giving other views a voice, I should mention that some scholars and commentators such as Adolf Jülicher do not agree with the interpretation of this parable above. Notably, the Oxford Bible Commentary says “the story line is based on the events of 4 BC when Archelaus went to Rome to claim his father’s throne and encountered strong resistance. To picture Jesus in terms of such an incident would be extremely odd. That the nobleman-become-king stands for Jesus is made more unlikely by the third servant’s wholly unflattering description of him as rapacious and a fraudster, an assessment that the king does not deny.... The king is not a pleasant character.

“The parable is unlikely to be an allegory, but is rather, in the words of Evans (1990), ‘another of the risque parables...in which the central figure is a reprehensible character’ similar to the dishonest steward (Luke 16:1-9), corrupt judge (Luke 18:1-8) and the friend who comes at midnight (Luke 11:5-8).”

[You’ll find more in the Commentary itself and on line.]