

“For to everyone who has, *more* shall be given, and he will have an abundance.”

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS, PART 1

Matthew 25:14–30



Part 1 – “Amplifying our Ambition” – 2 Corinthians 5:9–10

Part 2 – “Building for the Reward” – 1 Corinthians 3:10–15

Part 3 – “The Timing and Nature of the Christian’s Reward, Pt 1”

Part 4 – “The Timing and Nature of the Christian’s Reward, Pt 2”

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Matthew 25:14–30

Jesus instructs His disciples to steward opportunities and abilities wisely even while waiting for His return.

He provides this instruction through the form of a parable, which develops through three scenes:

I. The Talents Distributed (vv. 14–15)

II. The Stewardship Exercised (vv. 16–18)

III. The Reward Bestowed (vv. 19–30)

Context

- “Parable” – “a narrative or saying of varying length, designed to illustrate a truth especially through comparison or simile” (BDAG).
 - Parables are not intended to provide precise theological propositions, equivalencies, or timelines.
 - Parables are *invented illustrations*, intended to *emphasize* one main idea; their equivalences are approximate in nature.
 - Parables are adapted from common experiences; some details are left unstated, to be assumed by the audience based on ordinary life.

- The Parable of the Talents must be read in connection with the Parable of the Ten Virgins in 25:1–13.
 - **25:1–13** – emphasizes *waiting for* the Lord's coming.
 - **25:13** – “Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.”
 - **25:14–30** – emphasizes *working before* the Lord's coming.
 - **25:14** – “For it is just like a man about to go on a journey”
- An incomplete view about *waiting* (25:1–13) could lead to laziness in the present; Jesus' emphasis on *working* (25:14–30) dismisses such a possibility.



“That of the Virgins tells nothing about working for the Bridegroom during the delay. That of the Talents teaches that the time of waiting must be a time service.”

— Alfred Plummer, *Exegetical Commentary on Matthew*, 347



“This parable, like the preceding, is filled with obvious symbols. The master is Jesus. His slaves represent the church, whose members have received various responsibilities. The master’s departure is the departure of the earthly Jesus. The long time of the master’s absence is the age of the church. His return is the *Parousia* of the Son of Man. The rewards given to the good slaves stand for heavenly rewards given to the faithful at the great assize [judgment], and their joy is that of the messianic banquet. The punishment of the evil slave represents those within the church who, through their sins of omission, condemn themselves to eschatological darkness.”

—Allison & Davis, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Matthew*, 3.404

I. The Talents Distributed (vv. 14–15)

“For *it is just like* a man *about* to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.”

- “For” – connects to v. 13; indicates Jesus is continuing His instruction about *the right kind of waiting* for His coming.
- “*It is just like*” – a reference back to v. 1, “the kingdom of heaven,” which in this context refers *not* to God’s sovereign rule over creation, but to the new entity called *the church*, in which there are true and false believers (“wheat” and “tares”).

“Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”’”

— “Parable of the Wheat and Tares,” Matthew 13:24–30

“For *it is* just like a man *about to go on a journey*, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.”

- “A man *about to go on a journey*” – parallel to “the bridegroom” in the previous parable (25:1, 5, 6, 10); here, an owner of an estate/business.
- “Slaves” – servants within his estate/business; the context indicates these are not day-laborers, but those with a level of administrative responsibility (accountants, managers, stewards).
- “Entrusted his possessions to them” – mindful of his departure, the owner delegates his wealth to the oversight of these slaves.

*“For it is just like a man *about* to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.”*



- **“Talent”** – a unit of measurement, varying in size, usually between 60–80 lbs.; used to measure precious metals (gold, silver, copper); value varied depending on the metal.
- **“Each according to his own ability”** – the owner distinguished based on his assessment of each slave; not all were of the same skill, and thus, not all were given the same opportunities: **“five,” “two,”** and **“one.”**

- **Romans 12:3, 6a** – “For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly.”
- **1 Corinthians 12:4–7** – “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”
- **1 Peter 4:10** – “As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

- **The estate owner, who has departed for a time:** *Jesus Christ.*
- **The slaves:** *professing believers—members of the visible church.*
- **The talents:** *unique skills (natural and spiritual), preparation, and opportunities.*