

13. The Talents & The Minas

"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, **who called his servants and entrusted his property to them.** To one he gave **five talents of money**, to another **two talents**, and to another **one talent**, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents **went at once and put his money to work** and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money (Gk. *silver*).

"After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

"The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' "His master replied, '**Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!**'

"Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money (Gk. *silver*) on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

" 'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. **For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.** And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' "

(Matthew 25:14-30 NIV)

The two parables of the Talents and the Minas carry a similar message, though they are two distinct parables that were evidently spoken at different times. Essentially, they are two versions of the same truth. In fact, it is probable that Jesus would've repeated most of his teachings and parables numerous times throughout his ministry, but we can only accept what the writers, guided by divine inspiration, have specifically recorded in the Gospel accounts in accordance with their original sources. And the instances that have been recorded have been written in accordance with the wisdom and counsel of God, for good reason.

The Parable of the Talents, as recorded in Matthew's gospel, is viewed as belonging to Christ's Olivet discourse. It was given in the context of Christ's return at the end of the age, following on from the parable of the Ten Virgins. On the other hand, the Parable of the Minas (which we shall consider a little later in Luke 19:11-

27) is placed about a week earlier while Jesus was in the region of Jericho, during his time at Zacchaeus' house (Luke 19:1-10). It's interesting that this parable was given on the occasion when a chief tax collector, a businessman, one who was viewed as a traitor to the Jews because he was working for Rome, showed the fruits of repentance in accordance with the Divine Law by giving his money to the poor and paying restitution to those whom he had cheated. Jesus described Zacchaeus as a true son of Abraham due to his active faith, a son who was receiving salvation that day.

The reason Jesus spoke the parable of the Minas at that time was "*because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once*" (verse 11). The fact of the matter was that the Kingdom of God was *not* going to appear *immediately* in the way that the Jews thought it would, hence Jesus needed to correct their misapprehensions. In some respects it had already begun because the kingdom was already in their midst (cf. Luke 17:20-22). The spiritual Kingdom of God *did* arrive in the first century AD, but it did not arrive in the physical way that the Jewish people were looking for - that is, as a military worldly kingdom that would crush the Romans.

Jesus, as the true King, the Man of noble birth, was going to travel to a distant country (heaven) to receive his kingship (at the right hand of God) and then he would return at a later time (the Second Advent) to settle accounts with his servants (at the coming Judgment). In the meantime, his servants (the apostles, prophets, and disciples of Christ) are entrusted with his money and possessions to 'trade and do business' as faithful workers to their Master. The Parable of the Talents teaches this same basic theme, but the emphasis is more on the rich Master going on a long journey, while his servants are entrusted with his money and possessions to watch over his estate and business in his stead while he is gone.

The emphasis of both parables, though, is that of Christ, the Master-Prince, going away for a long time, while he entrusts his servants with his estate and to watch over his 'business' affairs. Eventually, he would return to settle accounts with them all and to see what they had done with what he had given them. The faithful ones would be greatly rewarded with positions of authority and great blessing, while the unfaithful ones would be rejected, and they would not have any share in his inheritance. Instead, they would be cast outside into the darkness. This rejection and exclusion from the blessings of the kingdom, experiencing darkness rather than light, would involve weeping and gnashing of teeth.¹

Take note also that there is only one Judgment Day for all concerned. The religious hypocrites and false brethren (the wicked, unfaithful servants) are judged at the same time as the faithful ones. The New Testament makes it clear that this would occur on the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Second Advent, when all mankind up to that moment in time would be judged before the heavenly judgment seat of Christ (e.g. Matthew 12:41-42; 13:49-50; John 5:27-30; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 2:5-12, 16; 1 Peter 4:5; Revelation 20:11-15). It is this very Judgment that is the focus of the next parable in Matthew chapter 25 - the parable of the Sheep and the Goats, which we shall be considering in the next chapter.

Let us now take a closer look at these parables, highlighting the main points of both. Let us first consider The Talents.

The Master and His Servants

Jesus is, of course, the Master-Householder of the parable who was about to be going away for a long time. So already there was a hint that Christ would be absent *for a long time*, but for how long we are not told.² Before he left on his 'journey' to the heavens, after his death and resurrection, he entrusted his property (i.e. the things that belong to the spiritual kingdom of God) to his servants, the apostles, prophets and disciples of the early church - and by extension, also to the whole Church of God, particularly those who are called to be teachers, pastors and evangelists.

In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was considered to be God's servant (Leviticus 25:42) and Yahweh was his Master and Redeemer. In the New Testament, there are numerous references that reveal that all followers of Christ Jesus, whether Jew or Gentile, are bond-servants (literally *slaves*; Greek *doulos*) of God and of Christ, and Jesus is the Lord or Master who has redeemed us from the harsh enslavement of sin with the price of his own blood. Therefore, we are not our own, for we were bought at a price - and a high price at that - the Ransom price of Christ's precious blood, and we are now servants of God and of Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 1 Peter 1:18-19).

Now servants are workers, they work for their master, so Christ has given every one of his servants a job to do within his spiritual kingdom. This is symbolised in the parable as **talents of silver**. This money was given to the servants so that they could oversee the master's business affairs (most likely the business of olive oil or grapes). Both a talent (Greek *talanton*) and a mina (Hebrew *mina*) were differing weights used for gold and silver coinage, with a talent representing a much larger sum of money than a mina. In both parables, the 'money' in the literal Greek is *silver* (*argurion*), which is symbolic of redemption and salvation.

Gold is symbolic of that which is divinely pure and kingly, for there isn't any metal greater than gold. **Silver** is next, which has to do with redemption. Jesus was betrayed for *30 pieces of silver* to obtain our redemption. Then there is **copper** or **bronze**, which symbolises God's judgment upon sin. These things can be understood more clearly if one studies the layout of the Tabernacle (& Temple) in the OT, giving close attention to the metals used for its construction, and the use of the sacred furniture & utensils (see Exodus chapters 25-30).

In the Talents, the money is distributed according to each servant's ability, therefore they don't all receive the same amount, and they are not all expected to produce the same amount. This highlights the different gifts and callings of God for those who are in his kingdom, for not everyone is given the same gift or gifts. We are all called to various positions and circumstances in life, but whatever we do, we should do it as serving our Master, in faithful obedience, as the Spirit gives us strength and ability.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. **There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.** There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

(1 Corinthians 12:4-6 NIV)

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says:

"When he ascended on high,
he led captives in his train
and gave gifts to men."

... It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, **to prepare God's people for works of service**, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

(Ephesians 4:7-13 NIV; see also Romans 12:6-8, 11)

In the Talents, one servant is given 5 talents of silver, another 2, and the other 1. This equals **8** talents of silver in total (I'm really good at maths!); and this symbolises the gifts of the New Covenant in Christ (the number 8 symbolising new beginnings, new creation and resurrection). The first two servants each put their share of the master's money to work and they *doubled* what they were originally given, while the other does nothing with his one talent and consequently hides it by burying it in the ground.

This act reveals the attitude of the unfaithful servant towards his master. He cares nothing about his master's affairs, and is therefore unfaithful and lazy. His wickedness is later revealed through the excuses he gives to the master, which are full of lies, slander and hypocrisy.

The faithful servants have worked hard in service to their master by doubling their original amount of silver, and this in turn has caused the master's business (i.e. his kingdom) to grow. Just like in the parable of the Sower, the good, faithful servants of God will multiply their seed-crop 30, 60 or 100 times over. But how is this done in a practical sense?

The answer is by following the commands of Christ and being led by the Spirit of God, in grace, through faith, seeking to be faithful in all things. Only in this way can the true servant of Christ bear the good fruit of the kingdom of God, and shine the light of Christ's character into a dark world. The issue is not 'how many souls can one save', for God is the only one who can save. The real question is, 'Have we been obedient to our Master, seeking the true will of the Father, progressively bearing the fruit (i.e. character) of our Lord?' It is the spiritual fruit of a godly life lived in faithful obedience to the will of the Father that will serve the Christian well at the judgment.

"Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.**"

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, **but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.** *Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'*

Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

(Matthew 7:17-23 NIV)

I always find these words of Jesus quite shocking really, for he said that MANY Christians who call him 'Lord' and have used (or abused) the gifts of the Spirit, sharing in the ministry of the kingdom, shall not receive the kingdom inheritance due to their lawlessness and wickedness of bearing the wrong fruit! No wonder Paul encouraged believers to '*work out your salvation with fear and trembling*' (cf. Philippians 2:12-13). There is much teaching in the NT that talks about obedience and faithfulness — even though this kind of teaching is not usually received with much enthusiasm in churches today; nevertheless, it is not optional for those who claim to follow Jesus (cf. John 12:26).

These words of Jesus had particular relevance to those in the first century who had experienced the special era of the miraculous powers and gifts of the Spirit, which essentially ceased after 70 AD. Nothing like it has been known ever since, for most of what has passed as being miraculous since then has been nothing like the powers and signs recorded in the Bible.

Ultimately, only those who listen to the Master's words and put them into practice (which includes acts of repentance where there has been failure and sin) will survive the storms of judgment.

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; **yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.** But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

(Matthew 7:24-27 NIV)

God does not show favouritism or partiality, so for those servants who blatantly go against his Will and Word, all will be dealt with sooner or later. We cannot bury our talent of silver in the ground and think that our Master will not notice. Ultimately, the Day of Judgment will bring it to light, and we will all be rewarded accordingly, when we shall either be repaid with wages in accordance with our acts (or works of service) as faithful, productive servants — or we could otherwise forfeit our rewards in the flames of God's judgment (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

The Rewards or Wages

After a long time, the Master in the parable returns and settles accounts with his servants. To those who had doubled his silver through their faithful works of service, he said, "*Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful over a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!*"

This is evidently talking of Christ's return in the Day of the Lord, and the subsequent Judgment that would follow. As already mentioned, take note that all the servants in these parables are judged at the same time, whether they are faithful or unfaithful servants. That is to say, this is alluding to the overall teaching of the NT that the resurrection and judgment of both the righteous and the unrighteous occurs at the same time. This is the event that is being portrayed in our next parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25.

In the judgment, all of us will be repaid in accordance with our acts and works of service. All the faithful servants will be given wages or rewards, while the unfaithful ones will forfeit their reward. All the rest will not even enter the Master's kingdom. Here are some texts that clearly teach this scenario.

"But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

(Matthew 12:36-37 NIV)

You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? **For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.** It is written:

" 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord,
'every knee will bow before me;
every tongue will acknowledge God.' "

So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

(Romans 14:10-12 NIV)

See also 2 Corinthians 5:10; Colossians 3:25 & 1 Corinthians 3:8, 12-15.

Jesus often taught the principle that he who is faithful in little will be faithful with much, therefore we are encouraged to be faithful even in the little seemingly unimportant things, having integrity of heart in all things and at all times - for God sees all, whether anyone else does or not. Let us take the following words of Jesus with all seriousness.

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? **And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?**

"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, **but God knows your hearts.** *What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight.*"

(Luke 16:10-15 NIV)

It's all about having the right focus in life, and having the right spiritual priorities, for there is nothing wrong with money and possessions in and of themselves, but if these things become our main focus, then the light of our eyes becomes bad, filling us with spiritual darkness. The modern 'evangelical' church should take heed of these things in these days as there is a huge focus on money and possessions, and even mega-churches and mega-ministries, and the church at large is in danger of losing sight of the true message of Jesus and his apostles (though it could be argued that the established churches, both Catholic and Protestant, lost sight of the true message of the NT numerous centuries ago).

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

"The eye is the lamp of the body. **If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light.** But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

(Matthew 6:19-23 NIV)

Like Paul, it is good to learn the secret of being content in all circumstances; something that is easy to say but extremely challenging when called to put it into practice. Having this kind of attitude is only truly attainable through total reliance on God and the power that he gives, for with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26).

I am not saying this because I am in need, **for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.** I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. **I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation**, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. **I can do everything through him who gives me strength.**

(Philippians 4:11-13 NIV)

Co-Reigning with Christ

The parable of the Talents indicates that the rewards for the servants will involve *reigning over others* as an inclusive part of sharing in the blessings of Christ's inheritance (*'I will put you in charge of many things'*). And the words of Jesus in Luke 16, quoted above, also indicated that the true sons of God would be given *true riches* in the messianic age - and this would involve co-reigning with Christ as princes of the universe! The meek followers of Jesus would truly inherit the earth, along with immortality and incorruption! This all belongs to the promise of Eternal Life, the life of the new messianic age.

In the parable of the Minas, which we shall look at shortly, this rulership is made even clearer, where Jesus mentioned *cities* to rule over. This promise of reigning

with Christ as sons of the kingdom is mentioned throughout the NT. Here are some notable examples.

Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? **Do you not know that we will judge angels?** How much more the things of this life!

(1 Corinthians 6:2-3 NIV; see also Romans 5:17, 21)

To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, **I will give authority over the nations**—that one 'will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery'—**just as I have received authority from my Father...**

To the one who is victorious, **I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.**

(Revelation 2:26-27; 3:21 NIV; see also Romans 8:17-19)

These texts clearly teach the view that those who are true followers of Jesus, those who, through faithful obedience, become spiritually victorious, would share in Christ's dominion over the nations of the earth, even participating in judging angels and the world of men. This was particularly relevant to those in the first century who were awaiting the imminent arrival of Christ's kingdom in power in the Day of the Lord; nevertheless, these promises apply to all faithful servants of the Master from that day forward.

Let us now move on and consider the parable of the Minas, which confirms much of that which has been mentioned above. In the Authorised Version this is known as the parable of the Pounds.

The Minas

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*. He said: "**A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return**. So he called **ten** of his servants and gave them **ten minas**. 'Put this money to work,' he said, '**until I come back**.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. 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.'

"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? Why then didn't you put my money (Gk. *silver*) on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?'

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

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

"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.** 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.'

(Luke 19:11-27 NIV)

Jesus is the Prince, the Nobleman, who went to the distant country of heaven to be proclaimed King. The leaders of Israel (the original subjects of the kingdom) objected to him being made king, and they sent a delegation after him by persecuting and murdering his apostles and servants. He nevertheless was made Lord and Messiah, and the day would arrive when he would return to settle accounts with his servants whom he had left in charge of his estate on earth (the spiritual kingdom of God, the Christian Assembly).

The difference between this parable and The Talents is that there were **10 servants** who were given **1 silver mina each**, and every servant was given the same amount. This speaks of the gracious gift of salvation and blessing that all followers of Christ can share in; but it is what we *do* with this gracious gift of life that will count in the end.

As in the parable of the Ten Virgins, the number 10 here symbolises the perfection or completeness of Divine order in relation to the end of the age, and the termination, and completion, of the old covenant order. That is to say, the 10 servants were representatives of the spiritual kingdom of heaven on the earth in that first century generation, who were experiencing '*the fulfilment* (literally "*ends*") *of the ages*', along with '*the fullness of the times*' (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11; Ephesians 1:10).

The other big difference in this parable is the rewards of the faithful servants. We are only told about the judgment of *three* of the ten servants, but they are a representative portion of the whole group, to reveal the principle of how *all* would be judged at Christ's Return. The first one, who had multiplied his mina by ten, was given *10 cities to rule over, in accordance with his acts*. The second, who had multiplied his mina by five, was given *5 cities to rule over, in accordance with his acts*.

This was indicating that the spiritually reborn sons of God, who were Overcomers, would be ruling over cities in the impending new age, as representatives of the kingdom of God; a heavenly government of a whole new order, ruled by Christ himself. As for the unfaithful servants, their only reward would be the judgment of the Second Death, the ultimate Gehenna of Fire, that is, the exclusion of outer darkness and eternal destruction. Yet only the resurrected children of God would experience the blessings of eternal life; the inheritance of an immortal, incorruptible spiritual body in a new creation, along with everything else that comes from being a son of the living God through Christ Jesus, and the glory that is associated with such a dignified position.

The Unfaithful Servant

Let us wrap this up on a more sober note by considering why the third and final servant was rejected. The parable of the Minas spells this out a little more clearly than the Talents.

In both parables, the unfaithful servant uses the same excuse, and the Master's verdict is the same. He is called a lazy, wicked servant, one who, in the final analysis, is worthless or useless to the Master. As a consequence of his sin, he is thrown outside into the darkness, no longer being able to lay claim to being a servant of his Master. He does not inherit the kingdom of the newly crowned King.

Even the silver (symbolising salvation and spiritual gifts) that was originally given to him is taken away from him, and instead is given to the one who has gained the most. For those faithful servants who have multiplied their grace-gifts, they will be given more, and will have an abundance of blessings, sharing in the Master's happiness. Whereas the unfaithful servant will be stripped of what he was originally graciously given, and excluded from the kingdom.

And here are the reasons why he was rejected and judged in a seemingly harsh manner.

1. He was lazy and worthless because he cared nothing for his master. He didn't do anything truly worthwhile with his portion of silver, but he just went and hid it away. He didn't work to increase his master's money, like the others, and do as he was told, and he was therefore careless and lazy and disobedient.
2. He was wicked because he made up lies and slander about his master, and in a cowardly manner, used this as an excuse for his own failure. He made out that his master was extremely harsh, as well as being a thieving extortionist - reaping where he had not sown, and taking out what he had not put in himself! So he made out that he was afraid of his master and decided to just keep his money safe instead, rather than risk making a mistake! Ironically, this turned out to be his final mistake (or sin).

The master judged the unfaithful servant by his own words, indicating that if he had really believed that his master was so severe, then why didn't he at least put the money on deposit in the bank so that it would earn interest - that is, he could earn some money by interest without having to do a thing, as this was the very thing that he was accusing his master of doing (taking out where he had not put in)!

It is worth pointing out here that, in the Law of Moses, usury or charging interest amongst brother Israelites was not viewed too favourably at all, in fact, it was forbidden (Deuteronomy 23:19-20). There are those who use this parable to endorse usury, but that is not the point of it at all. The Master (Jesus) was judging the servant *by his own wicked words*. The parable is not encouraging usury for that would have gone against the principle of the Divine Law.

There are a number of parallels in both The Talents and The Minas that are very similar to that of the parable of the Wise and Foolish Servants, which we considered in the last chapter; the ultimate one being that the fate of the unfaithful, disobedient and wicked servant would be the same as that of an unbeliever.³

This casts doubt on the popular doctrine of "once saved, always saved" for there is plenty of clear evidence within the teachings of Jesus and the apostles that not everyone claiming to be a disciple-servant of Christ will be automatically guaranteed an entrance into the kingdom of God — not unless one meets certain conditions that reveal that a person is truly a follower of Christ; one who has accepted the terms of the New Covenant and the Master-God who established it (cf. Matthew 7:21-23; 1 John 3:4-10; Romans 11:22).

The parable of the Minas concludes with the following somewhat shocking words of the Nobleman turned King – who represents Christ himself.

"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."

Although these words may appear rather brutal by our modern soft westernised standards, they are essentially describing the supreme right of the King to exercise his authority through capital punishment. These words have to be understood in the light of Israel's rejection of her Messiah, and the consequences of all their murderous acts of rebellion against Yahweh their God. This was in complete accordance with the terms of the Old Covenant (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28). Here is the fearful pronouncement of judgment from the lips of Jesus himself upon that first century generation of Israel.

"You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell (Greek *Gehenna*)? Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. **Some of them you will kill and crucify**; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. **And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth**, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, **whom you murdered** between the temple and the altar. **I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation.**

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, **you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you**, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. **Look, your house is left to you desolate.**"

(Matthew 23:33-38 NIV)

The enemies of Jesus were ultimately enemies of Yahweh himself, the God of Israel. They were the wicked unbelieving ones who thought they were doing God a

favour by murdering Christ and his followers. It is in the light of this damning indictment of Jesus upon Israel's leaders that these closing words of the parable of the Minas are to be understood. A king or governor of a nation in those days had every right to put to death all criminals in accordance with the law – and the teaching of Jesus and the NT apostles doesn't reject this principle of Divine rulership and authority (see, for example, Romans 13:1-6 & 1 Peter 2:13-17).

For further clarification of these things, I refer the reader back to the chapter on *The Parable of The Vineyard Farmers* in this book (also known as the Parable of the Tenants).

These words of Christ in the parable were tragically fulfilled in the Jewish War of 66-70 AD, when the vengeance of God came upon the rebellious Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem. The rightful King dealt severely with his rebellious subjects as he took his 'rod of iron' and smashed them to pieces like pottery. His forgiveness and mercy had already been offered to them all, but, as a nation, they had rejected their King and his messengers, so inevitably, Divine justice and vengeance had to take its course for all the wickedness and murder they had done in the Name of God.

All of this belonged to the Day of the Lord Jesus, the Day of His Return in power and glory; a day accompanied by fiery wrath; a Day that was likened to Noah's Flood, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.⁴ These events led to the Judgment Day, when those who were 'servants of the King' had made themselves ready for his Return, working wholeheartedly for their Master till the end.

And for all those who serve him faithfully, we shall hear the comforting words *'Well done, good and faithful servant. Come and share your Master's happiness and take your place in my kingdom.'* May this be our goal and desire as followers of Christ Jesus – to fully serve the one who came to serve, who gave his life as a ransom for many.

Endnotes

¹ As I have already considered this subject of the weeping and gnashing of teeth, I refer the reader back to the appropriate section in the Parable of the Wheat and the Darnel in Chapter 2.

² The phrase "a long time" can refer to a period of hours, days, weeks, months, or years, because it is relative to a particular context. This is how it is used throughout the NT. For instance, if I was to say that I was popping out for ten minutes but then took two hours, my absence could be viewed as "a long time". On the other hand, if I was to leave home on a trip that would take many weeks or months, it could also be said that my absence would be for "a long time".

In this parable, the "long time" that the master is away is not to be understood as hundreds or thousands of years, which is how the majority of mainstream Christianity since the second century has (incorrectly) understood this phrase in relation to the Second Advent of Christ. In the parable, the master (Jesus) returns within the lifetime of his servants whom

he placed in charge of his estate. Again, it needs to be emphasised that this has specific reference to the end of the age within that first century generation.

³ I refer the reader back to the section on Graded Punishment in Chapter 12 for further details.

⁴ It is my view that these Old Testament catastrophic judgments were localised events that took place in the area where God's ancient covenant people were living at that time, in the ancient Near East. This also makes Jesus' application of these ancient judgments much more relevant to the first century judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem.

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