

I. Review

- A. Context – The exhortations and parables found in Matt. 24-25 must be interpreted through the lens or context of the times that Jesus describes in Matt. 24:3-31. This time is known and referenced as the Day of the Lord in the rest of scripture. The parables and exhortations we will look at in this study are given to those who are desiring to be faithful and overcome in those days.
- B. Lover of our Soul – We must connect this study to the burning heart of love Jesus has for His disciples. He gave us these chapters and 170 others concerning this time because He loves us and wants us with Him where He is. Yes, this is pastoral council and encouragement but it is given with a fierce burning heart of love and affection for His flock to prepare them for those days.
- C. How to watch – The portion of this discourse we are going to look at in this study directly follows two very strong exhortations to “watch” in order that we are not swept away in His righteous judgment against sin and evil on that day. He is now going to directly follow up with what it looks like to prepare and watch so those dark days do not overtake us. Jesus gives prophetic truth telling us that many will be taken (fall away and be destroyed) by the persecution, tribulation, lawlessness, deception, and offence of the Day of the Lord. Immediately following, He gives an exhortation to be wise and faithful so that you stand firm and overcome in that day.

“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom the Master has made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?” (Matt. 24:45)

- 1. Wisdom – Jesus tells us that those who are cultivating the oil of intimacy with Jesus are those growing in the knowledge and understanding of God. This is available to all but it does cost us time and intentionality to sit before Him and commune with Him in the word. (Matt. 25:1-13)
- 2. Faithfulness – After Jesus talks about those who will develop a lifestyle of gaining the knowledge of God, then He talks about how they must be faithful with that knowledge to gain more of it and to see it manifest itself in the transformation of themselves and their actions into greater levels of Christ-likeness as a witness of the Kingdom.

II. The Parable of the Faithful Servant (Matt. 25:14-30)

- A. Many of us are very familiar with this parable but I find that it is rare to find this parable taught or considered to be a commentary regarding what separates those who will stand in the last days with those who will fall away (context). We must

understand, Jesus did not take a break from exhorting His disciples in how to prepare their hearts for the difficulties of the Day of the Lord. (Parallel passage found in Lk. 19:11-27)

1. One of the lenses we must view this passage through is the lens of how to live in a preparatory way that will keep us from falling away in the Day of the Lord.
- B. Calling into Question the Common Interpretation – It is very common to interpret the “talent” given by the master as spiritual or natural gifts, physical or spiritual resources, realms of influence, or God-given callings. There are multiple problems with this very common understanding.
1. Salvation Issue – At the end of the parable, people who are not faithful with their “talent” get cast into the lake of fire. Nowhere in scripture does the idea hold up that if you don’t use your spiritual gift or God-given resources you’re in danger of falling away.
 2. Trade or Earn – It is also a very unbiblical idea that gifts or resources given to us by God for ministry can be gained through our intentional effort or used to gain more gifts. The truth is absolutely opposite of this.
 3. Give it to another – The gifts and callings of God are unique and tailor-made by God for the use of the unique individual that he created. Others can benefit from your gift but you cannot give it to them, nor can God give your gift to another person, just like He cannot give your uniqueness to another person.
 4. To those who have, more will be given – This identical phrase is used by Jesus in a few other places in the gospels to describe one’s understanding of God but it is never used to speak of gifts, resources, platforms, or callings.
 5. Personal Experience and Observation - My experience has taught me that walking in my gift or calling is not enough to keep my heart vibrant before the Lord. In fact, if I don’t take the time to commune with Jesus, I will burnout and grow bitter. In some cases, I will get disillusioned and offended at God, if all I do is give my time and strength to walking in my calling or gift by giving myself to ministry. Because of this I have difficulty with the idea that being faithful to walk in your gifting, calling, or realm of influence will keep you from falling away in the Day of the Lord.

- C. Conclusive Exegetical Interpretation – In my opinion, there is only one interpretation of what the “talent” represents that fits the symbolism of this parable and the entire discourse. I believe that the talent represents the “intimate knowledge of God”. This theme is the only one that fits not only in the parable itself but also in the Olivet discourse (Matt. 24-25) as a whole.
1. Salvation Issue – Your belief and foundation of the truth of who God is and what He is like is a salvific issue. You are saved by your faith in who Jesus is and what He has done for you. As we learned in the previous parable, the intimate knowledge of God fuels our love for Him. In the entire theme of this discourse, the issue of cultivating and holding onto the truth of who Jesus is and what He is doing is what keeps us from offence, deception, lawlessness, and falling away. (Heb. 6:4-8; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:17)
 2. Trade or Earn – The knowledge of God is rarely thrust upon us; we are told that we must seek it, and seek it earnestly, and to carry ourselves in such a way as to receive it. The knowledge of God we have compels us to seek more knowledge. (Phil. 1:9-11; Col 1:9-12)
 3. Give to another – The knowledge of God can be given to others and should be given to others. Many times the Lord would try to reveal himself to individuals but they would refuse Him. When this happened, He would reveal himself to another. (Is. 55:4; Lk. 10:22; 1 Jn 1:3)
 4. To those who have, more will be given – This phrase is used by Jesus explicitly to speak of receiving and understanding the knowledge of God. In my opinion, this is probably the clearest point of why we should understand the “talent” of this parable to mean the knowledge of God and not a spiritual or natural gift, platform, ministry sphere, or any such thing. (Matt. 13:10-23; Mark 4:10-32; Lk. 8:4-18; Jn 15:2)
 5. Burnout, Bitterness, and Disillusionment – My experience has taught me that if I give myself to ministry without being faithful to growing in intimacy with God through relational knowledge that I end up just going through the motions with a disconnected heart. It is the knowledge of God that keeps me steady and causes my heart to burn with hunger and love; my ministry and gifts naturally flow out of that fire. (Jn 3:29; 1 Cor. 13:1-3; Rev. 2:1-5)

III. Verse by Verse

- A. For the Kingdom of Heaven – Jesus does not go on to another parable but rather He explains in greater detail the previous one. He uses the word “for” or “therefore”. In Matt. 13, Jesus gives six parables in succession concerning the “Kingdom of Heaven” and each time He starts a new one, it clearly says “He spoke another parable to them” or “again I tell you a parable”. This is not the case here. He is clearly reiterating the earlier parable in a different way and bringing greater clarity to it rather than talking about something new.
- B. Gave Talents – This parable hinges on what these “talents” are, so we must really take some time here to properly exegete this idea. In order to do this, we must take a careful examination of this parable in its entirety and how it relates to this discourse as a whole. In the first century a talent was a unit of exchange for precious metal. One talent was around 75 pounds and was worth 16 to 20 year’s worth of wages for a Roman foot soldier. For many Jews of that day, one talent would be the equivalent of a lifetime of earnings. Jesus wants us to know that these talents represent almost unimaginable worth. (Job 28:1-28; Prov. 2:2-5, 3:13-15; Ps. 19:7-10; Song. 8:7; Jer. 9:23-24; Matt. 13:44-46; 1 Cor. 2:3; 1 Pet. 1:7; Rev. 3:14-22)
- C. Each to his own Ability – The original word translated “ability” speaks of the capacity to handle or strength. The wealth that the master gives them is given according to what they can handle or have the strength to receive. Interestingly, in Luke’s gospel there are ten servants who all get the exact same amount. (Matt. 11:14; Mark 4:33; John 16:12-15; 1 Cor. 3:1-2; Heb. 5:11-14)
- D. Traded and Made More – The expectation of the master is that these servants would use what He gave them to obtain more of what He gave them. (Job. 17:9; Pro. 4:18; Matt. 7:7, 13:31-36, 15:15; 2 Cor. 8:7; Phil 1:9; 1 Thess. 3:12, 4:1; 2 Thess. 1:3)
- E. Hid the Lord's Money – This servant didn’t just ignore the talent that the master gave him; rather, He took the time to dig a hole and bury it. Rather than giving time to trade with it He took the time to bury it. It takes just as much strength to deny what the Lord gives us as it does to do something with it. (Prov. 1:24-32; Jer. 9:6; Is. 6:10; Hos. 4:6; Rom 1:18-32; 2 Thess. 2:9-12)
- F. Well Done, Faithful Servant – This is the key phrase we have been looking for just as we looked for what differentiated the wise from the foolish in the previous parable. Here, the faithful is differentiated from the wicked. In context to the discourse as a whole, the watching servant is faithful to intentionally use the

talent, trade with others, and gain more talents. The faithful servant is intentionally using the knowledge of God he has to press into more understanding and gain more intimacy and then live a lifestyle of this wisdom. (Matt. 25:34; Rom. 2:29; 1 Cor. 4:1-5; 2 Cor. 5:9, 10:18; 1 Pet. 1:6-9; Rev. 2:10, 17:14)

- G. Ruled Over a Few Things, Rule Over Many Things – The faithfulness of this servant proves that he can be trusted to be faithful with more or greater amounts of what belongs to his master. Jesus tells us that he was faithful with a “few” things and will now be given “many” things. This speaks of being trusted with more than the knowledge of God, but other things that belong to Him. In the parallel passage in Luke’s gospel, the servants were entrusted with money and then rewarded by being entrusted to govern over cities. The number of cities they were given to rule over was the same as the number of what they earned or gained in trading their talents. (Matt. 19:28-29; Lk. 22:28-30; 2 Tim. 2:12 Rev. 1:6, 2:10, 26-28, 3:21, 27, 5:10, 20:4-6)
- H. Enter into the Joy – The reward they are given is that they are granted to share in the joy of ruling with their master. The increased measure of responsibility brings with it an increased measure of joy. This joy and responsibility is shared with the master in friendship and partnership. (John 12:26, 14:3, 17:24; Heb. 12:2; 1 Pet. 1:7-8; Rev. 7:17)
- I. I was afraid of you - Now we move on to what wickedness looks like as opposed to faithfulness. It starts with not being rooted and grounded in the truth of the master's emotions towards him. He was afraid of his master rather than knowing he was loved and trusted by the master. This fear kept him from trading the talent. (Rom. 8:15; Lk. 15:11-24; 2 Tim. 1:6-7; Rev. 21:8)
- J. You are a Hard Man – The servant tells us why he refused to use his talent to gain more; it was because he believed there would be nothing in it for him (you reap where you did not sow), in other words, he did not view the trading of the talent to be worth his time and effort for the return he would get. The faithful servants believed they would receive great benefit in trading, whereas the wicked servant believed he would not receive enough benefit to make it worth the time or effort. This is the mindset that caused him to live a lifestyle of unfaithfulness. (Rom. 8:5-8; 1 Cor. 1:26-31, 2:14)
- K. I Hid Your Talent in the Ground – He took the knowledge of God and hid it from himself and others. This very language is used in scripture to talk about how people go down the path of unrighteousness and end up coming under the righteous judgment of God upon the wicked. This fits perfectly within the context of this parable. (Pro. 1:24-32; Jer. 9:6; Is. 6:10; Hos. 4:6; Rom 1:18-32; 2 Thess. 2:9-12)

- L. Wicked and Lazy – The master calls this the mindset that the servant had, along with the actions that accompanied it, as wicked and lazy. This mindset is that we should be afraid of the master and to not see the pursuit of trading the talent as valuable or worth your time, is in accordance with darkness and wickedness. It produces a heart-posture of laziness. The original word that is used means you don't desire to do something because you see it as burdensome, troublesome, or irksome. (Pro. 26:13-16; 2 Tim. 4:1-8)

- M. Deposited the Money with Bankers – Jesus tells this servant he should at the very least given his talent to someone who would do something with it, and that in doing so, would earn the servant some form of gain. The knowledge of God is meant to be shared and built upon. If this servant was not going to build upon it himself, at the very least he should have let others build upon it. (Is. 40:3; John 1:7-8; 5:35; Heb. 10:24-25)

- N. Take the Talent and Give it to the One with Ten – The knowledge of God that was revealed to this wicked servant will now be revealed to the one who has been shown faithful to receive it and use it rightly. (Matt. 8:11; 21:33-44, 22:1-14; Acts 13:46, 18:6)

- O. For Everyone who Has, More will Be Given. For him who Does Not Have, Even what he Has will be Taken – This phrase is only used to speak of the intimate knowledge of God. God reveals Himself to everyone, but more revelation comes to those who respond and are faithful to what they have been given. If they are not faithful with it, even what they once had will be taken from them through their wickedness and laziness. We can easily see the cross-reference to the earlier parable to where the darkness causes the foolish virgins lamps to go out. (Matt. 13:10-23; Mark 4:10-32; Lk. 8:4-18; John 15:2)

- P. Cast him into Outer Darkness, Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth – The end result of being unfaithful with the knowledge of God is to be unfaithful with the truth of who He is. We are saved by grace through *faith* or the belief in who God is and what He is like. When this faith is lost, we are no longer saved by grace through our faith. So it's not a matter of God walking away from us or us losing our salvation, but rather we walk away from Him and the salvation that is found in and through Him - we have given up. (Zeph. 1:4-6; Matt. 24:12; Lk. 8:13; John 6:66; 2 Pet. 20-22; Rev. 2:4-5)

