

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning

Week 10 (February 28-March 5, 2016)

“So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him” (Matthew 24:44). In this week’s studies, we will continue to see what Jesus says about being ready for His return.

Sunday, February 28 (read Matthew 25:14-18)

“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.” (Matthew 25:15)

God is **fair** to all His children, but that doesn’t mean that He treats them all **equally**. He gives to each of us “according to (our) ability” (v. 15). Likewise, parents are well aware that each child is different; therefore, they have to give to each of them according to their individual needs. In today’s text, the purpose of this parable is, like the previous one (v. 1-13), to remind us to be ready for our Master’s return. The Lord does not demand equal productivity, but He does require each of us to use, for His glory, what He has entrusted to us. Two of the recipients go out immediately and use their monetary gift, doubling the original amount (v. 16-17a). The one who receives the least hides the money in the ground, revealing why the master could not entrust him with more (v. 17b). What has Jesus given to you? Are you using His original investment (salvation, gift package, etc.) to bear fruit for His glory?

Monday, February 29 (read Matthew 25:19-23)

“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.” (Matthew 25:19)

Someday, each of us will stand before the Lord to receive our rewards (see 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Everything that has been done **by His grace** and **for His glory** will be classified as “gold, silver and costly stones,” while everything that has been done by **our own** wisdom and strength for **our own** glory will be labeled “wood, hay and straw” (1 Cor. 3:12). In today’s text, you will note that the master makes no distinction between the man who gains five talents and the one who gains two. Each of them doubles his original amount. Both of them hear the wonderful words, “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” (v. 21, 23)! What are you doing with the material goods entrusted to you? More importantly, what are you doing with your God-given gift package? God **will** demand an accounting.

Tuesday, March 1 (read Matthew 25: 24-30)

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.” (Matthew 25:24)

Isn’t it sad that God gets the blame for our failures, but He does not get the praise for our accomplishments? For example, “The woman YOU put here with me” (Genesis 3:12a, emphasis mine), or “I was born that way” or the printed verse above. In this parable, the recipient of the one talent knows that, if he multiplies the original amount like the other two men do, the increase will belong to the master (v. 24), so he hides it in the ground so that only the principal will be returned. Likewise, God’s children are given differing amounts of material goods as well as differing gifts of the Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12). We are commanded to use everything He has entrusted to us for His glory alone. The man with one talent is not able to do it that way, because he reasons that the master is not fair (v. 25). Perhaps you have had some of the same feelings. Maybe God has given others more wealth, better health, and more talents. Are you willing to use what He has entrusted to you for His glory alone? Are you willing to bloom where you have been planted? We will conclude this passage in tomorrow’s devotion.

Wednesday, March 2 (reread Matthew 25:24-30)

"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." (Matthew 25:28-29)

The master in the parable does not dispute the fact that he, alone, is entitled to the increase (v. 26), so he chastises the wicked, lazy servant by saying, "You should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest" (v. 27). Perhaps you have already discovered the truth of the old phrase, "Use it or lose it." This is true with the physical strength of our bodies as well as our gifts on loan from God. Jesus has left His Church on earth to reproduce (see Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8). We are never told to maintain the status quo, neither in the numerical growth of our church nor in our own spiritual growth. All around our country, non-productive churches are closing the doors and their members are finding new ministries in churches that are preaching God's Word and winning new converts. Reread v. 28-30 and you will discover the answer to a frequent question, "How large do you want your church to get?"

Thursday, March 3 (read Matthew 25:31-33)

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory." (Matthew 25:31)

Today's text prophesies the return of Jesus Christ to earth to set up His earthly kingdom, one that will last 1000 years (see Revelation 19 and 20). Along with the Lord and His angels, you and I will return with Him, having been in heaven for seven years following the rapture of the Church (Revelation 19:11-16). At that time, the remaining citizens on earth will be separated, the sheep (believers) from the goats (non-believers). Don't confuse this event with the rapture! When the rapture takes place, true believers will be called into heaven, probably with the words, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this" (Revelation 4:1b). Non-believers will be left on earth to endure the tribulation. During this horrible seven years, 144,000 Jewish evangelists will win many new converts (Revelation 7). Those believers who survive (sheep) the tribulation will enter into the earthly kingdom, but those who refuse to believe (goats) will be judged. We will continue this discussion in tomorrow's devotion.

Friday, March 4 (read Matthew 25:34-40)

The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40)

The Lord will come back to earth following the seven years of tribulation. Before He comes, the government of the anti-christ will persecute those who have become believers during these horrible times. The new converts will not be able to purchase food or other supplies, because they will refuse to take the mark of the beast (666, Revelation 13:16-18). That is why it will be so important for fellow Christians to assist those who are bold enough to reject the mark of the one-world global government. Many, if not most, of these new believers will be Jews. Take note of the fact that the people who are rewarded for their deeds do not even know they are serving **Jesus** (v. 37-39). They are doing only what their new faith leads them to do! The King teaches them that they are actually serving Him as they serve His children, even those who are unimportant in the eyes of men (v. 40).

Saturday, March 5 (read Matthew 25:41-46)

"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." (Matthew 25:46)

Today's text teaches that those who refuse to serve the new converts during the tribulation will be rejected for the kingdom of heaven. Most, if not all of these people, will accept the mark of the beast, thereby identifying with the global government. Revelation 14:9-12 gives the final fate of all who choose to take the mark. It is possible that some may refuse the mark, and yet, never surrender their lives to Jesus. These false converts will also be judged according to the printed verse above. They will be similar to today's false converts who join the church and are baptized, but who never truly come to know Jesus. They will never bear fruit or serve others in need. This entire parable is spoken so that God's people will willingly serve those fellow believers who are less fortunate. Like James, the earthly brother of Jesus, says, "Faith without deeds (works) is useless" (James 2:20b).