

Two Patterns of Judgment

There are two fundamental patterns of judgment for believers that Jesus related in two different parables—one based on **ability**, the other on **percentage**.

The first is the Parable of the Minas found in **Luke 19**. (A mina is a measurement of money.)

Luke 19:11–15 *“Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. Therefore, He said: “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. [It was going to be a long while before he got back.] So, he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas [one each] and said to them, ‘Do business till I come.’ [In other words, make a profit.] But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us.’ And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.”*

God is going to require an accounting of service from each one of us, and our faithfulness in service in this life will determine the position we occupy in eternity—that is, the responsibility we will be able to carry in the kingdom of God.

verses 16–19 *“Then came the first, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have over ten cities.’ And the second came, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned five minas.’ Likewise, he said to him, ‘You also be over five cities.’”*

Notice the master didn’t just say, “Well done, good servant.” This would have been a lower level of commendation.

verses 20–25 *“Then another [the third] came, saying, ‘Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit and reap what you did not sow.’ And he said to him, ‘Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant.*

You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?’ And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.’ (But they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas.’)”

The bystanders really did not think it was right that the one who already had ten should get one more. But Jesus goes on:

verse 26 *“For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.”*

Pay careful attention to this because most of us do not think the way Jesus thinks. He gave to the one who had ten minas because that servant had proven he could be ***faithful*** with whatever was entrusted to him. The first servant made the most and was rewarded with the most. This is a principle of multiplying what we have been given.

Use It or Lose It

At one time, God gave a man a supernatural gift of faith in a very strange way. He would pray for people with unequal legs and the short leg would grow out. It happened to literally hundreds of people and as it was happening, he would tell them, “Now, God has touched you. His supernatural power is working in your body; help yourself to all that God is giving you.” As a result, many people were supernaturally healed of a multitude of ailments.

However, some of his fellow ministers said, “You know, you have a reputation as a dignified Bible teacher. If you go around holding people’s feet and lengthening their legs, it may not fit in with your reputation.”

So, he thought, “Maybe they’re right.” He questioned the Lord about the matter, and this is what he believed He said: I’ve given you a gift. He suddenly realized it was a gift, the gift of faith.

Then the Lord explained to him, “There are two things you can do. You can use it and get more, or you can fail to use it and lose it.” He made up his mind at that point that he was going to use it and get more. And, to the glory of God, he did receive more.

Whatever gift you have been given, there are two things you can do: *You can use it and receive more, or you can fail to use it and lose it.*

Laboring Faithfully

Second, as we have already seen, your service in this life will determine your position in eternity. The one who gained ten minas was given authority over ten cities, and the one who gained five minas was placed over five cities. Their position in eternity was in exact proportion to their faithfulness in this life.

Notice, Jesus did not say, “Well done, good and successful servant,” He said, ***“Well done, good and faithful servant.”*** Some of us put too much emphasis on success and too little emphasis on faithfulness.

A man used of God was privileged to see tremendous works of God in many foreign mission fields. He once stated, “I could get a little puffed up and say, “Isn’t that wonderful! Thousands of people come to my seminars.” However, God reminded him, “Don’t forget, there was a generation before you that saw very little fruit. They labored faithfully and you have entered into their labors. Don’t give yourself too much credit for this fruit.”

We must respect the pioneers: the men and women who labored and laid down their lives. When the first missionaries went to East Africa, four out of every five died before they had been there many months. They saw few results for their brief labor. However, their lives were seeds planted in the earth that brought forth fruit later on. Though many of them saw very little fruit, they were faithful to the work God sent them to do. That faithfulness, I believe, has earned them great reward in heaven.

Put It in the Bank

The third man in the Parable of the Minas produced no return on the money entrusted to him. His master said to him,

“Well, you maybe didn’t have the ability to make money yourself, but you could have put it in the bank. Then I would have gotten my own with interest.”

How does that apply to us? What could we do if we feel we are not extremely gifted people? We might think, “I don’t have a big ministry; I’m not a preacher or an administrator. What can I do?” We can “put it in the bank.” We can find a ministry that is bringing forth fruit and examine the ministry to see if it is genuine, and then invest in it. You may invest your money, or you may invest some of your time. This is a legitimate way of multiplying what God has given you. This is putting the money in the bank. We will receive our reward when the Lord comes.

Jesus as Judge

At the end of the Parable of the Minas the master declares:

verse 27 *“But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.”*

This parable is a picture of Jesus as the Judge. Here Jesus is not the Savior; but Jesus is the Judge. Remember, the same person who is the Savior is also the Judge, and as thorough and efficient as He is in saving, so He will be in judging.

Does your picture of Jesus include that? Or are you one of those who say, “Gentle Jesus, meek and mild”? Praise God, this is true also, but it is not the whole truth. There is another side to Jesus. He is the Judge with eyes like a flame of fire, a two-edged sword that goes out of His mouth, a voice like the sound of many waters, feet like bronze refined in a furnace. (See **Revelation 1:12–16.**)

When John the Revelator met Him in that capacity, he fell at His feet as one dead. That impresses me! This is John—the one who had the closest relationship of all the disciples with Jesus. He had lain on the bosom of Jesus at the Last Supper. He had been one of those who was at the Sea of Galilee when Jesus had revealed Himself after His resurrection and made breakfast for them. (I like the fact that Jesus had breakfast ready for His disciples.) However, when John, who has known Jesus so intimately, is confronted by Jesus the Judge, he falls at His feet like one dead.

I think something like that needs to happen to the Church in our day. The Church, which has been living on a buddy-buddy relationship with Jesus, needs to be confronted by Jesus the Judge. It certainly would not do us any harm if we fell at His feet like someone dead.

The Parable of the Talents

The second pattern for the judgment of our service is found in the Parable of the Talents in **Matthew:**

Matthew 25:14–15 *“For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.”*

In the Parable of the Minas, each servant received one mina but in this parable one servant received five talents, one received two, and one received one. The talents (like the minas) are a sum of money. They were distributed to the servants according to their ability. God gives us talents according to what He knows we can do with them.

If you can use five talents, He will give you five. If you can only use two, He will give you two. And, if you can only use one, He will give you one. According to your ability He measures what He gives.

verses 16–19 *“Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them and made another five talents. And likewise, he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground and hid his lord’s money. After a long time, the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.”*

We need to keep in mind that the Lord is going to come and settle accounts with us.

verses 20–21 *“So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’”*

Notice the same principle as in the previous parable: what you do in this world will determine what you do in eternity.

Verses 22–23 *“He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’”*

In this parable there is a different principle of commendation. One servant made five talents and the other made two, but the words of commendation were exactly the same to each of them. In other words, it is the percentage God looks for. If you have received five, He expects a hundred percent; five more. If you received two, He also expects a hundred percent; two more. He knows what you are capable of, and He asks no more from you than He knows you can deliver.

verses 24–26 *“Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’ But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant.’”*

Please note that laziness is wickedness. Most of our churches would not accept drunkards as part of the congregation. However, many of our churches would accept lazy people. In the sight of God, I think laziness is a worse sin than drunkenness. That is the way I see Jesus measuring things. Please understand, I do not endorse drunkenness—it is a sin. However, I think in the eyes of God laziness is a worse sin. Jesus said:

verses 26–27 *“You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed. So, you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.”*

Again, we see the same “investment” principle as in the previous parable. If you do not have the ability to produce fruit yourself, invest it in a ministry that is bringing forth fruit.

verses 28–30 *“Therefore take the talent from him and give it to him who has ten talents. [The one who has, receives more.] For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

That phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth” is used several times in the New Testament. I have studied where it is used and have come to the conclusion that it is only used about people who have been very close to the real thing in God and missed out. They had every opportunity but failed to apprehend what God had for them.

A Serious Lesson

This is not written about people who never knew anything about God. It is the people who have been right on the edge of God’s best all their lives but never entered in. Those are the ones of whom the Bible says, *“There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* They will have tremendous bitterness, saying, “I could have been in this. I had the opportunity all the time, but I never availed myself of it. Now I’m cast out forever into outer darkness.” This should motivate us to fearlessly pursue the things of God.

Furthermore, the people in this parable who were rejected were the ones who had the least committed to them, the one-talent people. I find in most churches that the people who have great ability will do something with their talent. However, the one-talent people sit back and say, "There is nothing much I can do, so I won't do anything." They are the ones who are in danger of being rejected; they will be cast out.

I would say to the one-talent persons that most of you have underestimated your responsibilities. You have said, "I don't have much; there's not much I can do. God doesn't require much of me." God does. He requires faithfulness, whether you have a little or whether you have much.

A man once preached on this in his own church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Talking to the one-talent people, he asked for a response from those who felt they had one talent and had not been using their talent. The response was shocking. About half the congregation responded when he asked them to stand for prayer! He came to see this as a major problem with many believers.

It is too easy to simply say, "I've only one talent, so what can I do with it? I'll do nothing." Jesus will not accept that as an excuse. He would say, "You can put it in the bank. You can invest your one talent in a ministry that is really bringing forth fruit. Then much of that fruit will be credited to you."

Dear one-talent person, look out! You are in danger. You may one day hear the words, "Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Sober Assessments

Here are three conclusions we may draw from the study of these parables:

1. Our service in this life determines our position in the next life.
2. Not to use your talent is to lose it.
3. Not to do good when you can is sin.

James 4:17 says, *"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."*

Sins of omission are just as real as the sins of commission.

In **Matthew 25**, three classes of people were totally rejected by God:

1. The foolish virgins who took no oil (verse 12),
2. The one-talent servant who did nothing with his talent (verse 30),
3. The goat nations who did not help the brothers of Jesus (verse 46).

They were all totally and finally rejected by God.

What did they all have in common that caused them to be rejected? What did they do?" A simple answer, **"They did nothing."** That is all you have to do to be rejected—nothing. It is a solemn thought.

2. THE JUDGMENT OF ISRAEL

Up to now we have been dealing with the judgment of believers because that is the one that really concerns each of us. However, there are three other judgments to take place. The next judgment is a judgment in history—the judgment of Israel, a special people set apart by God. Though the Jews as a whole have been disobedient and unfaithful for many centuries, God has never permanently rejected them.

The Scripture says: **1 Samuel 12:22**

"The Lord will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you [Israel] His people."

God's faithfulness to Israel is not because Israel deserves it, but because of God's name, that it may be glorified. God is going to deal with Israel in a special way. Here is a principle that I want to pass on to you about blessing and judgment: God blesses the Jews directly, but He blesses the Gentiles through the Jews. However, God judges the Gentiles directly, but He judges the Jews through the Gentiles.

Those of us who are Gentiles need to remember that every spiritual blessing we have ever received **we owe to the Jewish people**. Jesus said in **John 4:22**, ***"Salvation is of the Jews."*** Every single blessing we have ever received in salvation we owe to one people—the Jewish people. God expects us, as Gentiles, to recognize that and act accordingly. **(See Romans 11:17–22.)** When it comes to judgment, God judges the Gentiles directly. But He judges the Jews through the Gentiles. Through hundreds of years of Jewish history God has persistently used Gentile nations to judge the Jews for their disobedience and their unfaithfulness.

The final judgment of Israel will take place during the Great Tribulation. Consider Jeremiah's prophecy concerning this time:

Jeremiah 30:3 *“For behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘that I will bring back from captivity [exile] My people Israel and Judah,” says the Lord. ‘And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.”*”

No matter what any government or politician thinks, the Bible says, “they shall possess it.” Everybody who knows the Bible knows “the land” is the little piece of land which is today called Israel. A preacher once said, “If the return of the Jews to their land was from God, there would be peace.” However, he did not know his Bible, because God says in connection with the return of the Jews: **Jeremiah verses 5–6** These are the words that the Lord spoke concerning Israel and Judah.

“For thus says the Lord: ‘We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale?’”

Jeremiah says the greatest pressure that Israel has ever experienced is immediately ahead, after they have returned to the land.

verse 7 *“Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.”*

Notice, it does not say saved from it, but saved out of it. Their God will deal in judgment with the Jewish people. At the end of the Tribulation, their judgment will have taken place.

3. THE JUDGMENT OF THE GENTILE NATIONS

Following the judgment of Israel, God will judge the other nations. This judgment takes place at the end of the Tribulation just before the beginning of the Millennium.

Joel 3:1–2 *“For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives [exiles] of Judah and Jerusalem, [Notice this refers to the same period—the return of the Jewish people to their own land. God says:] I will also gather all nations [Gentile nations] and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land.”*

God says that when He has finished dealing with the Jews, He will then deal with the Gentiles. He will deal with them on one basis—the way they have treated Israel. That is a remarkable fact, but there it is. In the passage above, God has two accusations against the Gentile nations:

First, they have oppressed the Jewish people.

Second, they have divided up (or partitioned) the land. God says, “That’s My land. I gave it to Israel, and no human authority or government has any right whatever to divide that land up.”

What is happening today? Exactly what God said should not happen. The land has been partitioned, is being partitioned, and probably will be partitioned. However, when God comes in judgment, He will judge the nations that have partitioned that land. Unfortunately, He could put Britain at the top of the list because Britain was responsible for a major partitioning of the land. At the end of World War I, the British were authorized to provide a national home for the Jewish people in what was then a large area known as Palestine. In the year 1922, by a single decision of Winston Churchill, Britain allocated seventy-six percent of that land to an Arab nation, which is now called Jordan, where no Jew was permitted to live. The remaining twenty-four percent of land has been divided by the United Nations. All of these Gentile nations, including the U.S. are going to have to answer to Jesus for these acts when He comes.

Regarding the judgment of the nations, we read in **Matthew 25:32–46** that Jesus separates the nations into two groups: the sheep and the goats. The sheep nations are invited into the kingdom; the goat nations are dismissed from the kingdom and sent into everlasting punishment. The basic principle of division is the way they have treated the brothers of Jesus. This is so important because Israel is a major factor in world affairs today and many of the nations are lining up on the wrong side. Israel cannot defend itself; but, sooner or later, when the time comes, God will intervene.

4. THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

The fourth judgment is before the Great White Throne which is described in **Revelation 20**. This great eternal judgment is a judgment of all unbelievers. John the Revelator paints a most awesome and vivid picture of what this final and great judgment will be like.

Revelation 20:11–15 **verse 11**: *“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.*

Think how terrible to appear before the One from whom earth and heaven have to flee, when He is in His majesty and in His wrath against sinners.

John continues in **verse 12** *“And I saw the dead, the small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of*

Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books."

In other words, the book contains the records of all they had done in this life; and this was the most complete and universal judgment. All unsaved human beings from every corner of this earth were assembled before this throne. This is how John describes it:

verses 13–14 *"The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades [Sheol, the place of departed spirits] delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."*

Remember that the second death is the irrevocable, eternal banishment from the presence of Almighty God, but it is not cessation of consciousness. Once we become beings in the womb, consciousness continues forever and ever. And then John sums it up this way:

verse 15 *"And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."*

Held to Account

We need to note some important facts from this passage.

First, even after resurrection, these individuals are still called "the dead." John says, *"I saw the dead, the small and great, standing before God."* Their bodies had been restored to them, but they were still dead. *Dead in trespasses and sins*; alienated and cut off from the life of God; and resurrected in their bodies to receive judgment for what they had done in their bodies.

Second, there are universal records kept of everything that each one of us has ever done. All has been recorded. There will be universal accountability, each one being required to answer for what they have done.

The word accountability is most unpleasant in the ears of modern culture. There are many different religions and philosophies today whose supreme objective is to declare to man that he is not really accountable to anybody but himself. I want to serve notice on you, that is a lie! Man is accountable to his Creator, who will one day be his judge. All of us are accountable. Finally, there is only one way of escape from this judgment: through the Book of Life. Everyone whose name was not written in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Now who, or what kind of person, has his name written in the Book of Life? In **Revelation 21:7**, John goes on to describe the kind of person whose name is written in the Book of Life.

Jesus says: ***“He who overcomes shall inherit all things [all the glories of heaven], and I will be his God and he shall be My son.”***

Notice, the primary requirement is to overcome; not to be defeated by sin and by the world and by ungodliness and by Satan. ***“He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.”***

John defines overcoming in his first epistle:

1 John 5:4–5 ***“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”***

The requirement is to be born of God through faith. What are we required to believe? That Jesus is the Son of God. He who believes that Jesus is the Son of God and is born again through that faith, has the faith to overcome the world. That overcoming faith will cause him to inherit all things. God will be his God and he will be the son of God. The alternative is stated in **Revelation 21:8**, where John describes the kind of person who will be thrown into the lake of fire:

“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

It is easy for us to understand that immoral persons and murderers and sorcerers and liars will be in the lake of fire. But would you note that the first two in the list are the cowardly and unbelieving? Those are the first two categories of people who are lost. I believe a person can get to heaven without theology. But I doubt whether a person will ever get to heaven without courage. In the midst of an unbelieving world, it takes courage to believe Jesus is the Son of God and remain faithful to Him.

The Great Divide

Someone was once visiting the Rocky Mountains in the state of Colorado. Someone pointed a little west of where they stood and said, “That ridge is the watershed of the continental United States. The rain that falls on one side flows down into the Pacific Ocean and the rain that falls on the other side ultimately flows down into the Gulf of Mexico.”

He realized that even though there might only be a few inches between where two raindrops fell, their ultimate destiny was thousands of miles apart. As he was picturing that in his mind, he said to myself, “Jesus is the watershed of human souls. Their destiny in eternity is determined by which side of Jesus they are on.”

Two souls can be so close together—husband and wife, parent and child, or brother and sister—yet one is on one side of Jesus, having received Him and believed in Him. The other is on the other side, not having believed and not having received. Though they are so close in this life, their ultimate destiny is an immeasurable distance apart. One will end in the eternal glory of heaven and the other will end in the lake of fire, the place of eternal judgment and destiny for unbelievers. The tiny little difference of a few inches in where two raindrops fall in the Rockies determines their ultimate destination. So, it is with you and me. Just a tiny little difference in this life—one side of Jesus or the other—will determine our eternal destiny.

The four main judgments, then, are:

1. The judgment seat of Christ, a judgment of believers only.
2. The judgment of Israel in the Great Tribulation.
3. The judgment of all other nations before Christ’s throne at the beginning of the Millennium.
4. The final judgment of all the remaining dead before the Great White Throne.

Are you prepared? If so, praise God. If not, then perhaps you should pray this prayer:

Lord Jesus, You have spoken to us many times that You are coming quickly, You are coming soon. You have warned us many times that we need to be ready for Your coming. I pray that You would grant me, by Your grace, to be ready for Your return, to be ready to stand before the judgment seat of Jesus and give an answer to the things I have done in the body. Lord, I pray for mercy, in Your name—the name of Jesus, Amen