

Jesus' Parables in Chronological Order

Parable #37 — Luke 19:12-27 — Ten Servants and Minas

¹¹ 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. ¹² He said: “A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. ¹³ So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’

¹⁴ “But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We don’t want this man to be our king.’

¹⁵ “He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.

¹⁶ “The first one came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned ten more.’

¹⁷ “ ‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’

¹⁸ “The second came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned five more.’

¹⁹ “His master answered, ‘You take charge of five cities.’

²⁰ “Then another servant came and said, ‘Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. ²¹ 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.’

²² “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? ²³ Why then didn’t you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?’

²⁴ “Then he said to those standing by, ‘Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.’

²⁵ “ ‘Sir,’ they said, ‘he already has ten!’

²⁶ “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. ²⁷ 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.’”

Parable #37 — Luke 19:12-27 — Ten Servants and Minas

1. Why did Jesus tell this parable of the ten servants and minas? (19:11)
[This is similar, but *not* the same parable, as the ten talents in Matthew 25:14-30.]
2. What did the man of noble birth want his servants to do with the money he gave them? (19:13) About how much money was it?
3. Verse 19:14 seems a bit odd until we know the players in this parable. To Jesus' audience, who was the "man of noble birth" (later called "the master")? Who were the servants? Who were the subjects (citizens, people, countrymen)? Who might they represent today?
4. In verse 19:21, was the servant's description of his master accurate? Would you say the servants's response to his master was hypocritical?
5. Perhaps more than some others, this parable *directly applies* to us today. Why?
6. What does this parable teach us about stewardship? What does it teach about the imminent return of the Lord?
7. What responsibilities and gifts has Jesus given to you (*to you personally*)?
8. Why is the master so hard on the man who did not use his mina to earn more? (A) he didn't share his master's interest in the kingdom, (B) he didn't trust his master's intentions, (C) his only concern was for himself, (D) he did nothing productive with the money, (E) he had a short-term mindset?
9. Jesus talks about two groups of people in this parable, the servants who each received a mina and the subjects of the kingdom. With which group do you more closely identify? Who would fall in the other group?
10. What can we learn from this story about neglecting to obey the truth that we already know? (James 2:14-17)
11. What can you expect from the Lord if you use the resources he has given to you for his glory? (Galatians 6:7-9)

Parable #37 — Luke 19:12-27 — Ten Servants and Minas — Leader's Notes

Apparently the disciples think that the Kingdom of God (or heaven) is just around the corner. Jesus, on the other hand, seems to view this mindset as problematic. He tells this parable in order to correct, or at least to put into perspective this short-term thinking. We, too (or at least many of us), believe that the return of our Lord Jesus Christ is imminent, that is, it could be at any moment. In the case of people of Jesus' day, the people were both right and wrong. The entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem did present Israel with their Messiah, but in the plan and purpose of God, He would be rejected, nailed to a cross, buried, and rise again, all to save men from their sins. It would not be until some time later that the kingdom of God would be established. Indeed, we still await the coming of that kingdom.

What, then, is wrong with looking for an imminent return of our Lord? Is Jesus trying to teach the people that they are wrong? Yes, in fact, He is doing that in our text. But it is not merely holding to an imminent return that is wrong, it is holding this view wrongly, in misapplying it, that we may err greatly.

The closer Jesus and his disciples get to Jerusalem (Jericho was about 17 miles away), the greater the expectation. Jerusalem was not only the capital of Israel, and the throne of the king, it was the place where they expected the kingdom to be commenced upon the arrival of Jesus.

They thought of the kingdom as but a few miles and a few hours away. They believed the kingdom of God was imminent. That was the problem, it would seem. That is the very reason Luke gives us for Jesus telling the parable which follows. Somehow, this parable is to correct, or at least to clarify, the situation.

(One mina was equivalent to about 100 days' wages.)

4. The slave's description of his master was probably not accurate. The master did not challenge the viewpoint of the slave—that he was a harsh and demanding man, but this does not mean that the slave was correct. Perhaps it was his perception of the master, correct or not. I personally think that the master was not harsh. After all, the master is a picture of our Lord, who will come as the King of the Earth.

The slave's words are hypocritical. The slave told his master that he feared him, because he was exacting, but the master refused to accept this explanation. If the slave had truly feared his master, he would have made an effort to produce a profit for him, which he did not do. If the slave was truly fearful, he would have also been obedient.

6. It is also possible that the slave may have failed to utilize his master's money simply because he felt that the time was too short to engage in business. At the beginning of this parable, Luke told us that Jesus spoke the parable in addition to His other words, because the people were looking for the kingdom to come

immediately. One of the things which a “short-term” mindset does is to discourage “long-term” planning and investing. If you receive a check for \$10,000 but know that you will have to write a check for that same amount in a day, you generally will not buy a savings bond or shares of stock, or even put the money in your savings account. You will deposit the money in your checking account, simply because you know that it will only be a short time before it will be gone.

Did the servant have the same mindset? Did he convince himself that doing business was foolish and unnecessary, since the kingdom was imminent? Did he feel that long-term investing of his master’s money was just plain foolish? It may very well be so. Long-term investing is foolishness to those who have but a short-term mindset.

Here is a very real tension in Christian living. We must hold two truths in tension as we seek to apply them. On the one hand, we must live in the light of an imminent return. Christ may come at any moment, and we should both be ready and watching for His return. But we must also live wisely, making good investments for His kingdom, knowing that His return may not be as soon as we think or hope. Many foolish things have been done by those who felt that the kingdom was imminent. On the other hand, many foolish things have been done by those who feel its coming is distant. We must hold both a short-term and a long-term view of life and ministry, and we must seek to hold these in tension (or balance).

The delay of the kingdom’s arrival had at least two reasons. In the first place, the king had to go away in order to gain the right to rule. Our Lord had to lay the foundation for His kingdom by laying down His life for the sins of the world, by making a provision for righteousness on the basis of His grace, so that men could be pronounced righteous and be allowed to enter into His kingdom. Jesus had to go up to heaven to be crowned king (Philippians 2:9-11), and to wait for the Father’s appointed time for Him to return and to reign.

In the second place, the delay of the kingdom provided a time for the king’s servants to be proven, to be tested, so that those who were faithful could be rewarded by greater responsibilities in the kingdom. The delay in the coming of the kingdom enables the Master to test His servants in the use of the money that has been entrusted to them. To the degree that the slaves are faithful in the use of money—a small thing—they will be given greater authority, the authority to rule in the kingdom.

And finally, while the disciples (especially) thought of the kingdom of God in terms of political revolution and of personal position and power, this parable reminded them that the coming of the kingdom would begin with a time of judgment. A judgment in terms of those who rejected Christ as Savior, and also a judging of the followers of the Lord as to their faithfulness in serving Him, which will be the basis of their rewards in the kingdom.

The text has an interesting lesson regarding Jews and Gentiles. Remember that

the gospel of Luke is purposed to be an explanation of the gospel from a Gentile perspective. Now who do you think the “citizens” in this parable represent? They represent the Israelites, The mass of Jews in Jesus’ day who rejected Him as their Messiah. And who would constitute the slaves? Slaves were most often foreigners—Gentiles if you would. Jesus has once again turned the world upside-down, for it is the (Gentile) slaves who become rulers, while the Jews, the “citizens” do not even enter the kingdom, but are slaughtered outside. The Gentile thrust of this gospel is once again evident. The way to honor and position is not competition and self-assertion (as the disciples seem to have been doing), but faithful service as slaves. To seek to preserve one’s independence, however, is to invite divine judgment.

Commentary and notes thanks to Bob Deffinbaugh, www.bible.org.