

Text: Matthew 25:14-46

Section 1

14"For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. 15"To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. 16"Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents.17"In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. 18"But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.19"Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20"The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.' 21"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' 22"Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.' 23"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' 24"And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. 25'And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.' 26"But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. 27'Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. 28'Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' 29"For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 30"Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 25:14-30)

I have a group of verses that I want to read, and then we'll talk about this passage.

17"Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you. (Deuteronomy 16:17)

12For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; 13for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. (Romans 2:12-13)

47"And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, 48but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. (Luke 12:47-48)

22But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. 26If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. 27Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. (James 1:22-27)

14What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. 18But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19You believe that God is one You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. (James 2:14-19)

19"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

So, we have three slaves, each of which was entrusted by his master with a sum of money. Each was given a different amount, depending on his own ability. God does not gift each individual equally, nor does He expect the same results from everyone. What He expects is 100% effort on the part of each of His slaves, which we are, if we are truly Christians. Notice that the slave that doubled his

two talents received the same praise as the one that doubled his five talents. Whatever talents, abilities, knowledge, wealth God has given to us are to be thoroughly invested in His service. If we do that, we can expect to be rewarded.

What is damnable is to not employ what God has given to us in His service. If the slave with the one talent had put his talent to good and profitable use he would have been praised the same as the others. Instead, he used fear and perhaps even contempt for his Master as an excuse for laziness and sloth. We as Christians are to be busy about God's work, employing all of our faculties in His service. Paul condemned laziness on the part of professing believers.

10For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. 11For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. 12Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12)

What does that passage have to do with obeying God? Remember, all work, when done with a Godly attitude, is honorable to Him, and even regarded as service to Him.

23Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. (Colossians 3:23-24)

I now want to take a closer look at verse 29:

' 29"For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.

What does this mean? Remember, at the last day all of our works will be judged.

9For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. 10According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. 11For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:9-15)

As Christians, we have a sure Foundation in Jesus Christ. The things that we do for Him in this world are, by way of example, fine building materials: **gold, silver, precious stones**. Works that are worldly only are **wood, hay, and straw**. The latter will burn up at the judgment, and the former will remain. If we have any of the former, that will be retained, and we will be rewarded. If a true Christian has none of the former, he at least has the Foundation of Jesus Christ, and will be saved, **yet so as through fire** (though I suspect that no true Christian will be entirely lacking in these things). An unbeliever, however, does not have the sure Foundation of Jesus Christ, and surely does not build upon his foundation with precious materials—works that honor Christ. Therefore, the one that has Christ will receive more in reward for his service. The one that does not have Christ has only pitiful, worldly achievements that will be burned up, leaving him with nothing, and himself cast *into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*. I pray that each of us has Jesus Christ for our Foundation, and that we are building upon that foundation each day with **gold, silver, and precious stones**.

Section 2

31"But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32"All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. 34"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35'For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; 36naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' 37"Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? 38'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40"Then the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.' 41"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; 42for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; 43I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' 44"Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not

take care of You?' 45"Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' 46"These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:31-46)

Look again at verses 34 and 40. What is the term that Jesus used to refer to Himself? *King*. Before discussing the ramifications of this passage with regard to judgment, I want to discuss something about which the Lord has taught be a great deal of late: the present reality of Christ's Kingdom. We are accustomed to speaking of Christ's Kingdom in future terms, but the Bible presents this as a present reality. In Ephesians, for example, Paul describes Jesus as already being in a position of rule and dominion.

18I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:18-23)

Jesus likewise described Himself as a King, and discussed the His imminent ascension to sit and rule at the right hand of God when He was on trial before the Sanhedrin, and before Pilate.

66When it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council chamber, saying, 67"If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe; 68and if I ask a question, you will not answer. 69"But from now on THE SON OF MAN WILL BE SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND of the power OF GOD." 70And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am." 71Then they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth." (Luke 22:66-71)

33Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" 34Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" 35Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?" 36Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." 37Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." (John 18:33-37)

Although this may seem extraneous, please bear with me: I want to read the entirety of Daniel Chapter 2. I want to do so partly because it is simply a fascinating account of God's providence in providing for Daniel and the other wise men living in Babylon, partly because God's prediction of the future through Daniel was exactly correct, and because this story does have relevance to the topic at hand.

1Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him. 2Then the king gave orders to call in the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. 3The king said to them, "I had a dream and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream." 4Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: "O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation." 5The king replied to the Chaldeans, "The command from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb and your houses will be made a rubbish heap. 6"But if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor; therefore declare to me the dream and its interpretation." 7They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation." 8The king replied, "I know for certain that you are bargaining for time, inasmuch as you have seen that the command from me is firm, 9that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is only one decree for you For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed; therefore tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation." 10The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean. 11"Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh." 12Because of this the king became indignant and very furious and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. 13So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them. 14Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard, who had gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon; 15he said to Arioch, the king's commander, "For what reason is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter. 16So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him time, in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king. 17Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter, 18so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven

concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

19Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven; 20Daniel said,

"Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever,

For wisdom and power belong to Him.

21"It is He who changes the times and the epochs;

He removes kings and establishes kings;

He gives wisdom to wise men

And knowledge to men of understanding.

22"It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things;

He knows what is in the darkness,

And the light dwells with Him.

23"To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise,

For You have given me wisdom and power;

Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You,

For You have made known to us the king's matter." 24Therefore, Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had

appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and spoke to him as follows: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon!

Take me into the king's presence, and I will declare the interpretation to the king." 25Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel

into the king's presence and spoke to him as follows: "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can make the

interpretation known to the king!" 26The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belshazzar, "Are you able to make known to

me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?" 27Daniel answered before the king and said, "As for the mystery

about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians nor diviners are able to declare it to the king.

28"However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take

place in the latter days This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed. 29"As for you, O king, while on

your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you

what will take place. 30"But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in

any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the

thoughts of your mind. 31"You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large

and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. 32"The head of that statue was

made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, 33its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and

partly of clay. 34"You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and

clay and crushed them. 35"Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and

became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found

But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. 36"This was the dream; now we will

tell its interpretation before the king. 37"You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the

kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; 38and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds

of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold. 39"After you

there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.

40"Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that

breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. 41"In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and

partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed

with common clay. 42"As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong

and part of it will be brittle. 43"And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in

the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. 44" In the days of those

kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another

people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. 45" Inasmuch as you saw that a

stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the

great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is

trustworthy." 46Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an

offering and fragrant incense. 47The king answered Daniel and said, "Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings

and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery." 48Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him

many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of

Babylon. 49And Daniel made request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the

administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel was at the king's court. (Daniel 2:1-49)

The four kingdoms depicted in Nebuchadnezzar's dream were Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Now, in 44 God said through Daniel that during the time of the Roman Empire He would **set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.** This Kingdom is, of course, none other than that of our King and Savior Jesus Christ. Daniel said that Christ's Kingdom would be established during Rome's rule. Therefore, Jesus was established then as the reigning King of all creation, and will reign forever.

With this said, I want to revisit a couple of verses that, given this understanding of Jesus as the reigning King, have been incorrectly interpreted by me.

**6For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
7There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)**

I have discussed this passage and the reign of Jesus as referring entirely to future events, when Jesus comes again to rule on earth. Jesus will indeed reign on earth in the future, but forgive me for neglecting the equally important truth that He reigns now, enthroned at the right hand of God the Father.

Even the presentation of the Gospel must include mention of Christ as Lord, as King, as Sovereign:

9that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)

To be saved requires more than to "accept Christ." We must bow to Him, to profess fidelity, service, and worship to Him as Lord, as King, as Master. We acknowledge His rule as a present reality in our lives and in all of Creation, faithfully live out our days in His service, and continue in that service for all eternity. What a privilege!

Now, let us return to the main thrust of this passage: judgment. Jesus sits enthroned now at the right hand of the Father, but one day He will sit upon what Matthew 25 calls *His glorious throne*, and what Revelation 20 calls **a great white throne**. He will there judge all people. Those that have been saved will be welcomed into eternal life; those that are not saved will be cast into eternal fire along with Satan and his demons.

11Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15)

There is a perceived incongruity here. Revelation 20 says we are judged by our works, and Jesus in Matthew 25 seems to explicitly base entry into His Kingdom upon whether or not one does certain types of works during his lifetime. Does this not contradict Ephesians 2, which teaches that we are saved by grace through faith, and not of works?

8For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

As we will see, there is no contradiction. Remember, when we are saved each of us is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

38Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39"For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." (Acts 2:38-39)

While in our sinful, fleshly nature we can do no good, the indwelling Holy Spirit brings about good in us. The difference in behavior between a Spirit-filled person and one without the Spirit is massive. In fact, our behavior in the Spirit is the exact opposite of that produced by the flesh.

16But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. 18But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. 19Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions,

factions, 21envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23)

The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives will bring about good works. Jesus was not telling his disciples that works would save them. Rather, He was telling them that the presence—or lack thereof—of saving faith and the Holy Spirit would be indicated by their works. The book of James tells us this as well:

14What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. 18But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19You believe that God is one You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. (James 2:14-19)

Repent and believe. Confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Receive the Holy Spirit and act accordingly. Those that believe receive eternal life—that's the Good News! Those that do not believe stand in judgment even now, and are destined for an eternity in Hell. I pray that each of us is in the first group!

16"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17"For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18"He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19"This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. 20"For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21"But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God." (John 3:16-21)