

A Glimpse of Life in the Kingdom

Part 2: Do Business Until I Come

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The man who first shared the gospel with me, Nap Clark, used to say that if you are truly saved, you are called upon to serve the King. This service is not optional. You can serve Him here and reign with Him during the kingdom, or you can shirk your responsibility to serve Him here and serve Him in the kingdom, but you are going to serve Him one place or the other.

Nap was not far off the mark. Entrance into the kingdom is one size fits all. Everyone gets in by grace, by hearing and believing the gospel of God's amazing grace and by trusting in Christ to save. But the extent of the reign of the children of God in the kingdom is not one-size-fits-all. In fact, positions are being determined by our service to the King in this life.

This truth is made clear by a fascinating parable spoken by our King on His way to the cross. The Lord Jesus was approaching Jerusalem for the last time, and He knew that His crucifixion was just a few days away. He had been busy demonstrating His divine power over nature, over angels, over demons, and over death itself. As the living Word of God, He had also been busy calling His Jewish sheep to Himself.

The King realized that many Jews were excited, thinking that their promised kingdom was about to come (Luke 19:11). He knew that they were soon going to forcefully attempt to make Him King (John 6:15). The people wrongly thought that His kingdom reign was near. Knowing their thoughts and realizing that it was not the right time for Him to be crowned King, Jesus gave an important parable revealing the truth concerning the postponement and ultimate establishment of the kingdom (Luke 19:11–27).

As the parable goes, a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. The Lord was obviously referring to the nobleman as a king since he was going to receive a kingdom. He was about to teach those with spiritual ears to hear some very important truths concerning this kingdom. Jesus was, no doubt, referring to Himself and the fact that He, after His death and resurrection, would ascend back into heaven to receive a kingdom from His Father and then return (Acts 1:9–12).

The nobleman called ten of his servants, gave them each a mina, and said to them, "Do business until I come." A mina was about three months' wages in the ancient world, a lot of

money. The servants were required to invest the nobleman's money while he was away. According to the parable, the citizens hated the nobleman and sent a delegation after him saying, "We will not have this man to rule over us" (Luke 19:14).

Because of where this parable is located in scripture, just before the death of our Lord, it is my view that this parable has tremendous meaning for us. There is a parallel truth. Speaking to the church at Ephesus, Paul explained that at the ascension of Jesus Christ back into heaven, Christ gave gifts to humans. These gifts were spiritual abilities for service given by the King to His subjects. This is an amazing comparison to the nobleman giving money to His servants to invest.

The Lord gifted some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:8–11). Those gifted were given supernatural abilities in order to build Christ's church (Ephesians 4:12–13). It was not Paul's intent to mention all the gifts here, only to explain what they were for.

Paul also wrote a letter to the divided church at Corinth. The Corinthians believers were fighting over leadership, one following this leader and another that leader. Paul said that we all have a shared part to play in building the body of Christ, as God gives to each one. There is to be no spiritual hierarchy. Some are to plant the seed of the gospel, and some are to water the seed. But in all cases, God causes life and growth to happen (1 Corinthians 3:5–7; 1 Peter 1:24–25). The Lord Jesus Christ is going to use every believer to build on the foundation of His church (1 Corinthians 4:5). We are one body, but everyone will be rewarded for their own labors (1 Corinthians 3:8). For this reason, we are to take heed how we build (1 Corinthians 3:10).

The nobleman's words to his servants, "Do business until I come" and Paul's words to us have a very similar meaning. When the nobleman returned, after receiving the kingdom, he called his ten servants to see how each had invested his master's money. The first servant said to his master that his mina had earned ten minas. The nobleman said to him, "Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a little, have authority over ten cities."

He called a second servant and found that his investment had earned five minas. The king rewarded him with rule over five cities. Notice that the king judged righteously. He was fair with his servants. In every case, the reward fit perfectly the profit made by the investment.

Speaking of this very truth, Isaiah said that when the Lord returns, His reward will be with Him (Isaiah 40:10, 62:11). Jeremiah also weighed in, saying that the Lord gives to every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings (Jeremiah 17:10).

The noble king's judgment of his servants is a fitting parallel to how the church-age believers are going to be judged by the King for the use of their spiritual assets. Like the parable, our reward is going to fit exactly the quality of our service. We will be judged fairly by one who has all the facts.

Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. (1 Corinthians 3:12-14)

Zero in on the words above: "of what sort it is." First, note that it is the quality of the work that will be judged, not the quantity. This gives great hope to those sheep who are called to the Shepherd late in life. They may feel that they have missed the boat, but this is simply not the case. They would still have time to do quality work for the Lord. It is the wise investment of their time and their assets that will matter.

Notice that six building materials are mentioned: gold, silver, precious stone, wood, hay, and straw. The categories of the building materials vary in the degree of value from gold, which is most valuable down, to straw, which has almost no value at all. We conclude from this that quality matters.

Another obvious difference is that one category of material is noncombustible. Gold, silver, and precious stones will not burn. The other group of wood, hay, and straw will burn but not to the same degree. Wood will burn to a lesser degree than hay. And last, straw will burn quickly.

Paul said that each person's work will be exposed to fire. Every work will be brought into the light to determine its quality, whether the work has the quality of gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay, or straw. There are obvious differences in reward from the gold quality all the way down to straw.

The main idea is that each believer's work will be judged. When? Paul said that the day will declare it. This day is the day of the judgment seat of Christ. The judgment seat will occur prior to His Second Coming. I personally feel that this will be a private judgment between our Lord and His child. Other servants will not be privy to another man's judgment. Before his own master, each will stand or fall (Romans 14:4).

For we must all stand at the judgment seat of Christ that we may receive in our bodies the things which we have done whether they be good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us shall give an account of himself to God. (Romans 14:10-12)

Back again to the parable of the nobleman: we find that the last servant called came before the master with no investment gain at all and with a sour attitude. He had hidden his mina away, for he was afraid. He said to the nobleman, "You collect what you did not deposit and reap what

you did not sow” (Luke 19:21). The servant denied the master what rightfully belonged to him. As a result, this servant lost everything. His mina was given to the one who had ten minas.

The nobleman said that to everyone who has, more will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him (Luke 19:26). This unfaithful servant, though he lost his reward, remained a servant. The nobleman said to bring “his enemies,” those not wanting to submit to his reign, and kill them. He did not say to bring “his servants.”

This has a parallel at the judgment seat of Christ. Paul finished the section on rewards by saying, “If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss” (1 Corinthians 3:15a). What does it mean to suffer loss? I think it means exactly what it says. The believer will suffer the loss of reward. Paul does not say that he *may* suffer loss; he says that he *will* suffer loss.

Paul quickly added, “But he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire” (1 Corinthians 3:15b). The possibility that a vast reward for a believer’s works may all go up in smoke is very real, but he or she will be saved in the end. This is obviously talking about eternal security. These unprofitable servants will go into the kingdom.

The quality of a believer’s work is not revealed in this life. We may do good deeds but with the wrong motive, but the facts will be revealed at a special time and place when the Lord returns. Our works will be judged by one who knows all the facts and who is the truth. That is why we are specifically told not to judge or evaluate any believer prior to the coming of Christ (1 Corinthians 4:5).

We either make wise investments of our spiritual giftedness, or we do not. There will be consequences. Our judgment has nothing to do with our sins or our eternal salvation. That was forever settled at the cross of Calvary. It will be based precisely on how we have fulfilled our stewardship “as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10; see also 1 Corinthians 3:10; Ephesians 3:7; Romans 12:3).

Jesus said that He is coming quickly, and His reward is with Him to give to everyone, according to their work (Revelation 22:12). The judgment seat has serious consequences. Bible teachers have minimized the impact of this judgment of believers. The church of Jesus Christ has suffered from it because many lack the motivation to use their giftedness to help build the church.

And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.
(Colossians 3:23–24)

This is part two of a three-part series, and is taken from Dr. Hill’s book, A Glimpse of the Coming King. Dr. Hill has served as a pastor, teacher, and author.