

Luke 12v42-48 Wise & Foolish Servants

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“And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, who his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant shall say in his heart. My Lord delayeth his coming and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens and to eat and drink and to be drunken; The Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord’s will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more”.

Sometimes we can feel that the parables of Jesus were used through out his ministry but there is definitely an increase in the number of them used in the later stages of his preaching. In Luke 9v51 fairly early in the gospel account Jesus is on the road to Jerusalem and the next several chapters show his growing collision with the religious authorities of his day. During that time in the rest of the gospel record many of the parables were given including many which are unique to Luke.

The key question framed by the Apostle Peter which this exposition sets to answer is ***“speakest thou this parable to us or even to all?”*** Certain Biblical information is limited in applicability to the disciples and should not be regarded as being strictly relevant to everyone. The need to keep asking this question about all the teachings which the Bible brings to the attention of the reader is a key feature which should never be forgotten or

dismissed. Interpreting the recipient incorrectly can result in some major difficulties and errors of understanding.

This explanation of a parable sets out the way that Jesus expects **his disciples** to approach the matter of service. He grounds it in the experience of the common man with the interplay of masters and servants. When the master is away, an agent is appointed who takes the chief responsibility as steward who makes any necessary decisions in his absence. He must however be ready to answer to his lord for those decisions and bear the consequences of any action or non-action taken.

There are many parallels with the portion of scripture given in Matthew 24v42-51 where there is an exhortation to watch and the role of a faithful and wise servant is set out for consideration. This comes in context just before the three great parables of the master's return which have already been examined from Chapter 25, the parable of the Wise & Foolish Virgins, the parable of the Talents and the parable of the Sheep & Goats all of which are expressly linked with the second coming of Jesus Christ. Luke records the information earlier in the gospel account, whereas Matthew has it at the end of his ministry in Jerusalem in the closing days before his crucifixion.

The steward is expected to provide not just milk but meat for the benefit of the rest of the disciples. This is not talking about preaching to the wider world who have yet to repent and join the believers. Notice how in Luke the punishment of the unfaithful servant was to be treated as an unbeliever, the ultimate ignominy, because such like to regard themselves as special and a cut above other people, elevated to the greatness they believe they deserve. This spirit must never be allowed to take hold in our midst as we seek to ensure that "having meat in due season" the Apostolic Ecclesia is fed on the meat of the Word and not the scraps which seem to so easily satisfy others. No the Truth is known because in their midst the truth is emphasised and meat is chewed and digested on a regular basis. We must never

slacken off in our studies, and we should keep challenging ourselves to be able to give an answer to those who ask for the reason of the hope within us. A watering down to milk would be a step backwards.

No man knows the day nor the hour when the master will return. Some say does that mean we can determine the year. In context the idea that the lord is absent for centuries is not appropriate. The parable speaks of the imminent return of the master who will require an account from the very person who he had put in charge, so years of absence is not in keeping with the detail of the narrative. If we could accurately and with certainty calculate the year of the return of Jesus, then the opportunity for complacency and delay would be very real. God has not revealed this information we just know the era or general time when it will occur by reviewing the signs of the times. The idea of the steward calculating that the master was delayed and would not be coming back soon is said to affect the behaviour of that selected person. This is the issue that confronts us all. We can treat others less well even if we do not beat our fellows when the urgency of the need to render an account to him to whom we are responsible, has receded.

The reward for faithful service is a state of blessedness in the new age of the presence of the master. That steward who acted so well will be made the ruler over all that he hath, that is he will be made the permanent steward over his master's affairs. It is not a promise to elevate a single individual over everyone else, but for the status of responsibility to remain. That is we must act now as if we are to become the immortal saints who now have the authority of Christ through the word but will in the future be publicly commended at the return of Jesus and the position made secure for the Kingdom age. However, if we have failed him and let ourselves and others down, then there is no room to expect anything else but the most strictest of censures, from a

disappointed lord who gave us such a glorious opportunity which we so foolishly squandered.

There is also the issue of being beaten with stripes. Corporal punishment is very real in scripture. The prescribed method of punishment under the law of Moses for capital offences was stoning. This involved the wider community in the crime and its ramifications so that they would know the consequences of such transgression. So it is with corporal punishment. Those delivering the sentence would be emotionally involved in the punishment, it was not some arbitrary matter remote from real people, but it was very much active and witnessed by those who lived with the offender. This enshrines the intimate nature of crime and punishment. This is not cruel but the very reverse as it teaches close up and personal what sin is about the corruption and harm done to individuals and to society itself. The artificial separation of criminals from society and their antiseptic remote treatment does not help in educating others in the sad consequences of such transgression.

Jesus is not cruel or angry, but he does endorse the punishments which his Father has already put in place to regular the otherwise out of control nature of sinners and sin. That some receive fewer stripes demonstrates the high standards of justice which underpin this divine punishment and it is to be understood literally. This is not some watered down smack on the wrist or a cross face made in your direction. Sin brings death and we forget this at our peril. May today might light of such things but the world is brutal and the artificial cocoons we build around ourselves will not protect us from the righteous condemnation which we all deserve if our earned wages were paid to us.

Ignorance is no excuse but the ignorant do receive a lighter sentence. This is similar to what we learnt in the last isolation class when Eve being deceived received lesser responsibility for her sin than Adam did, as he was not deceived but still transgressed. I Timothy 2v14. God is fair and the knowledge of

something makes you responsible for something in a way that ignorance does not.

Those with bigger talents will be asked to provide a larger response than others. If we feel we are being sorely tried by God, then we will receive a greater reward. Those who are not tried at all will receive nothing because they have not entered into God's attention they are outside the scope of punishment or reward they will just pass away from the opportunity of life because they have not sought Him out.

A Voice from the Altar

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