

Not of this world

In the days of Jesus, the Jews were eagerly awaiting a Messiah who would gather the former tribes of Israel into one unified kingdom. One of His first disciples proclaimed, 'We have found the Messiah'. Even John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus, 'Are You the Coming One, or shall we look for another?' News of His ministry spread quickly, and many people 'supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately'. Wherever Jesus travelled, large crowds gathered to see Him. After the people witnessed His miracles, their expectation of Him steadily increased. Was He the One who would set them free from Roman oppression and re-establish the kingdom of Israel? We know that Jesus did not fulfil their expectations regarding an earthly kingdom. He declared, 'My kingdom is not of this world'.

Jesus preached about the kingdom of God by speaking in parables. He fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah when the crowds did not understand what He was saying. However, Jesus explained to His disciples that the parables revealed the mysteries of the kingdom of God. They teach us what the kingdom of God looks like, how we enter it, how we receive it, how we participate in its growth and multiplication, and how we inherit it. Historically, many Christian movements have associated the kingdom of God with triumphal behaviour. They have sought to lay hold of the kingdom through enthusiastic and contrived expressions of worship. These initiatives attempt to lay hold of the kingdom of God through natural, humanistic means. Further to this, many Christians have a concept of the kingdom that is a conglomerate of independent local churches. That is not a 'kingdom'. We need to consider how Jesus revealed the administration of the kingdom of God through the parables. And we need to understand how the apostle Paul implemented this administration among all of the Gentile churches.

References:

Joh 18:36

Joh 1:41

Mat 11:3

Luk 19:11

Joh 9:39

Joh 6:15

Further Study: John 6:24-71

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 8

The kingdom among us

Jesus spoke in parables to give us insight into how the kingdom of God functions. The parables explain how we see, enter, possess and inherit the kingdom. The parables are like individual 'brushstrokes' that must be viewed together to see and appreciate the one complete picture. At the same time, each of the parables has a unique application and insight concerning how the administration of Christ operates within the kingdom of God. The Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God was coming. He answered, 'The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, "Look, here it is!" or, "There it is!" For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.' We recognise that the kingdom of God is, firstly, a *spiritual* reality that is not visible to the natural man. Jesus explained, 'If I cast out demons by the *Spirit of God*, then the kingdom of God has come upon you'.

The Scripture clearly shows that the kingdom of God is *in our midst*. We are reminded of the prophetic picture of Jesus walking *in the midst* of the lampstand churches in the book of Revelation. Of course, Christ Himself is seated at the right hand of the Father. He is sending noblemen-messengers on His behalf. They have been appointed as His 'under-oarsmen and eyewitnesses'. Christ has appointed apostles and prophets to carry the authority of His right hand, and walk among lampstand churches in every generation. An apostolic administration has been operating *in the midst* of the church since the appointment of the apostle Paul. It is important to recognise that God has entrusted the custodianship of His kingdom to an administration of noblemen who are His messengers. They are required to exercise faithful stewardship of Christ's possessions and equip the saints in every place for the work of ministry.

References:

Luk 17:20-21 Col 3:1
 Mat 12:28 Rom 14:17
 Rev 1:13 Col 2:16-17

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 4

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 9

The mysteries of the kingdom

The disciples asked Jesus why He spoke in parables. Jesus replied by saying that He taught in parables to fulfil the mandate given to the prophet Isaiah. We recall that the Lord instructed the prophet to cover the eyes and ears of the people so that they would not hear, understand and repent. Jesus spoke in parables to the great crowds so that 'seeing they may not see and hearing they may not understand'. However, He said to the disciples, 'To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God'.

We should not assume that the twelve disciples immediately understood the mysteries of the kingdom of God. If this was the case, Jesus would not have had to explain the parables to them. Even after He had spent forty days explaining the kingdom of God to them after His resurrection, the disciples still asked Him, 'Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?' Jesus said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority'.

It is evident that this limit upon the understanding of the disciples was *not permanent*. When the apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians, using exactly the same phraseology, he appeared to contradict the words of Jesus. Paul also referred to the parables when he wrote, 'Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.' By the time Paul was writing this letter, it is quite clear that it had been granted to the administration of apostles and prophets to 'know the mysteries of the kingdom of God'.

References:

Isa 6:9 Luk 8:9-10
Mat 13:10-14 Act 1:6-7
Mar 4:10-12 Mar 13:32

Further Study: 1 Thessalonians 5

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 10

Paul's preoccupation with the kingdom

Jesus set the pattern for the administration of the kingdom when He sent the twelve and the seventy-two ahead of Him to every place where He Himself was going. We note that He sent them out 'two' by 'two'. Paul understood the application of this model of 'two' as the ministry of the ascension-gift apostle and prophet. We recall that the apostle Paul firstly travelled with the prophet Barnabas and then with the prophet Silas. In the same way that Jesus sent the twelve and the seventy-two out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing, He also sent Paul 'far away to the Gentiles' to receive a kingdom.

We know that the apostle Paul was preoccupied with preaching about the kingdom of God. On his first missionary journey, Paul encouraged the new disciples to continue in the faith, saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God'. Likewise, on his third missionary journey, Paul spent three months in the synagogue in Ephesus, 'reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God'. Even during his incarceration in Rome, Paul continued to meet with the leading Jews to explain the kingdom of God to them. Some were persuaded and others did not believe. As those who did not believe argued with one another and departed, Paul quoted the words of Isaiah saying, 'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; and you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive'. In contrast to this, many did receive the word. Luke records that Paul was 'welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered'. The kingdom of God was evidently his preoccupation until the end of his days.

References:

Luk 10:1 Act 14:22
 Luk 9:2 Act 19:8
 Act 22:21 Act 20:25

Further Study:

Acts 28

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 11

He gave some to be apostles

When Jesus Christ ascended on high, the Father gave Him the full authority of the throne and all the possessions of the kingdom of God. He has given all things into *His hand*, and has then given the Son to be the Head of the church. In the same way, the Son has given all things to His ascension-gift administration, and then given this apostolic administration to His church in every generation. Paul declared that ‘He gave gifts to men. He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.’ Further to this, we read in his letter to the Corinthians that God has appointed *first* apostles and *second* prophets. There is an order of authority within the administration of the throne. The custody of the word and all of Christ’s possessions have *firstly* been given to ascension-gift apostles.

Paul readily testified that he had been appointed to the apostolic work toward all of the Gentile churches. He was appointed by Christ according to his name from the Father. Paul recognised that he had been set apart for this task from his mother’s womb, even though it wasn’t until his conversion that Christ appointed him to be an apostle to the Gentiles. We must be clear that apostleship does not work by self-appointment. Nor does it work by succession. Jesus Christ gives gifts to men so that there is an apostolic administration in every generation. The book of Acts declares that He never leaves Himself without witnesses. In his generation, the apostle Paul was appointed by Christ as an under-oarsman, an ambassador, a representative and a witness. He was also appointed to be Christ’s deacon. Paul testified, ‘I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service [deaconing]’. We can think of a deacon simply as a slave of another. An apostle is the slave and *personal deacon* of Jesus Christ.

References:

Eph 4:11

1Co 12:28

1Ti 2:7

1Ti 1:12

2Ti 4:17

Act 9:15

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Romans 11

Proverbs 12

Appointed to be an under-oarsman

When Jesus confronted Paul on the road to Damascus, He said, 'Get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister [under-oarsman] and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me'. Christ laid hold of Paul as one who was 'little' and the 'least'. Paul testified, 'I am the least of the apostles'.

Jesus appointed Paul to be His personal deacon and under-oarsman. An under-oarsman is someone who functions and serves as a helper in a subordinate capacity. The term 'under-oarsman' describes a relationship and a work. Paul understood that he was an under-oarsman to Christ Himself. He said to the Corinthians, 'Let a man regard us in this manner as servants [under-oarsmen] of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God'. This is the work and mandate of apostles and prophets as 'under oarsmen' of Christ in every generation. Jesus said that 'under-oarsmen' will not be involved in worldly or political agendas. He said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants [under-oarsmen] would be fighting so I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.' Leaders who become preoccupied with the politics of the world are not part of a true apostolic administration. Those who exercise true authority in the kingdom of God do not fight according to the flesh.

References:

Act 26:16-19

1Co 15:9

1Co 4:1

Joh 18:36

Luk 1:1-2

Act 13:5

Further Study: Colossians 1

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 15

The apostle's talent

We read in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, 'You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ.' It is evident that Christ gave Paul insight into the mysteries of the kingdom. It is also clear that Paul received grace and apostleship as a stewardship. As an apostle, he was the custodian of the word on behalf of Christ. This is the nature of the gift that the apostle receives as a unique slave and prisoner of Christ. Using the terminology of Jesus in the parable of the talents, we could call this the 'apostle's talent'.

An apostle bears witness that the authority of the throne and the possessions of the throne are in the stewardship of the apostles and prophets. It is important to realise that all the talents, that is, all the possessions of Christ, have been given to apostles as noblemen to impart as spiritual gifts. We recall that Jesus spoke of a particular slave who had 'ten thousand talents'. It is reasonable to conclude that this abundance of riches represented the stewardship of an apostle with an apostolic administration in a kingdom or multiple kingdoms.

Paul understood that his administration and the resource of apostolic talents had been given to him as a stewardship for many nations and kingdoms. He declared to the Corinthians, 'If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord'. Likewise, he said to the Romans, 'I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch, then, as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry [deaconing]'.

References:

Rom 11:13

1Co 9:2

Eph 3:3-4

Mat 18:24

2Co 4:2

2Co 11:5-6

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 12

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 16

Representatives of Christ

The apostle Paul recognised that the word, *with its accompanying administration*, had been laid down to him by the Lord. He said that the Lord has ‘committed [laid down] to us the word of reconciliation’ and He ‘gave us the ministry [deaconing] of reconciliation’. The word, and the administration of the word, had been laid down to Paul. He, in turn, had laid the administration of the word down to ascension-gift prophets, like Barnabas and Silas, who became fellow workers and fellow deacons in an apostolic administration. For this reason, Paul testified that the word had been laid down to ‘us’. Paul was using the term ‘us’ deliberately, because he was referring to an ascension-gift administration of apostles and prophets.

Paul continued by saying, ‘We are *ambassadors* for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you *on behalf of Christ*, be reconciled to God’. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, ‘Pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an *ambassador* in chains’. The word that is translated ‘ambassadors’ in this verse is the Greek word *‘presbeuo’*. This word denotes someone sent as a representative for another. Jesus said, ‘He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me, receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward.’ Jesus was clearly referring to men who are sent by, and on behalf of, His administration to proclaim the word and impart spiritual gifts. Those who receive these messengers and their word are rewarded by receiving the spiritual gifts they bring.

References:

2Co 5:18-20 2Ti 1:16-18
 Eph 6:19-20 Heb 6:10
 Mat 10:41

Further Study:

3 John 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 17

On behalf of Christ

As an ambassador of Christ, Paul proclaimed the word and functioned according to his grace and authority 'on behalf of Christ'. This proposition, 'on behalf of', is not borne out in our English translations. However, it is a fundamental principle in the Scripture. There are apostles and prophets who proclaim the word and deacon 'on behalf of the truth of God' in every generation. When he was challenged by the Corinthian church, Paul had no difficulty in furnishing proof that he was speaking for Christ. He was comfortable with his work as Christ's representative. Paul was careful not to fall short of his mandate, or to go beyond his mandate. He said, 'I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed'. Paul knew that everything he accomplished and experienced was 'on behalf of' Christ. He could testify that he was well-content with weaknesses, insults, distresses, persecutions and difficulties 'on behalf of Christ'.

Apostles who deacon 'on behalf of Christ' will choose faithful men and women to be fellow deacons with them. They appoint deacons who have proven themselves to be 'faithful workers'. In the same way that Christ lays hold of ascension-gift ministries, they in turn send deacons 'on their behalf'. The young man Onesimus was such a deacon, even though he appeared to be inferior. Paul chose 'that which is least'. He wrote to Philemon saying, 'I have sent him back to you ... so that *on your behalf* he might minister [deacon] to me in my imprisonment for the gospel'. This mode of appointing the least and the faithful was employed by apostles and overseers in all the churches. Concerning Paul's fellow apostles, we read in Colossians about 'Epaphras, our beloved fellow-slave, who is a faithful servant [deacon] of Christ *on our behalf*'.

References:

Rom 15:18-19 2Co 12:10
 2Co 13:3 Phm 1:12-13
 Col 1:7 Luk 21:15

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 16

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 18

Coming to you

We know that Jesus Christ addressed each of the seven churches in the book of Revelation. He said to the church in Ephesus, 'Remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else *I am coming to you* and will remove your lampstand out of its place'. Likewise, He said to the church in Pergamum concerning those who embraced and promoted destructive heresies, 'Repent, or else *I am coming to you* quickly and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth'. We note that Jesus did not *personally* speak to them because He instructed John to write on His behalf. And likewise, Jesus was not *personally* 'coming' to them. He was *sending* His apostolic administration as His representatives or ambassadors.

In his letters, Paul continually said that he was coming to the churches as the ambassador of Christ. We read in his letter to the Thessalonians, 'For you yourselves know, brethren, that our *coming to you* was not in vain'. He admonished the Corinthians by saying, 'Some have become arrogant, as though I were not *coming to you*'. Later he said to them, 'This is the third time I am coming to you'. To the Philippians, he wrote, 'I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly'. In this same letter, he spoke of coming to them 'again', which shows that Paul visited, and intended to visit, many of the churches on multiple occasions. At the same time, Paul was not always able to travel personally to the churches. In his letter to the Colossians, he confessed his great struggle on 'their behalf' and for all those at Laodicea, and 'for all those who had not personally seen his face'.

References:

Rev 2:5, 16 Php 1:25-26
 1Co 4:18 Col 2:1
 2Co 13:1 Phm 1:22

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Philippians 2

Proverbs 19

Imparting spiritual gifts

An apostolic administration will regularly come to the churches in a region to 'set things in order'. This may be the work of ascension-gift apostles and prophets, or those they send to do this work on their behalf. We are reminded that Paul left Titus in Crete to 'set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you'. Further to this, an apostolic administration will come at the beginning of a season to impart spiritual gifts to slaves. Paul prayed that he would be able to come to the church in Rome for this purpose. He testified, 'For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established'. He was referring to the gift of minas and talents.

When we read Paul's letter to the Corinthians, it is apparent that they had begun to think that the strength of their own hands had caused them to become rich. Paul had to remind them that he had brought the word to them and that he was their apostle. He asked, 'Was it from you that the word of God went forth? Or has it *come to you only*?' He said, 'Some have become arrogant, as though *I were not coming to you*'. Like the nobleman, Paul was returning to the church in Corinth to obtain the fruit of the word of faith that he had proclaimed among them. At the end of the season, the apostolic administration will return to receive the fruit that has been generated by the faithful stewardship of the slaves in the house. With this goal in view, Paul wrote to the Romans, 'I often have planned to come to you so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles'. He was seeking the fruit of his stewardship among them.

References:

Deu 8:17

1Co 4:7, 18

1Co 14:36

Jas 1:17

Tit 1:5

Rom 1:11-13

Further Study:

 1 Thessalonians 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 22

The nobleman is an apostle

The parable of the minas is recorded in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus said, 'A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return. And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, "Busy yourselves until I come back".' We know that Jesus Christ has ascended to the right hand of the Father and given gifts to men. However, we conclude that the nobleman in the parable of the minas does not represent Christ *personally*. If this was the case, then the distribution of minas would have only occurred once at the beginning of the church age. The nobleman represents the work of apostles that Jesus Christ has appointed in every generation of the church. An ascension-gift apostle, like Paul, is the ambassador or representative of Christ who imparts gifts to slaves on His behalf. It is apparent that the nobleman appointed ten slaves to a work within the administration of an existing kingdom. He already possessed one kingdom before he travelled to a distant country to receive another kingdom. This parable reveals that there are 'multiple kingdoms' which represent lampstand regions in multiple countries.

The apostle Paul is our first example of a nobleman who was sent to a far country to receive a kingdom. Paul testified that the Lord said to him on the road to Damascus, 'Go! For I will send you *far away* to the Gentiles.' He understood that he had been appointed as a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He had been appointed to be their apostle, and using the words of Jesus, we would say that he was 'their nobleman'. His mandate was to proclaim the mystery of the kingdom of God and impart spiritual gifts to the slaves of Jesus Christ in every place, so that they could become participants in the administration of the kingdom.

References:

Luk 19:11-13 Rom 11:13
Act 22:21 1Co 9:2
Rom 15:16 Act 16:5

Further Study: Romans 1:1-17

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 23

The attitude of a slave

Jesus used the parable of the landowner to demonstrate the humility of faithful slaves. He said, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing to pay his labourers a denarius each day, he sent them into his vineyard.' The landowner then hired other labourers at different times throughout the day. Irrespective of the time they commenced working, they all received one denarius.

When the Lord redeems us, we are given an opportunity to serve Him as a slave in His house. Both the invitation and the resources to serve Him come from Him. Jesus concluded the parable by saying, 'The last shall be first, and the first last'. Christian disciples are not promoted past slavehood. The attitude of a slave is the foundation for learning to deacon and receiving a stewardship. In this way, Paul said, 'Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus'. We know that Jesus Christ emptied Himself to become the Father's slave. His humility as a slave was demonstrated by His obedience. Similarly, we must embrace slave-like obedience. We need to be wholly, freely, willingly, and continually given to God as slaves to do His will.

Jesus instructed us to show faithfulness in that which belongs to another. This faithfulness is the primary characteristic of a slave because a slave, by very definition, does not own anything. Many Christians are not willing to be slaves within the administration of Christ. They are preoccupied with their own ministry, their own expression, their own opportunities, and their own recognition. This would indicate that they have no genuine connection or submission to the apostolic administration of Christ. It is incumbent upon every believer to recognise that we have been bought with a price by Christ to become slaves in the administration of His house.

References:

Php 2:5-7

Luk 17:7-10

Luk 16:12

1Co 6:20

Further Study: Matthew 20:1-16

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 24

Slaves in the house

Within the administration of Christ, it is clear that all slaves do not have the same function and authority. Each slave has been given a different work. Nevertheless, there are *common qualities* that every son of God must possess in order to become a faithful and sensible slave. Every son of God must be willing to *empty* themselves. Paul said of Jesus, 'He did not regard equality a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave'. A slave who understands 'emptying' will be wholly given to the work that their master has given to them. They will not be double-minded and seeking to fulfil their own agenda. They will not be preoccupied with the need for recognition or their own ambition.

A slave must have the attitude of one who is faithful in that which is little and faithful in that which is least. Jesus asked, 'Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his servants to give them their food at the proper time?' The Greek word that has been translated as 'servants' in this verse is '*therapeia*'. These servants are the master's attending medical or domestic staff. The faithful and wise slave is charged with the care of those who are doing the work of the house. These ones are workers in the house of the Son and not just church attendees.

In every generation, Jesus has appointed slaves over His household, to feed the other members their portion of food in due season. The slaves who have been 'put in charge of His household' are overseers and deacons. When fellow slaves submit themselves to the authority of overseers and willingly eat the word that is given to them in each and every season, they are blessed with the capacity to fulfil the works that have been prepared for them from before the foundation of the world.

References:

Php 2:7

Luk 16:10-12

Mat 24:45

Eph 2:10

Further Study: Luke 12:22-48

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 25

Many stripes and a few stripes

When He returns, the Master seeks an account from those who have been put in charge over the house. Each slave is called to give an account according to the word that was given to them. When Jesus referred to the king who returned to *settle accounts* with a slave, the literal meaning is to '*settle a word*'. If the Master returns to find His overseeing slaves nourishing those in His house, He calls them 'blessed' and puts them in charge of all His possessions. However, not all slaves are faithful and diligent. Some know the Master's will, but do not do it. They cannot give a proper account of their stewardship. Instead, the Master comes and finds them beating their fellow slaves and eating and drinking with drunkards. Jesus said that these ones would be beaten with many stripes.

There is a big difference between those who receive a few stripes and those who are beaten with many stripes. A slave who receives many stripes is removed from their place of service in the house. Jesus said that they are 'cut in two' and appointed a portion with the unbelievers or the hypocrites. This is described as a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. In the parables of the minas and talents, Jesus also described this place as 'outer darkness'. In the first case, 'outer darkness' is simply the place of no illumination and no insight. If an overseeing slave is removed from the house, the Lord will take their stewardship and give it to another. In contrast to this, there will be some overseers who allow corruption in the house because of 'ignorance'. Jesus said that these ones would be beaten with a few stripes so that they can repent and return to do the will of the Master. A slave who receives a few stripes is being chastened by the Lord so that they can continue to exercise oversight in the house.

References:

Luk 12:43-44 Mat 8:10-12
Mat 24:45-47 Mat 21:43
Mat 25:30

Further Study: Luke 13:18-35

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 26

Minas and talents

In the parable of the minas, the nobleman appoints his slaves to rule in his stead and then travels to a far country. He gives them custody of his possessions and rulership of his house, but not its ownership. He commands them to exercise authority on his behalf. Unlike talents, minas do not equate to *tangible* provision in the house of God. The parable of the minas addresses the increase of *authority*. The distribution of minas should produce authority in every son of God. This authority is not exercised as dominion over another person. Rather, the authority of a person's name gives them the capacity to fulfil the works that the Father wants them to do. It is important we understand that the term 'ability', in the context of the parable of the talents, literally means 'power'. As we commit ourselves to be slaves in the administration of Christ, the unique capacity that belongs to our name begins to be revealed.

A slave who is faithful in a 'very little thing' is able to receive 'much resource' from the Lord as a stewardship. There are many different kinds of talents that can be given to a slave, depending on their name and ability as a son of God. Some talents will be given as opportunities in secular environments to generate increase for the kingdom, such as business contracts and employment tenures. Other talents will be the tangible means by which overseers and deacons steward a congregation in a location, multiple communion centres within a geographical area, whole lampstand regions, or multiple lampstand kingdoms. Regardless of the nature of the talent, a steward never ceases to be a slave. Jesus said to His disciples, 'Whoever wishes to be the first among you shall be slave of all'. The apostle Paul understood this when he said, 'Though I am free from all men, *I have made myself a slave to all*, so that I may win more'.

References:

Mar 10:44 Mat 20:26-28
 1Co 9:19 2Co 4:5
 Mat 24:47

Further Study: Luke 19:1-27

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 29

Faithful in a very little thing

In biblical terms, one mina was the equivalent of approximately three months' wages. When we consider the resources that are needed for a lifetime of service to the Lord, three months' wages is a 'little' amount. When the nobleman returned, he commended the slaves who had applied themselves, saying, 'Well done, good and faithful slave, because you have been faithful in *a very little thing*, you are to be in authority'. In the book of Matthew, Jesus described the head of a house, saying, 'Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.'

In the next chapter of Matthew, Jesus proceeded to teach the parable of the talents. In biblical terms, one talent was the equivalent of fifteen to twenty years' wages. One talent is equal to approximately sixty to eighty minas. Our point is a simple one. We can only become stewards with talents, after we prove ourselves to be faithful and wise slaves with our minas. Receiving a mina precedes receiving a talent. We are entrusted with a 'little', which then grows to authority over 'much'. A 'little' is represented by the mina, while the talent represents 'much'. When a slave who is least takes *faith initiatives* to *deacon*, he grows into a steward who is great in the kingdom of God. The primary characteristic of a steward is their ability to *deacon* what the Lord gives them. Hence, Jesus said, 'Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your *deacon*'.

References:

Luk 19:17 Gen 39:4
Mat 24:45-47 Luk 16:10
Mar 10:43 Jas 1:9

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 1

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 30

Working with the mina

We can define a 'mina' as the word of faith proclaimed by an apostolic administration. One mina is enough power to recover our identity, name, abilities and works that God prepared before the foundation of the world. A mina symbolises a measure of authority that is given to slaves to empower them, so they can *exercise* the mandate of their name in the kingdom of God. In this sense, receiving a mina becomes our opportunity to commence working and labouring in the house of the Son.

In the parable of the minas, each of the ten slaves received the same quantity of resource. They all received one mina. The nobleman instructed his slaves to 'do business' until he returned. The literal translation for 'do business' is 'busy oneself'. This describes the diligence and *application* that we invest in our name, abilities and works, having had them recovered by a mina. We note that the nobleman entrusted minas to his slaves for a specific *period* of time. When we receive capacity as a resource from Christ, He gives us a set duration of time to apply ourselves. After that season, He returns looking for the fruit of our faithful application.

The foremost quality of a 'sensible and wise slave' is their commitment to deaconing when nobody is watching them. In the book of Revelation, Jesus warns us to 'remember what we have received' because He will 'come like a thief'. Also in the parables, Jesus said, 'Be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into'. Having our house 'broken into' is a parallel to the nobleman taking back the mina from the slave who took no faith initiatives.

References:

Luk 19:13

Rev 3:3

Mat 24:42-43

Mar 13:33, 36

Further Study: Luke 12:1-21

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 1

Minas according to name

Slaves are deemed 'faithful and wise' when they prove themselves to be faithful in that which is 'little' through diligence and application. When Jesus was teaching His disciples about slavehood, He said, 'He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much'. Ironically, when the Lord commits something 'little' to us, we may find it becomes our full-time preoccupation to do that work. Christ meets us in our faith to be diligent in that which is 'little'.

In the parable of the minas, we observe that each slave brought a different return from the one mina they received at the beginning. For example, one brought ten minas, while another brought five back to the nobleman. Clearly, there is a *qualitative* difference between minas, which manifests in their generative capacity. This difference is quite apart from a slave's personal *application* to their mina. Minas align with the *potential* of our name and our works. And they are given in direct proportion to our potential so that, by faithful and wise labour, our ability is recovered. We all receive the authority of our predestined name, but our names are not all the same. We do not share the same abilities, works or authority amongst our fellow slaves.

Having received a mina, our name, works and abilities will be viable. When we hear and receive from noblemen on behalf of Christ, their word is recovering our 'natural' ability. As our name and work are recovered, our ability will be seen and identified as the 'power' to generate increase and multiplication. When we serve as a slave, with the mina we have received, we demonstrate our willingness to be 'the least'. Likewise, our faithful slavehood reveals our willingness to be 'faithful in that which is another's'. This becomes the foundation for receiving talents according to ability.

References:

Luk 16:10

Luk 19:16-18

Mat 25:15

Further Study:

2 Corinthians 8

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 2

Unfaithful and unwise slaves

In the parable of the minas, Jesus identified the reward of slaves who are faithful in a very little thing. He also addressed the judgement of the unfaithful and unwise slave. This slave did not busy himself with the mina that was entrusted to him. We can only conclude that this slave failed to take any initiative with his mina because he had no faith. He did not believe he could do anything with his mina. Because he was gripped by fear, he could not even invest his mina in the bank. Fear always wars against faith. If we fail to apply ourselves, having received the authority of our name, we will draw back from the fellowship of giving and receiving in the house of God. We will withhold the unique contribution that we have been called to give. In practical terms, the person who receives a mina and fails to invest it in the bank, is the person who is unwilling to present themselves for any kind of service within their local congregation. If we do not present ourselves to become an obedient slave, we cannot possibly bring forth the fruit of our mina.

The unwise slave was filled with trepidation when he gave account to the nobleman. The book of Romans tells us that anything that is not from faith is sin. If we fail to measure ourselves to the authority of our name in the kingdom of God, we will suffer loss. The mina was removed from the slave and given to the faithful and wise slave who already had ten. There will be consequences if we fail to apply ourselves to our mina. We lose the authority of our name, which enables us to fulfil our specific works of righteousness in the kingdom of God. Our work will be given to another with proven capacity to labour diligently according to the authority of their name.

References:

Rom 14:23

2Jn 1:8-9

Heb 11:6

Eph 5:15

Luk 19:20-27

Further Study: Matthew 8:1-12

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 3