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Zacchaeus, 10 Minas, Triumphal Entry (Part 1)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this discourse, Steve Gregg discusses the biblical account of Zacchaeus, a rich chief tax collector whom Jesus invited to his house. Despite criticisms from the Pharisees, Jesus had lunch with Zacchaeus, and he even pledged to make amends and return fourfold whatever he had wrongfully taken. Gregg also mentions the parable of the Talents and how it relates to Jesus giving his life as a ransom for many. He concludes by emphasizing the importance of being good stewards of what God has entrusted to us, rather than using it for our own fun and games.

Transcript

Let's turn to Luke chapter 19. We need to cover this entire chapter, and it's not short. There's a lot to be said about certain parts of it.

So, I hope we can accomplish that, rather than fall behind schedule again any further. Luke chapter 19. In our last session, we saw Jesus was either coming into or going out of Jericho, or both, when he healed two blind men.

One of whom was a guy named Bartimaeus. The other one we don't know as much about. But it was Jericho was the region, and it was while Jesus was in Jericho, or passing through Jericho, that the next story occurs.

At the beginning of Luke 19, it says, Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, because of the crowd, for he was of short stature.

So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was going to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him, and said to him, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house. And he made haste and came down and received him joyfully.

And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone to be the guest with a man who is a sinner. Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Look, Lord, I give half of my

goods to the poor, and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold. And Jesus said to him, Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is the son of Abraham.

For the son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. Now, obviously, although there was a great crowd of people thronging Jesus as he went through Jericho, we only learn of one man by name, and he once visited Penge. Jesus singled out one person to be his host, to host himself and his disciples that day.

By the way, Jesus and his house to be hosted in and to eat in probably was a fairly expensive proposition to have Jesus and the twelve apostles over for dinner. So some might think that Zacchaeus was singled out because he was a rich man and probably had a large house, but that's not likely to be the case, because we don't, I think even some poor people would crowd Jesus and the disciples in their house, even at great expense themselves. And I don't think Jesus would have, of course, used that as a criteria for deciding who he's going to stay with.

It's interesting, he didn't wait to be invited into Zacchaeus' house. He told Zacchaeus, I'm coming to eat at your house. When you're the Lord, you can do that kind of a thing.

Nobody else really ought to behave that way. It's not good manners to go up to somebody and say, I'm inviting myself over for dinner. But that's just the thing about Jesus, the unique thing about him.

He acted as if he had the right to commandeer people's houses and their donkeys and things, as we'll see later in this chapter. He was the Lord and the Lord calls his own plays. He writes his own rules.

And that's what he has the right to do. Of course, he did nothing unloving. Zacchaeus was delighted to have Jesus over and Zacchaeus would have been pleased to have just gotten a glimpse of Jesus.

And instead, he got to spend the whole afternoon with him. Now, we're told that Zacchaeus was, in verse two, said he was a chief tax collector, not just a tax collector. Matthew had been a tax collector also.

And there were other tax collectors and sinners that Jesus had associated with, which had drawn criticism upon him before. But Zacchaeus is not just another publican, he was a chief publican. He was a high-ranking one.

Apparently, he probably had others under him. And he mentions later on the possibility that he had taken things from people by false accusation down in verse eight. I don't know exactly how that would be understood.

I mean, if he had said, I've taken it by false attribution of debt, then we would

understand that what he had done was in representing to somebody what they owed, he would have given them an inflated figure. And so that if the Romans expected the people to pay a certain amount, Zacchaeus, like apparently many tax collectors probably did, would figure the amount he had to pay to Rome and then inflate the figure and communicate that to the taxpayer. And basically, probably they'd inflate it as much as the market could bear and as much as they thought the person could afford to pay without protest.

Excuse me. And then they'd just pocket the difference, of course, which was why people hated tax collectors. For one thing, it was a political no-no to be a tax collector because you were siding with the enemy, the resented Romans.

And the other reason was because tax collectors were notoriously dishonest in this respect. And Zacchaeus suggests that he perhaps has been dishonest. But he doesn't say by false attribution of debt.

He didn't say if I have misrepresented people's indebtedness. He said if I've taken anything by false accusation. Now, I don't want to make much out of this because I don't know that much about the Greek word and its nuances, but it's a surprising word to me.

I would have expected some other word than that there. It's, you know, anybody might be guilty of false accusation. And in a court of law, a person might rip somebody off through making false accusations against them.

But that's not what tax collectors were usually involved in. I wonder personally whether he even extorted money from his other tax collectors under him. He was a chief tax collector.

He was in a hierarchy and had subordinate tax collectors under him. And it's possible that he extorted money from them by threatening to accuse them of dishonesty or whatever and expose them of what they did. Although I don't know that he's referring to that here.

All we know is that while all tax collectors had a reputation for being rip-off artists, this guy was chief, at least in that area, and therefore was probably one of the biggest rip-offs in town. And everybody knew it. And he was small of stature.

And it so happened that as Jesus approached the town, news apparently of his arrival preceded him and crowds thronged the streets on both sides. And Zacchaeus wasn't able to see over people's heads and not being a popular man in that town, probably people didn't want to move over and let him through. So he came up with a plan.

He calculated what route Jesus was going to take through town and he ran ahead and climbed up in a tree where he could get a glance from above the heads of the onlookers. He had no idea, of course, that Jesus would take special notice of him. And of course,

Jesus, we are told, when he came to that place, he looked up and saw him and said to him, Zacchaeus.

Now this probably surprised Zacchaeus. It's a very rare thing for Jesus to exhibit this kind of a word of knowledge. I mean, he does it on other occasions when he tells the woman at the well that she had been married five times and was living with a man who wasn't her husband.

That was obviously an operation of what we call the gift of word of knowledge. It would appear that he must have had such a gift now too. Unless, of course, you know, parts of the story that are not told, it could be that as Jesus stood and looked up in the tree, knowing the man was there, that the crowd's attention was drawn to the tree too.

And people said, oh, Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus is up in the tree. What's that guy doing up there? You know, and Jesus heard the guy's name and so called him by name, you know, Zacchaeus, come on down. It doesn't say how Jesus knew the man's name.

And I don't know if we're supposed to assume this was a supernatural revelation given to him on this occasion or not. If it was, it doesn't explain why God would reveal the man's name supernaturally to Jesus on this occasion and then on other occasions withhold such information from Jesus, like who touched his garment, which he didn't know until he inquired and things like that. I don't, you know, I'm not sure how much to read into that, a supernatural recognition of the man's name.

And I make this, I belabor it this much simply because sometimes preachers have made an issue of it. Say, you see, Jesus supernaturally knew the guy's name and Zacchaeus would be amazed that Jesus was able to call him by name. Maybe so.

But it's also possible that there were people murmuring the name of Zacchaeus once they saw him up there. Anyway, Jesus invites himself to Zacchaeus's house. And so, of course, Zacchaeus was pleased.

Verse six says he received Jesus joyfully. He made haste to come down. And verse seven tells us the crowd's reaction, which is not too surprising.

I mean, one could have anticipated it without being told. They murmured, saying, this guy, Jesus, has gone to be the guest of a man who's a sinner. No one in town, no respectable person in town would have gone to Zacchaeus's house.

And here Jesus was the man of the hour. They'd come out with the key of the city for him. And everyone was honoring him.

And here he goes in and associates with this guy. He didn't. I mean, of all the people in town Jesus could have had lunch with, there must have been many more noble citizens who would have longed to have Jesus visit them than this.

But Jesus said on another occasion, it's not those who are well that need a physician. It's those who are sick. And Jesus didn't even respond in this case.

He was just he was accustomed to being accused of hanging out with the wrong people. He was accustomed to being labeled a friend of sinners, and he didn't mind it. That's what he was.

He was a friend of sinners. And so we read of the criticism, but we don't read of any attention given to the criticism by Jesus or by Zacchaeus. Seemingly oblivious to the criticism, Jesus and the disciples have their lunch with Zacchaeus.

And at some point, either after the meal or at some other point during the afternoon, Zacchaeus stood up and announced that he was going to change his ways. Now, we don't have a single line prior to this of anything Jesus said to him while visiting. One can only imagine, but we can't even imagine.

I mean, Jesus said so many different kinds of things during his ministry. We don't know which of them he said to Zacchaeus. But clearly, I think given Zacchaeus response, Jesus must have communicated to Zacchaeus some of the things like he communicated to the rich young ruler, for example, that he lacked this thing.

Now, the rich young ruler, on the other hand, had never stolen and never been dishonest. And his goods were honestly gotten. Zacchaeus was not only a rich man, which in one sense might put him in that class of people who would hardly be able to come into the kingdom, but he was also a crook.

And that might have made it easier for him to come into the kingdom than the rich young ruler, because the rich young ruler had much he could boast of in his own virtue. He could say, I've kept all the commandments from my youth up. And my riches, he could have deduced, are God's blessing to me for my obedient service and so forth, whereas Zacchaeus couldn't make any such claim.

He was more like the publican in the story Jesus later told, who beat his breast and said, God, be merciful to me, a sinner, as opposed to the Pharisee in the same story who congratulated himself for his obedience to God. Here we have a case where just like the rich young ruler had been interested in talking to Jesus. And we know that Jesus told him to do things that he wasn't willing to do.

And when he saw him, well, here's another rich chief ruler of sorts, a ruler among the publicans, but he responds positively. Now we don't read that Jesus told him to sell all that he hasn't given before. And that's interesting that he didn't, because here's a guy who probably more than the rich young ruler needed to, needed to get his house in order and needed to probably become less materialistic.

But probably the reason Jesus didn't say that to him is because Zacchaeus volunteered

this proposition. He says, I'm going to give half of my goods to the poor. And if I've taken anything, you know, illegally or dishonestly, I'm going to restore fourfold.

Now the fourfold just means four times as much. And it reflects what the law itself required of thieves. They were supposed to return fourfold.

For instance, Exodus 22, the opening verses gives laws about restitution. If a thief was caught who had stolen an ox or a, or a lamb or something like that, it says in verse one of Exodus 22, the man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it. He shall restore five oxen for an oxen, four sheep for a sheep.

So apparently the fourfold comes from this understanding that Zacchaeus had that a fourfold restitution for a minor theft and a greater restitution for greater theft, would be a fourfold or fivefold. So he volunteers. I'm going to give fourfold back to those I've wronged.

I'm going to make restitution. Now, maybe this is why he wasn't required to sell all that he hadn't given before. If he sold all of it, he couldn't make restitution to those he'd ripped off.

We are to assume, I think, that he was able, he was rich enough that he could give away half his goods and still have enough to restore fourfold to those he had wronged. Now, this might suggest that the majority of his money had been gotten honestly. He does suggest that he may be culpable of ripping some people off and he hopes to make good on that.

But if you think about the figures, the mathematics, he was thinking that if he gave away half of his goods to the poor, with the remaining half, he could still pay back four times as much as anything he'd ripped off. Which means less than a quarter of the remaining half would represent money that he'd gotten wrongly, in his opinion. So we'd have to say the majority of his riches he had gotten without ripping people off, or at least that was his judgment of the situation.

In any case, his plan that he announced here was the evidence that he truly was repentant. That without being told, it would appear. He repented of any wrongdoing he had done.

And there's two things he wanted to do, is get right, with reference to the dishonesty. He wanted to make restitution according to the law for any wrongs he'd done. And there may not have been all that many compared to some.

We don't know. And then he also wanted to do something for the poor, which is, of course, what Jesus said the rich young ruler should be concerned about. This man volunteered that which showed that his heart was changed.

If the rich young ruler had obeyed Jesus, we would still not know whether his heart was changed or whether he was just doing it because Jesus had put him on the spot and he'd made such an ado about wanting to take Jesus' advice. It wouldn't have been spontaneous on his part. But here it would appear to be spontaneous.

Zacchaeus, he's got a vision now for the kingdom of God. He sees the need to be concerned for the poor. He sees the need to be just before God, even if he has to impoverish himself, making fourfold restitution.

That's more important than all of his possession. And he announces his intention. Jesus said to him in verse nine, today salvation has come to this house.

Now, whether that means just Zacchaeus himself, if he lived alone or his entire household, his family, it was not uncommon for a whole household to get saved at the same time. Actually, it's not all that uncommon even in modern times. If the head of household gets saved.

Some people have felt that there's a guarantee in Acts chapter 16 that if somebody gets saved, their household will be guaranteed to get saved as well. Because Paul and Silas said to the Philippian jailer, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved and your house, meaning your household. That's Acts chapter 16 in verse 31, I believe.

And some have taken that as a, yeah, some have taken that as a, you know, a promise to all, a universal promise. If you get saved, your whole household will get saved. But that doesn't agree with the rest of the teaching of scripture.

Jesus said he came to bring division in households and enemies who would be those of his own household as a result of their turning to Christ. But there have been cases, not unusual, for the head of the household to get saved and his wife, you know, follows her husband and so do the children. And so anyway, this whole house apparently was saved as a result of Zacchaeus' resolve here, his repentance and his desire to make restitution.

And Jesus says it at the end of verse nine, because he also is a son of Abraham. This seems to be his answer to the critics in verse seven. In verse seven, they said, this man's going in to be a guest with one who is a sinner.

And Jesus' answer to them, although he's speaking it to, initially to Zacchaeus, it's quite clear that when he says he means Zacchaeus, so he's talking to somebody else. His comment is for the benefit of others listening. He, Zacchaeus, is also a son of Abraham.

You recall that back in the 13th chapter of Luke, when Jesus healed the woman who had the spirit of infirmity and for 18 years she had been unable to stand up straight. Jesus said in verse 16, so ought not this woman being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound, think of it, for 18 years be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath. Jesus emphasized that his befriending of this woman on the Sabbath, although it drew criticism

from the religious people, it was justified because she was, after all, a daughter of Abraham.

And likewise, his befriending of Zacchaeus on this occasion, though it drew criticism from the religious and the proper crowd, it was nonetheless appropriate because he too was a son of Abraham. Now, by this, I understand both to mean physical descent from Abraham. Although, of course, after Zacchaeus' conversion and probably after that woman's healing, they probably also became believers and were spiritually children of Abraham.

But I think that his comment, for she is a daughter of Abraham or he is a son of Abraham, is a way of saying that, you know, you people who boast in your Jewishness forget that there's a lot of sons of Abraham and daughters of Abraham in need that you're neglecting. When the law says you shall love your brother and take care of your brother and love your neighbors yourself and so forth, certainly your first obligation is to your fellow brothers, children of Abraham. And here are some neglected, some lost sons, as it were, of Abraham.

And that's what Jesus means in verse 10. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. Here was a lost son of Abraham and nobody was looking for him.

He was living among his countrymen and they ignored him. They wouldn't even let him press through the crowd to have a look at Jesus. They criticized Jesus for going into the man's house.

They obviously wouldn't go in his house. They were quite content for this son of Abraham to remain lost and Jesus wasn't. He said the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Now, it's notable that at this late point in Jesus' ministry, he's tending to make more comments than previously as to the import of his mission and what he had come to do. Only in our last session, I believe it was, or the one before, in Mark chapter 10, we noticed that Jesus explained his mission in Mark 10, 45, where he said, even as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. Now, to give his life a ransom for many has to do with his atoning work.

He came to save people. And he says that here too, the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost. I don't recall that Jesus made a lot of comments in his earlier ministry about what the purpose of his coming was so much.

He came to earlier in his ministry, he announced the kingdom was at hand. He taught ethics. He taught about faith in God and teaching that God was a Father and so forth.

But now, as his own death approached, he began to say things to his disciples and to

others about the saving work he had come to do. It was time to, you know, after this point, I don't recall that he gave any more teachings of ethics or anything like that without being asked specifically about them. And he was now turning the attention of his emphasis to the subject of why he had come.

And the reason was this was just he was on his way to Jerusalem for his final week when this story took place, where we're coming to what they call the passion week rapidly here. And his death was imminent. And so he is giving occasional references, which he had not very much previously to the meaning of his coming, which was to die, to save the ones who had lost.

And so he justifies his coming to Zacchaeus in that manner. Here is a lost son of Abraham. God sent me to save him.

Those lost ones. Now we have a parable. It's a very lengthy parable.

Verses 11 through 27. It's kind of interesting and it resembles another parable. Some would argue that it's another version of the same parable.

Others would say it isn't and it doesn't have enough in common. Actually, it has very many similarities with the parable of the talents, which is found in Matthew chapter 25. There's three parables in Matthew chapter 25, and one of them is the parable of the ten virgins.

Then there's the parable of the talents, and then there's the parable of the sheep and the goats. And the one about the talents is Matthew 25 verses 14 through 30. We won't read it right now, but just suffice it to say Matthew has arranged it as part of the Olivet Discourse.

In Matthew, the Olivet Discourse is actually two chapters long, chapter 24 and 25. But chapter 25 just has these three lengthy parables that all have something to do with being prepared for his coming. And whether Jesus really spoke the parable of the talents on the occasion of his talk on the Mount of Olives, we don't know because Matthew does tend to combine things from other times in one place.

But in any case, the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 has the same lesson, and in many respects, the same details as this parable of the minas. I think the older King James says the parable of the pounds. A pound or a mina is an increment of money, just like a talent was a weight of money.

And so that is, both parables are talking about money, and both of them are talking about stewardship of money. Now the details, incidental details, are a little different in the two parables, but the meaning of the two is identical, it would appear to me. Let me read this lengthy parable.

Now as they heard these things, he spoke another parable because he was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. Therefore, he said, a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, do business till I come.

But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him saying, we will not have this man to reign over us. And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, and called to him that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first saying, Master, your mina has earned ten minas.

And he said to him, well done, good and faithful servant, because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities. The second came saying, Master, your mina has earned five minas. Likewise, he said to him, you also be over five cities.

And another came saying, Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief, for I feared you because you are an austere man, you collect what you did not deposit, you reap what you did not sow. And he said to him, out of your own mouth, I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow.

Why then did you not put my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest? And he said to those who stood by, take the mina from him and give it to him who has ten minas. But they said to him, Master, he has ten minas. For I say to you that to everyone who has will be given.

And from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. But bring here those enemies of mine who did not want me to reign over them and slay them before me. Now, this parable has two objects, it would appear, or actually three.

Whereas the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 doesn't focus on quite as many points, mainly it focuses on the issue of stewardship, which is a principal meaning of the parable here too, that God has given certain assets to his people and they are expected to use them to produce profit for him. That's probably the dominant theme of this parable. However, there's two other subordinate themes.

One of them is insinuated in verse 11 when it says he told this parable because he was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. Part of his reasoning for giving this parable was to tell them that the kingdom of God was not going to appear immediately. Now, remember back in chapter 17, verse 20, the Pharisees had asked him, when will the kingdom of God appear or when would it come? And he answered, the kingdom of God is not going to come with observation.

It's not going to come visibly, at least not right away. Now, we know, of course, when Jesus returns, his kingdom will be universal. There will be nothing left but his kingdom.

The heavens and the earth will be dissolved. The elements will melt with fervent heat. There'll be a new heaven, new earth in which to all righteousness.

His kingdom will be universal and it'll be visible. How could it not be visible when there won't be anything else but it? However, at this present time and in Jesus' day, the kingdom of God was not visible. It had not appeared, but it had come.

And he mentioned that in Luke chapter 17 in verse 21. He says, the kingdom of God is among you. The kingdom of God has come.

It is within your midst. So Jesus indicated the kingdom had, in fact, already come in a sense, but its appearance, its visible, observable reality was yet to come and it was yet for a long ways off. And, of course, that still may be a long way off from our point of view.

We don't know. It may be, we're certainly a lot closer to his kingdom appearing now than they were then. We're 2,000 years closer, but we may still be another 2,000 years off from it.

The point is that Jesus told the parable to prevent them from thinking that the kingdom would appear immediately. I wonder whether Jesus, if he were here today, would say anything to try to prevent modern Christians from thinking that his kingdom was going to appear immediately. Um, I don't know.

He apparently did not want them to have this kind of attitude that the kingdom is going to appear immediately. What did, what attitude did he want them to have instead? The attitude of, well, I've got a job to do here. I've got something I'm supposed to be accomplishing.

He tells a parable how this owner gave these things to his servants. And he told them in verse 13, do business until I come. The older English, uh, in the, in the King James says occupy until I come.

Keep occupied. Not just keep busy with busy work, but occupy yourself with this that I've given you. Make use of it.

And when I come, you can turn over to me whatever you've made with it. So what Jesus is saying here is let's not be getting all wrapped up in apocalyptic pure about the kingdom going to come right now. What you need to focus on is what you're supposed to be doing until it does.

If Jesus wanted people to be, um, obsessed with the question of when the kingdom

would come, he could have said something more specific about when that might be. Now we might say, well, he didn't know when it would be only his father knew. True.

But everything he spoke was from his father. If his father wanted us to know that his father could have revealed that. He could have said, well, it's gonna be 2000 years or three or four or however many.

He didn't give any clues like that. And that would have been the best way to convince these people that the kingdom wasn't going to appear immediately. And he could just said, listen, it's a couple thousand years off.

That would put him off right away from thinking it's going to happen any moment. But he doesn't give any specifics. Instead, he tells the story of a man who goes into a far country.

The fact that it's a far country suggests it's going to take him a long time to get back. He's going to be gone for a long time. If you look over at Matthew 25 in the parable of the talents, although like I say, the details in some cases are different.

We have a. We have something similar because in Matthew 25, 14, it says the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And it goes on to give a story very much like the one we're reading. But then in verse 19, Matthew 25, 19 says, and after a long time, the Lord of those servants came.

That's the second coming, as I understand. That's a reference to his return. But he specifies that he's going on a long journey and he'll come back after a long time.

Now, a lot of people think that the disciples held the view that Jesus was going to come back immediately. I mean, a lot of people have looked in Paul's writings and said, oh, Paul thought Jesus was going to come back in his own time. Well, I don't think there's any evidence that Paul did think that.

And I think there's a fair amount of evidence that he didn't think that, especially in 2 Thessalonians chapter two, where Paul says, don't let anyone fool you by telling you the kingdom of God is at hand or that the coming of the Lord is at hand. So that's not going to happen until there's a great falling away and the man of sin is revealed. Paul indicated there's a fair number of things got to happen yet.

And when people say, well, didn't the apostles think Jesus was coming in their time? I don't think they did. Jesus had told him it's like a man going to a far country. And after a long time, he comes back.

Of course, they didn't know how long that would be. It's possible that a few decades might have seemed like a long time to them. So we don't know exactly how the disciples

pictured the length of time.

But Paul's writing, as I say, in 2 Thessalonians does not give us the indication that he thought Jesus was going to come back anytime soon at the time he wrote it. There were several important things that had to happen first, he said, and it wasn't close. And don't believe anyone who says it is.

Now, I want to say this too. If it was important to Jesus and important to Paul, Jesus here and Paul in 2 Thessalonians, to put the disciples off of looking for an immediate return of Christ or looking for an immediate appearance of the kingdom, if that was important to Jesus, he must have thought it's not healthy for people to be always looking for such the apostle Paul and warning them not to listen to people who said such things. He must thought it was unhealthy for the church to be talking like, well, it's near.

He's going to come soon. Unhealthy in the sense that it gets their focus in the wrong place. Now, if it wasn't healthy for the Christians in Jesus day and in Paul's day, one has to ask, why would it be healthy for Christians in our day to be fascinated with the question? When is it going to happen? It's going to happen immediately.

Why should that matter? This parable says the man went away for a long time. He was going to return, but he went away for a long time and he told the servants to occupy or do business to do things in his service while he's gone. And we have in the parable, of course, his return also.

Now the illustration he gives at the beginning in verse 12 is that a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. What is this? What is the background of this picture? I mean, how often did nobleman become kings? Here's a guy who already had some, you know, local status as a nobleman, but he wanted to get a kingdom and he apparently had one coming to him. He had to just go away and receive it.

But how was this to be? Was he supposed to go and are we to understand that he took an army with him to conquer a faraway land and then rule it? Well, then why would he return to where he came from? Why wouldn't he just stay and rule the kingdom that he went and conquered? There is in fact, a historical precedent behind this. Josephus tells of more than one time when local rulers would go to Rome to be established officially by the Roman Emperor over their kingdom. Archelaus, the son of Herod the Great, had done this.

Now you might recall Herod the Great was ruling in Jerusalem when Jesus was born, but he died while Jesus was still very young, while Jesus was still probably a baby or toddler. But when Herod the Great died, he had left a will bequeathing the reign of Judea and a few other regions to his son Archelaus. However, the people of Judea didn't want Archelaus to rule them.

He was a creep and he was a cruel man and so forth. And they protested, but Archelaus made a trip to Rome, a far country, to receive official confirmation that his father's will would be honored and that he would receive this kingdom. So the man went to a far country to receive the kingdom and then to return to rule the kingdom.

The kingdom he would rule was not the country that he went to. Now, I don't know to what degree to press the parallels to the kingdom of God, but this would suggest probably that the kingdom is not to be identified with heaven. Heaven is the far country that Jesus went away to and he's going to return from there.

He went away to the far country so that he could receive the kingdom and then come back here and rule it. The kingdom is here. Well, it'll be on the new earth, I believe.

Of course, his kingdom is already here in spiritual form, but it hasn't appeared yet. And that's the point of the parable. The kingdom wasn't even very soon going to appear.

That would be much later at his second coming. But he had to go to heaven in order to obtain the kingdom. Let me show you something interesting in Daniel chapter seven.

Daniel chapter seven, verse 13 says, I was watching in the night visions and behold, one like the son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He came to the ancient of days and they brought him near before him. And then verse 14, then to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all people's nations languages should serve him.

And his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away in his kingdom, one that shall not be destroyed. Now, this is a prophecy about Jesus, of course. Jesus is described as one like the son of man, which just means one like a human form, as opposed to the one in the previous verses of the chapter, there was a kingdom that was like a lion and one was like a bear and one's like a leopard.

Now he sees a kingdom represented by one like a man, not an animal, but like a human. And this one happens to be Jesus. Now he's coming with the clouds of heaven and the wording there has tempted many.

In fact, some have succumbed without a fight to this temptation to see this as a picture of the second coming, because there are passages about the second coming that are coming with the clouds of glory and so forth. And since there's clouds here, some have felt this is a picture. In fact, most have felt this is a picture of the second coming.

However, if you'll notice, he doesn't come to earth, he comes to heaven. He's coming in the clouds of heaven to the ancient of days. That's to God, the father.

The direction of movement is up, not down. This is Jesus, no doubt at his ascension. When Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives, according to Acts chapter one, the disciples watched him go up and disappear into the clouds.

Daniels, from the point of view of his vision, he's above the clouds in heaven, looking at the heavenly scene. And here comes Jesus through the clouds to God. And when he came to God, what did he do? Well, according to Psalm 110 and the frequent references to that song in the New Testament, Jesus came to the father and sat down at the right hand of God.

What for? Just to bide his time until the time for his kingdom to come? No, so he could reign. He sat down to reign at the right hand of God. He received his kingdom and he has been reigning ever since his ascension over his kingdom, over his people.

But then some might say, well, since he received it, why didn't he come back? Well, let's just put it this way. He's still in the process of receiving it. He is reigning, but not all his subjects are submitting.

He has, as Jesus said in Matthew 28, 18, he has all authority over heaven and earth. That means he's the king. He's the ruler over it all.

But not all of his subjects submit to him. And what he's doing in the meantime is conquering from his seat in heaven. He's conquering the earth through the gospel.

He's conquered you. He's conquered me. He's conquered a bunch of other people, too.

But look at what Paul says about this in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. 1 Corinthians chapter 15 says in verse 24, then comes the end when he delivers the kingdom to God, the father, when he has put an end to all rule and all authority and all power, for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death, for he has put all things under his feet.

Now it talks about all things being put under Jesus' feet. That is an allusion to Psalm 110, where it says, God said to Jesus, sit at my right hand till I make your enemies your footstool. Well, he's sitting at the right hand of God, and he's going to keep sitting there until all of his enemies have been made his footstool.

That's taken 2,000 years so far. It may take another 2,000 for all we know. But that's what he's waiting for.

He's sitting, but Paul says he's reigning now, and he will continue to reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. He had begun to reign in Paul's own lifetime, and he will continue to reign until there's no more enemies for him to conquer, which suggests that the church age is seen as a time of warfare, a time of Christ having received his kingdom, but not yet being fully acknowledged in his kingdom. Not all of his subjects are accepting him.

Now that is also in the parable here, because it says at a certain point in Luke 19, 14, but his citizens hated him. Now, they were his citizens. They belonged to him, but they hated

him.

And they sent a delegation after him saying, we will not have this man to reign over us. So here we have him. He receives a kingdom, but his subjects don't want him.

Herod the Great had found this to be true. The emperor had appointed Herod the Great to be king over Jerusalem in 40 BC, but the citizens of Jerusalem wouldn't have him. They actually made war against Herod, and he had to fight for three years to conquer his own citizens so that he could come.

He fought his way into Jerusalem. It took him three years to do it. So it was 37 BC when Herod finally was established and sat on the throne over Jerusalem.

He had been appointed as king three years earlier, but the citizens rejected him, and so he had to conquer them. Now, of course, to compare Jesus with Herod the Great or with Archelaus would seem to be strange and inappropriate, but I think what Jesus is doing here, he's giving a scenario that was within the living memory of his hearers. There were parallels, political parallels of this kind of thing happening that they could remember.

Herod had had to fight against his rebellious citizens in order to take the kingdom that had been appointed to him by the emperor. Archelaus had had to leave Jerusalem and go to Rome to be re-established as king over Jerusalem against the wishes of the citizens. So often in this parable, this nobleman goes away, he receives the kingdom, but his citizens reject him.

They say, we don't want this guy to reign over us. Now, we don't hear about them again right away. That's just kind of thrown in, almost parenthetical in verse 14 in the parable.

They hated him, but we've been told in verses 12 and 13 that he had some servants to whom he invested his capital for them to go out and work with it, invest it, use it, turn a profit for him. And so we read of his return in verse 15. He reckons first with those who had been entrusted with goods and they are first rewarded.

But before the story is over in verse 27, it says, but bring here those enemies of mine, 27, who did not want me to reign over them and slay them before me. When Jesus returns, all those that have rejected him throughout this age of his absence, he'll deal with him. He'll slay them.

He'll come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those that know not God and that do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to second Thessalonians 1.8. So here we have several factors in the parable. The first is the kingdom wouldn't appear immediately. It was going to appear, but it was going to be a long ways off because the king was going to have to go away for a long time.

He had a long journey. He'd receive his kingdom, but he's not going to, you know, he's

going to be resisted. Some of his subjects are not going to want him and he won't deal with them till he comes back.

When he returns, he'll slay them all. In the meantime, however, there's this other thing, and that is that his servants who are not rejecting his kingship are entrusted as stewards of his revenues. Now that is probably the dominant feature of the parable.

It certainly is the dominant feature of the parables of the talents in Matthew 25. And that would probably be the one of the principal lessons in view of this parable as well. In verse 13, it says he called 10 of his servants in the parable of the talents.

There are only three servants mentioned. There were 10 servants that were brought and he gave them various amounts to do business with. Amina, we're told in the margin here was about three months salary for the average labor.

So like in our time, I suppose a person who goes and works at McDonald's or something, let's just take the poorest person. He works full time. He's probably going to make, what's the person going to bring home from McDonald's? Anyone know? Probably not.

You're all Canadians anyway. You don't know what they take home in America. But I imagine they'd make a little less than a thousand bucks, I would think, working full time, less than a thousand bucks a month, even if they're making more than minimum wage.

Let's be generous and say they make a thousand bucks a month. So Amina then would, in terms of parallel purchasing power, be maybe like \$3,000. One guy is given 10 of them, that'd be like \$30,000.

Another is given five, should be like \$15,000. One is given one, maybe a thousand. A thousand dollars is just a round figure, but it'd be something like, oh, I'm sorry.

Amina is three, I'm sorry, is three months. So it'd be, OK, so \$3,000 would be like one Amina. And then it'd be \$3,000, \$15,000, \$30,000, respectively.

Now, only three different figures are given, although 10 different servants are named. So I think we'd understand that, you know, the examples that are given, the three examples are given are sort of just characteristic of the way he dealt with the situation. Probably, you know, it's not important to decide what the other seven guys did with theirs.

The point is that these servants were not given these Aminas to use for their own fun and games. They weren't, it wasn't for their own entertainment. They were given into it by their master.

It was his goods. It says in Matthew 25 that he delivered his goods to his servants. Matthew 25 in the parable of the talents, which, as I said, is quite parallel to this.

Matthew 25, 14 says, and he called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.

That doesn't mean he was divesting himself of his goods, that he was impoverishing himself at his, you know, so that his servants could become now rich. They were just entrusted to use his goods.

They were slaves in all likelihood, or at least stewards. They were investment stewards and they were entrusted to go out and use what he owned and to produce more for him to own. It's clear when he came back, they said, here's your stuff.

And here's the profit I made with it. They gave it back to him. They didn't think it was theirs, not for a moment.

Now, this is an important point in the story. And we've talked about stewardship before, but it's in a parable like this that it comes out most clearly that whatever we have, and this clearly must be what Jesus is telling us as we're awaiting his return, as we're awaiting the appearing of the kingdom.