



The 'parable of the bags of gold' is discussed in this study.<sup>1</sup>

'The parable of the ten minas' from **Luke 19:12-27** is also commented upon.

### **The context in which Jesus tells the parable.**

Prior to the parable of the bags of gold, **Matthew** opens chapter 25 with Jesus' parable about ten virgins who are waiting for the arrival of the bridegroom.

Jesus clearly refers to His return in that parable.

In the Gospel according to **Luke** the parable of the ten minas is followed by Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and His arrest.

In both Gospels Jesus is taken prisoner and condemned shortly after these parables. Jesus' departure from this world and His return is referred to in both parables.

### **A man / a man.**

In **Matthew 25:14** Jesus talks about 'a man going on a journey'.

In **Luke 19:12** about 'A man of noble birth' who goes to a distant country to have himself appointed king.

**Jesus** is referring to **Himself** here.

He is about to be crucified and, after His resurrection from the dead, to leave the world, in order to take His place in heaven at the right hand of the Father.

### **The servants.**

In both parables (Matthew 25:14 / Luke 19:13) the master calls the servants who are in his service to him.

The servants symbolise **the disciples** of Jesus.

A disciple of Jesus has put his life under His authority, just like servants live under the authority of their master.

The similarity between servants and disciples is discussed extensively in the studies 'Discipleship (1)'<sup>2</sup> and 'Conversion and discipleship in the O.T.'<sup>3</sup>.

### **The property.**

In **Matthew 25:15** Jesus compares the master's property with **bags of gold**.

In **Luke 19:13** Jesus equates the master's property to **minas**.

In both parables Jesus presents the master's property as a **financial value**.

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<sup>1</sup> Text: Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 19: 12-27.

<sup>2</sup> Study: Discipleship (1).

<sup>3</sup> Study: Conversion and discipleship in the Old Testament.



### The value of a bag of gold:

The value of **1 bag of gold** was the same as **6,000 drachmas** (Greek currency), or **denarii** (Roman currency).

An example of the **denarius** is to be found in Jesus' parable where a master is looking for workers for his vineyard.

- *He agreed to pay them **a denarius for the day** and sent them into his vineyard. (Matthew 20:2)*

**One denarius** was a day labourer's wage therefore.

**One bag of gold** is thus equal to the wage for **6,000 working days**.

Calculated in terms of our time **one bag of gold** has the value of approximately **25 annual salaries**.

### The value of a mina:

In the New Testament the **mina** ('**mna**' in Greek) only appears in this parable in Luke, so it is difficult to represent its value.

Consulting different works produces widely different values for the mina.

This is not important with reference to the interpretation of the parable in Matthew 25 however.

### The property as a symbol.

Before his departure the master divides his property among his servants.

If the master in the parable is Jesus and the servants are His disciples, what do the bags of gold and the minas represent?

What is 'the property' of Jesus that He entrusts to His disciples at His departure?

Towards the end of His life on earth Jesus said:

- *It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the **Advocate** will not come to you; **but if I go, I will send him to you.** (John 16:7)*

**The bags of gold and the minas are symbols of the Holy Spirit** whom every disciple of Jesus receives in his heart, according to the promise:

- *I will give you **a new heart** and put **a new spirit** in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put **my Spirit** in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)*

This is **the Holy Spirit**, of whom Paul writes that He makes His dwelling in the heart of the disciple<sup>4</sup>, as a result of which the disciple fulfils the law, through the divine love<sup>5</sup>, for:

- ***God's love** has been poured out into our hearts **through the Holy Spirit**, who has been given to us. (Romans 5:5)*

**The Holy Spirit and the love of God are inseparable, one from the other.**

**The Holy Spirit, as the third Person of the Divine Trinity, IS love, for God IS love<sup>6</sup>.**

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4 Study: Discipleship (2).

5 Study: Romans 13:10 – Love is the fulfilment of the law.

6 Study: Who is God.



## The master entrusts his property to his servants.

The master dares to entrust his property to his servants during his absence.

Similarly, Jesus also left the Holy Spirit, the Advocate behind after His departure from this world. Jesus entrusts the Holy Spirit, who puts the divine love in their heart, to His disciples. He trusts that they will remain faithful to His teaching during His absence, and that they will voluntarily allow themselves to be led by the Holy Spirit, who, as Jesus said:

- ... will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:26)

## What each servant receives.

**Matthew 25:15** says that the master entrusts a **different amount** to **three servants**.

Each servant receives an amount **in accordance with his competence**, his natural ability.

The first servant receives **5 bags of gold** (equivalent to 125 annual salaries), the second servant **2** (equivalent to 50), and the third receives **1 bag** (equivalent to 25 annual salaries).

**Luke 19:13** says that the master gives **one mina to each servant**.

When compared, both parables show that the servants:

- Are entrusted with property of **very great value** (Matthew)
- **Each** receives **the same amount** (Luke)

That is precisely what happens when one receives the Holy Spirit.

The **value of the love of God** through the Holy Spirit **cannot be expressed in terms of a sum of money**.

And **every disciple receives the same amount**. Everyone's 'competence' is **completely 'filled'**:

- *For the one whom God has sent (Jesus) speaks the words of God, for **God gives the Spirit without limit**. (literally: not with a measured amount). (John 3:34)*

Every disciple of Jesus Christ who receives the Holy Spirit in his heart is 'fulfilled', or, better, 'filled' with divine love, according to the extent to which he/she **opens him/herself up to the working** of the Holy Spirit.

The amount is not measured off. Every disciple is 'filled' with the Holy Spirit, is 'filled' with divine love.

## Giving account - verse 19.

In **Matthew** the man who goes abroad expects his servants to **increase** the value of his property during his absence.

In **Luke** the man of noble birth instructs them to **do business** with it.

When both return after a long time, they call their servants to give account of their management.

This is what John saw in the visions of Jesus' return:

- *And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged **according to what they had***



**done** as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged **according to what they had done**. (Revelation 20:12-13)

As Paul also writes:

- For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while **in the body, whether good or bad**. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Which works someone has performed will be revealed before the judgement throne of Jesus Christ. **Not what** someone has done will be **the determining factor** in this respect, but what the  **motive** was.

Jesus is interested in what lives in the heart, the soul of an individual.

Whether the works done while in the body are good or bad according to God's norms is determined by the state of the disciple's heart.<sup>7</sup>

### The first two servants' account.

In both parables the first two servants increase the value of the master's property 'in accordance with their competence'.

In **Matthew 25:16-17** the first servant, who received 5 bags of gold, has earned 5 more. The second, with 2 bags of gold, has earned 2 more.

In **Luke 19:16 and 18** the first of the ten servants who received a mina has earned 10 more, the second, 5.

They are praised by their master for their effort.

The property Jesus bequeaths to His disciples is the divine love through the Holy Spirit.

**What can a disciple offer Jesus as proceeds from his life??**

**A disciple of Jesus Christ**, led by the Holy Spirit, has only one commission in life: **to love, as Jesus loved the people and came to the world to serve**.

Paul elaborates extensively upon what this means in 1 Corinthians 13, the chapter of love.

He teaches what **the divine love** through the Holy Spirit **produces** in Galatians 5:

- **The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control**. (Galatians 5:22)

The fruit of the Spirit is not measured off against the deeds a disciple of Jesus does in his life.

Whether a disciple has really received a '**heart of flesh**' is perceived in the **radiance** emanating from his life.

What Jesus expects from a disciple as '**proceeds**' for His Kingdom is the **result** of a life motivated by love for God and his neighbour, which is put into the heart of the disciple by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, when the Holy Spirit also comes **over** the disciple<sup>8</sup>, he will receive **extra power** in this respect.

<sup>7</sup> Study: Galatians 6:7-8 - Sowing and reaping.

<sup>8</sup> Study: The baptism in the Holy Spirit.



### **The third servant.**

In both parables (Matthew 25:18, Luke 19:20) the third servant who settles his account has hidden the master's property in the ground.

This servant seems indifferent and rebellious. He has apparently not understood his master correctly, as a result of which he is afraid of him.

He has great difficulty in having to hand over the proceeds of his work to the master instead of keeping it for himself.

He said:

- *I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. (Matthew 25:24)*

By hiding the bag of gold/mina in the ground he has no proceeds to hand over to the master. A dreadful end awaits this servant.

This is like a disciple who has received the love of God in his heart, but who does not allow it to influence him and remains indifferent. He lives his own life, exclusively in his own interests.

Worldly desires overwhelm the divine love in his heart as a result.

His life produces nothing to hand over to Jesus when he is called 'to account'.

### **The bankers.**

It is noticeable that, in both parables, the master asks the third servant why he did not give the money to the bankers. They would have been able to realise a profit for the master with the capital that the servant would have entrusted them with.

The master apparently accepts the possibility that a servant does not want to work for him and would have been content to draw out his capital from the bank with interest.

Jesus apparently accepts the fact that a disciple can go his own way in life, but He is not content when His 'investment' in the life of that disciple produces nothing for His Kingdom.

Jesus expects that a disciple who does not wish to work for Him, at least to make an effort to hand the 'investment' over to someone who will indeed make a profit out of it.

### **An example:**

The divine love in the heart of a disciple will give him a vision for action according to his 'competence', in a life of servanthood.

Suppose that this vision contains work or a ministry as a result of which the disciple will earn less than he would like to, in order to maintain a certain lifestyle, he can then completely ignore that vision and do nothing with it. This corresponds with 'hiding the bag/mina in the ground'.

The disciple could interest someone else in the vision he has received, however, so that the other person goes on to fulfil the task that he should actually have performed.

As a result, the other person, like a 'banker', could produce profit for the Kingdom of God with the first disciple's vision.

In that case, when the accounts are closed off, Jesus would then be able to claim 'interest' from the other disciple, who took over the task from the first one.