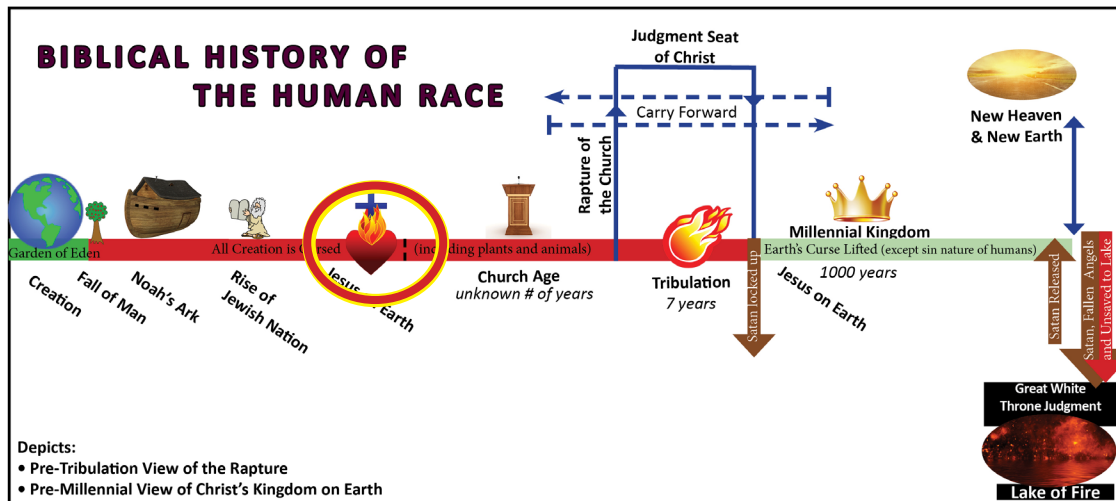


Preparing for the Rapture and Beyond



BACK TO THE FUTURE: JESUS SPEAKS

NOTES



See page 183 toolbox for full-page image.

BACK TO THE FUTURE (JESUS EXPLAINS HIS KINGDOM)

We've been looking at the **WHAT** and the **WHY** -

WHAT is going to happen to me/us in the next era?

WHY is it important for me to know and understand?

Now we turn to **HOW** we can get ahead of this situation **to maximize the quality of our lives for the next 1000 years - and eternity.**

LISTENING TO THE WORDS OF JESUS HIMSELF

Let's travel backward in time once more - back to the first century to see what we might find in the teaching Jesus provided us in the parables.

"One-third of Jesus' speaking ministry was in the form of parables. The root meaning of the word *parable* (*parabole* in Greek) suggests putting things side by side, and broadly speaking, a parable is just that - a putting together of ideas from different spheres in such a way that one idea illuminates another. A

NOTES

simple definition of a parable is “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.”¹

Warren Wiersby said, “The parables are both mirrors and windows. As mirrors they help us see ourselves. They reveal our lives as they really are. As windows, they help us see life and God.”²

USING AN EASTERN VIEWPOINT TO INTERPRET BIBLICAL SYMBOLS



Over 20 years ago I had the joy and privilege of traveling to Israel two years in a row. I went with a wonderfully gifted Bible teacher who taught us from the Scriptures every day as we toured the Land of our Lord. In the evenings, we were joined by local (often Jewish) gifted teachers as well.

One that profoundly impacted me was a man who taught us to “look at symbols” in Scripture with an “eastern viewpoint” rather than a “western” one. He explained that one of the issues people from the “west” have with symbols in prophecy and parables was that we (almost) immediately begin to try to **visualize the object** being used in the passage. He said that a person with an “eastern viewpoint” would **consider what the object or person in the passage could do – how could/would it function, what was its purpose**, not what did it/they look like.

For example, in Revelation 19 the symbol of a white horse is used. I seriously doubt that we will ride an actual horse all the way from heaven back to the earth. Instead let’s consider how a white horse might function and what it’s description might symbolize in that day. What did the writer and readers think about a white horse? Perhaps:

- Power and strength
- Speed and swiftness – a horse was the fastest mode of transportation of that day
- Wealth - a totally white horse is rare and expensive

Preparing for the Rapture and Beyond

NOTES

- What else comes to mind?

Take a few minutes to see if you can apply an “eastern viewpoint” to these prophecy/symbolic clues:

- Dressed in fine linen, white and clean: _____

- Eyes blazing like fire: _____

- Many crowns: _____

- Robe dipped in blood: _____

- Sharp sword coming out of his mouth: _____

Finally, let the Bible “interpret itself” – virtually (if not all) the imagery in prophecy/parables has been explained somewhere in the Scriptures themselves, we don’t have to guess. We do have to take the time to look it up, however.

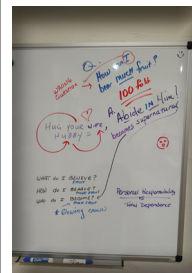
“FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE...”

What can we glean from a few of the parables Jesus told us to help better answer our reward questions?

A long time ago I began thinking about how to “maximize my reward” even though I truthfully didn’t understand rewards especially how they are “earned.” Everything I had learned beforehand only “danced around the edges,” not giving me satisfactory answers. And many teachings conflicted with each other.

I wrote on the white board in my office “Q. How can I bear much fruit – 100-fold fruit?” I believe that 100-fold fruit bearing is possible, otherwise He wouldn’t have “teased us” by talking about it. I assume you are like me and want to hear His commendation, *“Well done, good and faithful servant!... Come and share your master’s happiness!”*

What was I missing? I set out on a quest. What I



NOTES



A talent was worth about **fifteen** **years** wages of a laborer.

learned was not at all what I expected, and answers were “hiding in plain sight” all the time. For me, it was time to start over with fresh thinking.

Jesus often used parables to explain the nature of His Kingdom. The parables are, therefore, one of our primary tools to understand **His plan for His Kingdom**. Let’s walk down this path together, mining a few passages for clues – we will consider two that are “investment” parables and others that are agricultural parables.

INVESTMENT PARABLES



PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

These parables start ... “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like...” **by this He is indicating this is what the Millennial Kingdom will be like.**

¹⁴“For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called **his own slaves** and **entrusted his possessions to them.** ¹⁵To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, **each according to his own ability.**

¹⁹“Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.

²⁰The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, **you entrusted five talents to me.** See, I have gained five more talents.’

²¹His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will **put you in charge** of many things; **enter into the joy of your master.**’

Matthew 25:14-15, 19-21 NASB 1995

In this parable:

- The slaves are called “his own” and the master “entrusted his (own) possessions to them.” It was the master’s money, and they (the slaves) belonged to him as well. He is NOT giving or even “loaning”

Preparing for the Rapture and Beyond

NOTES

the money to them. It is His and they are given the **privilege** of earning a return on his investment (ROI) for their master. They are being **given the privilege of doing unique work for Him**.

- The slaves got different amounts to work with – “each according to his own ability.” He knew each one and knew what abilities they had. In our case, He knows us and **He gives us the abilities He wants us to use for His Kingdom**.
- They were not told what to do or how to invest the master’s capital - he left it up to each one to decide **how to work** and **how much** to work.
- The slaves recognized that the talents (money/capital) and, therefore, the gain belonged to the master.
- The master’s response to the various slaves indicates that he expected the slaves to use what he entrusted to them to make a profit for himself. He wasn’t **asking** the slaves to grow his kingdom, **he expected it**. They worked for him, so it was reasonable.
- The reward amounts are not as specific as they are in the Parable of the Minas.

What is stated is that both the first and second slave DOUBLED what they were given. **The second was given less to work with** than the first but **he doubled it the same as the first slave** and was **given the same commendation (and reward) as a result**. He used what he had - he didn’t complain that the master should have given him more.

Have you done that or thought that way? I know I have. I’ve thought, “if only I had or could _____ ... I would _____.” Shame on us, Forgive us, Lord Jesus.

The talents represent opportunities to further the Kingdom. If we squander our Christian life, we miss

NOTES



A mina was
worth about

100 days

wages of a
laborer.

the opportunities and someone else gets them (See Revelation 3:11).

We have specific things He wants us to accomplish; we don't get to choose. Consider Jesus' statement to the Father:

⁴I have brought you glory on earth by

***you gave me to do.** John 17:4*

PARABLE OF THE MINAS

¹³And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, 'Do business with this until I come back.'

*¹⁵When he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him so that he might know what business they had done. ¹⁶The first appeared, saying, 'Master, **your mina** has made ten minas more.'*

¹⁷And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.' ¹⁸The second came, saying, 'Your mina, master, has made five minas.' ... ¹⁹And he said to him also, 'And you are to be over five cities.' Luke 19:13, 15-18, 19 NASB 1995

In this parable:

- Each of the ten slaves got the same amount to work with, **they start out on equal ground with one mina each.**

They were not told what to do or how to invest the master's capital – just “do business” or as the King James says, “occupy until I come.” This is in the imperative mood meaning it is a command (not a request or suggestion).

We are given the same command, **failure to this is viewed by Him as rebellion.**

Preparing for the Rapture and Beyond

NOTES

- All the slaves knew that the mina belonged to the master and the gain would be his as well. This is apparent by the response, “Your mina...”
- It is the master’s expectation that the slaves will make a profit on his investment. His reward is commensurate with the success of the individual slaves:
 - 1 Mina x 10 (fold) profit = 10 cities
 - 1 Mina x 5 (fold) profit = 5 cities

Since they all started out with the same amount to work with, the difference in their results must be attributed to working harder or smarter or both.

Their reward is commensurate with the ROI (return on investment) they achieved for their master. We are only told what happens with three of the ten slaves. What do you think the result is for the other seven? I think we can figure it out...

Consider this example of sharing the load of rulership found in Exodus - this is how Jesus plans to distribute His load or rulership in the Millennium:

¹⁹Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people’s representative before God and bring their disputes to him. ²⁰_____

_____ and instructions, and show them the way they are to _____ and how they are to _____.

²¹But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over _____, _____,

_____, and _____. ²²Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, Exodus 18:19-22

These will be our jobs - it has already been decided.

“Notice that the Master rewards his faithful servants not by taking away responsibilities but by giving them

NOTES

The word “has” is implied to include the use of what the person has, meaning using the opportunities to “invest” in the Kingdom work. The first two servants used the opportunities to invest and were rewarded for doing so, the third squandered his opportunities, so his opportunities were taken from him and given to the ones who used them.

greater ones. **Service is a reward, not a punishment.** God offers us more work, more responsibilities, increased opportunities, along with greater abilities, resources, wisdom, and empowerment. We will have sharp minds, strong bodies, clear purpose and unabated joy.”³

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM - THE UNPRODUCTIVE SLAVE(S) IN BOTH PARABLES

²⁰“Then another servant came and said, ‘Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. ²¹I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.’

²²“His master replied, ‘I will judge you by your own words, you _____! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? ²³Why then didn’t you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?’

²⁴“Then he said to those standing by, ‘Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.’

²⁵“‘Sir,’ they said, ‘he already has ten!’

²⁶“He replied, ‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away. Luke 19:20-26

²⁴“Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

Preparing for the Rapture and Beyond

NOTES

²⁶“His master replied, ‘You _____, _____! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

²⁸“So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’
Matthew 25:24-30

There are credible Bible scholars and teachers on both sides of the interpretation of the closing verses of these two parables. It is not unusual for these verses to be left out of any teaching from these parables because some teachers don’t believe that the last servant is saved. Therefore, anything taught about him doesn’t apply to the church. I see it differently. Let me explain, then decide for yourself.

1. The master calls them HIS SLAVES and **treats them exactly like the others** at the beginning of each parable. Jesus doesn’t ask or expect unsaved people to grow His Kingdom. He does expect US (believers) to help grow His Kingdom in response to His “investment” in us.
2. He calls the 3rd servant “wicked and lazy,” takes **back his own currency** (the servant wasn’t using it, and He didn’t “give it to him” in the first place) and in one parable **instructs those standing by to “throw those worthless servants outside.”** That seems like pretty “light” punishment to me.

Some people say this last part is why they cannot accept that these people are His servants (saved

NOTES

people) in the first place because “Jesus would never treat us - as believers - like that.”

I see no reason why He wouldn’t or couldn’t. After all, He paid a great price to purchase us out of the kingdom of darkness for His Kingdom. We are His slaves/doulos, **expected** to obey Him and further the interests of His Kingdom. And we accepted His gift of our salvation.

Those slaves were “wicked and lazy” - they didn’t work in the best interest of their master - they just enjoyed their lives with no regard for the master or his business. Note that the word *wicked* is translated as *worthless* in some translations.

Let me be extremely cautious here - there are several types of “work” for the Kingdom. There is not a one-size-fits all assignment. But we would be wise to be sure we are doing **something** of value for the Kingdom as we will see in later chapters.

Take a careful look at these verses:

²⁴“Then he said to those standing by, ‘Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.’ ²⁵“‘Sir,’ they said, ‘he already has ten!’ ²⁶“He replied, ‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away. Luke 19:24-26

This is the ultimate “use it or lose it” situation. It seems that the longer we go on taking our salvation for granted, the more likely it will become that we will lose opportunities to earn rewards for the future. Conversely, the more “actively we embrace our salvation,” the greater our opportunities will be to earn rewards for the future.

Nevertheless, if the worst that happens to us if we act foolishly and squander our opportunities

Preparing for the Rapture and Beyond

NOTES

to earn rewards is we get thrown outside the castle away from “the light,” we will probably cry and whine, but we won’t (eternally) die. **We are still His, always will be.** (Remember... *will suffer loss but yet will be saved... 1 Corinthians 3:15.*)

3. The master (who is now the king in the Parable of the Minas) instructs “those standing by” to **kill his enemies.**

²⁷But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me. Luke 19:27

(Eternal) Death is what unsaved people receive. That is much different.

4. Including the 3rd servants with the others completes the parables with various outcomes depending on how we use our King’s resources (our lives) for His goals and purposes. And leads me to the conclusion that **there may well be some believers who are indeed saved but will have little or nothing to show for their lives at the bema.** They will be the ones who, although they will enter the Millennial Kingdom in a new glorified body, their position will be the lowest and furthest away from King. **They will be unhappy at the Judgment Seat of Christ, but it will be better for them there than to be at the Great White Throne Judgment.**

If I may be so bold as to say that most Christians in the modern church - at least in the western world - have more than adequate resources at their disposal and **use very little of it for the glory of God or growth of the Kingdom.** Of course, we ALL have one resource - TIME - that we use very little toward the advancement of His Kingdom. We will talk about this in detail in the chapters ahead.



How might these parables fit our lives today?
What can we glean from these two parables that might apply to earning rewards?

NOTES

- A. Our Master is away from His estate** (the earth) right now.
- B. He has left us here to work on His behalf to grow the Kingdom.** He expects (and commands) us to do that. Since they are commands, **failing to do so is disobedience, rebellion.**
- C. He invested in us (bought us with his blood)** and is looking for a return on His investment in us (**His ROI**).

- D. His desired result is more lost people being saved, and the saved being disciplined** (see the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20). **Saved/disciplined humans are the “assets” He wants increased.** I say this based on:

⁶“But as for Me, I have installed [consecrated] My King upon Zion, My holy mountain.”

⁷“I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son,

Today I have begotten You.

⁸‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations [Gentiles] as Your inheritance,

And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.

Psalm 2:6-8

- E. In order to achieve His desired result, He has provided each of us with access to two types of assets:**
- 1. Universal** – these assets are shown in the Parable of the Minas - they are the same for everyone and are **equally distributed**.
 - i. The biggest similarity is that ALL Believers have access to the HOLY SPIRIT and

Preparing for the Rapture and Beyond

through Him can demonstrate the FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT to others

- ii. we can all PRAY and INTERCEDE for others
- iii. we can all be GRACIOUS and KIND to others
- iv. we can all SHARE and be GENEROUS with what we have been entrusted
- v. we can all SHARE THE GOSPEL with others

2. **Unique** – these assets are shown in the Parable of the Talents; they are **not distributed identically or equally**. They may be things like varying amounts of money, gifts or skills, access to larger numbers of people, etc. It could also be **time based on the number of years we have to work in his Kingdom** while we are here now (if we die young, for example - not if we just stall and wait until later in life to accept the gift of salvation, that's different.)



One last thought, are we **so involved with our jobs, business, education, possessions, friends, family, children's activities, sports, and social life** that we've essentially buried the assets He entrusted to us to invest? Which slave are you? Be honest with yourself and discuss this challenge with others in your group.



AGRICULTURAL PARABLES

PREPARING THE SOIL

Take a few minutes to read the parables of the soil in Matthew 13 and Luke 8.

How does someone "become" good soil to yield a maximum crop?

⁸Still other seed fell on good [kalos] soil, where it produced a crop—a _____, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Matthew 13:8

NOTES

FOLD MEANS TIMES (MULTIPLICATION)

2 fold is 2 X something
30 fold is 30 X something
60 fold is 60 X something
100 fold is 100 X something



In the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) Jesus expresses happiness and commends the servant for doubling His investment – this is "two-fold."

In the Parable of the Minas (Luke 19:11-27), the Servant produced a 100-fold result.

In the Parable of the Soils or Sower (Matthew 13:3-23 and Luke 8:4-15), He tells us that 100-fold is possible and that some people will achieve it. [Why not you? Why not me?]

In all three parables He is pleased and commends His servants.

100-FOLD in the Old Testament:

Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the Lord blessed him. Genesis 26:12

What is needed is the "good hand of the Lord" to be upon us. Want that? Check out Ezra chapters 7 - 8. How many times do you see that phrase used there and what was the result? The explanation as to why "the good hand of the Lord was upon him" is also given, do you see that as well? Worth investigating.

NOTES



What “fold” are you? Remember we are talking about “production” here

- not desires, wishes or intentions. Are you satisfied with this, do you believe Jesus is satisfied?

Be honest with yourself and discuss this with the group.

Kalos means chiefly good (literally or morally), i.e., valuable or virtuous, praiseworthy or noble.

⁸Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a _____ times more than was sown. Luke 8:8

Instructions for preparing the soil are spelled out for us in the text:

²³... the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one [a person] who produces a crop, yielding a _____, _____ times what was sown. Matthew 13:23

¹⁵... The seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good _____, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop. Luke 8:15

- **The seed is the Word of God.**
- **The good soil is people** with a noble and good heart
WHO:
 - **Hear the Word of God**
 - **Understand it** (this comes only from the Holy Spirit)
 - **Retain** or “keep it”
 - **By persevering**, produce/yield a huge crop

Like the parable of the Minas – **everyone starts out the same** (on a level playing field), but the **outcomes are different**:

The soils are all right next to each other – the “external” conditions are the same:

- All include some type of dirt
- All include the same seed, sown in the same fashion (equal)
- The sun, the rain, the “external influences” are the same

The **outcome difference** is a **result of worldly distraction versus focus and intentionality**.

Preparing for the Rapture and Beyond

BOTTOM LINE: We prepare ourselves to be useful to our Lord. This is often spoken of as **“total submission.”**



FRUIT BEARING BRANCHES

¹“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even _____ . ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain in me, as I also _____ in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. John 15:1-4

Some translations say “abide” rather than remain.

Abide: menō to continue to be present, to be held, kept continually, to remain as one, not to become another or different.

This explicitly states that we have **no hope of bearing fruit** unless we remain close to our Lord (“in Him”). The best ways to do this include:

- o Spending Time Reading and Studying the Bible
- o Prayer and Meditation
- o Practice and Obedience
- o Gratitude and Rejoicing

There is often confusion about verse 2:

He [Father] cuts off every branch in me [Jesus] that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruit.

The first half of that verse talks about a branch that “bears **NO fruit.**” Careful consideration of that falls in line with verses elsewhere in the New Testament whereby a believer dies and is taken to heaven earlier than perhaps they would have otherwise been. This would actually be a merciful act on the part of Jesus. Let me explain.

NOTES

NOTES

1. The non-fruit-bearing person IS saved, “in Me” is the evidence of that fact.
2. If a person isn’t bearing fruit anyway (so no rewards are being “accumulated”) there is nothing lost by the person going on to heaven early.
3. It could also mean that the saved person is actively engaged in persistent disobedience in some way and is, therefore, losing what they may have otherwise gained. More on this in Chapter 10. By taking the person off the earth “early” more of their rewards previously earned could be preserved.
4. If their misbehavior is seen by others (often the case as we usually know when others we are in relationship with are sinning), “getting away with it” may lead others into disobedience by example. This could be a primary reason for the Lord to remove a believer earlier than was necessary (recall the “sudden death” of Ananias and Sapphira - others were “watching” and knew what they did.)

I am NOT saying that this is the case for every believer who dies at a younger age - PLEASE hear me on this. This is just worthy of consideration for our own lives and behaviors.

The second half of that verse is about branches that are bearing fruit - but the Father wants the branch to become more fruitful (therefore, earn more rewards). So, He “prunes” that branch. Pruning can be “painful” for the branch for a short while. Later we will see/ understand why He did it and will be grateful for His work in us. In our “world” this most often comes in the form of “tests or trials” (see James 1:2-4).

For more on the topic of bearing fruit, feel free to watch the video teaching by Dr. Bruce Wilkinson entitled ***What on Earth is God Doing in My Life*** - you may access it at www.bemabuilders.org/videos.

Preparing for the Rapture and Beyond

HE CHOSE AND APPOINTED US TO BEAR LASTING FRUIT

¹²My command is this: _____ each other as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends _____ you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and **appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last**—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷This is my _____: _____ each other.
John 15:12-17

How does one bear lasting fruit? The answer is contained in v. 12, 14, & 17:

¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command.

¹²My command is this: Love (agapáō) **each other** as I have loved (agapáō) you.

¹⁷This is my command: Love (agapáō) each other.

Potential application to these agricultural parables:

- Why would a master instruct his slaves (doúlos) to cultivate His soil, plant a particular seed?
- Would he not expect a harvest from the work of the obedient slaves?
- What would that harvest mean to the master?
- Would it not increase the value of his estate?
- Would that increase in value likely please the master, especially if it was abundant?

NOTES

NOTES

- Could that master, if he wanted to, reward his slaves for obeying His instruction and working hard to increase the value of His estate?
- **Why would he do that? Of what benefit could there be to the master (to reward the obedient, hardworking slaves AND to let them know that he planned to do so)?**



These are somewhat rhetorical questions – except the last one. Can you think of a few answers for that last one? **Of what benefit could there be to the master to reward His obedient, hardworking slaves AND to let them know that he planned to do so?**

1.

2.

Continuing with the fruit (parables) analogies ... We are instructed to bear (produce/exhibit) fruit. Elsewhere in the Scriptures the fruit of the Spirit is clearly defined. I believe the following Scriptures go together and are helpful for us to discover some answers to the HOW of our rewards question. Note we must use an “Eastern viewpoint...”

¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last— John 15:16

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Galatians 5:22-23

Could we, therefore, assume that the fruit analogy means that love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control should feed, nourish and sustain us and others spiritually just like physical fruit does for the body?

Preparing for the Rapture and Beyond

NOTES

Physical Fruit:	Spiritual Fruit:
Grapes and other crops of that day	Love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control
Intended to feed, nourish and sustain the body	Intended to feed, nourish and sustain the soul and spirit

Could this mean that we are instructed to **cultivate these character traits in our lives so that the Holy Spirit can use us to further His work* in the advancement of Jesus' Kingdom?** We do this by putting on display the character of our Savior (the fruit of the Spirit) to this lost and hurting world. This makes His work in us winsome and desirable to others - something they might need and want to have for themselves. For example, have you ever heard someone say, "I wish I could control my temper like you do..."?

***NOTE who does the increase:**

⁶I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 1 Corinthians 3:6

THE FIRST FRUIT

The first "fruit" listed is **love**. Jesus commanded us over and over to "love one another." The word He uses is **agapáō** which is **to look out for, consider, want and act in the best interest of another even if it is painful to do so**. He **agapáō**-ed us... This is not **Philéo**, (Greek word for love that expresses warm affection, friendship, and brotherly affection, emphasizing emotional closeness) although, in general, that is part of Christianity.

¹²My command is this: Love (agapáō) each other as I have loved (agapáō) you. John 15:12

This could be phrased: Look out for the best interest of others as I looked out for your best interest. **I'm pretty sure that eternal life rather than eternal damnation is in the best interest of others.** Do you agree?

We are not commanded to **philéo** anyone, although it is

	Agapáō	Philéo
Church Family	✓	✓
All Others including Enemies	✓	

NOTES

expected (predicted) that it will happen as an outgrowth of the action of agapáō within the church family (not necessarily for everyone and not necessary for enemies).

¹⁷ This is my command: Love (agapáō) each other. John 15:17

⁸ Whoever does not love (agapáō) does not know God, because God is love (agápē) 1 John 4:8

¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:13

Since we know that **God is love, we are being commanded to “wear him” on display all day, every day.** And, in doing so we are obedient slaves who produce an abundant crop for our King. This abundant crop will enrich His Kingdom and He promises to reward us for doing so. As just noted, we work but He produces the increase.

BOTTOM LINE

In all of these parables there is a connection between **behavior (ACTION)** and **reward**. For one thing, all of these actions are **INTENTIONAL** (neither accidental nor automatic simply because we are saved).

- a. We must abide in Him – **stay “close” to the Lord.** Don’t lag behind by being lazy and don’t run ahead and miss His instructions, doing whatever we please and expect a reward for it.
- b. We must be **obedient to Him.**
- c. We must be **trustworthy, faithful (loyal) to Him.**
- d. We must do **quality work in His name.**

Preparing for the Rapture and Beyond



UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

1. Did you apply anything new last week from Chapter 6? What was it, how did you apply it?
2. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, *“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”* Think and pray about this verse. What do you think Paul means by the phrase, *because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.* Write your thoughts here and discuss this with your group.
3. John 15:1-4 speaks about the Father “pruning” us/the vine. What do you think “pruning” means here? What might it look like in practical application of our daily lives here and now?
4. Name one thing you learned in this chapter that will be beneficial in the days ahead. How will you apply it (be specific)?

