

CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY

By Mike Burnham

Luke 19:11-27...in verse 11 we see that one of the reasons for the parable is because "they thought that the kingdom of god should immediately appear." so first of all Jesus was teaching them that there would be a period of time between the time he left and when he came back to set up his kingdom, he was the certain nobleman. Before he left he gave those who wanted him to reign over them a gift to use in his absence. They were to be fruitful and multiply the gift. To those servants who were faithful he gave to rule in his kingdom, but the emphasis is on the third servant who was a failure.

Now this servant is no different than the other servants except in what he didn't do. Equally with the other servants he is entrusted with a gift. Jesus calls them all "his servants" as opposed to the citizens who hated him. The servants differ in capacity, but they do not differ in the possession of a common trust. All three are judged solely on the ground of their works. The third servant didn't squander what was given to him, he hid it in the earth. Notice also that the nobleman is no stranger to him.

Christians are given the Holy Spirit and the gospel and are to show forth Jesus Christ until he comes by what they say and do, by how they live. If a Christian's life, what he says and what he does is buried in the world he will show forth nothing. It is not the possession of the gift that determines our reward, but our "use" of it: it is what was gained not what was originally given that reward is given.

Jesus describes the third servant as the exact opposite of the first two: instead of good and faithful, he says he is "wicked" (not wicked in the general sense, but a worthless servant. Matthew adds "slothful" meaning "unprofitable". In verse 22 Jesus says "out of thine own mouth will I judge thee." his knowledge of his master ought to have made him more faithful, not less, to produce instead of hide. God demands fruits and works. For the

believer to have at his judgment only what he had at his conversion will be total loss of reward. The third servant has no part in the kingdom whatsoever. In Matthew it mentions him being cast into outer darkness, which might mean the outer fringes of the glory of the millennial kingdom where they sorrow over lost opportunities, wasted time, slighted privileges , there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

It seems that god has deliberately interposed a prolonged period between the two advents, that our lord might test his servants, in his absence, to discover which are fitted for positions of responsibility and trust at his return. This plan is in operation at the present moment. His long journey is now nearly over, and at any moment the investigation may begin. Loss of entrance into the kingdom has no bearing on eternal salvation

In Hebrews 4:9,10, a rest is mentioned, a sabbath-rest. I think that this rest is the millennial reign of Christ. It is God's rest in the old earth's closing dispensation foreshadowed by every sabbath under the law, not the eternal rest. Canaan is the type of the millennial kingdom of Christ.

Who was excluded from entering into this rest? *Did not all they that came out of Egypt? And with whom was he displeased forty years? Wasn't it with them that sinned--as only believers can sin; that is, against privilege and light, Heb. 3:8-18.* Christians have need of anxious care: for who were they who so provoked God? Even those whom he had already brought from bondage.

We see that they were not able to enter in because of "unbelief", Heb. 3:19. But unbelief in what? They started out with faith. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, Heb. 11:29. The rejected report of the two spies was the last straw because it amounted in disbelief in God's word and his ability, Num. 13:30-33; 14:6,11,22-24

God gives us not only facts backward to believe, but facts forward: never to believe the facts backward is to be lost; not to believe the facts

forward is for a child of God to drift at once into sin and come short of the rest, Heb. 4:1,2,11. Unbelief results in disobedience.

Paul denounced all forms of evil as incompatible with the kingdom of God: "do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?" (1 Cor.6:8-11). Why? Because by definition, the future kingdom of God is one of righteousness. Paul was not only concerned about specific acts of immorality or conduct incompatible with our status. He was also concerned with a religious view which disregarded practical morality and thus encouraged, perhaps even affirmed, immoral and unethical behavior. Toward that stance, Paul is emphatic: "do not be deceived." (6:9). The Corinthians were deluding themselves into believing that God's moral demands did not need to be taken seriously. But to reject God's moral imperatives is to reject membership in God's kingdom, (6:10). Paul then reminds them of God's transforming intervention in their former lives of unrighteousness in v-11. Then he tells them to flee immorality, v-18 and honor God with their bodies, v-20. How is that possible? It is possible because their body is the dwelling place of the spirit of God, who can continue to transform them toward conformity with the image of their creator, v-19. Who inherits the kingdom? All those who reject the continuing encroachments of sin, moving in the power of the spirit toward the coming kingdom of the Lord.

Col. 3:23-25, the inheritance is not something we receive automatically, it is a reward. It is earned by faithful service to our Lord Christ. *But he that doeth wrong* will not receive the reward of the inheritance. Also see Eph. 5:5; Gal. 5:19-21, Col. 3:5-9. Men may grant us free passes into the kingdom of Christ but they are empty words, vain words. Notice in Galatians: factions, divisions, parties, distinctively church sins.

Matt. 7:21...the will of the father is to produce good fruit, v-17. In Matt. 6:33 we are told to "seek", which means to "covet earnestly, strive after" the "kingdom" which does not refer to a land but conduct befitting a citizen of the kingdom of God, and "his righteousness" which refers to his character. Our conduct and character are to be the same as our Father's in

heaven where our citizenship is, Phil. 3:20.

Is the kingdom the prize for which the Christian is to run, and which may be forfeited, unless a standard of holiness be attained known only to God? It would appear so by the following scriptures: Eph. 5:1-6; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 2:26,27; 3:11-13, 21; 1 Cor. 9:24-10:12. If we acknowledge any judgment of a believer's works at all, and that before a judgment seat and not a mercy seat, we are compelled to acknowledge that the investigation must be judicial. If we assume that all chastisement is confined to this life only, the judgment seat is shorn of all judicial function. If the backslider, even the worst, is instantly and miraculously cleansed and perfected at death, and by the act of death, there would neither be need for the prolonged process of sanctification through a lifetime of suffering, nor justice to those countless sufferers who have sanctified their lives through agony. 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10-12; Col. 3:24,25; Heb. 10:26-31. This is the reconciliation between Paul and James, between justification through faith unto eternal life and justification through works unto millennial reward. Before works--Rom. 4:10; Gen. 15:6; after works--Jas. 2:21; Gen. 22:15-18. Jesus said; "if you love me, ye shall keep my commandments, John 14:15,21,23; 1 John 5:3. Now look at James 2:5. What of a continuously disobedient brethren which John goes on to describe? V-6-13. Also see Rom. 8:12,13; 2 Cor. 12:20,21; Matt. 18:18 loosed from what in heaven? Maybe his part out of the kingdom, v-23?

Losing out at the judgment seat of Christ of the blessings of the millennial kingdom supplies an incentive second only to love in its motive for alienating the disciple from the world and filling him with a passion for the kingdom of god. 1 Peter 1:17;

"NOTE ON THE JUDGMENT"

Those who oppose this teaching, admit that there will be rewards; confess that the believer sins, and as a consequence receives chastisement, (but only in this life!); and some go further, and allow that offending believers will suffer loss at Christ's coming, but it will not amount to exclusion from the kingdom. They agree in the principle but differ about its extent. I don't believe this should be a test of fellowship as I believe none of us fully understand the seriousness of God's command to "be ye holy", Romans 11:13,22.

Someone will say: "what about "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin:" 1 John 1:7? That's true but admittedly, in spite of Jesus' atonement, the chastisements of God descend on the offending believer in this life. Why is it wrong to assume that they will fall upon him in the next age, (the millennium)? Are there any scriptures that assert that chastisement will "not" come upon offending Christians when we stand before his judgment seat? I don't know of any. If not, why call it a judgment seat instead of a mercy seat? Why have a judgment at all? We will be judged on *the things done in this body whether good or bad*. What will be the judgment of the bad things? Forgiveness or penalty, judicial or merciful?

Though i don't approve of using parables to make positive doctrine, I do believe they can be used to enhance a doctrine so I submit these passages from one gospel: Matt. 5:22-30; 7:21-27; 10:32,33; 18:21-35; 24:45-51; 25:1-30; most commentators say that Jesus is talking to the church or Christians in general in these passages.

Many believers have died out of the fellowship of churches from which they have been justly excluded for sin. Will they be accounted worthy of a place in the kingdom, who were put out as unworthy of a place in the church? What about Matt. 16:19; 18:18; John 20:23; 1 Cor. 5:4,5?

If the judgment seat of Christ is just, it would appear to me that the giving of rewards for good deeds would preclude the giving out of chastisement for evil deeds. Otherwise, where is the justice? Doesn't God's word say that each will

"receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good "or" bad": 2 Cor. 5:10? And also "he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is no respect of persons", Col. 3:25? Also Heb. 12:28,29.

Many carnal Christians have been heard to say, "i am not bothering about rewards; i will be happy anyway." They don't seem to realize that they will be standing before a judgment seat, not a mercy seat, nor a seat of grace. Christians have already been before the mercy seat and there the penalty of sin, which is eternal death, was taken away and we are no longer under that curse, and we have forgiveness of sins. But the penalty for sin is not at question at the judgment seat, our works are. And my understanding is that forgiveness comes after repentance, Mark 11:25,26; Matt. 18:35; 1 John 1:9; Psalm 32:5; Prov. 28:13; 2 Cor. 7:9,10. If a person is not sincere enough to turn or want to turn from their sin to pleasing their father in heaven, why should they expect forgiveness. We were forgiven when we were saved by repentance and faith. Repentance and faith do not stop there, they continue to be a vital part of our lives until we sleep.

Where are the excluded during the kingdom? I don't know. But we are not obligated to solve all possible problems connected with revealed truth before we accept it. Some perhaps may look, as Moses did from Mt. Pisgah, without entering the kingdom. Some are in that mysterious region known as the "outer darkness". Others?

It appears to me that a believer may suffer anything short of eternal destruction, but only within the millennial age.

"To "this" man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that "trembleth" at my word" (Isa. 66:2,5).