

## **The parable of the talents, and talent-sized hail stones**

by Douglas E. Cox

In his Olivet Discourse, Jesus said to his disciples:

“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money.

“After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

“Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given,

and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." [Matthew 25:14-30]

The fate of the servant who received one talent was to be cast into "outer darkness," which pictures ignorance, or delusions. The parable has to do with our knowledge of spiritual things.

The parable of the talents applies to the interpretation of the Olivet Discourse, of which it forms a part.

In Scripture, talents are both a measure of weight and an amount of money. I think Jesus told this parable to his disciples to teach them to consider his words in the Olivet Discourse as like the talents distributed to the servants in the parable. Those who interpret his prophecy correctly and get understanding are like the servants who traded with their talents, and gained more. Jesus' words reveal more than a superficial, literal reading suggests.

In Revelation 16:21, hail stones with the weight of a talent fall upon men. Like rain and snow, hailstones may represent the word of God, and the prophecies of Scripture. [Isaiah 55:10] The hailstones of Revelation 16:21 are not natural hailstones. In natural hailstorms there is a great variety in the size of hail. But in John's prophecy all the hailstones are about the weight of a talent, which far exceeds the size of natural hail. The reference to talents links the prophecy to the parable of the talents in the Olivet Discourse.

"And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great." [Revelation 16:21]

Prophecy taken literally often leads to absurd conclusions, and contradictions.

Taking a literal approach to prophecy corresponds to the behaviour of the servant in the parable of the talents, who received a single talent, which he took and buried in the earth. The servants who received two and five talents traded with them, and gained more. These servants represent those who interpret prophecy according to the principles revealed in Scripture, and who discover far more spiritual truth than taking the words in a plain, simplistic fashion would indicate.

The apostle Peter said that heresies would be introduced into the Church.

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." [2 Peter 2:1-2]

The parable of the tares also shows that false teachings would be present in the Church, until the time of the harvest.

In Isaiah's prophecy, rain and snow are symbols of God's word.

“For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” [Isaiah 55:10]

Similarly, talent-sized hailstones may represent God’s word in the form of a powerful rebuke, and correction.