



The Parable of the Minas

by Tim Kelley

I teach a Hebrew Roots class at a prison in Texas where we are going through the New Testament and tying the words of Yeshua and the apostles to the Torah. It's a slow process. We only cover at best 10-15 verses each week because those in my class have a lot of questions.

At one of those classes we were studying Matthew 5. When we got to the part where Yeshua instructed His disciples to love their enemies, one student asked about verse 44 which reads -

Matthew 5:44 ⁴⁴ "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

His question was "why does Yeshua say here to 'love your enemies then in Luke say that He is going to kill His enemies?" His question took me completely off guard! He was, of course, referring the parable of the minas found in Luke 19, the last verse of which reads -

Luke 19:27 ²⁷ 'But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay *them* before me.' "

Like most of the followers of Messiah Yeshua, he identified the "certain nobleman" as Yeshua and the 'enemies' as those who did not believe in Him. But why had Yeshua said earlier to "love your enemies" while here He is instructed His servants to kill His enemies.

I did not have a plausible answer, so I gave him the best answer I had . . . "I don't know!" I then jokingly assured him that we would discuss it further when our studies got us to that passage in Luke. Hinting that - at our rate of progress - it might be years before we get to Luke, he answered "No problem - I'll still be here!" From the looks of the others in the class, I could see that many of them had the same question, so I stated that I would study into it and try to come up with an answer before the next class.

Not wanting to forget my obligation, the next morning I did study into it, and though I'm not sure that I came up with the correct answer, I did learn a lot about the parable. In this message, I want to share with you what I've learned, because what I saw goes right along with the message that I believe God has put on my heart for the past 3-4 years. What we are going to see in this parable is that:

- Yeshua's purpose was to prepare His disciples to carry on after His death.
- They needed guidance and encouragement
- The parable is not about our individual "good works", but about standing up to opposition as we strive to raise up "citizens" of the kingdom

To begin our study, let's talk a little about context. You've probably heard that the first three points to remember when it comes to Bible study are "context, context, and context". This is very true. Quite often, a person will be reading along in the Bible and read something that reminds him of something else he had either read or heard said in the Bible and think it's a contradiction. This is probably the case of my student . . . we were reading Yeshua's words in one place and that reminded him of something else Yeshua said elsewhere. Without reading the context, he thought there might be a conflict. So in order to establish the context of the Parable of the Minas, I want to begin at Luke 17:11.

Luke 17:11 ¹¹ Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

Yeshua and His disciples were making a trip from their homes in Capernaum to Jerusalem, a distance of about 85 miles if they go by way of Jericho - which we will see was indeed the case. The trip would take about 4 days. As they followed along the Jordan River southward, they came upon ten lepers who, knowing who Yeshua was, asked that He heal them. But Yeshua did not immediately heal them. Instead, He told them to go back into town and show themselves to the priests - an obligation they would have had if they had been healed. They all obeyed His instructions, and as they were on their way, they were healed. Afterwards, one of them - a Samaritan - came back to thank Him. The others - presumably Jews - apparently did not recognize Yeshua as the promised Messiah, but simply as a prophet who could heal. On the other hand, the Samaritan - the foreigner - recognized Yeshua as the "prophet like unto Moses". He glorified God with a loud voice as he came back to thank Yeshua for his healing.

As their journey progressed they came upon a rich nobleman. This man was apparently very astute in the Torah and had been obedient to it since his youth, and thus was probably Jewish. More than likely he believed that he had lived a pretty religious life, but when he asked Yeshua -

^{NKJ} **Luke 18:18** . . . "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Yeshua's answer was simply - "Follow Me". That was not the answer the nobleman was looking for. He apparently thought that living a Torah lifestyle was his key to the kingdom and eternal life, but Yeshua said he was still lacking. He needed to "follow" Yeshua. Since it's clear that he had been following Yeshua in regards to his Torah walk, the "follow" that the nobleman needed to do was to follow Yeshua on His journey, i.e. - become one of His disciples. Peter clearly understood that to be the case because he answered Yeshua -

^{NKJ} **Luke 18:28** Then Peter said, "See, we have left all and followed You."

What was Yeshua's purpose in telling the rich nobleman to follow Him, and more specifically, what impact did it have on His disciples. As we continue, we will see.

It was at that point that Yeshua separated Himself and his twelve disciples from the others who had been following them and said just to the twelve -

^{NKJ} **Luke 18:31** . . . "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.

This was to be their last trip to Jerusalem. All that had happened so far on this trip - the healing of the non-Jewish Samaritan; the clear instruction to continue following Yeshua in His mission - and all that had been said and done for the past three and a half years, was to prepare them for what was getting ready to happen, and to prepare them for what they would be doing for the rest of their lives. And now - since they knew that something was indeed "different"

about this trip - they should take special notice of what would transpire from that point forward. And so shortly after taking them aside, they left the Jordan and headed west toward Jericho. As they neared the city, a blind man noticed that a large group of people were passing by on the road. When he learned that it was Yeshua and His entourage, he cried out to Him for healing. Yeshua restored the man's sight, and the former blind man joined the entourage and followed after him.

So in the past 3-4 days, as they traveled along the Jordan River on their way to Jerusalem, the disciples had heard a number of parables, and had experienced a number of events including:

- The heart-felt appreciation of a Samaritan - a non-Jewish Israelite - who recognized Yeshua as the healer
- A Jewish nobleman who was Torah observant, but unwilling to follow Yeshua
- Yeshua's declaration that this was going to be their last trip together
- A blind beggar having his eyesight restored and then becoming a follower of Yeshua

These events should have shown them that they had a job to do, that their reward was not dependent just on their Torah observance, but also in their willingness to follow in Yeshua's footsteps, and that their audience would be those Samaritans who would appreciate their "healing" so much that once healed, they too would follow Him. Most importantly, they should have seen that they were going to have to do those things on their own . . . that Yeshua was not going to be there to lead them by the hand.

But Yeshua knew that they did not see it, and so He continued giving them examples. So with just 15 miles between them and Jerusalem, Yeshua used the example of a tax collector to help nail down what was expected of them and to set up the Parable of the Minas.

Zaccheaus

Zaccheaus was a wealthy tax collector, but he was also quite short in stature. Zaccheaus' is a Hellenized Hebrew name that means "pure". It comes from the Hebrew word zakak (זָכַק - 2141) that means to be pure, bright, and clean. You might say that "we can't find a bit of 'dirt' on him", and that's quite unusual being that he was a tax collector. After all, the "publicans" (as they were called) were - in the Jew's eyes - worse than an extortioner, a law breaker, and an adulterer¹. Bible-History.com² describes them this way:

"Most of the time when the Bible mentions a publican, or a tax collector it is referring to a regular tax collector (publicanus) rather than a chief tax collector. The tax collectors were usually Jewish and therefore they were hated by their own people. When they collected their taxes for Rome they would turn over the required amount of money, and whatever they could add on for themselves is what they kept. They were known to be extortioner of large sums of money. Because tax collectors were in relationship with Rome - who were Gentiles in the eyes of the

¹ Luke 18:11

² <http://www.bible-history.com/sketches/ancient/tax-collector.html>

Jews and hated for their domination - they were treated similar to the worst kinds of sinners and prostitutes.”

But Zaccheaus - as his name implies - was different. Though he was a ‘chief’ tax collector, he did not steal from the people. He did not collect more than was right. Never-the-less, in the eyes of Yeshua’s disciples - who were destined to stay in Zaccheaus’ house that night - he was a sinner . . . and they let Him know it. So in defense of the charges laid against him, Zaccheaus said -

Luke 19:8 . . . "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."

Apparently, Yeshua accepted this statement as truth. How do we know? Because He did not come back with a statement to indicate otherwise. He did not proceed to give the names of all the people he had extorted in the past as he did to those who brought a woman caught in adultery; He did not tell him his family history as He did the Samaritan woman. He just accepted his testimony as truth.

But was it always true? Did Zaccheaus have a tarnished past? It’s quite possible. In fact the text implies that sometime in his past, he had indeed taken things by false accusation³ but had repented and that he was currently in the process of making things right by paying restitution. What’s more, being that Zaccheaus lived near the Jordan River, it is quite possible that he was one of those tax collectors who came to John while he was baptizing in the Jordan River and subsequently repented. Let’s go back and look at that story -

^{NKJ} **Luke 3:1-14** Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar . . . the word of God came to John . . . ³ And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins . . . ⁷ Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to you, 'We have Abraham as *our* father.' For I say to you that God is able to rise up children to Abraham from these stones. ⁹ "And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." ¹⁰ So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?" ¹² Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" ¹³ And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you." . . .

If Zaccheaus was among those asking the questions, it’s quite possible that he became one of those ‘stones’ that three and a half years earlier had repented of his lawless ways and became a true ‘child of Abraham’. He could have also been a witness to the voice that came from heaven and of the dove that descended on Yeshua - the man he was hosting at his home that very evening. Maybe the reason he climbed the sycamore tree was so he could verify that the ‘Jesus’ he had heard so much about - the ‘Jesus’ that was passing through Jericho that day - was the same ‘Jesus’ on which he saw the dove descend. Maybe this explains why Yeshua answered Zaccheaus’ defense by saying -

^{NKJ} **Luke 19:9-10** . . . "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; ¹⁰ "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

If all that I’ve said about Zaccheaus is true, I’m sure the conversation around the dinner table that evening was quite interesting. I’m sure they would have talked about the events of that short encounter at the river 3 ½ years earlier – John’s ability to shut the Pharisees down, the dove that alighted on Yeshua’s shoulder, and the voice from heaven. Andrew, being that he had formally been one of John’s disciples, probably brought in details that Zaccheaus may have forgotten. They probably laughed at John’s use of the term “brood of vipers”⁴ to describe the Sadducees and Pharisees who were constantly opposing him

³ The words “give” and “restore” are present active verbs implying something that is currently happening.

⁴ Matt. 3:7

- just as they currently did to Yeshua. And it's likely that Zaccheaus mentioned John's statement about bearing fruit – something that John was doing, and something the Pharisees were obviously not doing.

^{NKJ} **Luke 3:9** "And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

The encounter with Zaccheaus was probably a big 'shot in the arm' for the disciples who were probably concerned about some of the things Yeshua had said during their journey. But that's not all it was intended to do. It was also a witness to what Yeshua had earlier told them about His imminent demise and that they would have to continue on and 'bear fruit' – taking Yeshua's message of the Kingdom to the people, after all, that message is what motivated them as it did many who would come after them.

Going back to the story of John the Baptist, we see what motivated John's disciples and many of the people who came to John's baptism was their expectation of the coming Messiah and the Kingdom of God -

^{NKJ} **Luke 19:15-16** Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ *or not*, ¹⁶ John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

The peoples' motivation was their belief that the coming of the Messiah was near and that the Messianic Kingdom would soon be ushered in. But as John pointed out, he was not the Messiah, but the real Messiah would come after him. What's more, shortly after Yeshua's baptism, John was put in prison, and subsequently but to death. The Kingdom did not come in his day.

Let's now see what happened while Yeshua was still in Zaccheaus' home - maybe during that evening's dinner. Right after stating that Salvation had come to Zaccheaus house, the narrative goes on to say -

^{NKJ} **Luke 19:11** 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.

The parable mentioned was the Parable of the Minas, and as is shown in text, it was going to be given because the disciples were under the impression that since the Messiah was in their midst, the Kingdom was about to be restored. That was the same thing John's followers believed, but just as it did not happen with John, it was not going to happen with Yeshua.

This statement was directed at the Pharisees and Sadducees who, though they lived a Torah based lifestyle, bore no good fruit. On the other hand, John did bear good fruit, and Zaccheaus - a "deplorable tax collector" - was a witness to that fact.

The Parable of the Minas

Now that we know the context in which the parable was given, let us delve into the Parable of the Minas.

The main character in the parable is the 'certain nobleman', but the Greek text does not imply nobility. It instead refers to the man as an "anthropos" which simply means a human being, but for the sake of the story, we'll continue to refer to him as a nobleman. The only other thing we know about the nobleman is that he is a successful investor, and this is based on the testimony of the third servant. The nobleman makes money by wisely choosing where he invests his money. He obviously has employees (the servants) that we can assume were trained by him to invest money themselves. If that were not the case, it would have been a foolish move to trust them with his money.

In the parable, the nobleman went to a far country to receive a kingdom, and when he had done so, he was going to return with the kingdom. Before leaving, he gave to each of his ten servants a mina, a denomination of money worth about \$20. He told them each to use the money to carry on the business

until he returned. In other words, they were to use the training the nobleman had given them to wisely invest his money.

At this point in the parable, there is a change in the story line. Whereas before the story was about investing money, it has now changed to the fact that the nobleman had enemies - fellow citizens - who when they learned that the nobleman was preparing to leave to bring back his kingdom, they sent a delegation to deliver the message that they would not have the nobleman rule over them.

In the story (vs. 14), the word for delegation is “presbeia” (4242) and it comes from the word “presbuteros” (4245) which means “elders”. In other words, the citizens who hated him sent the elders to oppose him. Why do you think they wanted to oppose him? One reason may be that he did not do things the accepted way -

^{NKJ} **Matthew 15:1** Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, ² "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

Yeshua did not do subscribe to their rabbinic system, and it probably irritated them that He was successful in raising up disciples without following their prescribed order. The scriptures hint that this was indeed the case -

^{NKJ} **John 4:1** Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John ² (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), ³ He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.

John more than likely ran his ministry within the confines of the accepted norm, and as a result had a large number of followers, but Yeshua came along and did not follow the accepted norm and had many more disciples than John, and in a shorter period of time. This infuriated the Pharisees and therefore they opposed Him every step of the way.

Getting back to the main story line . . . When the nobleman returned, he asked each of his servants to show how much each had gained from their investment of his one mina.

The first servant worked very hard and grew the nobleman's mina ten-fold. As a reward for his diligence, he was awarded 10 cities in the nobleman's kingdom. The second servant also worked quite hard and grew the nobleman's mina five-fold. As his reward, he was given 5 cities in the nobleman's kingdom.

The third servant - unlike the previous two servants - was fearful. Even with the training he had received, he was not confident that he could grow the nobleman's money, and so to prevent the potential loss of the money due to a bad investment, he wrapped the mina up and hid it away. This did not please the nobleman. The servants all had the same training and they all were witnesses to the fact that if they followed the example of the nobleman, they would be successful. Therefore, fear that they might not be successful was not an excuse for not trying. If the third servant was truly fearful that his investment efforts would be unsuccessful, he should have at least put the money into a “safe” investment such as a bank where it would at least draw interest. But he did not do that either. His complete lack of effort was taken as a rejection of the opportunity he had been given and he was therefore given no reward.

Based on the context we covered earlier, Yeshua is the nobleman, and the ten servants are the disciples. Yeshua's business was that of raising disciples who would follow in his footsteps, and based on the events of the prior three days, he was quite capable of doing just that. Though the first two servants were typical of the twelve disciples (excluding Judas), the one who was afraid probably represented the rich young ruler who - though he was probably able to be trained - was not willing to follow Yeshua out of fear of losing what he already had. The antithesis of the rich young ruler was Zaccheaus - another rich person who did become a follower of Yeshua.

But who are the elders, and what role do they play in the parable? I submit that the elders were the Pharisees, and their role in the parable was to be in opposition to the servants. This certainly did become the case. The book of Acts as well as the epistles show that the Pharisees continued after Yeshua's death to wreak havoc with the disciples and within the believing communities.

Could it be that the third servant did not actually fear the nobleman, but feared the nobleman's way of making disciples? Maybe the elders - the Pharisees - 'got to him' and convinced him that doing things the way the nobleman showed maybe worked for the nobleman, but would not necessarily work for the servant, and so to play it safe, decided to not do anything. We have a likely example of that with Peter in Galatians 2:11.

The point of the parable is this. Yeshua was going to be leaving the disciples, and in His absence, He expected them to carry on the business of raising disciples. He could have raised all the disciples He wanted Himself, but that was not His intent. He wanted it done through their efforts, and He wanted it done the way He had shown them. But He knew they would face opposition, and He wanted them to understand that if they continued to follow what He had taught them, they would be successful and would bear good fruit, but if they let their opposition get the best of them, they would fail.

The parable ends with the nobleman's instructions to bring his enemies before him and slay them. It must be understood that the nobleman did not say to kill all his enemies, but only those who did not want him to reign over them. In other words, kill the opposition.

Those who opposed Yeshua were not the common enemies of the Jews. They were not the Romans - the enemies that He alluded to in Matthew 5. The Romans were not out to get Yeshua, nor were they necessarily out to get the Jewish people. In fact, they were somewhat indifferent to the Jews, and many of them came to be believers and followers of Yeshua. On the other hand, the enemies in the Parable of the Minas were in opposition to Yeshua, and ultimately to His kingdom. They - like Adonijah, the son of King David, who - during the early days of King Solomon's reign - were in opposition to the king and thus a threat to the kingdom. And like Solomon did with Adonijah, King Yeshua will have to put them down.

Yeshua brought this out in a warning He gave to his disciples just before they left Capernaum on this last trip they made together to Jerusalem. He gave this warning as a result of the Pharisees who were literally thumbing their noses at His message. He knew that the Pharisees would bring trials upon His disciples as they began to carry on with the work of their master - Messiah Yeshua. So He said to them -

^{YLT} **Luke 17:1** . . . 'It is impossible for the stumbling blocks not to come, but woe *to him* through whom they come; ² it is more profitable to him if a weighty millstone is put round about his neck, and he hath been cast into the sea, than that he may cause one of these little ones to stumble.

Their response was simply -

^{NKJ} **Luke 17:5** "Increase our faith."

And as they made their final trip to Jerusalem, the encounter with Zaccheaus and the Parable of the Minas was intended to do just that..

Shalom Aleichem