

SOME INTERPRETATIONS OF THE TALENTS IN MT 25:14-30

- English Language *Natural gifts and abilities.* “‘Talent’ in the figurative sense of mental endowment or natural ability is derived from this very parable and was first used in this way in English circa 1430 [*The Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd Ed.) Vol. 17 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989): 580]. In other words, this figurative sense of the word should not be read back into the parable.” [Ben Chenoweth, *Tyndale Bulletin*, **56**, 61 (2005)]
- Don Carson *Nothing:* “Attempts to identify the talents with spiritual gifts, the law, natural endowments, the gospel, or whatever else, lead to a narrowing of the parable with which Jesus would have been uncomfortable. Perhaps he chose the talent or mina symbolism because of its capacity for varied application.” [*The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, p. 516]
- Origen *The ministry of the Word:* “For Origen the parable of the talents is an allegory in which the nobleman is Christ who leaves his disciples at the Ascension, while those given the talents are the disciples, entrusted with the ministry of the Word which has been given to them until he comes again.” [Michael S. Northcott, *Theology*, **107**, 241 (2004).]
- Gregory the Great The five talents are the *five senses*; The two talents are “*theory and practice*”; the one talent is “theory alone.”
- John Calvin *The gifts of God*, especially the gifts of the Holy Spirit
- John Chrysostom “*Each person’s ability*, whether in the way of protection, or in money, or in teaching, or whatever.”
- Augustine *Salvation:* “The wickedness of that servant who was reprobate and severely condemned, was that he would not put out his money to use. He kept the entire sum he had received; but the Lord looked for profit from it. God is covetous with regard to our salvation.”
- Joachim Jeremias *The Word of God*
- Michael Green *The Law:* “It looks as if the original application was to the Pharisees. They received the torah and oral law with great care from their predecessors, and ultimately from God. They preserved it unchanged. They buried it where ordinary people could not get at it. And they did not use their responsibility well. They wanted a religion without change and without risk. And they are heartily condemned for it. They are worthless servants, who will have their prize possession, the law, taken from them, and will find themselves outside the kingdom, in the darkness (30).” The application also goes wider than the Pharisee: it applies to all who are determined to retain the status quo and to avoid risk and change in their religion—to all who refuse to trade with the responsibilities the Master gives them.” [Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew* (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP).]
- Ben Chenoweth *The secrets of the kingdom of heaven* (Ibid.)
- Michael Green *Responsibilities:* “They are not abilities (a talent is a weight, which later became a unit of money). They are, rather, the responsibilities that Lord gives his people in the light of their abilities and opportunities. So it is not a ‘talent’ in the way we would use the word. It is not a gift, as if we control it. It is not an ability, of which we might boast. It is actually an investment which the Master makes in us his servants.” (Ibid.)
- John B. Carpenter Our God-given resources, not least including *money*: “But let us make no mistake about it. Jesus was using money, and so, though I think the principle is applicable to more than just money, the principle certainly does not exclude money (or else it would be nonsense). Surely Jesus did not mean us to think that he was saying: ‘Now I am using money as an example of spiritual endowments and the principle I am talking about is only true of the spiritual endowments.’” [*Missiology*, **25**, 165 (1997)]