

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 11 March 2024

Greetings.

This coming Friday (15th March) is known to many as 'the Ides of March', a date made famous as that of the assassination of the Roman general, statesman and dictator-for-life, Julius Caesar, in 44 BC.

Speaking as someone who didn't do particularly well at Latin in my distant school days, I believe that we owe probably the best-known Latin phrase to him.

It was just three years before Caesar's death, following a quick and decisive victory over Pharnaces II, the king of Pontus (a kingdom on the shores of the Black Sea, including parts of modern Turkey, Georgia and Ukraine) that he coined the phrase, 'Veni, vidi, vici' ('I came, I saw, I conquered') as his own account of his campaign.

Historians (ancient and modern) claim that Caesar included the phrase in a letter written to the Roman Senate declaring his victory and had the phrase written on a placard displayed in his triumphal procession back to Rome. I do not wish to belittle Caesar's victory but you and I know of One who came and who achieved an infinitely greater victory.

One of the twenty-four 'elders' (whose thrones surround the central throne in heaven) is on record as having declared, 'Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered' (Rev. 5. 5 ESV) ... and this conquest He achieved as 'the Lamb who was slain' (Rev. 5. 12).

Well, then, do we sing with Samuel Gandy:

His be the Victor's name
Who fought our fight alone:
Triumphant saints no honour claim;
Their conquest was His own.

Bless, bless the Conqueror slain—
Slain by Divine decree—
Who lived, who died, who lives again,
For thee, my soul, for thee!

Ponder the following quotation:

'The cross of Christ on Golgotha is a historic fact just as truly as the murder of Julius Caesar in Rome. But the murder of Caesar has no importance for us. We do not meet God there ...

'What makes this historical fact (of the cross of Christ) all-important is that God meets us at the cross and nowhere else. If it is really true that there we meet God, in His incredible love for us in spite of what we are—and faith knows that this is so—then this fact is of unique importance'.

(Emil Brunner, *'Faith, Hope, and Love'*, page 21.)

In the Musings distributed a month ago (Monday, 12th February), I said that the words which Charles Dickens put into the mouth of the then-reformed Ebenezer Scrooge ('I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future') remind me 'of a series of three messages which I gave almost twenty years ago'.

As part of that Monday's Musings, I set out an updated and edited version of the notes of the first of those three messages ('Living in the Past').

Today, I set out below an updated and edited version of the notes of the second of those three messages ('Living in the Present').

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

LIVING IN THE PRESENT

SCRIPTURE

Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho ...

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.

Therefore, He said: 'A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, "Do business till I come". But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us".

'And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

'Then came the first, saying, "Master, your mina has earned ten minas". And he said to him, "Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities".

'And the second came, saying, "Master, your mina has earned five minas". Likewise, he said to him, "You also be over five cities".

'Then another came, saying, "Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow". And he said to him, "Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?"

'And he said to those who stood by, "Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas". (But they said to him, "Master, he has ten minas".) "For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me".'

When He had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

Luke 19. 1, 11-28 (*The New King James Version*).

INTRODUCTION

Several weeks ago, I began the study headed, 'Living in the Past'¹ with a reference to Charles Dickens' novel, 'A Christmas Carol', and in particular to the section towards the end of the story where the then reformed character Ebenezer Scrooge scrambles out of bed, repeating the words, 'I will live in the Past, the Present and the Future'.

In that study, we considered how, as God's people today, we ought to live in the light of the past. In this study, I want to consider with you Ebenezer Scrooge's words, 'I will live in the present'.

WHAT LIVING IN THE PRESENT DOES NOT MEAN

Living in the present certainly does not mean that we should live for the present, which is precisely what one of Paul's fellow-labourers sadly came to do: 'Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world ('the now age', literally), and has departed for Thessalonica'.² No, you and I are to live, not for the present but in the present.

WHAT LIVING IN THE PRESENT DOES MEAN

REDEEMING THE TIME

Paul's clarion call, sounding in both of his letters to churches in Asia (to the saints at Ephesus and at Colossae), is 'redeeming the time'—'making the most', that is, 'of every opportunity'.³

The word here translated 'redeeming'⁴ isn't the word normally used to describe redemption.⁵ In both instances, Paul employs a commercial term meaning 'to buy out, to purchase completely' and comes from the background of the marketplace. Paul's word picture is clear: Believers should act as prudent merchants, tirelessly buying up ('snapping up', if you like) and using all available opportunities of doing good and of serving God.

There have been many occasions through the ages when an exceptional man or woman has stood out from all others because he or she faced some momentous opportunity and seized it—the effects of which proved to be far-reaching and dramatic. But I suspect that few, if any, other opportunities ever ranked with that taken by a Queen of Persia about 2,500 years ago.

THE EXAMPLE OF ESTHER

At that time, Esther's own people (the nation of Israel) lay under sentence of death and that by decree of the then most powerful potentate on earth (Xerxes, the mighty King of Persia),⁶ known to many of us as Ahasuerus—whose laws and decrees cannot be reversed or rescinded.⁷ This particular decree has been prompted and inspired by the King's most senior government official, Haman the Agagite.⁸

Counselled by her cousin, Mordecai, to make supplication to the King for her people, Esther points out that it is public knowledge that neither man *nor woman* is permitted to enter the king's inner court uninvited, on pain of death, unless the King sees fit to extend his golden sceptre.⁹ The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, claims that men were stationed around the royal throne armed with axes to despatch any unwelcome visitors.¹⁰ The message is crystal clear—if you didn't get the sceptre ... you got the axe! And that would really spoil your day!

Esther further points out that there is no guarantee whatever that she will find favour with the King—that she has not been summoned by the King for the past thirty days. This in itself was ground for considerable misgiving. Secular historians describe Xerxes as a vain and sensual monarch and it was by no means impossible that, during the last month, he had transferred his affections elsewhere. There were certainly no guarantees in this business—as ex-Queen Vashti could tell you!

Mordecai's reply is simple and to the point. He is confident that, if Esther remains silent, God would doubtless raise up deliverance for the Jews 'from another place'. But, as he says, 'who knows but that *you* are come to the kingdom for such a time as this'.¹¹ Returning Mordecai the message, 'I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish',¹² Esther takes the opportunity which her role and position as Queen give her and goes in.

The former Queen Vashti had suffered the loss of her *crown* for *not coming* when she had been *called*; Queen Esther is prepared to risk the loss of her *head* by *coming* when she has *not been called*!

Neither Esther nor Mordecai reasons that, because God is in control, they can afford to sit back and fold their arms. They know that God is pleased to use human instruments to work His will through and that He expects those instruments to take whatever opportunities present themselves. And so, in one sense (aided by the King's sleepless night¹³), the opportunity grasped by Esther saves the day ... and the entire Jewish nation. 'Cometh the hour, cometh the man', they say; well, in this case. 'Cometh the hour, cometh the woman'!

BUYING UP THE OPPORTUNITIES

But few indeed ever face such dramatic opportunities as this. For most of us, our opportunities are of a far more ordinary, mundane and everyday kind—of the sort which Paul has in mind when he exhorts the Galatians, 'Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore *opportunity*, let us do good (literally, 'let us work good') to all, especially to them who are of the household of faith'.¹⁴

So, 'as we have opportunity, let us work good'. Such opportunities may not vie with that which Esther seized but they are nonetheless extremely important and we can rest assured that God takes note of what we do with every one of them.

THE PARABLE OF THE MINAS (the 'pounds' of the King James Version)

(i) Introductory comments

We noted above that the word 'redeeming' (used in connection with our opportunities of doing good and of serving God) comes from the background of the marketplace. In a way, that connects well with the parable which comprises the scripture reading at the head of this study, which is also largely set against a commercial background. I chose this particular scripture reading because it is concerned, not only with the future (with the time, that is, of the kingdom's actual establishment), but also largely with *the present* and with the opportunities afforded us in the present.

As you doubtless know, there are *two distinct aspects* to the kingdom of God in the Gospels:

(i) the *present* form, entered by faith and the new birth and

(ii) the *future* form, which will be manifested in power when the Son of man sits on the throne of His glory and takes the reins of universal government.

These two aspects are often referred to as the 'now' and the 'not yet' forms.

(ii) The context

When Jesus speaks the parable of the minas, He is making His way to Jerusalem ('the city of the great King', as He once described it¹⁵). It was commonly believed (by both the crowds and the disciples¹⁶) that He was going there to establish a glorious kingdom: that 'the kingdom of God would appear immediately'. But *He* knows that He is going to Jerusalem to die¹⁷ and, thence, to heaven to receive His kingdom, which would not be established on earth for some time to come.¹⁸

The Lord had recently told Zacchaeus that 'salvation' had come to his house that very day,¹⁹ but He knows that 'salvation' would not come to the house of Israel until much later—until the time spoken of by the prophet Isaiah: 'Say to the daughter of Zion, "Behold, *your salvation* comes; behold, His reward is with Him and His recompense before Him'.²⁰

One of the reasons that Jesus told the parable was to correct the popular misunderstanding.²¹

(iii) The background

Jesus and His disciples had recently left Jericho²² and were now approaching Jerusalem²³, a distance of less than twenty miles. And there can be no doubt that He employed a well-known historical incident (connected in part with Jericho) as the backcloth and framework for His parable.²⁴

Herod the Great had died a little over thirty years earlier. Herod had fathered several sons, of whom Archelaus was one of the more fortunate, in that he managed to outlive his father—unlike three of Herod's other sons who (along with many others of Herod's family) were murdered by their insanely jealous father.²⁵

Archelaus was cited in Herod's final will as ruler of Judaea and Samaria and, shortly after Herod's death, he left Jericho²⁶ to go to Rome (the 'far country'²⁷) to push his claim, and (so he hoped) to have his father's will confirmed by Augustus Caesar and thereby 'receive his kingdom'.

Josephus records how, in Herod's final testament, he 'granted the kingdom to Archelaus'²⁸ but that Archelaus 'would not ... take upon him either the authority of a king, or the names thereto belonging, until Caesar, who is ... lord of this whole affair ... confirm the succession'.²⁹

It is likely that our Lord's story, spoken in or near Jericho, would have come alive to His disciples because, when Archelaus returned from Rome, having 'come into Judea, he ... magnificently rebuilt the royal palace that had been at Jericho, and he diverted half the water with which the village of Neara used to be watered, and drew off that water into the plain, to water those palm trees which he had there planted'.³⁰

Although we may not necessarily accept the suggestion that 'Archelaus had rebuilt the stately royal palace of Jericho, under the very shadow of which the Speaker and the crowds were perhaps standing',³¹ there can be little doubt that our Lord's hearers would have made the connection between His parable and the history of Archelaus. Indeed, the aqueduct that Archelaus had constructed ran alongside the road by which our Lord and those with Him left Jericho on their way towards Jerusalem.

But Archelaus was detested by the Jews, having, in a Jewish uprising immediately following his father's death, felt compelled to slay three thousand of their number.³² It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the Jews dispatched a delegation to Rome to plead with Augustus for freedom from the reign of Archelaus, preferring to come under direct Roman rule.³³

The record of Josephus shows how closely this detail in the parable accords with those events of thirty years before:

'Archelaus ... had new sources of trouble come upon him at Rome ... for an embassy of the Jews was come to Rome ... Now the number of the ambassadors that were sent by the authority of the nation were fifty, to which they joined above eight thousand of the Jews that were at Rome already ... Now the main thing they desired was this: That they might be delivered from kingly and the like forms of government, and might be added to Syria, and be put under the authority of such presidents of theirs as should be sent to them'.³⁴

The Jews preferred, that is, to come under direct Roman rule and the statement of the delegation in the parable, 'We will not have this man to reign over us', doubtless echoes their desire that they be freed from any 'kingly' form of government.

It would be difficult not to see the close parallel between this stated desire (made on behalf of 'the nation') and the response which the Jews and their chief priests made a few days later when, concerning the Lord Jesus, Pilate declared, 'Behold your King!' The Jews then 'cried out', we read, 'Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!' And when Pilate replied, 'Shall I crucify your King?' the chief priests answered, 'We have no king but Caesar!'³⁵

But, given that the delegation was sent after the nobleman had left to 'receive for himself a kingdom', it may well be that our Lord had in mind rather the fierce hostility shown by the Jews towards His apostles and the early church following His ascension. That is, that the persecution of believers throughout the period covered by the Book of Acts was in effect the 'embassage' which the Jews sent 'after Him', rejecting His claims and making it clear that they did not want Him as their King.³⁶

(iv) The parable itself: small sums of money entrusted

The nobleman in the parable chooses to commit a relatively small sum to each of ten of his servants, that he might test their industry and faithfulness during his absence, with a view to allocating to them later jurisdiction over the cities in his kingdom ... although I see no reason to believe that his servants expected this.³⁷ I say 'relatively small sum' partly because the mina is described as 'very little' by the nobleman³⁸ and partly because there were no less than sixty minas in a single 'talent'.³⁹

The nobleman gived clear and precise instructions that each servant was 'to do business ('to trade', that is) till I come'.

The Lord tells how, come the nobleman's return, he deals as might be expected (violently and mercilessly) with those who had rejected his rule over them. But the parable focuses rather on how the nobleman determined the roles and positions of responsibility of his servants in his kingdom; namely, solely on the basis of the degree of industry and faithfulness which each had shown during his absence—during the time of probation, if you like, which had now come to an end.

(v) The parable itself: differing accounts of stewardship

The first two servants had performed extremely well.

The very first servant to offer an account of his service could point to a remarkable one thousand per cent profit.⁴⁰ But, if his success was impressive, his reward (authority over ten cities) was even more staggering—being altogether out of all proportion to what he had achieved with the mina entrusted to him.

And yet, although in one sense (that of its scale) the reward was entirely disproportional to the service rendered, in another sense (that of its number) it was directly proportional to what the servant had achieved. For the extent of responsibility bestowed as a reward was directly proportional to the servant's proven faithfulness and industry, as was true also of the second servant—who, having achieved half as much with his mina as had the first servant with his was rewarded with half as many cities.

But, by way of contrast, another⁴¹ servant had hidden his mina for the entire duration of his master's absence— ostensibly out of fear of his master, who he claimed was notoriously hard on his servants. By declaring his decision not to take risks with his master's property,⁴² he was virtually making his own laziness into a virtue, thereby attempting to shift any blame for his lack of action on to his master and on to his master's character.

In that our Lord develops the case of this, the third, servant in far greater detail than the case of the other servants, it is clear that His parable is largely directed against the faults of which he is a notable representative.

It is true, he had not:

- (i) wasted his master's goods, as had the unjust steward;⁴³
- (ii) spent his portion in riotous living, as had the prodigal son;⁴⁴
- (iii) run up a fantastic debt of ten thousand talents, as had the unforgiving servant.⁴⁵

Yet he is properly described as 'wicked'⁴⁶ for the simple reason that he had not done as he had been told! He had not been left to decide for himself what he wished to do – or not to do – with *his master's* mina. He had not been at liberty to hide it away in some 'handkerchief' or whatever.⁴⁷

But the nobleman is too shrewd for him and quickly sees through his feeble excuse. For, had his master's character really matched the description which this servant gives of it, fear should have spurred him into action. The truth was that the servant was not fearful but lazy ... he was not cautious but bone idle.⁴⁸

(vi) The parable itself: future opportunities forfeited

Beyond doubt, one of the most intriguing features of the parable lies in its emphasis on what happens to the minas *after* they have fulfilled their obvious purpose of establishing how many cities in the kingdom should be allocated to the servants.

Particularly intriguing is the parable's focus on the transfer of one of the original minas from one servant to another, followed by the tantalising words which Jesus puts into the mouth of the nobleman, '*from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him*'.

How, we may well wonder, can one take away from someone that which he does not have?

Most certainly, then, there are some decidedly odd features about the Lord's story which have nothing to do either (i) with correcting the people's false expectation about the timing of the kingdom or (ii) with any of the historical background of Archelaus' journey to Rome—which incident provides no counterpart whatsoever, as far as we know, to the role played by the minas.

And then we have to reckon with the ludicrous comment which the Saviour puts into the mouths of those standing by: 'Master (literally, 'Lord'), *he has ten minas*'!⁴⁹ If you and I had been the bystanders in the story, I guess we *might* have interjected, 'Lord, he has ten *cities*' but certainly not, 'Lord, he has ten *minas*'. For who, in his right mind, having received jurisdiction over ten cities, would care a hoot about having one more mina to add to the ten minas he already possessed?

But that is precisely the point—the key lesson of the parable revolves around that very mina!

How then are we to understand the intriguing words of the nobleman in verse 26, 'from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him'?

I suggest that the clue lies in the arithmetic of verses 24 and 25.

The servant who receives ten cities is described both by the nobleman and by the bystanders as 'having' *ten* minas ... and yet, in fact, he has *eleven*! Clearly, the man still *retains the original mina* which had been given to him,⁵⁰ to which he has now *added a further ten minas*.⁵¹ For him to have had the original mina taken from him would have been a punishment for him—as it certainly proved to be for the 'wicked servant'.⁵²

We must conclude, therefore, that verses 24 and 25 should be paraphrased and understood as saying, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has *gained* the ten minas', and, 'Lord, he has *gained* ten minas'.

Armed with this key, the paradox of verse 26 is easily explained: *'to everyone who has **gained** shall be given; and from him who has not **gained**, even what he has will be taken away from him'*.

In effect, the nobleman is pointing out that, if a trader entrusted with capital shows a significant profit, people will eagerly offer him further capital but *a trader who reports no profit will have taken from him the capital previously entrusted to him*. That is, 'from him who has not made any profit ('who has not gained') will be withdrawn even that capital with which he was entrusted'.

(vii) The salutary lesson of the parable

But why, we may well ask, does our Lord attach such importance to a mere mina? What can the mina represent that is so fundamentally important? Well, clearly, the mina represents something (i) which is given to every servant of Jesus to use and to invest and (ii) which can be removed and transferred to others.

As I understand it, at its simplest, *the mina stands for the opportunities—the openings for service and for doing good— which we are all given*. Although the details of our personal opportunities differ enormously, we each have in common a week of seven days and a day of twenty-four hours. To that extent, we are each given the same amount of **'the present'**, packed, even bulging, with opportunities unique to ourselves.

By means of His parable, our Lord wants us to know that, through the proper and diligent use of our present opportunities and occasions for service and doing good *in this life and this world*, we can secure for ourselves a reward which will consist, in part, of further, enlarged opportunities and capacity for service *in His manifested kingdom*. The reward for God-given opportunities which are grasped and taken *now* will, in part, be increased opportunities *then*, on a grander and more glorious scale than we can ever dream or imagine.

But, alas for us, there is more to the parable than that. For the servant who has his mina taken from him stands as representative of all those who do nothing of eternal value with the opportunities which God graciously gives them.

And, by introducing the third character into His story, the Saviour is, therefore, forewarning us that *our failure to exploit and put to use our God-given opportunities in this present world will lead inescapably to the loss of those opportunities of service which God would otherwise have readily given us to use for Him in His kingdom*. That is, by our misuse (and even by our non-use) of our present opportunities, we forfeit what otherwise would have been ours in His kingdom. And that is no laughing matter!

In the day of review, the Lord is saying, He will determine the scope for service which each of us will be given in God's kingdom, not on any arbitrary basis but based on what we have done here with what we have been given. That is (like it or not), our role then is being hammered out on the anvil of **'the present'** life.

Make no mistake, God's kingdom will be no place of idleness and ease. It won't be some form of 'heavenly holiday camp'. From the beginning, God made man to work.⁵³ And, as I understand it, the rewards to be secured in the day of review will consist not only of *crowns*,⁵⁴ *cities*⁵⁵ and *commendation*⁵⁶ but also in a wider sphere of activity—in increased, enlarged opportunities of serving Him.⁵⁷

Do we want to be the best that we can be for our Lord in His future, manifested kingdom? 'If so, then', He says to us, 'take care how you live in **the present**, for it is your energetic use of the opportunities I give you in this world that will prepare and fit you for greater things in my kingdom. But if you do not make use of your opportunities *now*, you will not be given them *then*. Use them *here* or lose them *there!*'

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

It is a solemn thought, indeed, that, as we noted earlier (under the heading, 'Buying up the opportunities'), although the opportunities you and I each face every day 'may not vie with that which Esther seized ... they are nonetheless extremely important and we can rest assured God takes note of what we do with every one of them'.

Our Lord's 'Parable of the Minas' reveals just how 'extremely important' those opportunities are.

With an eye to the exhortation which the Lord Jesus addresses, through its angel, to the church at Philadelphia, 'Hold fast what you have, that *no one may take your crown*',⁵⁸ let us each determine, with God's help, so to live '**in the present**' that *no one is going to take our mina* in that day!

Footnotes

¹ That study formed the main part of the Monday Musings for 12 February 2024.

² 2 Tim. 4. 10.

³ Eph. 5. 16; Col. 4. 5.

⁴ The Greek word, 'ἐξαγοράζω'.

⁵ The Greek word, 'ἀπολύτρωσις'.

⁶ Esther 3. 13.

⁷ Esther 1. 19; 8. 8; Dan. 6. 8, 15.

⁸ Esther 3. 7-11.

⁹ Esther 4. 11.

¹⁰ 'The king had made a law, that none of his own people should approach him unless he were called, when he sat upon his throne and men, with axes in their hands, stood round about his throne, in order to punish such as approached to him without being called', Flavius Josephus, '*The Antiquities of the Jews*', Book XI, Chapter VI, paragraph 3.

¹¹ Esther 4. 14.

Referring to the time when King George VI made him Prime Minister in May 1940, at what he described as 'the outset of this mighty battle', Winston Churchill once wrote: "I felt as if I were walking with destiny, and that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial". (Quoted from Winston S. Churchill, '*The Great Battles and Leaders of the Second World War*', page 168.) I guess that Queen Esther might have said those very words of herself: 'that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial'.

But, as things developed, there was one obvious difference. Because, for all his best efforts, Mr Churchill could do nothing to save *some six million Jews* from Hitler and the horrors of the Holocaust, whereas, Esther was the instrument that God chiefly used to save *the whole Jewish nation* of her day from Haman and the decree he had so carefully drafted.

¹² Esther 4. 16.

¹³ Esther 6. 1-10.

¹⁴ Gal. 6. 9-10.

¹⁵ Matt. 5. 35.

¹⁶ Matt. 20. 21; Mark 10. 35-37.

¹⁷ Luke 9. 31, 51; 17. 33; 18. 31.

¹⁸ But, in its future manifested form, *established the kingdom will be*: 'He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end', Luke 1. 33; 'when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near', Luke 21. 31; 'Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea ... was looking for the kingdom of God', Luke 23. 50-51; 'They asked Him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"', Acts 1. 6. The Lord Jesus does not question that the 'kingdom of God' would be manifested in the future (hence, His words about the nobleman's 'receiving' a kingdom, Luke 19. 12, 15) but only that the kingdom was to be manifested 'immediately'! It is a question only of timing.

¹⁹ Luke 19. 9.

²⁰ Isa. 62.11; words appropriated by the Lord Jesus in Rev. 22. 12.

²¹ Luke 19. 11.

²² Luke 19. 1.

²³ 'He was near to Jerusalem', Luke 19. 11.

²⁴ A fuller exposition of the parable, together with details of the context and the historical background can be found on the website of Precious Seed International at <https://www.preciousseed.org/articles/the-parable-of-the-pounds1-part-1/> and <https://www.preciousseed.org/articles/the-parable-of-the-pounds-part-2/>.

²⁵ Although Herod was an Idumean by race, he lived as a Jew and so avoided eating pork. This led to a (probably apocryphal) report that Augustus once quipped about him as follows—a Roman philosopher claimed, ‘When he (Augustus) heard that Herod king of the Jews had ordered boys in Syria under the age of two years to be put to death and that the king’s son was among those killed, he said, *“I’d rather be Herod’s pig than Herod’s son”*’ Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius, *‘The Saturnalia’*, Book 2, Chapter 4, Paragraph 11.

²⁶ King Herod died at Jericho; Flavius Josephus, *ibid.*, Book XVII, Chapter VI, Paragraph 5, and Chapter VIII, Paragraph 2; *‘The Wars of the Jews’*, Book I, Chapter XXXIII, Paragraph 6. Archelaus attended his father’s funeral there before setting out for Rome.

²⁷ Luke 19. 12.

²⁸ Flavius Josephus, *‘The Antiquities of the Jews’*, Book XVII, Chapter VIII, Paragraph 1.

²⁹ Flavius Josephus, *‘The Wars of the Jews’*, Book II, Chapter I, Paragraph 1.

³⁰ Flavius Josephus, *‘The Antiquities of the Jews’*, Book XVII, Chapter XIII, paragraph 1.

³¹ H. D. M. Spence, *‘Luke: The Pulpit Commentary’*, comment on Luke 19. 12.

³² Flavius Josephus, *ibid.*, Book XVII, Chapter IX, Paragraphs 1-3.

³³ The Jews were determined at all costs to frustrate Archelaus’s desire to ‘reign over’ them. ‘According to Nicolaus of Damascus, the Jewish delegation was willing to consent to Antipas’ rule if direct Roman rule was impossible’, Harold W. Hoehner, *‘Herod Antipas’*, page 27.

³⁴ Flavius Josephus, *ibid.*, Book XVII, Chapter XI, Paragraphs 1-2. A parallel account is given in Flavius Josephus, *‘The Wars of the Jews’*, Book II, Chapter VI, Paragraph 1.

³⁵ John 19. 14-15. ‘This was going way beyond merely rejecting Jesus. They were now repudiating Israel’s messianic hope, including the messianic kingdom, and rejecting Yahweh’s sovereignty over their nation’, Thomas Constable, *‘Expository Notes’*, comment on John 19. 15.

³⁶ ‘Thus, the Jews, when Peter sets their sin before them and declares to them that, if they repent, Jesus would return and with Him the times of refreshing, reject the testimony, and, so to say, send Stephen after Jesus to testify that they would have nothing to do with Him’, J. N. Darby, *‘Synopsis of the Books of the Bible’*, comment on Luke chapters 19 and 20. There is no suggestion in our Lord’s parable, of course, that the plea made by the delegation would prove in part successful, as events had proved in the case of Archelaus. For, in the event, Archelaus was not granted the whole of Herod’s kingdom; Caesar ‘gave the one half of Herod’s kingdom to Archelaus, by the name of Ethnarch ... Idumea, Judea, and Samaria, were parts of the ethnarchy of Archelaus ... But as for the other half, he divided it into two parts, and gave it to two other of Herod’s sons, to Philip and to Antipas’. (Source: Flavius Josephus, *‘The Antiquities of the Jews’*, Book XVII, Chapter XI, Paragraph 4, and *‘The Wars of the Jews’*, Book II, Chapter VI, Paragraph 3.)

³⁷ In the parable, the Lord speaks only of ten servants. It is not that the nobleman has only ten servants; as a claimant to a kingdom, he would have many more. It is that he selected ‘ten of his servants’.

³⁸ Luke 19. 17.

³⁹ Which sum (a talent) would feature in the later and, in some respects, the similar parable of Jesus, recorded in Matt. 25. 14-30.

‘One mina was worth about four month’s wages’, D. L. Bock, *‘Luke: Baker Exegetical Commentary’*, Volume 2, comment on Luke 19. 12. I suspect that such a small amount would have meant that the servants faced not only a time of great activity in their lord’s absence but also a time of obscure, humble activity—operating not as high-class merchants, with vast stocks to deal in or invest, but as small-time traders, who would need to expend considerable energy to make any profit out of what little they have been given.

⁴⁰ Although such a profit may seem extremely large to us, it 'was quite possible under ancient conditions with enormous interest and commission rates', I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, page 705.

⁴¹ The word 'another' translates the word 'ἕτερος', which 'expresses a qualitative difference and denotes 'another of a different sort'. W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, article 'Another'.

The first two servants were profitable; this man was unprofitable. The first two were both good servants; he was a 'wicked servant', Luke 19. 22.

⁴² Yet, 'according to rabbinical law, burying was regarded as the best security against theft. Anyone who buried a pledge or a deposit immediately upon receipt of it was free from liability. On the other hand, *if anyone tied up entrusted money in a cloth, they were responsible for any loss incurred as a result of their inadequate care of the entrusted property*', Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, page 61. Our Lord's immediate audience may have understood Him to say, therefore, that this servant failed to exercise even the most elementary precautions with respect to the property entrusted to him.

⁴³ Luke 16. 1.

⁴⁴ Luke 15. 13.

⁴⁵ Matt. 18. 24.

⁴⁶ Luke 19. 22; the Greek word, 'πνηρός'.

⁴⁷ Various scholars suggest a towel, a headdress or a sweatcloth.

It may well have been either a neckcloth used to protect the back of the head from the sun or a piece of cloth used to wipe perspiration off the face and neck; compare Luke's use of the word in Acts 19. 12.

One scholar suggests that the cloth 'which, not exerting himself, this lazy servant does not need for its proper use ('in the sweat of your face you shall eat bread', Gen. 3. 19), he uses for the wrapping up of his pound. That he had it disengaged, and free to be turned to his purpose, was itself a witness against him', R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, page 519, footnote 3.

⁴⁸ We should note that, although this *servant* is deprived of future opportunities of service, he is not 'slain', as are the nobleman's *enemies*, Luke 19. 27.

⁴⁹ Luke 19. 25.

⁵⁰ 'He called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas', Luke 19. 13.

⁵¹ 'Your mina has earned ('προσηργήσατο'; 'to make *more*, earn *in addition*', I. H. Marshall, *ibid.*, page 705) *ten* minas', Luke 19. 16.

⁵² Luke 19. 24.

⁵³ Gen. 2. 15.

⁵⁴ 1 Cor. 9. 25; 1 Thess. 2. 19; 2 Tim. 4. 8; Jas. 1. 12; 1 Pet. 5. 4; Rev. 2. 10.

⁵⁵ Luke 19. 17, 19.

⁵⁶ Matt. 25. 21, 23; Luke 19. 17. 'Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes ... then each one's praise ('commendation', 'approbation') will come from God', 1 Cor. 4. 5.

⁵⁷ 'The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it and His servants shall worshipfully serve ('λατρεύω') Him', Rev. 22. 3.

⁵⁸ Rev. 3. 11.