

## Personal Accountability

Most of us have had to serve jury duty at some point or another in our past. A few years back I was actually one of the ones who made it through the screening process to serve on a jury. I, along with other selected jurors, was escorted into a courtroom where we were to hear the charges against an individual. Once in the courtroom, I saw the judge, lawyers, and the defendant. I watched as the defendant, and what appeared to be his lawyer, approached the judge and began communicating. A few moments later, all the jurors were released. Apparently the man had made a plea bargain.

All of humanity faces a similar appointment at the end of time. All those who died (just and unjust) will be resurrected from the grave (Acts 24:15). Both just and unjust will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (John 5:28-29). Each individual will give account for the “works” he did or did not do while on this earth (Rom. 2:5-6; Rev. 20:13). There will not be a lawyer to barter for a lesser penalty or plea bargain. Those who are found guilty will be devoid of all hope at this point. Even if Moses or Samuel approaches God (the judge) on behalf of the sinner, He will not change His judgments on this individual (cf. Jer. 15:1ff). It will not matter if the sinner has close associations with spiritual men compared to Noah, Daniel, and Job. Once I have lived my life, I will stand alone before the judgment seat of Christ (cf. Ezek. 14:12-13).

Said judgment is depicted in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. The servants in that parable were entrusted as stewards with various amounts of money from their master who was to leave for a season. When the master returned home, he made a reckoning with his servants whom he had given his goods. Two of the servants had done well, but one did not. To the two, the master said, “*well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord*” (Matt. 25:21). To the wicked and lazy servant who did nothing, the master said, “*cast ye out the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth*” (Matt. 25:30).

There are four important things to note. First, there will certainly be a day of judgment. Secondly, I will give account for what I have done in this life. Thirdly, no one will be able to save me if I have rejected God’s mercy (I will stand alone before the judge). Finally, I need to see that I can do something now about where I spend eternity. God is willing to justify (acquit) me of my sins (Rom. 5:1-2). The blood of Jesus has the power to remove sins I have committed against God (Heb. 9:22). I can take advantage of Christ’s sacrifice by being baptized into Christ for the remission of my sins (Acts 2:38). When I sin again after baptism (I Jn. 1:8, 10), I can ask God to forgive me and be confident that He hears my prayers. The apostle John said, “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (I Jn. 1:9). The inference is clear; if I am not baptized I will not receive the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Secondly, if I am baptized yet sin again, I will not receive forgiveness of my sins unless I “*confess my uncleanness*” to God in a spirit of humility (Isa. 57:15; I Jn. 1:8-10). When each of us understands our personal accountability, we will be more ready to confess our faults and repent of our wrongdoings. Heaven is at stake!