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FLESH

By: C. D. Cole

Introduction: This is a word study, a study of the word "flesh." Let us study it, not to satisfy idle curiosity, but for practical purposes. The word of God is made up of words. Some words have a variety of meanings. I cannot think of a word that has a greater variety of meanings than "flesh."

The word "flesh" is sometimes used of living things. *"And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth,"* Genesis 6:13. *"And all flesh shall see the salvation of God,"* Luke 3:6.

It is sometimes used of the human body. *"But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you,"* Philippians 1:22-24. *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me,"* Galatians 2:20.

It is used as a synonym of person. *"For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh,"* Colossians 2:1. Paul speaks of those who had not *"seen my face in the flesh,"* meaning those who had not known him personally.

The most common use of the word "flesh" is in the sense of human nature; the moral nature of man in his natural state; the nature received in the first birth. We speak of our first birth as a physical birth, but this first birth included both body and soul. Man is a psychic as well as a physical being. A physician is one who treats the body; a psychiatrist is one who deals with the soul or the mind. A physician is a student of the human body; a psychiatrist is a student of the human mind.

Where we read about the natural man receiving not the things of the spirit, it is the man without the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians and Colossians, Paul speaks about the old man, which is corrupt, and the new man which is created after the likeness of God in righteousness and true holiness. *"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,"* Ephesians 4:24. This old man and new man refers to the old nature, which is sinful and the new nature which is created sinless.

The unregenerate man has nothing but the old nature; the regenerate man has both and is responsible to put on or live the new nature.

The old nature is often called the flesh and the new nature is called the spirit. *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,"* John 3:6.

So far as we are concerned, we received the fleshly nature in our first birth. We are by nature children of wrath. We can convey our sinful nature to our children, but we cannot give them our spiritual nature; every person must be born again to enter the kingdom of God.

If I were to sit in judgment upon God, I would not think He would be doing right in judging me for expressing a nature that I was born with. God did not give me this sinful nature. He made man upright as a responsible being and is not to be blamed for the fall of man. In purely human relations we blame the man for drunkenness even though he may have inherited the taste for drink from a drunken father.

The purpose of this message is to wither natural pride and show us the need of a prayerful and careful living. Human nature is like a powder magazine and we must keep the sparks of temptation away from it.

The fleshly mind has no understanding of spiritual truths. The fleshly nature has a mind but it is in a state of ignorance. *"For to be carnally* [fleshly] *minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal* [fleshly] *mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God,"* Romans 8:6-8. The fleshly mind cannot love God.

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PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

By: C. D. COLE

"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.

Introduction: The Lord has been speaking of himself as the heavenly bridegroom; now he compares Himself to a man traveling into a far country. While away He has entrusted his goods to His servants to be traded with for His own profit. After a long while He returns and has a settlement. Two of the servants went to work and had a profit for their master, the other refused to work and hid the money in the earth and the master lost. The three outstanding thoughts in this parable are: Return; Responsibility: Reckoning.

The Lord's Return

His return is certain. He has gone into a far country, but only as a traveler. He went away in body and will so return. *"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven,"* Acts 1:11. His interests are here on the earth. His property is here and he has servants to look after it. He has gone to heaven on business.

He did not tell His servants when He would return. He knew the ability of each and so gave to each the amount of money he had the ability to use. One represents the large business man, one the smallest, and the other in between.

He was gone a long time. How long we are not told. There is no way to measure the time. It would be a long time whether for one year or ten thousand.

The Servant's Responsibility

They were responsible for their own conduct. They belonged to their master. We are not our own; we cannot do as we please, there is the Lord to be pleased.

They are responsible for their Master's goods. It was in their possession, but they did not own it. Whatever we have of personal powers, body, mind, will, of attainments, of possessions, money, farm, grove, business, of influence in family, society, all these are our talents. A talent was money to the amount of 1200 pounds. Every man has as much as one talent in one or all of these possessions.

They were responsible to increase their Master's goods. This could only be done by work. The ruin of the one talent man was that he did nothing. He was good for nothing. Profit represents what we do for His cause while he is away. He is to come first. Of course the servant had to live. There is not one word about their going hungry; not one word of complaint from the master about what they had to have to live on. But they were to do business for him, and his was in his interest that they should have food and clothing. But He was to be first. They belonged to him and all that they possessed was His.

God sent Elijah to a widow woman. *"And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks; and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two*

sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah," I Kings 17:10-16.

Reckoning

"After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them," Matthew 25:19. There is a reckoning day coming. Jesus is coming back from the far country whither he has gone. We must not leave this fact out of our reckoning; and as his stewards we must be prepared at any moment for him to come and reckon with us as to the talents with which he has endowed us.

The three servants are typical characters. He has more than three servants, but these three stand for three kind of servants:

1. The five talent man doubles his Lord's property. He worked with enthusiasm. He was faithful. He was promoted to ruler over many things. He was entrusted with greater things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. He shared the Master's portion. The consummation of heavenly delights is not that we shall have joy of our own but that we shall enter into the joy of our Lord.

2. The two talent man also doubled His Lord's money. He was just as faithful, but did not have as much ability. He could not run as big a business; he could not make as much money, but he was as faithful, and his reward was the same as the big business man.

3. The one talent man did not make anything. He refused to do anything. His indolence was his ruination. He buried what the Lord told him to use. He criticized his Lord, as a hard master. See what the Lord does with him: He takes away the talent; the lost man in hell will never have opportunity to serve Christ. *"Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,"* Matthew 25:30.

The one talent man was a servant only by profession; he was a lost man among God's people without the spirit of service and love for God.

***FLESH* - By: C. D. Cole**
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The fleshly mind cannot produce the new birth. *"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,"* John 1:12-13. We are not born again by believing with a fleshly mind. Human nature cannot bring forth spiritual children of God. It is the Holy Spirit who produces children of God. The new birth is a supernatural birth. The new man or new nature is a new creation.

The saved man has both natures:

This causes a warfare within the soul. Paul describes this warfare in his own life. *"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members,"* Romans 7:22-23. *'For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would,"* Galatians 5:17.

For spiritual progress; for a life pleasing to God; the new nature must be fed and the old nature must be starved. *"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby,"* I Peter 2:2. *"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof,"* Romans 13: 14. Here is a challenging and a dangerous situation confronting us. There never was so much food for the flesh as today. And this food was never so appetizing as today. There is the blessed word of God for the new man, but this menu is being refused, while church members make provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

This fleshly nature in the saved man is no better than in a lost man. *"For I know that in me* [that is, in my flesh] *dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not,"* Romans 7:18. *"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh",* Philippians 3:3. *"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit,"* Galatians 5:25.

The flesh is in every saved man, but the saved man is not in the flesh. *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,"* Romans 8:9. The new birth did not take the flesh out of us, but it took us out of the flesh. We have our life and strength not from the flesh but from the Spirit.