Genesis - Commentaries by William John Hocking, Editor

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E.M.K.— Does the parable of the talents refer to believers? If so, explain as to the unprofitable servant (Matt. 25:14-30). The parable applies to all, (believers or not) who are in the place of Christian service. It will assist you in understanding the parable to recollect that the question is one of service, not of eternal life. The goods were delivered by the master to his servants (verse 14), one of whom was found “unprofitable” and cast into outer darkness (verse 30). Judas was, in a sense, such an unprofitable servant. He was one of “the twelve” even, thus occupying a distinguished place of service, and yet he was lost after all (John 6:70, 71; Acts 1:25). He served himself rather than his Master, Whom he entirely misjudged. Now those who have eternal life can never perish (John 10:28). And eternal life is given by God on account of faith in the Lord Jesus (John 3:16), not on account of faithful service. Had the.” slothful servant” possessed eternal life, he would have known the Master (John 17:3). He calls his lord a hard man (verse 24). This is false, proving his utter ignorance.

See on 1 Corinthians 9:27 in Vol. 2. B.M.M., p. 142.

F.W.R.— Sojourning of Israelites. Explain the different periods given: 400 years (Gen. 15:13; Acts 7:6), 430 years (Ex. 12:40,41; Gal. 3:17). Let us take first the passage in Galatians which states the law was given 430 years after the ratification of the covenant. Now this I say; A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul” (Gal. 3:17, R. V.). As this period begins at the confirming of the promise to Abraham, we must fix this point. Now Abraham received the promise in Ur (Acts 7:2, 3) but he stayed in Haran until Terah, his father, died. When he entered Canaan at the age of seventy-five, the first confirmation was made (Gen. 12:7). Starting here we can pursue the landmarks as follow: —

1. Birth of Isaac	25 years later	(Gen. 21:5).
2. Jacob	60 after	1. (Gen. 25:26).
3. Joseph	91	2
4. Death of Joseph	110	3. (Gen. 1:26).
5. Birth of Moses	64	4
6. The Exodus and the law given	80	5. (Ex. 7:7).
Total...	430 years after	Genesis 12:7.

It will be observed that each item except 3 and 5 is established by direct scripture. For 3 notice that Jacob was 130 years of age when he went into Egypt (Gen. 47:9). Joseph was then about 39; since he was 30 when raised to power (Gen. 41:46), and years of plenty and 2 of famine elapsed before his father came. Deducting 39 from 130, we have 91, the age of Jacob at the birth of Joseph, as stated above.

As to 5, there is nothing to enable us to speak so accurately; still it can be shown to be an approximate estimate. Levi was about ten years older than his brother Joseph, and therefore 120 at the latter’s death (Gen. 1:26). Levi died 17 years later at the age of 137 (Ex. 6:16). Jochebed, the mother of Moses, who must have been Levi’s youngest daughter, seeing she married her nephew (Ex. 6:20), could hardly have been less than 40 at her father’s death. If so, taking the above reckoning, Moses was born (64-17) 47 years after, that is, when Jochebed was 87 years old. This is not unreasonable. So that 64 years agrees with the facts recorded of this period.

Even if we commence reckoning, as some do, at Genesis 15 the small difference of five or ten years thus made can be added to 5, without altering the sum total, or affecting the above reasoning as to the time given—64 years.

Turning now to the next passage, we read, “The sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was 430 years.” Here we have the same period. The question arises whether it applies to the actual time the people were in Egypt.

If so, we must add 215 years to Jochebed’s age at the birth of Moses, making her (215 plus 87) 302 years old, which is incredible. If not, as we believe, then the 430 years covers the whole period of sojourning in Canaan (Heb. 11:9) as well as in Egypt—from Abraham’s first entry into the promised land until the Exodus. They had been sojourners 430 years and now went forth to take possession of the promised land. This text therefore agrees with Galatians 3:17.

In the third place we look at Genesis 15:13, where 400 years, not 430, is named. This however we find is spoken not of Abraham but of his seed. “Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years,” In this instance we cannot start before the birth of Isaac who was Abraham’s seed, and promised in this chapter (Gen. 15). We must therefore (see above) deduct 25 years from 430, leaving 405 years. Shortly after Isaac’s birth, the persecution of the seed began by the son of Hagar the Egyptian (Gen. 21:9) mocking Mac. This will further reduce the 405; so that we can easily see how 400 years covers in round numbers the affliction of Abraham’s seed by the Egyptians.

The fourth passage (Acts 7:6) is but a quotation (Gen. 15. and hence requires no remark.

Summing up, the 430 years refers to the sojourning of the children of Israel in Canaan and Egypt, and the 400 years to the affliction of Abraham’s seed.

Against the view taken above that the children of Israel were actually in Egypt 215 years and not 430, it is alleged that the genealogy of Joshua, the son of Nun (1 Chron. 7:23-27) who was born in Egypt demands a longer time, because of the number of generations named (to or 1:1). But we must recollect that the Israelites multiplied at an exceptionally rapid rate (Ex. 1:7) to the surprise of the Egyptians. So far from this passage (1 Chron. 7:23-27) being a valid objection to the 215 years, we see in it an explanation of the vast number of the Israelites at the time of the Exodus, a fact which has puzzled some to account for. The rate of increase was of a special character, as Exodus 1 shows, and in accordance with this statement we find an unusually large number of consecutive generations, given in 1 Chronicles, as occurring between Ephraim and his descendant Joshua. This is confirmation not contradiction. Besides, if we take eleven generations in 215 years, this only gives an average of 19 years between father and son, which under the circumstances we can well understand.

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