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Preface

Symbols and Quotations in This Book

Braces { } are used to mark material injected by myself into quotations of others.

In some of the references to Scripture in quoted material, the name of the book has been substituted for ch. or chapter to facilitate indexing. Quoted material has not been changed.

The iconic symbol ❖ placed at the start and end of some material indicates that material is quoted from J. N. Darby. The symbol ❖ is used to mark quoted material from others. These symbols are used where 10 point type is maintained rather than 9 point indented quotations.

Quotations of Scripture by the writer are taken from the translation of J. N. Darby.

Books in Print in this Series

Elements of Dispensational Truth, vol. 1 covers many matters.

Elements of Dispensational Truth, vol. 2 covers many matters.


Elements of Dispensational Truth, vol. 4: The Sermon on the Mount: Its Dispensational Place and Meaning; and, The Imprecatory Psalms: Their Dispensational Place.

Elements of Dispensational Truth, vol. 5: Parables of the Kingdom of the Heavens in Mystery.

Parables in the Gospels

◆ In considering the subject of the parables of the New Testament, questions immediately arise as to what is a parable? and why did our Lord so often speak in parables?

The word “parable,” in the New Testament, is a translation of the Greek word, parabolē, and is always translated “parable” in the Authorized Version {KJV}, except in Mark 4:30, where it is “comparison” (but “parable” would be correct); in Luke 4:23, where it is “proverb”; and in Heb. 9:9; 11:19, where it is “figure.” The word is derived from paraballos, and signifies literally, “a placing one thing by the side of another,” a “comparison”; and hence a “simile,” “similitude,” “parable.”
A short narrative was related, with more or less of detail, but always complete in itself. Alongside of this ran, as it were, its interpretation; as we see beautifully brought out in the parable of the sower, and our Lord’s own interpretation. The sower, the seed, and the various sorts of ground, have that which answers to each.

This, in short, shows us what is a parable. It has often been said there are no parables given us by John in his Gospel. It is true that the above Greek word is not used by this apostle, but he uses another word (paroimia), translated “proverb,” in John 16:25, 29, and 2 Pet. 2:22, and “parable,” in John 10:6. Now, seeing that John omits all the parables given by the other Evangelists -- in keeping with the character of his Gospel, for he once only uses the term, “kingdom of God” (John 3:3) -- the question arises, is the passage in John 10:6 a “parable”? It is Christ as the Good Shepherd, and a little consideration will show that it is not like any of the other parables, and partakes more of the character of an “illustration” than of a parable, and is rightly translated “allegory.” 1

Our Lord himself introduces His parables by a quotation from the Old Testament. He spoke to the people in parables,

that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world (Matt. 13:35).

This is generally marked as a quotation from Psa. 78:2. That reads (with v. 3),

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old; which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us;

whereas our Lord speaks of things “kept secret from the foundation of the world.”

What were these secret things He was about to explain to them? Our Lord Himself tells us. The disciples asked Him why He spoke to the people in parables. He replied,

Because it is given unto you to known the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given (Matt. 13:11),

though some of the parables were so plain and pointed that we read the chief priests and Pharisees perceived that he spoke of them (Matt. 21:45).

Why were only the disciples to know these mysteries? It was because of the judicial blindness of His once-favored people. He spoke to them in parables, because they, seeing, see not; and hearing, hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. For this people’s heart is waxed

1. The “Revisers,” {of 1881} in both the above-named passages in the Hebrews, have translated the word “parable”; but it is difficult to see how the Old Testament tabernacle can be “a parable for the time [now] present” (Heb. 9:9). Many of the things named are in contrast to what we now have, in and by the finished work of Christ. And in Heb. 11:19 we cannot see any trace of a parable. In the purpose of Abraham, Isaac was put to death, and he received him back from death, not really, but in a “figure.”

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gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have
closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with
their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be
converted, and I should heal them (Matt. 13:13-15).

Thus it is plain why our Lord spoke in parables. His followers were to understand
the mysteries of His kingdom, but the Jews were not; they had closed their eyes,
and judicial blindness now enshrouded them. Christ had come to His own, and His
own had not received Him. The Pharisees had already been guilty of the sin against
the Holy Ghost, by declaring that He cast out demons by the power of Beelzebub,
the prince of demons (Matt. 12:24). Some of the parables were given to the
disciples only, and what He had spoken in public He explained to them in private.

There were “mysteries,” then, revealed by the parables: things above and
beyond what had been recorded in the Old Testament, and which no one could
possibly have discovered: they must be revealed. Without this who could have known
that Satan was busy catching away the seed sown by the Gospel? or that he
was sowing tares among the wheat in the kingdom? Who could have known that
God was making a marriage feast for His Son, to which all were welcome? or that
there was joy in heaven over one repenting sinner? Who could have conceived the
manner of reception the Father gives to a returning prodigal? or could have
imagined the dread scene of the rich man and Lazarus when they had quitted this
world? These are some of the divine mysteries Christ would have His disciples
know.

To us also -- Christians in this day -- it is given to know the mysteries of the
kingdom. Christ calls us friends, to whom He reveals what He is doing (John
15:15). “We have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16). Happily, of several of the
parables we have our Lord’s own explanation. May He give us, by the teaching of
the Holy Spirit, the true interpretation of them all.

On considering the parables of our Lord, it will be seen that they may be
classified under a few general headings, showing --

I. The condition of the people of Israel, and their being set aside as a testimony
for God; such as the parables of the Wicked Husbandmen, the Fig-tree, and the
Two Sons.

II. The setting up of the kingdom, and Satan’s opposition to it; such as the
Sower, the Tares, and the Leaven.

III. The way of God in bringing into the kingdom; such as the Great Supper,
the Lost Sheep, and the Prodigal Son.

IV. The responsibilities of those connected with the kingdom; such as the
Unmerciful Servant, the Talents, and the Ten Virgins.

Two of the parables -- the Mustard Seed and the Leaven -- show clearly that
there is a great similarity between the terms “Kingdom of heaven” and “Kingdom
of God,” seeing that these same parables are referred to the kingdom of heaven in
Matthew and the kingdom of God in Luke. While “kingdom of God” is more
general, “kingdom of heaven” is found only in the Gospel by Matthew, and that
seems to give it an especial reference to Israel. They were looking for an earthly kingdom, it was important to turn their eyes to heaven, the place whither their Messiah must go before He comes to set up His kingdom in power on earth. ²

The parables have been used as the medium of much false teaching. Where our Lord Himself did not interpret, false teachers have been busy; indeed, we all need to be on our guard, or we may go astray, especially in interpreting the details of a parable. ³ We must remember that a parable is a “comparison,” mostly of natural things (with which all are more or less familiar), with things of a deeper and spiritual meaning. The great thing is to gather the teaching of a parable as a whole, and then take up the details, as far as they are in agreement therewith, rather than to insist on every detail, which very few of the parables will allow. For instance, it will not do to conclude that, because in the parable of the Virgins there were five wise and five foolish virgins, there will be an equal number of professors lost and saved. This forms no part of the teaching of the parable. The fact is, that in the parables we need the teaching of the Holy Spirit, as we do in every other part of the word of God. Our Lord explained the parables to His disciples, in His own presence, privately; may, we, in the same presence, seek to learn them also.

We have seen the solemn position of Israel in the days of our Lord on earth. They had not received Him, and were not to understand the mysteries of the kingdom. Let us not forget the great responsibilities devolving on Christendom in this our day. We see much error and evil around us on every hand. Surely the light that many had has become darkness, and, alas! how great is that darkness. Whereas God is faithful, and has promised that he that will do His will, shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God (John 7:7). . .

_____________________________________

². {Matthew emphasizes the governmental and administrative ways of God and the parables have this character.}

³. For instance, persons have attempted to prove from the Prodigal Son, that there is no need of the atonement. The son was received at once into his father’s house, upon his confession, without any allusion to another having to die for him! entirely ignoring the many proofs of that doctrine elsewhere. From the parable of the Wheat and Tares it has often been contended that the wicked should not be put out of the church, because the tares are to be allowed to grow with the wheat until the harvest, over-looking that this is a similitude of the kingdom, and not of the church.
Parables of the Kingdom of the Heavens in Mystery

Outline of Matthew

The moral rejection of the King is markedly clear in Matt. 12, as the formal rejection is markedly clear in Matt. 26-27. Up to Matt. 12 we have the king and the gospel of the kingdom. From Matt. 13 on we have the kingdom in mystery brought before us. These are two main divisions, however many sub-divisions and sections within those that there may be. Some have taken a recurring phrase in Matt. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1 to indicate five sub-divisions of the book. It follows that Matt. 11:1 - 13:53 forms a sub-division. The fact is that a great transition takes place with the opening of Matt. 13. The Lord takes a new position as the sower rather than seeking fruit from Israel. He brings something, rather than seeking to gather something. As an example of apparent oblivion to this, one writer called the section from Matt. 11:1 - 13:53 “The Kingdom’s Confidential Affairs,” whatever that is supposed to mean. At any rate, Matt. 11:1 - 13:53 does not form a sub-division of Matthew, and if this alleged sub-division is not true to the subject matter, it is not necessary to merely accept the other alleged sub-divisions predicated on the phrase in question as if pointing to other subdivisions.

I. The King, His Forerunner, and the Proclamation of the Kingdom as at Hand until His Moral Rejection (Matt. 1 - 12).

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(C) Matt. 11:16-24: The Character of “This Generation” Manifested

(D) Matt. 11:25-30: All Things Delivered to the Son

(2) Matt. 12: Christ’s Moral Break with Israel


(B) Matt. 12:14-21: Bows to His Rejection

(C) Matt. 12:22-32: Blasphemy Against the Spirit’s Working in Christ

(D) Matt. 12:33-37: Fruit Is the Test of the Tree

(E) Matt. 12:38-42: Divine Government Falls on the “This Generation”

(F) Matt. 12:43-45: Completeness of Evil Overpowering “This Evil Generation”

(G) Matt. 12:46-50: His Moral Break with the Nation Complete

II. Consequent on His Moral Rejection, the Kingdom in Mystery Proclaimed, the Assembly to Be the New Center of Administration, More Moral Teaching, Then His Final Rejection, and Resurrection (Matt. 13-28).

1. Matt. 13: the Kingdom in Mystery Announced

(1) Matt. 13:1-23: in Moral Rejection, Christ Sows, Leading to the Kingdom of the Heavens in Mystery

(B) Matt. 13:10-17: Parables Regarding the Kingdom in Mystery Because of Judicial Blinding on Manifested Unbelief

(C) Matt. 13:18-23: Parable of the Sower Explained by the Lord

(2) Matt. 13:24-35: The Kingdom in Man’s Hands and the Judgment on it

(A) Matt. 13:24-33: Evil Results from Man’s Hands

(1) Matt. 13:24-30: Parable of the Wheat and Darnel

(2) Matt. 13:31-32: Parable of the Mustard Tree

(3) Matt. 13:33: Parable of the Leaven in the Meal

(B) Matt. 13:34-35: Things Hidden from the World’s Foundation

(C) Matt. 13:36-43: Man’s Results Manifested and Judged


(A) Matt. 13:44-50: Good Results from God’s Purpose

(1) Matt. 13:44: Treasure Hid in the Purchased Field

(2) Matt. 13:45-46: Purchased the One Pearl of Great Value

(3) Matt. 13:47-50: The Good Preserved

(B) Matt. 13:51-52 Things New and Old

(4) Matt. 13:53-58: Man Stumbled at the Lowly One

2. Matt. 14 - 17:21: Results of His Rejection

(1) Matt. 14: Lust Murders; He Blesses Meanwhile; And, He Will Protect the Remnant; Millennial Blessing

(A) Matt. 14:1-12: Denouncement of Lust Resulted in the Forerunners Murder

(B) Matt. 14:13-21: Thoough Rejected, His Ministry of Compassion Continues

(C) Matt. 14:22-33: The Godly Jewish Remnant Delivered

(D) Matt. 14:34-36: Millennial Blessing

(2) Matt. 15: State of Israel under the Law; Grace in Contrast

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(B) Matt. 15:21-28: Law Excludes the Gentile, but Faith Is Answered

(C) Matt. 15:29-31: Grace Meets Every Need

(D) Matt. 15:32-39: Jehovah Fills His People with Good Things

(3) Matt. 16: Manifests the State of Israel Regarding Himself; Notices the New Order to Come in (The Assembly)

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(B) Matt. 16:5-12: The Legalists’ Leavened Doctrine
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(C) Matt. 16:13-20: The Son of the Living God, the Rock on Which He Builds the Church
(D) Matt. 16:21-28: The Cross of Rejection Is for His Followers

(4) Matt. 17:1-21: the Glory Will Follow the Sufferings; Though We Are Weak While Waiting
(A) Matt. 17:1-8: Christ’s Kingdom Glory
(B) Matt. 17:9-13: Elijah Will Come and Restore All Things
(C) Matt. 17:14-21: Our Weakness While We Wait for the Glory

3. Matt. 17:22 - 18: Meanwhile, Show His Lowliness as Well as His Honor, and in the New Assembly, Which Will Be the Center of Administration

(1) Matt. 17:22 - 18:14: the Humble Place
(A) Matt. 17:22-27: Though Rejected, He, and We, Pay the Tax
(B) Matt. 18:1-14: The Offenceless Path for His Followers

(2) Matt. 18:15-20: Holy Attitude in View of the New Center of Administration (The Assembly)
(3) Matt. 18:21-35: Mercy’s Place in the Kingdom in Mystery, and God’s Governmental Ways

4. Matt. 19-20:16: Guiding Principles for His Professed Followers During His Absence

(1) Matt. 19: Holiness in Relationships; Forsaking All to Follow Him
(A) Matt. 19:1-9: Only One Basis for Divorce
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(E) Matt. 19:28-30: Reward in the Kingdom in Manifestation

(2) Matt. 20:1-16: He Will Reward as He Will

5. Matt. 20:17 - 23: Final Presentation of the King to Israel

(A) Matt. 20:17-19: What Our Lord Had Before Him
(B) Matt. 20:20-23: A Place Sought by the Flesh
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(2) Matt. 20:29 - 21:1-22: Formal Presentation of the King, the
Son of David

(A) Matt. 20:29-34: Light Received to Follow the Son of David
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(D) Matt. 21:18-22: Setting Aside of the Old Israel Pre-figured

(3) Matt. 21:23-46: Opposition Grows, its Character Exposed, and Judgment to Come

(A) Matt. 21:23-27: Opposers Confounded Concerning Authority
(B) Matt. 21:28-32: Parable of the Two Sons: Wilfulness Exposed
(D) Matt. 22:1-14: Parable of Invitation to the Marriage, Destruction of Jerusalem, Judgment on Those Without a Wedding Garment


(B) Matt. 22:23-33: Saducean Error and Ignorance of Scripture Exposed
(C) Matt. 22:34-40: A Lawyer Tempts Him and Fails
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(5) Matt. 23: Final Indictment of Scribes and Pharisees; and Judgment Pronounced

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(a) Matt. 27:45-50: Abandonment; and Dismissing His Spirit

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(1) Matt. 28:1-10: Risen King
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   (B) Matt. 28:7-8: Testimony to the Resurrection
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(2) Matt. 28:11-15: First Rationalist Explaining the Resurrection

   (A) Matt. 26:16-17: Homage to the Risen One
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Parables Dealing With
The Kingdom of the Heavens in Mystery

Certain parables of Matthew are listed here in the order in which they occur in Matthew. Those which are said to be likenesses of the kingdom of the heavens are indicated with a bold number. There are 10 of them noted by the bold numbers.

1. The sower, seed and soils (Matt. 13:3-9; 18-23).
3. The mustard seed become a tree (Matt. 13:31-32).
4. The woman leavening the meal (Matt. 13:34).
5. The treasure his in the field (Matt. 13:44).
8. The king and his bondmen (Matt. 18:23-35).
13. The faithful and the evil bondmen (Matt. 24:45-51).

Numbers 1, 10, 11, and 13 have a dispensational or governmental bearing that should be noted as speaking of things that led to the introduction of the kingdom in mystery.

Regarding number 14, the parable of the bondmen and the talents is an adjunct to the parable of the ten virgins. This will be explained when we consider them in detail.

In the preceding outline, the 10 parables of the kingdom of the heavens in mystery are noted in bold-face type.
Part 1: The Parables of the Kingdom in Matthew 13

Introduction

From the above outline of Matthew, the place of Matt. 13 may be seen to come after our Lord’s moral break with the nation – shown in Matt. 12. Unbelief had greatly grown and the only thing left for them was to get Him crucified. Consequently, the announcement of the kingdom as at hand was suspended (but will be proclaimed again in the future) and then the kingdom of the heavens in a mystery form – unforeseen by the OT prophets of Israel – is presented in Matt. 13 by parables. Matt. 13 itself tells us that the parabolic teaching was used in connection with Israel’s blindness, which again shows that the Lord’s break with the nation had taken place.

Matt. 1 - 12 led up to this change in God’s dispensational ways given us in Matt. 13. The chapters that follow in Matthew bring before us various results of this change.

Should we be interested in the Parables? What kind of a question is that? implying that something in God’s Word should not interest us? See Matt. 13:11.

Distinguishing Things that Differ

The following brief letter by C. H. Mackintosh, regarding Matt. 13, will serve to indicate the direction our study of the parables will take.

My dear friend,

A more complete study of Matt. 13 will enable you to see that the “slight mistake” is yours, not mine. No doubt, most of us have had the same idea with regard to “leaven” as that to which you have given expression. It arises from not understanding the true meaning of the

4. This reminds us of Gen. 15:16, that the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full. It took centuries to mature. When ready to be judged, God had brought Israel to the border of Caanan to begin executing His judgement. Thus does God allow iniquity to ripen, as He did with Israel, and as is the case with Christendom now. “This generation” of which the Lord Jesus speaks is the Christ-rejecting generation that came out of Egypt (Deut. 32:5) until He appears in glory. It is a moral class of persons, not some persons in a 25 or 40 year slot of time.

5. This friend had written to object to the statement that “leaven is never applied to aught {anything} that is pure, holy, or good”; and referred to Matt. 13:33, to prove the unsoundness of the statement.
term, “kingdom of heaven.” When this is seized, all difficulty vanishes.

To what then does the term apply? To the condition of things during the absence of the King. Is this a condition of unmixed good? Alas! far from it. “An enemy” has been at work. He has introduced “leaven” into the “meal.” He has sowed “tares” among the “wheat.” Are “tares” good? No; they are false professors. Is “leaven” good? No; it is evil doctrine, evil principles, evil influence. The “meal” is good; the “wheat” is good; the “pearl” is good; the “treasure” is good; some of the “fish” are good. But there are bad and good in the kingdom -- in the professing church -- in Christendom. Christianity is like the beautiful snow as it descends in its purity from the clouds. Christendom is the odious and unsightly slush produced by the mixture of earth’s pollutions with the pure material.

But we must not confound the church or assembly of God with the kingdom of heaven; or the body of Christ with Christendom. The most disastrous results flow from this confusion. It leads to the denial of all godly discipline in the assembly. We are told that the tares and the wheat are to grow together. True; but where? In the field. But is the field the church? No; the Lord distinctly tells us, “The field is the world.” Are we to root up the tares? No; angels will do that by-and-by. But are we to suffer known tares in the assembly? God forbid! . . .

May I ask you to give Matt. 13 your prayerful study? Come to it with your mind free from all your preconceived ideas, and Christendom’s false teachings. Most of us have had to unlearn a lot, to unship a quantity of mere rubbish, in order to take in the pure and precious truth of God.

I am, dear friend, faithfully yours, C. H. M.

**The Scope of Matt. 13**

The kingdom of the heavens had been presented to the nation in its responsibility, which had rejected the King (Matt. 1 - 12). The Kingdom of the heavens as it shall be when Christ reigns in the millennium is not a mystery. The OT has much to say about that future reign. Before Matt. 13, the gospel of the kingdom of the heavens as at hand was proclaimed, first by John, then by the Lord, then by the Twelve. That preaching referred to the kingdom as foreseen by the OT prophets. Consequent upon His rejection, 7

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6. {In the hands of man, the kingdom had taken man’s churchy form.}
7. Between that rejection and the opening of Matt. 13, how sweetly our Lord point’s out who really are his mother and His brethren, though saying that also awaited His rejection (see Matt. (continued…))
that preaching was suspended and will be taken up again by a godly Jewish remnant, preparatory to Christ’s appearing in glory. The future kingdom will have the nation of Israel in the place of prominence and power in the earth. The present mystery aspect of the kingdom of the heavens, not foreseen by the OT prophets, does not contain provision for those in it to have prominence and power in the earth while the King is absent. The parable of the mustard seed become a tree points to the assumption of worldly power that characterizes Christendom. The fact is that things that will be so under the visible reign of Christ in the future -- in the manifested kingdom in power -- is craved in professing Christianity now, while Christ is hidden at God’s right hand.

Consequent upon His rejection and the suspension of the preaching of the kingdom as at hand, His sowing (Matt. 13) indicates a new work following the moral break with the nation of Israel (in Matt. 12). After that rejection He did not come to Israel to find fruit.

Moreover, the kingdom of the heavens in mystery did not begin until He had entered the glory. 8 Note well that His sowing while here on earth is not called a similitude of the kingdom of the heavens, for the kingdom of the heavens did not exist while He was here on earth. The parables of the kingdom of the heavens always suppose the King’s rejection and His consequent absence. Thus it is the second parable in Matt. 13 that is the first similitude of the kingdom of the heavens -- in mystery form. (The second parable -- i.e., the first similitude -- supposes the King’s absence and the sowing left in the hands of man.)

It is quite noticeable that the words “parable” and “mystery” do not appear in Matthew before Matt. 13. A new form of teaching was thus introduced as well as something new concerning the kingdom

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7. (...continued)
12:46-50). It really is disowning the claims of mere natural relationship for what is spiritual.
8. {It is incorrect to say:

The period covered by these parables is from the day that the Lord commenced His public ministry till the time time that He establishes the kingdom on earth (E. W. Rogers, Jesus the Christ, A Survey of Matthew’s Gospel, London: Pickering and Inglis, p. 69 (1962).

The Lord had commenced His public Ministry before taking the position of a sower, the Kingdom in mystery did not begin until He had ascended into glory, and the kingdom in mystery will end when the wheat is gathered into the granary -- pointing to what will occur at the rapture. The parables in Matt. 13 do not apply further than that point. However, some things added to the parables in the Lord’s explanations, go beyond that point, but that is another matter. The time that the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom as at hand is not part of the epoch of the kingdom of the heavens in mystery.

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The remaining six parables in Matt. 13, then, are similitudes of the kingdom of the heavens in its mystery form during His absence, a form unforeseen by the prophets of Israel. Yet, it is the seven parables that give a complete picture, as the number seven indicates. We see in Matt. 13 the start, character, and end of the kingdom in mystery. The other four similitudes of the kingdom found in Matt. 18-25 give us particular aspects of the kingdom in mystery. “Mystery” does not refer to something mysterious, as men speak, but to the fact that the OT did not speak of it, and God’s children may learn these things.

Five times Matthew uses “kingdom of God” instead of the usual “kingdom of the heavens.” The reason is that when the Lord said something that was true of the kingdom as He spoke, “kingdom of God” was used because the kingdom of the heavens had not yet commenced. The Gospels are divinely designed!

While the similitudes begin with His absence, the parables themselves, as given by the Lord, do not reach into the short epoch (or beyond that short epoch) called the great tribulation. The six similitudes have to do with the epoch contemporaneous with the epoch during which the church is on earth. When we come to the Lord’s explanations of several parables, we find that the explanation introduces something additional to what was said in the parable. This is a characteristic feature of our Lord’s explanations. Note that these additional matters in the Lord’s explanations reach beyond the epoch to which the parable itself applies. It appears that there are writers on these parables that transgress against this help to understanding.

9. It is easy enough to think that the kingdom in mystery runs right up to the appearing of the Lord to set up the kingdom – mystery replaced by manifestation. Years ago, I thought this also. But it is erroneous. It is true that mystery will give way to manifestation, but there must first occur the removal of the suspension of the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom as at hand. The preaching of the gospel of the kingdom is not a mystery. Avoid mixing what concerns the Christian profession with the resumption of the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom by the future, godly Jewish remnant. See the chart below.

Walter Scott (The Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven) drags the harvest and the vintage of the book of Revelation into this. The harvest in Revelation is not what is meant by the harvest in Matt. 13.

His other point is that the rapture is not found in Matt. 13. We may notice that “the rapture” is not named in Rom. 11 either. Yet the fulness of the Gentiles (i.e., the full complement of presently saved Gentiles) must be complete before the excision of the wild olive graft takes place. This means that the rapture takes place before the excision of the wild olive graft -- just as here in Matt. 13 the end of the kingdom in mystery occurs before the time of the resumption of the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom by the future Jewish remnant. So, just what does absence of the words “the rapture” in these two passages prove? It proves that the word “the rapture” is not mentioned in either passage, but not that we cannot place it properly (continued…)
These parables, given consequent upon the Lord’s break with the nation of Israel, because of their rejecting Him, concern the form the kingdom of the heavens would take until the rapture, though the rapture is not mentioned, as such, in the parable. Specifically, the parable of the net does not involve the future preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, which will be proclaimed again, after the rapture, by the future godly remnant of Israel, preparatory to the appearing of Christ in glory to bring in the kingdom in power and manifestation.

The kingdom of the heavens, in mystery, is the form the kingdom of the heavens takes while the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom is in suspension. During the tribulation period the gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed by the godly Jewish remnant. The preaching of the gospel of the kingdom is not part of the kingdom in its mystery aspect. The tribulation period is not a mystery.

As noted, some explanations made by the Lord add to a parable some things that will take place after the end of the mystery aspect of the kingdom. The following chart is illustrative of some of these matters.

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9. (...continued)
in these parables after the rapture has been revealed.

The six similitudes of the kingdom in mystery each concern the same thing! The similitudes, or likenesses, point to certain features. The Lord’s explanations add to some of the parables things which are not part of those parables -- going beyond them.

10. In John, this rejection is assumed at the beginning -- see John 1:11. Note also that there is no point to discussing what would have happened had the nation received Him. That was not possible:

Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God; for neither indeed can it be (Rom. 8:7).

Why speculate on what would have happened if the mind of the flesh was otherwise than it was? Just as God utilized Pharaoh, and Judas, so did He utilize the nation to accomplish His ends.

Note that in Matt. 12, Christ’s works of power were not denied, but were attributed to the power of Beelzebub. His opposers were put on their responsibility and found guilty. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning (Acts 15:18) and He utilized their rejection of Christ to bring out things not spoken of in the OT. Consequent on the cross, the mystery of Christ and the church was revealed. Here in Matthew the mystery form of the kingdom is brought out while the inauguration of the kingdom in power is in suspension.

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It has already been indicated that the parable of the sower is not a similitude of the kingdom of the heavens -- which kingdom in its mystery form supposes the rejection and absence of the King. The first parable points to the break of the King with the nation, He being rejected, and thus He begins a new work as indicated by His sowing.

The six similitudes of the kingdom of the heavens are comparisons of the same thing; they refer to features of the same kingdom in mystery. That is, parables 2-6 do not refer to one epoch, with parable 7 referring to another epoch that follows the epoch to which the previous 5 refer. The correct understanding is graphically shown on the above chart. Nor does parable 2 carry into the epoch of the recommencement of the preaching that the gospel of the kingdom is at hand -- though the Lord’s explanation adds things beyond the parable, things reaching even to the righteous shining as the sun.
in the kingdom of their Father.

Spoken to the multitude by the sea; showing outward results in the world, i.e., the form professed Christianity would take.

Spoken to the disciples in the house; showing what was of value to God.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Sowing good seed.</th>
<th>5. Treasure hid in the field.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Varied results.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Christ knows the hidden treasure.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>2. Sowing darnel in the field.</th>
<th>6. Pearl of great price.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satanic mixture.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Christ knows its value.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>3. Mustard seed becomes a tree.</th>
<th>7. Gospel gathers in.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Worldly power (violence).</strong></td>
<td><strong>Good kept, worthless rejected.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parable 1 is not a similitude of the Kingdom in mystery.

Parables 2 - 4 show the result of the Lord’s sowing in its public character.

Parables 1 - 4 shows Satanic power working in various ways and shows the progress of corrupting evil in the kingdom in mystery.

Parables 3 and 4 speak of what is collective and developed results; 3 of what is outward, 4 of what is inward -- worldly power and doctrinal evil, involving the two great features of sin: violence and corruption.

Parables 5 - 7 shows what is for God -- and for faith to lay hold of. They depict results of the sowing that are of value for Christ’s pleasure.
respectively.

Parables 1 and 3 note birds: first taking away the good seed, then roosting in the mustard tree; i.e. first hindering, then infiltrating.

Parables 1 and 2 speak of individuals and notices sons of the Kingdom.

Let us take heed, and stand separate from what does not meet the mind of God.
(1) The Sower and the Seed
Matt. 13:1-9; 18-23


(1) And that same day Jesus went out from the house and sat down by the sea. (2) And great crowds were gathered together to him, so that going on board ship himself he sat down, and the whole crowd stood on the shore. (3) And he spoke to them many things in parables, saying, Behold, the sower went out to sow: (4) and as he sowed, some [grains] fell along the way, and the birds came and devoured them; (5) and others fell upon the rocky places where they had not much earth, and immediately they sprang up out of [the ground] because of not having [any] depth of earth, (6) but when the sun rose they were burned up, and because of not having [any] root were dried up; (7) and others fell upon the thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them; (8) and others fell upon the good ground, and produced fruit, one a hundred, one sixty, and one thirty. He that has ears, let him hear.

The Explanation: Matt. 13:18-23

(18) Ye, therefore, hear the parable of the sower. (19) From every one who hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand [it], the wicked one comes and catches away what was sown in his heart: this is he that is sown by the wayside. (20) But he that is sown on the rocky places -- this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, (21) but has no root in himself, but is for a time only; and when tribulation or persecution happens on account of the word, he is immediately offended. (22) And he that is sown among the thorns -- this is he who hears the word, and the anxious care of this life, and the deceit of riches choke the word and he becomes unfruitful. (23) But he that is sown upon the good ground -- this is he who hears and understands the word, who bears fruit also, and produces, one a hundred, one sixty, and one thirty.

Significance of Going Out of the House

We have seen the Lord pronounce on the Jewish people a judgment which extends even to the last days, breaking, as come in flesh, all His relations with them. The heads of the people had blasphemed against the Holy Spirit and brought this judgment on the entire system, although the patience of God still sought all those who had ears to hear. The Lord sought no more fruit in His vineyard. There was only
Concerning His ministry in Israel, the Lord’s break with Israel is seen in Matt. 12. From then on, in Matthew He is seen as no longer seeking fruit from Israel. Indeed, the soul under the law does not, on that basis, produce fruit for God. What fruit there was in any godly Israelite was the result of sovereign grace acting in the individual, in whom a new nature had been implanted by the Spirit. Fruit is not produced by the law itself (Rom. 8:7).

The change resulting from the Lord’s break with the nation of Israel is seen in His going out from the house that same day (Matt. 13:1). 12 The paramount lesson of the Sower is that the Lord was no longer seeking fruit from the nation but rather He began a new work, denoted by sowing. And this sets the scene for the following introduction of the kingdom in a mystery phase unforeseen by the OT prophets. We also see that the kingdom in mystery is furthered by preaching the Word of the kingdom, not by sovereign power and judgment that will introduce the kingdom in manifestation.

The Sowing Denotes a Change

The law, then, did not make the nation of Israel righteous, and the Lord’s break with the nation having taken place, a new work begins, signified by the parable of the sower and the seed. Rather than looking for fruit, He now brings something, the seed. In Matt. 13:19 it is called “the word of the kingdom” -- a designation in keeping with the character of the book of Matthew. It is the word of the kingdom concerning the heretofore unrevealed mystery form of the kingdom (Matt. 13:11).

The Lord’s sowing is something far removed from the manner in which the kingdom for Israel would be established as foreseen by the prophets of Israel. Rather, it is preparatory to the introduction of the kingdom in mystery, as noted below. This is done in view, of course, of the cross,

12. This is not the same as His going into the house and explaining certain things to the disciples, as well as telling them three parables (Matt. 13:36ff), but it does signify a change from speaking publicly to the crowd, and privately to the disciples concerning what was for their ears only. A house points to an order, each house having its own order, as yours does.
which is the basis for God’s acting in sovereign grace -- whether as now or as in the future with bringing in the kingdom in manifestation. *Nothing for God* is the mere response of the first man to God, of fruit for God in the first man, as such. All that is for God is what He sovereignly communicates. We do well to thoroughly learn this great fact.

The Seed Reveals a State of Soul

There was no problem with either the sower or the seed sown, though there was with the soils. These soils point to various conditions of the heart with respect to the seed. There are four of them. Regarding the first three, the believer needs to be aware that the features involved can affect his walk and communion with God. The agencies at work are Satan, the flesh, and the world, respectively.

**THE RESISTANT HEART**

Some seed “fell along the way.” This is the pathway of men through this world, packed down with notions and ideas; the word of the kingdom is one among so many. In this case, the Lord explained that the person heard the word, sown in his heart, but did not understand it. 13 The wicked one catches away what was sown in such a heart. This reminds us of Acts 17:21. The believer must judge himself so that his heart does not, in measure, resist truth from God. Satan is prominent in this case.

**THE UNJUDGED HEART**

Rocky ground, without much depth of soil, points to a heart with lack of plowing, coupled with shallowness. Lack of depth means lack of repentance. Truth must enter the heart through the conscience, else no real work of God is wrought in the soul. Some growth of foliage does not indicate that the person was born of God. It signifies profession. New birth is shown by fruit, not a fair show in the flesh. The immediate reception of the word with joy 14 turns out to be a merely fleshly thing devoid of repentance, manifested by being offended, i.e., stumbled, because of the heat of the day, i.e., stumbled by tribulation and persecution. Self-judgment should characterize a believer. The flesh is prominent here.

**THE DISTRACTED HEART**

The thorns remind us of the curse upon the ground in the world of sin that

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14. The sinner needs new birth and repentance (which go together), then peace with God, and as delivered from the power of sin, consequent joy.
Adam entered by the fall. In this third case, the anxious cares of this life -- i.e., the course of events -- as well as the deceit of riches, chokes the word. Time is more important than eternity. Such things may also affect the heart of the believer in some degree (see Phil. 4:6). The *world* is prominent here.

**THE PREPARED HEART**

No man is by nature good ground (Rom. 3). The Lord’s explanation of the parable adds some points, and in this case that the word is heard and understood. This is in direct contrast to the first case and the result is the bearing of fruit (v. 22). Faith is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8). It is a divine implantation into the soul. Faith and new birth accompany one another and are divine implantations. This causes a person to repent. The flesh does not repent and then as a consequence becomes born again. Man is lost, totally lost, and there is nothing in him by which to repent. But by God’s sovereign implantation of faith and life, the person repents.

The prepared heart is a heart sovereignly prepared by God. *Christ* is prominent here.

Let us re-emphasize that the Lord had come to His fig tree and His vineyard to obtain fruit, but there was none. He therefore takes a new position as sower, bringing seed that produces fruit.

**The Quantity of Fruit**

The quantity of fruit noticed is instructive. It is a decreasing amount: 100, 60, and 30 fold. It has been suggested that Matthew’s gospel, which is very dispensational in character, indicates a decline in fruitfulness with the advance of the present period of the kingdom in mystery. This may be contrasted with Mark 4, where the fruitfulness is stated as increasing: 30, 60, and 100 fold. The viewpoint in Mark is that of the perfect Servant of God and His perfect service, the result of His work as ever growing. In Mark the seed is not called “the word of the kingdom” as here, but “the word” (Mark 4:13ff). In Luke it is called “the word of God” (Luke 8:11) and it bore fruit 100 fold. The full effect and power of “the word of God” is thus stated. It accomplishes altogether that for which it is sent forth. Considered from the moral standpoint, it could not be otherwise.
The Kingdom in Mystery is a Sphere of Profession – Real and False

The fourth case is more than only producing leaves, as in the second case. Without fruit, the leaves are no better than Adam’s cover of fig-leaves. Leaves were also on the fig-less fig tree that the Lord cursed. Leaves speak of profession -- which may be real or false. Fruit is the test. Mere leaves is like the five foolish virgins, whose foolishness consisted in taking no oil with them (Matt. 25:3). The oil-less torch could burn a little but the case will become manifest. The Spirit of God did not fuel their profession. The similitudes of the kingdom frequently show the presence of the real and the false in the sphere of profession. It leads to grave error and foolishness not to recognize this character in the parables.

In addition to this character of the results of sowing, in the next parable in Matt. 13, the first similitude of the kingdom of the heavens in mystery, we have in addition the positive over-sowing of the great Enemy of Christ.

The Explanation of the Parable

Note that the explanation of this parable was given only to the disciples. As usual, the Lord’s explanations add something to what the parable stated.

The question of the disciples concerning why the Lord spoke in parables was the occasion used by the Lord to explain the blindness of the nation, with the judicial consequence that some things were to be hidden from the nation (see just below). In this connection, note that the word ye in Matt. 13:18 is italicized and followed by the word “therefore.” This is the emphasis of contrast between the remnant and the nation. It is meant that Christ’s own should understand. This is also true regarding the emphasis of “your eyes” (Matt. 13:16).

Why He Spoke in Parables

Matt. 13:10-17

(10) And the disciples came up and said to him, Why speakest thou to them in parables? (11) And he answering said to them, Because to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, but to them it is not given; (12) for whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall be caused to be in abundance; but he who has not, even what he has shall be taken away from him. (13) For this cause I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear nor understand; (14) and in them is filled up the prophecy of Esaias, which says, Hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand,
and beholding ye shall behold and not see; (15) for the heart of this people has grown fat, and they have heard heavily with their ears, and they have closed their eyes as asleep, lest they should see with the eyes, and hear with the ears, and understand with the heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. (16) But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear; (17) for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous [men] have desired to see the things which ye behold and did not see [them], and to hear the things which ye hear and did not hear [them]. (18) Ye, therefore . . .

What may be called parables were used by the Lord previously; but here, obviously, is something that has a special character such that the disciples recognized a difference. This difference caused them to inquire concerning why the Lord was speaking “to them” in parables. It is clear that His response indicates the change we have already noted concerning Matt. 12; namely, His break with the nation. Consequent upon the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, He warned of coming judgment in Matt. 12:38-42, followed by the prediction of their future state (Matt. 12:45), the “seven other spirits worse than himself” pointing to the completeness of their future wickedness -- which will occur when the Antichrist is enthroned in Jerusalem. This is followed (Matt. 12:46-50) by owning only spiritual relationship. The natural, familial link with Israel was broken. It has been pointed out that this was, so to speak, ministerial in character as to the break, compared to the cross which was, of course, historically the time of finality and definitiveness of the break. Thus, in Matt. 13:10-17 He further owns the distinction between His disciples and the nation, which was now coming under judicial blinding (cp. Rom. 11:25).

The introduction of the parabolic teaching in Matt. 13 is consonant with the transition noted in Matt. 12. The distinction made between the disciples and the rest is clearly noted here, with emphasis added to “your eyes” and “Ye, therefore.” Moreover, it is clear that the distinction is contrary to the erroneous notion that man has moral free will:

Because to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, but to them it is not given (Matt. 13:11).

Tortuous explanations to make this consonant with alleged moral free will in man is not needed; needed is submission to what is stated: to one group it is “given,” and to the other group it is “not given,” to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, which He is about to speak of in parables. God has sovereignly given or not given.

There are numbers of mysteries spoken of in the NT. They are mysteries, not as being mysterious as men speak, but as being unspoken of in the OT. The occasion of God acting according to these mysteries is Christ’s rejection by the nation of Israel (abettled on our Lord’s final day by
the Gentiles). This mystery concerns a form the kingdom would take upon the King’s absence, He having been rejected, during the time while the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom as at hand is in suspension.

Regarding Matt. 13:12, “whoever has” refers to those to whom something has been given, such as the disciples. There is more for such. Israel answers to “he who has not” and answers “to them it is not given.” There were some external things they had (Rom. 3:1, 2) but Israel had that taken away from them. Israel, from the time of Moses until Christ appears in glory is “this generation,” a Christ-rejecting, moral class. The sealing to them of Isaiah’s prophecy concerning their blinding was inexorably unfolding, leading to the Lord’s charge that they had both seen and hated both the Father and the Son (John 15:24), for the Son had manifested the Father.

In v. 9 the Lord gave the exhortation, “He that has ears to hear, let him hear.” Man is responsible to hear, yet grace alone can communicate hearing, as was illustrated by the case when dead Lazarus was called forth from the tomb. He could not naturally hear, but the voice of the Son of God gave hearing and response. (Cp. Eph. 2:1-6). Here, we see it was given to the disciples to hear and see. Not so with the nation, which loved darkness rather than light (John 1). The disciples, said the Lord, had blessed eyes and ears. Every believer ought to be bowed before God for His sovereign work in his soul! All that is blessed comes from Him.
(2) **The Wheat and the Darnel**

_Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43_

(24) Another parable set he before them, saying, The kingdom of the heavens has become like a man sowing good seed in his field; (25) but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed darnel amongst the wheat, and went away. (26) But when the blade shot up and produced fruit, then appeared the darnel also. (27) And the bondmen of the householder came up and said to him, Sir, hast thou not sown good seed in thy field? whence then has it darnel? (28) And he said to them, A man [that is] an enemy has done this. And the bondmen said to him, Wilt thou then that we should go and gather it [up]? (29) But he said, No; lest [in] gathering the darnel ye should root up the wheat with it. (30) Suffer both to grow together unto the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the harvestmen, Gather first the darnel, and bind it into bundles to burn it; but the wheat bring together into my granary.

**The Lord Jesus Speaking in the House, and Explaining the Parable of the Wheat and the Darnel**

_Matt. 13:36-43_

(36) Then, having dismissed the crowds, he went into the house: and his disciples came to him, saying, Expound to us the parable of the darnel of the field. But he answering said, (37) He that sows the good seed is the Son of man, (38) and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom, but the darnel are the sons of the evil [one]; (39) and the enemy who has sowed it is the devil; and the harvest is [the] completion of the age, and the harvestmen are angels. (40) As then the darnel is gathered and is burned in the fire, thus it shall be in the completion of the age. (41) The Son of man shall send his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all offences, and those that practise lawlessness; (42) and they shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. (43) Then the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He that has ears, let him hear.
**The Parable** 15

This is the first similitude of the kingdom. The transition from the time of our Lord’s sowing, when He was here, to the time of the kingdom itself and its character, is marked by the words “become like.”

**“Become Like,” Not Merely “Like”**

Afterwards, before explaining the parable of the tares, Lord gives two other similitudes of the kingdom; remember that it is a question here of the kingdom. It is well to remark that the word for likeness is not the same in these parables and that of the tares. Here it is only the character the kingdom will take; it is “like” to, etc. In the parable of the tares, “it is become,” or has been made, “like.” It is a character that it has taken in actual circumstances considering the rejection of the King. 16

Regarding the four parables told to the crowd, the first two are connected as explained in this quotation. The next two indicate what the sowing of the tares lead to concerning the outward form of the kingdom, in mystery, in the world.

**The Two Seeds**

In the parable of the sower there were various soils but only one seed. To this seed there were various responses, which responses are seen in connection with “the word of the kingdom.”

In this parable there is no issue about soils. It concerns the sowing of a different seed among the wheat sown, and growing, in the field. In the explanation, the Lord identified the good seed in the field with “the sons of the kingdom” (Matt. 13:38) and the other seed, the darnel, 17 with “the sons of the evil [one].” (See 1 John 3:8-12).

“While men slept” 18 is when the over-sowing occurs. Perhaps this indicates unwatchfulness. In Jude 4 we are told of persons who “have got in unnoticed.” They got into the Christian profession. Jude describes such and speaks of the coming of the Lord for us as a “mercy’ (Jude 21). Yes, the

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15. See *The Bible Treasury* 4:38, 39.
17. *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 3:159 discusses the darnel, showing it is not “degenerate wheat.” To merely translate this as “weeds” loses the significant fact that it is a *particular* weed that appears like wheat until harvest time.
18. For sleeping see also Matt. 25:1 and cp. Jude 4.
deliverance from this will indeed be a mercy! Take the Laodiceans (Rev. 3) as an awful example of mere profession, as well as 2 Tim. 3:1-9. See also 2 Pet. 2 and 2 Cor. 11:13-15.

“*The Field Is the World*”

Some matters we will leave until we come to the Lord’s explanation, but here we must anticipate the Lord’s explanation regarding the field to immediately bring it to bear on the gross and unholy explanation that the field represents the church -- in bold defiance of the Lord’s own explanation (Matt. 13:38). To say that the field represents the church foments excuseless toleration of evil, an attempt to have an evil mixture in the assembly of God, sanctioned by the Lord Himself, most reprehensible.

The first reason for denying that the field represents the church is, then, our Lord’s statement that “the field is the world.” It is neither Israel or the church.

Secondly, we Christians have instructions to be separate from:

1. unbelievers in service and worship (2 Cor. 6:14-18);
2. immoral persons called “brother” (1 Cor. 5:11);
3. those who bring evil doctrine (Gal. 1:8; 2 John 9, 10; Rev. 2:14, 15);
4. assembly association with such (1 Cor. 5; Gal. 5:9; 2 Tim. 2:19-22).

Thirdly, we are responsible to judge in the assembly, i.e., those that are “within” (1 Cor. 5:12, 13). The “within” cannot be the field in this parable.

Concerning reception, let there be positive evidence, as far as possible, of true salvation and freedom from evil and association with it. We do not attempt to root out tares from Christendom (though there are those who have engaged in doing so, who put also real Christians to death. But when it comes to the assembly of God (or marriage, etc.), we want definite tokens of reality and separation to the Lord. Of course a mistake might be made, but these are our instructions, personally and corporately. Where there is doubt, responsibility lies upon the individual in question. For example, a Christian is to marry “in the Lord.” How can he do that if no one can discern?

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19. “Does this mean we are to have tares in the church? *If the kingdom of heaven meant the church, there ought to be no discipline at all: you ought to allow uncleanness of flesh or spirit there, swearers, drunkards, adulterers, schismatics, heretics, antichrists, as much as the rest*” (*The Bible Treasury* 4:38).
While it is true that the field is the world, the whole world is not sown with wheat or darnel. The kingdom in mystery refers to Christendom, i.e., the sphere of the profession of Christ. The Lord will deal with what is represented by the kingdom in mystery in one way, and the whole world in another way. We must not confound everything into one lump.

No Human Remedy for the Character of the Crop in the Field

The OT prophets never foresaw a kingdom with this character for it is not the foretold condition under the reign of the great son of David. Divine power will then settle matters, in contrast to the present condition.

The parable shows that the servants recognized the presence of darnel, yet in answer to their question whether the darnel should be up-rooted, the householder said:

No; lest [in] gathering the darnel ye should root up the wheat with it (Matt. 13:29).

Just imagine the wickedness of a religious system condemning heretics and then turning them over to the secular arm for execution. How pious! Concerning the principle of this wickedness, was not that done in the case of the Lord Jesus Himself?

“Grow Together unto Harvest” and “In the Time of Harvest”

The Sower allows the kingdom in mystery to go on in this character and He Himself will see to the judgment of the darnel. There is nothing here about allowance of the wheat having fellowship with the darnel. The whole thing is looked at as one crop growing in the field until the time of harvest. Clearly, “harvest” is not a single point of time. It is a period: “the time of harvest.” The crop is not to be cleared of darnel until sometime within the time of harvest:

In the time of harvest I will say to the harvestmen, Gather first the darnel, and bind it into bundles to burn it; but the wheat bring into my granary (Matt. 13:30).

It is important not to read into this what is not there. For example, we are not told that the darnel is burned before the wheat is brought into the

20. That the kingdom in mystery is a sphere of profession with a mixture of true and false is also seen in other similitudes of the kingdom: Matt. 18:23-35; 22:11-14; 25:1-12.
Nor are we told that the wheat is bound into bundles. Moreover, concerning time, keep in mind that in His explanations the Lord adds things to the parable which go beyond the parable itself. It is the parable itself which is the similitude of the kingdom in mystery. Added things may take us beyond the kingdom in mystery concerning its duration. In fact, that is the case.

Thus, “in the time of harvest,” but before the gathering of the wheat into the granary, the darnel are first bundled preparatory to burning (not burned at that point). This process may be going on right now. Well, you say, that would mean we are now “in the time of harvest.” Correct. So now we have to deal with erroneous thoughts about the meaning of “this age” because of the false notion that there is a church age, whereas the truth is that we are in the Mosaic age. “The end of the age” is the end of the Mosaic age, not the end of an alleged church age. Nor is “the end of the age” a revival of the Mosaic age after the close of an alleged church age. Such things are false inventions caused by the primal false invention, namely, that the church is an age among the earthly ages.

It is best to leave the harvest (and the vintage) noted in Rev. 14 where it is and the harvest here where it is, not mixing the two or running them together. The harvest in Matt. 13 refers to what transpired in the kingdom in mystery. The harvest in Rev. 14 is a judgment regarding the earth. (The darnel of Christendom will receive their own distinct judgment and it is not well to merge this in with something more general.)

The following quotation from J. N. Darby is helpful:

The short answer is, that the harvest is not one definite point of time. “In the time of harvest,” it is written, “I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” First do this, and then that. In other words, it is a period in which different events take place, the order and meaning of which is exactly what is in question. It is also alleged (page 9), that “gathered together” is the same as “rooted up.” But it is no such thing: quite a different word is used for rooted up. Again, “gathering together,” or up, is said to be removal from the field by reaping or plucking up, that is, the end of present existence -- a very singular explanation. We all know such is not the effect of reaping. The removal of the wheat from the field is expressed in quite a different way. Indeed the tares are never said to be removed from the field at all, and notoriously, if we turn to the thing prefigured, they will be judged in the field when the harvest comes, and to this the parable looks on. In truth, the subject is the field, as to which there is one only exception -- “Gather the wheat into my garner.” The thorns, we read elsewhere, will be utterly burned in the fire in the same place. The tares are gathered together to be burned -- clearly declaring that
the gathering together is not the final judgment.

Further, none can read the parable and its explanation without seeing that they describe different scenes, as is always the case in such prophetic statements, because public results before men explain what is parabolically stated when the results are not there. Thus, gathering the wheat into the garner is not shining forth as the sun, nor is gathering into bundles to be burnt the same as gathering out of the kingdom and casting them into the fire. Note here, that the uniform testimony of Scripture is that the saints will appear, or be manifested, when Christ appears for judgment (Col. 3; Rev. 17:14; ch. 19).

Hence the gathering the wheat into the garner must be before the gathering evils out of His kingdom and casting them into the furnace of fire. The making the heavenly saints to remain on earth while the judgment is being executed, is against the universal statement of all scripture. And this is what is alleged. For if the gathering the tares in bundles to be burned be the same as their final burning (an allegation indeed manifestly absurd), then their complete judgment takes place before the saints are taken into the garner; “the end of present existence” as regards the tares is before the saints are with Christ. Further, the righteous shining forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father is clearly not in the present age, which the harvest of judgment closes. It is the new age, while the gathering into the garner is part of the harvest or end of this age. The harvest, then, or end of the age, is certainly not one point of time. The Lord Himself states a “first” in what happens. The only question then is, Does the rapture of the saints take place before the execution? All Scripture answers, Yes. They come with Christ to judgment; they appear with Him in glory. The order of the parable and its explanation is, first, gathering the tares in bundles, then the wheat is put into the barn; and when it comes to the execution of judgment the tares are gathered out of the kingdom and burnt, and the righteous shine forth as the sun. 21

The Lord’s Explanation

Some Points in the Parable Explained

The disciples said to the Lord:

Expound to us the parable of the darnel of the field (Matt. 13:36).

That occupied their minds, not the wheat. The darnel are indeed a prominent feature, and in fact the next two parables will give us characteristic features of the kingdom in mystery that have characterized it externally on account of the darnel.

The sower is the Son of man (Matt. 13:37). No doubt, this subsumes others who, under Him, sow. Son of man is a title that the Lord took as the rejected one by Israel. It is vastly broader than the title King of Israel, for it embraces His ultimate sway over everything. His rejection led to this title, made good by the cross, resurrection, and ascension into glory. The Son of man is also is the judge and in this He uses the angels of His power (Matt. 13:41).

That the field is the world we have already noted; as we have also the two seeds being the sons of the kingdom and the sons of the evil one; the evil one named as “the devil.”

We take note that the wheat being taken into the granary is not noticed in the explanation by the Lord.

We are told that the harvestmen are angels. Before noticing their dealing with the darnel concerning the burning of the darnel, we observe that in the parable they are told to bring the wheat into the granary. Concerning angels, in Heb. 1:14 we read:

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out for service on account of those who shall inherit salvation?

That the Lord Jesus will Himself come for us (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:15-18) does not preclude the employment of these ministering spirits concerning our “gathering together to him” (2 Thess. 2:1).

22. The designation, “sons of the kingdom” shows that only the wheat has a true claim to be expressions of the good seed and to be brought into the granary. It is a mixed sphere of profession in which they find themselves. This reminds me of Luke 19:9. All the Jews were of Israel, but the Lord used “son of Abraham” in a special sense. (Cp. John 8:37-40). In this parable, all are in the crop, but only some are “sons of the kingdom.”
The Time of Harvest Is the End of the Age

The gathering of the darnel into bundles is the first thing done. Then the wheat are brought into the granary. That, of course, brings us to the terminal point of the church being here in responsible testimony. However, it is not at that precise point (i.e., at the rapture) that the end of the age begins. It begins before the wheat is brought together into the granary. The reason for saying this is:

the harvest is [the] completion of [the] age (Matt. 13:39). 23

Since it is “in the time of harvest” that the wheat is brought together into the granary (Matt. 13:30), it is within the completion of the age that the rapture takes place. If you accept the idea that:

(1) there is a church age among the earthly ages, and
(2) that the church age ends at the rapture, and
(3) then the end of the age (end of which age, do you mean?) begins,
you force “the end of the age” (end of which age, do you mean?) to begin within the alleged church age. Rather, understand that the church is above and outside of the earthly ages (a heavenly thing) and the present age is the Mosaic age, then there is no creation of these conflicting things. “The end of the age” is the end of the on-going Mosaic age. The gathering of the darnel into bundle (preparatory to burning) is first -- before the wheat is brought together into the granary. (Actually, when the wheat is brought into the granary, the mystery aspect of the kingdom ends. After that, in God’s time, a godly Jewish remnant will be formed and the suspended preaching of the gospel of the kingdom as at hand will recommence.) After that the darnel will be burned in the fire of God’s judgments in the earth:

The Son of man shall send his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all offences and those that practice lawlessness; and they shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and wailing and the gnashing of teeth (Matt. 13:41, 42).

What will also happen?

Then the righteous shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13:43).

Concerning these things, J. N. Darby wrote:

Remark too here that the kingdom of heaven {when manifested in power} is parcelled out into two parts, the kingdom of the Son of man, and the kingdom of our Father: the objects of judgment in what is

23. The end, or completion, of the age is an expression found only in Matthew: Matt. 13:39, 40, 49; 24:3; 28:20.
subjected to Christ, and a place like His before the Father.  

Just as in the case of the burning of the darnel, this also is not part of the parable of the kingdom in mystery. These things are outside the epoch of the kingdom in its mystery form. The kingdom in mystery does not continue until the appearing of Christ in glory, going on in mystery all during the time of the godly Jewish remnant preaching the gospel of the kingdom as at hand.

**That the Present Age Is the Mosiac Age Was Often Noted by J. N. Darby**

I was brought up on the Scofield system, so to speak, which falsely carries the trial of man beyond the cross, as if the revelation of the Father in the Son (John 15:23, 24) was not the final test of the first, fallen man; and the system sets up the church as an age among the earthly ages, and etc. In this false system, we are presently in an alleged church age. I had to unlearn this system. Allow me to say that it is quite disturbing to me to see so many who look back to JND as a help to their understanding embrace the Scofield system. I am not the judge of C. I. Scofield’s person, of course, for everyone stands and falls to his own master. His system, however, is certainly subject to examination. I do think that the notion, whether held consciously or merely latent, or implicit, in the mind, that the Lord took JND out of clerisy, a false church system, false prophetic notions, taught him dispensational, church, and prophetic truth, and then the Lord turned that truth over to a congregational clergyman to organize, correct, and perfect is an outrage against the gracious recovery of truth in the 1800s. I suggest to you that the notion is absurd. I suggest to you that it also is absurd how those who look back to JND as bringing out a great accession of truth have fallen into the Scofield system, which takes much away from the recovered truth.

Having said that, let us hear a some remarks by J. N. Darby concerning the present age being the Mosaic age (not a church-age) which is the view consistent with the heavenly character of the church and our being seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (though we are here concerning responsible testimony). The first is in comments concerning what we are considering in

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24. **Synopsis** 3:74, note.

25. The first, fallen man, and a standing in Adam fallen, was ended at the cross. Christ as having entered the world was the Second Man in His Person, but took the Second Man’s place only in resurrection. He has displaced the first man. The first man is no longer under trial and consequently all have been pronounced lost.
The rapture of the church belongs to this age, to the harvest, to the end, but to this age, as to its time. It seems it {the church} will appear in another age. 26

The church will appear with Christ in glory and that is for “the age to come,” i.e., the millennium.

As to the expression “this age,” we are accustomed to apply it to the church; but it is not here a question of the church, but of the introduction of the kingdom of heaven, Messiah being rejected by the Jews. What was the age in which the Lord was found with His disciples? Was it the church, or the dispensation of the church? By no means. It was a certain age of this world, which was to end by the reception of the Messiah, and the re-establishment of the law as a rule by the government of this Messiah. The people of Israel having rejected Him, this age becomes purely and simply this present evil world (age), from which Christ delivers us, but in the course of which God has set up His kingdom, in the way we have just spoken of {i.e., in mystery}. 27

The close of the Mosaic age was suspended; meaning, the Mosaic age did not close. What should have closed it was “the age to come,” i.e., the kingdom in power. Thus, the 70 weeks of Dan. 9 might appear to have closed it and the new age of Messiah’s reign begun. But that is not what happened. The 70th week is in suspension but the Mosaic age rolled on in the interval between the close of the 69th week and the opening of, as well as during, the future 70th week.

We are properly nowhere, save in the extraordinary suspension of prophetic testimony, or period, which comes in between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week of Daniel, or at the end of that age which was running on when Christ was here, the close of which was suspended by His crucifixion; His return to establish it then, according to Acts 3, being precluded by the rejection of the testimony of the Holy Ghost, which followed -- finally declared at Stephen’s death. 28

“This age” (Matt. 12:32; 1 Cor. 2:8; 2 Cor. 4:4; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:21; Heb. 6:5) is not an earthly church-age among the earthly ages.

... a perfectly well-known phrase among the Jews who spoke of the olem-hazeh, this world or age, and the olam-havo, the age to come,

27. Collected Writings 24:12.
the latter being the time of Messiah’s reign. 29

. . . the truth is that Christianity is not properly an age at all. “This age” belongs to this world, not to the church . . .

Christianity may find its epoch in the prolonging of the {Mosaic} age; but it is not by it that it is begun, nor ended, as a precise date of time . . . 30

There is a question to ask regarding this Scripture:

. . . but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age nor in the coming [one] (Matt. 12:32).

“The coming [one]” does not, of course, mean the alleged church-age. And if it did, then perhaps this sin could be pardoned in the millennial age? “The coming [one]” means what we call the millennial age -- the final age. Might not it be forgiven, then, in the alleged church-age? There is, in fact, no loophole here. There is no Church-age between “this age” and “the coming [one].” “This age” means the Mosaic age, which is still running on right now, and will be replaced by “the coming [one].”

Take notice of this expression {end of Matt. 12:32}. We see the manner in which the Holy Ghost passes on from the time then present to the Jews, which would soon end, to the time when the Messiah would set up His kingdom, their “world [age] to come.” We have a position outside all this, during the suspension of the public establishment of the kingdom. The apostles even did but preach or announce it; they did not establish it. Their miracles were “the powers of the age to come” (compare 1 Pet. 1:11-13). This, as we shall see by-and-by, is of great importance. Thus also with regard to the new covenant, of which Paul was the minister; and yet he did not establish it with Judah and Israel. 31

Really this is not a dispensation. The Jews had a “this world” and “a world to come,” “this age” and an “age to come.” Messiah was to bring in the “age to come.” The age of the law went on and Messiah did come, but they would not have Him, and the whole thing stopped {i.e., the announcement of the kingdom as at hand}; then comes the church between that and His second coming; and this is why I said this is not strictly a dispensation, 32 but when Messiah comes again, it will

29. Collected Writings 10:360. See also 24:78; 31:127.
30. Collected Writings 8:14.
32. {You may ask, then, why he sometimes speaks of it as a dispensation. Note his words: “not strictly a dispensation.” So, sometimes one speaks in a conventional manner rather than strictly. The trouble with that is that it may lead to confusion in those that hear or read. But as an
close this time {i.e., the Mosaic age we are in now} . . .

We, who form a part of the church of God, and not having anything to do with the earth, are in no sense an age {i.e., there is no church-age among the earthly ages}, but are a heavenly people united to Christ above, during the suspension of this age {suspension of the age of the kingdom that had been announced as at hand}, filling up the gap between the Lord’s leaving the Jews, and His return to them again. So in Rom. 11 we have the olive tree with some of the branches broken off, and others grafted in. This is the tree with its root in the earth, and consequently it could have nothing directly to do with the church in heaven. Some of the branches were broken off, and some left; but this could never be said of the church, the body united to its head, at the right hand of God. The church, of course, does fill up a certain place and time, but it is during the suspension of the age to which Christ came.  

The remnant owned Christ, but the Jews did not. You get the sixty-nine weeks {of Dan. 9}, and then a long parenthesis in which Christ is set aside and the Jews on the earth, “desolations being determined,” which goes on until the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled. During this period the church, the heavenly thing, is called. Thus the time we are in is not reckoned at all {it falls between the 69th and the future 70th week of Dan. 9}. So the prophets (who do not speak of the times of the Gentiles as Daniel does) pass it over altogether and connect Christ’s second coming to earth with His first coming.

For the promise the presence and succor of the Lord {Matt. 28:18-29} is not only bound with the idea of the age, but it extends to its end, and we always remember that here, as in chapters 13 and 24, “age” in no way applies to Christianity as an epoch. Though Christianity might happen, and did happen, before the end of the age, the age already

32. (...continued)
example of the use of a phrase that is confessedly inexact, consider “church dispensation”:

Our dear brother does not like this expression ‘the church dispensation,’ {which was used by JND} in fact it does not appear to me very exact, but it is sufficient that everyone understands me. The substance of the question is what is important in my mind {Collected Writings 1:158}.

Indeed, it is the substance that is important, but when inexactness gets so habitual as to have overthrown the truth of the substance, it is long overdue to object and correct.

See Collected Writings 1:284, 289; 14:16.}

33. Collected Writings 25:243-244. See also 13:155.

34. Collected Writings 25:140. The suspension of the age to which Christ came was the kingdom, announced by his fore-runner, John, to be at hand. But the change in the age was suspended and the Mosaic age rolls on until the present work is accomplished, and then the recommencement of the preaching of gospel of the kingdom as at hand will take place.

35. Collected Writings 11:320. See also 25:244; 1:94 (not worded in the best way).
existed at that moment, and was in a great measure run out; it was a period of the world’s history in the Jewish point of view, which the presence of the Messiah was to terminate. 36

The Lord would be with them to the end of the age. This is a relationship He takes up with the remnant and is outside the time of mystery of the kingdom.

36. *Collected Writings* 24:78. See also p. 75.
Addition of the Mosaic Age to the Chart

Let us add to the chart what we have seen regarding the continuance of the Mosaic age, and where the “time of harvest” and “the end of the age” fit.
Parables of the Kingdom of the Heavens in Mystery

**A One-year Crop**

There has been talk concerning “the delay of the parousia,” the expectation of the Lord’s return, and the allegation that the NT shows that a long epoch was predicted to precede the Lord’s coming for His own. Let us note that this parable uses a similitude that covers only part of one year. Even the parable of the servants giving an account (Matt. 25:14-30) uses something within their life-time. The parables are not written so as to foster the notion that the NT *prophesied* a delay of centuries. Indeed, the NT evidence is such, regarding the expectation of Christ’s return, that it has given rise to that very talk about “the delay of the parousia.” If a centuries-long delay was actually prophesied, there would be no such talk about how to account for the delay. But these matters have been addressed, repeatedly, elsewhere, and here attention is drawn to the fact that the parables are given in such a manner as not to interfere with the blessed hope of His coming for us.

When the time came that these parables were properly expounded, those who saw the truth of them also thought they saw formation of darnel-bundles taking place.

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NOTE: The next two parables show the effect of the tares (darnel) in the kingdom of the heavens in mystery: becoming, externally, a great power in the earth and, internally, the spread of evil in doctrine.
(3) The Mustard Tree

Matt. 13:31-32

(31) Another parable set he before them, saying, The kingdom of the heavens is like a grain of mustard [seed] which a man took and sowed in his field, (32) which is less indeed than all seeds, but when it is grown is greater than herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of heaven come and roost in its branches.

The mustard seed was the smallest seed his hearers were accustomed to deal with, not necessarily the smallest seed in the world. The smallness of the seed stands in contrast with the largeness of the growth, much larger than other herbs the hearers would be familiar with. It is this point, i.e., the contrast of the smallness of the beginning -- which would not gender an expectation of producing so large a plant -- and the largeness of the growth that is used in a parabola way. It is an herb that becomes a tree, which is the point. It is a stature out of proportional character for an herb. The Assyrian power is likened to a tree in Ezek. 31:3-9. See also Ezek. 17:22-24. The wicked are like the green bay tree (Psa. 37:35). Nebuchadnezzar’s power was like a great and lofty tree (Dan. 4).

What is pictured is that the kingdom of the heavens, in mystery, is a power in the earth. This is the effect of the tares and of wheat, too, that thinks like them.

In the first parable we saw birds taking away the seed. Here, they are roosting in the tree. A world-power, sheltering birds -- is that true Christianity? In the parable of the wheat and the darnel the warning was not to root up the darnel lest wheat be rooted up. Rooting up has, however, taken place, but it would appear that darnel was busy rooting up wheat. Was it the Duke of Argyl that said ‘power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely’? There is only One capable of combining absolute righteousness with absolute power. The assumption of worldly power, portrayed by the tree, leads to violence, one of the two great characteristics of sin: violence and corruption. These filled the earth upon which the flood in Noah’s day came. Corruption and violence point to the two characters of Satan. He goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, and comes also as an angel of light (2 Cor. 12). This second character is for the purpose to bring in corruption, which is pointed to by the next parable.

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(4) The Leaven in the Meal

Matt. 13:33

(33) He spoke another parable to them: The kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until it had been all leavened.

In Scripture, woman represents the subjective side of matters, i.e., state or condition, in contrast to man, representing the outward and public side of a matter. Thus, in the Revelation, the woman, Babylon the Great, is overthrown, and then the Man of Sin is revealed.

The three measures of meal represent the fulness of Christ as the food of God’s people. Leaven, in Scripture, always points to wickedness and evil. The woman puts the leaven in the three measures of meal and it works until the whole is leavened.

This parable points to the corruption that has taken place in Christendom, complementary to the previous parable pointing to the assumption of worldly power and violence inherent in it.

The Meal

The three measures of meal existed before the leaven was introduced into it. Christ died, rose again, and went into the glory; then the kingdom in mystery began. The woman did what the law of the offerings forbade. The meal-offering was to be free of leaven (Lev. 2:11).

There are some cases in the OT that typify that Christ is the food of God’s people as well as of God Himself. They had three measures of meal. The first that comes before us is when the three visitors came to Abraham:

And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, Knead quickly three seahs of wheaten flour, and make cakes (Gen. 18:6).

How well it is if we have in our dwellings what can be presented to God that is for His pleasure, even Christ in His fulness.

Gideon lived in a day of difficulty, yet he threshed wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. He was able to make ready an ephah of flour in unleavened cakes (Judg. 6:19). An Ephah is three seahs. In times of difficulty it is well to have this for our God.

Hannah had the ephah also (1 Sam. 1:24). In a thankful spirit she went to Shiloh with this offering.

Ruth had an ephah of barley (Ruth 2:17) which she gleaned in the field of Boaz. Such should be the result of our gleaning in the Word of God.
In Zech. 5 we have a woman corrupting the ephah.

Do I have in my house an uncorrupted ephah? Do the Christians with whom I meet have an uncorrupted ephah?

**Leaven**

The first thing to note is that the text does not say that the kingdom of heavens is like leaven, period. The likeness is *the whole* of what is stated.

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38. No one has said that the kingdom of heaven is like leaven, period. L. Boettner, *The Millennium*, p. 27, wrote:

> According to this interpretation Christ is to be understood as saying in effect, “The kingdom of heaven is an evil influence which brings the whole world into a state of apostasy.”

Not only does his objecting foist on those he opposes the making a part the whole, he also foists into this his own notion regarding this kingdom as the whole world. Is it really true that it is part of dispensational truth to say that the kingdom of the heavens in mystery is an evil principle that corrupts those that receive it? Is this sober? Is it honest? What would the reader think if I said that the kingdom was actually very small because “it is like a grain of mustard seed”? or, “the kingdom is like a man.” Yet, that is the very kind of characterization used in this objection. See also O. T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, pp. 86, 87.

The object is to make leaven mean the gospel and its spread. The fact is that Israelites normally used leaven. It was permitted. But there are numbers of texts where leaven is used with a typical meaning, as denoting evil, and was prohibited, as in the offerings -- except the wave-loaves, but its action was stopped by the fire. This type points to believers in whom there is leaven. Leaven was excluded from every offering typifying Christ. It should have occurred to Covenantists that the gospel of Christ would not be typified by leaven!

So Ex. 12:39 is used in an attempt to show that leaven is not always used in an evil sense. Even if that were so, that does not prove Matt. 13 is an exception to the rule. Ex. 12:15 shows they had to have leaven put away for the passover on the 14th. The day of their journey (the 15th -- Num. 33:3) was the first day of the feast of unleavened bread. Therefore there was much reason for them not to have baked with leaven without trying to force the notion that it was merely haste to leave. The fact is that Ex. 12 shows it was not permitted to have it. The NT uses leaven in the same way regarding evil (see Matt. 16:6, 12; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1; 1 Cor. 5). See C. H. Mackintosh, *Notes on Leviticus*, on ch. 23).

Remarkably, the Covenantist view of Matt. 13:33 quite inverts the meaning, as T. B. Baines noted:

According to the received interpretation, the meal is the world, the leaven the gospel, and the leavening of the mass the universal spread of Christianity. But what is the authority for this interpretation? According to all Scriptural symbols, the meal signifies what is good, whereas this interpretation makes it signify what is bad -- according to all Scriptural symbols, the leaven signifies what is bad, whereas this interpretation makes it signify what is good; according to all Scriptural symbols, the leavening of the meal signifies the corruption of what is pure, whereas this interpretation makes it signify the purifying of what is corrupt.

*The Lord's Coming, Israel, and the Church*, p. 118.)
The woman was engaged in a clandestine work. She was hiding something. Evil was at work in what she was doing by putting leaven in the meal.

The next point to note is that leaven is used two ways in Scripture:

1. As here, it is viewed as gradually corrupting, progressively assimilating, and finally permeating, the whole. This is the *process character* of leaven.

2. As in 1 Cor. 5, where the incestuous person is called leaven, and if not excommunicated by the assembly gathered together, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, his presence would give character to the assembly as a leavened lump. This is the *characterizing character* of tolerated leaven. It is not a question of the spreading of the practice to others, but of tolerated presence giving character to the lump. Viewed as in Christ, no one is leavened; in practice they may be leavened by doing such a deed, or by being in fellowship with it being tolerated and not purged out.

The point in the parable is not that all persons in the kingdom are leavened, nor is the point that the kingdom is inherently evil. It is the spread of evil doctrine characterizing the kingdom.

There are professed Christians who tell me that Christ could have sinned. The meaning of this blasphemy is that Christ is two persons, one of whom could sin and the other could not. The two persons would have to be split apart if one of the two did sin, so that one of the two persons could be eternally punished, or else perhaps he could repent and . . . -- but it is too horrible to continue about this blasphemy against the Person of Christ. The Son of God took manhood into His Person such that there is one Person. The humanity cannot act independently of the deity. Even to say that Christ was *able not* to sin is no substitute for saying He *could not* sin.

To say that the Lord had a drive to sin, but did not actually sin, constitutes His humanity as having “sin in the flesh” (see Rom. 8:3); a fundamentally evil teaching.

The manhood that the Son of God took into His person is complete manhood -- with human will, such that He has a divine-human will. The Son of God took into His Person complete manhood -- with human “I,” such that He has divine-human I, divine-human personality.

The Son of God was Son from eternity -- divine and eternal Sonship. Its denial is fundamental evil.

Satan is an objective reality, else when the Lord was tested in the wilderness, the sin was in Himself. Denial of an objective Satan is fundamental evil because it undermines the holiness of Christ.
There are doctrines which also undermine His work. These things are leaven in the meal.

**Misuse of Matt. 13:33**

Just as the Lord’s direction in the parable of the wheat and darnel, to allow both to grow together to the harvest, has been abused by deliberately (mis)using that direction, regarding the kingdom in mystery, by applying it to the church, so Open Brethren misapply Matt. 13:33 to the church. They do not hold that the presence of tolerated leaven in the assembly leavens the assembly, making it a leavened lump. This doctrine was first enunciated in 1848 in the infamous “Letter of the Ten,” as their principle of practice, signed by ten principle brethren at the assembly in Bethesda, England, where George Muller and Henry Craik ministered. The denial is in itself evil because it distorts Scripture to allow fellowship in the breaking of bread with a leavened person and not be leavened by doing so. And that is the connection with Matt. 13:33, namely, such doctrine is among the evil that the woman is seen putting in the three measures of meal. Just think of a Christian being taught that if he breaks bread with a known fornicator he is not leavened by doing so. What must be the idea of fellowship in the breaking of bread in such a group?

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39. “. . . yet Archbishop Trench {of the Church of England} argues that this parable expressly forbids all attempts to root out evil from the church, and treats the kingdom of heaven as synonymous with “the church,” quoting the words of Augustine, ‘not two bodies of Christ, but one body in which now are wicked men, but only as evil humours in the natural body’” (*The Parables of Our Lord and What They Teach*, London: Morrish, n.d.).

40. For example, the well-known W. Hoste, one time editor of the *Believer’s Magazine*, said:

> Where the leaven is allowed to work unjudged, the whole must sooner or later become leavened, that is, each member will become knowingly inoculated with the evil, be it moral or doctrinal. Our Lord in Matt. 13:33 sets His seal on this exegesis . . . (*The Witness* 60:61).

This is the wide-spread view among them and is the basis of their denial that in 1 Cor. 5, leaven leavening the lump means, not the spread of leaven, but the presence of tolerated leaven changes the character of the lump to that of a leavened lump. By saying:

> We totally reject the collateral theory of defilement (*Rejudging the Question*, p. 21).

W. Hoste states this as the OB position. Thus, the OB position is that if the leaven is tolerated, that is bad because it will keep spreading in the assembly, not that the lump is changed to a leavened lump by the toleration.

41. See the history of this in *Precious Truths Revived and Defended Through J. N. Darby*, vol. 2, 1845-1850, where the origin of Open Brethrenism is documented and this letter is reprinted.

42. See documentation of OB views in *1 Cor. 5, Clearing the Assembly of Leaven*, available from Present Truth Publishers.

www.presenttruthpublishers.com
(34) All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and without a parable he did not speak to them, (35) so that that should be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden from [the] world’s foundation.

Note that this marks a transition point from what was said to the crowds by the sea to speak with his disciples in the house. Besides that, the Lord states that He was speaking things hidden from the world’s foundation. “From the world’s foundation” indicates the subject concerns things of an earthly order compared to things spoken of as ‘before the foundation of the world,’ which has to do with the church, or saints who compose it, in that character; i.e., things of a heavenly order.

Note also the hiddenness of these things. That is consonant with it being the kingdom in mystery; meaning, it was not revealed, or spoken of, in the OT.
(5) The Treasure Hid in the Field

Matt. 13:44

(44) The kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure hid in the field; which a man having found has hid, and for the joy of its goes and sells all whatever he has, and buys that field.

Purchase and Redemption

Many have been taught, and still are taught, that the treasure hid in the field is Christ and the man is the sinner finding Christ. In Matt. 13:38 we were told that the field is the world -- no sinner buys that field. Moreover, the kingdom in mystery is the form of the kingdom in Christ’s absence during the suspension of the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom as at hand. Christ is in heaven, not hid in the field.

It is Christ that bought the field and therefore He owns everything. Sometimes this is called (quite correctly) the doctrine of purchase. As Son of God, the Creator, everything is His by creatorial right. He created everything (John 1; Col. 1; Heb. 1). Becoming man, Christ purchased (bought) everything by His death. Everything belongs to Him as man also, on account of His death by which He bought the world (i.e., the material world).

But that is not the same thing as redemption by His blood. Everything, and everyone is bought, and is His property, but not everyone is redeemed.

43. The false notion is dwelt on at some length in The Bible Treasury, New Series 1:7.
44. J. N. Darby wrote:

In principle, Christ has bought the world, and the church is in it. His authority only extends to a small part of the world; and one part, formerly subject to His authority, has now even revolted from it; but the parable does not at all touch upon these facts. It only presents the principle, that is to say, there is a treasure hidden, which was not even bought but found, something external was bought for the love of this treasure, thus hidden there, necessarily, and as a matter of fact; whether the treasure exists as an individual whole, or in several pieces, is not the question here. The purchaser takes the whole, such as it is, for the sake of the treasure. The delight which He finds in the beauty of it (the church) is the subject of this parable. Here it is the fact of the field purchased as a whole, that He might possess the treasure that was dear to Him. Neither is it a question of the establishment of the authority of Christ in blessing in this world, nor of His joy in the deliverance of the creation itself. That will take place in the world {i.e., age} to come, when there will no longer be a question about the mysteries of the kingdom (Collected Writings 24:20, note).
Those wicked persons noted in 2 Pet. 2 are bought but not redeemed. Everything is Christ’s property, including the redeemed, but the redeemed are a special class, by redemption through His blood, and will enjoy eternity with Christ. See Rev. 1:5.

Concerning His joy, see Heb. 12:2; for selling what He had, see 2 Cor. 8:9. See also Eph. 1:14.

Regarding Christ’s purchase of the field, we observe this: He is not presently occupied with the field other than in a providential way. It is something in the field that He is presently occupied with. The time will come when the whole earth will be judged and “the kingdom of the world of our Lord and his Christ is come . . .” This is not now, it is not by the present gospel, it is not by Christian agency, it is by sovereign power and judgment’s noted in the Revelation that this will be brought about. It is depicted in Dan. 2 as the smiting stone (not a rolling stone) smashing the image and becoming a mountain that fills the earth. That depicts the millennial kingdom displacing the Gentile power depicted by the image.

Thus, His present object is the treasure in the field and His joy. 45

**These Three Parables Are Not Israel, the Church, and the Gentiles**

The notion that the last three parables of Matt. 13 speak of Israel, the church, and the Gentiles has come from the writings of F. W. Grant. I had been under the influence of this teaching earlier in life (it has a neat appeal), but came to see that it is false. Allow me to state some reasons for this.

1. Since it appears that the view is a schematization regarding which if one of the elements is shown to be false, the other two must be re-examined to see if another, or both, are viewed wrongly. Therefore let us think first about the last of these three parables.

(a) The net is made to be the future preaching of the gospel of the kingdom. An objection to this is that the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom is not a mystery. It already was preached by John, by the Lord, and by the Twelve (Matt. 10) -- which did not fall within the mysteries of the kingdom. The future preaching of the gospel by the godly Jewish remnant connects with that past preaching. Meanwhile that preaching is in suspension during the time of the mystery aspect of the kingdom. That future preaching is not a

45. See *Collected Writings* 24:18-20.
mystery of the kingdom, nor any aspect of it.

(b) The six similitudes of the kingdom in Matt. 13 concern the same thing in various aspects; i.e., concern the present work that God is doing, resulting from the Lord having taken the position of sower. The future preaching of the gospel of the kingdom:

1. is not about the same thing as the other parables;
2. does not flow from the Lord’s having taken the position of sowing. It is outside what the Lord had in view when he took position of sower, consequent upon the suspension of the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom.

It is something of a different character altogether just as was the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom by John, the Lord, and the Twelve (Matt. 10). The different character is shown by the Lord breaking with the nation (Matt. 12) and taking the position of the sower (Matt. 13). The false notion involves mixing things that differ in kind.

(c) In directly objecting to the interpretation of the net meaning the future preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, J. N. Darby noted that the kingdom of the heavens in mystery does not have in view the whole world, but the future preaching of the gospel of the kingdom does have the whole world in view (Matt. 24:15):

Further, in the gospel of the kingdom, when the church is gone, there is no gathering a net-full of good and bad. All is individual; and in the judgment, all the world is brought together, without exception; not a net-full gathered, and the separation made between those only who are in it, the mass of fishes being left in the sea. The kingdom of heaven, the subject of all these parables, never embraces all the world, but is a partial thing -- save buying the field to have the treasure hidden in it, which makes the special object more distinct, but the operation of the Lord is partial. The field is the world, but the operation is sowing, and tares, and a treasure which is there: but in the parable of the sheep and goats it is expressly all the Gentiles who are gathered, and no partial collective operation at all. Nor am I, indeed, aware that the throne of judgment set up on earth is ever called the kingdom. The parable of Matt. 25:31 seems to me to make a clear distinction.

Besides this, the comparison of the use made of the sea does not seem to me to seize the true use of these figures. In Isaiah the wicked are like the troubled sea, casting up mire and dirt. This is a special action of the surf, and the wicked are viewed in this character, and compared to it. That is another idea from the vast sea of nations, out of which a net-full of fishes is taken, good as well as bad. The sea and the fishes of the sea are distinct things; and it is a different thing to bring up all the nations -- everybody for judgment, and to gather every kind and leave the mass of the rest where they were. There is no
bringing to shore in the judgment of the nations, before the judgment, but a gathering of all together. The fish are brought out of the sea into a net: that is the fishing work. ⁴⁶

The fact that our Lord bought/purchased the world does not mean the mystery of the kingdom is about the whole world. It is something within a part of the world. He will reign over all in the future.

3. Israel has no part of the kingdom in mystery, as J. N. Darby pointed out:

In the last three parables {Matt. 13:44-48} we have the mind of the Lord in what took place; and first, it seems to me, in contrast with Judaism. Judaism, and Israel itself, was no hidden treasure, no mystery of the kingdom. The Lord gave up nothing to have it. They were His known people and inheritance in the world. He came to His own, though His own received Him not. When He comes again, He will take them to have the world, not the world to have them. In no case has the Lord, it seems to me, taken the world to have the Jews. ⁴⁷

The Lord had found a treasure hid in the field of this world. This was not Israel; Israel would none of Him. It was Israel’s responsibility, and was over. Here He was seeking, He was acting, and takes the world because of what was there to be found in it, His heavenly people; and had given up all His earthly title and place to take this. It was worth while. Surely He shall have it more gloriously as Son of man, but He gave all up then and took the world, for all things are now His. But it was not only the value of His people in His sight, but He knew and judged of the moral beauty the nature and heart of God desired. He was it; and the heavenly saints alone, formed into His likeness, answered to this delight. ⁴⁸

Yes, the future kingdom rights of the Messiah is not what is before us in any of these parables. It is from the standpoint of His rejection by Israel that the hidden mystery is brought out and that hidden mystery does not deal with the nation which had rejected him.

4. There is one more point to which our attention is called, by J. N. Darby, and that is the difference between the parables -- which goes no further than the removal of the wheat in the garner, i.e., the taking to heaven as we know from later revelation -- and the explanation of the parables, which adds things not in the parables and which take us beyond the rapture, i.e., takes us beyond the closing point of the mystery aspect of the kingdom.

I have only one more remark to make, already alluded to as a principle. The statement of the parable is overlooked, and confounded with the explanation. In the parable of the net {Matt. 13:47}, as in the

⁴⁶. Collected Writings 33:124.
⁴⁷. Collected Writings 33:123.
⁴⁸. Collected Writings 24:152. See also Synopsis 3:75.

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tares and wheat, the explanation is, and is meant to be, different from the parable. In the parable it is carefully stated that the persons who separate are the persons who have drawn the net: “which when they had drawn to shore, they sat down, and put the good into vessels.” They are occupied with the good, and simply reject the bad. In the explanation, the angels -- certainly not the fishermen -- separate the wicked from among the just -- another kind of act -- and cast them into the fire. In the parable we have the fishermen’s work carried out to the end of the fishermen’s part in it. The two previous parables give the thought and purpose of God in the kingdom of heaven; this, the part His servants take in it. In the tares, further, you have no action of men, but of Christ, and Satan, and then judgment in this world, providential and actual, the wheat being gone out of the way into the garner. The gathering into the net, and out of it into vessels, is a distinct part of the parabolic action, and done by the fishermen. In the parable of the tares and wheat, the servants are forbidden to meddle with what is to be done, and the work of judgment, which is all, save the Lord’s and Satan’s, committed to others. 49

5. Hopefully, at this point we are better able to appreciate the following concerning parables five and six. Previously, we noted that the parables of the mustard seed becoming a tree, along with the parable of the woman putting leaven in the meal, were a pair concerning the effect of the darnel. Regarding the parables told to the disciples in the house, the first two parables are also a pair, but in this case regarding the good seed. The first pair (parables three and four) present the outward, public aspect of the kingdom in mystery. The second pair (parables five and six) are what is for God, not public, but hidden. Hidden stands in contrast to the great public thing that the tares have made of the kingdom in mystery as depicted in parables three and four. Parables three and four concern the same thing, only one is outward and the other inward. In the scheme being rejected, parables five and six are about two very different things. 50 However, in the six similitudes of the kingdom the parables are about the darnel and the wheat, what ever form they may take in a parable. Israel answers neither to the wheat or the darnel.

6. Finally, it is frequently repeated that in this parable we have Israel as the treasure in the earth while the pearl comes from the sea and points to the church. But that is not why the field is noted. It is noted on account of the purchase of everything by Christ -- besides the acquisition of the treasure.


50. Of course, in the idea that the treasure is Israel, you lose the comparison of two parables pointing to the darnel and two parables pointing to the wheat, since Israel is not wheat in the field.
The Treasure

There could naturally no more be a treasure in the field than there could naturally be the good ground as in the parable of the sower. These are things that He Himself produces (Eph. 2:1-6) by sovereign grace. So, we must not try to impose on this that the Lord did not know what He was doing: that He accidentally came upon a treasure in a field, then He took that treasure and hid it, then after that He sold all that He had and bought that field.

The treasure is a form the wheat has in His view contrasted to the character stamped by the darnel on the kingdom in mystery in its external form. The hid treasure may be contrasted to the prominent character of the kingdom appearing as the great mustard tree.

The treasure refers to the wheat that is in the kingdom in mystery, not to the redeemed of all ages, nor to Israel presently or future. Israel, the nation, has no part in the kingdom in mystery just as it presently has no part in the olive tree in Rom. 11.

Hiddenness is a prominent feature. This hiddenness needs to be understood as a contrast with the time of manifestation of the saints in glory:
51. In the parable of the wheat and darnel we learned that the field is the world. When the Christ is manifested who [is] our life, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory (Col. 3:3, 4).

There are no grounds here for the doctrine of the invisibility of the church, though it did become so concerning failure in responsible testimony.

In this parable the Lord finds something, whereas in the next parable He seeks something. The finding must be thought of in connection with the hiddenness.

While the pearl is an aspect of the wheat also, the figures speak of different aspects: the treasure points to the saints as a treasure, the pearl points to the saints as forming something beauteous. Immense value is a marked feature in both parables. Thus, in both cases, the same cost is noted. However, in the case of the treasure, we are told that the field was bought. In the case of the pearl we are told that he bought the pearl of great value.

Oh, my beloved fellow-believer, if our hearts are possessed of any sensibility, will they not be moved to their inmost depths in answer to such incomprehensible love as this? He sold “all that He had” to redeem us for Himself. Should anything be counted too costly to lay at His feet? What thing that we really valued have we given up for Him? What pleasure that we knew He could not fully sympathize with, have we foregone for His sake? Oh, let us take ourselves to task in this way, seeking His grace to esteem Himself our choicest treasure, and count all else but loss. And, further, may all we do for Him be done “for the joy thereof,” not simply as a matter of duty, and still less from a spirit of fear, but from very love to Himself as the blessed object of our hearts’ delight, and from overflowing joy in the prospect of soon being at home with Him, enjoying the reality of what is now “that blessed hope,” the “joy set before us.” Our Lord Jesus has made us His own, and reckons us his treasure, and where His treasure is, there are His interests also. If He is our treasure, our hearts are with Him where He is, and in nowise set on the world that has disowned Him. May it be manifest to all who observe us that our treasure, as our conversation, is indeed in heaven. “Christ sitteth on time right hand of God; set your minds on things above.”

51. In the parable of the wheat and darnel we learned that the field is the world.

52. Words of Truth 2:193.
(6) The Pearl of Great Value

Matt. 13:45

(45) Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls; (46) and having found one pearl of great value, he went and sold all whatever he had and bought it.

The sinner is not seeking Christ (Rom. 3). There are many who appear not to believe what is explicated there concerning the sinner’s state. Christ came to seek and to save that which is lost. The pearl of great price is not an individual but rather points to something collective -- the character of which came out later (Eph. 5:25).

The merchantman valuing the one pearl of great value may be contrasted with the woman occupied with corrupting the meal.

Concerning Christ seeking the lost sheep, I recall a brother speaking on this and saying, When the Lord came to the lost sheep did He say to it, “Alright sheep, jump up on my shoulder”? I remember how deeply it moved me. How deep was the lostness of my soul -- not a motion Godward! The blessed Lord picked up the sheep and put it on His shoulder -- as the all-the-way-home Savior! Such is the character of the Seeker of the pearl of great value.

The value of this pearl will never diminish in His eyes. The church will be eternally distinct and a source of glory to God eternally (Eph. 3:25).

It really is His own grace which has invested the pearl with the beauty He sees in it. Pearls do not lay about as gold nuggets might. True it is that an irritant in the oyster gets covered with nacre, layer on layer, making the pearl. Our Beloved was here in holy manhood and went to the cross to deal with the great irritant, sin, providing the holy basis for grace upon grace to be poured upon us that we might be that distinctive pearl of great worth. It is a pearl that answers to His thought, that measures up to His estimation of value.

Here we see the Lord judging, according to His perfect intelligence, the moral beauty of that which He would have for Himself at any price. It is not here merely the joy of possessing a treasure, but of discriminating and valuing the treasure which He sought and which He was able to prize and distinguish from every other. Thus the Spirit of Christ in its actual operation only rests definitely upon the church, and that not in the joy of possessing it only, nor that of accomplishing salvation in the redemption of it, but in the accomplishment of all the thoughts of God, of all that moral beauty which can have its source in the heart and reproduce itself for Him in that church which He gave to Christ. The epistle to the Ephesians in particular presents to us this thought: the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ chose us in
Christ before the foundation of the world, that we might be holy and without blame before Him in love. This is its reproducing itself in grace. And what is the calling according to which we ought to walk? It is that we are “the habitation of God by the Spirit.” He has given us a place which is to the praise of the glory of His grace. 53

Whatever else He may value, it has been noted that to the possession of this pearl we trace the inducement to sell all that He had to obtain it.

53. Collected Writings 24:20
(7) The Net Cast Into the Sea

Matt. 13:47-50

(47) Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a seine which has been cast into the sea, and which has gathered together of every kind, (48) which, when it has been filled, having drawn up on the shore and sat down, they gathered the good into vessels and cast the worthless out. (49) Thus shall it be in the completion of the age: the angels shall go forth and sever the wicked from the midst of the just, (50) and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

Above, much has already been observed concerning this parable. Let it be noted that the parable is given in vv. 47-48. Verses 49-50 are the Lord’s explanation. Regarding the six similitudes of the kingdom in mystery, observe this: two parables are explained by our Lord, the parable of the wheat and the darnel (at the disciples’ asking) and the parable of the seine gathering in the good and the worthless fish, which the Lord explained without being asked to do so. It is well to consider this parable in view of what was said concerning the parable of the wheat and the darnel. The structure of the presentation of the parables invites us to do so.

Let us review once more what J. N. Darby pointed out:

In the parable of the net, as in the tares and wheat, the explanation is, and is meant to be, different from the parable. In the parable it is carefully stated that the persons who separate are the persons who have drawn the net: “which when they had drawn to shore, they sat down, and put the good into vessels.” They are occupied with the good, and simply reject the bad. In the explanation, the angels -- certainly not the fishermen -- separate the wicked from among the just -- another kind of act -- and cast them into the fire. In the parable we have the fishermen’s work carried out to the end of the fishermen’s part in it. The two previous parables give the thought and purpose of God in the kingdom of heaven; this, the part His servants take in it. In the tares, further, you have no action of men, but of Christ, and Satan, and then judgment in this world, providential and actual, the wheat being gone out of the way into the garner. The gathering into the net, and out of it into vessels, is a distinct part of the parabolic action, and done by the fishermen. In the parable of the tares and wheat, the servants are forbidden to meddle with what is to be done, and the work of judgment, which is all, save the Lord’s and Satan’s, committed to others. 54

Let us recall that in an earlier parable the Lord had equated the end of the

age with the harvest. There, we saw that the wheat is taken into the garner in the time of harvest. That means that the wheat is taken into the garner in the end of the age. That means that the end of the age will already have begun before the wheat is taken into the garner. That means that the end of the age does not open after the wheat is taken into the garner. And all of that means there is no such thing as a church-age closed by the rapture and following that the end of the age begins. This is a reminder of what we have already considered in some detail. The reason for pointing this out again is that the expression “end of the age” may cause one to unnecessarily project this parable into an epoch after the rapture of the saints, but also a reminder that such a thing is not in keeping with the Lord’s explanation and use of it in the parable of the wheat and the darnel.

Moreover, we considered that the parables concern the same thing, i.e., what is transpiring now during the suspension of the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom. The net is not that gospel. That gospel, as has already been pointed out, has the whole world in view, which the kingdom of the heavens, in mystery, does not. W. Kelly (I think it was) wrote:

The parable does mark in the first place the fishermen completing their work of filling the dragnet from every kind, and drawing it ashore; next, sitting down and sorting the good fish into vessels, while they cast away those unfit for food. This was the fishermen’s work of delicate discrimination; and the more striking as the servants were forbidden in the first similitude to gather the darnel. To deal with the wicked is in both parables assigned to the angels. They are, as the interpretation goes on to say (not only explaining, but adding), to come forth and sever the wicked from amidst the righteous. This is another truth, which must not be confounded with the fishermen’s work of gathering the good into vessels. Both are true, but they differ in their nature and objects. We, the servants or fishermen, have to do with the good; the angels will execute judgment on the wicked. The Christian is called to the work of grace. So it was even among the Jews of old. “If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth,” said Jehovah to Jeremiah: not the vile from the precious, but the precious from the vile. 55

55. The Bible Treasury, New Series 1:38. See also Synopsis 3:76-77.
Conclusion: Things New and Old

(Matt. 13:51-52)

(51) Jesus says to them, Have ye understood all these things? They say to him, Yea, [Lord]. (52) And he said to them, For this reason every scribe discipled to the kingdom of the heavens is like a man [that is] a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.

Well, I confess to wondering how much the disciples understood. If the Lord asked you if you have understood all these things, what would you answer?

One matter we should understand is that we are in the Mosaic age just as were the disciples when they heard these things. The end of the age was for them the end of the Mosaic age, and indeed it is so. They were to understand that there was to be, during the end of the age, first a gathering of the tares into bundles in preparation for their burning. Following this, the wheat, i.e., the sons of the kingdom were going to be brought together into the granary. After that there was judgment upon the wicked in the field. This would be followed by the righteous, the wheat -- sons of the kingdom -- shining in the kingdom of the Father.

Of course there are others who will be brought to the granary, but that is not found in this passage, so do not drag it in. Moreover, there will be other judgments in the earth, but that is not found in this passage.

Matt. 13 brings before us “things new.” There are other matters heretofore revealed that are “old” such as the Messianic reign that is still to come. Each has its place and they are not to be confused or confounded.

It is well if we seek to be a scribe discipled to the kingdom of the heavens.

* * * * *

We have considered six of the ten similitudes of the kingdom of the heavens in its mystery form, plus the parable of the sower which led to this new form of the kingdom. Now we must consider the other four of the ten similitudes plus several others related to this subject.
Part 2: Parables in Matthew 18-22

Introduction
The King and His Bondmen

Matt. 18:21-35

(21) Then Peter came to him and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? until seven times? (22) Jesus says to him, I say not to thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven. (23) For this cause the kingdom of the heavens has become like a king who would reckon with his bondmen. (24) And having begun to reckon, one debtor of ten thousand talents was brought to him. (25) But he not having anything to pay, [his] lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and his children, and everything that he had, and that payment should be made. (26) The bondman therefore falling down did him homage, saying, Lord, have patience with me and I will pay thee all. (27) And the lord of that bondman, being moved with compassion, loosed him and forgave him the loan. (28) But that bondman having gone out, found one of his fellow-bondmen who owed him a hundred denarii. And having seized him, he throttled him, saying, Pay [me] if thou owest anything. (29) His fellow-bondman therefore, having fallen down [at his feet], besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee. (30) But he would not, but went away and cast him into prison, until he should pay what was owing. (31) But his fellow-bondmen, having seen what had taken place, were greatly grieved, and went and recounted to their lord all that had taken place. (32) Then his lord, having called him to [him], says to him, Wicked bondman! I forgave thee all that debt because thou besoughtest me; (33) shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-bondman, as I also had compassion on thee? (34) And his lord being angry delivered him to the tormentors till he paid all that was owing to him. (35) Thus also my heavenly Father shall do to you if ye forgive not from your hearts every one his brother.

Forgiveness

The immediate occasion for this parable being spoken is Peter’s question regarding frequency of forgiveness, no doubt that being occasioned by the Lord’s words in Matt. 18:15. You will observe that that verse indicates that the one sinning is dealt with about it. None of that unholy notion, “Oh, let me just forgive him.”

Peter may have had in mind Prov. 24:16 but the Lord went 70 times more regarding a personal matter of a brother sinning against a brother. Such a number, 490, makes it virtually limitless. Another wrote:

◆ When the Lord was speaking of Christian discipline, Peter asked Him: -- “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? until seven times?” He evidently thought he had expressed the fullest measure of
grace by saying “seven times,” this being the expression of spiritual perfection. But what was the Lord’s answer? He named a still more perfect number. “Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven,” and then adds the solemn parable of the King “who would take account of his servants.”

Let us ask ourselves, christian reader, “How often have you and I forgiven a brother who had sinned against us? I am afraid, if the same brother should sin against us the seventh time, grace would become an effort to us. We should in that case be inclined to think that with us “grace has had her perfect work,” and that he is “turning grace into lasciviousness.” But if you and I, reader, have once got beyond the number “seven,” we shall get such a relish for exercising grace in “forgiving one another,” “even as Christ forgave us,” that long before we have reached the number seventy, -- not to speak of seventy times seven, i.e., 490, we shall have left off counting, in case we really had exerted ourselves with that unpleasant task “until seven times.”

In the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of John the apostle, that grace manifests itself in all its lovely and touching character. There we behold Jesus as {typically} “Son over his own house,” exercising discipline in the most solemn case of Judas Iscariot. There the darkest treason that ever was or will be had to be dealt with. And in what spirit and way did Jesus exercise that discipline? Was it with the rod, the “whip of small cords,” in His hand, as in the quite different case of John 2? No, but in perfect grace from first to last, though all the time in truth. For He dwelt among us in “grace and truth.” How often in cases where church discipline has become necessary, are we inclined to deal graciously with the sinning brother, if he has not offended us personally, especially if he is our friend or related to us! We are then often but too inclined to lay full stress upon grace at the expense of truth. But in cases when he has been irksome or personally disliked by us, we are inclined to do the opposite, laying all the stress upon truth. How different was His procedure, Who is our pattern as He is our Savior. When the holiness of His Father’s house was in question, He dealt in truth with those that defiled the temple. But in Judas Iscariot’s case of the blackest treason and ingratitude against His own Person, He acts with such perfect grace, that to the natural mind it almost appears as if there had been too much of grace before truth. But we shall soon see that this was not, nor could be, the case on His part, with Whom grace never was separated from perfect truth, and truth never from perfect grace. ◆


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The Parable

As we saw in the case of the parable of the wheat and the darnel, here in Matt. 18:23 we again have the words “become like.” W. Kelly remarked:

In Matt. 13:24, Matt. 18:23 it is “become like” or “was likened,” these being historical (as others are not) likenesses that the kingdom assumed through the rejection of the Lord and His going on high. The rest (Matt. 13:31, 33, 44, 45, 47, 20:1) were merely likenesses of certain special features at particular seasons; as one case differs by a peculiar comparison with the future (Matt. 25:1). 57

It is a character that the kingdom of the heavens takes respecting the matter of forgiveness brought up by Peter, having in view the rejection of the King.

In answer to a question, the following was given, in Words of Truth 5:199-200.

◆ The Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus as the Son of Abraham and Son of David, presented to the Jews and rejected; then the consequences to the Gentiles in two ways, viz., a new form to the kingdom of the heavens, and the bringing in of the Church, announced as replacing Israel. Consequently, you find, as in connection with the kingdom of heaven, the governmental dealings of God strongly marked. Primarily, you find God’s dealings with the Jew. He, as a servant, owed the debt of ten thousand talents, and could not pay. All God’s culture of him, culminating in His sending the Lord Jesus, only enhanced the debt. The Lord on His cross, in the name of that sinful people, pleaded for them in the words, “Father, forgive them, for they knew not what they do.” 58 They were governmentally pardoned, and vengeance for the blood of Messiah was not demanded at the moment. (I mean governmentally in contrast to that forgiveness which has reference to eternal things.) The answer to that prayer of the Lord was the offer of national pardon in Acts 3:14, &c., by the Spirit of God sent down from heaven, by Peter’s mouth: “I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.” Thus judgment was delayed for the time, through the compassion of God, although nationally they did not respond to the offer. Then came the free dealings of the grace of God to the Gentiles, through Saul of Tarsus. They owed, in comparison with the Jew, but “an hundred

57. The Bible Treasury 20:379.
58. {This prayer will be answered when the time comes to bring them to repentance by the operation of sovereign grace upon them.}
pence”; still, what they owed, they owed to them, for “salvation was of the Jews.” Thus, the same servant -- forgetting the gracious forgiveness extended to him -- went out and took his fellow servant by the throat, and demanded the debt. So, you find in 1 Thess. 2:14-16, the attitude of the Jew to his Gentile brother; so with Paul’s defense (Acts 22) where the Jews gave him audience to the words, “Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles,” and then they took the one who announced it, as it were, by the throat, and would not hear another word. Wrath came upon them then to the uttermost. God delivered them up nationally to judgment by the Gentiles under the Roman armies, and they have remained in bondage and ruin ever since under His righteous government, till they shall pay in suffering and sorrow, all that was due -- until Jerusalem shall have received double for all her sins, and the word “comfort ye, my people,” is pronounced. (See Isa. 40.)

This is the direct thought in the parable; but, as is usual in Matthew, you find not only dispensational teaching, but personal lessons as well as moral principles. So here you learn the principles by which we should live as those who owed ten thousand talents, and whom grace has pardoned. We must go and imitate God, who has so dealt with us. Alas, how solemn to find that so many having taken up Christianity as a profession, have failed in grace to others, and thus proved the insincerity of their profession; surely they will not escape. The kingdom of heaven always assumes that there may have come in profession under the name of Christ, and that such will solemnly meet its end in judgment where no life is. Life is known by practice, characterized by grace that bestowed it, and thus its teaching is applicable to us. ◆

A paper by J. N. Darby, “Present and Eternal and Governmental Forgiveness of Sins,” might be of help to the reader in understanding governmental forgiveness, which has to do with God’s disciplinary ways.

59. {A denarius was a laborer’s wages for a day (Matt. 20:1-16). A talent, say of gold, was a huge amount.}

60. Collected Writings 31:357ff. See also Synopsis 31:357.
The Householder and the Vineyard Workers

Matt. 20:1-16

(29) And everyone who has left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit life eternal. (30) But many first shall be last, and last first (Matt. 19:29-30).

(1) For the kingdom of the heavens is like a householder who went out with the early morn to hire workmen for his vineyard. (2) And having agreed with the workmen for a denarius the day, he sent them into his vineyard. (3) And having gone out about [the] third hour, he saw others standing in the market-place idle; (4) and to them he said, Go also ye into the vineyard, and whatsoever may be just I will give you. And they went their way. (5) Again, having gone out about the sixth and ninth hour, he did likewise. (6) But about the eleventh [hour], having gone out, he found others standing, and says to them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? (7) They say to him, Because no man has hired us. He says to them; Go also ye into the vineyard [and whatsoever may be just ye shall receive]. (8) But when the evening was come, the lord of the vineyard says to his steward, Call the workmen and pay [them] their wages, beginning from the last even to the first. (9) And when they [who came to work] about the eleventh hour came, they received each a denarius. (10) And when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more, and they received also themselves each a denarius. (11) And on receiving it they murmured against the master of the house, (12) saying, These last have worked one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the heat. (13) But he answering said to one of them, [My] friend, 61 I do not wrong thee. Didst thou not agree with me for a denarius? (14) Take what is thine and go. But it is my will to give to this last even as to thee: (15) is it not lawful for me to do what I will in my own affairs? Is thine eye evil because I am good? (16) Thus shall the last be first, and the first last; for many are called ones, but few chosen ones!

61. {“Friend” (hetairos) is used only in Matt. 11:16; 20:13; 22:12; and 26:50. The word signifies a companion, not one necessarily born of God. Judas was thus addressed (Matt. 26:50).}
The Flesh Brought Out

Matt. 19:29-30 is quoted above, connecting it with what follows, especially as Matt. 20:16 brings to bear Matt. 19:30 with an example. It is necessary for us to understand that while the gracious Lord will reward His own, and will be no man’s debtor (Matt. 19:29), the sovereignty of grace must be maintained. He has the right to do as He will with what is His:

is it not lawful for me to do what I will in my own affairs?

It is natural for the flesh to think that God is unfair. Unfair flesh judges the gracious One! Thus the Kingdom in mystery brings out the thoughts of the flesh as well as the sovereignty of grace: two things always opposed to each other. How lovely it is that one is free to serve our gracious Lord according to these words:

whatsoever may be just I will give you.

Observe how the display of the graciousness of the householder brought out the chafing of those who had made an agreement. They chafed under their own voluntary agreement. It had a legal aspect to it. This, then, leads to considering the principle and motive for serving our Lord. One of the points to be made is that in the kingdom in mystery, the thoughts of many are quite in error:

Thus shall the last be first, and the first last,
as illustrating our Lord’s words:

But many first shall be last, and last first (Matt. 19:29).

We know that the kingdom in mystery is filled with darnel. That is not the principle question here; i.e., the question of whether a laborer is wheat or darnel is not the principle point in this parable. The major point is the principle and motive undergirding service in the kingdom in mystery. However, Matt. 20:16 does have a bearing on the point of service from those who are professors but who are not wheat:

for many are called ones, but few chosen ones.

In Scripture we find a call from God that differs from the efficient, elective call of God. That distinction is made here though not exactly in those terms. The wheat is, of course, chosen ones. They are few, while there are many called ones in the kingdom in mystery (the sphere of profession) and are looked upon by our Lord as working there. We shall look at this statement in Matt. 20:16 62 once again in Matt. 22:14, in another parable of the

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62. “Verse 16 answers to Matt. 19:30, only the former is on the side of grace, the latter in view of man and the religion of the world” {i.e., of the kingdom in mystery -- which has the (continued...)}
kingdom in mystery, where we learn the solemn end of empty profession.

The Principle and Motive of Service in the Kingdom

Not salvation, but the principle and motive undergirding service -- working in the kingdom in mystery is the main point. We may note that the “first” person had his mind on the worth of the service he would do (a legal principle) while the others left it to the grace of the householder that engaged their service on his behalf. It is true that only one person is used to illustrate to us the “first.” That is true also in the parable in Matt. 22:1-14 also, as in another parable we shall consider. Yet, it characterizes the mass in Christendom. However, one example is sufficient to make the point about being “first.” Besides that, the largeness of the householder’s grace is shown in others.

It is the fact that grace (but never at the expense of righteousness) is the characterizing feature of true Christianity. The Christian’s salvation is by grace and grace has appointed the special place he has before the Father revealed in grace through the Son. Indeed, the Christian’s teacher is grace: Titus 2:11-15. It first teaches us to say NO to

impiety and worldly lusts,

and then

we should live soberly {concerning ourselves personally}, and justly {towards others}, and piously {towards God} in the present course of things, awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ . . .

As A. C. Brown used to say, “Grace is God for us in all that He is, in spite of what we are in ourselves.” “God is light” and “God is love” – presented in that order. Let us learn from it. He always acts consistently with what He is! The grace of God operative in us has this character.

The following brief comments by J. N. Darby give the setting and bearing of this parable.

But nature, however amiable and good in this sense, has the deep root of evil in it. This we see in the young man who runs up to the Lord. A beautiful character -- his showing desire of learning of Him, whom he saw to be the most perfect master of good, would inherit eternal life, had kept all those commandments which were the maintenance of the relationships we
have spoken of. But the Lord cuts down the whole seed of man (for the young man came to Him as a man, a Rabbi). There was none good but one -- God; still for man the commandments were His will, and, for man to enter into life he was to keep them in the system of the law. Relationship to God the Lord does not speak of, and He says life, dropping the word eternal, which the young man had used. But the way of life for man in this world was keeping the commandments. The young man, like Paul, was irreproachable in conduct. The Lord puts the test of lust and of his heart, and all was wrong. Instead of lust judged, and all counted dung for Christ, Christ is left for the riches which his lust clung to. This tale was told of man’s heart; even where irreproachable, lust possessed it, and earth, not heaven, was its desire. The new and heavenly thing had come in which detected its state, and the fairest remains of creation: character and qualities were nothing; the heart was away from God. Riches -- which to a Jew were a sign of divine favor, according to the government of this earth, now that God was revealed, and man’s state made manifest, that it was a question of man’s heart with God -- were the greatest hindrance. The reason was simple: they held the desires of the natural heart.

But if one with the best qualities, and the desire of doing good, and such an opportunity, were not saved, who was to be? The Lord’s answer does not avoid the consequence; with man it was impossible: plain, earnest, and solemn testimony. But that did not hinder God; all was possible with Him, and He could save. We have, then, the consequence of giving up all for Christ, but not beyond the kingdom. All here concerns the kingdom. Peter, ever forward, puts the question, What were they to have who had forsaken all? In the renewed world, which was coming, they would be on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, the first places in the center of the kingdom; and every one who had left what nature loved for Christ’s name would have a hundredfold in this world, and then everlasting life; for in following Christ eternal life comes in, not in doing the law.

But the principle on which it is done is also of all importance. Many then first should be last, and who were last first, but as a principle it is (Matt. 20) always true. And the principle laid down is this -- laboring through confidence in Christ, and not for so much reward; 63 grace, and not law: reward is encouragement to endurance, not motive. Those who agreed for their penny {denarius} got their penny, those who trusted the master of the vineyard got according to his heart. “What is right I will give,” and they went on his word. The assurance of reward for sacrifice is there when Christ

63. {Nothing is said that would cause anyone to think reward is of no account. That would be to despise reward, which would be despising Christ’s joy to give. Thus, while it is correct to say that reward is not the motive, that is not to suggest it has no place.}
is the motive of the sacrifice; but where the reward is the motive of the
service, it is poor pay, and indeed all is false. But thus there are (the
converse) last first, those who, with perhaps later opportunity of service,
have more trust in the Lord’s heart and faithfulness, and reap the fruit of it
in Him. The sovereign grace of God is the source of true blessing. But here
service, not conversion, is the question. Matt. 18, on to thus far in Matt. 20,
closes the moral instruction of His disciples, as giving the true character and
state of things, brought in by His rejection, and the principles the disciples
were to act upon: ch. 18 more within, among saints; ch. 19 men’s state and
the kingdom, the principle of service being shown in ch. 20. The Lord then
proceeds to tell them of His rejection as immediate in Jerusalem, where He
was going; that He could give them the cup, that was all. He was taking the
lowly place, ministering, and giving His life a ransom for many: the high
places in His kingdom were for those for whom they were prepared of His
Father. Then, as in all the three Gospels, begins the history of the last scenes
with the blind man near Jericho.  

From this we are helped to understand that this parable met the
erroneous Jewish idea of works, which the person that spoke to the Lord
exhibited when he said “what must I do” (Matt. 19:16-30). The disciples
also needed to be thoroughly delivered from this soul-destroying notion. Of
course the parable, as a parable of the kingdom in mystery, is not about the
Jewish nation, but the fact is that “the first” in this parable worked on the
Jewish principle -- as those under law do. As part of what we see in the
woman putting the leaven in the three measures of meal, this is a
characteristic feature in professing Christendom.

The Two Children and the Vineyard

Matt. 21:28-32

(28) But what think ye? A man had two children, and coming to the
first he said, Child, go today, work in [my] vineyard. (29) And he

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64. Collected Writings 24:169-170; see also Notes and Comments 5:151; The Bible Treasury,
New Series 1:71-72.

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answering said, I will not; but afterwards repenting himself he, went.
(30) And coming to the second he said likewise; and he answering said, I [go], sir, and went not. (31) Which of the two did the will of the father? They say [to him], The first. Jesus says to them, Verily I say unto you that the tax-gatherers and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. (32) For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the tax-gatherers and the harlots believed him; but ye when ye saw [it] repented not yourselves afterwards to believe him.

What Led to These Parables?

Following the similitude of the kingdom in Matt. 20:1-16 which considered the principle and motive of service -- legal service or trusting the grace of Him whom we serve -- the Lord spoke of His death and resurrection (Matt. 20:17-19), as then on the way to Jerusalem where He would give Himself. In the face of this, the mother of James and John showed ambition for her sons (Matt. 20:28), 65 providing the Lord with the occasion to speak of the character of ministry and the greatest ministry of all: to give His life a ransom for many. Notice that He says this as “the Son of man,” a universal title, for the ransomed will be from the ends of the earth, not only Jews.

In Matt. 20:29 we arrive at a section of Matthew in which we have the formal presentation of the King. Recall that we saw in Matt. 12 the Lord’s break with the nation. This may be called His moral rejection compared to what we are now entering upon, which may be called His formal rejection (cp. Acts 4:28). 66

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65. As was the case with all the godly in Israel, they understood the prophets of Israel according to what is called “literal interpretation” (with all due allowance for figurative, symbolic, and apocalyptic expressions). Opposers of a literal kingdom for Israel do, in fact, know what is meant. Luke 1:68-79 is a case in point. Why, even the disciples in Acts 1 were still looking for the literal kingdom. The Lord never said to anyone there will be no such kingdom for Israel. In Acts 1 He in effect told them their timing was wrong. My Dispensational Truth, vol. 1 considers in detail the faith of the godly remnant in Israel regarding the coming kingdom for Israel. Here, that the mother expected such a kingdom as did the disciples, is shown by their indignation. They had no basis by which to understand their prophets other than literally regarding the coming of such a kingdom.

66. That there was first a moral rejection, and then a formal presentation of Christ but rejected, seems too much for some theologians to grasp. Thus O. T. Allis, Prophecy and the Church, Presbyterian and Reformed, p. 79 (1945), needs to remind us that our Lord had repeatedly said that He was going to Jerusalem to die (Matt. 16:21; 20:18). So He entered Jerusalem to die as Israel’s King. He did not come to reign.

Well, that is true, but it is not all that is true about His entry into Jerusalem. My difficulty is why it is so difficult to understand a moral test followed by a formal test. The King was now (continued...)

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So He must present Himself to Jerusalem, fulfilling prophecy, as the son of David, where He will be rejected. Thus, on the way to Jerusalem, having gone through Jericho, the city of the curse, he healed two (the number of testimony) blind men who, appropriately, called on Him as the Son of David (Matt. 20:29-34), thus owning Him as Messiah, as Israel presently blind in part (Rom. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:13-17) will do when He comes in sovereign grace to turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

Next, that son of David, as Zech. 9:9 had prophesied, entered the city of the great King, riding on the colt, the foal of an ass (pointing to the

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66. (...continued)

formally presented to Israel’s responsibility to receive Him. Of course the Lord knew the outcome. As W. Kelly remarked:

. . . in order to the filling up of man’s iniquity, and the accomplishment of the counsels of God, He presents Himself as such (Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, p. 436 (1896 ed.).

Yes, He entered Jerusalem to die, but He also formally entered Jerusalem by prophecy (Zech. 9:9), testing them regarding the Kingdom in the presentation of His Person as the King of Israel. (Only God may so act - Acts 4:28.) This rejection of Him is the public reaffirmation of what had been morally at work and so forcefully exhibited in Matt. 12. Such was ever the way of God. He had repeatedly brought out moral state by public acts that express the corrupt state.

John 6:15 has nothing to do with the matter. That was belly-minded flesh that would make a provider their king. Does anyone of any spiritual sense think the Lord should become King on that basis? And, that because He refused it, that proves He never formally presented Himself to Israel’s responsibility as King? We may leave such objections to Covenantists who think that they have presented an insuperable objection.

67. The fact that part of Zech. 9:9 is omitted in Matthew and John (i.e., “He is just and having salvation”) is utilized by P. Mauro, More Than a Prophet, pp. 33, 34, to say that the omitted words indicate the national salvation of Israel (true) but the omission means that “here again is proof that the offer of the earthly kingdom was not in view at that time.” The fact is that God, to whom are known all His works from the beginning (Acts 15:18), the omniscient One, may make such an offer to put Israel on their responsibility, to bring out the state. The quotation is worded so as to be in season. When Christ appears in glory, to bring in the kingdom by divine sovereignty:

Then He will be just and having salvation. He was it always; but it was not in that character that He rode into Jerusalem now. His whole character is here placing the Jews under the final test of the presence of Messiah their King, bringing on their judgment as about to leave them, the rejected King passes them all in review before Him and assigns them their place. It is the last closing act between Messiah and Jerusalem (A Voice to the Faithful 6:290 --1872).

It is too much to ask the mind imbued with Covenantism to enter into the ways of God.

68. It is beneath sober consideration to suppose the colt needed its mother in order to keep it under control. The King was in complete control of everything until such time as it pleased the Father that He should allow the accomplishment of the designs of the wicked schemers. Even all that was under divine control. The dumb colt, quietly under the King’s control, spoke eloquent testimony to His power over nature itself. Does any sober Christian for one moment suppose the colt might have thrown Him off? Nor did the owner refuse Him the use of the colt. (continued...)
future, new Israel, subdued under Him) was acclaimed (Psa. 118) by the fickle crowd (on our Sunday) -- the crowd which some days later cried out for His crucifixion.

After that, He went to His temple which, alas, was as corrupt as when He began His public ministry (John 2:13-22). Nothing changed; yet He cleansed the temple this second time, thus showing His authority coupled with holiness (Matt. 21:12-17). 69 The future, millennial temple will be entirely according to His own character.

While there, the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple and he healed them (Matt. 21:14). These are really works of power of the age to come (see Heb. 6:5). After receiving praise (Matt. 21:15, 16), He withdrew from the city to Bethany. 70

But such was not the case when He came to Jerusalem the first time -- which coming was to present Himself to Israel’s responsibility as representative of the first, fallen man under trial. The epoch of the first man, as under trial, being judged and set aside had arrived. This judgment on the first, fallen man, in the persons of Israel, we read in His cursing the barren fig tree (leaves -- i.e., profession -- without fruit). 71 The fig tree symbolized the nation of Israel after the flesh and His cursing it signified its end. No fruit was ever to grow on that tree (Matt. 21:18-21). Regarding that pretentious, fruitless tree, the first man was about to put the second Man on the cross. 72 Then he spoke to his own about the faith to remove “this mountain,” figurative of the casting of Israel out among the Gentiles, as the cursing of the fig-tree was figurative. 73 The prominence of Israel as an

68. (. . . continued)
‘The Lord has need of him’ were words of powerful command, though couched in such words. Who was in charge? Who was the sovereign King such as none other ever was or will be?
69. See W. Kelly, Matthew, pp. 441-442 (1906) for some helpful detail concerning this.
70. In his Dictionary of Scripture Proper Names, J. B. Jackson gives “house of response” as an alternative meaning of Bethany. In any event, it was where He was received.
71. “The Olive Tree, Fig Tree, and the Vine,” Bible Witness and Review, pp. 49, 52 (1877) may be profitably read.
72. In fact, the significance is broader than Israel because Israel was a phase in the trial of the first, fallen man to show that he was not recoverable. The implication in the cursing of the fig-tree is the definitive setting aside of the first man under trial in Israel. The Lord Jesus was born into the world as the second Man, the Lord out of heaven. He was that in His person. But after the cross, in resurrection, He took the place belonging to the second man, the first man having been judged as lost. The second man has displaced the first man, who then no longer had a standing before God. The trial ended at the cross, for they had both seen, and hated both the Son and the Father -- seen in the Son (John 15:24).
73. A different view is this: “But the Lord takes occasion of the fact, that at His word the fig-tree withered forthwith away, to show His disciples the effect of faith in them from the time it (continued . . . )
obstacle to true faith would thus be removed.

Not surprisingly, His authority for doing these things was questioned by the leadership which was determined upon His destruction (Matt. 21:23-27). Their questioning was actually a indication of the implicit, authoritative character of His words and works. Their own authority as sitting in Moses’ seat, supported by their iniquitous hypocrisy, needed to be brought out to demonstrate their moral bankruptcy and incompetency to judge of Him whose Person they did not, or would not, recognize. From this point on, the Lord strikes at their consciences without the use of any signs.

His question to them brought out their dishonesty -- causing their hypocrisy to come out in the form of self-declared incompetency to form a judgment. He should give account to such incompetence, dishonesty, and hypocrisy? Observe that it was a characteristic in our Lord’s dealing with questions, that instead of answering such things directly, He rather dealt with the state of soul that gave rise to the question.

So then He, the master of the situation, had some words for them, some parables concerning their moral state of soul as unsubject to God, though they had a fine outward appearance before men (the leaves of the fig-tree). But they are judged by Him.

The parables, then, continue the exposure of their state. Matt. 21:28-32 shows them to be worse than the tax-gatherers and harlots. The parable of the husbandmen (Matt. 21:33-46) shows Israel’s treatment of the messengers God sent and then what was done to His Son. His adversaries pronounced their own judgment (Matt. 21:41). Then this is followed by a similitude of the kingdom which includes the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70).

Concerning the first two parables:

1. These two parables speak of things that have happened before the kingdom in mystery began. They speak of what led to Israel’s loss of its place.

2. Not being parables of the kingdom in mystery, the meaning was not hidden from them as is the case with the parables of the kingdom (cp. Matt. 13:11, 12).

3. These two parables place Israel on responsibility for the rejection of Christ.

4. Each of the two bring to bear a different aspect of the rejection of...
Christ, as noted above.

These two parables are followed by a similitude of the kingdom which, among other matters, points to the destruction of Jerusalem. Thus, the three parables are instructively connected as unfolding God’s dispensational ways and His governmental dealings. Let us briefly look at them.

**The Parable of the Two Children and the Vineyard**

The Lord was here confronting the moral state of those who declared their incompetency to tell whether the message of Messiah’s forerunner was of heaven or of men (Matt. 21:25). He declared to them the result of their rejection of John’s message. The point made by our Lord concerning the obedience, or not, of the two children was clearly understood by His opposers. They knew that the repentant child did the will of the father. Thus the Lord made of them the unrepentant class; and those they despised in Israel answered to the repentant child. The repentant believed John. Refined, religious flesh, thinks it really needs no fruits of repentance and rejected Christ.

Notice that our Lord placed into the mouth of the first child the words, “I will not,” but into the mouth of the other a refined expression, “I [go], sir.” Yes, and the self-important, emphasized I in the second case is significant. Can you not see how the Lord puts the fine pretension of His opposers into the mouth of the deceiving child? But concerning those despised ones, the righteous rebukes of John were used by the Spirit to bow them to God’s word. Not so the self-righteous. They would not enter the same way as tax-gatherers and harlots. Therefore our Lord said to them:

Verily I say unto you that the tax-gatherers and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you (Matt. 21:31).

This is one of the five times “kingdom of God” is used in Matthew rather than “kingdom of the heavens.” “Kingdom of God” may have a moral bearing, as is the case here, where Kingdom of the heavens is inappropriate.

The refined moral state of our Lord’s opposers was exposed for what it is: disobedience to God -- awful self-righteousness. But that self-righteousness was a cloak hiding what the heart was really like. Next, the

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74. Helpful on this is “The Marriage Supper of the King’s Son, Matthew 21-23 to Chap. 22:14, *Collected Writings* 12:264-275. Also, a brief tracing of the bearing of Matt. 18-20 is given in 24:270-271.
Lord adds another parable, one that will uncover the secret spring of the heart.

**The Husbandmen**

*Matt. 21:33-46*

(33) Hear another parable: There was a householder who planted a vineyard, and made a fence round it, and dug a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and left the country. (34) But when the time of fruit drew near, he sent his bondmen to the husbandmen to receive his fruits. (35) And the husbandmen took his bondmen, and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other bondmen more than the first, and they did to them in like manner. (37) And at last he sent to them his son, saying, They will have respect for my son. But the husbandmen, seeing the son, said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him and possess his inheritance. (39) And they took him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him. (40) When therefore the lord of the vineyard comes, what shall he do to those husbandmen? (41) They say to him, He will miserably destroy those evil men, and let out the vineyard to other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their seasons. (42) Jesus says to them, Have ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which they that builded rejected, this has become the cornerstone: this is of the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes? (43) Therefore I say to you, that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and shall be given to a nation producing the fruits of it. (44) And he that falls on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder. (45) And the chief priests and the Pharisees, having heard his parables, knew that he spoke about them. (46) And seeking to lay hold of him, they were afraid of the crowds, because they held him for a prophet.

**They Will Have Respect for My Son**

In Isa. 5 we have Israel likened to Jehovah’s vineyard (see Psa. 80:8, 9; Jer. 2:21). This is the case here also. The hedge points to Jehovah’s protecting care, while His name is a strong tower (Prov. 18:10). The wine-press points to the provision of joy. Thus, the higher the privileges, the greater the guilt. Israel always trampled upon the rights of God for the flesh is incorrigible.

Here we see that God had carefully provided for the vineyard. There was no defect, no lacking provision.
Jehovah had sent His servants to Israel that He might have fruit. Note well that in the parable He received not so much as one grape. Rather, His representatives were maltreated and killed.

At last the son was sent:

They will have respect for my son (v. 37).

'Well,' said a brother in a reading meeting, 'but they killed Him and did not have respect for Him. How can that be?' Another brother answered: "THEY WILL HAVE RESPECT FOR MY SON!" Indeed they yet will.

You will note that in the gospel presenting the perfection of the service of the perfect Servant of God, the wording is the same (Mark 12). The perfection of His service will be acknowledged in God's time, as here in Matthew the King will be acknowledged as the Son. However, in Luke, we read:

I will send my beloved son: perhaps when they see him they will respect [him] (Luke 20:14).

Luke's is the gospel presenting the Son arrayed in the beauty of perfect manhood. He is the worthy One. And as a moral touch, the intimacy of relationship is noted: "my beloved son." Perhaps when they see such a One, they will respect Him. Oh, what a test to bring out how opposite they were to such a One -- in the moral enmity of their hearts. The "Brightness of the eternal glory," who was arrayed in "a splendid robe" (Luke 23:11), was mocked and crucified.

Thus the death of Christ is viewed in this parable, not as the groundwork of the counsels of God, but as the climax of man's sin and the closing scene of his responsibility. Whether law, or prophets, or Christ sought fruit for God, all was vain, not because God's claim was not righteous, but because man -- aye, favored man, with every conceivable help -- was incorrigible. 75

Thus is the testing of man closed. How is it that the Scofield system transgresses this immense fact and continues the testing of man?

**Given to Other Husbandmen**

Matt. 21:41 tells us the judgment pronounced by his opposers concerning such conduct. Not only is this self-condemnatory, of course, but it shows us that such persons can form a correct judgment concerning wickedness when it is brought before them; but wickedness in others, not in themselves, for

they would not do such a thing themselves, would they? This judgment was rendered by religious men professing to own the true God. The Lord had held up a mirror for these rebels to look into but they thought they saw others, not themselves.

Next, the Lord tells them who they saw in the mirror and brings before them what Scripture said concerning Himself as the stone. He speaks of this stone in two positions. One position is here on earth where they themselves fell on the stone and were to be broken, and not have the kingdom of God. The other position is that the stone shall fall on others, i.e., as coming from heaven in judgment, grinding them to powder. Refer, for example, to the smiting stone in Dan. 2. This is connected with the setting up of the millennial kingdom. 76

The kingdom of God, here, refers to the coming kingdom which earlier in Matthew had been announced as at hand (by John, the Lord, and the Twelve). Meanwhile, however, the Lord having broken with the nation (Matt. 12) the kingdom of the heavens in mystery had been declared to the disciples (Matt. 13). This, of course, anticipated the cross, His absence above, and eventually His return. The two positions of the stone are consonant with this. He will indeed come as the smiting stone, and He will set up the kingdom of God. Its moral bearing is before us here. These men were altogether unfit to participate in the kingdom of God, morally considered.

In Matt. 21:42 there is a quotation of Psa. 118:22. There is an application of the corner-stone now (Eph. 2:20). The quotations from the OT found in the epistles are applications, not fulfillments. The reader will be spared making many a mistake if he keeps this in mind. The church is neither Israel (nor, the spiritual Israel, nor Zion). Here we have the corner-stone laid in Zion. See also Isa. 28:16-17 where this is brought in as an encouragement to the faithful remnant in Israel in the midst of the evil nation (during Daniel’s 70th week). 77

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76. In order to bring this text in harmony with the notion that there is no future restoration of Israel, it is said that grinding to powder occurred at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The stone of stumbling is a person: Christ. So is the crushing stone that same person (unless you have a non-scriptural system to support). Christ did not come in AD 70, though there are Preterists who insist that He did. Fantastic!

Without limiting the application, there may be special reference to Israel (see Isa. 8:14, 15).

77. Commenting on 1 Pet. 2:6-8, W. Kelly wrote:

Here it is not the temple of glory as by-and-by, but a spiritual house, and a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices during the day of Christ’s rejection by Israel.

But do the believing Jews forfeit all because the mass rejected Him? Far from it. They

(continued…)
The kingdom of God was an expectation of Israel. It will be given to a nation producing the fruits of it. That is not the Gentiles. The old Israel, under the old covenant, is judged (as the cursing of the fig tree signified). The New Israel, under the New Covenant, is that nation that will produce those fruits -- because divine sovereignty will bring this about. This New Israel is a nation that will be born in a day (Isa. 66:8; Rom. 11:26; Isa. 60:21).

The parable of the husbandmen attaches itself rather to the nation, as sphere of the ways of God, an economy on the earth; not human nature under the law, but the chiefs of the nation to whom the vineyard of God had been confided. God had had long patience; He was seeking fruits which were due to Him; and His messengers, His servants, had been dishonored, ill-treated, and even killed. There was one thing more that God could do, and He did it; He sent His Son. The husbandmen cast Him out of the vineyard and killed Him; they must undergo the judgment they had deserved. It is not the incurable evil, the flesh which cannot please God, which perishes before His eyes; it is an exterior and terrible judgment falling on the nation which, notwithstanding all the patience of God displayed toward it in its long career, has crowned its iniquity by rejecting and crucifying His Son. This people suffers the public judgment of God; it is a body ruined, broken, in consequence of its sin; it will be ground to powder (save the small remnant God has reserved for Himself) when in the last days it will be found an adversary and apostate.

The chief priests and the Pharisees perceived he spoke about them. Not repentance, but death to Him was in their hearts, stung by the truth. As they were afraid to pronounce concerning whether our Lord’s forerunner, John spoke from heaven or from man, because the people held John to be a prophet, so now He Himself is treated the same (Matt. 21:46). However, God would see to it that Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed (Acts 4:28).

And that brings us to the third parable in this trilogy -- which will take us from before our Lord’s execution on into the kingdom of the heavens in mystery and the destruction of Jerusalem (involving a national judgment) as

77. (...continued)

enter into the present enjoyment of the promises, as far as these were compatible with the present ways of God; and if there be not the reception of all, God has provided some “better thing” for or respecting us, as another points out (Heb. 9:39-40) (The Epistles of Peter, pp. 132, 137).

See also his Lectures Introductory to the Gospels, in loco. See also J. G. Bellett, Short Meditations on the Psalms, Psa. 118, in loco.


79. Collected Writings 30:279.

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well as the professor who had no wedding garment (involving individual judgment).
The Wedding Feast

Matt. 22:1-14

(1) And Jesus answering spoke to them again in parables, saying,
(2) The kingdom of the heavens has become like a king who made a
wedding feast for his son, (3) and sent his bondmen to call the persons
invited to the wedding feast, and they would not come. (4) Again he
sent other bondmen, saying, Say to the persons invited, Behold, I have
prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatted beasts are killed, and all
things ready; come to the wedding feast; (5) But they made light of it,
and went, one to his own land, and another to his commerce. (6) And
the rest, laying hold of his bondmen, ill-treated and slew [them].
(7) And [when] the king [heard of it he] was wroth, and having sent
his forces, destroyed those murderers and burned their city. (8) Then
he says to his bondmen, The wedding feast is ready, but those invited
were not worthy; (9) go therefore into the thoroughfares of the
highways, and as many as ye shall find invite to the wedding feast.
(10) And those bondmen went out into the highways, and brought
together all as many as they found, both evil and good; and the
wedding feast was furnished with guests. (11) And the king, havin
gone in to see the guests, beheld there a man not clothed with a
wedding garment. (12) And he says to him, [My] friend, how camest
thou in here not having on a wedding garment? But he was speechless.
(13) Then said the king to the servants, Bind him feet and hands, and
take him away, and cast him out into the outer darkness: there shall be
the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. (14) For many are called ones,
but few chosen ones.

The Kingdom of God
and The Kingdom of the Heavens

Because there are interpretations based on the erroneous idea that the kingdom
of God and the kingdom of the heavens are to be equated, or are synonymous,
some comments on such over-statement are in order. Matt. 19:23-24 is offered
in proof. The real meaning of this error is that the inspiring Spirit makes a
distinction without a difference, which is no distinction after all. No doubt
greater respect for verbal inspiration might have hindered such allegations.

(23) A rich man shall with difficulty enter into the kingdom of the
heavens; (24) and again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to enter
a needle’s eye than a rich man into the kingdom of God (Matt.

These texts are not synonymous or equated. In v. 23 it is possible, though
difficult; in v. 24 it is impossible. The distinction is precisely in accordance
with the change in expression from kingdom of God to kingdom of the heavens.

A rich man could enter the sphere of profession (i.e., the kingdom of the heavens), without reality in his soul as we know from many parables, the same as anyone else, though riches might hinder him from desiring to do so. The kingdom of God, considered here as a moral sphere of reality, he cannot enter, anymore than a camel can go through the eye of a needle. It is impossible -- riches enable him not one bit. The disciples’ response shows that this impossibility is the meaning, but with God it is possible (Matt. 19:26) because sovereign grace can accomplish this (cp. Col. 1:13) though riches does not help.

The Setting

This parable, whether spoken on this exact occasion or not, fits here in accordance with the character of Matthew’s gospel, which connects things according to a ‘dispensational’ and/or governmental order. The Spirit caused Matthew to connect these parables according to the mind of the Spirit in this presentation of Christ. This parable provides an answer to the chief priests and Pharisees regarding their exposed attitude towards God, towards his messengers to them, an finally towards His Son sent to them for the fruits due Him who owns Israel as His vineyard.

“The kingdom of the heavens has become like” indicates it takes a character in view of the rejection of the Christ, the sent One. Therefore the kingdom of the heavens in mystery must needs have features noted in this similitude.

What is noted in v. 2 is something that occurred before the kingdom in mystery began, but needed to be given here for the moral connection with character of what follows.

Concerning the King, see 1 Tim. 1:17. Such a King would supply the guests with a suitable wedding garment, especially those brought in from the highways.

80. As we saw in the case of the parable of the wheat and the darnel (Matt. 13:24), and in Matt. 18:23, we again have the words “become like.” W. Kelly remarked:

In Matt. 13:24, Matt. 18:23 it is “become like” or “was likened,” these being historical (as others are not) likenesses that the kingdom assumed through the rejection of the Lord and His going on high. The rest (Matt. 13:31, 33, 44, 45, 47, 20:1) were merely likenesses of certain special features at particular seasons; as one case differs by a peculiar comparison with the future (Matt. 25:1) (The Bible Treasury 20:379).
The Invitations

The first invitation was given by John, by the Lord, and by the Twelve (Matt. 10). This was refused. 81

The second invitation is in view of a profound change. Surely the death of Christ is in view in these figures of a rich provision. The King’s bountiful provision was fully and completely prepared, ready to be lavished on those whom he would call to honor his son. Moreover, with all things ready, he also had ever so many wedding garments available as needed.

Note to whom the second invitation is addressed: “Say to the persons invited.” This, as the first invitation, had Israel in view. “He sent other bondmen.” Certainly the eleven (plus Matthias) were included (Acts 2-6). But now these had received the Spirit as Indweller, consequent upon Christ’s exaltation in glory. In Acts 2:32, 33 we see that the Christ received from the Father the Holy Spirit, 82 and Christ then poured the Spirit out upon those waiting as He had instructed (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). 83 But there was the mighty, conscience-piercing testimony of the Christian proto-martyr, Stephen, in Acts 7. He laid before them how Israel systematically resisted the Holy Spirit. They listened until He testified to seeing the hated One in the glory of God. Well, they were not going to have Him down here, and certainly not up there in the glory of God!

Thus ended the year noted in the parable in Luke 13:6-9. For three years the owner of the fig tree sought fruit. Finding none, he says to the vinedresser to cut it down. But the vinedresser asks for one more year to apply what was necessary to induce fruit-bearing, and if no result, then cut it down. The vinedresser points to the Holy Spirit and His testimony through Christ’s servants from Acts 2-7, ended in the stoning of Stephen, a great turning point in the book of Acts.

The first invitation was as under the law. The second invitation was on

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81. “First of all the Jews, already invited, are bidden to the marriage feast. They would not come. This was during Christ’s life-time” (J. N. Darby, Synopsis 3:115).
82. The Lord Jesus received the Holy Spirit two times. The first time was at His baptism. He was sealed (John 6:27), receiving the plentitude of the Spirit, as perfect man, needing no atoning blood for cleansing as we do. He was sealed according to the perfection of His Person. But He received the Spirit the second time, in glory, from the Father, for the purpose of being Head of the body formed by His baptizing (those waiting for the promise of the Father) into one body, in the power of one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). The doctrinal unfolding of what occurred at Pentecost followed after the testimony to Israel concerning the exaltation of Christ to God’s right hand. Everything has its ordered place in the ways of God!
83. This involved the baptism in the power of one Spirit into one body (1 Cor. 12:13), a once-for-all act. The body is formed once for all. We are joined to that body by receiving that same “Holy Spirit of promise” by sealing with the Spirit (Eph. 1:13).
a different basis. During the testimony during the period from Acts 2-7, Israel had opportunity to take the position of a man-slayer and run into Christ in the character of being a city of refuge for the manslayer (ancient Israel was provided six cities of refuge for those who accidentally caused the death of someone). But no, Israel would not take the place of it having been manslaughter. Thus, it was, as we know, murder using the secular arm -- so to speak -- to accomplish seizing on the inheritance.

The second invitation was met in two different ways. There was the indifference manifested in making light of it and being occupied with land and commerce. Secondly, there was the ill-treatment and killing of the King’s messengers. The stoning of Stephen sealed this matter.

**The Anger of the King**

And [when] the king [heard of it he] was wroth, and having sent his forces, destroyed those murderers and burned their city (Matt. 22:7). The Roman legions were, after all, God’s forces (though not His people), for He is sovereign and all belongs to Him. He makes the wrath of man to praise Him and the remainder (what would not) He restrains (Psa. 76:10). The destruction of the city of those who did the things we have been considering is, of course, Jerusalem. The destruction took place in AD 70. The account by Josephus is quite detailed and vivid. Surely God controlled matters such that there exists Josephus' account, presenting an absorbing picture of the dreadful administration of the government of God. Awful as it was, and awful as the so-called holocaust in Germany was -- and as a testimony to man’s wickedness -- the worst yet remains to come (Matt. 24:21). But the destruction in AD 70 has its own character in connection with the formal destruction of the Mosaic system, though it came to and end morally at the cross, signified by the rending of the veil.

This judgment was of a national character; there is also individual judgment as seen in the casting out of the man without the wedding garment.

**The Third Invitation**

I suggest treating Matt. 22:7 as a parenthesis.

(6) But they made light of it, and went, one to his own land, and another to his commerce. And the rest, laying hold of his bondmen, ill-treated and slew [them].

(7) And [when] the king [heard of it he] was wroth, and having sent his forces, destroyed those murderers and burned their city.)
(8) Then he says to his bondmen, The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy; (9) go therefore into the thoroughfares of the highways, and as many as ye shall find invite to the wedding feast. 84

The parable thus connects the event described in v. 7 as a consequence of the treatment depicted in v. 6 (see Acts 7, 12, 22:4; 26:1). Then v. 8 returns to things that began before the destruction of Jerusalem, namely the mission to the Gentiles.

After the stoning of Stephen, Saul of Tarsus was saved, Peter opens the kingdom, as it were, to the Gentiles, and the gospel brings in both Jew and Gentile: “as many as ye shall find.” The two previous invitations had Israel, as such, in view but the third is general. For the second, see Acts 2:14, 22; 3:12; 4:10; 5:31; 7:2. We noted already that the stoning of Stephen was a turning point. He answers to the embassy in Luke 19:14. Israel would not have Christ in humiliation, and they were not about to accept Him in glory either. Persecution but resulted in the gospel going forth.

Note that the wedding feast is furnished with guests. Yes, guests, not only saved persons are there.

**No Wedding Garment**

It has been previously emphasized that the kingdom of the heaven, in mystery, is a sphere of profession, both true and false. We have already encountered this situation and here it is again.

The king provided wedding garments, suitable to himself. Persons were brought from the highways as they were, but not left as they were in the king’s presence. He clothed them suitably for his honor and dignity. 85 Evil and good were to be brought (Matt. 22:10). Saul of Tarsus may illustrate what “good” means but he made certain to condemn all ‘goodness’ of the

84. After dragging into this matter the thought that “the gospel of grace is an invitation to become part of the Bride of Christ, not to be a guest at the wedding,” and quoting v. 8 as “the wedding is ready,” and the Christian wedding is in Rev. 19, E. Schuyler English says that the third invitation must therefore be to Israel during the tribulation; and the nation, both good and bad, will gather for the feast (Studies in the Gospel of Matthew, NY: Our Hope Publications, p.161 (1941)). This is given as a sample concerning how ideas are injected into the parables, varying by theological system, as well as what emphasis is brought to bear, or customs imported into the parable. At the end of treating this parable, we will examine at some length how non-Lordship salvation theology treats this parable to fit that scheme.

85. Allow a word of exhortation. When we profess to come into the Lord’s presence for worship, is there not dress and manner and posture suitable for what we profess we are doing? Ostentation is as bad as slovenliness. Let us beware of imbibing anything of the spirit of the man without a wedding garment. The honor of the king was bound up with the honor of his son.
flesh (Phil. 3:4-8) and elsewhere described himself as having been an insolent, arrogant, and over-bearing man, as well as chief of sinners (there can only be one chief). “Evil and good” refers to man’s thoughts; all alike needed the wedding garment to cover them. Any fitness for man is divinely communicated. Wretched self-righteousness must be covered just as moral turpitude must be covered.

The man without a wedding garment speaks of those who have their own thoughts regarding what is suitable to God. Christendom is filled with, characterized, by such persons. But suitability is provided by God Himself. Cp. Isa. 61:10 and Luke 15:22. Really, the man’s conduct points to contempt for what is due the Father and the Son. W. Kelly referred to such a one as “the Christ-despising intruder.” It was really treating the king’s provided wedding garment with contempt. That garment points to Christ as our garment before God. Contrast that with Adam’s fig leaves -- replaced by skins of God’s providing. The first, fallen man needed the covering. The second man has provided it. It is Himself.

Part of an article follows, quoted from Things New and Old 21:316-321.

◆ Here we see the rich and precious grace of God flowing out to the Gentiles. All the barriers are swept away, and the shining river of God’s salvation sends its refreshing and life-giving stream to the ends of the earth. “The salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it.”

We have from the inspired pen of the evangelist Luke, a most exquisite point in connection with this subject.

And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled {Luke 14:23}.

It is not possible to conceive anything more lovely or more glorious than this. It is pure, absolute, sovereign grace. It is not a question of man’s responsibility; all that is closed. It is not, “Go work”; it is not “Give fruit”; it is not even “Come.” All these methods have been tried, and tried in vain. He would not work; he would not give; he would not even come.

What remains? Just this -- God’s compelling grace. He says to the sinner, “If you will not have anything to say to me, I am determined to have to say to you. I will save you in spite of yourself. I will compel you to come. I am determined to fill my house with guests. I will fit you and clothe you with a wedding garment. It matters not who you are or what you are; I shall have you in my presence, and at my feast in a manner worthy of myself. I have made ample provision; I have made out the title, found the ransom, done all; and not only so, but I shall make you come. I know that, if left to yourself, you would never come at all; I have proved this, proved it beyond all question; and now I shall not leave you to yourself; I shall not
allow you to stay away; I shall give you a clean deliverance from yourself, from your sins, from the devil, from the world, from all your liabilities and responsibilities, as a lost, ruined, guilty sinner; and I shall bring you to my table clothed in garments of salvation -- yea, clothed in my righteousness, accepted in all the acceptability of my own Son. I will give you a title, give you a capacity, give you a nature, give you all, make you all, do all for you; you shall be my guest for ever; and if anyone shall inquire, How can all this be? The answer is, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor. It is all grace from first to last -- all to the praise of the glory of my grace. I do not ask you for an atom; I do not ask you to put forth a single effort: I know it would be of no possible use to do so, for if it were all made to depend on your moving your eyelash, you would not do it. I have taken the whole matter into my own hands, from first to last, and you shall be, to all eternity, a monument of my saving, quickening, compelling grace.

Reader, we ask you, is not all this most marvelous? Can anything exceed it? May not angels well desire to look into it? May not principalities and powers gaze with wonder at it? Who but God could speak and act like this? Only think of His dealing thus with the being that had broken His law, stoned His prophets, murdered His Son, resisted His Spirit. What matchless, transcendent, adorable grace! God would fill His house with guests, who, if left to themselves, would have turned their backs for ever upon Him, and rushed headlong to an everlasting hell.

Need we say there are holy responsibilities flowing out of all this marvelous grace -- powerful claims upon all those who are the happy, privileged subjects thereof? Surely there are. If our responsibility, as sinners, has issued in the most complete and hopeless, failure and ruin; if it has for ever closed in the cross of the Son of God; if grace has compelled us to come within the hallowed circle of God’s salvation: if we are saved, blessed, cleansed, clothed, accepted in the beloved, endowed with every privilege that God could bestow upon us, if all this be true, and it is true, true as the truth of God can make it -- then, may we not ask, what manner of persons ought we to be? If we are saved, ought we not to live as such? If we have gotten the wedding garment, ought we not to wear it, and to appear in it continually? Are we not called to put on Christ, in our daily life? Should not our habits, our manners, our temper, our style, our spirit, our whole practical life and character declare whose we are and whom we serve? Can it be that anyone professing to have the wedding garment, could be found going after the folly, vanity, frivolity, and ridiculous fashions of this wretched world?

Alas! alas! there is a terrible amount of heartless, worthless profession in our midst. The doctrines of grace are talked about, but where is the fruit?
There is nothing more terrible, nothing more sad and humiliating than to see persons professing to be saved by the free grace of God, and yet exhibiting gross selfishness and earthly mindedness in their daily private life. It was this that broke the blessed apostle's heart, and made him weep bitter tears, as he tells us in his epistle to his beloved Philippians. And if it was so, in his day, what is it now?

We may, perhaps, be asked, “What has all this to do with the parable of the wedding garment?” We reply, much, every way. Let us read the closing sentences and see if they do not bear down, in awful solemnity upon all who take their place, professedly, among “the guests,” but are not really clothed in the wedding garment.

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how earnest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few chosen.

How solemn! How soul-subduing! How appalling! How dreadful for anyone to appear among the guests, to take a place among the saved, to profess to be a subject of grace, and yet not have on the wedding garment! “How camest thou in hither?” It is an open, daring insult to the King, to His Son, and to the nuptial feast -- the very highest offence against the grace of God. The idea of appearing amongst the Lord’s people, being at His table, professing to belong to Him, and yet not being really clothed upon with Christ -- the true wedding garment; presuming to belong to a scene in which one has neither part nor lot -- this is a sin only to be found among the ranks of baptised profession. It is characteristic of Christendom; it is sinning against and despising the very richest, highest, grandest display of grace that ever was or could be made in this world.

“How camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?” There is no excuse. He cannot say, “I could not afford to buy one.” All is free. The garment is as free as the feast. There is no hindrance. All is of grace -- free, sovereign, compelling grace. Otherwise there would be no force in the “How?” But there is tremendous force in it; such force indeed as leaves the man “speechless.” He has nothing to say. His case is desperate.

And be it remembered, this is a sample case -- a case, we hesitate not to say, bearing, with terrible emphasis, upon thousands of professors around us. Let us remember the words, “The kingdom of heaven is like.” In another place we read, “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened.” But our parable is a similitude of the kingdom now; and it indicates the sure and dreadful destiny and portion of all those who, though appearing amongst the
guests, do not really belong to Christ, are not truly converted, are merely self-indulgent, world-loving professors.

How appalling the end of such! There is no hope, no remedy, no plea. It is the utter rejection of Christ, the neglect of the great salvation, the refusal of the wedding garment; and, all the while, professing to be a Christian. In fact it is the very highest order of wickedness, the condemning sin of this day of high and wide-spread evangelical profession. As nothing can exceed the grace that shines in the gospel of God, as now preached, so nothing can exceed the guilt of those who in heart neglect it, while professing to have it. “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”

Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

* * * * *

Let us remind ourselves concerning what we previously noticed regarding the use of friend. “Friend” (hetairos) is used in Matt. 11:16; 20:13; 22:12; and 26:50. The word signifies a companion, not one necessarily born of God. Judas was thus addressed (Matt. 26:50). This man was addressed the same way.

Next we learn about being speechless. Numbers of persons with whom I have spoken over the years have told me what they will say to God if called to account. It would be difficult not to laugh in their face were it not for the solemnity of their self-deception, for some seem serious about their own imagined competency. What but the flesh could be so self-important and imaginative.
Let us have the solemn words before us again:

Then said the king to the servants, Bind him feet and hands, and take him away, and cast him out into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth (Matt. 22:13).

Oh, says Mr. Nice, God is love and He would not put anyone in hell. Hell is here in this life only. Wonder where Mr. Nice learned that God is love? Perhaps he was reading John’s gospel and skipped John 1 where we learn that light has come into the world; or skipped 1 John 1 were we learn that “God is light” before we come to “God is love” in 1 John 4. God has revealed Himself, surely, but He has done so in a certain way and order, not haphazardly. We learn by observing His order as well as what He says.

The sentence is here carried out by servants (*diakonos*) who are not the servants (*doulos*) of vv. 4, 6, 8, and 10. The servants engaged in the execution of the sentence points to angels.

The figures of speech point to a horrible reality. In Matt. 13:42 we read of the darnel ending in weeping and gnashing of teeth. So is the case with the bad fish -- the wicked -- in Matt. 13:49.

Matt. 22:14 shows us that in the kingdom of the heavens there are many like the man without the wedding garment, and few that are actually saved.

We also note that Matt. 22:7 refers to something national while here we have judgment of individuals -- the national referring to Israel while the individual has in view especially those brought in from the highways, i.e., dominantly Gentiles. The invitations were all gracious. Regarding the two cases, grace refused and grace abused, the divine government surely finds the guilty.

At the beginning of our examination of this parable, attention was directed to the fact that what is noted in v. 2 is something that occurred before the kingdom in mystery began, but needed to be given there for the moral connection with the character of what follows. At the end of this parable we have something noted that will occur outside the epoch of the kingdom as in mystery: namely, the execution of the sentence pronounced upon the man with no wedding garment will occur after the end of the kingdom of the heavens in mystery. Just as the darnel are left in the field for burning after the wheat is gathered into the garner (which closes the epoch of the kingdom in mystery), such is the case with persons this man represents. He is, of course, the same as one of the darnel in the kingdom of the heavens.
Matt. 20:16 indicates that the man without the wedding garment represents a large class of persons -- many -- in the kingdom of the heavens in mystery.

I apprehend that the two passages in Matthew (20:16, 22:14) show the contrast of the external effect and internal power. Matt. 22:14 is pretty plain. The gospel message as men speak had brought in a crowd, and where the true wedding garment was not, he who had it not was cast into outer darkness. The application of ch. 20:16 is less immediate, it is more the general principle; it connects with Matt. 19. There, reward is declared to be the fruit of sacrifice, and to guard against enfeebling grace this parable is added, where -- though there was an appointed reward for labor -- we are shown to be no judges of it: for there are (the converse) last, if God calls them to it, who will be first. For there may be a great appearance of labor, and yet God not own it. It is still the contrast of the outward appearance and those whom God has chosen, the fruits of His own grace, and not of following apparent principles by man, while only self is there. Only here it is labor and rewards bring it in: in ch. 22, external calling and grace.


No Wedding Garment

Objecting to Arminianism does not necessarily make one a Calvinist; no more than one objecting to Calvinism necessarily makes one an Arminian. Likewise, objection to “non-Lordship salvation” does not necessarily make of one a “Lordship salvation” advocate, and vice versa. However, one may lean more to Calvinism and Lordship salvation without being identified with the unscriptural baggage such positions may have.

Here we will consider some points that have appeared in the above Journal, concerning Matt. 22:1-14, forced into conformance with the non-Lordship salvation position that characterizes this journal.

The parable is made to mean that since the man without the wedding garment is inside, he must represent a Christian. This involves aligning other
parables also into conformity with this idea.

It is claimed that the wedding garment represents works -- and therein he is deficient so as to be not able to participate in the coming kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ in His millennial reign. Deficient? He has NO wedding garment, so their conclusion should be that he has NO works that please God.

It is claimed that the outer darkness, as well as the weeping and gnashing of teeth, refer not to eternal punishment, but to losing a place in the coming kingdom.

There is nothing inherent in the phrase that would automatically make it refer to hell (p. 9 of 22).

Thus it all is a matter of rewards, a view required by non-Lordship salvation notions which bends Scriptures throughout the NT to support this view. Thus, one may accept Christ as Savior and only many years later accept Him as Lord of one’s life -- if indeed ever, I suppose. As is the case with most, if not all, errors, some Scripture or teaching is supposedly being protected by the error(s). In this case, the doctrine of assurance of salvation is allegedly undergirded by such a handling of Matt. 22:1-14. How so? Well, the problem to be solved is: how many works are needed to be sure of salvation? Non-Lordship salvation cuts right through this and in effect says ‘none.’ True belief ensures salvation. Let us be sure we realize the true implication of saying the wedding garment signifies works. The man had NO wedding garment.

How camest thou in here not having on a wedding garment (Matt. 22:12)?

In non-Lordship salvation theology, would only one work acceptable to Christ have resulted in the person having a wedding garment? Or might it require two works, or how many would the man need to have been considered to have a wedding garment? Non-Lordship salvation actually solves no problem regarding the subject of works following salvation, but rather, perverts Scripture.

This man, then, is by lack of the wedding garment, not fitted to be in the King’s presence, but is fitted for the outer darkness. Cp. 2 Pet. 2:17; Jude 13. Certainly being clothed with the righteousness of God or not does easily fit this matter.

Let us look a little more at the “outer darkness” as well as the “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” If, in fact, these indicate hell, as they surely do, it


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is most solemn to mitigate the meaning whenever it suits your system. Deniers of eternal punishment do such a thing also.

Apparently to soften “outer darkness” somewhat, it is made “the darkness outside” the room. The system is that there will be saints in the darkness outside; yet, the same description is used of judged sinners, for they will be in the darkness outside. But in the non-Lordship salvation system, it means some saints’ debarment from co-reigning with Christ, while for sinners it means hell.

I would suggest to you that “outer darkness” stands in answer to the inner darkness of the lost soul. In the gospel of John where light and life are among its themes, we learn that lost man is the darkness that did not apprehend the Light come into the world (John 1:5). Concerning Christians, how encouraging it is to read:

. . . giving thanks unto the Father, who has made us fit for the sharing of the portion of the saints in light, who has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated [us] into the kingdom of the son of his love (Col. 1:12, 13).

. . . who has called you out of darkness to his wonderful light (1 Pet. 2:9).

But ye brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you as a thief: for all ye are sons of light and sons of day; we are not of night nor of darkness (1 Thess. 5:4).

. . . for ye were once darkness, but now light in [the] Lord (Eph. 5:8).

This excellent sufficiency ought to make clear that no child of God will be placed in outer darkness of any real or imagined kind.

Regarding “weeping and gnashing of teeth,” occurring in Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28, it is admitted that inMatt. 13:42, 50; 24:51; 24:48-50; and Luke 13:27, 28, refers to unbelievers. It is said that is not necessarily true inMatt. 22:13 and 25:30, for allegedly, there is nothing inherent in the expression itself that automatically associates it with the eternal judgment of the unbeliever (p. 10 of 22).

In this system held by professed dispensationalists, this is a saint who misses co-reigning in the kingdom. So is it a saint who has been raptured and is one who has had his body transformed into conformity with Christ’s body of glory (Phil. 3:21) who is thus to weep and gnash his teeth, the same description as for the wicked in Matt. 13? Has he missed the rapture also?

What such persons are denied is:

88. Gregory P. Sapaugh
the joy of being at Christ’s wedding banquet -- that is, of co-reigning with Him (11 of 22). 89

The King in the millennium kingdom is Christ. He is not the king in this parable; he is the son. The wedding feast is not about reigning in the millennium. This parable concerns the kingdom of the heavens in its mystery aspect, which terminates at the gathering the wheat into the garner, i.e., the rapture. After that the recommencement of the preaching of gospel of the kingdom will take place -- which preaching is presently in suspension. The kingdom in mystery “has become like” a wedding feast where such and such things occur. This is not one of the parables of the kingdom in mystery that is “like,” but one where it is said, “has become like.” It has to do with the present sphere of Christian profession, not the millennial kingdom. The lesson is that this sphere has many such false professors like the one without the wedding garment, and tells us what the end of such persons is. Non-Lordship salvation theology injects into this parable what is not meant.

It is claimed that being bound hand and foot means:

he is unable to serve in the Lord’s government (p. 8 of 22). 90

So, whatever else this saint without works (actually NO wedding garment) may have from the Lord, he is debarred from co-reigning with Christ. 91 The meaning really is that just as man is totally lost, so he will be totally unable to resist the judgment pronounced on him.

Matt. 22:14 must also be bent to comply with this false view. Thus chosen, which really refers to election, is taken to mean:

the ones properly clothed are chosen to be at the banquet (p. 12 of 22).

If that is so, it follows from non-Lordship theology that few real Christians will reign with Christ in the millennium. Most Christians will be outside in the darkness because:

For many are called ones, but few chosen ones (Matt. 22:14).

89. Gregory P. Sapaugh
90. Gregory P. Sapaugh
91. These notions remind me of the partial rapture notion; i.e., only deserving Christians are raptured. No doubt advocates of this notion plume themselves that they are among the deserving number!

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**The Wicked, Slothful, and Useless Bondman**

For consistency, the system requires that the “wicked” “bondman” of Matt. 25:30 represent a “regenerate” person. This in spite of the Lord’s words:

> “Wicked and slothful bondman . . . cast the useless bondman into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

Just when -- at what time or occasion -- does our Lord say to this alleged Christian that he is “wicked”?

> “Wicked”! If the man was merely a professor, like the darnel, how should the Lord have stated that fact before it would be believed that the man represents a professed Christian in Christendom, who is not the Lord’s?

> “Wicked”! “Thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sowed . . .” he said to the Lord. “Wicked”! J. N. Darby wrote:

> Weeping and gnashing of teeth are his portion who has not known his Master, who has outraged Him by the thoughts he entertained of His character. 92

Where is this wicked, slothful, and useless bondman kept while others are co-reigning with Christ?

**Some Objections**

Just as partial rapture views do, so the effect of these views is to rend the body of Christ. Advocates of either system do not, of course, see it that way.

In the two cases just considered, there are no works for Christ indicated; indeed, just the opposite is indicated: no works for Christ.

Such alleged Christians (i.e., having no works for Christ) cannot be part of the wife of the Lamb (Rev. 19:8):

> And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright [and] pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

“Righteousesses” does not mean imputed righteousness, but practical, righteous acts. There can be none such except as wrought by grace operative in the soul. Thus these are life-works of the Christian. The man who had “no wedding garment” had no life-works. If you say he had some, you raise the issue of how many works are required to be wearing a wedding garment.

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92. *Synopsis* 3:133
But you really do not know, whatever your pretension. 93 Thus, the solution regarding the assurance of salvation that this system seeks to settle has a different uncertainty appear -- let us call it:

**Wedding Garment Uncertainty.**

Another Scripture we might consider for a moment is:

... if we endure, we shall also reign together (2 Tim. 2:12).

Whatever “endure” means, 94 the fact that the man with no wedding garment will not co-reign with Christ means that he has not endured. Thus, the solution regarding the assurance of salvation that this system seeks to settle has a different uncertainty appear -- let us call it:

**Endurance Quantity Uncertainty.**

Thus, various Scriptures might be brought to bear this matter. The man with no wedding garment has no works. The Lord said:

If ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love (John 15:10).

No works means no keeping of Christ’s commandments; means no abiding in His love. Nor are such Christ’s friends (John 15:14). But advocates of the false system will go through the NT systematizing it to accommodate the erroneous system alleging to establish the doctrine of the assurance of salvation on the certain basis of non-Lordship salvation. It does raise the questions regarding how many works are necessary in order to have a wedding garment; how many works are necessary so that the Lord does not call one of His own a wicked, slothful, and useless servant; how many righteous acts must there be to be part of the Lamb’s wife; etc., etc.

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93. A person who produces no life-works is devoid of divine life in his soul. He may profess to believe but in reality he does not differ from the one who does not make a profession. Neither is Christ’s. Both go into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

94. A footnote in JND’s translation says:

‘Endure’ has a double sense in English: ‘to last,’ and to go through suffering patiently.’ Here it is the latter, as in Rom. 2:7; 8:25; James 5:11.
Part 3: The Parables of Matthew 24:45 - 25:30

Introduction

The Structure of Matt. 24-25

These three parables are part of the Olivet discourse. 95 Where have we arrived at this point in Matthew’s unfolding of Christ’s rejection as King of Israel? Matt. 12 records the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in saying that Christ wrought His power by Beelzebub. Therefore He morally separated from the nation and declared who his relations really were, following this by the series of parables in Matt. 13, introducing the matter of a new aspect of the kingdom of the heavens -- in a mystery form, unforeseen by the prophets of Israel. Subsequent to this He announces the assembly, though nothing as to the form of it as one body, for that was a mystery revealed through Paul. It was to be the new center for where Christ’s authority is owned by those who are gathered together unto His name. He also brings out into bold relief the state of Israel, especially in Matt. 21-23, coming to the end of this in Matt. 23 where He pronounces judgment, their house being left to them desolate until they say -- by the acting of sovereign grace on their behalf, of course --

Blessed [be] he that comes in the name of the Lord (Matt. 23:39).

Certainly He came in the name of the Lord the first time, but as presented to man in his responsible standing in Adam-fallen. Fallen man being what he is, the outcome (rejection) was certain. Christ’s rejection was the occasion of God’s bringing blessing through the cross and setting aside the first man as under trial to show that he was not recoverable. When Christ appears in glory, then sovereign grace and power will turn ungodliness away

95. The Olivet discourse has been considered in a number of papers. See:

The Bible Treasury 10:327; 12:257; New Series 4:150, etc.; 10:252, etc.

The Prospect 1:77, 168; 2:21, 45, 53.

Collected Writings of J. N. Darby 24:44-63; 179-194 (1871); 219-232 (appeared in the Christian Witness 4:266 (1837)); 30:286-301; 24:50-63; 179-190;

Synopsis, in loco.

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from Jacob and all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:26).

After His rejection of Israel in Matt. 23 we have the Olivet discourse. It is well to see how Matt. 24-25 follows after our Lord’s leaving Israel’s house as desolate.

The disciples, as Jews, were viewed as part of the nation, though as a remnant *spiritually* detached from it, and witnessing in it. 96

So, next the Lord went away from the temple, yet His disciples “came to [him] to point out to him the buildings of the temple” (Matt. 24:1). No doubt the impressiveness of the buildings was before their minds rather than spiritual empathy with what we read at the close of Matt. 23. Is there something for the instruction of our hearts in *that* during our Lord’s rejection from the earth? Are we in spiritual empathy with that?

He *answered* them, we read. He is not the least impressed. The temple was due for awful destruction, even as He had already prophesied in the parable in Matt. 22:7. It ought to be a constant exercise on our part to seek to be in sympathy with our Lord’s mind about matters.

His answer resulted in the questions regarding the sign of His coming and the completion of the age; i.e., of course, the age in which they were, the Mosaic age -- which will be displaced by the age to come, the millennium.

And that brings us to the Olivet discourse, Matt. 24, 25. Throughout this discourse His coming is in view. The Olivet Prophecy divides into three great sections. Note that the *Lord’s coming* and also *judgment* is prominent in each part and is seen in relation to three companies of people respectively: Jews, Christendom, and Gentiles.

1. **Jews.** Matt. 24:1-44 concerns the Jews and Daniel’s 70th week. After the tribulation of those days the Son of Man will come in power and gather His elect – which is a reference to the Jewish elect. Thus, He first answers their questions and this brings before us events which are still future from our time, however near, culminating in His coming in judgment (Matt. 24:4-31, vv. 31-43 giving moral exhortation for the godly Jewish remnant of that period). 97

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96. *Synopsis* 3:120.

97. J. N. Darby remarked upon the Lord’s judgment of the nation in Matt. 21-23, noting that Matt. 24 speaks of what concerns the remnant, and then notes the change after that:

> ... then the judgment of the nation, or if you will of that generation, in chapters 21 to 23; the exposition of all that concerned the remnant, in Matt. 24.

But this leads our divine Master to consider the remnant under another aspect, that the disciples scarce understood then, that is, its relations no longer with Israel (continued…)

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2. CHRISTENDOM. But before the events of Matt. 24:4-44 transpire, the disciples are actually to find themselves in the kingdom of the heavens in mystery. This the Lord speaks of next introducing that matter in parabolic form (Matt. 24:45 - 25:30). The first two parables have the state of the heart in view, as connected with His coming, followed by a third parable that, while having His coming ultimately in view, concerns service and the conscience. In all three parables, there is a warning of judgment to take to heart.

There are three parables (Matt. 24:45 - 25:30) and what is brought before our souls is profession and responsibility in various aspects:

a) Christendom looked at as a servant serving in the Master’s household, and the servant’s relationship to it in view of His coming;

b) the virgins, meant to be pure while waiting for the Bridegroom, waiting for Him as a present expectation, in an expectant posture; and,

c) the individual servants’ service in relation to the Master’s substance, in view of the fact that He will return.

3. GENTILES. Matt. 25:31-46 tells us about the judgment of the nations when Christ shall have sat down upon His throne of glory. Observe how Matt. 25:31 follows Matt. 24:30 quite directly. Here, our Lord spoke of how His coming would affect the Gentiles (Matt. 25:31ff) in view of the preaching of the King’s brethren, the godly Jewish Remnant. His

and the hopes of this people, but with Himself; in other words, to consider this remnant as charged with His service, as the retinue of joy, come forth to await His return, or finally, as charged with His interests here below in His absence. This is what follows from Matt. 24:45, to 25:30. In the first case, it does present the position and the effect of fidelity during His absence, and the manner in which unbelief would identify itself with the state of heart which puts off the thought of His return. If, during the absence of the Master, a true service is yielded by the wise and faithful servant (it is not a question here of “good”) who keeps his place to accomplish, in care bestowed upon those who compose the household, that which was entrusted him in the house, blessed is that servant; at the time of the return of the Master, he will be made ruler over all His goods. Here this is a great principle of service to which the apostles were called -- true for their service in Christianity, and applicable also for each of us in his place. But the position and the principle only are laid down here. If there was infidelity, if the servant put off the thought of the return of the Master, and went on his way with those who made themselves drunken in the world, he should be counted among the hypocrites and taken in an hour when he least expected it. (Collected Writings 24:52-53).
explanation, as often, went beyond what was asked.

There is no valid spiritual reason to project Matt. 24:45 - 25:31 into the future epoch spoken of in Matt. 24:4-44. The kingdom of the heavens in mystery is not existent any longer when the godly Jewish remnant recommences the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom as at hand (cp. Matt. 24:14). The kingdom of the heavens in mystery ceases when the wheat is gathered into the granary.

**The Character of Matt. 24:45 - 25:30**

Let us expand somewhat concerning the character of Matt. 24:45 - 25:30, the parabolic section. The disciples’ questions asked in Matt. 24:3 are answered by the Lord in Matt. 24:4-44. After that, He would tell them more than they asked, as found in Matt. 25:31-46, but first something concerning His coming regarding the kingdom of the heavens in mystery which was shortly to be introduced, then continues again where he left off at Matt. 24:44, resuming in Matt. 25:31. This imparts to Matt. 24:45 - 25:30 a parenthetic character. This parenthetic material is presented in parabolic form, distinguishing it in that way from the Lord’s teaching in prose in Matt. 24-25.

Thus, in Matt. 24-25 we have material that deals with the Lord’s coming regarding Jew, the kingdom of the heavens in mystery, and the Gentiles in the future.

Matt. 24:45 - 25:30 does not depict events paralleling Matt. 24:4-44. I desire to record here W. Kelly’s distinct rejection of the notion that in Matt. 24:45 - 25:31 we have the future Jewish remnant:

There are some, on the other hand, who deny that the parable speaks of Christians at all. These will have it that not only the foolish virgins are not Christians -- which I believe to be quite true -- but that the wise are not either, but what is commonly called the Jewish remnant. Now, I am of opinion that they are . . . mistaken.

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98. The reader will find an exposition of these passages in *Elements of Dispensational Truth*, vol. 2.

99. This interposed and parenthetic character is similar to the interposed and parenthetic character of the kingdom of the heavens in mystery.

100. See *Collected Writings* 6:248-249 for a brief outline.


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Is it true that the Jewish remnant will have oil in their vessels? They will never have oil in their vessels till the Lord Jesus comes and pours the Spirit on them. 102

... they will not be exposed to the temptation of going to sleep. 103

J. N. Darby deliberately rejected the idea that the Jewish remnant is meant:

I would further remark that any application of these parables to the Jewish remnant is a mere mistake; God’s dealings with and by this remnant, as far as treated in this part of scripture, are unfolded in chapter 24 to the end of v. 31, and this connects itself as to historical events on earth directly with v. 31 of ch. 25. Verse 32 of Ch. 24 begins personal exhortations to v. 44. These exhortations have their application to that remnant and close with personal separation by judgment, the spared ones being left on earth. From v. 45 we pass over to general Christian ground . . . 104

**The Change In Subject Matter**

All references to tribes of the land, Judea, the Sabbath, and such Jewish designations are absent in the three parables. They are not about Jews, as such, or Gentiles as such. The parables are about the Christian profession.

In due course we shall find that the title “Son of man” is a copyist insertion in Matt. 25:13. The parables do not refer to the coming of the Son of man in just that way. This is in keeping with the subject matter. The title of Son of man, when used in Matthew’s gospel in connection with His coming, denotes the posttribulational part of the one coming and that part is not especially in view in these parables. In Luke, the title “Son of man” has a moral bearing and Luke uses the title where Matthew would not. Thus, in keeping with the interposed character of this parabolic section having to do with the present kingdom of the heavens in mystery, the title Son of Man is not used.

**Whom Do the Disciples Represent?**

Some additional remarks concerning the disciples is in order here, as we begin considering the section that brings out the responsibility of those in the

102. W. Kelly’s Writings on Prophecy, p. 141; The Bible Treasury, New Series 10:295. {As a point of accuracy, observe that the Jews will not be indwelt of the Spirit as Christians are.}
104. Collected Writings 24:190.
**kingdom in mystery**, in which the disciples were going to find themselves.

W. Kelly observed this:

From this point the Lord begins to open out a new thing, namely, what the disciples were going to become. And evidently this is the proper order. The Lord had begun with them as they were, and then He leads on to what they were to become, with the new relationships of Christ dead and risen, when also fresh power was given by the Holy Ghost. As a mark of this, you will see that the Lord drops all allusion to Judea, and all reference to the temple, prophets, and Sabbath. The Lord opens out now into parables of a general and comprehensive nature which would be equally as true at Timbuctoo as at Jerusalem -- it does not matter where. They belong to Christianity; to that which Christ died and rose to establish by the mission of the Spirit. The Lord here shows us this opening out into wider principles of a moral nature, which embrace all the true disciples, wherever they might be in this world, at any time till He comes. Hence we find three parables which apply to this. 105

**The Parables Do Not Tell us about the One Body**

We should also note that these parables do not speak of the one body, as such. The revelation of that truth was communicated through Paul. However, we learn things that do apply to those who are members of that one body, but not viewed in that standing in these parables. The parables depict the Christian *profession*, composed of true and false; the one body contains only true believers.

The church, when presented in Scripture according to the position given in the purpose of God, is viewed as one body on earth (“the whole body” in Eph. 4:16 106). But it is also viewed as in responsible testimony and in this there has been, and is, great failure, so that the church viewed in this external aspect will be cast into the great tribulation, and given over, judicially, to believe the lie (2 Thess. 2). The church, viewed in responsible testimony, is filled with false professors.

In these parables we have responsibility in profession from another point of view, though the same persons are involved. It is the kingdom of the heavens in mystery -- the reign of heaven in mystery -- wherein God’s government is exercised in a way different from its public, open character
when the kingdom will exist in manifestation under Christ’s rule when He shall have returned. Then, righteousness shall reign (Isa. 32:1) and justice will be swiftly executed.

The kingdom of heaven {in mystery} supposes men on the earth, the government of God exercised over a certain state of things, the reign of heaven which continues the course of government of things here below, although in new circumstances; not the same manner as in Israel: a government limited in application, which puts on a particular form, until Christ comes, because He does not yet judge; and this is what gives place, He having been rejected, to the specialities in these parables. Nevertheless all those who recognize the authority of Christ are here under their responsibility. Perhaps, in certain cases {?}, they are the same persons as who compose the church; but they are looked at in another point of view. 107

These parables speak of the Lord’s coming -- in effect its pretribulation part. Some Christians say that is reading back into these parables what was revealed as a mystery to Paul. They (so-called “ultradispensationalists”) are greatly mistaken and their allegation is necessitated by a system that claims to be advancing dispensational truth whereas it undermines it and leaves room for the flesh in principle. 108 The fact that Christ would come for His own was not a mystery revealed to Paul. The change of the body and the order of events connected with Christ’s coming were secrets revealed to Paul. But that He Himself would come is told us in John 14 and in Matt. 25. In view of fuller revelation we can see that what we have in John 14 and Matt. 25 involves the rapture.

It is not the heavenly side and the rapture, though when the Bridegroom comes and they meet Him, that would be practically the rapture to us. 109

The parable of the midnight cry does not exist for the purpose of telling us the fact that Christ will come again. It teaches us that a present expectation of that return was the expectation at the first and that it ought to characterize us. Christians know that Christ will come, though they may have different thoughts about His coming. The parable does not depict a giving up of the fact of Christ’s coming but the loss of the present expectation and of the midnight cry reasserting that expectation.

Subsequently, the apostle Paul had placed the Thessalonians, among

107. Collected Writings 24:54.
108. This system, as do other pretended improvements upon the dispensational truth recovered in the 1800s, reject the very basic dispensational truth that the testing/probation of the first man ended at the cross. At any rate, the system is examined in a lengthy appendix (2) in J. N. Darby’s Teaching Regarding Dispensations, Ages, Administrations and the Two Parentheses.

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whom he spent but three weeks, in this waiting posture (1 Thess. 1:10), and it is an expectation meant to characterize us (Luke 12:35).

During those three weeks he, Paul, had caused the Thessalonians to wait for the Son from heaven. It was later that by revelation he told them the order of events. One does not need to know 1 Thess. 4 and 1 Cor. 15 to wait for Him. The expectation of Himself may be present before the truth that is a mystery in connection with His coming for us is known. The Lord said (John 14) that He Himself would come for His own and take them to the Father’s house. That is not the appearing in glory when He is manifested in glory and we with Him (Col. 4:3).
The Faithful and Evil Servants

Matt 24:45-51

(45) Who then is the faithful and prudent bondman whom his lord has set over his household, to give them food in season? (46) Blessed is that bond-man whom his lord on coming shall find doing thus. (47) Verily I say unto you, that he will set him over all his substance. (48) But if that evil bondman should say in his heart, My lord delays to come, (49) and begin to beat his fellow-bondmen, and eat and to drink with the drunken; (50) the lord of that bondman shall come in a day when he does not expect it, and in an hour he knows not of, (51) and shall appoint his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

In Matt. 24:32-44 the Lord had given instruction for the future, godly remnant of Israel concerning His return in glory. There was a watchfulness inculcated according to the position they will occupy in that epoch.

Not only is there a watchfulness suitable for them regarding His return in glory and power, there is a watchfulness that is suitable for those in the kingdom of the heavens in mystery, meanwhile, concerning which the Lord now speaks. “Who then is the faithful and prudent bondman . . .?” or is the bondman evil, and say in his heart “My lord delays to come”? That depicts a state reached in the kingdom of the heavens in mystery. This parable is connected with the next parable as the connecting word “then” in Matt. 25:1 shows. It is the condition depicted by the evil servant that leads to the kingdom of the heavens, in mystery, taking the character as given in the parable of the 10 virgins. That is the reason for the words, “Then shall the kingdom of the heavens be made like to . . .” The patent implication in these words is that the events depicted in the parable of the faithful and evil servant shows a state arrived at in the kingdom of the heavens. The result of this state is the falling asleep concerning the expectation of the Lord’s return, depicted in the next parable as one of sleeping concerning the Lord’s coming, when the original state was one of going forth to meet Him. They had started well, but while waiting fell asleep. It is quite clear that the coming of the Bridegroom, and the constant expectation of it, is a most important matter in the first two parables.

There are Christians who are not evil servants, yet put off the Lord’s coming. We get the Lord’s view of putting off His return for us in these parables. Why would a real Christian put off the Lord’s coming?
The Faithful Servant

The first of the three parables takes up the service of the servant in the household, the present sphere of profession, where God’s order was to be maintained. He who serves according to the Lord’s mind will be blessed indeed. He gives the household healthy doctrine and loving care. He looks upon the household as God’s and desires that God’s order and holiness shall be maintained there. He is careful, too, about the methods used in carrying out His service (1 Cor. 3:10). Conscious of being responsible to the Lord, He knows that His Lord will acknowledge what meets His approval, in service to His own.

This servant has the duty to give food in season. That has in view need in the household. There is discernment on the part of the servant concerning needs.

He does not lord it like the evil bondman and neither is he found eating and drinking with the drunken. He walks in the paths of righteousness and occupies until his Lord comes. This servant has learned from the Lord Jesus, the perfect Servant of God. The following is from a lecture by W. Kelly.

◆ First, then, we have a servant -- a faithful and wise servant. All Christians are called to be so, though some specially so. A servant in the house is called to provide good and suited meat for the house. Every Christian shares that in a way, though some are more suited for that work than others. Responsibility is according to privilege.

What constitutes a servant according to the mind of God? Waiting for the Master. That is what exactly suits a servant, and the Lord Himself was the perfect model. Christ was the true Hebrew Servant of Ex. 21. He served His time; the wife was given figuratively, and children also, but He was not content to go out. He loved the place of a servant for God’s glory, and the service of poor wretched man. What place so good in this poor world? And then taken to the door-post and made a servant for ever. The Lord will never cease to be a servant. He is such now, though exalted. Now He is washing His disciples, feet, so often soiled by the mud of this world. Who is the great effectual Washer? Christ; and the Holy Ghost, too, has His part. Yet Christ is the Servant, and that because of perfect love. But for sin, no such service would be called for. Directly ruin takes place then the Savior comes and takes that lowly part which no one else could take, and washes His disciples’ feet. Now we ought to know the meaning of that, for each Christian needs the gracious Cleanser of our feet.

And when He comes and takes us to heaven, He is still the Servant. He comes forth to serve those whom He takes to heaven. Are we affected as we ought to be at the words? He said, “I am among you as he that serveth,”
when here; but even when eternity begins, and He delivers up the kingdom, He still keeps the place of subjection, because He never gives up manhood, and the place of man is service. He serves for ever. Thus He is, and is meant to be, the great pattern of the Christian. How is this answered to now? The Lord had to warn even apostles not to affect the grandees of this world -- “neither be ye called benefactors,” etc. -- the complete contrast of Himself.

A “faithful servant” is one always waiting for Him; and He intimates that His coming would soon be forgotten, though the “evil servant” does not refer to it dogmatically. Denial of it is not supposed, but the evil servant says in his heart and tells by his conduct, “My lord delayeth his coming.” The effect is everything unworthy -- evil communications with evil people, assumption and presumption -- the exact opposite of all in Christ. This is just the history of Christendom. In the second century there was no notion of the true place of Christ and Christianity, and the hope of waiting for Him was lost. The Lord puts Himself into the parable -- “Ye yourselves like men that wait for their lord.” Like servants behind the door waiting for their Master, sure He is coming, but ignorant when {see Luke 12}. This is the only proper waiting for the Lord Jesus, carefully carried out in the Epistles, where the word is always “we” which are alive, not they -- “we,” the servants behind the door waiting for the Lord. It is the unfaithful that say “they.” Yet the apostle never said the Lord was coming in his day. It is all the exact truth, but the moment was concealed that we might be always waiting for Him. It is put very strongly here. There is only one servant: it is collective responsibility, and it is strikingly carried on to the evil servant. The collective testimony lost the hope, and when the hope was turned to Jewish from Christian, the foundation got lowered too; the evil servant was punished as a hypocrite, not merely as a man of the world.  

**The Evil Servant**

In this parable the early, changed state of Christendom, as a whole, is in view. *The evil servant displaced the faithful servant.* The cutting off of the unfaithful servant points to the eventual cutting off of Christendom. The matter is presented as devolving upon the un-expectant waiting for the Lord’s return. There is such a thing as an expectation of the Lord’s return generally held. The next parable emphasizes individual responsibility.

Doctrine forms practice. Sound teaching is necessary for a holy,

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separated walk. Truth must enter into the heart via the conscience. See how the Lord dealt with the woman in John 4, where truth entered her soul through the conscience. When truth does not enter the soul via the conscience, heart trouble develops.

J. N. Darby observed this:

Here the servant is treated as a servant, but as an evil one, as a hypocrite by the Lord. He considers himself so too. He says “My Lord” -- he is so dealt with -- the Lord of that servant. What a lesson for the professing church, and particularly for the hierarchical part of it! What makes this more remarkable is, that he is treated as the same servant, as to position, as the other who will be made ruler over all his Lord’s goods. Nay, he is treated as the same servant changed in character, “But and if that evil servant, 0 kakos doulos ekeinos.” 111

. . . the responsibility of Christians during the absence of the Lord. The general result for Christianity is developed at the end of Matt. 24. All depended on the living expectation of the Lord. If those should fail the servant would take the mastery over his companions in service, and would tyrannize them; he would join himself to the world, in order to enjoy its fleshly delights; the consequence would be, that he would be cut off, counted among the hypocrites, and cast aside. This gives occasion to more precise details as to the condition and the responsibility in which Christians are placed during His absence, and this is what we are about to examine. 112

W. Kelly wrote:

The evil servant says in his heart, “My Lord delayeth his coming.” He believes what he likes, and what he likes is that the Lord should delay His coming. If you love anyone, you want to see him. The absence of the person you love is trying to you. There may be the wisest reasons for delay, but the delay taxes your patience; and your hope of the speedy return of the one you love is the greatest joy to your heart.

The Lord gives this feeling and strengthens it. Granted, that it may be hindered by false prophetic notions; yet there is in the heart of all true Christians a desire for the coming of Christ . . .

There may be false prophetic views which hinder; but as the new nature does go out towards Christ, so it longs for the day when it will be ever with Christ. Speaking generally, waiting for Christ supposes longing for His coming; but if put in certain forms and propositions, this may never be found out. If you want to show that men do not look for Christ’s coming, you can have abundant grounds for working on.

111. Collected Writings 20:338.
112. Collected Writings 30:293.

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On the other hand, I think God will give you sufficient evidence that all who are His really look and long for His coming.\(^{113}\)

The evil servant has his portion among the hypocrites and he would not have that portion unless he was a hypocrite. He is one who is a Christian in profession, but is not real. We find such persons in various parables. Also, listen to the Lord’s solemn warning:

Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied through thy name, and through thy name cast out demons, and through thy name done many works of power? And then will I avow unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me workers of lawlessness (Matt. 7:22, 23).

Now, in John 10 we read that Christ knows His sheep. Therefore, these never were sheep, else He would have had to say, ‘I knew you once, but do not know you now.’ These are professors of Christianity that know not the Lord Jesus; and, He never knew them. Moreover, note well their claims! Who are these self-proclaimed wonder-workers? They are “workers of lawlessness,” i.e., they do their own will, without reference to the will of God. Yet the claim is to have done these things “through thy name.” Clearly, these are professors of Christianity, particularly in positions where they make such claims. They have heart-trouble consonant with the rejection of sound teaching.

There is also a system, so to speak, that is an example of taking that servant’s place. Rather, I should say this character is embodied in the system. There is a system that believes it is reigning with Christ now and smites its fellow servants and eats and drinks with the drunken. This servant had a case of heart-trouble; “My Lord delayeth his coming.” This is the connection of the word “then” in Matt. 25:1. The kingdom of the heavens “then” took the character like to ten virgins who fell asleep, and etc. With respect to what did they fall sleep? They had gone forth to meet the bridegroom (see 1 Thess. 1:9, 10) but a doctrine had come in that raised a cloud and mist even before those who belonged to Christ (the five wise). “My lord delayeth his coming.” This expresses a loss of the present expectation.\(^{114}\) So this servant took the place of authority instead of service,
but calling it service. Does the parable indeed indicate a moral connection between the attitude of heart and the actions? Let the reader and writer beware! The mustard tree (Matt 13) shot forth its branches and soon became a political power in the earth. The virgins who ought to have been up and going out to meet the bridegroom went to sleep -- i.e., sleep, with respect to maintaining an expectant posture regarding His coming.
The Parable of the Expectant Posture: 
The Ten Virgins
Matt. 25:1-13

Introduction

The previous parable presented faithful and unfaithful service regarding the Lord’s interests during His absence (from a corporate viewpoint) -- with a view to His coming again -- dealing with the state of soul. In connection with the matter of His coming again, we now have before us the subject of an expectant posture, the expectation of His coming during His absence, with oil in the vessel, to feed the torch while expecting His return. Verse 13 focuses on the point:

Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour.

Here is the expectant posture in which the Thessalonians were set (1 Thess. 1:9, 10).

In another parable, the issue concerned having a wedding garment; that has to do with Christ and His work providing a wedding garment. Here, the issue is oil, a type of the Holy Spirit, Whom we Christians have indwelling consequent upon the application of the finished work of Christ to our souls.

This parable, as many others, speaks of true and false profession. The virgins speak of this profession -- to belong to Christ, to be pure for Him. It may be real or false. The lamps speak of giving light in accordance with the profession. But the oil speaks of the Spirit, and the vessel speaks of the heart. Only the true have oil in the vessel.

The word then (Matt. 25:1) connects this parable with the preceding parable of the servants in a special way. It denotes a time connection. It tells us that when a certain characteristic manifested itself, then . . .

Very early in the history of the profession of Christianity, men who had not faith attached themselves to the profession (Matt 13:24, 36-43; 2 Tim. 3:5, 6; Jude; Heb. 3:12; Rev. 2, 3). Along with this, clerisy arose (3 John; Rev. 2:6).

What of those who followed the apostles, the so-called “Apostolic Fathers”? The interested reader may consult the following note for information about them. Many of these men were unsound on the person of
Christ. 115

Church and prophetic views are very closely connected. In the Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, vol. 14, the article, “The House of God; the Body of Christ; and the Baptism of the Holy Ghost,” fully shows the rise of clerisy and the corruption of church truth and much more.

A summary statement concerning the corruption of doctrine we may borrow from the church historian, Phillip Schaff who himself was unsound on Christ’s humanity), who said, concerning “the theology of the fathers”:

We seek in vain among them for the evangelical doctrines of the exclusive authority of the Scriptures, justification by faith alone, the universal priesthood of the laity \{believers is the proper word\}; and we find instead as early as the second century a high estimate of ecclesiastical traditions, meritorious and even overmeritorious ritualistic, and ascetic tendencies, which gradually matured in the Greek and Roman types of catholicity. 116

W. Kelly’s The So-called Apostolic Fathers on the Lord’s Second Coming 117 may be consulted for the corruption of doctrine connected with the Lord’s coming and with prophecy in general.

An examination of the writings of the Ante Nicene Fathers shows that many of them were premillennialists. They believed that Christ would return and then commence a 1000-year reign. But those of them who speak of these subjects show that they did not expect the Lord at any moment. They expected the advent of Antichrist first. We may class them as posttribulationists. This was the first step of decline in prophetic teaching. Meanwhile the Alexandrian school of these men, especially Origen (c. 185 - c. 254 AD), spiritualized away the meaning of Scripture.

The first step in the descent from apostolic doctrine, then, concerning the Lord’s coming, was the loss of the coming as a present hope. It became a deferred hope and the Antichrist was expected first. At the same time the perversion of much truth concerning other things progressed along with the rise of the clergy.

The next major step in the loss of truth concerning prophecy and “millennialism,” often called “chiliasm,” is described by P. Schaff thus:

But the crushing blow came from the great change in the social condition and prospects of the church in the Nicene age. After Christianity, contrary to all expectation, triumphed in the Roman

115. This has been shown by J. N. Darby in “Romanism,” Collected Writings of J. N. Darby 18, and “Christological Pantheism,” ibid. 29.
117. May be seen in W. Kelly’s Writings on Prophecy, p. 185ff.
empire, and was embraced by the Caesars themselves, the millennial reign, instead of being anxiously waited and prayed for, began to be dated either from the first appearance of Christ, or from the conversion of Constantine and the downfall of paganism, and to be regarded as realized in the glory of the dominant imperial state-church. Augustin, who himself had formerly entertained chiliastic hopes, framed the new theory which reflected social change, and was generally accepted. The apocalyptic millennium he understood to be the present reign of Christ in the Catholic church, and the first resurrection, the translation of the martyrs and saints to heaven, where they participate in Christ’s reign.  

And that is how “amillennialism” arose.

### The Bearing of the Parable of the Ten Virgins

The following is from a lecture by W. Kelly.

◆ The Lord next goes to another and different view -- “ten” virgins are not “one” {as the evil servant in the previous parable}. “Then shall the kingdom of heaven,” etc. “Then,” when judgment falls on the evil servant. He deals with other objects; it is another way of bringing out the utter failure of Christendom. The opening words of this ch. 25 are unique in the three parables which form the group. We find a general picture of Christendom from first to last. By Christendom I mean that which bears the name of Christ, whether truly or not. The kingdom of heaven {in mystery} is that new thing, not the kingdom on earth. If Christ is rejected in lower glory, God brings in a higher one. If Jews reject, Gentiles are called. We have a picture here outside Judaism. All ten make a bright profession. All took torches (for the correct word is “torches,” and quite distinct from the “lamps” in The Revelation). In eastern weddings the going in with the bride is always at night.

> “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.” This is the Christian hope again. From the start of Christendom the call was, Go forth to meet the Bridegroom from all below. If it was a Jew it was from the temple and its ritual, and that because an infinitely greater is there, and He the Bridegroom. Could God use a figure more striking to the heart than that He who died for our sins should be the Bridegroom. “They went forth”; a heavenly character was stamped on their work. If a person were a Christian in Otaheite, he “went forth” to meet the Bridegroom as much as if at Jerusalem. The Gentiles “went forth” as much as the Jews. If the hope were

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of another kind -- say the coming of the Judge -- you could not use the expression “went forth.” No person could “go forth” to meet his Judge. But if you look at the creeds of Christendom, all forget the Bridegroom, all look for the Judge, the One that will put on the darkest of caps, and will sentence not for time but for eternity. Not a word of that here. Here the hope of the Christian is put in the parabolic form of meeting the Bridegroom. Not fighting unbelievers, but the influence of divine love in the person of Christ. Well, five wise and five foolish -- these show their folly by having no oil. The torch would burn brightly for a very little while without oil. All go forth, but the difference exists even from early days. John, James, and all the later Epistles assume persons of dubious character in the professing church. But all at first go forth to meet the Bridegroom.

The “tarrying” in scripture is never used to delay the coming of the Lord. All the parables are so constructed that those, who went forth at first, meet Him. But while He tarried “all slumbered and slept”; the heavenly hope was given up. The early fathers all lost it. Sleep implies no longer going forth. You could not suppose they slept on their legs. They must have turned in somewhere; they departed from the will of the Lord and gave up “going forth.” It is true that Jewish believers will carry the gospel of the kingdom as they flee from the enemy, but this is not the attractive power of the love of Christ.

“At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom.” That cry is going forth now, and has been going forth some seventy years. People at the end of the former century {end of the 1700s} waked up, but the cry was, Behold the Judge, not, Behold the Bridegroom. Here persons knowing His love, or ought to, were in peace, and instead of alarm, they go forth to meet Him. In the year 600 they woke up in a fright, but the Judge did not come, and they went to sleep again. Then in 1000 there was a great scare that the end of the world had come. They woke up, built cathedrals, did much to propitiate the coming Judge, but the Judge did not come, and they went faster to sleep than ever in the dark ages. All was dark, but what has taken place? Not merely the coming of Christ, but the gospel of God has been brought out more simply and clearly than at the Reformation; even all the reformers (unless it were Zwingle) held baptismal regeneration. There is no such notion in the word of God. This is not referred to to slight them, but to show that the gospel could not be taught in its fulness in connection with the idea that life is communicated by baptism. No, all are lost, and all require to be saved. Besides this, peace with God, redemption, new relationship, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost are brought out and keep the heart from being afraid. Instead of going to meet the Judge, if you know the gospel you know

119. {Not “waked up” as meant in the parable. He refers to a form of historicism.}
Christ bore the judgment and more. He loves me, yes, better than the angels. When the cry went forth, God wrought that hearts might go forth bounding to meet the Lord Jesus, knowing we are immeasurably dear to Him. This made the difference plain. The foolish virgins found no oil, and set to work in great earnestness to get it, as now in Christendom. People who once were card players and fox-hunters are now great for early Communion and outward forms. It is all an effort to get the oil, as there are frequent requests for those they know to be pious to pray for them, as did Simon Magus, instead of buying for themselves “without money” and “without price.” And the solemn part is -- the same spirit is found in all denominations.

The Parable of the Expectant Posture: The Ten Virgins
Matt. 25:1-13

(1) Then shall the kingdom of the heavens be made like to ten virgins that having taken their torches, went forth to meet the bridegroom. (2) And five of them were prudent and five foolish. (3) They that were foolish took their torches and did not take oil with them; (4) but the prudent took oil in their vessels with their torches. (5) Now the bridegroom tarrying, they all grew heavy and slept. (6) But in the middle of the night there was a cry, Behold, the bride-groom; go forth to meet him. (7) Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their torches. (8) And the foolish said to the prudent, Give us of your oil, for our torches are going out. (9) But the prudent answered saying, [We cannot,] lest it might not suffice for us and for you. Go rather to those that sell, and buy for yourselves. (10) But as they went away to buy, the bridegroom came, and the [ones that were] ready went in with him to the wedding feast, and the door was shut. (11) Afterwards come also the rest of the virgins, saying, (12) Lord, Lord, open to us; but he answering said, Verily I say unto you, I do not know you. (13) Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour.

120. The Bible Treasury, New Series 7:356-357.
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Introduction

The state of souls professing Christianity is in question.
In the following parable their service is in question. 121

The Character and Setting

This parable has long been called the parable of the ten virgins. It received that designation before the midnight cry sounded during the second quarter of the 1800s. Therefore, we would hardly expect it to have been called the parable of the expectant posture. But that is the thrust of this parable. It is given in view of the evil servant saying in his heart “My Lord delays to come” (Matt. 24:49) and it closes with “Watch, therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour” (Matt. 25:13). Truth has a moral bearing. It is always our responsibility, as well as privilege, to seek out the moral bearing of truth that we profess and put it into practice in our life.

We have learned, hopefully, when considering the seven parables in Matt. 13 that the kingdom of the heavens is a sphere of profession while Christ is absent, beginning with His taking a place in glory and ending with the gathering of the wheat into the garner, which points to the rapture. Following the rapture of the saints, the gospel of the kingdom as at hand, now in suspension, will be again proclaimed, by a godly Jewish remnant, preparatory to Christ’s appearing in glory. There is no such thing as the kingdom continuing in mystery while the godly Jewish remnant is proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom as at hand. It is confusion of things that basically differ. When considering the man without the wedding garment, we noted that his end needed to be added to complete the picture the Lord presented, not to show that the kingdom in mystery goes on until the appearing of Christ in glory. We have the same thing here with regard to the end of the five foolish virgins. However, that has been used to support the idea that this parable applies to the tribulation period, which idea will be examined later.

We have elsewhere considered subject of the kingdom but the following brief statement about it may be helpful to some.

The kingdom of heaven supposes men on the earth, the government of God exercised over a certain state of things, the reign of heaven which continues the course of government of things here below, although in new circumstances; not in the same manner as in Israel: a government limited in its application, which puts on a particular form, until Christ comes, because He does not yet judge; and this is what gives place, He
having been rejected, to the specialities contained in these parables. Nevertheless, all those who recognize the authority of Christ are here under their responsibility. Perhaps, in certain cases, they are the same persons as those who compose the church; but they are looked at in another point of view. 122

We have already observed that parables of the kingdom of the heavens suppose the rejection and absence of Christ from earth. They apply to some certain state of things while He is away. They apply to the present period, though there may be indicated events, added by the Lord in His explanations, that we have learned take place in Daniel’s 70th week, included in Matt. 13, the “time of the harvest.” The parables of the kingdom of the heavens have to do with God’s dispensational workings and government -- not yet in manifestation and glory as it shall be when the Son of man (who is now on the Father’s throne -- Rev. 3:21) shall sit down upon the throne of His glory -- meanwhile in secret, as it were; for the kingdom of the heavens exists in its mystery form (Matt 13:11) now. That is, this kingdom exists now in a mystery form, or phase, and when Christ comes in power and glory, it will exist in an open and manifested form.

**Not Jewish**

There is nothing especially Jewish in this parable, such as we see in Matt. 24:4-44. Besides that, the future Jewish remnant does not go forth, nor do they have oil in their vessels, i.e., the indwelling Spirit. Moreover, to suggest they will go to sleep under the persecutions of the Antichist, and while they are preaching the gospel of the kingdom, that it is at hand, and while the two witnesses manifest power from God, and they read Matt. 24:1-44 and Dan 9 and 12, etc., is quite beside the mark. You might as well say that the two witnesses in Rev. 11 go to sleep. Yes, and that those in the circumstances described in Matt. 24:4-44 will go to sleep and not wake up to the fact that Messiah is coming until the what? Keep steadfastly in mind that in this parable all go to sleep.

In an effort to make this parable refer to the Jews in the future, J. F. Walvoord claimed that:

Inasmuch as the rapture (John 14:1-3) had not yet been revealed, it is questionable whether Christ would have tried to teach His disciples using an illustration of a truth that was not even known to them at this

122. *Collected Writings* 24:54.
He notes that the oil refers to the Spirit:

The symbolic meaning of oil is well established in Scripture as referring to the Holy Spirit... We have already noticed that the Spirit is poured out on Israel after Christ has appeared in glory, not on, or in, the godly Jewish remnant awaiting the appearing of Christ (supposed by this theory to be sleeping, remember!). Appeal to the anointing with oil in the OT is actually an admission of having no Scripture for believing the godly Jewish remnant has the Spirit indwelling. Moreover, the anointing with oil in the OT is just that, not a giving the Spirit as indwelling to the anointed with oil -- which is for true Christians. But the (false) way around this is to reduce the matter to the operations of the Spirit in new birth and salvation:

Accordingly, any genuine saint of God has experienced a ministry of the Holy Spirit which has caused his new birth and has introduced him to the truth of his glorious salvation. The wise virgins by their supply of oil typically are represented as having such a work of the Spirit, while the foolish lack this preparation.

Moreover, He did not tell us who the foolish virgins represent.

Beware of forcing a solution to a difficulty one has in the mind and ending with confusion confounded.

Some questions regarding this matter were addressed to J. N. Darby:

Ques. Is there any thought of the rapture in the parable of the ten virgins?
No. Matthew was to Israel, so you get no ascension there at all.
Ques. What is, “they . . . went in with him”?
They have a part with Him down here; and the marriage is with Jerusalem on earth, not the Jerusalem above.
Ques. How does that apply to saints now?
Exactly; they went out to meet the Bridegroom. It is not the heavenly side and the rapture, though when the Bridegroom comes and they meet Him, that would be practically the rapture to us.

123. “The Parable of the Ten Virgins,” Bibliotheca Sacra, April 1972, p. 101. So in The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook, Wheaton: Victor Books, p. 396 (1990), where it is the only reason he gives why the present is not in view. The idea would, for consistency, require that bringing the wheat into the granary (Matt. 13:30) not point to the rapture. In effect, it would lead to the notion that the similitudes of the kingdom do not apply to the time when Christianity is on earth.
124. Ibid., p. 102.
125. Ibid., p. 103.
Ques. Is it connected with responsibility more than with grace?

Well, it is more a history of what will happen. The difficulty is as to the virgins. They were converted, you may say, to wait for God’s Son, and they go out to meet Him. And while the Bridegroom tarried, they turned in to some place to rest; and then they went to sleep. They are heavenly saints, but not the bride, i.e., not viewed in that aspect. So they go in to the marriage.  

The Bridegroom and the Bride?

Various writers find support in a false textual reading in Matt. 25:1 for their idea that the parable applies to the end of the age. For example, Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote:

Old manuscripts -- especially the Vulgate -- add the words and the bride. That is, the ten virgins went forth to meet the bridegroom and the bride.

The idea here is to make the bride be the church accompanying the coming Bridegroom so that the ten virgins are necessarily Jews who meet the Bridegroom and the bride, after the Lord has appeared in glory. We will examine this theory in some detail in Appendix 2. The words “and the bride” are a textual gloss. The virgins, of course, do not signify the bride of Christ (there could not be foolish ones in the bride of Christ) and that if it pleases you to have to think of a bride, it would be the Jewish bride on earth, which the Lord will come for in its due season. The Jewish remnant
does not go forth to meet the bridegroom. 130 We believers will be caught up to meet Christ and subsequently accompany Him at His appearing in glory.

Not only because of lack of good evidence for the false reading, but also in view of what we shall consider, we may dismiss arguments founded on this wrong notion.

Who Is The Bridegroom? And Who, And Where, Is the Bride?

Obviously, the Bridegroom refers to the Lord Jesus. That is not contested; rather, the question always arises, “Who, and where, is the bride?” J. N. Darby remarked:

The bride is not mentioned; the virgins are Christians { in profession} -- the bride would be earthly Jerusalem. The virgins are called to meet Him in His coming to the marriage. 131

The virgins are gone out to meet Him, and do not await His coming to the place He is to arrive at. 132

In connection with God’s purpose to glorify Himself in Christ, in two spheres, the heavenly and the earthly, there is also an earthly bride, Jerusalem. And in His coming to earth for Jerusalem, there is another phase of His coming, and that other phase, or part, is what we have before us here in Matt. 25:1-12.

At this point, the Jewish practices as to several marriage feasts will occur to readers acquainted with the practice which we are told was in effect in the time when this parable was given. We must defer discussion of this until later. Let us return to consider the bride -- who is not specifically mentioned in the parable.

A day is coming when all Israel shall be saved (Rom 11:26; Isa. 60:21). That nation, all born of God, as connected with Jerusalem, is the bride, the earthly bride, that the Messiah comes to get. Meanwhile we are called out and we will go in with Him to the marriage. For Israel as a bride, see Isa. 62:5. See also Psa. 45.

The bridegroom had come. That is Christ (John 3:29). But He would be taken away (Matt 9:15; Luke 5:35). Israel was not ready, as the first man never is ready. He is desperately wicked and incurable (Jer. 17:9). The bridegroom was rejected and meanwhile we have been called out to go forth

130. Collected Writings 24:30.
131. Collected Writings 24:342; see also pp. 57, 190. See Notes and Jottings, p. 100.
132. Collected Writings 3:335.
to meet Him and then go in to the marriage with Him. Meanwhile, too, we know from elsewhere, the heavenly sphere is opened to us and we share all with Him as the bride, the Lamb’s wife -- a different thought. That is heavenly, a different character and position. But the earthly bride, in the earthly sphere, the nation of born-again Jews, shall be willing in the day of His power. They shall then obey His voice for He shall make them willing. See Psa. 110:3; and Heb. 8:8-14 with the “I will.” Then consider Isa. 54:4-10.

We may extract the custom from which the parable is allegedly taken from G. N. H. Peters, for general interest.

The custom from whence the parable is taken, was one familiar to the East. Jesus selects a particular time in the marriage ceremonial, to illustrate the uncertainty of His Coming, and the consequences of heeding or not heeding the cautions He already had given respecting it. It is the time after the wedding at the house of the bride’s parents (Horne’s Introd., vol. 2, p. 161, Barnes’s Com. Loci, Lisco’s “On the Parables,” p. 183, Encyclop. Relig. Knowl., art. “Mar. Ceremony,” Smith’s Dict. Bible, Meyer’s Com. etc.), and after the wedding festival there (which lasted several days -- we are told seven for a maid and three for a widow), when the bridegroom, with the nuptial guests, conducts the bride to his own house or to that of his father, that is chosen. The procession generally started in the evening or night with great pomp, having torches, songs, and music. This company with the bridegroom, was met by another, friends of the bridegroom and bride, which, at or near the bridegroom’s house, waited, ready at the first notice of approach to go forth, meet the procession, unite with it, enter the house, and participate in the entertainment or marriage supper. This last company not knowing precisely the hour or time when the procession would come, made preparation and watched for its arrival, so that it could enter in with the bridal party -- its union with the other and privilege of admittance, being indicated by the bearing of lamps, or burning torches, thus showing that they were friends, and as such could properly be admitted as guests at the marriage feast. After the procession entered the house with those who actually participated in the escort and manifested their friendship and respect for the bridegroom and bride, the door was shut and admittance refused. Now Jesus takes this parabolic representation from actual life, and shows from the uncertainty of the bridegroom’s arrival and the preparedness of the company awaiting him, how it will be (as the word “then” implies) at His future Advent, and, consequently, enjoins watchfulness. 133

G. N. H. Peters, however, views the virgins as representing the Jews in a coming day, and the bridegroom as coming with the bride, the church, to earth, for the celebration. We shall later consider this idea in some detail and

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trust that the reader will see that it is groundless.

There is no necessity to press that the parable must follow in detail the Jewish marriage custom any more than it is necessary to suppose that because the Lord used the word hades that He believed, as did the Greeks, that Pluto was the god of the underworld. The Holy Spirit is quite competent to select and arrange to suit His purpose. Thus the picture that the Lord Jesus presents is that of the bridegroom on the way to get his bride. His hearers could well enough understand this and so can we.

Now, it does surprise us that the foolish would go and buy, or try to buy, oil in the middle of the night. It does seem very foolish! The spiritual lesson, then, is very plain, but do persons really go to buy oil at midnight? The point is not to raise difficulties, which never requires much talent, but to note that it is not at all necessary to press analogy to the exact details of a Jewish or Oriental custom, that could or could not be, but rather recognize that the Spirit of God selects and arranges to suit His purpose and we are then to seek the mind of God concerning the lessons.

**How We Will Consider This Parable**

We will consider this parable under seven headings:

1. The Original Going Forth (v. 1);
2. The Preparation of the Ten Virgins (vv. 2-4);
3. Sleeping (v. 5);
4. The Midnight Cry (v. 6);
5. The Reaction of the Ten Virgins (vv. 7-9);
6. The Bridegroom’s Coming and Its Result (vv. 10-12);
7. Warning to Watch (v. 13).
The Parable of the Expectant Posture: The Ten Virgins Explained

Matt. 25:1-13

I suppose that when the midnight cry sounded in the early 1800s, the traditional and prevailing view was that the ten virgins represented the two classes composing the visible Church, saved and unsaved, false and true; and that readiness for the coming was preached. The dispensational truth of the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens was not understood until brought out by J. N. Darby. Since then, futurist premillennialism (posttribulationism) has developed (apparently B. W. Newton being the father of it), and other eschatological variants, have arisen that explain these parables otherwise than the divine intent in them, as well as an increasing departure by Scofieldians (see Appendix 2). This parable seems especially to bring out a very wide spectrum of views, as does Matt. 13. Included in these views is modern attempts to contract the real teaching, making a generalized application about being ready for the Lord’s return. 134

134. For example, David L. Turner, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary -- The Gospel of Matthew, Carol Stream: Tyndale (2005) wrote: The interpretation of this parable has been unnecessarily complicated by excessive allegorizing . . . The expectation of the bridegroom lends itself perfectly to the point of alert preparedness for the coming of Jesus, but one should not be concerned with whether the rapture of believers or the return of Christ to earth is in view (Walvoord 1974:196-197). Neither should one succumb to the common temptation to identify oil in the parable with the Holy Spirit (Green 1988:240; Hendriksen 1973:879), or stress that salvation cannot be transferred from one person to another (Tasker: 1961:234). Perhaps such speculations are pleasant intellectual exercises . . . (p. 324).

From this dis-help let us now look at remarks by Craig S. Keener, Matthew, Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press (1977):

In this particular parable (in contrast to 24:42-44) the issue is not that the virgins went to sleep -- both wise and foolish did so; this detail is merely part of the narrative’s setting. The issue is that some were not watchful enough to have sufficient oil (Beare 1981:482; Schweizer 1975:467). Some suggest that the torches could burn only fifteen minutes before being rewrapped with more oiled cloth (for example, France 1985; Witherington 1984:43) . . . (p. 357).

The fare here is that the sleeping means nothing, or insufficient oil -- rather than as the text says, no oil in their vessels -- and so on.

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1. The Original Going Forth

(1) Then shall the kingdom of the heavens be made like to ten virgins that having taken their torches, went forth to meet the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1).

*Then Shall The Kingdom of the Heavens be Made Like to . . .*

Following the *heart-condition* described concerning the evil servant in the previous parable saying “My Lord delays to come,” *then* shall the kingdom of the heavens be made like to . . . The force of this statement is:

The true force of the word is that the kingdom of the heavens will then have become like to ten virgins thus gone out. Nothing more solemn and more instructive than this parable as to the state of Christians. It is a question of the return of the Savior and of that which will happen to Christians, to the members of the kingdom, at that epoch. If the servant said, “My Master delayeth his coming,” it would be his ruin, the demonstration of the state of his heart. But in fact the Bridegroom would delay; and this is what has happened. 135

*“Then” Indicates a Change*

The corruption of doctrine means *not* giving the household “meat in due season.” The rise of clerisy and meritorious works, sacerdotalism, sacramentarianism, etc., was not “meat in due season.” It was beating the fellow servants, rather. And the Word does not say that the servant became drunk but rather there was a connection with the world. It does not mean that such an one was in the habit of eating with men who were drunk from strong drink though it does not exclude that. It does not, however, primarily mean *that* anymore than the beating means that such an one beat others with literal whips. It was after a spiritual manner that such things were done.

We have learned that Rev. 2 and 3 gives us a foreshadow of the history of the professing church, the church viewed in responsible testimony here, and it is Ephesus -- representing the apostolic age -- that hated the *deeds* of the Nicolaitanes, those like Diotrephes, who would, it seems, act as the clergy. Such were present then. In Pergamos we find the *doctrine* of the Nicolaitanes; in that church that represents the time following the institution of Christianity as the state religion by Constantine the Great. Things progress and *deeds* must be justified by the development of *doctrine* to
justify those deeds.

In Sardis, which represents the time between the close of the apostolic age and the institution of Christianity as the state religion, we find that they had those who said that they were Jews, but were not, but were really a synagogue of Satan (Rev. 2). It is not meant that such denied that they were Christians. Nor does it follow that they were not in the professing church; they were! True, they would not be counted among those who had an ear to hear, but the point is that there were those who were confounding Christianity and Judaism. And the Lord calls it the synagogue of Satan. It was working effectually and would result in Jezebel in the church! And meanwhile, the deeds of the Nicolaitanes were rapidly increasing. So the beating of the fellow servants proceeded. “But and if that evil-bondman should say in his heart, my lord delays to come, and begin to beat his fellow bondmen . . .” And so the world was brought into the profession of Christianity -- not in a gross form such as worshiping the emperor, as the heathen did, nor sacrificing to the gods, but the world was brought in in another form.

So we {Jews} also, when we were children {in our minority -- under the law}, were held in bondage under the principles of the world . . . (Gal 4:4).

So we clearly see that the mixture of Judaism and Christianity is really the bringing in of the world. There was therefore the spiritual eating and drinking with the drunken.

True, there were many faithful unto death in this time, praise the Lord for His sustaining goodness. Yet the condition of things we have so briefly considered was rapidly developing. The wicked servant said, “My Lord delays to come.” Even true children of God were caught up in the spirit of what the wicked servant did and said, as is usually, and sadly, the case with His children, and it became characteristic of that period. They were not in the expectation noted in 1 Thess. 1:9, 10; or in Luke 12, which brings moral state before us.

It is when these things began, very early in church history, that “Then shall the kingdom of the heavens be made like” what we have in Matt. 25:1-5. The professors of Christianity, whether true ones and false ones, had been taught by Paul the present expectation of the Lord’s coming (as well as what we have in the gospels) and he had set them in a waiting posture (1 Thess. 1:10; Phil. 3:20, 21). They were called out from among Jews and Gentiles and so they “went forth” to meet the bridegroom. But alas, as the bridegroom tarried, the present expectation became a deferred hope, and they fell asleep. We must now consider the parable in detail.
“Then” Does Not Mean after the Great Tribulation

There are many pretribulationists who think that “then” indicates that this parable refers to Israel after the tribulation. This idea will be examined in Appendix 2. Here we will note an example of this idea:

“Then” -- at that time -- immediately after the tribulation -- when the bridegroom comes -- not to the wedding but from the wedding . . .

“Then” refers to the state manifested by the evil-servant-condition of the previous parable. Is that so difficult to see?

In the false scheme the nation of Israel is involved, for five virgins are foolish and so the godly Jewish remnant cannot be meant. This scheme falsely puts the nation into some kind of relationship to God, during the great tribulation, whereas in Matt. 23:38, 39 the Lord had pronounced:

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, Ye shall in no wise see me henceforth until ye say, Blessed [be] he that comes in the name of [the] Lord.

Thus, God is done with that nation -- the nation that had been under testing. In the end of the age, after the rapture of the saints, He will form a godly Jewish remnant, but that is not the nation. However, after He appears, He will bring it about that the godly Jewish remnant will form the nation, a new nation under the new covenant. The parable of the 10 virgins cannot be about that godly Jewish remnant, for five are foolish; nor can it be about the nation, for God is done with the nation until Christ appears in glory and then turns away ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. 11:26). The parable is about the expectant posture that should characterize professing Christians, a posture in which they had been set originally.

The Ten Virgins

The ten virgins are virgins either in fact or in profession only. They remain such throughout the parable. The wise virgins, in fact, are professing Christians who are saved. Their wisdom consisted of this: they “took oil in their vessels with their torches”; and, they were “the {ones that were} ready” -- because they took oil with them.

In 1843 J. N. Darby pointed out that:

It is not here individual watchfulness, denoting a saint, which is set forth (for all together slept, and all together awoke); but it is the forgetfulness of the church, as a {professed} body, of its
The ten virgins speak of responsibility, as the number 10 in Scripture does. It is collective responsibility in profession. And while it is most important to see this, that does not hinder pressing this passage upon an individual believer concerning the expectant posture that should characterize each Christian.

“Went Forth”

It was, of course, quite possible that instead of “went forth” the word ‘waited’ could have been used, as G. N. H. Peters incorrectly wrote:

... waited, ready at the first notice of approach to go forth ...,

But “waited” is not what we read. Moreover, since Peters makes of these ‘waiting’ ones the Jewish remnant, he must necessarily regard the Jewish remnant as sleeping with respect to the Lord’s appearing in glory, when the Lord had detailed instructions in Matt. 24:4-44 and other places, when they have to flee from Jerusalem in the middle of Daniel’s 70th week, when many will be proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, as at hand, etc. It appears to me that the notion that all ten of the ten virgins are the Jewish remnant (with all these foolish among them) is, for these, and other reasons, as we shall see, false on the very face of the matter. The idea that the ten virgins represent the godly Jewish remnant, or the nation of Israel, is a torturing of the parable as well as a mitigation of the warning of the passage concerning the state of Christendom now. The case is rather as described by C. H. Mackintosh:

But the call to Christians was to “go forth.” They are supposed to be always on the move; not settling down on the earth, but going out in earnest and holy aspirations after that heavenly glory to which they are called, and after the heavenly Bridegroom to whom they are espoused, and for whose speedy advent they are taught to wait.

Such is the true, the divine, the normal idea of the Christian’s attitude and state. And this lovely idea was marvelously realized and practically carried out by the primitive Christians. But, alas! alas! we are reminded of the fact that we have to do with the spurious as well as the true in Christendom. There are “tares” as well as “wheat” in the kingdom of heaven; and thus we read of these ten virgins, that “five of them were wise, and five were foolish.” There are the true and the false, the genuine and the counterfeit, the real and the hollow, in professing Christianity.

137. Collected Writings 5:116.

138. {It might be better to use the expression “return.”}
Yes, and this is to continue unto the time of the end, until the Bridegroom come. The tares are not converted into wheat, nor are the foolish virgins converted into wise ones. No, never. The tares will be burnt and the foolish virgins shut out. So far from a gradual improvement by the means now in operation -- the preaching of the gospel and the various beneficent agencies which are brought to bear upon the world -- we find, from all the parables, and from the teaching of the entire New Testament, that the kingdom of heaven presents a most deplorable admixture of evil; a corrupting process; a grievous tampering with the work of God, on the part of the enemy; a positive progress of evil in principle, in profession, and in practice. \(^{139}\)

“Went forth” has in view the Christian’s separation from the world (see John 17, etc.) to wait for the Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1:9,10). J. N. Darby remarked:

They had originally gone out to meet the bridegroom -- left the rudiments of the world and all religious association with it, for that is especially going out. They had got back into worldly religion, into the world for ease, while still making profession. \(^{140}\)


\(^{140}\) Collected Writings 24:193.
2. The Preparation of the Ten Virgins

(2) And five of them were prudent and five foolish. (3) They that were foolish took their torches and did not take oil with them; (4) but the prudent took oil in their vessels with their torches (Matt. 25:2-4).

The Distinction of Prudent and Foolish Virgins

All alike had torches. There was a profession regarding having light. The folly of the foolish consisted of this: they “did not take oil with them”; and, they were not ready (v. 10) because they took no oil with them. Their end is outside. They are as much hypocrites as the wicked servant of Matt. 24:51 or the man without a wedding garment. Their portion is with the hypocrites, with the Judases, who may fool us all if we are not watchful, and MAY even be preachers as Judas was (Matt 10:1, 4). Yes, they may even be “ministers of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:15) on the outside. They are counterfeit. True Christians such never were. A counterfeit was always a counterfeit. A true coin never becomes a counterfeit. A Judas was always a Judas. He was even given power over unclean spirits (Matt 10:1) by Him who made Balaam’s ass speak, and compelled the diviner, Balaam, to speak no ill of Israel. Besides, as we have seen, there are such of whom the Lord Jesus says, “I never knew you” (Matt 7:21-23) -- Judas among them.

The foolish virgins are professed Christians who are not Christ’s. They have no oil in their vessels. There is really nothing difficult about it except when men have theories thinking that the salvation of God’s children is unstable. And those views show great want of having learned that “in me, that is, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.” And if they would go down far enough, as Jonah did when he went down to the bottom, they would learn his words, “Salvation is of the Lord,” not through one’s being wise enough to exercise one’s supposed moral free-will.

The Foolish Never Were Christ’s Sheep

“The door was shut” (Matt. 25:10). These are solemn words. Such is the fate of those who do not belong to the Savior. Too late, too late, for the cry, “Lord, Lord, open to us.”

This cry of, “Lord, Lord” is a cry we find in Matt. 7:21-24 where the boasters of great things were told “I never knew you. Depart from me ye
workers of lawlessness.” 141 In Matt. 25 we find the Lord saying to the foolish “I do not know you” (Matt. 25:12).

In John 10:27 we read, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them . . .” Having thus learned that Christ knows His sheep, we therefore also know that the foolish of Matt. 25 and the workers of lawlessness of Matt. 7:21-23 who are expressly declared to have never been known by Christ, are not sheep of Christ. They are mere professors. They know how to say “Lord, Lord,” well enough and lay claim to works of power in His name, as well as laying claim to being light bearers. They honor Him with their lips but their hearts are far from him, whatever their provision. Satan comes as an angel of light and his minister as ministers of what? of righteousness! Amazing deception!!! False professors got into the sphere of discipleship very early. See Jude, where they are considered as among Christians. It is just what we have in Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43. Matt. 25:3 declares plainly enough that the foolish “did not take oil with them.” Do you understand those words? This is perfectly in accord with the statement, “I do not know you.” There is nothing difficult about it. What is wanted is the simple bowing to what God states about it.

**The Foolish Are Not Lacking in Sanctification; Or, Not Filled with the Spirit**

Explanations that the foolish were not sanctified enough, or that they were not “filled” with the Spirit, are foolish explanations. Such troublesome theories are negated by the Lord, who said to the foolish, “I do not know you” (Matt. 25:12). That settles it. He does not so speak to His own, as John 10:27 shows. Moreover, we read that the foolish “took no oil with them” (v. 3). Is that a reason to say that they did not have *enough* oil; that they had oil, but were not answering to what it means to be *filled* with the Spirit? Such plain contradictions of the Lord’s words shows that a doctrinal agenda is being served, rather than receiving into the soul the statements of Scripture. It is not a matter of a difficult point.

The ten virgins represent professing Christians true and false. They do not represent the church as seen in its unity as the body of Christ. The Word of God addresses us as disciples, for example; that is, learners. Such may be true or false. The Word of God addresses us as servants. One may be faithful or a hypocrite. There is really nothing difficult about understanding that there exist professed servants of Christ who are not saved. It is want of

141. Not “I knew you once, but now I do not know you.” His words are “I never knew you.” Such were never saved. No child of God can be lost again.
true acquaintance with the mind of God that gives rise to the troublesome theories and notions we have about these things. We are generous with the goods of Another and perhaps anxious to read reality into every man’s profession, amiability, and respectability. But the torch not fed by oil will have a measure of smoke that those who are “full-grown men, who, on account of habit, have their senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14), and who will generally be able to discern, without claiming infallibility for their discernment. The trouble is that there is abroad a sentimental love, a wishy-washy sort of thing, that pretends to be the love denoted in the Scriptures; whereas it is an amiable attitude of the flesh that boils down to indifference, if we may call it by its true name. Phil 1:9-11 and 2 John 5, 6 ought to exercise our souls to have divine love operative in our souls, which will ever cause us to judge things according to the balance of the sanctuary. It is want of attendance in such a place (Psa. 73:17) that causes us to err so often.

The Word of God, then, addresses professed Christians in a number of different characters, and not exclusively as members of the body of Christ. Here we have ten virgins, professed Christians viewed in responsibility to maintain the present expectation of the Bridegroom. They are represented as virgins and therefore they ought to keep themselves unspotted by the world (James 1:27).

In reply to notions of Dr. E. Bullinger expressed in his *The Mystery*, W. J. Hocking wrote:

Is it not best first to ascertain the purpose of the parable? This is supplied in Matt. 24:13,

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour.

Now we can understand attendant virgins slumbering and sleeping; but how incongruous would it have been to represent a bride falling asleep on such an occasion? Do not the “Spirit and the bride say, Come?” (Rev. 22:17). Beside half of them are shut out, a circumstance quite foreign to the figure of a bride, but faithfully illustrating the fate of the mass of professing Christendom, as we are taught in unfigurative language elsewhere. The ten virgins therefore set forth the mixed company of those who take the place of Christians, while the bride {of Christ} figures the church in glory associated with Christ in His public appearing and reign.  

142.


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What Are The Torches?

Concerning the physical torches, W. E. Vine says:

LAMPAS . . . denotes a torch (akin to lampō, to shine) frequently fed like a lamp, with oil from a little vessel used for the purpose (the angeion of Matt. 25:4); they held little oil and would frequently need replenishing . . .

“In rendering luchnos and lampas our Translators have scarcely made the most of the words at their command. Had they rendered lampas by ‘torch’ not once only (John 18:3), but always, this would have left ‘lamp,’ now wrongly appropriated by lampas, disengaged. Altogether dismissing ‘candle,’ they might then have rendered luchnos by ‘lamp’ wherever it occurs. At present there are so many occasions where ‘candle’ would manifestly be inappropriate, and where, therefore, they are obliged to fall back on ‘light,’ that the distinction between phōs and luchnos nearly, if not quite, disappears in our Version. The advantages of such a re-distribution of the words would be many. In the first place, it would be more accurate. Luchnos is not a ‘candle’ (‘candela,’ from ‘candeo,’ the white wax light, and then any kind of taper), but a handlamp, fed with oil. Neither is lampas a ‘lamp,’ but a ‘torch,’” (Trench Syn., Par. xlvi.).

The torch represents the testimony of the person as a professed light bearer. Compare, for example, Matt. 5:15, 16. The character of the torch of the foolish was well described by C. H. Mackintosh:

There is the outward profession, but no inward reality -- no spiritual life -- no unction -- no vital link with the source of eternal life -- no union with Christ. There is nothing but the lamp of profession, and the dry wick of a nominal, notional, head-belief.

The foolish have a testimony as a light bearer, as well as the wise. There were found already in Paul’s day those that had “a form of piety, but deny the power of it” (2 Tim. 3:5). His instruction to Timothy to turn away from such (2 Tim. 3:6) proves that they were there already.

What Is The Vessel and the Oil?

Oil represents the Holy Spirit. The oil is in the vessel -- which represents the person as the depository of oil.

Do ye not know that your body is [the] temple of the Holy Spirit which [is] in you, which ye have of God; and ye are not your own? For ye

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have been bought with a price: glorify now then God in your body (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).


The true testimony is, then, fed by oil, the “supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:19). He came on the day recorded in Acts 2 in a special capacity. Yes, He was here in OT times, we know, but He came (John 16:7, 13; Acts 2:1-4) as the Indweller (John 14:15-17; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20) of the believer as well as the church (1 Cor. 3:16); came in that special sense. In the OT times He came upon men, but now He lives in believers. He did not live in persons then. The indwelling of the Spirit is only true now.

The wise had oil in their vessels. That represents the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as the power of the light bearer. The foolish took no oil in their vessels. Do not try to read into this that they must have had oil, then, in their torches. In this connection W. Kelly remarked:

The scripture says, not that they had a little oil, but that they had none. The teaching is perfectly plain, and it is only when men have a troublesome theory of their own that they find these difficulties. But you say that their lamps had been burning. True, the wick burned a little while, but it did not burn long without oil. There is really no difficulty if we believe what the Lord says, that they took no oil. 145

145. {There are those, such as Robert H. Mounce, Matthew, Peabody: Hendrickse n, p. 223 (1991), who say that the foolish took “no extra oil.” The meaning of the parable in necessarily hidden when such suppositions are imported into the parable.

146. The Coming and Day of Lord Viewed Morally, p. 30, (1871).
3. Sleeping

Now the bridegroom tarrying, they all grew heavy and slept (Matt. 25:5).

What Does it Mean That the Bridegroom Tarried?

The question, what does it mean that the bridegroom tarried, is not answered by those who place this parable in the end of the age. The godly Jewish remnant will be acquainted with the timing of events of Daniel’s 70th week and what follows shortly thereafter, and know that these events are timed in Scripture, i.e., the 1260 days, etc. No doubt they will also understand Matt. 24:1-44, which is for their direction. The idea of the bridegroom tarrying does not really fit into that period. Heb. 10:37 says:

For yet a very little while he that comes will come, and will not delay.

It is instructive to note the word delay in Matt. 24:48 is the same as in Heb. 10:37 and the word “tarried” in Matt. 25:5. W. Kelly wrote:

Dr. {David} Brown puts together Matt. 25:5, and Heb. 10:37, as if they indicated an oscillation of the heart between two very different and seemingly opposite views of the interval between its own day and the day of Christ’s appearing. It might have struck him as remarkable, however, that the “tarrying” is not spoken of in the later statement, where one could understand, on his principles, the tried and persecuted crying out, “But thou, O Lord, how long?” Now, the reverse is the fact. It is the parable of the virgins which discloses the tarrying of the bridegroom, and most certainly this revelation did not hinder the apostles, after the Pentecostal Spirit was given, and fuller light imparted, from increasingly expecting the Lord. It is the apostle Paul, towards the close of his career, who comforts the Hebrew believers with the assurance that yet a very little while and the Coming One will come, and will not tarry. “The very little while” in the one corresponds with the tarrying of the bridegroom in the other; that being over, he will come and “will not tarry.” Both are perfectly harmonious. At the time the Epistle was written, the Lord had tarried; the apostle knew not the hour of his return, and was inspired simply to announce that it would be sure and soon. It is the less reasonable to cite Matt. 25 in support of the notion that a long revealed delay is reconcilable with constantly waiting for Christ, seeing that not a word in the Virgins or the Talents protracts his return beyond the lifetime of those first watching or trading. There is nothing to imply even another generation to succeed the one addressed. Of course we are arguing solely from the Lord’s own words, and supposing the disciples to know nothing of the future, save what was fairly deducible thence. Ex post facto we know that the delay has been extended; but the question is: Could -- ought the apostles to have gathered a delay of eighteen
centuries at least, from what the Lord uttered? On our view, all is simple. The calling of the faithful, as here presented, was to go forth in order to meet the bridegroom: their sin was that they all slumbered and slept. The delay, which should have proved their patience, gave occasion to their unfaithfulness; and when the cry was made at midnight, they have to resume their first position -- “Go ye out to meet him!” The course pursued by our Lord, we need scarcely say, was worthy of himself -- the wisest, tenderest, and best in every way. He showed the only right object for the virgins; he warned all of such a delay as should check impatience, but not such as should entitle those then (or at any time) alive to say, “The bridegroom is not coming in our day.” If He had wished His people to be continually expecting Him, but withal not to be stumbled if He tarried He could have done, it seems to us, no other than He has done. 147

They All Grew Heavy and Slept

The loss of the present expectation of the Lord has several effects. One is seen in the parable of the evil servant: my Lord delays his coming, with consequent behavior. Another effect is to turn our blessed hope (John 14:1-3, etc.), the coming of the Lord to meet us, into a coming of the Judge. This has happened with the loss of the heavenly hope. The loss affected the state of soul and His coming was turned into a matter of facing a Judge. Joy, something connected with the thought of a bridegroom, was gone.

They went to sleep with respect to the expectation of Christ at any time. (Some defer this parable to Daniel’s 70th week.) 148 It ought to be quite clear that they woke up to the very thing regarding which they had fallen asleep. And Matt. 24:13 tells us why we have this parable.


148. The posttribulationist, A. Reese, said:

The opening verse of Matt. 25 gives the time for the fulfillment of the Parable of the Bridegroom; it is coincident with the judgment of the closing verses of the previous chapter; the midnight cry is on the Day of the Lord (*The Approaching Advent of Christ*, p. 242).

He intends this to mean the day of the Lord’s appearing in glory. Observe that he does not understand that the day of the Lord is an epoch reaching from the appearing of Christ to smite the image of Dan. 2 until the dissolution of the present heavens and earth (2 Pet. 3). He thinks it means 24 hours and is the 1260th day from the middle of Daniel’s 70th week.

I am sorry to have to note that this placement of the parable by posttribulationists is agreed to by many Scofieldians but not by C. I. Scofield himself. And not only that, they place the beginning of the day of the Lord about the time that Daniel’s 70th week begins.

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When Did the Sleeping Start, and Why?

It is clear that sleeping followed being awake. They had been awake in expectation of the Bridegroom regarding the fact that He might come at any time. They had been set into an expectant posture concerning our Lord’s return. The falling asleep is the giving up of the expectant posture. That this is the meaning is also pointed to by the fact that the midnight cry involved placing them again in the expectant posture. The Jewish expectation is given in Mal. 4, the close of the OT canon. The Christian expectation is given in Rev. 22, the close of the Christian canon:

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come (Rev. 22:17).

Does your heart answer:

Amen; come, Lord Jesus (Rev. 22:20)?

Is it not the fact that Christendom lost that and went to sleep with respect to that present expectation?

The question, when did the sleeping start, and why, is not answered by posttribulationists, who connect this parable with Christ’s appearing in glory. See Appendix 2.

Is it not plain that all slept until the midnight cry? And that, therefore, if the posttribulationist view is true, Christendom having gone to sleep will be sleeping until the day of the Lord’s appearing in glory to set up the kingdom? And yet they will have all the signs allegedly appointed for watchfulness, and endure all those persecutions under Antichrist, while through it all, they all sleep! And they can count the 1260 days from the placing of the abomination (Dan 12; Matt. 24), yet sleep on. The alleged church in Judea will flee. Are they sleeping while fleeing or just after they flee? Thus is the truth about this matter frittered away from its present bearing, fostering the continuance of sleeping with respect to the expectant posture that is the true Christian expectation.
4. The Midnight Cry

But in the middle of [the] night there was a cry, Behold the
bridegroom; go forth to meet him (Matt. 25:6).

When Did This Occur?

The time that this parable embraces covers the period from that time when
the imminent expectation was lost until the Lord comes again. In the parable
we find that some of those that went to sleep went in to the marriage feast.
There ought to be no difficulty in our minds concerning the fact that the
same virgins represent, what we now know to be, the entire, lengthy period
of time. We have a similar thing in Matt. 13 where there is but one crop that
denotes the profession of Christianity from the time of sowing down to the
time of harvest which is still future.

The parable is constructed so as not to put any stated event between the
professing Christian and the expectation of His Lord’s return. But we know
that a vast amount of time actually has transpired between the time when the
virgins went to sleep and when that cry first went out beginning in about
1827. 149 The present period had far advanced and the Bridegroom had
tarried long, much, much longer than any would have been led to expect.
Though God knew all that would intervene, Christians did not.

Concerning the sounding of the midnight cry, A. C. Gaebelein wrote:

The midnight cry has been heard toward the middle of last century,
when the Holy Spirit through mighty instruments, though humble,
gave a revival of the blessed Hope and all that which is connected with
it. 150

No doubt it was the Spirit of God that sounded the cry, but there was a
human agent that He prominently used. We know that it was J. N. Darby
through whom these truths were brought out. 151

Actually, the cry began earlier than A. C. Gaebelein wrote, though he
was on the right track. The cry was being sounded more loudly and widely
by the mid-1800s.

Another wrote:

. . . He gave but ONE cry! and it was never repeated! All had to go
out again; they had got in somewhere, when they had surrendered the
hope; and, when awakened by the cry, they had to accept the hope,

151. No, it was not through Morgan Edwards.
and, as at the first, when they had gone forth, they had to go forth again to meet Him. 152

**Behold The Bridegroom; Go Forth To Meet Him**

Who is it that raised this cry? Surely it is He Who watches for Christ’s interest during His absence. “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come” (Rev. 22:17).

The cry is grand. Consider the way it is stated. It does not say, “Behold the bridegroom cometh,” but rather, “Behold the bridegroom.” It is the Spirit’s desire to fasten our eyes upon the One Who loved us unto the uttermost. And after our eyes are fixed upon the only worthy object, we are told, “go forth to meet him.” There are, then, two precious things brought to our attention in this stirring cry; the Person and His coming.

With the recovery of the truth beginning in 1827 concerning the present expectation of Christ’s return, there grew a rich, accompanying ministry of the Person of our Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of the Father. Two books especially illustrating such ministry were written by J. G. Bellett. One is, *The Moral Glory of the Lord Jesus*, and the other is, *The Son of God*.

The truth concerning what the church of God is, is intimately connected with the truth of the Lord’s coming. It is not my purpose to enlarge on this connection but merely to call attention to the fact that this is so, and that consequently a host of collateral truths were apprehended in their proper bearings.

The Spirit of God raised the cry, but the human vessel through whom the truth of the present expectation of Christ’s return was recovered to the church of God is well known, though many have despised this truth and the servant of God who is thus identified in a special way with this truth, and other truths (the mystery of Christ and the church, etc.). Many have not hesitated to defame him, and even go so far as to calumniate him with the charge that he got this “any-moment secret rapture” theory, as it is derisively labeled, from a demon-inspired, Irvingite prophetess. 153 The servant of the Lord whom the Spirit of God used to restore to the saints the expectation of Christ, the proximate hope, and place them in the original expectant posture, was J. N.


153. The true character and worthlessness of such nonsense is exposed in detail in my *Precious Truths Revived and recovered Through J. N. Darby*, vol. 1, available from Present Truth Publishers.
In the recovery of dispensational truth, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer (1 Cor. 6:19) and especially in the church (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:22) was a leading feature. This presence resulted as a consequence of the exaltation of Christ (Acts 2:33). The presence of the Holy Spirit in the church, which is the body of Christ (Who is the Head in heaven) thus formed, is the leading feature of truth at the present time. Consequently the truth of being gathered together to Christ (by the Spirit, who gathers to no other name, however honored, nor any doctrine, however true) according to Matt. 18:20, on the ground of the one body (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4) was acted upon. The fact that failure came in proves once again what our hearts are, not that God has not left a path for faith, or a place where He has put His name. That which we see all about us, the general ruin, outwardly, of what ought to be a clean and bright vessel of testimony, ought to humble us into the dust as we confess our own part in the dishonor done to Him Who loved us and washed us in His own blood. Concerning this, W. Kelly remarked:

I hold it to be most important to the Christian to know what the church of God was, and to grieve before God for the difference. I have no sympathy with the Christian who is not a mourner because of the state of the church. It is well to have joy in the Lord, but we should be humble about ourselves and the church. You ought to feel deeply this condition for the Lord’s sake.

Those through whom the midnight cry was raised were cognizant that it was the Lord’s work, bringing Matt. 25:6b to pass.

With regard to . . . the Lord’s special work now, it is clear that it is an internal one. The Lord’s promise was, that previous to his actual return the cry should go forth again, “Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet him.” That cry was to act upon themselves. “Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.” What then the Lord has awakened our attention to now, is the solemn fact that all have slumbered, wise and foolish together, whilst the Bridegroom has tarried.
W. Kelly remarked:

But now mark another thing. It is midnight, and there was a cry made, “Behold the bridegroom; go forth to meet him.” Has this been fulfilled? In measure this, or rather it is being fulfilled now. It is a cry made by divine grace. No sign appeared, no outward warning, no seeing of a prophecy accomplished, as for the Jewish remnant in ch. 24. In us God works invisibly by His word and Spirit. The Lord is interposing to break the long slumbering condition of Christendom, and this not only for the wise, but for the foolish.

Have there not been times when men were impressed with the fear that judgment-day was coming, when they yielded to sore panic at the cry that “the end of the world” was at hand? In the year 600 they were sure it would be then. But time passed on, and the end of the world did not come. They slumbered again. Then, in the year 1000 (surely 1000 was the fatal number!), there was yet greater alarm all over western Christendom; and the clergy took advantage of this, and got the barons and people to give their gold and their silver, lands and possessions, to build grand cathedrals and religious houses some of which, as is well-known, exist to the present day. This fear passed away, and the end of the world did not come. Then followed a long slumber indeed.

Further there have been partial awakenings at various times since, but they were of the same character. At the period of the great rebellion, when the Puritans got into power in England, there was a momentary shaking in this country; and bold men rose up, who tried to establish the Fifth Monarchy, or present power in the world in the name of the Lord Jesus. Movements such as this took place at various epochs; but where was the going forth to meet the Bridegroom? There was not even a resemblance to it.

In past ages then there was alarm, sometimes to the utmost degree; and this state is represented in the well known mediaeval hymn or dirge, “Dies Irae,” the extreme expression of Catholic terror. Such was the feeling of the middle ages. Since then in later times, Protestant fanatics tried to get power into their hands. But this means seizing the earth at the present, not quitting all to meet Christ.

The momentous fact is that two spiritual characteristics, very distinct from ancient or mediaeval or modern views, mark off truth from error as to this. Are we not to be humbled because of the evil that has been done in Christendom? And are we not practically to take our stand on what was the Lord’s will from the first? If the Lord at the outset called all Christians to go out to meet Him, they should ever cherish this as their calling and joy of heart. The consequence of a revival of the Christian hope of meeting the Lord is resumption of the original position, that of going forth to meet the Bridegroom. How could believers honestly continue in what they know to be false and unscriptural if they look for the Lord to come back any day? Thus the
practical effect is immediate and immense where heart and conscience are true to Him. 157

5. The Reaction of the Ten Virgins

(7) Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their torches. (8) And the foolish said to the prudent, Give us of your oil, for our torches are going out. (9) But the prudent answered saying, [We cannot,] lest it might not suffice for us and for you. Go rather to those that sell, and buy for yourselves (Matt. 25:7-9).

What Does it Mean That They All Arose?

What is it that arouses them? What is it that puts them in their proper position of waiting? Why, the midnight cry (v. 6): “At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh.” This, I trust, has in some little measure gone forth of late years, bringing the church back again to its real hope. All had forgotten it, and all awoke when the midnight cry was made. The real difference between the wise and foolish virgins was this, that one class had oil in their lamps -- oil being a type of the grace of the Holy Spirit, the hidden grace -- and the others had not. It is not here individual watchfulness, denoting a saint, which is set forth (for all together slept, and all together awoke); but it is the forgetfulness of the church, as a body, of its hope, and its consequent slothfulness. 158

Recall that it was pointed out that the 10 virgins are not depicting individuals as such, but rather collective responsibility. It is collective responsibility in profession.

Charles R. Erdman, a posttribulationist who necessarily views this parable in connection with the Lord’s appearing in glory, slides by the sleeping and awakening quite easily, saying:

The fact that the virgins “slept” indicates no special fault. It is rather stated in order to emphasize the suddenness of the return of Christ. 159

In Rev. 20:16, 17 we read:

*I* am the root and offspring of David, the bright [and] morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.

We can more easily understand the Spirit saying Come. Is the *whole* bride saying so? We have a parallel phenomenon here with the virgins waking up. Not all are in the good of the expectant posture – as all are not really saying, Come. There is in both texts something attributed to the whole which is actually true of a part. The truth is that not all Christians are in the expectant posture, which expectant posture is where apostolic doctrine places us, and which is consonant with what the Spirit and the bride say. The next parable is an adjunct to this one and speaks of service that has in view the coming of the Lord, but not necessarily with reference to the expectant posture.

At any rate:

He that testifies these things says, Yea, I come quickly. Amen; come, Lord Jesus (Rev. 21:21).

No wonder preterists, who believe that the Lord came in AD 70, attempt to prove that the book of Revelation was written before AD 70. It is embarrassing to that system to have such words written by an apostle after AD 70, the time they say that He came. Really, how can one who loves the Lord Jesus look at such words and put that Preterist construction on them? How can they be in the good of those words? Well, they cannot be. Are you? Do you say “Come, Lord Jesus”? That is what the Spirit and the bride say. Do you? Are you in moral consonance with the Spirit and the bride? And is there any point to saying those words from the heart’s response if you envision intervening events between yourself and His coming? -- for example, the revelation of the Man of Sin?

*Then All Those Virgins Arose and Trimmed Their Torches*

It is true that in actual fact not all Christians are in the good of the expectant posture. But what is true of the part is looked at as true of the whole, just as in the words, “And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come.” We must not look in the parable of the virgins for all the variations we find in professed Christians. But we are told that there was a general effect. They arose and trimmed their lamps. There arose a felt need with respect to testimony.

On the part of the wise virgins, there was a marked increase of missionary activity in the 19th century, along with the rise of the Sunday Schools, Y.M.C.A., and other movements. There was also a remarkable interest aroused in the truth of the Lord’s coming and many began to await
the Son from heaven. In this regard W. Kelly wrote:

Is there nothing like this going on now? I appeal to those who love the Lord and the Church; and the more they know what is going on in the Church, and the more honest they are in answering, the better. Is not the midnight cry being made? Is there no going forth to meet Christ? It seems to me there can be but one answer, wherever spiritual intelligence and honesty are found. Since the apostles passed away, never till now has there been the appearance of any such awakening in the hearts of the saints all over the world; never before this joyful welcome, taking the place of sleep that used to be only disturbed by dreams of distress.

And another thing is in its way to be marked. It is not a set of persons satisfied with themselves, or wishing to use this cry in order to make a party. God forbid such a misuse! The cry goes out from the saints of God, wherever they may be, and penetrates where it is least expected. It has been heard in Catholicism. It has rung through Protestantism. Neither nationalism nor dissent have been able to stifle the call. Despite of all past sloth or present barriers and stumbling-blocks, the wise virgins go out to meet the Bridegroom. It is for none to say how far the Lord may carry the call, or to what extent He may give it effect. I do say it is a dangerous thing for souls to wait to see this or that result produced, before they go forth with oil in their vessels. Let the eye be only on Christ. Let the heart ever rest on the precious truth that we are one with Him, joyful in the taste of His love by the Holy Ghost now, and we shall soon reciprocate the longing of His heart who says, “Behold, I come quickly.” If we know what He is to us here, we shall earnestly desire unbroken fellowship with Himself in heaven. And if saints only in a larger measure enter into this most precious portion for the heart, they will not be able to rest where there is not a practical testimony to it in their hearts and their homes, in their walk and their worship. The hope is just as practical as the faith of God’s elect, and must be carried out into the details of each day.\(^{160}\)


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Give Us of Your Oil -- Go To Those That Sell

Another has written this concerning the foolish seeking oil:

Awe-stricken come the foolish virgins to the wise, saying, “Give us of your oil”; but this is beyond the Christian, and the wise bid them “Go, buy oil for yourselves.” There is One who sells, but freely, without money and without price: to buy even from an apostle is fatal. The cry was given to revive the hope, as it had the effect also of recalling to the original and only right attitude of the saints toward Christ. It was enough to sever the wise as alone ready to act accordingly. It was too late for the foolish: who could give what they wanted?

What is the meaning of all the recent agitation? People zealous for religious forms, who know not really of Christianity. It is the foolish virgins in quest of the oil, leaving no stone unturned to get what they have not, the one thing needful -- taking every way except the right way. There is only one means of procuring the oil: solely can it be through Christ Himself, without money and without price. I remember the time when men bearing the name of the Lord’s ministers spent their time in fishing, hunting, shooting, and dancing. Clergymen joined in worldly pleasures without shame. You rarely hear of such things now: the Oxford delusion has altered the form. The same sort of men now-a-days look very demure: they are in general busy everywhere about religion. Do you believe they are any better than the men who used to hunt and dance? They have a zeal; but is it according to knowledge? Is it Christ, or is it not what they call the church without Him? Form deceives most.

All the fashionable ecclesiastical millinery or machinery, does it change people’s state or suppose real renewal? The decking of ecclesiastical buildings, the fantastical costumes of clergymen, the modern taste for church music, processions, and stations, simply show that the foolish virgins are at work. They are not in a fit state to meet the Lord, and fear it themselves. They are troubled with the rumor of they know not what. The consequence, then, of this midnight cry is that a double activity is going on. For the Lord is awakening those who know Himself, and are wise by His grace, to

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161. {JND remarked:

I think the fact that the other virgins had to go away to buy oil means only that it was too late to have part with the Bridegroom, and that the faithful virgins could not then communicate grace (Collected Writings 30:295).

We must bear in mind that these parables have also a governmental character in them. These matters are ordered by God.}

162. Which is farthest from the truth? -- Chrysostom’s notion that those who sell are the poor, the indirect occasion of good to such as walk in love; or Alford’s, who deduces from it “a mean” enough argument for an appointed and paid ministry?
go forth to meet the Bridegroom. The others, if indirectly, are none the less powerfully but in their own way affected by the cry and its effects, which rise not above nature and the earth.

Utterly ignorant of the grace of God, they are trying to make up by what is called “earnestness.” They know not that they are far from God, yea, dead in trespasses and sins: their superstitious trust in baptismal regeneration blinds them. So they think, or hope, that being “earnest” they may somehow or other get right at last. What delusion can be more hopeless? If you ask them whether their sins are blotted out, and they are saved by grace, they count it presumption. They are as ignorant of the true power and privilege of redemption as the heathen or the Jew. They have no Spirit-taught certainty that the Son of man came down to save the lost. If there be such a thing as a present salvation, their occupation is evidently gone. Neither grace nor truth admits of all this religious self-importance, bustle, and vain show. As sinners, we need a Savior, and a divine salvation; as saints, let us seek a calm but complete devotedness to the name, word, and work of the Lord Jesus. But man prefers his own works; and to win the world he finds that scenic representations of Christian facts or forms act most on the masses, and attract the light, sentimental, despairing, and even profane. Individuals in the midst of such histrionic religion may seek with a certain measure of the gospel to win souls; yet they subject Christ Himself to the church. But the movement as a whole is just the activity of the foolish virgins, who have not the oil and in vain try to get it as best they can.¹⁶³


Others seeking oil are those seeking spiritual power. They do not understand the will of God in all this, yet there is a hustle and bustle after something of a spiritual nature concerning which they feel a need. It is possible for some of the true children of God, as to their practical state, to get caught up in these searchings also.

The Pentecostal/Charismatic movement is an example of such a thing. They look for spiritual power, for the baptism in the Spirit, for being “slain in the Spirit,” for speaking in tongues, for healing of the body.

The ecumenical movement is also an example of such a thing. Those engaged in it are looking for a unity in which there is spiritual power.

Romanism also bestirred itself. The Jesuits were reconstituted and old orders were infused with new vigor. The infallibility of the Pope was proclaimed (1870) as well as the immaculate conception of Mary, inspiring fresh veneration for her. Fresh appearances of the Virgin were alleged, and so forth.
It is interesting to note also that Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Scientists, Mormons, Christadelphians and others arose a little after the midnight cry was sounded; and others came into prominence thereafter. An interest in prophecy had arisen in England before the truth concerning the pre-Daniel’s 70th week rapture became known and no doubt Satan was active to counteract that. I believe the Irvingite movement was at the first a very direct attack against the recovery of the truth of the rapture, and demon-possession took place in this group, whatever latter modifications there were, as is often the case with various movements.

Not understanding the true character of the need, the foolish would obtain what they need in a wrong way (and children of God get caught in this, too, though it is not the object of the parable to go into these varieties of cases). It reminds us of Simon, who,

having seen that by the laying on of the hands of the apostles the [Holy] Spirit was given, offered them money, saying, Give to me also this power, in order that on whomsoever I may lay hands he may receive [the] Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:18-20).

**Our Lamps Are Going Out**

The foolish said that their torches were going out. They of course, never had a true light, i.e., a light fed by oil. “They took no oil.” Moreover, this is not a full, candid admission of their true state before God. It is human opinion that they express; and this is somewhat analogous to what we read concerning the 99 just persons that have no need of repentance, in Luke 15. Actually, there are really none such. That is not a divine affirmation of the case regarding the moral state of the 99; it is the reflection of their own thoughts and not the truth at all. It was the thought of the scribes and Pharisees concerning themselves who, as Paul tells us of the Jews in Romans, went about seeking to establish their own righteousness and would not submit to the righteousness of God. God commands all men, everywhere, to repent. So, “our lamps are going out” merely indicates that there arose an uneasiness about their condition. There had only been an empty, lip-service profession of intellectual dabbling in divine matters that is not sustainable.
6. The Bridegroom’s Coming and Its Result

(10) But as they went away to buy, the bridegroom came, and the [ones that were] ready went in with him to the wedding feast, and the door was shut. (11) Afterwards come also the rest of the virgins, saying, (12) Lord, Lord, open to us; but he answering said, Verily I say unto you, I do not know you (Matt. 25:10-12).

A new phase of Church History began.

Readiness

Someone said:

Some time elapses before the bridegroom comes, after the cry, so as to prove, who had grace and who had not; for the effect of putting them in this position, was to try if they had grace which could alone sustain this . . . position. The separation of professors from the Church who joins with Him, is revealed to be the effect of the cry before the Lord comes at all. The wise only are there to meet Him. 164

And again:

It was not the time of calling and supply of grace, but of separation and testing as to the possession of grace -- a solemn thought! Who can say how soon it may come? Whether individually it may not be come for some who have heard the cry, woke up and given up all, or gone back to the world?

This is the point, I believe, intended by not getting oil from others; and no more than this; it was not the time of calling and communication of grace, but of testing as to the possession of it. 165

The time of calling was really over before the midnight cry. This is not meant to ignore the missionary activities that transpired during the 19th century and are conducted even now. But if anyone conceives such activities to be the time of calling, he is mistaken. He is looking at the matter as a historian of human events might look at it, as K. S. Latourette might in his series, Christianity in a Revolutionary Age; wherein we may discern true service of the children of God along with much activity of the foolish virgins.

Let us keep in mind that in the parable the same virgins who went to sleep were the ones who were woken up. The parable is not meant to give

165. Collected Writings 24:291.
the reader the idea that centuries would roll on between the time that Christendom went to sleep regarding the proximate hope of the Lord’s coming for the saints and when the awakening cry went out. In view of that fact, we who are living some 170 years since that awakening cry ought not be overly surprised at the passage regarding this time. Meanwhile, we have seen Israel become a state (1948) and presently Jerusalem seems to be becoming a burdensome stone for all people (Zech. 12:3).

Noah said of Japheth, “Let God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem” (Gen. 9:27). And so in the present period it has come to pass. The center of Christianity is not with the Hamites (who are, for example, Africans, Chinese) nor with Shemites, nor even with all Japhethites. The center is the old Roman Empire, which will be revived in due time, and of which we in the Western hemisphere and Australia and New Zealand (and other places) are merely extensions. The center of attention will increasingly be Europe and Israel. The eyes of God are meanwhile upon the return of Jews in unbelief to their ancient land (Isa. 18) and it is well that, though we are simple persons, we have God’s mind and thoughts to guide us, where often the learned are occupied with secondary causes, and would not admit the real cause because they cannot see any connection. Far be it from us to disparage true learning, but let us ever remember that “the meek will He guide in judgment.”

The Door Was Shut

Obviously, this must be understood figuratively that opportunity is thus stated to be ended. The awful finality of rejection is brought home by these words.

“I Do Not Know You”

There are those who say that the foolish virgins are Christians who, because of lack of sufficient sanctification, or for lack of not taking an adequate supply of oil with them, miss the Lord’s coming. No doubt those who say such things are comfortably satisfied with themselves, considering themselves as sufficiently sanctified and deserving, or having the forethought to take a sufficient supply of oil (whatever the sufficient quantity turns out to be)! Perhaps this is actually presumption and pride on their part that disqualifies them from being sufficiently sanctified? Concerning the rapture and professed dispensationalists, such body-of-Christ-dividers leave members of the one body here on earth to go through the great tribulation.
and be caught up at the appearing of Christ in glory. 166 I do not know where posttribulations park those believers, do you?

In John 10:27 our Lord says of His sheep, “I know them.” Here in Matt. 25:12 he says “I do not know you.” Do you seriously think that statement helps the false notion that defective Christians are meant here? We have much warning in Matthew about false profession. Keep in mind Matt. 7:23:

. . . I never knew you. Depart from me, workers of lawlessness.

In 2 Tim. 2:10 we read:

[The] Lord knows those that are his.

We have seen in other similitudes of the kingdom those who were not wheat. The kingdom of the heavens, in mystery, is a sphere of profession, true and false. There is nothing difficult about this except as notions are imposed on Scripture.

I do not expect that there will be a literal coming of such persons to speak personally with the Lord, asking to be let in. This is a warning to be ready and that the time of opportunity will end.

There is no second chance!

Thus, vv. 11-12 are given to complete the picture -- and prepare us for the warning in v. 13.

166. Such a notion makes of the rapture a reward, whereas it is all of grace equally for each member of the body. It is when the raptured saints appear in glory with Christ, that differences will be made, though all alike appear in glory with Him.

We who are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord will be caught up together (1 Thess. 4).

The form of this notion by J. A. Seiss, *The parable of the Ten Virgins*, is dealt with at length in “Who Are the Foolish Virgins,” *Helps by the Way* 1:317-332; and an answer to a question in 2:53-54. See also New Series 1:328ff.
7. Warning to Watch

Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour (Matt. 25:13). 167

This is the great thrust of the parable of the expectant posture and is a standing rebuke of the heart problem of the evil servant: “My lord delays to come.” It is a standing rebuke to growing heavy and falling asleep.

Why Did not Excellent Christians in the Past Know?

J. N. Darby wrote:

One is asked sometimes how it has happened that those excellent men of past times had no knowledge of this truth were not animated by this hope. The answer is easy: the wise virgins slept like the foolish. Waiting for the Savior was lost in the church. And, mark it well, it is the cry, Behold the Bridegroom! which awakens from their sleep slumbering Christians. One must not fall under illusions: the

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167. W. Kelly wrote:

It may interest some to know that the parable really closes with the words, “Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour.” The words “wherein the Son of man cometh” are an unauthorized addition to the parable. The words were no doubt put in because they occurred elsewhere in the discourse; but it is perfectly well known to those acquainted with these matters that the clause has no sufficient title to be there . . .

A spiritual mind would see that “Son of man” does not agree with the tone of the parable. The Lord is presented not as Son of man, in which capacity judgment is given to Him, but as Bridegroom. What has a bridegroom to do with judgment?

Elsewhere he said:

“Watch therefore,” says He, “for ye know neither the day nor the hour.”

There is no authority for what follows (“wherein the Son of man cometh”). You have heard the names of Greisbach, Scholz, Lachmann, and Tischendorf; of Dean Alford, Bishop Wordsworth, and Dr. Tregelles in this country. I am not giving you a peculiar thought in the least, for all biblical critics worthy of the name agree in this omission as required by the best authorities. Copyists added the clause from ch. 24, bringing in the sense of the coming Judge. But this is quite different from what the Lord here urges, which is the delight of meeting, yea, the going forth to meet Him, the Bridegroom. Man, as such, must be judged; all tribes of the earth mourn before the Son of man. But the calling and hope of the Christian is fraught with other and joyous expectations; and this spite of their unfaithfulness during the night whilst He tarried.

The title of the Lord Jesus as “Son of man” has a dispensational bearing in Matthew. In Luke this title has more a moral bearing and is used where Matthew does not use it.

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proper state of Christians depends on this expectation:

Ye yourselves [it is said], like unto men that wait for their lord {Luke 12}.

Without doubt the new nature that the Christian receives produces essentially the same fruits, whatever be the circumstances in which it is found; but also the character is formed by the object that governs the heart; and there is nothing which detaches from the world like waiting for the Lord, nothing which searches the heart like this expectation, in order that there be nothing that suits not His presence. Nothing consequently introduces like it the feelings of Jesus in the judgment that it conveys on good and on evil; nothing like for cherishing affection for Jesus in the motives which govern our conduct. Remark also that in reality it is the same waiting for the Savior, the fact of watching in waiting for Him, which is in question here: not at all the service that we have to accomplish during His absence. Service and the responsibility that attaches to it are found in the following parable (Matt. 25:14-30).

The same distinctions are found in Luke 12. In v. 27 it is said,

Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching;

then the recompense that they will enjoy the blessings of heaven and that Jesus will gird Himself to make them happy. Afterwards (v. 43) it is a question of the service to render during His absence; and then the reward is the inheritance.  168

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**Three Attitudes**

Someone pointed out three attitudes concerning the Lord’s coming that are found in the Scriptures.

**EVIL SERVANT** -- “My Lord delayeth his coming” (Matt. 24:48).

**SCOFFER** -- “Where is the promise of His coming?” (2 Pet. 3:4).

**CHRISTIAN** -- “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

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Why Not Watch?

From Things New and Old 23:43-52.

Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day, nor the hour (Matt. 25:13)

The Lord assures us He is coming, and calls us to be waiting and watching. He has also of late years given us a clear and scriptural understanding about His coming. He has shown us the distinction between His “coming” and “the day”; so that while “we see the day approaching,” we have not to wait for any particular events to be fulfilled, for Christ Himself to come. Thus the faithful among the Jews by-and-by will be looking for “the Sun of Righteousness to arise, with healing in his wings,” to introduce them to their long-foreseen day of blessing on the earth; we are taught now to look for “the Bright and Morning Star,” to take us away from the earth, and translate us to glory. This must precede the rising of the Sun, which ushers in the day. The coming of the Lord for us to meet Him in the air, is then plainly distinguished from His coming in manifested glory with us to the earth. (See Mal. 4:2; Rev. 1:17; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; Rev. 22:16.) But, with all this scriptural knowledge, why are we not more truly waiting and watching for Him?

In Luke 12 our Lord solemnly refers to this, and shows what may be the hindrances, and what will be the accompaniments, to our really waiting for Him as wise and faithful servants. As to the former, we may notice --

1. FEARS. If the heart be oppressed with the fear of man, or dread of circumstances, we shall of necessity be occupied with these things instead of the Lord. Hence our Lord said, “Fear not, little flock”; and again, “Fear not them which kill the body.” If the heart is thus dreading men and circumstances, unbelief is at work, something has come in between us and the Lord, and communion is interrupted. We are not, therefore, consciously in the circle of divine, unchanging, eternal love. Besides, “fear hath torment.” It brings sadness, as well as leanness. Moreover, we are told, “the fear of man bringeth a snare” (Prov. 29:25). The dwelling in the full consciousness of the Father’s love, is the alone deliverance from fears. A verse in Psa. 34 has been paraphrased. “Fear him ye saints, and then ye shall have nothing else to fear.” This is most true. Our Lord also said to His disciples,

Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear him, which, after he has killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea I say unto you, fear him.

And, after assuring us that a sparrow is not forgotten before God; and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered, our Lord graciously added,
Fear not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows (vv. 4-8).

Surely, nothing could exceed the tenderness and care conveyed by such endearing words. The consciousness that the Father loves us as He loves His Son and cares for us in numbering the hairs of our head, will enable us to rise so superior to men and circumstances, that the love of the world will not be in us, neither will the fear of man, or any fear of evil oppress us for “perfect love casteth out fear.” We shall heed the Savior’s words,

Fear not, little flock, for it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

We shall be happily occupied by faith with our Lord Jesus Christ, and shall find it pleasant to watch and wait for His coming.

2. CARES. He who has been our Sin-bearer is now our Care-bearer. But if instead of casting all our care upon Him who careth for us, we bear the burden ourselves, we soon get away from the Lord. In the parable of the Sower, Jesus referred to cares hindering the power of the truth.

The cares of this world . . . choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful (Mark 4:19).

The heart may thus become occupied with cares instead of with the Lord; and therefore not in a condition to be waiting and watching for His coming.

It is a mistake to suppose that bad things, or trying things, are needed to weigh heavily on our hearts as cares. Prosperity produces cares as well as poverty. On the one hand our Lord spoke of a rich and covetous man who said, “What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?” This was his anxiety; the burden on his heart was, how large and commodious the new barns should be: a fruitful source of leanness and unhappiness of soul. We fear it is far from being uncommon in this day of loud profession. It is self, a man laying up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God; and at a time, perhaps, when the Lord’s tried and honored servants are groaning in secret before Him for necessary food and raiment. No marvel that our Lord said to such a man, “Thou fool.”

On the other hand, the pinch of poverty is trying, and especially to such as have known “how to abound”; but our Father knows that, and He says, Do not be anxious.

Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body what ye shall put on.

If it be a question of food, look at His care even for unclean creatures -- “Consider the ravens.” If it be a question of clothing, see how He clothes the grass of the field, which quickly springs up, and is soon cut down and cast into the Oven, yea, “Consider the lilies.” Do not then be like the nations of the earth, “for your Father knoweth that ye have need of these
things” (v. 30).

The Lord’s mind therefore is, that instead of these anxieties, we should be dwelling on our Father’s perfect love to us in Christ, and seeking His glory and obedience to His will, as matters of the first and highest considerations: reckoning upon His care for the supply of food and clothing. If self be the motive, and not the glory of God; if doing our own will have the first place in our minds -- if the Lord’s authority, service, and the welfare of the members of His body claim our attention only in a secondary sense, it will not be surprising that disappointment and distress follow.

The man of plenty so acting may find he has been laying up his treasure in bags which fail, and the one in poverty will resort to the world’s contrivances of getting out of his difficulties, and instead of proving the Father’s care and faithfulness, bring many sorrows upon himself. May we all heed the Savior’s searching words, “seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you” (v. 31).

3. THE TREASURE. What has been advanced leads to the heart-searching question of where our treasure is. We know what it ought to be, but where is it? Is our treasure on earth, or in heaven? May we have grace to deal honestly with ourselves on this momentous question. We believe it to be the great question for the day; the all-important point for the heart-searching consideration of every child of God for our Savior said,

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (v. 34).

Happy those who can truly say

“Jesus shall my treasure be,
    Now and through eternity.”

Such are taken up with the Lord Himself. They know Him as the strength of their life and their portion for ever. They know Him not only as a relief for the conscience, but as a resource on all occasions; not only as a refuge, but as the fountain of all blessing. They live by the faith of Him, they refer all to Him, and draw all they need from Him. Apart from Him, they see no beauty; and do not wish to be where He is not. His interests are their interests; His honor their honor; His reproach their reproach; His will their will. His glorious person; His accomplished work, His various offices, His goings forth from everlasting, His moral excellencies and perfections have so won their hearts, that they can truly say

“That with Thy beauty occupied,
    We elsewhere none can see.”
In a word, such have

turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to
wait for his Son from heaven {1 Thess. 1:9, 10}.

Thus much for the hindrances to watching for our Lord’s return.

The *accompaniments* of waiting and watching are also brought before
us in this chapter. No doubt He was then specially referring to the Jewish
remnant, to whom His coming will be more in the suddenness of a thief,
because it will be connected with judgment. But we are assured that we are
not in darkness, that that day should overtake [us] as a thief
(1 Thess. 5:4).

Still, though the remnant is specially referred to here, our Lord’s reply to
Peter’s question, “Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?”
gives ample warrant for our applying the great principles to ourselves.

There are, then, at least two practical ways that mark those who are
truly waiting and watching for the Lord -- girded loins, or service; and
brightly burning lights, or testimony.

The idea that “seeing the second coming,” as some call it, is all that
scripture teaches is far beside the mark. And we have to fear lest this great
and practical truth of scripture decline in us to mere knowledge of doctrine,
however orthodox and important; for we hold it to be impossible to be really
waiting and watching for God’s Son from heaven, apart from practical ways
of separation from the world, and devotedness to the Lord. The wise virgins
had oil, and, with burning lamps, went forth to meet the Bridegroom. The
hope of the early Christians was connected with serving the living and true
God. The expectation our Lord gave to His disciples was, that He would
come again and receive them unto Himself, that where He is, there they
might be also, and He also said, “Occupy till I come.” And so here our
Lord’s words are,

Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye

Let us look for a moment at these two distinguishing marks.

1. *The girded loins* give us the idea that the person is ready for service;
from which we learn that the Lord would not have us be merely talking of
His coming, but that waiting and watching for Him should be connected with
devotedness. His household, His gospel, His sheep and lambs will be objects
of our interest, concern, and care. Doing His will, going hither and thither
to carry out His mind, or, like Mary sitting at His feet for necessary
strength, wisdom, and grace, will occupy those who are really “as men that
wait for their Lord.” Elsewhere we read that the mark of the true and
faithful servant is that he cares for the Lord’s household, to give them meat
in due season; concerning whom it is said,
Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, he shall make him ruler over all his goods (Matt. 24:45-47).

May we then be watching and waiting with girded loins!

2. **Lights burning**, or testimony for the Lord. All is darkness where there is no light; but even if a small light is introduced, what a marvelous change is produced, and how many things are made manifest! There is no mistaking a light in a dark place, unless people are blind. We are to shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life. We are not merely to abstain from evil, but to manifest the mind of Christ -- to be for Him down here, in the sweet consciousness that He is for us, up there. Those around will thus know that we are for the Lord, and that we take sides with Him in the very presence of those who reject Him. This will entail self-judgment, self-denial, and the cutting off of much that would otherwise be tolerated. The lamp must be trimmed, and fully supplied with oil in order to burn well; everything must be laid aside that stands in the way of its shining brightly. The crust must be removed from the wick, and all hindrances to the light shining must be taken away. Every weight must be dropped, every impediment to the service of Christ and obedience to His will put away, and the heart be drawing constantly from the grace of God in Christ, if we would be shining as lights in the world.

Let none imagine, therefore, that if oppressed with fears, burdened with cares, and indifferent to the Lord’s service, they can be as men that wait for their Lord. Those only who know that perfect love casteth out fear, and are careful {anxious} for nothing, because they roll every burden upon Him who cares for them: those who rejoice in Christ Jesus as the treasure of their hearts, and therefore make His interests to be of first importance; those who are girded and active in doing the Master’s will, and in refusing everything that hinders true testimony for Him; such are as men that wait for their Lord: such lovingly look up to Him and say “Come, Lord Jesus.”
Part 3: Matthew 25:45 - 25:30

Excursus on “The Delay of the Parousia”

We have already noted an instructive phenomenon regarding the parables considered, concerning which the parable of the ten virgins gives an example. These parables are presented in such a way as to give no grounds for expecting a delay in the parousia, the Lord’s coming. In the case of the ten virgins not only was it within one life time, it was in one night that the falling asleep with regards to the expectant posture and the subsequent midnight cry occurred.

Postmillennialism is the worst form of delaying the parousia as an expectation in the heart, for in this system a millennium of a Christianized world must occur before Christ can return. The teaching brought out in the early 1800s resulted in nigh beating this teaching to death. However, it has made some come-back again -- in the face of World Wars I and II, and the on going, increasing world unrest since, even with Israel back in the land,¹⁶⁹ and now in the face of the Islamic threat as well as the threatings of non-Islamic, aggressive nations. Advocates of postmillennialism criticize dispensational truth as being “pessimistic” as compared with the optimism of their views regarding the effect of the gospel.

Some persons cannot tell the difference between realism and pessimism, especially if their judgment is clouded by a false theological system. Postmillennialists, of course, regard themselves as optimistic, but there might be a better name for it. A leading advocate of postmillennialism in the 1800s was Dr. David Brown, to whom, and to which system, various brethren replied.¹⁷⁰

Another form of delaying the parousia as an expectation is futurist posttribulationism, which places Daniel’s 70th week before the return of the Lord for His saints. If you say to such that they are waiting for Antichrist, they are incensed that you dare to say such a thing. It is true that they are waiting for the Lord’s return in a certain sense, but it is also the fact that they are waiting for Antichrist’s coming first. If you press on them what

¹⁶⁹. There may be a space of time between the rapture and the opening of Daniel’s 70th week, during which the setting up of the state of Israel might have occurred. However, such was not the case. The setting up of the Jewish state is not a sign presented in Scripture as something to be looked for before the rapture -- though we know its establishment had to occur before the revelation of the Antichrist in the middle of Daniel’s 70th week.

¹⁷⁰. His work on this subject (Christ’s Second Coming: Will It be Premillennial) went through numerous printings in the 1800s and has been reprinted several times during my life time. W. Kelly responded in The Bible Treasury 1:44-45, 57-61, 75-79, 92-94, 122-126, 155-160, 185-188. This volume has other excellent responses to erroneous millennial views. J. N. Darby also replied: Collected Writings 11:333. See also 10:257; 32:245; 11:1, 206; W. Trotter, Plain Papers on Prophetic and Other Subjects, available from Present truth publishers.

www.presenttruthpublishers.com
Scripture says about watching, they will say that watch means to be awake, especially awake in service. No doubt watch means to be awake. But watching for His return is not merely being active in service. A Christian who is waiting may be active in service without watching for His return. This is so elemental, yet needs to be said, for theologians will ply such false explanations.

I remember courting the woman who was to become my wife, now of over 50 years. She, living in Connecticut, the best arrangement was for her to come by train into Grand Central Station in New York City and I, from New Jersey, met her there on the weekend to take her to my parents’ home. Above the grand concourse there was an elevated place, with wide steps leading down to the concourse area. I could have been busy with numerous things while waiting. Without at that time thinking about such matters regarding what I am now writing, my habit was to look at the entrances to the concourse where persons streamed into the concourse from the arrived trains. As I think about it, I ask, was I merely waiting for her, or was there another factor in this? Yes, I was watching for my beloved to enter the concourse while I was waiting. Then when I saw her I quickly went down the steps to meet her coming across the concourse to where she knew I would be. It would not have been acceptable to me to tell me that I could have been occupied with things while waiting and that would have constituted watching for her.

Let your loins be girded about, and lamps burning; and ye like men who wait for their own Lord whenever he may leave the wedding, that when he comes and knocks, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those bondmen whom the lord [on] coming shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he will gird himself and make them recline at table, and coming up will serve them. And if he come in the second watch, and come in the third watch, and find them thus, blessed are those [bondmen] (Luke 12:36-38).

In the light of our Lord’s words here we must now take the matter of waiting a step further. In this passage, waiting is in the context of immediate expectation, pointing to our constant, immediate expectation of His return. Why should I fight against this? -- unless I have a theology that opposes an immediate expectation. Note how the blessed Lord expresses His appreciation for such an expectant posture. So, no matter during what watch he may come, He looks to “find them thus.” Find them how? Let affection of the servant for his Lord answer truthfully!

The parousia has been delayed. But let us allow no delay in our heart’s expectation, formed by a false theology. Let us be constant in expectancy and show by our lives that it is true of us.

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come (Rev. 22:17).

Regarding date-setting\textsuperscript{171} by ‘dispensationalists’ acting in contradiction of the expectant posture, its source is in the mind of the flesh within. It is an activity of the flesh, certainly not of the Spirit of God.

Imagine being able to predict the coming and claim the Word of God for this! An important discovery from Scripture has been made! I have made this important discovery! Get the word out! Get the books printed and selling! Hope, too, to make some money on it meanwhile! -- fame too, at least, if not money! Such shameful prognostications by false prophets received a severe blow when prophetic and dispensational truth, with the expectant posture, was recovered in the early 1800s. There were plenty of date-setters among historicists before and at that time. Now we find this fleshly engagement among some professed dispensationalists. It should be unhesitatingly condemned.

Then there is Harold Camping, an amillennialist, who published a book, \textit{1994?} concerning the amillenialist last-day-of-earth’s-history notion. No, it did not occur in 1994; so as in the case of the failed ‘dispensationalist’-date-settings, he also recalculated. Now expect in 2011. We must be in “the little season” after the millennium (which in the amillennial system is not limited to a literal 1000 years). Well, if the rapture has not occurred by 2012, let the recalculations begin again!

\begin{quotation}
\textsuperscript{171} J. N. Darby wrote:

For my part, I believe that all the calculations that have been made are without foundation. There may be many very interesting things in the works in which they are found, as I have often found; but the calculations themselves are baseless. I believe there have been analogous things, wherein the principles of evil, which shall break in the last days, have been more or less developed; but as to the exact calculations, they are based on a false principle, because these dates, in their exact application, apply to the Jews of the last days (\textit{Collected Writings} 24:59-60, note).
\end{quotation}
The Parable of Serving While Waiting

Matt. 25:14-30

(14) For [it is] as [if] a man going away out of a country called his own bondmen and delivered to them his substance. (15) And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to each according to his particular ability, and immediately went away out of the country. (16) And he that had received the five talents went and trafficked with them, and made five other talents. (17) In like manner also he that [had received] the two, [he also] gained two others. (18) But he that had received the one went and dug in the earth, and hid the money of his lord. (19) And after a long time the lord of those bondmen comes and reckons with them. (20) And he that had received the five talents came to [him] and brought five other talents, saying, [My] lord, thou deliveredst me five talents; behold, I have gained five other talents besides them. (21) His lord said to him, Well, good and faithful bondman, thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter into the joy of thy lord. (22) And he also that had received the two talents came to [him] and said, [My] lord, thou deliveredst me two talents; behold, I have gained two other talents besides them. (23) His lord said to him, Well, good and faithful bondman, thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. (24) And he also that had received the one talent coming to [him] said, [My] lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hadst not sowed, and gathering from where thou hadst not scattered, (25) and being afraid I went away and hid thy talent the earth; behold, thou hast that which is thine. (26) And his lord answering said to him, Wicked and slothful bondman, thou knewest that I reap where I had not sowed, and gather from where I had not scattered; (27) thou oughtest then to have put my money to the money-changers, and when I came I should have got what is mine with interest. (28) Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him that has the ten talents: (29) for to every one that has shall be given, and he shall be in abundance; but from him that has not, that even which he has shall be taken from him. (30) And cast out the useless bondman into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.
Introduction

Here again we have the absence of Jewish matters which characterizes Matt. 24:1-44. How strange, if Matt. 24:45 - 25:30 is Jewish.

Matt 25:14 reads:

For [it is] as [if] a man going away out of a country called his own bondmen and delivered to them his substance.

The wording is such as to cause our minds to link this parable with the preceding one as a complement, an adjunct, to it, in order to bring another point to bear concerning the coming of Christ -- with regard to the fact that not all are expecting Him at any moment.

This parable tells us about the Lord’s dealings with the service of His servants, their responsibility in service, in view of His return. It is service in the world. They trade in His absence in accordance with the responsibility He gave to each as in the profession of the kingdom of the heavens in mystery. His coming again is evidently not pressed, though His servants know He will return sometime. So we learn from this that the parable depicts labor in Christ’s absence, devoted labor, too, withal without the present expectation of His return necessarily in their minds.

We know very well that though the midnight cry is the real cause of agitation of the virgins, not all professed Christians assent to the truth that Christ’s return is a present expectation. What about those who labor for Him in His absence and do not have that present hope? In the parable of the midnight cry we learn how the expectation of Christ has an effect upon the state of soul; and in it, the Lord’s coming has to do with profession and possession, not with faithfulness in service in that which He has entrusted to us who profess to know Him. In the parable of the talents we see measures of devotion (and in one case, no service) in service without particular reference to His coming as a present expectation. Many of Christ’s servants have labored without having any such expectation. I do not say that lack of that present expectation does not affect one’s service; it does, but that is not the point in this parable.

J. B. Stoney, remarking on this matter, wrote:

... it is individual all through, and the effect of individual grace in that knowledge of the Lord Himself, which made them serve with the confidence of love, without as to that referring to the Lord’s return. They labored while He was away, but not here in direct reference to His return. The state of the saints of God, as a whole, depended on that; but many have served devotedly, knowing Christ, without knowing aught really of His coming as a present expectation, though knowing He would return and take account, and their service was accepted with the blessed word, “Well done, good
and faithful servant. 172

What a blessed, and also humbling, scene to contemplate, you servants of God. Only let us be careful how we do our work (1 Cor 3:10). We shall stand before Him Whom our soul loves and hear those blessed words from the lips of Him that loved us unto the uttermost; those words of appreciation, but appreciation of what? All acceptable to Him had its source in Himself. See also Luke 17:10 and 2 Cor. 10:18. We learn, too, that it is faithfulness, not success, that is commended. Let us take careful note of it.

The whole parable shows the spirit in which Christ’s servant labors according to grace, and its result, not in the kingdom, but together in the Lord’s joy, which is according to grace, in our enjoyment of it. If this be wanting all is gone. 173

What Are The Talents?

The talents are money. They are not natural endowments. The idea, ‘use your talent for Jesus,’ has a dangerous half-truth in it. The talents were given “to each according to his particular ability” (Matt. 25:15). Therefore, the talent represents something from the Lord which is distinguished from “ability,” but yet is proportioned according to ability.

The dangerous half-truth is that we indeed aught to use the talent for the Lord Jesus, but persons conceive that because they have the “talent” for singing, or running, or boxing, or such like things, that they ought to develop that and use it for Christ. Well, we certainly get no such idea from this parable. The talent is something besides the ability.

The talent, it would seem, represents a sphere, or measure, of responsibility in connection with the profession, being in the kingdom of the heavens in mystery. 174 He that was faithful over a few things was set over many things (v. 21).

The increase of the talents denotes that with the faithful discharge of the responsibility committed to us, the sphere of responsibility and service is enlarged.

Different persons have different abilities. But if we wish to pursue such

174. It is often said that the Lord gave gift. The difficulty felt resulting from this thought is seen in Words of Truth 7:179, for example. I suggest that it is better to understand that our Lord committed responsibility according to ability. This avoids the idea of the unsaved professor having a gift of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12).
things to the end, we had better come promptly to this: “Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” (Rom. 9:20).

There exist differing natural endowments and there exist differing quantities of talents entrusted to us from the Lord. While the subject here is responsibility, not gifts, Rom. 12, which views gifts as services to God, has a solemn warning for us, because we are so prone to fall into the fault of the devil, that is, becoming inflated (1 Tim. 3:6). Rom. 12:3 tells us not to have high thoughts of ourselves, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each a measure of faith. We need to take a sober cognizance of the measure God has given to us.

**Giving Account**

The commendation manifests faithful stewardship; it is manifested in the Lord’s joy and approval. And it will be further manifested in being set over many things. It is a commendation for faithfulness (see 1 Cor. 4:2; 2 Cor. 8:12). The Lord’s commendation is a very sweet thing. In Mark, the gospel that presents the Lord Jesus in the perfection of His service, there is the remarkable commendation of the woman who poured out the ointment upon Him:

What she could she has done (Mark 13:14).

It makes one weep to realize that one could have done more. The Lord asks for no more than what she did; but does He expect less from us than what we could do? Matt. 10:42 speaks to us, as well as 2 Cor. 10:18.

**What About The Wicked Bondman?**

**He Was Not One of Christ’s**

Some people suppose that because the wicked bondman received a talent, he was once a saved man, but was lost again; i.e., again, as if it were impossible for a man to be only a pretended Christian. The NT is full of warnings against mere profession, like the virgins without oil. Christendom is full of such persons. Some are in positions of responsibility, as were many pharisees in their day, and responsible for it, whom the Lord called blind leaders of the blind. Jude notices that persons crept in unawares in the profession of Christianity. Peter notices false teachers among God’s people (2 Pet. 2). But the NT is full of such warnings. People have difficulty about it because they have not learned their own total lostness, “that in me, in my
flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” They suppose a child of God can be finally lost. But they use such examples as the wicked servant and the virgins without oil as representative of such cases. In 1 Cor. 3:11-17 we have a warning about work for the Lord, and in v. 17 we learn that one, who clearly, like the other workmen *professes* to be a Christian, may be destroyed. The Lord takes one up on his profession and the result is to be seen in due time.

Michael G. Huber, after showing his inability to properly distinguish the Lord’s use made of the description “sons of the kingdom” in Matt. 8:12 and 13:38, perverts the meaning of “outer darkness” in keeping with his non-Lordship salvation system, to make the “outer darkness” mean missing the kingdom. Then he applies this to Matt. 25:30. He informs us that each of the three is, alike, a *slave* (*doulos*). He wrote:

The text offers no differentiation in their relation to their master. He would have them all be “saved.” While the text calls them each a slave, it would be false to say there is no differentiation in their relationship to their master. The truth is that this servant never knew “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Note that he called Him “a hard man” and makes other accusations. The fact that He addressed Him as Lord is no proof that he was ever Christ’s. Read Matt. 7:21-23 again and consider the words, “I *never knew* you.” Our Lord could never say that to a person supposedly at one time His sheep -- because He *knows* His sheep (John 10:27-29).

Concerning one’s service, does Christ call any of His own “wicked” as He characterized this person?

The mouth of this wicked servant speaks what was in his heart, as Luke 6:45 tells us. He did not discharge one atom of his responsibility. He never did! He was “useless” (v. 30). He didn’t even act consistently with his charge against his Lord (vv. 26, 27).

The kingdom of the heavens in mystery is filled with false profession but all professors are held responsible under their profession of Christ as their Lord.

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Take Therefore the Talent from Him

God makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder He restrains. All evil, all failure, all wrath shall eventually and evidently be shown to praise Him, and whatsoever will not, He restrains.

The failure of the wicked servant is therefore used by our Lord (however He shall accomplish this) to minister to the enlargement of the faithful (Matt. 25:28). The faithful truly possessed in the day of his faithfulness, but the wicked servant did not truly possess anything. There must be some sense in which he did not possess, because the Word of God says, “but from him that has not, even that which he has shall be taken from him” (Matt. 5:29). At the least, he did not have divine life; he never was a child of God, though he was a professed servant of Christ. And the Lord takes him up on the ground of profession and he is cast into the outer darkness. There shall be weeping, i.e., sorrow, but not godly sorrow unto repentance, for there is the accompanying gnashing of teeth, i.e., hatred against God. The moral state of such is fixed for eternity and their judgment slumbers not!
Appendix 1:

Matthew 24:45 - 25:30
and the Partial Rapture Notion

Who Are The Foolish Virgins?

A thought is current in the present day among those who believe in and look for the speedy coming of the Lord and Savior, which I desire to consider a little in the light of Scripture. It is a point of no small importance to have the truth about, not only as tending to cloud or otherwise, the brightness of the prospect of the Lord’s coming, but even as influencing our views of the gospel itself, as in the sequel we may see.

The view I refer to is that when the Lord calls up His saints to meet Him in the air, according to 1 Thess. 4, not all the saints will be caught up to meet Him, but only those among them who have a certain preparedness of heart, beside and beyond the common possession of faith and of the Spirit. To state this in the words of one of its zealous advocates, who regards the “foolish virgins” of Matt. 25 as illustrating this idea:

By these improvident virgins, therefore, (he says) I can understand none other than real Christians, with no stain whatever upon the genuineness of their profession, but whose Christianity lacks that maturity of growth, depth of consecration, and perfection of development, which alone can entitle to the highest honors and joys of the kingdom. The Royalties and Priesthood of the world to come are not to be reached by the common orders of saintship . . . There must be a fulness of self-sacrifice for Christ, a completeness of obedience, a thoroughness of sanctification, an ampleness in all the graces of the indwelling Spirit, and a meekness and fidelity under the cross resembling that of Christ himself, or there will be no crowns, no thrones, no kingdoms. 176

I quote this, not as believing that all who hold these views would go as far as the writer in the expression of them. Still, however expressed, the essential idea is the same, and it is perhaps well to have it before us in the

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full development of which it is capable. Dr. S.’s view (which is also that of
very many others, or I should not bring it forward here), is that there is a
“duality in the translation of the [living] saints, as also in the resurrection of
them that sleep in Christ,” at his second coming. He believes that before the
troubles which are predicted as attending the close of the present
dispensation, the Lord will take up the faithful ones among His people, dead
or living, to Himself; and that these only are the kings and priests of Rev. 5,
the Bride of Matt. 25, or the “Church of the first-born ones” in Heb. 12.
The rest of the true saints are left on earth, shut out from this privileged
place, to endure the sufferings of the great tribulation, and to be only caught
up to the Lord at His appearing.

Of this latter class not only the “foolish virgins” of Matt. 25, but the
“evil servant” of Matt. 24:48, and the “wicked and slothful servant” of
Matt. 25:26, are considered to be examples.

A consequence that necessarily follows, is that for those who cannot
persuade themselves that they have attained this “completeness of
obedience,” this “ampleness in all the graces of the indwelling Spirit,” the
Lord’s coming must indeed be a dark and gloomy prospect rather than a
“hope.” He must indeed be enjoying a very comfortable satisfaction with
himself, who has no doubts at all that he will be found among the approved
ones in that day. Would Dr. S. himself stand forward and say, “I am the
man. I have no doubt, no question of the sort”? If he could, still we should
have to ask, is there no possibility of self-deception in the matter?

Not he that commendeth himself is approved but whom the Lord
commendeth.

If on the other hand he could not affirm this for himself; what, I again ask,
of the “blessed hope”? {Titus 2:13}.

He might perhaps urge, that the consideration of the possibility of
falling short would stir men up to greater earnestness. Possibly that might
be; for it is much easier to stir men (confessedly) by selfish motives than by
divine ones. What does this sort of earnestness amount to? If Christ
died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto
themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again,
what would the fear of being shut out of the blessed presence of the Lord to
a punishment which could be figured by being “cut asunder,” or by the
“outer darkness, where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth,” do to
make me more devoted to Him who died for me? Is there “fear in love,”
spite of the apostle’s assurance to the contrary? Does faith work by fear? or
fear help one to love more?

Is “devotedness” for fear I should be shut out in outer darkness, really
that? Is it living to Him who died for me, or really living in very religious
devotedness to myself? There can be but one answer from those who know the true spring and power of Christian life and walk.

Now if we examine the texts which are supposed to teach this doctrine, it will not be hard to show that it is itself quite without any Scriptural basis. The statement of the apostle in 1 Thess. 4, is absolutely against it. It assures us that those who are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord, shall be caught up “together” with those raised from the dead, to meet the Lord in the air. As to the dead, the express purpose of the apostle is to assure the Thessalonian Christians that none of the living would go into glory before these, that the living saints of that time and the risen ones would form but one company. Not a hint is given of such a difference to be made among them as might dash to the ground any such hope as to many; for Dr. S. believes that this distinction will be made both among the living and the dead saints; and it is the only consistent view. For why should the mere fact of being alive or dead at the Lord’s coming make any difference as to the judgment of their spiritual state? 177

But the apostle here knows no distinction either as to the dead or the living. He masses the “dead in Christ” together, and those who “are alive and remain” together. He unites these in one glorious company to meet the Lord in the air. His doctrine is therefore a complete denial of Dr. S.’s and those who side with him. For if one Christian is “alive” at the coming of the Lord, he is necessarily one of those of whom the apostle speaks as to be caught up together with the dead in Christ to meet the Lord in the air.

It is quite true, indeed, that Scripture exhorts to “watch” for the Lord, and says “to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time unto salvation.” It is vain to make any distinction between wise and foolish virgins upon this ground, for in point of fact, “they all slumbered and slept” (Matt. 25:5). This then cannot be the distinction. And furthermore if the letter of the parable is to be pressed, the foolish virgins are in the end as much awake to the coming of the Bridegroom as the wise are. But they are not so “ready.”

Furthermore the words “to them that look for Him” are general enough to include all Christians, for they do “look for” Him, although sadly perplexed by erroneous teaching as to it, as well as often deficient in earnestness of desire.

Even did “looking for Him” imply more than this, the parable they

177. {Let the reader understand this. Observe that partial rapture must be logically extended to ‘partial resurrection’ also. This view undermines the Scripture teaching of “the resurrection of the just.” Those resurrected would be resurrected on other grounds than that they were “the just.” Thus, it is a different resurrection than the one we find in Scripture.}
contend for as favoring their views, would indicate, as we have just now seen, that all would be waked up to look. Short time would suffice with the Lord to accomplish this.

The instance of the “evil servant” in Matt. 24:48, is all against the views contended for. Dr. S. speaks of him as one “as really a servant as the first,” but deficient in fidelity and worldly in his temper, and whom his Lord when he comes severely punishes (Last Times, p. 351). Now it is quite true that being “cut asunder” is a severe punishment; but is it fair or right to say as Dr. S. does say, that it does not imply his being lost? In the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11-27) he admits that the “slaying” of the citizens who “will not have this man to reign over them,” does imply that they are lost (see p. 263). Does he consider that cutting asunder is not slaying?

And then again, when it is said, “shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites,” most people would suppose that that meant something more than merely “suffering the great tribulation,” as Dr. S. puts it. And surely his having his portion assigned him with the hypocrites means nothing less than that he himself is sentenced as a hypocrite.

But it is objected, that he is called a “servant” and therefore must be a converted man; and on the same principle the one in Matt. 25:24, or Luke 19:20, although never having really served, and “knowing” his master to be “a hard man.” It is difficult to understand the argument. That he had the spirit of service is plainly not the case. That he had the place and responsibility all will admit, but that is no more than is true of every professing Christian. And he is judged as being untrue to the profession.

Again, in the case of the “wicked servant” of Matt. 25, his portion is declared to be in the outer darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth. Surely Dr. S. would not interpret this of “tribulation judgments.” To be consistent he must do so, for Luke 19:11-27 is strictly parallel, and so he interprets the sentence there. Yet it is the sentence passed upon the one who has not on the wedding garment in Luke 22, and the latter part of it is found in passages where there can be no question that the doom is an eternal one (Luke 12:42-50).

Thus far, then, the doctrine sought to be based upon these passages is utterly without foundation. We shall now see if the parable of the ten virgins, Dr. S.’s stronghold apparently, as he has written a whole volume to enforce this view of it, will afford it any better one.

And, first, it is contended that “the kingdom of heaven,” of which the parable in Matt. 25 is a similitude, is made up of “subjects born from on high,” of “purged souls, hoping, looking, and waiting for the coming of their Lord to complete their bliss” (Ten Virgins, p. 11). That this is not so, a large part of the parables which speak of it bear witness. The tares are in
the kingdom as well as the wheat; and in the end of this age,

the Son of man shall send His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire (Matt. 13:41).

Were these not in the kingdom before they were cast out? So similarly in the 49th verse of the same chapter, “wicked” as well as “just” are there. In Matt. 22 “bad and good” are again found as guests for the wedding, and the man that has not on the wedding garment is cast out.

These are plain and sufficient instances to show that the “kingdom of heaven” represents the whole Christian profession, and therefore in the present parable of it we may in like manner expect to find the false as well as the true, the bad as well as the good.

But further, Dr. S. contends that foolish and wise here are alike “virgins”; “that is,” he says, the company

is made up of a community of people who are chaste and pure, beautiful and loving, of people with a pure faith, beautified with grace, and knowing nothing of the unclean loves of idolatry and wickedness.

Yet he strangely adds,

if they are not wholly cleansed in fact, they certainly are by profession (p. 15),
a damaging admission for his cause, one would think. “Virgins in fact or by profession,” would suit the people whose views he is contending against well enough. They are taken for what they profess to be. The event makes manifest what they are.

Yet he has to admit as much, because even he cannot find absolute virgin purity in all these “virgins.” Nor are the “foolish” those who have declined from it. They are foolish at the beginning as at the end; “five of them were wise and five foolish,” is said of them from the very first. If then, they are not all absolutely “virgins,” save by profession, the line can no where be drawn so as to exclude even the whole mass of unconverted but professing Christians.

But, says Dr. S.,

these virgins are all betrothed under engagements to one who will presently come to claim them as His Bride (p. 15).

This is simply a mistake. The parable does not represent it so at all. For plainly in the “Oriental wedding-scene” which it is admitted furnishes the framework of the parable, the troop of attendant virgins are not “espoused” at all, but quite separate from the “bride,” nor is it hinted here that they are the same. Who is the bride in this parable can only be conjectured. She does
not come upon the scene. For myself I believe it is the Jewish earthly bride of Jehovah, according to the common figure of the prophets, and that it is while the Lord is on His way to take up Israel once more, and bring them into relation with Himself, that Christians are caught up to meet Him, and come back with him to the marriage. So at least it surely will be, and it is in complete accordance with the whole prophecy of these chapters, which speak throughout of the Lord’s coming in that way, and not of the reception to the Father’s house above (John 14:1-3), the heavenly portion of Christians. This, however, is fatal to Dr. S.’s whole argument, for in that case, the foolish virgins are shut out, not from the heavenly marriage, but from the earthly one, and would not be even attendants upon the Lord when he appears in the clouds of heaven to judge and to bless the earth. But to be shut out then must needs be final.

I do not press this, however, although quite believing it, because it is only an indirect argument, and may be difficult for some to follow. It is enough for my purpose that the parable before us never hints at any identity between the troop of virgins and the bride, and that the whole analogy is quite against it.

I need say nothing about their lamps, as even Dr. S. speaks of the “lamp of public profession” (p. 21). A point of more importance is that the lamps of the foolish are represented as having been lighted, for when the cry comes at midnight, they say “our lamps are going out.” Another thing which I would class along with this, is, that it is said of them all, “They went forth to meet the Bridegroom.” Dr. S. insists very much upon these two points, and no wonder, though his remarks are founded upon a misconception merely. There is much in the language of parable everywhere of a similar character, language not to be taken as literally true, but true only from a certain point of view, which may be the hearer’s and not the speaker’s. Thus in the 15th of Luke, the Lord (it is told us) is speaking in answer to the murmuring of the Pharisees at His receiving sinners (vv. 1-3). He asks them, Does not the shepherd find peculiar joy in the recovery of a lost sheep? “I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.” The Pharisees were these latter. Had they no need of repentance? In their own eyes they had none; and the words of the parable hold up thus the mirror before their eyes; that they may recognize themselves in it, and learn that they had never caused such joy in heaven, as these sinners were causing then.

Further on in the same chapter these Pharisees find their representative

178. Not “gone out.” as Dr. S. rightly remarks.
in that elder brother, who murmurs, as they were doing, at the grace which received prodigals. That steady worker in his father’s fields, no wanderer, but terribly severe upon the evil in his brother, who can say to his father in all the consciousness of uprightness, “Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment,” -- how easy to understand who was intended there! and then how that would wing home the conviction, what hard service he found it! no kid even to make merry with his friends! little did he know of joy and music in his father’s house, who when he heard the music and dancing there, must needs ask what it all meant!

Yet had he “never transgressed”? His conscience took no note of his having done so; he was “touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless,” as to that. That explains the language of the parable, and only that can explain it. This is the sort of speech, however, which perplexes Dr. S., as well as a good many more.

Many and many a professing Christian (and not a conscious hypocrite at all, but a very good and pious Pharisee) has in his own thought a brightly burning lamp which perhaps, alas, only the breath of the midnight air will extinguish, as he wakes up at the sudden cry, Behold, the bridegroom cometh. These are the men who are called to look into this mirror and recognize themselves there. They would not recognize themselves at all in the picture of men with no lights; but to think of lights that may go out!

This may show the mistake that Dr. S. falls into in supposing that the foolish virgins, as well as the wise, took oil with them (p. 21). The word says, they “took no oil” {Matt. 25:3} but this he supposes to mean “no oil additional to what their lamps contained.” But this is only argued from a lamp being useless without oil, by their going forth at midnight to meet the Bridegroom, and especially by their words, “Our lamps are going out.” Useless, however, as a lamp is without oil, it is not more so than profession without reality, and might well picture that. And many a man may have a lamp burning bright enough to go forth to meet the Bridegroom, when there is none to meet, whose light will rapidly go out at the true coming. All this is simple and intelligible enough, if we remember that style of parabolic language which I have but just now illustrated.

There is no ground whatever for the assertion in entire opposition to Scripture, that the foolish virgins took oil with them. They took none: and that was just their folly. But, as Dr. S. truly remarks, “oil is the fixed symbol of the Holy Ghost.” Their being without this, then, is their fatal characteristic. “They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with
them.” 

In the exposition of the latter verses of the parable Dr. S.’s assumptions become multiplied. He assumes, that because in v. 11, the foolish virgins are simply called “the other virgins,” that therefore they are now delivered from their folly. He assumes that “they also procure the requisite supplies of oil” (p. 107). All this needs no reply, for it is simply apart from the Word altogether.

But it is graver, and brings us to the point of the whole matter when he remarks that the words,

I know you not (are) uttered, not as a judge passing final sentence, but as a Bridegroom explaining why he could acknowledge no further applicants to be his Bride, no matter how well qualified they might be for such a position (pp. 108, 109).

This is in the first place disproved by the simple fact that the parable is totally against the identification of the troop of virgins with the bride. They are attendants only, from the point of view taken in the chapter here.

And as to the privileges of the Bride of the Lamb being the reward of a certain class among real Christians only, it is a dream as baseless as all the rest. “The bride, the Lamb’s wife,” is pictured for us in Rev. 21, 22 as the “great city, the holy Jerusalem”; and we are told, “there shall in nowise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” All true Christians are surely in the book of life. Again it is added, “Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are” – what? a second and inferior class of Christians? No, but “dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth or maketh a lie.”

These simple texts are decisive against Dr. S.’s view. We have seen that the parable in question gives no support to it. Any one that can read Eph. 5:23-32 may see how little foothold for it there is there.

Dr. S. believes that he finds in “the Church of the firstborn ones” (Heb. 12:23), the same select company of advanced Christians. He will find, if he looks further, perhaps, that the only body of saints in heaven put in contradistinction to these, is the OT saints, who are evidently, as a body, “the spirits of just men made perfect.” The “Church of the first-born ones”

179. Lit. “with themselves”; which makes it plain, that it was not merely no oil along with their lamps (i.e., additional to what these contained) but none at all.

180. In the earliest and best MSS., “Blessed are they that have washed their robes.”

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embraces thus all the saints of the present time.

I have quoted already words which show us that Dr. S. makes the becoming “kings and priests to God” also conditional upon the possession of piety “beyond the ordinary run of Christian attainment” (p. 68). He has forgotten the apostle’s words to all believers, “ye also, as living stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood”; and once again, “ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). If this were conditional, it was only upon their being “living stones,” which all the converted are; and the apostle says to them, “Ye are . . . a royal priesthood,” not “ye may attain to it if ye run well.”

Thus in none of these senses could the Lord say to His people, “I know you not.” He could not say so to any one saint of His, for He Himself says, “I know my sheep” {John 10}. No loss of reward on their part could ever make Him deny this. No one can ever bring forward one word of Scripture to show that the words in question, which are the denial of His knowledge of these people personally, -- of any acquaintance with them, -- can possibly be modified into the affirming that they had lost reward. Take it in whatever character you will, “the Lord KNOWETH them that are His”; and if His, He will own them, whatever their works may be.

I would not wish to speak otherwise than strongly of a view which introduces a dark cloud of legality over the brightest hopes of the Christian, falsifying the Lord’s sweet assurance, “I will come and receive you to myself,” with the dark foreboding, “Perhaps He will not receive me,” while the self-confident and self-complacent are those encouraged. The character of Christian life and service is perverted by it. Things are held out as the rewards of service, which are the simple fruits of Christ’s work for every believer. And reward itself being given as a motive for exertion instead of Christ’s love constraining, those who accept such teaching are in the fair way to lose it. Self-seeking is more dangerous to the saint in the garb of devoutness, than in the open undisguise of worldliness and indulgence.

I have taken up Dr. S.’s book, because one may fairly take it as a sort of standard of views largely obtaining now among a certain class; and because it is well to take up plainly what is very openly put forth as needed admonition to the Church at large. The Lord give His dear ones to hear His voice who says, “I know my sheep,” says it to and of the poorest, humblest, most unworthy of His people. I do not in this advocate laxity; God forbid. But I am sure “we love Him because He first loved us,” and that what makes one holy is just what makes one happy in undoubting assurance of this love. “He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as He is pure” {1 John 3:3}. He does not purify himself to have the hope, but because he has it.
Work as hard as you please to escape the tribulation, brethren, you are working for yourselves and not for Christ. Just so far as this motive has power over you, it necessarily displaces the true Christian principle of “living not unto ourselves but unto Him who died for us and rose again.”

There are rewards. Not a cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple, because the Master is dear to you, shall lose its reward. But once make the reward the object, and you miss it, for you are not doing it for the love of Christ, but for the reward. It is hired service. God needs none such. It is wretched legality. We are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free.

The way in which Scripture connects the judgment of works for the saint, and the apportionment of rewards, with the Lord’s coming, is exceedingly beautiful, while it is in itself a complete answer to the theories we have been examining. With the Lord’s coming for His saints is associated no thought of judgment; no question of one’s works at all. Simply He comes to receive us to Himself, into the many mansions {abodes} of the Father’s house, that where He is there we may be also (John 14:1-3). He comes Himself in the joy of His love to give us the greeting and the welcome. We get the fruit, not of what we have done, but what He has done. No sentry is at the door of the Father’s house; no challenge awaits us there.

Raised or changed, and having put on the image of the heavenly, the dead in Christ, and those alive and remaining to the coming of the Lord are caught up without exception to meet the Lord in the air and be ever with Him. There is no cloud upon this prospect. To be shut out is impossible for any Christian. He must be among the dead in Christ who are changed, or among the living who are caught up with them.

It is in connection with His “appearing” or “revelation” only, that the question of reward comes in. It has nothing to do with the family place or with membership of the body of Christ; nor even with priesthood, kingship, or the privileges of the Bride. These things are ours by His grace simply, the result of His work for us, and the gift of His love to us. What is all the highest reward of our own work, which will distinguish us from one another, compared with that reward of His, which we shall enjoy in common?

But when He comes with His saints, those apportionments over ten cities or over five, that giving of distinctive crowns, &c., will take place. 181

181. I append some main passages which can easily be referred to in proof of this: Matt. 19:28-30, Luke 19:15; 1 Cor. 1:7, 8 (margin); 1 Thess. 3:13; 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:8.

Dr. S’s texts from Revelation will come up for consideration in a paper which will appear, (continued…)
The roll of the true David’s mighty men will be unfolded, and each will receive according as his work shall be. Concerning the result of that, it does become us indeed to be humble, but it touches nought of what we have in Christ together.

*Helps by the Way* 1:317-332 (1873).

**Answers to Special Questions**

A correspondent, in reference to the article, “Who Are the Foolish Virgins?” in our last volume, writes

With your view I am at a loss what meaning to attach to 1 Cor. 3:15 and 1 Cor. 15:41, 42. What is the “loss” of the believer’s burned works, or in the resurrection the different magnitude of the stars? Nor can I see any difference between the stubble-builders’ loss as by fire, and that of the builder on the sand in Matt. 7:26. One loses his work by fire, the other by water. The asserted cause of this loss is “hearing Christ’s words” — receiving the Scriptures as such, “but not doing them”; like the “carnal babes” of 1 Cor. 3, walking not in the Spirit, but “according to man,” i.e., tradition, friendship of the world, sectarian division, as the great mass of Christendom is now doing. All this is to be judged by Christ’s word, as in John 12:48: rewarded like the builders of “gold,” or meeting loss like those of “stubble,” or the foolish virgins, — i.e., being left behind in the first resurrection, but the waiting subjects of the second, as in Rev. 20:5, 6.

*Answer.* The paper in question distinctly asserts that “there are rewards” for the believer’s works, and of course loss, therefore, for those whose works cannot stand the trial. In 1 Cor. 15, however, there is no question of this, nor does the passage “one star differeth from another star in glory” apply to it at all. The contrast is in this whole passage simply between the earthly condition of the first Adam and those connected with him, and the heavenly condition which the “last Adam” introduces into. It is in answer to the question, “How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?” not “how do the risen saints differ from one another?” but “how do they differ from their former selves?” All through the passage, there is not a question about any difference among the saints in glory; nor any about the reward of works.

As to the man “saved so as through the fire” (as the Greek is) in 1 Cor. 3, the difference between him and the builder on the sand in Matt. 7
is very marked. The one is “saved,” though suffering loss. The other is given as an illustration of the saying, v. 21, “Not every one that sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Thus, as the figure itself should point out to us, the ruin of the house upon the sand is the destruction of the dweller in it.

“And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity” (Matt. 7:53).

But the real question is not, are there rewards? or is there loss to saints who are themselves accepted? There is no doubt about that. The real question is whether the “loss” in 1 Cor. 3 is, “being left behind in the first resurrection” and waiting for a second. Has our correspondent any proof of this? He points us to Rev. 20:5, 6. If he means rather v. 4, I freely acknowledge that there is a second company of martyrs for Christ added to the first seen sitters upon the thrones. But these, as being simply “martyrs,” do not certainly look like the “stubble-builders” of 1 Cor. 3. They are, I doubt not, those who, after the taking away of the Church to be with the Lord, are slain in the persecutions that follow, and who thus, being shut out of the earthly blessing just at hand, are made partakers of the heavenly blessing.

Still that is not called a “second” resurrection, but all, in character, the “first”: “This is the first resurrection.” If then our correspondent refers really to Rev. 20:5, 6, does he mean that “the rest of the dead,” who lived not again until the thousand years were finished” are “carnal” but real Christians? If so he gives them a lower place than I ever heard of any doing. But the “rest of the dead” are, beyond doubt, those shut out of the first resurrection, because they are not like those that have part in it, “blessed and holy,” and upon whom “the second death hath no power.” They are those “judged according to their works” (v. 12) at the end of the millennium, and therefore lost, as every soul so judged must needs be.

That there is reward, or loss of it, for the believer at the appearing of Christ, is surely true. But that very simple but most blessed fact, that it is at His appearing with, and therefore AFTER His coming for, His saints, is conclusive proof that being shut out of His presence at the coming is not the “loss,” in whole or in part, that any saint shall suffer.

*Helps by the Way* 2:52-55 (1874).
Appendix 2: Ten Virgins and the Appearing

Appendix 2:

Notes on the Idea That
Parable of the Ten Virgins
Applies to the Appearing in Glory

Interestingly, in a series on “The Olivet Discourse” in A. C. Gaebelein’s magazine, Our Hope, a complaint was made regarding the increasing popularity of applying these three parables to the end of the age:

. . . there is an increasing tendency among teachers of Prophecy to apply this parable of the virgins in a Jewish way, putting its fulfilment in the time of the great tribulation . . . it is incorrect.  

Most likely he is referring to Scofieldians. Below, a number of them will be quoted as holding the false view. I do not think that C. I. Scofield held this view. He connected the parable of the 10 virgins with those of Matt. 13 as applicable now.  

The New Scofield Reference Bible, in loco, has hidden this fact by dropping the following note that is in the old edition:

The kingdom of heaven here is the sphere of profession, as Mt. 13 . . . (p. 1035, 1945).

The idea of projecting this parable into the end of the age preceded C. I. Scofield. But he rightly rejected the notion. It is found, for example, in G. N. H. Peters.

Sleeping During the Great Tribulation

It is now widely held by pretribulationists, in agreement with posttribulationists, that the parable of the ten virgins applies to the appearing of the Lord in glory. Of course the posttribulationists apply it to the church while many pretribulationists apply it to either the Jewish remnant or the nation of Israel. Each of these views entail certain results concerning the implication of sleeping, during the great tribulation, with respect to the coming of the Bridegroom, sleeping at the same time that the godly Jewish remnant is both persecuted and is preaching the gospel of the kingdom as at hand. Yet this notion means that they are sleeping regarding the coming of Him who will

182. Our Hope 21:18 (July 1914).

183. Dr. C. I. Scofield’s Question Box, Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, pp. 67, 68, and see p. 107, n.d.
establish that very kingdom! It is a remarkable notion. It falsifies the true position of the godly Jewish remnant and links them with “the many” of the Jews (Dan. 9:27) who receive the Antichrist and the mark of the beast. But we will defer examining what is entailed until after a review of the views set forth by the pretribulationist advocates of the view that the parable applies to the appearing of the Lord in glory, though some comments concerning what is entailed will be made as we proceed.

The sleeping, then, allegedly takes place during Daniel’s 70th week, or during the last half-week, the great tribulation, and the sleeping is with respect to the coming of the Bridegroom. I would have thought that an attempt at an explanation of this astonishing phenomenon would have been enough to deter one from putting forth this view. But, if you are determined to have this parable not apply to the Christian profession, then let us hear from you an account of the sleeping state.

Are the Ten Virgins the Jewish Remnant?

If the ten virgins represent the Jewish remnant, then unbelievers (the foolish virgins) are part of the Jewish remnant -- and thus it must be wrong to refer to them as the godly Jewish remnant because of the inclusion of the foolish virgins among that remnant. What is this Jewish remnant, allegedly composed of wise and foolish, a remnant of? The notion even destroys the very concept of a remnant! The remnant means the godly of Israel at that time. The very idea of a remnant excludes the foolish.

E. S. English, an editor on the committee that revised the Scofield Bible, argues thus:

The ten virgins represent the remnant of Israel after the Church has been taken. The five wise virgins are the believing remnant, the foolish virgins the unbelieving, who only profess to be looking for Messiah’s coming in power. While the Bridegroom tarries (not in the sense of delay, for God the Father has appointed the time in His foreknowledge, and at that moment the Lord Jesus will come in power), while the Bridegroom abides, they all slumbered and slept. Yes, the remnant of Israel will possess human natures, just as we do, and even though they will preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to all the world, they will slumber as did the disciples in Gethsemane, and as the Church does today. “And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him” (Matt. 25:6). Is not this cry “the sign of the Son of Man in the heavens” (Matt. 24:30)? The narrative needs no further exposition. 184
He seems to imply two remnant, a believing Jewish remnant, and an unbelieving Jewish remnant. There is but one remnant and the rest of the Jews, in Palistine at any rate, receive the mark of the beast, having received the Antichrist. It is the imagination of his mind to claim that there is an unbelieving Jewish remnant, or a part of the remnant, or any outside the remnant, “who only profess to be looking for Messiah’s coming in power.” Moreover, the notion of unbelievers among the remnant evacuates the word remnant of its true meaning. And concerning his last sentence quoted, it avoids facing the problem of the unbelieving Jews receiving the mark of the Beast and all that is entailed with that. This “exposition” is stunningly incredible.

Are the Ten Virgins the Nation of Israel?

“Then” Does Not Mean after the Great Tribulation

There are many pretribulationists who think that “then” (Matt. 25:1) means that this parable refers to Israel after the tribulation. For example:

“Then” -- at that time -- immediately after the tribulation -- when the bridegroom comes -- not to the wedding but from the wedding . . .

In such a scheme the nation of Israel is involved, for five virgins are foolish. This scheme falsely puts the nation into some kind of relationship to God, whereas in Matt. 23:38, 39 the Lord had pronounced:

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, Ye shall in no wise see me henceforth until ye say, Blessed [be] he that comes in the name of [the] Lord.

Thus, God is done with the nation -- the nation that had been under testing -- and He is done with the nation until after Christ appears in glory. In the end of the age He will form a godly Jewish remnant, but that is not the nation. However, after He appears, He will bring it about that the godly Jewish remnant will form the nation under the new covenant (rebels of Israel purged, Ezek. 20). The parable of the 10 virgins cannot concern that godly Jewish remnant, for five are foolish; nor can it be about the nation, for God is done with the nation, as such.

The view that the ten virgins represent the nation of Israel during the
end of the age is much more prevalent than that they represent the remnant. 186

Some Slide over the Issue of the Five Foolish

Here we will look at a number of quotations of pretribulationists who place the parable in the end of the age but do not address the matter of the five foolish virgins -- for they must be the apostates of the Jews in the end of the age and who receive the mark of the Beast.

J. Dwight Pentecost wrote that there are two parables that describe:

. . . judgment on living Israel in order to separate the saved from the unsaved (25:1-30) . . . Christ was dealing here {the 10 virgins} with judgment for the nation of Israel. 187

Lewis Sperry Chafer says that the virgins mean Israel:

That Israel is indicated by the term virgins is not confined to this context. The 144,000 of Revelation 14:1-5 are, in verse 4, said to be virgins; and in Psalm 45:8-17 a prophetic picture is drawn of the millennial palace, and announcement is made of those who will have right to be in it. 188

A difference he has with some others is that he held that:

. . . the marriage supper of the Lamb has been celebrated in heaven . . . {and also says that} The reception on earth is characterized by the marriage feast, admission to which is, for the Jew on earth, equivalent to entrance into the Messianic kingdom.

Carl Armerding wrote:

We have already suggested that these virgins are the ones spoken of in Psalm 45:14 as those who will be associated with Israel in a coming day. And it is very interesting to note in that connection that the hundred forty-four thousand who will stand with the Lamb on

186. Sometimes views are wild. Imagine a person stating before the Prophecy Investigation Society, in Britain, the following:

There is only one solution and that is that the ten virgins represent ten Gentile powers on the earth at the time of the marriage supper after the tribulation, and after the parousia . . . the five wise virgins correspond to the sheep and the five foolish virgins correspond to the goats (Aids to Prophetic Study, No. 35, p. 58, April 26, 1928).


188. Systematic Theology 4:133, Dallas: Dallas seminary Press (1948). The virgins in the Rev. and the Psalm are saints. The five foolish are lost. Observe how he slides over this.

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Mount Zion are also described as virgins (Rev 14:1-4). These are those whose love will not “wax cold” (Matt. 24:12).  

Harold S. Paisly (of Gospel-Hall Open Brethren) asserted:

. . . has no connection whatever with this age. It can only occur after the great tribulation.

Why would he say that?

To use any prophetic parable in teaching the Rapture would be an application unwarranted to this great subject, seeing it was hidden in the purpose of God until made known by the Blessed Lord in His Upper Room ministry (John 14:1-3) . . . It is our understanding that the wise virgins speak of this future remnant who will be saved in the Great Tribulation period and at its close will go out to meet the Bridegroom . . .

What is so remarkable is the silently sliding over the issue regarding the foolish virgins during the great tribulation and the bearing on this matter. Moreover, the fact is that the 144,000, all of whom are saints really, do not answer to the ten virgins, five of which are not saints.

What is astonishing is the assertion that at the close of the Great Tribulation, note well, they go out to meet the Bridegroom. He does not account for them going to sleep while the bridegroom tarried, and what followed. How could he sensibly comment on that? This view is patently false.

The seizing on the word “virgins” in a number of Scriptures will not do, while ignoring the profound difference. I am once again reminded of W. Kelly’s remark that because Noah was in an ark, and Moses was in an ark, we have not yet learned that they are the same thing. This is what is being done by looking through Scripture for the word “virgin.”

Some Just Slide

Dr Thomas O. Figart, distinguished professor at Lancaster Bible College, merely slides through the parable in the following easy manner:

From a dispensational point of view, this, like the other six illustrations in this part of the Olivet Discourse, depicts a warning to the jews to be ready at the closing day of the great tribulation for the coming of the Son of Man, and has no reference to the rapture of the
Church. Not to be prepared is to be shut out of the Kingdom of Heaven. . . .

**Some Make a Comment on the Five Foolish**

Paul P. Enns wrote:

The parables of {Matt.} 25:1-30 are usually understood as applying to Israel, since the church was raptured prior to the events of chapter 24 . . . the five foolish virgins represent unbelieving Israel that fails to prepare for Messiah's return.

John F. Walvoord, who holds to the future application, simply does not address what is *entailed* in this false view, nor does William MacDonald, who says:

The *foolish* virgins represent those who hold the Messianic hope but who have never been converted and thus do not have the Holy Spirit.

E. Higgins (of Open Brethren) claimed:

. . . the five foolish virgins represent those who expected to be in the kingdom but had never properly prepared.

Louis A. Barbieri, Jr. wrote:

Israel in the tribulation will know that Jesus' coming is near, but not all will be spiritually prepared for it. His coming will be sudden when not expected (Matt. 24:27, 39, 50). Though this passage does not specifically interpret the meaning of oil, many commentators see it as representing the Holy Spirit and His work in salvation.

W. MacDonald said the foolish do not “have” the Spirit, implying that the wise virgins do have the Spirit. Where is it taught in Scripture that the future *godly* Jewish remnant ‘has’ the Spirit? Nowhere.

W. L. Pettingill wrote:

The virgins are professing Jewish disciples just preceding His return

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The oil is a type of the Holy Spirit. (Zech. 4). Five of the virgins had oil in their vessels with their torches. So every regenerate person has the Holy Spirit indwelling his body . . . 198

OT saints were born again but did not have the Spirit indwelling their body. Moreover, Israel will have the Spirit poured out on them later than what is in this parable, even if claimed to apply to the Jewish remnant. It is the false theory about the application of this parable to the future Jews that is the father of all these errors, or brings them out to our view.

L. A. Barbieri, Jr. explains away the statement that the wise had “oil in their vessels” as merely meaning the work of the Spirit. E. Higgins claims that they expected to be in the kingdom. The reader should steadily keep in mind that these brethren are attributing to the unbelieving Jews who, in fact, are worshiping the Beast, the Antichrist, and Satan, and who have the mark of the beast, that such Jews are professing to expect the Messiah to return, and to be in His kingdom! Is that not incredible? And they are compelled to believe some such thing because they reject the application of the parable to the present time.

Stanley D. Toussaint gives some account of these foolish ones in the tribulation:

The five wise virgins illustrate those Jews who not only anticipate the Messiah’s coming but also prepare for it. The foolishness of the other five prefigures the stupidity of the Israelites who wait for Christ’s coming but do not properly prepare for it. They know He is coming but are spiritually unprepared nevertheless. Perhaps their spiritual condition will be analogous to the Jews at the Lord’s first coming. With eyes only for the physical benefits of the kingdom, the foolish Jews fail to prepare themselves spiritually for its coming. The prepared enter the kingdom as pictured by the banquet, but the unprepared are excluded. The foolishness of the five unprepared virgins is accentuated by the fact that they slept when they should have used the time for preparation. So Israel should use the time of tribulation.

Verse ten describes very well the suddenness of the coming of the King. The genitive absolute indicates that while the foolish virgins were going to obtain oil, the bridegroom came. In addition there seems to be very little interval between the cry, “Behold, the bridegroom!” and the arrival of the procession. Christ had already predicted this (Matthew 24:27, 39, 50).

Verses ten to twelve picture the judgment of the Jewish nation

before the establishment of the kingdom. 199

James R. Gray, an Acts 9 position ultradispensationalist, wrote:

Third, the parable illustrates that after the second coming and regathering of His people, God will judge Israel to see who will enter His kingdom. The saved (wise) will enter, the unsaved (unwise) of the nation will not. 200

*In this false view of the parable there is a systematic omission of dealing with the fact that the Jews will be given over to the false worship and the mark of the beast, but the godly Jewish remnant will reject the false worship and will be preaching the gospel of the kingdom as at hand -- instead of sleeping.*

**Are There Two Kinds of Sleepers?**

Here are a number of quotations of John MacArthur’s view:

Then refers to the time of Christ’s unexpected appearing in power . . .

The ten virgins are professed believers in Him . . .

. . . He comes to gather them for His wedding feast, the kingdom of heaven.

They were committed to Jesus Christ religiously . . .

. . . the professing church . . .

The main thrust of the parable . . . is directed to the generation who will be living during the latter part of the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:34).

The sleep of the foolish bridesmaids might suggest their false confidence, whereas the sleep of the prudent ones could suggest their genuine security and rest in the Lord. 201

“Behold the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.”

In the same way, people living during the end of the Tribulation will have seen all the signs of His coming and will know that His appearing is imminent. 202

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201. {It is astonishing what is used to defend false notions!}

202. {Here are some comments by posttribulationists. The fountain-head of posttribulationism, B. W. Newton, remarked:}

That these words belong only to the time when the sign of the Lord’s coming in glory has been actually seen and recognized is . . . proved by two things; first that the whole professing Church is awakened; secondly, that all conversion in this

(continued…)}
Appendix 2: Ten Virgins and the Appearing

When the Lord appears at the end of the Tribulation, many professed Christians will frantically realize their lack of spiritual life. This serves as an example of how an expositor gives an exposition of how to impose his own notions upon Scripture. Look at those words about sleep, not to speak of John MacArthur’s comment indicating Christians are in the tribulation. Here is what his comments suggest to me:

“Wonderful things in the Bible I see,
Things that are put there by you and by me.”

What is said about the worship of the Triad (Satan, the Beast, and the Antichrist), as well as the mark of the Beast, sweeps away all of this imagination in divine matters. Think of it; in the end of the age the professing believers are composed of prudent and foolish, the foolish being committed to Jesus Christ religiously. Who are these foolish ones who do not worship the Beast and do not receive His mark? John MacArthur has very strange views. Regarding the elect of Matt. 24:22, he wrote:

The elect could represent the nation of Israel . . . It could also include those who become Christians during the tribulation . . . (Rev. 17:14) . . . God will preserve a redeemed remnant of the nation of Israel as well as some redeemed Gentiles. He will shorten the daylight hours so that the Antichrist cannot complete his

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202. (...continued)
dispensation ceases (The Prophecy of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 24 and 25, in loco).

A. Reese claimed:

. . . the midnight cry is on the Day of the Lord (op. cit, p. 242).

Craig L. Bloomberg said:

The cry parallels the trumpet blasts of 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:52; and 1 Thess. 4:16 (which contains both trumpet and shout) (The New American Commentary, Nashville: Broadman Press, p. 370 (1992)).

T. Houghton wrote:

Probably those believers who have been enabled to keep awake will utter it {i.e., the cry}. They will be aware that the great tribulation has terminated (“Readiness for the Coming,” in Watching and Waiting, April/June, 1996.)

All the talk about the privilege of suffering, the purification, and other clap-trap about Christians in the great tribulation (“It will be a great honor, fraught with the highest reward,” A. Reese, op. cit., p. 222) receives its true worth (zero) from such remarks as our being told that Christians are sleeping during the great tribulation, right up to the appearing in glory! That is, none were watching during the great tribulation -- unless by a subterfuge, with T. Houghton, you imagine a few “who have been enabled to keep awake.” Where is his Scripture for that? He must have sensed the difficulty of his view.


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Rev. 17:14 refers to those who accompany Christ from heaven when he appears. How does that Scripture support the notion that there are “Christians” in the great tribulation? And, we might well wonder if the daylight hours are shortened everywhere around the globe. That means that the rotation rate of the earth will be changed. It will spin faster! Or, does it mean that there will be a great tilt imposed on the earth so that a particular area will have shortened daylight hours, while elsewhere there will be longer daylight hours? I confess it is difficult to restrain one’s indignation at what is put forth for the consumption by saints of God, pretending to be exposition of Scripture. But he does believe in a pretribulation rapture(?)..

In an Open Brethren magazine we read:

These ten virgins would appear to represent the nation of Israel . . .

In v. 5 we read, “While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept.” We know from Hebrews 10:37 that the heavenly Bridegroom will not tarry; but to saints who, at this time may be undergoing severe persecution, He may seem to tarry. Their cry will be “O Lord how long,” or in the words of the mother of Sisera they might cry, “Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?” (Judges 5:28) But seeming delays are often a test of fidelity, as can be seen, in the following instances. In Exodus 32:1 we read, “When the people saw that Moses delayed (tarried) to come down from the Mount.” Moses did not delay, but they thought he did and in his absence they fell into idolatry. Again, in Matthew 24:48 the unfaithful servant said, “My lord delayeth his coming,” with the result he abused his fellowservants and ate and drank with the drunken. And now in this verse we read, “While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept.” They were not “as men that wait for their Lord.” They were sleeping when they should have been awake! The injunction in 1 Thessalonians 5:6 is, “Let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

Apparently the writer is not himself happy about his explanation, and sensed that it did not seem likely that the remnant would be sleeping. So he went on to say:

Since we do know that there will be a godly remnant looking out for the consolation of Israel and that at least some of them will be “awake,” we wonder whether, in that day, there will be two kinds of sleepers, e.g. Jonah’s sleep, in the ship, was one of sinful indifference to the word of God, whereas the sleep of the Lord Jesus

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204. Ibid., p. 45.
205. Ibid., p. 55.
was one of complete confidence in God and a sleep to the glory of God. Might not the five wise virgins say with the Psalmist, “I will both lay me down in peace and sleep for thou Lord only maketh me to dwell in safety (confidence)? (Psalm 4:6), whereas the sleep of the other five was a sleep of sinful indifference. It should be pointed out that, had the foolish virgins stayed awake all night, they still would not have been accepted. The point at issue is not whether the virgins slept or did not sleep, but whether they had oil in their vessels.

1 Thessalonians 5:9,10 says, “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us, that whether we watch or sleep, we should live together with Him.”

Notice:
1. He directly contradicts the Lord’s words, “they all grew heavy and slept.”
2. Having directly contradicted the Lord, he must explain away his contradiction by inventing two classes of sleepers.
3. Then he attempts to mitigate the seriousness of directly contradicting the Lord by shifting the focus on to the matter of oil or lack thereof, which, of course has its own importance.
4. Then he asserts that “the point at issue is not whether the virgins slept or did not sleep.” Why, it hardly matters at all! So long as the parable does not apply now.
5. Finally, he quotes an irrelevant Scripture, 1 Thess. 5:9,10, which refers to Christians, whether they are alive or “sleep through Jesus” (1 Thess. 4:14 -- died), “we may live together with him.”

207. Ibid., p. 31.
Partial Marriage Supper of the Lamb Theory

There are Christians who are called “partial rapturists,” and we saw the theory in the previous chapter. There is an analogous theory regarding the ten virgins in the end of the age, though I have not heard it labeled as a partial marriage supper of the Lamb theory. This is what it should be called. This view regards the foolish as being saints. Here are some examples. Archie Payne, a pretribulationist, wrote:

As to the foolish virgins, it may suffice to suggest that they are the counterpart of what is common in this age -- the empty-hearted professors. It is clear from Joel and other prophets that the Spirit will bear a special testimony in that period, so that the parallel of the lamps and oil holds good. To sum up briefly, the virgins are composed of Israelites who, in the latter days, will be waiting for the Lord’s Appearing. As it was in the days of His flesh, the multitudes will be divided, the difference not being external but internal, and of the Spirit. The period of waiting, being a period of tribulation, will seem prolonged, and weariness and lassitude will set in, so that many {not “all”?} slumber and sleep. Then, at the darkest hour, the cry is heard and the Lord appears as the Bridegroom accompanied by His Bride -- the Church. Those who are ready pass in with Him, most probably to a place of special dignity and honor, and the door is shut.

Afterward the cry is heard, “Open unto us!” but they are not amongst the numbered ones, and He knows them not. It is interesting, however, to note that this parable does not introduce the thought of outer darkness, or of the gnashing of teeth. There seems room for an accepted invitation to the Feast which apparently follows directly after. But the place of honor and close association with Christ in His glory is ever closed to them. They may possibly enter into the Kingdom, but of that there is no word.

He thinks it possible that the five foolish may get in afterwards. F. A. Tatford (of Open Brethren), a pretribulationist, approvingly quotes F. E. Marsh who asserts that the foolish do come into blessing:

Dr. F. E. Marsh adopts a reasonable interpretation and one that is consistent with the context when he says, “The wise virgins are the godly Jewish remnant, who will be looking for the Messiah during the night of tribulation, and who correspond to the ‘virgins’ of Psalm

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208. {Not even the mark of the Beast counts for anything, notice.}

209. When the King Comes, or, Prophecy in Parables, London: Pickering and Inglis, p. 109, n.d. Apparently the Lord’s words “I do not know you,” do not really have their weight with this writer.
Observe, then, that the nation of Israel is divided into two classes as they enter the millennium. And what is this earthly marriage supper of the Lamb from which part of the saved nation of Israel is excluded? Numerous questions could be asked about this myth, for that is what it is, including the lack of dealing with the apostates of the nation. Where are they in this mythical scenario? The fact is that those not of the godly Jewish remnant are apostates and believe the lie when God sends a working of error that they might be judged, because they did not receive the love of the truth. These ten virgins in the end of the age theories all falsify the true state of affairs in the end of the age and must necessarily do so in the attempt to force the Scriptures.

### These Views Falsify the True State of the Nation of Israel During the Great Tribulation

Regarding the parable of the ten virgins as having the appearing of Christ in glory in view denies that a definitive separation of the godly from the ungodly, in Israel, takes place in the middle of Daniel’s 70th week when the ungodly accept the mark of the beast and engage in the worship of the Triad (The Beast, the Antichrist, and Satan). (This applies also to the posttribulationist view which regards the ten virgins as the church in the tribulation.) Indeed, the idea involves:

1. a total falsification of the character, conduct, and persecution of the godly Jewish remnant; and,

2. a false affirmation of the foolish professing to look for Messiah’s coming in power. That is, the non-godly, who have the mark of the Beast and worship him, and the Antichrist, and Satan, are here supposed to be waiting for the true Messiah to come!

This is all a pretension that the ungodly Jews are not given over to accept the false christ, the Antichrist. It does not seem possible that these writers are ignorant of what will transpire with that nation at that time. But if they do know, how explain their sliding by the facts about the nation’s apostasy? The

five foolish must mean those that are not part of the godly remnant. What is the position of those who are not part of the remnant? Let us review this.

**Things We Must Believe Concerning the Godly Remnant If the Notion Is True**

Whatever difficulties you see regarding the application of the parable of the ten virgins to Christendom, if you apply it to the godly Jewish remnant or the nation of Israel, you have greatly increased the difficulties.

**We Must Believe that the Godly Remnant Will Go to Sleep While Preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom.** During the tribulation period the remnant will preach the gospel of the kingdom. This is the gospel John preached (Matt. 24:14; 3:2) as well as the Lord (Matt. 4:23) and the Twelve (Matt. 10). The godly Jewish remnant will recommence this preaching which is presently in suspension while the church is here. We are asked to believe that this preaching that Messiah is coming to reign will be preached during this period but that the remnant will slumber. It is evident that the slumbering in the parable is with reference to their original posture of going out to meet that bridegroom. Thus they will lose sight of His coming while preaching His coming to reign as at hand -- as John, the Lord, and the Twelve preached!

The Jews were not called to go forth to meet the bridegroom. John’s preaching of the gospel of the kingdom included no such call -- at least Scripture does not say so. The Lord Jesus also preached the gospel of the kingdom (Matt 4:23) and included no such call, nor did the Twelve (Matt. 10). The remnant will take up this same gospel. They do not “go forth to meet the bridegroom” which implies an expectation and hope that is not earthly. The expectation of the remnant is “a horn of deliverance for us in the house of David” and “deliverance from our enemies and out of the hand of all who hate us” (Luke 1).

**We Must Believe that the Godly Remnant are Sleeping While Persecuted.** Recall that in this false scheme the midnight cry is at the appearing of the Lord in glory. The nation of Israel, or some remnant, which allegedly went out to meet the Bridegroom fell asleep, and thus the godly remnant fell asleep -- sleeping up to the appearing, sleeping during the last half-week of Dan. 9. In the middle of the week Satan is cast down from heaven. Let us remind ourselves of what he will do:

And when the dragon saw that he had been cast out into the earth,
he persecuted the woman which bore the male [child]. 211 And there were given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the desert into her place, where she is nourished there a time, and times, and half a time, from [the] face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth behind the woman water as a river, that he might make her be [as] one carried away by a river. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was angry with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 12:13-17).

We Must Believe that the Godly Remnant Sleeps While the Two Witnesses Work. In Jerusalem, mighty Moses-like and Elijah-like ministry and displays of power are also proceeding (Rev. 11), but we are to believe the godly remnant is sleeping.

We Must Believe the Remnant is Sleeping When They Flee Because of the Placement of the Abomination. This allegedly sleeping remnant has the Lord’s instructions in Matt. 24. They flee when the abomination of desolation is put in what is a holy place.

We Must Believe the Remnant is Sleeping When They Know Messiah will Come and Bring in Full Blessing in 1335 Days. Though they do not know the day or hour Christ will appear to deliver them, they see from Dan. 12 that there are named 1290 days and 1335 days from the placing of the abomination (in the middle of the 70th week of Dan. 9) until the full blessedness is realized. But we are supposed to believe that they are sleeping with respect to the coming of Messiah!

We Must Believe They Are Sleeping When They Know the Days Are Cut Short. They know that Jeremiah spoke of Jacob’s trouble. They are in it and the Lord assured them that “he that has endured to the end, he shall be saved” (Matt. 24:13). They know also that:

if those days had not been cut short, no flesh had been saved; but on account of the elect {the remnant} those days shall be cut short (Matt. 24:22).

We Must Believe That The Remnant Will Awake at the Appearing of Christ in Glory. This is truly astonishing. When else do you propose that the remnant awakes, if not at the appearing? At what earlier time? Keep in mind that you must have the rest of the nation awake also at whatever time you

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211. {The sun-clad woman is Israel depicted symbolically as she is in the purpose of God. Israel has not yet answered to this symbolic presentation, though the male child, i.e., Christ, has come from Israel.}
pick 212 -- and we will consider the state of that nation just below. And when did the godly remnant go to sleep? -- along with the rest of the nation? Whatever difficulties one may have regarding the application of the parable to professing Christendom, these are the really insuperable difficulties.

We must believe that the godly Jewish Remnant has the Spirit. The wise have oil in their vessels. Not only does the false theory assume something not in evidence, namely, that the godly Jewish remnant will have the Spirit, the Scripture contradicts the notion, telling us when Israel will have the Spirit poured out on them -- after the regathering, which is necessarily after Christ returns in glory.

We Must Believe that the Ungodly Under Antichrist Will Awake. It is well-known that there will be a confirmation of a covenant for seven years between the coming Roman Prince and Israel. We read that:

he shall confirm a covenant with the many [for] one week (Dan. 9:27).

“The many” refers to the mass of the Jews. Dan. 12:10 makes a distinction between the godly remnant and the mass of the Jews:

Many shall be purified, and be made white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.

The wicked are those of the nation that are not of the godly remnant. We read of them in Matt. 12:43-45:

But when the unclean spirit has gone out of the man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and does not find [it]. Then he says, I will return to my house whence I came out; and having come, he finds [it] unoccupied, swept, and adorned. Then he goes and takes with himself seven other spirits worse than himself, and entering in, they dwell there; and the last condition of that man becomes worse than the first. Thus shall it be to this wicked generation also.

“This generation” is the ungodly, the Christ-rejecting, from Moses’ day right on through the end of the age; i.e., the Mosaic age. What the Lord said signifies the completeness, the fullness, of their idolatry, when they receive

212. John Phillips says that the midnight cry might be this:

The Book of Revelation indicates that, just before the final climactic judgments, an angel will be sent to span the world in a moment of time and to preach “the everlasting gospel” (14:6). Perhaps this is what awakens these people to the imminent return of Christ. Or perhaps it is the setting up of the Beast’s image and the onslaught of the Great Tribulation . . .

Well, it has to be one thing or another in his system, and perhaps it is not so important after all, as long as we agree that the parable applies to Jews in the end of the age!
the Antichrist. The Babylonian captivity swept out the idolatry from among them. The idolatry will return in full Satanic power in that epoch. When our Lord was here He also warned:

\[ \ldots \text{if these things are done in the green tree, what shall take place in the dry? (Luke 23:31).} \]

They were then, so to speak, in the youth time of their departure from God; what shall they do when it has far advanced? Our Lord also warned the Jews:

\[ \text{I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not; if another come in his own name, him ye will receive (John 5:43).} \]

Such will be among those who receive the mark of the Beast (Rev. 13). We are expected to believe that these Jews are depicted by the five foolish who went out to meet the bridegroom, fell asleep and then were awakened to the original expectation. In reality, they, along with the apostates of Christendom will believe what is false, that they all might be judged who have not believed the truth, but have found pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2:11, 12).

The conclusion is that the theory is not only untrue, it is far beneath sobriety in divine matters. What makes expositors accept such notions?

**What About the Posttribulationist View of this Parable?**

The view is that “the whole professing Church will slumber and sleep” right up to the day of the appearing of Christ in glory -- I suppose even posttribulationists who warn about it! The view is similar to what we are examining except that it is not the remnant that sleeps; it is the professing church, which wakes up on that day. 213 Never mind that A. Reese’s “Israelitish Church of the end times,” the church at Jerusalem, had fled when the abomination was set up:

As soon as Antichrist sets up his image as predicted by Daniel, then this remnant {church remnant} are commanded to flee; whereas the Jewish remnant will be left behind to pass through the tribulation of

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those days. 214 and therefore knows that 1260 days remain until the appearing, as posttribulationists believe -- in the face of the Lord’s words that no one knows the day -- and in the face of the idea that the parable supposedly depicts all sleeping right up to the appearing!

Where Will the Reception Take Place?

Projecting this parable into Daniel’s 70th week may seem to lead to the idea that the five wise virgins are the bride, and while the marriage takes place in heaven, there is a “reception” that takes place on earth. This is but another illustration of how errors are bound together. Herman A. Hoyt, a pretribulationist, wrote:

A reception will be held for the bride and the Bridegroom in the house of the Bridegroom. This event will take place on earth when Christ has returned from heaven with His bride and is referred to in Revelation 19:9: “And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they that are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” 215

Many Scofieldians will not have it that when the Christian dead are resurrected at the time of the rapture, the OT saints are resurrected as well. But they are raised at that time (Heb. 11:40). At the rapture there will occur a stage in the resurrection of the just, and not a “just” one will be left in the grave. 216 But observe that if they are not then raised, why, there would be no guests in heaven to attend the marriage supper, unless you claim that it is the disembodied souls of the OT saints that are the guests. But the resurrected OT saints are the guests of Rev. 19:9. Deny that they are resurrected when the Christian dead are resurrected and you must begin to look for the “guests.” Systematizing your error, you must then make the marriage supper take place on earth so that you will have the guests. You will bring the marriage supper of the heavenly bride down to earth. One error begins a chain-effect. Well, what this means is that the house of the Bridegroom -- of the heavenly Bridegroom, remember -- must be on earth! And so it allegedly is:

The second part takes place in the house of the Bridegroom (Matt.

214. T. I. Wilson, “On This Rock I Will Build My Church,” Watching and Waiting, July/August, 1957, vol. 15, no. 22, p. 345. He is a Newtonian (following B. W. Newton) in prophecy, and by a Jewish remnant it is not implied that they are Christ’s. According to these notions, they are an unsaved company preserved from the worship of the Triad so as to be able to be the nation in the millennium.


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25:10) ... {Rev. 19} Verse 11 pictures Christ coming in glory back to where this supper will take place ... The friends of the Bridegroom will be there. They are the Old Testament saints who will be resurrected at the end of the tribulation period (John 3:28-29; Matt. 9:15; Dan. 12:2). There will be the vast throng of Jews who are saved during the tribulation period, and who are identified as the virgins (Rev. 7:1-8; 14:1-4; Matt. 25:1-13). J. Dwight Pentecost, a pretribulationist, mentioned a possible scenario:

In Revelation 19:7-16 the wedding supper follows the wedding itself. Luke 12:35-36 seems to suggest that while the marriage is in heaven the marriage feast is on earth. This parable then would describe the coming of the Bridegroom and the bride to the earth for the marriage feast to which the five wise virgins will be admitted and the foolish excluded.

This really is not the view of just a few. This is essentially the view taken in the Ryrie Study Bible, in loco.

And another error bound up with this is that some Scofieldians also say that the rapture is not a part of the second coming.

I happily take note of the fact that Leon J. Wood rejected, and rightly so, the notion of a marriage supper of the Lamb taking place on earth.

The Oil

In the parable, the oil represents the Holy Spirit. It has been said that this is not a representation of indwelling, which indwelling admittedly is only true now -- but signifies the Holy Spirit upon them as in the OT.

217. {Remember that Dan. 12:2 uses resurrection in a figurative way for the restoration of Israel. Notice also that in Part Two of Elements of Dispensational Truth, vol. 1 we saw that the raising of the NT saints is part of the first resurrection, which is the resurrection of the just. The OT worthies are just men and will not be left in the grave at that stage of the resurrection of the just. Why, that would be a denial, in effect, that they are just!. Moreover, Heb. 11:40 is against the writer’s notion.}


221. The Bible and Future Events, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, p. 50 (1976).

222. E. Schuyler English said:

Thirdly, though oil is a type of the Spirit of God, it is not necessarily a type of the Spirit as indwelling the believer in the Age of Grace. In Old Testament history the Spirit of God came upon certain of His servants, and surely the Holy Spirit will come upon the believing remnant of Israel in the Tribulation, especially as they go...
already noted that the oil is in the vessel. Besides, when the Scriptures speak of the Holy Spirit in connection with what God will do in a future time, it always connects the Spirit with the millennium. Then it is, that He will be poured out (Zech. 12:10). So the remnant will not have the Spirit poured out on them (whatever that entails) until He comes whose right it is to reign. He must come in His glory first and purge out the rebels from amongst Israel (Ezek. 20:38) and so shall the Deliverer turn away ungodliness from Jacob and so all Israel will be saved (Rom 11:25, 26).

It is only the believing Christian who has the Spirit indwelling -- indwelling during Christ’s absence -- but the Jew will have the Spirit on him after Christ returns.

The effort, then, must be to confine the meaning of the oil in the vessel to, not the Spirit within, but the new birth. Error has a domino effect.

It is useless to object by speaking of OT anointings with oil, because we do not have anointing with oil here, but a question of oil in the vessel. The vessels were not anointed with oil.

Are the Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven Jewish?

W. S. Hottel claimed:

The teaching is entirely Jewish and dispensational. Matthew contains many things regarding God’s dispensational and governmental ways with the Jews that the other gospels do not and this has given rise to the expression “Jewish gospel.” It would be better to say that it is dispensational and governmental in character, with the Jews especially in view. Our passage is dispensational, so to speak, not Jewish. Yes, John 14:1–17:26 has a different character, but that does not prove that Matt 25:1-13 is therefore Jewish. We have noted before that Matt. 24:45-51 refers to the Lord’s coming with respect to state of soul in service, in the profession of Christianity, Matt. 25:1-13 with respect to waiting for Himself, and the following parable with respect to service in the world in view of His coming but not in connection necessarily with the any-moment.

222. (...continued)


coming of Christ to take us to Himself, to the Father’s house. It has to do with His coming but it takes it up with regard to responsibility in His absence. It is a different view than in John, but that is no grounds to assert that therefore it is Jewish and applies to the tribulation period.

R. W. Beales (of Open Brethren) wrote:

The ten virgins have also been made to represent the Church, but it is evident that they cannot be. They are most likely to be seen as bridesmaids waiting not only for the bridegroom but also his bride, though here she is not mentioned. (In Rev. 19 it is the bride who is the center of the picture and not the bridegroom, but doubtless he is there for it is said that the marriage of the Lamb is come etc., but it is who is described with such detail). These virgins, all of them sleeping, are awaiting the wedding feast or feasts, and therefore the coming of the bridegroom, when he shall return from the actual wedding.

See also this referred to in Matt. 22:1-12 and Luke 12:36-40, and note the words, “when He shall return from the wedding,” could anything be more conclusive? Why, therefore, confuse the bride which we believe the Church to be, with bridesmaids or guests? Even John Baptist when introducing the Lord Jesus said, “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom,” and called himself the friend of the bridegroom standing and rejoicing because of the bridegroom’s voice. How much happier the bride herself, seen in Revelation as all glorious! See Eph. 5:25-32, also Song of Solomon 6:4-10 and 7:1-, a description which Israel was intended to fulfil, but alas! she became the defiled adulterous wife, to be restored and cleansed surely, but displaced in this relationship by the Church, His body and bride, “not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.” No wonder we cry with the Spirit, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

R. G. Lord (of Open Brethren) said:

Our questioner must remember that Matthew 25:1-13 is a parable of the kingdom of heaven and as such is Jewish in scope and as such its interpretation does not belong to this present age in which the gospel of the Grace of God is the preacher’s theme.

It is very sad to see the idea stated that the application of the parables of the kingdom of the heavens to the present period is inconsistent with the preacher’s theme of the gospel of the grace of God. A considerable portion of Matthew is going to have to be tortured to fit this notion.

Concerning Luke, those who have learned something about the characteristic differences of the four gospels have learned that Luke

emphasizes the moral aspects and features of matters. So we do not have there the dispensational unfoldings of Matt. 24:44–25:29. Matthew groups things according to dispensational and governmental (government of God) connection and Luke groups things according to moral order -- moral connections that should be grasped.

In Luke 12:35-40 we have an admonishment concerning an expectant attitude that should characterize the Lord’s servants and a promise and encouragement that the expectant servant will be served. We have a word that speaks to the conscience of all (vv. 41-44) and a warning concerning unbelief (vv. 45, 46) and finally a measured reward for unbelief (vv. 47, 48). (We do not get dispensational unfoldings here in the same way as Matthew -- which is not to say that there is nothing dispensational in Luke.) This has nothing to do with the kingdom of heaven being like what is noted in Matt. 25:1-13. The return from the wedding is not attributed to the Lord in Luke 12 in a prophetic way. It is an illustration to show the disciples an expectant attitude that becomes them. It is moral, not dispensational. Besides, in Matt. 25 the virgins go forth to meet Him and the five wise “went in with him to the wedding feast.” In Luke, the illustration pictures the “men who wait for their lord” as inside, ready to open the door (Luke 12:36).

W. Kelly remarked:

“Let your loins,” therefore, He says, “be girded about, and lamps burning; and ye like men who wait for their lord, whenever he may leave the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.” I do not take this expression about returning from the wedding as prophetic, but rather as moral, in accordance with the habitual style of Luke. It is certainly intended to present no aspect of judgment, but of joy, and it is therefore and allusion to the well-known facts constantly before their eyes, a figure taken from them. They were to be waiting for their Lord, not in a judicial sense, but as to One Who returns from a wedding, that when He comes and knocks they may open unto Him immediately. This is another grand point, not only that He is associated with joy, but that they should be free from all earthly encumbrance, so that the moment the Lord knocks, according to the figure, they may open to Him immediately -- without distraction or having to get ready. Their hearts are waiting for Him, for their Lord; they love Him, they are waiting for Him. He knocks, and they open to Him immediately. Such is the normal position of the Christian, as waiting for Christ, the only true Object of hope. 227

Concerning John 3:29, it is a profound mistake to suppose that John is

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speaking of the assembly of God as the bride. This supposition probably arises because it is thought that since he speaks of himself as the friend of the bridegroom, that this excludes him (John) from being part of the bride -- and that therefore the earthly (Jewish) bride cannot be meant; or perhaps it is merely used to bolster a theory about Matthew.

John is using a figure, and if it is to be applied to a bride, it is the earthly bride. John knew nothing of the bride, the Lamb’s wife, nor was it given to him from above to utter anything about that which awaited the revelation given to us through the ministry of Paul.

The Lord is likened to the bridegroom also in Matt. 9:15 and Luke 5:34, 35. In these passages His disciples are called “sons of the bridechamber.” Using the reasoning applied to John 3:29, must not those disciples be excluded from the bride of Christ? But we know the conclusion is false; the premise is also false but carries just as much weight as the reasoning on John 3:29; i.e., no weight.

Concerning the references to the Song of Songs, they are misapplied. Note the incipient amillennial treatment of this: “. . . but displaced in this relationship by the Church.” Let the reader beware of this handling of Matt. 25. It is taking a step away from dispensational truth, little as its advocates may think so. The first paragraph in the Synopsis on the Song of Songs ably shows its application to Israel.

The truth is that this notion is refuted by all that we have thus far considered, namely, the original posture, the sleeping, the restoration of the truth, the oil, and other subsidiary points.

J. F. Walvoord, while noting that the marriage feast is symbolic rather than literal, claims that it seems implied that the feast is held on earth. He adds to this that a familiar idea that the marriage feast is held in heaven is not clearly taught in Scripture, and that the implications are to the contrary. Rev. 19 is explained away by regarding the “invitation” to the feast as the same as participating in the event of the second advent to earth. 228 Keep in mind that he and many Scofieldians hold that the saints of the OT are resurrected at the appearing of Christ in glory and therefore OT saints cannot be those “called to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:9) if the marriage supper takes place in heaven before the appearing of Christ in glory. The truth is that the marriage supper does take place in heaven. Rev. 19 and 20 describe sequential events. The marriage supper (Rev. 19:9) does precede the appearing of Christ in glory (Rev. 19:11-21). The supper on earth is “the great supper of God” (Rev. 19:17) when the judgments poured out attending Christ’s appearing in glory will feast on the wicked gathered

There remains one other class of objection that we will notice. It is not reasonable to expect that if the rapture is meant by the midnight cry that we ought to have something about the resurrection or translation of the believers in this passage. Such argument would have as much, and as baseless, application to John 14:1-3. The order of events in connection with the rapture was a revelation given to Paul (1 Thess. 4), and the translation of believers was a mystery given to Paul (1 Cor. 15), and therefore could not be in these parables, though room is left for these, for the Word of God is a whole. Therefore the absence of these things in the parable cannot be construed into an argument that the parable cannot refer to the present expectation of Christ's coming.
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