



## **Chapter 25**

# ***The Olivet Discourse Continued***

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**Theme:** Olivet Discourse continued—the parable of the ten virgins, the talents, and the judgment of the gentile nations.

Jesus told the following parables to clarify further what it means to be ready for his return and how to live until he comes. In the story of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), we are taught that every person is responsible for his or her own spiritual condition. The story of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) shows the necessity of using well what God has entrusted to us. The parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46) stresses the importance of serving others in need. No parable by itself *completely* describes our preparation. Instead, each paints one part of the whole picture.

### **Matthew 25:1**

**Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.**

[then] Links with previous verse.

[likened unto ten virgins ...] Fourth parable of Matthew 24-25, illustrating watchfulness in view of His coming (Matthew 25:1-13). These virgins, doubtless, represent the church—a name given to it because it is pure and holy. See 2 Corinthians 11:2; Lamentations 1:15; 2:13.

**Clarke:** Then shall the kingdom of heaven—The state of Jews and professing Christians—the state of the visible Church at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, and in the day of judgment: for the parable appears to relate to both those periods. And particularly at the time in which Christ shall come to judge the world, it shall appear what kind of reception his Gospel has met with. This parable, or something very like it, is found in the Jewish records: so in a treatise entitled RESHITH CHOCMAH, the beginning of wisdom, we read thus: “Our wise men of blessed memory say, Repent whilst thou hast strength to do it, whilst thy lamp burns, and thy oil is not extinguished; for if thy lamp be gone out, thy oil will profit thee nothing.” Our doctors add, in MEDRASH: “The holy blessed God said to Israel, My sons, repent whilst the gates of repentance stand open; for I receive a gift at present, but when I shall sit in judgment, in the age to come, I will receive none.” Another parable, mentioned by Kimchi, on Isaiah 65:13. “Rabbi Yuchanan, the son of Zachai, spoke a parable concerning a king, who invited his servants, but set them no time to come: the prudent and wary among them adorned themselves and, standing at the door of the king’s house, said, Is any thing wanting in the house of the king? (i.e. Is there any work to be done?) But the foolish ones that were among them went away, and working said, When shall the feast be in which there is no labor? Suddenly the king sought out his servants: those who were adorned entered in, and they who were still polluted entered in also. The king was glad when he met the prudent, but he was angry when he met the foolish: he said, Let the prudent sit down and eat—let

the others stand and look on.” Rabbi Eliezer said, “Turn to God one day before your death.” His disciples said, “How can a man know the day of his death?” He answered them, “Therefore you should turn to God to-day, perhaps you may die to-morrow; thus every day will be employed in returning.”<sup>1</sup>

**Clarke: Virgins**—Denoting the purity of the Christian doctrine and character. In this parable, the bridegroom is generally understood to mean Jesus Christ. The feast, that state of felicity to which he has promised to raise his genuine followers. The wise, or prudent, and foolish virgins, those who truly enjoy, and those who only profess the purity and holiness of his religion. The oil, the grace and salvation of God, or that faith which works by love. The vessel, the heart in which this oil is contained. The lamp, the profession of enjoying the burning and shining light of the Gospel of Christ. Going forth; the whole of their sojourning upon earth.

**Barnes: Shall be likened**—Or shall resemble. The meaning is, “When the Son of man returns to judgment, it will be as it was in the case of ten virgins in a marriage ceremony.” The coming of Christ to receive his people to himself is often represented under the similitude of a marriage, the church being represented as his spouse or bride. The marriage relation is the most tender, firm, and endearing of any known on earth, and on this account it suitably represents the union of believers to Christ.

**Then**—at the time referred to at the close of the preceding chapter, the time of the Lord’s Second Coming to reward His faithful servants and take vengeance on the faithless. *Then* shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took **their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom**—This supplies a key to the parable, whose object is, in the main, the same as that of the last parable—to illustrate *the vigilant and expectant attitude of faith*, in respect of which believers are described as “they that look for Him” (Heb 9:28), and “love His appearing” (2Ti 4:8). In the last parable it was that of servants waiting for their absent Lord; in this it is that of virgin attendants on a Bride, whose duty it was to go forth at night with lamps, and be ready on the appearance of the Bridegroom to conduct the Bride to his house, and go in with him to the marriage. This entire and beautiful change of figure brings out the lesson of the former parable in quite a new light. But let it be observed that, just as in the parable of the Marriage Supper, so in this—the *Bride* does not come into view at all in this parable; the *Virgins* and the *Bridegroom* holding forth all the intended instruction: nor could believers be represented both as Bride and Bridal Attendants without incongruity.<sup>2</sup>

**McGee:** To better understand the customs in Israel during the New Testament period, we refer to the Peshitta, which is a Syriac version of the Bible. Although it is not a text to be recommended, it does shed light on some of the customs of the day. The Peshitta translation of the verse before us indicates that the virgins went forth to meet the bridegroom *and the bride*, which means that the bridegroom is coming from the marriage

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Clarke’s Commentary

<sup>2</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 25:1). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

to the marriage supper. It is my understanding that, although the marriage of Christ and the church takes place in heaven, the marriage supper takes place on this earth. A passage in the Gospel of Luke substantiates this. As our Lord is giving warnings and parables, He says, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately" (Luke 12:35–36). You see, the wedding has taken place, and the bride is with him. Obviously, if he is coming from the wedding, the bride is with him; no man ever went on a honeymoon by himself—if he did, it wasn't a honeymoon!

So here in the parable of the ten virgins, Christ, pictured as the bridegroom, is bringing the bride with Him, and the believers on earth are waiting for Him to come. While the Great Tribulation has been going on upon the earth, Christ has been yonder in heaven with His bride, the church. Then at the conclusion of the seven years of Tribulation, He comes back to earth with the church.

This, now, is the attitude toward His coming on the part of those on the earth—<sup>3</sup>

**ESV: the kingdom of heaven will be like. ten virgins. Bridesmaids. bridegroom.** As God referred to himself as the "husband" of Israel in the OT (e.g., Isa. 54:4–6), so Jesus pictures himself here as a bridegroom (cf. Matt. 9:14–15). It was the Jewish marriage custom (cf. 1:18) for the groom and his friends to leave his home and proceed to the home of the bride, where the marriage ceremony was conducted, often at night. After this, the entire wedding party returned to the groom's home for a celebratory banquet.

### **Spurgeon: THE KING AND HIS MARRIAGE PROCESSION**

Our Lord was still seated, with his disciples, upon the Mount of Olives (see Mt 24:3). The instructive parable that follows was spoken by him in continuation of the discourse we have been considering. It is evidently intended to set forth, under a familiar figure, the need of preparation for the King's glorious appearing when he comes to claim his bride. To those of us who will not be alive at Christ's Second Advent, the midnight cry, "Go ye out to meet him," will sound forth at the hour of death.

According to Oriental custom, the bridegroom is represented as having gone to the house of his bride's father, whence he would conduct his spouse to her future home. The parable opens at the point where some of his professed friends are waiting to join the procession, and go in with him to the marriage-feast. Thus is the nominal Church of Christ waiting for the coming of the Lord. There did not seem to be much difference in the eternal appearance of the "ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." They were all virgins, they all took their lamps, and they all went forth to meet the bridegroom. They all made a profession of attachment to him, which led them to separate themselves from their other companions and acquaintances, that they might go forth to meet him on his wedding-night.

There was, however, a vital and essential difference between them: "Five of them were wise, and five were foolish." Let us fain hope that we are not to gather from our Lord's words that one half of the professing Church is composed of those whom he calls "foolish." Yet our Savior would not have spoken of so great a proportion if there were not

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<sup>3</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:134). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

really a very large admixture of foolish professors with the wise possessors of the grace of God.

### **Matthew 25:2**

**And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.**

**Clarke: Five of them were wise**—Or, provident, φρονιμοι—they took care to make a proper provision beforehand, and left nothing to be done in the last moment.

**Clarke: Five were foolish**—Μωροι, which might be translated careless, is generally rendered foolish; but this does not agree so well with φρονιμοι, provident, or prudent, in the first clause, which is the proper meaning of the word. Μωρος in the Etymologicon, is thus defined, μη ορα το δεον, he who sees not what is proper or necessary. These did not see that it was necessary to have oil in their vessels, (the salvation of God in their souls), as well as a burning lamp of religious profession, Matthew 25:3, 4.

**And five of them were wise, and five were foolish**—They are not distinguished into good and bad, as TRENCH observes, but into “wise” and “foolish”—just as in Mt 7:25–27 those who reared their house for eternity are distinguished into “wise” and “foolish builders”; because in both cases a certain degree of goodwill towards the truth is assumed. To make anything of the equal number of both classes would, we think, be precarious, save to warn us how large a portion of those who, up to the last, so nearly resemble those that love Christ’s appearing will be disowned by Him when He comes.<sup>4</sup>

### **Matthew 25:3**

**They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:**

The foolish took no oil with them, they did not run out, they had none!<sup>5</sup>

**[foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them]** Foolish, because they did not take extra oil in separate vessels to replenish their supply in their lamps should the oil be used up (Matthew 25:3-4).<sup>6</sup>

**Yashanet.com:** They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: The oil in the lamp could equally represent the Ruach haKodesh or the Torah, as the two cannot be separated.

**Psalm 119:105-107** - *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous*

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<sup>4</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 25:2). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>5</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Matthew, khouse.org

<sup>6</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

*judgments. I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.*

The parable of the virgins is meant to teach preparedness, a common theme in Judaism with regard to the coming of God's Kingdom:

**Midrash Rabbah – Ecclesiastes IX:7 - LET THY GARMENTS BE ALWAYS WHITE; AND LET THY HEAD LACK NO OIL (IX, 8). R.**

*Johanan b. Zakkai said: If the text speaks of white garments, how many of these have the peoples of the world; and if it speaks of good oil, how much of it do the peoples of the world possess! Behold, it speaks only of precepts, good deeds, and Torah. R. Judah ha-Nasi said: To what may this be likened? To a king who made a banquet to which he invited guests. He said to them, 'Go, wash yourselves, brush up your clothes, anoint yourselves with oil, wash your garments, and prepare yourselves for the banquet,' but he fixed no time when they were to come to it. The wise among them walked about by the entrance of the king's palace, saying, 'Does the king's palace lack anything?' The foolish among them paid no regard or attention to the king's command. They said, 'We will in due course notice when the king's banquet is to take place, because can there be a banquet without labour [to prepare it] and company?' So the plasterer went to his plaster, the potter to his clay, the smith to his charcoal, the washer to his laundry. Suddenly the king ordered, 'Let them all come to the banquet.' They hurried the guests, so that some came in their splendid attire and others came in their dirty garments. The king was pleased with the wise ones who had obeyed his command, and also because they had shown honour to the king's palace. He was angry with the fools who had neglected his command and disgraced his palace. The king said, 'Let those who have prepared themselves for the banquet come and eat of the king's meal, but those who have not prepared themselves shall not partake of it.' You might suppose that the latter were simply to depart; but the king continued, 'No, [they are not to depart]; but the former shall recline and eat and drink, while these shall remain standing, be punished, and look on and be grieved.' Similarly in the Hereafter, as Isaiah declares, Behold, My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry (Isa. LXV, 13). Ziwatai said in the name of R. Meir: These will recline and eat and drink, while the others will recline without eating and drinking; because the vexation of him who stands [at a banquet without participating in it] is not the same as of him who reclines [without participating in it]. He who stands without eating and drinking is like an attendant, but he who reclines and does not eat suffers very much more vexation and his face turns green. That is what the prophet says, Then ye shall I sit and discern between the righteous and the wicked (Mal. III, 18).*

**Spurgeon:** They may have thought that, if they had lamps that were similar to those carried by others, it would be sufficient. Perhaps they judged that the secret store of oil, being unseen, was unnecessary. They were willing to carry a lamp in one hand; but to devote the other hand to the care of an oil-flask, was more than they were willing to do. It

is the want of the oil of grace that is the fatal flaw in many a professor's lamp. Many have a name to live, but have not the life of God within their souls. They make a profession of attachment to Christ, but they have not the inward supply of the Spirit of grace to keep it up. There is a glitter or a flash, but there is no permanent light, and there cannot be any, for although they have "lamps", they have "no oil with them."

### **Matthew 25:4**

#### **But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps**

**[wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps]** Wise, because they took extra oil in separate vessels besides what they had in their lamps.

**Clarke: Took oil in their vessels**—They not only had a sufficiency of oil in their lamps, but they carried a vessel with oil to recruit their lamps, when it should be found expedient. This the foolish or improvident neglected to do: hence, when the oil that was in their lamps burned out, they had none to pour into the lamp to maintain the flame.

**Barnes: And five of them were wise**—. The words “wise and foolish,” here, refer only to their conduct; in regard to the oil. The one part was “wise” in taking oil, the other “foolish” in neglecting it. The conduct of those who were “wise” refers to those who are “prepared” for the coming of Christ—prepared by possessing REAL piety, and not being merely his professed followers. The conduct of those “without” oil expresses the conduct of those who PROFESS to love him, but are destitute of true grace, and are therefore unprepared to meet him. Nothing can be argued from the number here in regard to the proportion of sincere Christians among professors. CIRCUMSTANCES in parables are not to be pressed literally. They are necessary to keep up the story, and we must look chiefly or entirely to the scope or design of the parable to understand its meaning. In this parable the scope is to teach us to “watch” or be ready, Matthew 25:13. It is NOT to teach us the relative “number” of those who shall be saved and who shall not. In teaching us to “watch and to be ready,” our Lord gives great additional interest by the circumstances of this narrative; but there is no authority for saying that he meant to teach that just half of professing Christians would be deceived. The moral certainty is that “nothing like” that number will be found to have been hypocrites.

**Oil in their vessels**—The five foolish virgins probably expected that the bridegroom would come immediately; they therefore made no provision for any delay. The wise virgins knew that the time of his coming was uncertain, and they therefore furnished themselves with oil. This was carried in “vessels,” so that it could be poured on the torches when it was necessary.

**McGee:** Oil is symbolic of the Spirit of God. In that day I think there will be phonies as there were at His first coming. Jesus called them hypocrites. They will have lamps but no oil.<sup>7</sup>

**ESV: lamps.** Large dome-shaped torches, fueled by rags soaked in oil and used for walking outside. **oil.** With extra containers of oil, the torches could last for several hours.

### **Matthew 25:5**

**While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.**

**[tarried, they all slumbered and slept]** During the hours before the bridegroom came they all became sleepy and slept.

**Clarke: The bridegroom tarried**—The coming of the bridegroom to an individual may imply his death: his coming to the world—the final judgment. The delay—the time from a man’s birth till his death, in the first case; in the second, the time from the beginning to the end of the world.

**Clarke: Slumbered and slept**—Or, they became drowsy and fell asleep. As sleep is frequently used in the sacred writings for death, so drowsiness, which precedes sleep, may be considered as pointing out the decays of the constitution, and the sicknesses which precede death. The other explanations which are given of this place must be unsatisfactory to every man who is not warped by some point in his creed, which must be supported at every expense. Carelessness disposed them to drowsiness, drowsiness to sleep, deep sleep, which rendered them as unconscious of their danger as they were before inattentive to their duty.

### **Matthew 25:6**

**And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.**

Suggestive of the early Jewish wedding ceremony.

**[midnight]** Jewish weddings were generally celebrated at night, starting at the rise of the evening star; but in this case there was some extra delay and the bridegroom and his friends arrived at midnight.

**Clarke: At midnight there was a cry**—The Jewish weddings were generally celebrated in the night; yet they usually began at the rising of the evening star; but in this case there was a more than ordinary delay.

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<sup>7</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:135). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

**[cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh]** This was customary. Starting from the home of the bridegroom his friends began crying this and all along the route people would take up the joyous cry until it would get near enough to the home of the bride that it would wake up the sleeping ones.

**[go ye out to meet him]** This was the duty of the ones chosen by the bride to welcome the bridegroom (Matthew 25:1,6,10).

**Spurgeon:** That midnight cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh," startled all the sleepers. It should be well if we all I thought more of the great truth of our Lord's Second Advent. The oftener it is preached, in due proportion with other revealed doctrines, the more likely will it be to arouse both slumbering possessors and sleeping professors of love to Christ. As the midnight of this present evil age approaches, there is increasing need for all to be bidden to listen for the clarion cry, "Go ye out to meet him."

### **Matthew 25:7**

**Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.**

**[Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps]** Then—when they heard the cry. They all arose to trim their lamps and get them in order. They all had lamps burning when they went to sleep, but the lamps of the foolish needed more oil. The Greek reads, "our lamps are going out" (Matthew 25:8). They asked for oil from the extra that the wise had, but were sent to buy some quickly (Matthew 25:9).<sup>8</sup>

**Barnes:** *Trimmed their lamps*—Burning until midnight, the oil was exhausted: they gave a dim and obscure light. They trimmed them by removing the burnt parts of the linen or the torch, so that they would burn clear. It was needful, also, to dip them again in oil, or to pour oil upon them. This strikingly represents the conduct of most people at the approach of death. They then begin to make ready. They are alarmed, anxious, and trembling, and then they ask the aid of others, but often when it is forever too late.

**Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps**—the foolish virgins as well as the wise. How very long do both parties seem the same—almost to the moment of decision! Looking at the mere form of the parable, it is evident that the folly of "the foolish" consisted not in having no oil at all; for they must have had oil enough in their lamps to keep them burning up to this moment: their folly consisted in not making provision against its *exhaustion*, by taking with their lamp an *oil-vessel* wherewith to replenish their lamp from time to time, and so have it burning until the Bridegroom should come. Are we, then—with some even superior expositors—to conclude that the foolish virgins must represent true Christians as well as do the wise, since only true Christians have the Spirit, and that the difference between the two classes consists only in the one having the necessary watchfulness which the other wants? Certainly not. Since the parable was designed to hold forth the prepared and the unprepared to meet Christ at

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<sup>8</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

His coming, and how the unprepared might, up to the very last, be confounded with the prepared—the structure of the parable behooved to accommodate itself to this, by making the lamps of the foolish to burn, as well as those of the wise, up to a certain point of time, and only then to discover their inability to burn on for want of a fresh supply of oil. But this is evidently just a *structural device*; and the real difference between the two classes who profess to love the Lord’s appearing is a *radical one*—the possession by the one class of *an enduring principle of spiritual life*, and the want of it by the other.<sup>9</sup>

**McGee:** Notice that *both* the wise and the foolish virgins slept. The difference in them was that some had the Holy Spirit (represented by the oil) and some did not—because they were not genuine believers.<sup>10</sup>

### **Matthew 25:8**

**And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.**

[oil] the Holy Spirit. Zech 4; Acts 10:38; Heb 1:9; Rom 8:9; Zech 12:10.

How can the five virgins “buy” oil if they need the Mark of the Beast? This must be before!<sup>11</sup>

[oil] Lamp oil, not the Holy Spirit, for He cannot be bought and sold or divided between people at their request. This no more refers to the Holy Spirit than oil in Genesis 28:18; 2 Kings 4:1-6; Luke 7:46; Luke 16:6; etc.<sup>12</sup>

**Clarke: Our lamps are gone out**— are going out. So then it is evident that they were once lighted. They had once hearts illuminated and warmed by faith and love; but they had backslidden from the salvation of God, and now they are excluded from heaven, because, through their carelessness, they have let the light that was in them become darkness, and have not applied in time for a fresh supply of the salvation of God.

A Jewish rabbin supposes God addressing man thus:—I give thee my lamp, give thou me thy lamp; if thou keep my lamp I will keep thy lamp; but if thou extinguish my lamp I will extinguish thy lamp. That is, I give thee my WORD and testimonies to be a light unto thy feet and a lanthorn to thy steps, to guide thee safely through life; give me thy SOUL and all its concerns, that I may defend and save thee from all evil: keep my WORD, walk in my ways, and I will keep thy SOUL that nothing shall injure it; but if thou trample under foot my laws, I will cast thy soul into outer darkness.

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<sup>9</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 25:7). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>10</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:135). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>11</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Matthew, khouse.org

<sup>12</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

**And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out—** rather, as in the *Margin*, “are going out”; for oil will not light an extinguished lamp, though it will keep a burning one from going out. Ah! now at length they have discovered not only their own folly, but the wisdom of the other class, and they do homage to it. They did not perhaps despise them before, but they thought them righteous overmuch; now they are forced, with bitter mortification, to wish they were like them.<sup>13</sup>

**Spurgeon:** They now began to value what they had aforesaid despised; they had been so foolish as to think that oil was unnecessary, now they saw that it was the one thing needful. Hence their request to their wiser companions: "Give us of your oil." They gave a dreadful reason for their request: "for our lamps are gone out," or, going out; the dry wick flickered a while, and then died out in darkness, like the snuff of a candle.

Those are terrible words, "our lamps are gone out." It is worse to have a lamp that has gone out than never to have had a lamp at all. "Our lamps are gone out." The foolish virgins seemed to say, "We thought everything was ready for tonight, we even gloried in our lamps, we promised ourselves a bright future, we thought all was well for our share in the marriage-supper; but our lamps are gone out, and we have no oil with which to supply them." May no reader of this page ever have to utter this bitter lament! Those who are putting off their repentance till their dying hour are like these foolish virgins; their folly has reached its utmost height. When the death-sweat lies cold on the brow, the neglected oil of grace will be valued. Then will come the despairing cry "Send for a minister to pray for me, get in some Christian people to see what they can do for me."

### **Matthew 25:9**

**But the wise answered, saying, *Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.***

**Clarke: Lest there be not enough for us and you—**These had all been companions in the Christian course, and there was a time when they might have been helpful to each other; but that time is now past for ever—none has a particle of grace to spare, not even to help the soul of the dearest relative! The grace which every man receives is just enough to save his own soul; he has no merits to bequeath to the Church; no work of supererogation which can be placed to the account of another.

**But the wise answered, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you—**The words “Not so,” it will be seen, are not in the original, where the reply is very elliptical—“In case there be not enough for us and you.” A truly wise answer this. “And what, then, if we shall share it with you? Why, both will be undone.”

**but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves—**Here again it would be straining the parable beyond its legitimate design to make it teach that men may get salvation even after they are supposed and required to have it already gotten. It is merely a friendly way of reminding them of the proper way of obtaining the needed and precious

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<sup>13</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 25:8). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

article, with a certain reflection on them for having it now to seek. Also, when the parable speaks of “selling” and “buying” that valuable article, it means simply, “Go, get it in the only legitimate way.” And yet the word “buy” is significant; for we are elsewhere bidden, “buy wine and milk without money and without price,” and “buy of Christ gold tried in the fire,” (Is 55:1; Rev 3:18). Now, since what we pay the demanded price for becomes thereby *our own property*, the salvation which we thus take gratuitously at God’s hands, being bought in His own sense of that word, becomes ours thereby in inalienable possession. (Compare for the language, Pr 23:23; Mt 13:44).<sup>14</sup>

### **Matthew 25:10**

**And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.**

**[door was shut]** Doors were always locked to uninvited guests and for fear of thieves who would rob the guests or carry off the bride for a ransom.

**Clarke: While they went to buy, the bridegroom came**—What a dismal thing it is, not to discover the emptiness of one’s heart of all that is good, till it is too late to make any successful application for relief! God alone knows how many are thus deceived.

**Clarke: And they that were ready**—They who were prepared—who had not only a burning lamp of an evangelical profession, but had oil in their vessels, the faith that works by love in their hearts, and their lives adorned with all the fruits of the Spirit.

**Clarke: The door was shut**—Sinners on a death-bed too often meet with those deceitful merchants, who promise them salvation for a price which is of no value in the sight of God. Come unto me, says Jesus, and buy: there is no salvation but through his blood—no hope for the sinner but that which is founded upon his sacrifice and death. The door was shut—dreadful and fatal words! No hope remains. Nothing but death can shut this door; but death may surprise us in our sins, and then despair is our only portion.

**Barnes: Went in with him to the marriage**—The “marriage-feast.” The marriage ceremony took place before the bride left her father’s house, but a feast was given at the house of her husband, which was also called the “marriage,” or a part of the marriage solemnities. This part of the parable doubtless represents the entrance of those who “are ready,” or prepared, into the kingdom of God, when the Son of man shall come. They will be READY who have repented of their sins; who truly believe on the Lord Jesus; who live a holy life; and who wait for his coming. See Mark 16:16; John 5:24; Acts 3:19; Revelation 22:11; 2 Peter 3:11-12; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

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<sup>14</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 25:9). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

**Barnes: The door was shut**—No more could be admitted to the marriage-feast. So, when the truly righteous shall all be received into heaven, the door will be closed against all others. There will be no room for preparation afterward, Revelation 22:11; Ecclesiastes 11:3; 9:10; Matthew 25:46.

**And while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut**—They are sensible of their past folly; they have taken good advice: they are in the act of getting what alone they lacked: a very little more, and they also are ready. But the Bridegroom comes; the ready are admitted; “the door is shut,” and they are undone. How graphic and appalling this picture of one *almost saved—but lost!*<sup>15</sup>

**Yashanet.com** And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. The marriage banquet is for Messiah, the bridegroom, and His bride, the faith community of Israel, made up of both Jews and gentiles who trust in Yeshua and His Torah. The end-times book of Revelation shows the necessity of Torah, as part of one's faith in Yeshua, in order to enter the Kingdom of God:

**Revelation 12:17** - *And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, [Torah] and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

**Revelation 14:12** - *Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, [Torah] and the faith of Jesus.*

**Revelation 22:14** - *Blessed are they that do his commandments, [Torah] that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

**Spurgeon:** Undoubtedly, there are death-bed repentances; but it is to be feared that, in the great majority of cases, people who wake up so late to a true conviction of their condition will find that, while they go to buy the long despised grace, "the bridegroom" will come. The poor head may be so distracted with pain that the mind may not be able to catch the idea of what faith in Christ is; mental capacity may wholly fail in that dread hour. The risk is so great that none but the fatally foolish will postpone till then the preparation for the King's coming. "They that were ready went in with him to the marriage:" their readiness consisted in having lighted lamps, or flaming torches; our preparation for death or Christ's coming, is the possession of grace in the heart. "And the door was shut:" when that door is once shut, it will never be opened. There are some who dote and dream about an opening of that door, after death, for those who have died impenitent; but there is nothing in the Scriptures to warrant such an expectation. Any "larger hope" than that revealed in the Word of God, is a delusion and a snare.

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<sup>15</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 25:10). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

## **Matthew 25:11**

**Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.**

**Clarke:** Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord—Earnest prayer, when used in time, may do much good: but it appears, from this parable, that there may come a time when prayer even to Jesus may be too late!—viz. when the door is shut—when death has separated the body and the soul.

**Spurgeon:** "The other virgins" were not "ready" when the bridegroom came; and there is no hint in the parable that they were any more ready when they came and clamored at his closed door, "Lord, lord, open to us." "We came to meet thee, we carried lamps, we were with the other virgins; Lord, Lord, open to us! "His answer tolled the knell of any vain hope of admission that they might have cherished: "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." "If any man loveth God, the same is known of him." (1Co 8:3, R.V.) The Good Shepherd says, "I know mine own, and mine own know me." (Joh 10:14, R.V.) Those whom Jesus Christ knows in this sense, he loves; and they love him because he has first loved them. The foolish virgins had professed to be the bridegroom's friends, yet they were proved to be not even his acquaintances. May none of us ever hear from the blessed lips of the heavenly Bridegroom that terrible death-sentence, "I know you not"!

## **Matthew 25:12**

**But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.**

**[know]** The intimate type of knowledge, not the word for a factual, information type of knowledge.

**Clarke: I know you not**—As if he had said, Ye are not of my company—ye were neither with the bride nor the bridegroom: ye slept while the others were in procession. I do not acknowledge you for my disciples—ye are not like him who is love—ye refused to receive his grace—ye sinned it away when ye had it; now you are necessarily excluded from that kingdom where nothing but love and purity can dwell.

**Barnes: I know you not**—You were not in the company of those who attended me to the marriage-feast, and are unknown to me. Applied to professing Christians, having ONLY a profession of religion, but no real piety, it means, I do not know or ACKNOWLEDGE you as Christians. I do not approve of you, or delight in you, or admit that you are my friends. The word "know" is often used in the sense of approving, loving, acknowledging as real friends and followers. See Matthew 7:23; Psalms 1:6; 2 Timothy 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:12.

**Yashanet.com:** But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. This is the same reply Yeshua gave in chapter 7, which was directed to those who thought they could follow Him apart from the will of the Father and His sayings, both of which refer to Torah:

**Matthew 7:21-24** - *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father [Torah] which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:*

The above would lend credibility to the idea that the oil in the lamps of the virgins represents Torah.

**ESV: I do not know you.** The OT speaks of God “knowing” his chosen people (Jer. 1:5; Hos. 13:5; Amos 3:2). The same theme continues in the NT, where it describes a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ (cf. Gal. 4:8–9; 2 Tim. 2:19).

### **Matthew 25:13**

**Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.**

Were the five saved or not saved? The basic story is simple enough, five were ready and five were not. The problem is when we start to examine, what does it mean? The five foolish had lamps? Were they saved?

The concept of the virgin, is that they were set apart for this service. They were called to give light! Five of them had their profession empty (the wick will burn for awhile without oil). They had no oil. The oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. No evidence that they are saved. The fact that they were in the profession, does not tell us that they are saved. How do we know they were not saved? They were outside when the door was shut. Also, when they asked the Lord to open the door, He said, “I know you not.”! The scary part of this is that they thought they were saved.<sup>16</sup>

#### **The Virgins**

- They were set apart, called to give light!
- Five of them had their profession empty (the wick will burn for awhile without oil). They had no oil.
- Oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.
- No evidence that they are saved..
- How do we know they were not saved?
- They were *outside* when the door was shut. Also, when they asked the Lord to open the door, He said, “I know you not”!
- The scary part of this is that they *thought* they were saved.
- Is the Holy Spirit in your life?

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<sup>16</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Matthew, khouse.org

**Clarke: Watch therefore**—If to watch be to employ ourselves chiefly about the business of our salvation, alas! how few of those who are called Christians are there who do watch! How many who slumber! How many who are asleep! How many seized with a lethargy! How many quite dead!

**Barnes: Watch, therefore** ...—This is the scope or design of the whole parable. This is the great truth that Christ wished to inculcate, and all parts of the parable are to be interpreted in reference to this admonition. Like the virgins, many are professedly going to meet the Bridegroom—the Lord Jesus Christ. Like the coming of the bridegroom, his advent will be sudden. It will be to many at an unexpected time. Many, even professing Christians, will be engaged in the business of the world; thoughtless about eternity; not expecting his approach, and not prepared. They will only PROFESS to know him, but in WORKS they will deny him. So death will come. All approaches of the Son of God to judge men are SUDDEN, and to many unexpected. So many, when they shall see him coming, at death or the judgment, will begin, like the foolish virgins, to be active, and to prepare to die; but it will be too late. They that are ready will enter in, and heaven will be closed forever against all others. The “coming” of the Saviour is certain. The precise time “when” he will come is not certain. As the virgins should all have watched and been ready, so should we. They who are Christians should be ever watchful; and they who are not should lose no time to be ready, for in such an hour as they think not the Son of man shall come.

Notice that it is “the day nor the hour” rather than the century or the year, as it is from our perspective. The attitude for His own during this future period is to *watch*. That is the important thing for them to do.

**Watch therefore.** The point of the parable is that disciples must “watch correctly” in order to be properly prepared and ready to accompany the Son of Man when he returns.

### **Matthew 25:14**

**For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.**

[kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country ...] Fifth parable in Matthew 24-25, illustrating diligence in view of His coming (Matthew 25:14-30).

**Barnes: For the kingdom of heaven** ...—The “parable of the talents” was spoken still further to illustrate the manner in which he would deal with people at his return to judgment. The words “the kingdom, of heaven” are not in the original, but are very properly inserted by the translators. The design of the parable is to teach that those who improve their talents or faculties in the cause of religion who improve them to their own salvation and in doing good to others shall be proportionally rewarded; but they who neglect their talents, and who neither secure their own salvation nor do good to others, will be punished. The kingdom of heaven is like such a man—that is, “God deals with people in his government as such a man did.”

**Barnes: His own servants**—That is, such of them as he judged to be worthy of such a trust. These represent the apostles, Christian ministers, professing Christians, and perhaps all people. The going into a far country may represent the Lord Jesus going into heaven. He has given to all talents to improve, Ephesians 4:8; 2:12.

**His goods**—His property representing the offices, abilities, and opportunities for doing good, which he has given to his professed followers.

**For the kingdom of heaven is as a man**—The ellipsis is better supplied by our translators in the corresponding passage of Mark (Mk 13:34), “[For the Son of man is] as a man”

**travelling into a far country**—or more simply, “going abroad.” The idea of long “tarrying” is certainly implied here, since it is expressed in Mt 25:19.

**who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods**—Between master and slaves this was not uncommon in ancient times. Christ’s “servants” here mean all who, by their Christian profession, stand in the relation to Him of entire subjection. His “goods” mean all their gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual. As all that slaves have belongs to their master, so Christ has a claim to everything which belongs to His people, everything which, may be turned to good, and He demands its appropriation to His service, or, viewing it otherwise, they first offer it up to Him; as being “not their own, but bought with a price” (1Co 6:19, 20), and He “delivers it to them” again to be put to use in His service.<sup>17</sup>

### **Matthew 25:15**

**And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.**

**Barnes: According to his several ability**—According to the ability of each one. According as he saw each one was adapted to improve it. So in the church and the world. God gives people stations which he judges them adapted to fill, and requires them to fill them. He makes “distinctions” among people in regard to abilities, and in the powers and opportunities of usefulness, requiring them only to occupy those stations, and to discharge their duties there, 1 Corinthians 4:7.

The master divided the money (talents) among his servants according to their abilities. No one received more or less than he could handle. If he failed in his assignment, his excuse could not be that he was overwhelmed. Failure could come only from laziness or hatred toward the master. The talents represent any kind of resource we are given. God gives us time, gifts, and other resources according to our abilities, and he expects us to invest them wisely until he returns. We are responsible to use well what God has given us. The issue is not how much we have, but how well we use what we have.

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<sup>17</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 25:14). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Notice that the master gave to his servants responsibilities according to their individual abilities.

There is a principle in Judaism that God gives to each one of his servants as much spiritual enlightenment as they are capable of handling. The human being that had the greatest enlightenment was Moses, who spoke directly with God, and not in dreams or visions. Everyone else since Moses sees things less clearly:

**1 Corinthians 13:12** - *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

### **Matthew 25:16**

**Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.**

[talent] is a coin worth about a year's salary. The approximate dollar equivalents would be in six or seven figures.

### **Matthew 25:17**

**And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.**

The two who had received most employed their money in trade, and by honest industry doubled it before their master returned, representing the conduct of those who make a good improvement of their abilities, and employ them in doing good.

Notice that the "talents" were sums of money. They do not represent talents in the sense of the natural endowments of a person such as a musical talent. The application to us is that whatever God has given to us, we are to use for Him.

### **Matthew 25:18**

**But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.**

**Barnes: Digged in the earth ...**—This represents the conduct of those who neglect the abilities that God has given, and fail to do what he has required. This is done often:

1. On the plea that they do not occupy a high station.
2. That they have slender abilities, and can do little good.
3. As it was in this case, that God had not given them as much as he did others, and they will therefore do nothing.

These pleas are without foundation; because:

1. God does not require us to do as much as those who have greater abilities; but this is not a reason why we should do nothing, 2 Corinthians 8:12.
2. Any situation is honorable, and may be useful, where God has placed us; and though humble, yet in that we may do much good, 1 Corinthians 12:11-31.

3. People of slender abilities may often do more good in the world than people of much greater talents. It is rather a WARM HEART than a STRONG HEAD which is required to do good. A humble Christian, by his life, example, and conversation, may often do much more good than “is” done by those in more elevated stations and with far greater gifts.

We are not to suppose by this, however, that our Saviour meant to teach that only those of feeble talents neglected their duty. The parable does not require us to do this; and the Fact is, perhaps, that those most highly endowed are the farthest from properly improving their talents.

### **Matthew 25:19**

**After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.**

[**reckoneth with them**] Compared accounts. Only here and in Matthew 18:23-24. To reckon is to settle accounts. Here it means to inquire into their faithfulness, and to reward or punish them accordingly.

**Spurgeon:** There is a reckoning-day coming, even though "a long time "may elapse before "the lord of those servants cometh." Jesus is coming back from the far country whither he has gone; his own word is, "Behold, I come quickly." We must not leave this great fact out of our reckoning; and as his stewards, we must be prepared at any moment for him to come and reckon with us as to the talents with which he has endowed each of his servants.

### **Matthew 25:20**

**And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.**

### **Matthew 25:21**

**His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.**

Jesus is coming back—we know this is true. Does this mean we must quit our jobs in order to serve God? No, it means we are to use our time, talents, and treasures diligently in order to serve God completely in whatever we do. For a few people, this may mean changing professions. For most of us, it means doing our daily work out of love for God.

### Matthew 25:22

**He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.**

**Spurgeon:** This servant's commendation and reward are exactly the same as those given to his more highly privileged brother; as if our Savior would teach us that it is not the number of our talents, but the use we make of them, that is the essential matter. He does not expect as much from the man with two talents as from the one to whom he has given five; what he does expect is that they should both be faithful over the few things he has committed to their care. It was so with the two servants mentioned in the parable. The second had doubled the capital received from his lord, even as the first had done with his larger amount of trust-money; therefore they were equally praised and blessed.

### Matthew 25:23

**His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.**

Two guys, different talents, different performance.

**ESV: Well done, good and faithful servant.** The master's identical statements of praise to both servants show that what was important was not the total amount earned but faithfulness in utilizing their gifts and potential. **You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much.** Faithful stewardship in this life will result in being given greater responsibility and stewardship in the life to come.

### Matthew 25:24

**Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:**

**[hard man]** Hardhearted man, thus accusing his master to excuse his own slothfulness.

**[strawed]** Scattered abroad, as if his master reaped without sowing. The attitude of a slothful man who thinks everything others do prospers where it would fail in his case.

**Barnes: The one talent**—The design of this part of the parable is to show that no one is excused for neglecting his duty because he has few talents. God will require of him only according to his ability, 1 Corinthians 4:2; Luke 12:48; 2 Corinthians 8:12.

**Barnes: A hard man**—Of a sordid, griping disposition; taking advantage of the poor, and oppressing them.

**Barnes: Reaping** ...—This is indicative of an avaricious and overbearing disposition; compelling the poor to sow for him, and reaping all the benefit himself.

**Barnes: Hast not strawed**—The word “straw” means to “scatter”—as people scatter seed in sowing it. It may mean, also, to “ventilate,” or to “fan by ventilating” or winnowing. As “sowing” the seed is mentioned just before, it may be that this refers to gathering grain fanned or winnowed by others, while he did nothing—indicating, also, a hard or sordid disposition.

**24-30** This last man was thinking only of himself. He hoped to play it safe and protect himself from his hard master, but he was judged for his self-centeredness. We must not make excuses to avoid doing what God calls us to do. If God truly is our Master, we must obey willingly. Our time, abilities, and money aren't ours in the first place—we are caretakers, not owners. When we ignore, squander, or abuse what we are given, we are rebellious and deserve to be punished.

**Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man**—harsh. The word in Luke (Lu 19:21) is “austere.”

**reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed**—The sense is obvious: “I knew thou wast one whom it was impossible to serve, one whom nothing would please: exacting what was impracticable, and dissatisfied with what was attainable.” Thus do men secretly think of God as a hard Master, and virtually throw on Him the blame of their fruitlessness.<sup>18</sup>

**Spurgeon:** At the day of reckoning, the unfaithful as well as the faithful have to give account of their stewardship. This man's words were self-contradictory, and his excuse was self-condemnatory. He said that he know that his lord was a hard man, reaping where he had not sown, and gathering where he had not strawed, yet he confessed that the talent he brought back had been given to him by this master whom he represented as severe and unreasonable. He also admitted that it was his lord's money that he had hidden in the earth: “thy talent.” It was entrusted to him, and yet even the servant owned that it did not belong to him: “Lo, there thou hast that is thine.” “I have not made any addition to thy talent; but I have not lost it, nor given it away; I have brought it back, lo, there it is.” He seemed to speak as though this was all that could be rightly expected of him; yet he was evidently not satisfied with himself, for he said, “I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth.” See how fear may become the mother of presumption. Faith in God begets holy fear; but servile fear is the parent of doubt, which in its turn has a family of unbelieving rebels.

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<sup>18</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 25:24). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

### **Matthew 25:25**

**And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.**

**[afraid]** Another characteristic of a slothful man. He is always afraid to venture out in business and take risks. This was the safe route. The other guys took risks.

**Barnes: That is thine**—There is what properly belongs to thee. There is the original talent that thou gavest me, and that is all that can be reasonably required. Observe here:

1. That this expresses exactly the feelings of all sinners. God, in their view, is hard, cruel, unjust.
2. All the excuses of sinners are excuses for indolence and sin, and the effect is to cheat themselves out of heaven. The effect of this excuse was that the reward was lost, and such will always be the result of the excuses of sinners for not doing their duty.
3. Sinners grudge everything to God. They are never willing to be liberal toward him but are stinted and close; and if they give, they do it with hard feelings, and say that that is all that he can claim.

### **Matthew 25:26**

**His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:***

**[slothful]** means failure to act energetically. He also blamed his failure on his master.

**[thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed]**  
If you thought I was that kind of man, then you ought to have been faithful to your trust.

**Barnes: Slothful**—Indolent, lazy, who had done nothing. God will judge people not merely for doing wrong, but for NOT “doing” right. See Matthew 25:45. That servant was “wicked,” because he had such an opinion of his master; he had shown that he was slothful by not making good use of the talent, Matthew 25:27.

**Barnes: Thou knewest** ...—This should be understood, and might have been translated, as a question. If you knew that I was Such a man you ought to have acted accordingly, so as to have escaped punishment. Didst thou know that I reap, etc.? Then thou shouldst have given my money to the exchangers, etc. This is not intended to “admit” that he was such a man, but to convict the slothful servant of guilt and folly in not having been prepared to meet him.

### **Matthew 25:27**

**Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and *then* at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.**

[exchangers] The bankers who would give interest.

[usury] With interest if no other profit.

**ESV: you ought to have invested my money with the bankers.** In the OT, Israelites were forbidden from charging interest to other Israelites (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:35–37; Deut. 23:19), but it was permissible to charge interest on money loaned to Gentiles (Deut. 23:20). In any case, the central point of the parable concerns the importance of being a faithful servant of all that God has entrusted to one's care.

### **Matthew 25:28**

**Take therefore the talent from him, and give *it* unto him which hath ten talents.**

#### **The Slothful Servant (Duke)**

Here we have the truth illustrated by this parable (Matthew 25:28-30).

The Slothful Servant Was:

1. Ungrateful (Matthew 25:18)
2. Erroneous in reasoning (Matthew 25:18,24)
3. Unjust (Matthew 25:18)
4. Fault-finding; accusing (Matthew 25:24)
5. Self-justifying (Matthew 25:24)
6. Fearful (Matthew 25:25)
7. Wicked (Matthew 25:26)

His Punishment:

1. Rebuked (Matthew 25:26)
2. Judged out of his own mouth (Matthew 25:26)
3. Judged for failure of trust (Matthew 25:27)
4. Stripped of his talent (Matthew 25:28-29)
5. Cut off and banished forever from his master (Matthew 25:30; Matthew 13:42)

### **Matthew 25:29**

**For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.**

The talents here are used as figures of speech. There are a few theories as to what the talent symbolizes, they are generally treated as gifts (as in skills). The issue is that one views these talents as opportunities, and you will be held accountable. The last guy refused to put to use what the Lord had entrusted Him with. Hiding it for safekeeping is not using it. Whatever resources the Lord has put at your disposal (money, place in community, skills). What are you doing with them? You lose when you don't put them to

use. The fruitfulness of it, the Lord will take care of, whether 10-fold or 100-fold. You will take risks.

Where there is no vision the people perish.<sup>19</sup>

**Barnes: For unto every one that hath shall be given**—This seems to be a proverbial expression. It means, whosoever rightly improves what is committed to him shall receive more, or shall be rewarded; but he that misimproves what is committed to him shall NOT be rewarded. In pecuniary matters in the LITERAL sense of this parable they who improve their money by industry or merchandise increase it. They who do not who are indolent or vicious lose what they did possess, and it goes into the hands of the faithful and industrious. In the spiritual sense of the parable it means that they who are faithful shall be rewarded—not, however, that anything shall be taken from the unfaithful and given to them; and it means also that the unfaithful and indolent shall be taken away from their privileges and punished.

### **Matthew 25:30**

**And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**

[**servant**] He was a servant as much as the rest of them, but he became unprofitable (Matthew 25:14,19,30).

[**weeping and gnashing of teeth**] Another description of eternal hell, not the grave (Matthew 13:42,50; Rev. 9:2). Wailing, here and in Matthew 13:50; weeping in Matthew 8:12; Matthew 22:13; Matthew 24:51; Matthew 25:30; Luke 13:28; and gnashing of teeth in all these passages picture bitter remorse and pain.

**Barnes: And cast ...**—See the notes at Matthew 8:12. The spiritual meaning of the parable may be thus summed up:

1. The servants of God are not all endowed with equal gifts and talents.
2. All, whatever may be their ability, are bound to employ their talents in promoting his honor, and in a proper improvement of them.
3. By employing their talents in a proper manner, they improve and strengthen them.
4. They will be judged according to the improvements which they have made.
5. All sinners look on God as a hard master, and as unreasonable and tyrannical.
6. People will be judged not merely for “doing wrong, but for neglecting to do right.”
7. If the servant who kept the talent entire without injuring it, and who returned it to his master as he received it, was nevertheless judged, condemned, and cast away, what must they expect who abuse their talents, destroy by drunkenness and lust the noble faculties conferred on them, and squander the property that might be employed in advancing the interests of morals and religion!

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<sup>19</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Matthew, khouse.org

**McGee:** There is a great principle in this parable for us. And it was given in the light of the fact that all of us—you and I included—are going to have to stand in the presence of God and give an account of how we have used what He has given to us. The Lord is not going to ask us how *much* we have done for Him but how *faithful* we have been to that which He wanted us to do.

For the child of God there are two important things: (1) Find out what God wants us to do; that is, determine what the talent is that He has given us, and then (2) be faithful in the use of it. To some of us God gives a very small ministry, and that may be upsetting to us; but if we are one—talent people, God expects us to be *faithful* with that.<sup>20</sup>

### **Matthew 25:31**

**When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:**

**31-46** God will separate his obedient followers from pretenders and unbelievers. The real evidence of our belief is the way we act. To treat all persons we encounter as if they are Jesus is no easy task. What we do for others demonstrates what we really think about Jesus' words to us—feed the hungry, give the homeless a place to stay, look after the sick. How well do your actions separate you from pretenders and unbelievers?

**McGee:** The polarization of all of the Olivet Discourse is moving toward the placing of Jesus Christ on the throne of this world. This is the message of the Gospel of Matthew—in fact, it is the message of the entire Word of God.

Now we will see that the nations will be judged. You may ask, “Doesn't it mean individuals?” Yes, you can consider it as individuals composing the nations. But nations are responsible to God.<sup>21</sup>

### **Matthew 25:32**

**And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats:**

#### **The Judgments**

This is one of three major judgments in the Scripture. We will call it the Sheep and Goat judgment (not to be confused with the Bema Seat of Christ where the Christians get their rewards for service, nor to be confused with the Great White Throne judgment which comes at the end of the Millennium.) Who is being judged here? Nations.

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<sup>20</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:136). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>21</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:136). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

**Clarke: All nations**—Literally, all the nations—all the Gentile world; the Jews are necessarily included, but they were spoken of in a particular manner in the preceding chapter.

### **Matthew 25:33**

**And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.**

Cf. Ezek 34:17.

### **Matthew 25:34**

**Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:**

**[inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world]** The purpose of this judgment is to determine who shall enter the kingdom (Daniel 7:9-14,22; Rev. 11:15), and to give the meek the earth as promised (Psalm 37:11; Matthew 5:5).

**Clarke: Ye blessed of my Father**—This is the king’s address to his followers; and contains the reason why they were found in the practice of all righteousness, and were now brought to this state of glory—they were blessed—came as children, and received the benediction of the Father, and became, and continued to be, members of the heavenly family.

**Clarke: Inherit**—The inheritance is only for the children of the family—if sons, then heirs, Galatians 4:7, but not otherwise. The sons only shall enjoy the father’s estate.

**Clarke: From the foundation of the world**—It was God’s purpose and determination to admit none into his heaven but those who were made partakers of his holiness, Hebrews 12:14. The rabbins say, Seven things were created before the foundation of the world.

1. The law.
2. Repentance.
3. Paradise.
4. Hell.
5. The throne of God.
6. The temple; and
7. The name of the Messiah.

**Barnes: Prepared for you** ...—That is, “designed” for you, or appointed for you. The phrase “from the foundation of the world” is used to denote that this was appointed for them in the beginning; that God has no new plan; that the rewards which he will now confer on them he always INTENDED to confer. Christ says to the righteous that the kingdom was prepared for “them.” Of course, God meant to confer it on “them.” They were individuals, and it follows that He intended to bestow His salvation on them as individuals. Accordingly, the salvation of His people is universally represented as the

result of the free gift of God, according to His own pleasure, bestowed on individuals, and by a plan which is eternal, Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:4-5, 11-12; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2; John 6:37. This is right and consistent with justice; because:

1. All people are by nature equally undeserving.
2. Bestowing favors on one does not do injustice to another, where neither deserves favor. Pardoning one criminal is not injuring another. Bestowing great talents on Locke, Newton, or Paul did not injure me.
3. If it is right for God to GIVE eternal life to his people, or to ADMIT them to heaven, it was right to “determine” to do it, which is but another way of saying that God resolved from all eternity to “do right.”
4. Those who perish CHOOSE the paths which lead to death, and WILL not be saved by the merits of Jesus. No blame can be charged on God if he does not save them against their will, John 5:40; Mark 16:15-16.

**Yashanet.com:** The Talmud teaches that seven things were seven things created from the foundation of the world:

**Talmud - Mas. Pesachim 54a** - *Surely it was taught: Seven things were created before the world was created, and these are they: The Torah, repentance, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna, the Throne of Glory, the Temple, and the name of the Messiah. The Torah, for it is written, The Lord made me [sc. the Torah] as the beginning of his way. Repentance, for it is written, Before the mountains were brought forth, and it is written, Thou turnest man to contrition, and sayest, Repent, ye children of men. The Garden of Eden, as it is written, And the Lord planted a garden in Eden from aforetime. The Gehenna, for it is written, For Tophet [i.e., Gehenna] is ordered of old. The Throne of Glory and the Temple, for it is written, Thou throne of glory, on high from the beginning, Thou place of our sanctuary. The name of the Messiah, as it is written, His [sc. the Messiah's] name shall endure for ever, and has existed before the sun! — I will tell you: only its cavity was created before the world was created, but its fire [was created] on the eve of the Sabbath.*

The Messiah's sacrifice also goes back to this time (Hebrews 9:26; Revelation 13:8). The Bahir (a book of deeper Hebrew teachings on the Torah that we address in our Revelation study), affirms Yeshua's words. It compares the Kingdom to a special light from God set aside since the foundation of the world:

**Bahir 190** - *"What is Fear of God? It is the First Light. Rabbi Meir thus said: Why is it written (Genesis 1:3): And God said 'Let their be light, and there was light.' Why does it not say: 'And it was so?' But this teaches us that the light was very intense, so that no created thing could gaze upon it. God therefore store it away for the righteous in the Ultimate Future.*

### **Matthew 25:35**

**For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:**

**Clarke: I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat**—Every thing which is done to a follower of Christ, whether it be good or evil, he considers as done to himself, see Matthew 25:40; Acts 9:4, 5; Hebrews 6:10. Of all the fruits of the Spirit, none are mentioned here but those that spring from love, or mercy; because these give men the nearest conformity to God. Jesus had said, Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy; and he here shows how this promise shall be fulfilled. The rabbins say: “As often as a poor man presents himself at thy door, the holy blessed God stands at his right hand: if thou give him alms, know that he who stands at his right hand will give thee a reward. But if thou give him not alms, he who stands at his right hand will punish thee.” Vaiyikra Rabba, s. 34, fol. 178.

**Spurgeon:** The King dwells with great delight upon the details of his servants' kindnesses to himself. Are we, then, after all, to be saved by our works? By no means. Yet are our works the evidences of our being saved. If our actions are such as Christ will commend at the day of judgment, they prove that we are saved by grace, and that the Holy Spirit has wrought effectually in us, and through us. The services mentioned by the King were all rendered to himself: "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat,: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in: naked and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." There is no mention of what the righteous had said, or of what profession of love to Christ they had made; the commendation was for what the King declared they had actually done by way of ministering unto him.

### **Matthew 25:36**

**Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.**

**Clarke: I was sick, and ye visited me**—Relieving the strangers, and visiting the sick, were in high estimation among the Jews. One of their sayings on this head is worthy of notice: “He who neglects to visit the sick is like him who has shed blood.” That is, as he has neglected, when it was in his power, to preserve life, he is as guilty in the sight of the Lord as he is who has committed murder. See Kypke in loco.

**Naked**—Poorly clothed. Among the Jews they were called “naked” who were clad in poor raiment, or who had on only the “tunic” or inner garment, without any outer garment.

### **Matthew 25:37**

**Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink?**

**Clarke: Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, etc.**—This barbarous expression, an hungered, should be banished out of the text, wheresoever it occurs, and the simple word hungry substituted for it. Whatever is done for Christ's sake, is done through Christ's grace; and he who does the work attributes to Jesus both the will and the power by which the work was done, and seeks and expects the kingdom of heaven not as a reward, but as a gift of pure unmerited mercy. Yet, while workers together with his grace, God attributes to them that which they do through his influence, as if they had done it independently of him. God has a right to form what estimate he pleases of the works wrought through himself: but man is never safe except when he attributes all to his Maker.

### **Matthew 25:38**

**When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*?**

### **Matthew 25:39**

**Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?**

### **Matthew 25:40**

**And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.**

Three groups of people here: the sheep, the goats, and the brethren.

**Clarke: Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren**—The meanest follower of Christ is acknowledged by him as his brother! What infinite condescension! Those, whom many would scorn to set with the dogs of their flock, are brothers and sisters of the blessed Jesus, and shall soon be set among the princes of his people.

**Barnes: My brethren**—Either those who are Christians, whom he condescends to call brethren, or those who are afflicted, poor, and persecuted, who are his brethren and companions in suffering, and who suffer as he did on earth. See Hebrews 2:11; Matthew 12:50. How great is the condescension and kindness of the Judge of the world, thus to reward our actions, and to consider what we have done to the poor as done to him!

**Yashanete.com:** Yeshua's brethren are the children of Israel and those gentiles adopted into the faith of Israel. They are those who trust in Him and keep His Torah (1 John 2:3-4; 3:22-24; 5:2-3; 2 John 1:6; Revelation 12:17; 14:12; 22:14).

"Works" are an integral part of "faith" in Judaism:

**James 2:24** - *Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*

It can thus be said that those persecuting Torah-observant followers of Yeshua, are in fact persecuting Him.

**ESV:** In the context of the parable the **least of these** refers to those who are most needy among Jesus' **brothers**—a reference most likely to Jesus' disciples and by extension all believers. The “sheep” are commended for their great compassion for those in need—for the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger; for those who are naked, sick, or in prison. The righteous will inherit the kingdom *not because of* the compassionate works that they have done but because their righteousness comes from their transformed hearts in response to Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom, *as evidenced by* their compassion for the “least of these.” In caring for those in need, the righteous discover that their acts of compassion for the needy are the same as if done for Jesus himself (**you did it to me**).

### **Matthew 25:41**

**Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:**

**[Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire]** Some will be sent to the lake of fire and eternal punishment (Matthew 25:41,46; Matthew 13:39-50; Matthew 24:51; Rev. 14:9-11; Rev. 19:20; Rev. 20:10). These will make the firstfruits of the second resurrection, which is that of all the wicked dead (Rev. 20:4-6,11-15). Due to their judgment and entrance into eternal hell here, they will not be resurrected and judged again in Rev. 20:11-15.<sup>22</sup>

**[prepared for the devil and his angels]** Hell was prepared for Satan and his angels and no man needs to go there (John 3:16-20). If he persists in serving Satan then he will have to spend eternity with him (Matthew 25:41,46).

**Clarke: Depart from me, ye cursed**—Or, Ye cursed! depart.—These words are the address of the king to the sinners; and contain the reason why they are to be separated from blessedness: Ye are cursed, because ye have sinned, and would not come unto me that ye might have life.—No work of piety has proceeded from your hand, because the carnal mind, which is enmity against me, reigned in your heart; and ye would not have me to reign over you. Depart! this includes what some have termed the punishment of loss or privation. Ye cannot, ye, shall not be united to me—Depart! O terrible word! and yet a worse is to come.

**Clarke: Into everlasting fire**—This is the punishment of sense. Ye shall not only be separated from me, but ye shall be tormented, awfully, everlastingly tormented in that place of separation.

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<sup>22</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

**Clarke: Prepared for the devil and his angels**—The devil and his angels sinned before the creation of the world, and the place of torment was then prepared for them: it never was designed for human souls; but as the wicked are partakers with the devil and his angels in their iniquities, in their rebellion against God, so it is right that they should be sharers with them in their punishment. We see here, plainly, why sinners are destroyed, not because there was no salvation for them, but because they neglected to receive good, and do good. As they received not the Christ who was offered to them, so they could not do the work of righteousness which was required of them. They are cursed, because they refused to be blessed; and they are damned, because they refused to be saved.

**Spurgeon:** Every word in the King's sentence upon those on his left hand will strike terror into their hearts. "Depart from me:" to be banished from Christ's presence, is hell. "Ye cursed:" they could not plead that they had either kept the Law or obeyed the Gospel; they were indeed doubly cursed. They were bidden to depart "into ever lasting fire, prepared: for the devil and, his angels." They had joined the devil in refusing allegiance to the Lord; so it was but right that, imitating his rebellion, they should share his punishment.

### **Matthew 25:42**

**For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:**

**Clarke: I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat**—I put it in your power to do good, and ye would not. A variety of occasions offered themselves to you, but ye neglected them all, so that my blessings in your hands, not being improved, according to my order, became a curse to you.

### **Matthew 25:43**

**I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.**

**Clarke: I was a stranger**—If men were sure that Jesus Christ was actually somewhere in the land, in great personal distress, hungry, thirsty, naked, and confined, they would doubtless run unto and relieve him. Now Christ assures us that a man who is hungry, thirsty, naked, etc., is his representative, and that whatever we do to such a one he will consider as done to himself; yet this testimony of Christ is not regarded! Well, he will be just when he judges, and righteous when he punishes.

### **Matthew 25:44**

**Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?**

**Clarke: Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, etc.**—It is want of faith which in general produces hard-heartedness to the poor. The man who only sees with eyes of flesh is never likely to discover Christ in the person of a man destitute of the necessaries of life. Some pretend not to know the distressed; because they have no desire to relieve them; but we find that this ignorance will not avail them at the bar of God.

### **Matthew 25:45**

**Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me.**

### **Matthew 25:46**

**And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.**

This is not the resurrection judgment. There are four groups of people that go into Gehenna, or the outer darkness: paraguys (the beast and the false prophet), unrighteous nations (this judgment), then at the end of the millennium: the devil and his angels, and finally the wicked dead from the Great White Throne judgment.

Here nations are being judged. And they are judged in such a way that even the winners are puzzled.

Who are the brethren? Some consider all believers as this group, but perhaps it has a more specific and surprising application, his brethren being the Jewish remnant that will be given the mandate to be His witness around the world. The “Great Tribulation” is the “Time of Jacob’s Trouble,” focusing specifically on Israel and especially the 144,000 which are His ministers proclaiming the gospel to the world. They will be under great persecution. Certain nations will choose to protect them, feed them, hide them, etc. And they will be surprised that they will be singled out and spared.

We can also see a historical application of this theory, their are studies that have been published which show how nations rise and fall in relation to their treatment of the Jews (for example, the Persians vs. the Babylonians). This particular application is yet future.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Three Judgments**

- **The Sheep & Goat Judgment**
  - Judgment of the Nations
- **The Bema Seat of Christ**
  - The Believer’s Rewards
- **The Great White Throne Judgment**
  - The Final Judgment

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<sup>23</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Matthew, khouse.org

**[everlasting]** Greek: aionios (GSN-166), eternal. It is translated "everlasting" and "eternal" of twenty things:

1. God (Romans 1:20; Romans 16:26)
2. The Holy Spirit (Hebrews 9:14)
3. Life (44 times, Matthew 19:16,29; Matthew 25:46; John 3:16,36; Romans 6:22)
4. Salvation (Hebrews 5:9)
5. Redemption (Hebrews 9:12)
6. Inheritance (Hebrews 9:15)
7. Gospel (Rev. 14:6)
8. Covenant (Hebrews 13:20)
9. Kingdom (2 Peter 1:11)
10. Honor and power (1 Tim. 6:16)
11. Consolation (2 Thes. 2:16)
12. Glory (2 Thes. 1:10; 1 Peter 5:10)
13. Resurrected bodies (2 Cor. 5:1)
14. Things not seen (2 Cor. 4:18)
15. Habitations (Luke 16:9)
16. Destruction (2 Thes. 1:9)
17. Judgment (Hebrews 6:1-2)
18. Damnation (Mark 3:29)
19. Fire (Matthew 18:8; Matthew 25:41; Jude 1:7)
20. Punishment (Matthew 25:46)

The same Greek word is translated "everlasting" and "eternal" in this same verse and is used to describe both the eternal punishment of the wicked and the eternal life of the righteous; if one is eternal the other one is also everlasting.

**Clarke: And these shall go away into everlasting punishment**—No appeal, no remedy, to all eternity! No end to the punishment of those whose final impenitence manifests in them an eternal will and desire to sin. By dying in a settled opposition to God, they cast themselves into a necessity of continuing in an eternal aversion from him. But some are of opinion that this punishment shall have an end: this is as likely as that the glory of the righteous shall have an end: for the same word is used to express the duration of the punishment, *κολασιν αιωνιον*, as is used to express the duration of the state of glory: *ζωην αιωνιον*. I have seen the best things that have been written in favor of the final redemption of damned spirits; but I never saw an answer to the argument against that doctrine, drawn from this verse, but what sound learning and criticism should be ashamed to acknowledge. The original word *αιων* is certainly to be taken here in its proper grammatical sense, continued being, *αιειων*, NEVER ENDING. Some have gone a middle way, and think that the wicked shall be annihilated. This, I think, is contrary to the text; if they go into punishment, they continue to exist; for that which ceases to be, ceases to suffer. See Genesis 21:33, where the subject is explained.

From what our Lord has here said, we may see that God indispensably requires of every man to bring forth good fruit; and that a fruitless tree shall be inevitably cut down, and cast into the fire. Let it be also remarked that God does not here impute to his own children the good works which Jesus Christ did for them. No! Christ's feeding the

multitudes in Judea will not be imputed to them, while persons in their own neighborhood are perishing through want, and they have wherewithal to relieve them. He gives them a power that they may glorify his name by it and have, in their own souls, the continued satisfaction which arises from succouring the distressed. Let it be farther remarked, that Christ does not say here that they have purchased the eternal life by these good deeds. No! for the power to work, and the means of working, came both from God. They first had redemption through his blood, and then his Spirit worked in them to will and to do. They were therefore only workers together with him, and could not be said, in any sense of the word, to purchase God's glory, with his own property. But though God works in them, and by them, he does not obey for them. The works of piety and mercy THEY perform, under the influence and by the aid of his grace. Thus God preserves the freedom of the human soul, and secures his own glory at the same time. Let it be remarked, farther, that the punishment inflicted on the foolish virgins, the slothful servant, and the cursed who are separated from God, was not because of their personal crimes; but because they were not good, and were not useful in the world. Their lives do not appear to have been stained with crimes,—but they were not adorned with virtues. They are sent to hell because they did no good. They were not renewed in the image of God; and hence did not bring forth fruit to his glory. If these harmless people are sent to perdition, what must the end be of the wicked and profligate!

Eternal punishment takes place in hell (the lake of fire, or Gehenna), the place of punishment after death for all those who refuse to repent. In the Bible, three words are used in connection with eternal punishment.

(1) *Sheol*, or “the grave,” is used in the Old Testament to mean the place of the dead, generally thought to be under the earth. (See Job 24:19; Psalm 16:10; Isaiah 38:10.)

(2) *Hades* is the Greek word for the underworld, the realm of the dead. It is the word used in the New Testament for Sheol. (See Matthew 16:18; Rev. 1:18; Rev. 20:13-14.)

(3) *Gehenna*, or hell, was named after the Valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem where children were sacrificed by fire to the pagan gods (see 2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chron. 28:3). This is the place of eternal fire (Matthew 5:22; Matthew 10:28; Mark 9:43; Luke 12:5; James 3:6; Rev. 19:20) prepared for the devil, his angels, and all those who do not believe in God (Matthew 25:46; Rev. 20:9-10). This is the final and eternal state of the wicked after the resurrection and the last judgment.

When Jesus warns against unbelief, he is trying to save us from agonizing punishment.

**ESV: Then he will say to those on his left.** In contrast to the sheep (who will “inherit the kingdom”; v. 34), the goats are condemned to the **eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels**. The reason for their condemnation is that they are guilty of sins of omission—that is, they have refused to show compassion to the **least of these**, which is the same as if they failed to have any care for Jesus himself. Given the evident unrighteousness of their hearts, they are condemned to **eternal punishment**. Some interpreters hold that this judgment (**these will go away**) will occur prior to the inauguration of Jesus' earthly millennial kingdom, and that the “sheep” (v. 33) are those blessed to enter and live under Jesus' dominion. Others equate this judgment scene with

that which closes the earthly age, just prior to the eternal state (Rev. 20:11–13). The most important point, however, is that judgment will come.

**Spurgeon:** "Everlasting" and "eternal" are different translations of the same Greek word. The "punishment" is of the same duration as the "life." The one is no more temporary or terminable than the other. In heaven "the righteous" will be forever anticipating future bliss while enjoying present perfect happiness; and in hell, the unrighteous will be ever looking forward to "the wrath to come" while enduring what our Savior here describes as "everlasting punishment" in "everlasting fire" (v. 41). Between heaven and hell there is a great gulf fixed, an awful abyss that cannot be crossed, so that the separation between the sheep and the goats will be eternal and unalterable. God grant that none of us may be on the wrong side of that great gulf!