

## THE MOUNT OLIVET SERMON; Matthew 24 and 25

### Part 2 Chapter 25

#### The parable of Ten Virgins

**25:12; but He answered and said; truly I say to you, I do not know you.**

The three parables recorded in Matt. 24:45-25:30 belong together and should be studied together. The observation is correct that the first half deals with both faithfulness and wisdom, the second with wisdom alone, and the third faithfulness alone. The first is intended especially for the ministers of the church, the second and third is for all of her members; the second dealing with the spiritual life, the third with spiritual gifts and good works. In the first the hypocrites are exposed; in the second, the formal Christians; the third the slothful Christians. But this very inner corresponding of the parables and their close connection with Jesus' great discourse that precedes, shuts out the hypothesis that Matthew combined these pieces and made them read like a collected whole whereas Jesus did not utter them in the sequence that they are given to us. Was Matthew not present when Jesus spoke His discourse on Mt. Olivet? Yes he was, Matthew, as one of the original Twelve, observed all that Christ said and did personally.

Jesus told the following parables to clarify further what it means to be spiritually vigilant—ready for His return and how to live until He comes again. The ten bridesmaids teach that every person is responsible for his or her own spiritual condition. The story of the talents shows the necessity of using well what God has entrusted to us. The parable of the sheep and goats stresses the importance of expressing our faith through serving others in need. No parable by itself completely describes our preparation. Instead, each one presents one part of the whole picture.

***Matt. 25:1-13; Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five of them were prudent. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them. But the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. But at midnight there was a shout, "Behold, the bridegroom!" "Come out to meet him." Then all those virgins rose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the prudent, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." But the prudent answered saying "No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves." And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. And later the other virgins also came, saying "Lord, lord, open***

***up for us.” But he answered and said, “Truly I say to you, I do not know you.” Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.***

Let’s expand these verses a little bit to get their full meaning and context as is the usual habit I have acquired: *For the purpose of contrast I will teach you the importance of being properly prepared for my coming using a parable that compares My Second Coming to ten virgins going out to meet the bridegroom. At that time the divine spiritual kingdom of the glorious Messiah will be likened to ten damsels of marriageable age who took unto themselves, with their hands, lamps that were fed with oil and went to the place of the bridegroom from all different directions to have a meeting with the newly married bridegroom. But five of them had hearts that were morally worthless and five had a mindset that was sensible, and practically wise in relationships. The five that were morally worthless were so because they were not prepared and took no oil, which represents the Holy Spirit that enlightens the hearts of men concerning their need for God, namely in Jesus Christ. However, the five that had a mindset that was sensible and practically wise in relationships brought with them the provision of oil which represents the Holy Spirit that governs their vessels; the vessels being symbolic of their body that was accompanied with their torches, which symbolizes the eternal Light which bears witness to Christ. Now also, while the young bridegroom, who represents Christ, was up until this time delaying, all of the virgins got sleepy and began to fall fast asleep, which symbolizes that outwardly there was not much physically to differentiate them. But in the middle of the night there was a public outcry, “attention, the bridegroom is present! Go out from all directions to meet him,” which is symbolic of the fact that Christ will be coming from one direction and we shall be coming from another to meet together in the air. At that time every one of the virgins arose from a posture of sleep to trim their lamps, which is symbolic of being ready and prepared by being on the watch to honor and dignify the bridegroom. But at that time the morally worthless virgins spoke these words to the virgins that had a mindset that was sensible, and practically wise in their relationships, “Give to us, of your own accord and free will, some of your oil (your heart regenerated by the Holy Spirit), for our lamps (bodies) are about to be quenched (die).” However the sensible, and practically wise answered with discretion concerning reference to the preceding circumstances, speaking this to them, “No, because we do not have sufficient enough oil to satisfy the assistance that you need to make you content and us too; also the Holy Spirit is not ours to give or take away, go away instead from this place to the merchandisers (preachers and pastors) and pay the price to get some for yourselves. But while they were leaving that place to go to the merchandisers to buy oil, the bridegroom came to the place of those who were ready to complete their mission and entered in with him to the wedding festivities; and then the door was closed. So afterwards the remaining virgins also came to the place of the bridegroom, saying this: “Master, master, open up for us so that we may enter.” But the bridegroom answered in these words, “I tell you a most certain and infallible truth when I say, I am not acquainted with the person that you are, and none of you are related to me.” So*

*this is the lesson of the parable, take caution right now to prepare yourself against being continuously anxious which results from the fear of the loss of your salvation that may come from actual or imminent tests of your spiritual life, because you do not perceive for certain the day nor what part of The Day of God by whose authority Christ will return to sit as judge over you.*

This parable in the past has always been somewhat confusing to me, especially this first verse and this is the reason. First of all, why are ten virgins, who are of the marrying age, according to the Greek, going out to meet a recently married or engaged man? It sounds like it's a little deceiving when we read that they also did it under the cover of darkness (taking lamps), so they weren't going to meet him just have lunch with him! And, oh by the way, where is the recently married bride and what is she up to while all of this is going on? How does she feel about these ten virgins going out to meet with her recently married/engaged husband? If I allow my corrupt mind to fill in the blanks, I'm surprised that this parable isn't sponsored by a soap company! As we read on through the parable it seems as though the bridegroom is the only one going to the reception, leaving his bride, accompanied by five virgins, because five had to go elsewhere, none of whom, by the way, are his recently acquired wife! Before we let our minds stray too far off and we allow our imaginations to wander off into temptation and sin, I asked myself, how does this, that which appears to have the potential for a popular soap opera, compare with the purity and righteousness of Christ's Second Coming?

This parable, when read literally, seems to be awfully close to another religion that has its focus on multiple virgins, that is, if we do not take the time to learn about and understand the Jewish culture of this time. The obvious answer to these questions are, as usual, that there are some Jewish traditions and customs taking place that did not need explanation to those Jews that Jesus Christ was teaching so thus it would be pointless to explain every aspect that was common knowledge, of this parable to them. These are obviously traditions and customs that we do not practice, along with many others, in our culture of wedding ceremonies today. These are some of the things that we should know about this culture as we read this verse, so that we can keep it in its intended context. In the Greek, when a verse starts out with the word "then," the Teacher is bringing us back to verses that He has previously taught, that is, the verses that precede this one. In these previous verses He is talking about His Second Coming. At His Second Coming each of us will meet the Lord in the very spiritual condition that we were in when we died physically. That is, in a spiritual sense, we will have to ask ourselves this question, are we appropriately prepared and have we fulfilled all of the criteria that the Lord requires from us in order to be allowed into His kingdom? These criteria for adoption as His children that entitle us to this inheritance can be boiled down to just one question; do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and all that responding with a "yes" implies? In our answer we will either be counted with the foolish, who are not prepared (did not want to pay the cost of discipleship

and thus lose their inheritance), or with the wise, the ones who let the Holy Spirit convict their hearts of sin, righteousness and judgment, ***John 16:8; and when He comes (the Holy Spirit), will convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.***

This parable gives us some insight into what Jewish weddings looked like in the time that Jesus Christ walked with mankind on the earth. The bride and groom would've been betrothed by the parents and this would've made them legally man and wife, contrary to today when an arrangement is merely a promise to marry on a date set in the future. After the Jewish betrothal a certain amount of time was allowed to pass, but usually not a very long time. Then on a certain evening the groom, accompanied by his friends, proceeded in a festive procession from his own or his father's house to the home of his bride to bring her and her virgin companions back to the grooms home for the consummation of the marriage. What was understood by the Jews in this parable, but the parable doesn't tell us, is that the virgins were meeting the bridegroom to accompany the bride. These would be like bride's maids or attendants of a bride on a wedding today. This consummation took place while all of the friends of the bride and groom waited patiently outside of the house for the bride and groom to reappear to engage in the ceremonial day with its wedding festivities. This was the common procedure. Today we can't imagine having a wedding procession that is lead by the bride and groom to a house while all of those in the procession waited outside for the groom to pronounce that the marriage has been consummated! I've heard, but I can't verify, that if the sheets of the wedding bed had blood on them the procession cheered wildly, indicating that he had indeed married a virgin. If there were no blood stains on the sheets, the bride was assumed unfaithful and was promptly stoned to death.

This parable is an allegory about the Second Coming of Christ, even up to and including the consummation of the marriage. Those that are saved get a cheering welcome from the heavenly hosts; those who were not faithful are condemned to spiritual death. In the Second Coming the heavenly Bridegroom takes His bride, the true church, to His heavenly home, and the feast is held there. This explains the actions of the ten virgins who took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. These are friends of the bride who went out from their homes with the necessary lamps, not to the bride's home, but to a place that was conveniently near. When the groom brought the bride out of her home, these virgins came forward and joined the procession with their lighted lamps and had their part in the feasting and the joy of the wedding in the groom's house. These lamps were vessels that contained oil; they were really more like a torch that lighted the way.

One thing that I've noticed in the few parables that I have studied is that every word has significance and we can easily over-look some of these words. For instance, the number ten plays a very significant part in Jewish culture and in this parable; one of the things that the

number ten symbolizes is “restoration” or “completion.” We can find this number throughout the Scriptures, e.g.; there are Ten Commandments, then we have **Matt. 25:28; “therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has ten talents,” Luke 15:8; “Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?” Luke 19: 13-17; And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas, and said to them, “do business with this until I come back.” But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, “we do not want this man to reign over us.” And it came about that when he returned, after receiving the kingdom; he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him in order that he might know what business they had done. And the first appeared saying, “Master, your mina has made ten minas more.” And he said to him, “well done, good slave because you have been faithful in a very little thing, be in authority over ten cities.” Ps. 33:2; give thanks to the Lord with the lyre; sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings.**

Then also in the Jewish culture it took at least ten families to form a synagogue; and at least ten persons to form a funeral procession. These ten virgins represent all of those who refer to themselves as Christians during the ages. All of us on earth shall be made like the ten virgins at the Second Coming.

The second verse of the parable says that five were wise and five were foolish, the actions of both groups prove it out. We have five in each group, a broken ten. This should not be regarded as an indication that at the time of the Second Coming that there will be an equal amount of the wise and the foolish, but the division of the number ten intimates that there will be a lot of people that are not prepared for His Second Coming. Lamps without oil are the forms of Christian (?) life that are without substance, or without any evidence to claim that they are Christian. The lamps with oil can symbolize a true Christian that resembles the Light of Jesus Christ. As the teaching in James tells us, they are the ones who demonstrate their faith by their works, that is, their works are proof of their heart condition that has resulted from their faith. Some commentators teach that the oil represents the grace of God while others say that it is the Holy Spirit of God, personally I think either one fits and using either one would not change the point of the parable, of which the wise have all that they need to accomplish God’s will for them. This Holy Spirit/grace is not available to give away by those who have it, the only source is God alone to give out as He sees fit in His sovereignty. His Holy Spirit/grace is available to everyone, but some will reject it in their arrogance and pride because they want to be their own lord of their life. These persons do not want to be told or shown the pathway to true life, but want to accomplish everything in their own power thinking that they can bring with them their own furnishings for their afterlife; or possibly they cannot believe that such a gift can be free without any effort on their part and so they try to do works to deserve His gift. Some have

even convinced themselves that all of the preparing is something that can wait until they are on their death bed not even considering that we don't all die a slow death.

Hundreds of "Christians" attach themselves to a church but are never reborn or renewed in their heart and see merely church attendance as their means of salvation, much like the Jews who thought their heritage was enough to gain salvation. These people are carrying empty lamps. Both groups of virgins in the parable had done all that they considered necessary for meeting the Bridegroom. If He had come at once, or if He had delayed even longer than He did, the preparation of the two groups would have been the same; some would have oil and others would still be without oil. Even if both groups had been wide awake they would have not been more prepared than they were. In Christ's Second Coming some will have allowed their spirit to sleep, which is a way of saying that they were concentrating more on the material things of this world rather than on their spiritual destination. When the call came that the Bridegroom was ready the wise were perfectly ready and prepared. The virgins that were not ready let precious time slip away in which they too could have properly prepared themselves *if* they had seen the true importance of the event. Not to just be present at the correct time, but to be present and adequately prepared! The Coming of the Groom has only one purpose, namely to take His bride to the wedding feast, which has been prepared by Him in His home. Once inside the home the doors were shut, never again to be opened. Just as once we take our last breathe the opportunity for salvation and grace is gone. The door had only been opened to allow those whom Christ knows through His relationship with them, there will not be any wedding crashers at this wedding, those that did not desire to have a relationship with Him are as strangers to Him, just as those who do not desire a relationship with us are strangers to us, and He will not allow them to enter and the preparation time for this day has ended.

One point that should be brought out that could be misunderstood by a literal reading of this parable is that if the oil represents the Holy spirit/grace of God we have to know that it is not available as something that can be bought or bargained for to possess. The Holy Spirit/grace is a free *gift*, when the five wise virgins tell the five foolish virgins to go and buy oil, or in this case Holy Spirit/grace, this could represent the cost of discipleship; that is growing into the person that Jesus describes in His Sermon on the Mount and not regarding the values of the world as being attractive. The cost of giving up what we see as valuable that we have acquired from this present evil age is of no value to God. If they had the money to buy oil but did not do so before hand, this would indicate that Christ gave them plenty of opportunities to accept His gift but they turned it away in favor of spending their opportunities on fleshly, worldly pleasures and could not bring themselves to give anything of value (time) to the investment of their relationship with Christ. This brings out the character of the five foolish virgins. The priority of their values and attitudes was to spend what they had on what at the end times will be destroyed by moths and rust; ***Matt. 6:19; Do not lay up for yourselves***

***treasures upon the earth where moth and rust will destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.***

The five foolish virgins chose to invest in the here and now and in satisfying the pleasures of their flesh. The foolish virgins could be classified today as the ones who will be at a church service every Sunday, take good sermon notes, even intend to read and study them when they get home and apply them to their lives. But what happens when they leave church? Their Bible, with its good sermon notes, gets put on the shelf, or may never even leave the car, never to be reopened again until the next church service. “Out of sight, out of mind,” would seem to apply here. This happens because of choices of priorities in their life. Their life is filled with the transient temporal things of today with no inclination of a spiritual investment in their future life in eternity. Maintaining relationships with family and friends has taken a higher priority than their relationship with Christ, thus they never get to a point of having an intimate relationship with Him and do not know Him. This, of course, is not acceptable to Him and the reason for His reply toward the closing verse of this parable; “truly, I do not know you,” as He shuts the door and never opens it again. Even, as in our worldly relationships, we cannot truly know someone that we do not have a relationship with, so it goes in our spiritual life also; we cannot know Christ if we do not have a relationship with Him.

So, what is the lesson we should learn from this parable? “Watch,” be prepared, because the day and the hour of His coming is unknown. Believers should live as if the Lord might come at any moment. Are our lamps trimmed and filled with oil? The pivotal words of this parable are “foolish” and “wise” and these two words center on the oil, (grace and relationship). Our watching means that we must constantly look to ourselves, not depending on someone else for our preparation, to be ever ready, to be ever rich in grace so that when the day and the hour arrive there may be no question as to our being received by Jesus Christ into His wedding feast. For example we cannot attach ourselves to our pastor and depend on him to do everything for us, to speak to God for us, to act as our representative, to have the faith that saves us!

Jesus concluded the parable of the ten virgins with this application that His true followers must keep watch and be ready because He will return when they least expect it. God may delay His return longer than we prefer or expect. We must be prepared for such a delay—counting the cost of discipleship and persevering faithfully until He returns. Those who are unfaithful must realize that neglecting Christ’s invitation may lead to irreversible consequences and the time of opportunity to believe may pass.

In the parable that follows this One, Jesus Christ, describes *how* we are to keep watch. As we proceed to the next parable look for the application to be watchful in our prayers, (public and private), in the sermons and in the teachings that we listen to, our attitudes at time of

communion, and every other religious exercise. We need to be watchful over our heart because our heart is an indicator of who we are; it is the seat and center of human life as the seat of the desires, feelings, affections, passions, impulses, and the mind. We need to be watchful over the words that we use in our conversations, being on the alert for any disbelief that may enter in. These can come from being too attached to the world and its offerings in general with its snares and charms, false teachers and their doctrines and dogmas. If we clean up all of these areas of our life we will be on the way to being prepared. But we should not become discouraged if we fail a few times, this regeneration or sanctification process is exactly that, a process. We must put the failures behind us and celebrate the victories that through the power and strength of the Holy Spirit we have become over-comers. To become discouraged and give up is playing exactly into the hands of the enemy.

### **Parable of the Talents**

#### **Matthew 25:14-30**

***Matthew 25:21; His master said to him, "Well done good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master, (or Lord).***

As I studied this parable I came to the realization that God has made an investment in me, giving me talents also. There are times, as I think back when He has given me five talents because He has seen my attitudes and values in me as a good investment and there are times when I know that I have been like the person that only receive one talent; when my attitudes and values were of the selfish type, not willing to share or invest in the work of His kingdom and I instead try to use them to build my own kingdom here on earth. Of course, ideally, we would all be a person that our Lord could invest five talents in, but I think before we get to that point in our spiritual walk it is just as important to find some consistency and constancy in our life. Not for God's benefit, for there is nothing that we can do for His benefit, but so we can know who we are constantly, to what we are capable, and what others can expect from us. Inconsistencies in our person can have a detrimental affect on our abilities to use our talents, as people will have a tendency to shy away from us not knowing what to expect from us. This is not to say that we should become stagnant in our spiritual life, but more like the kind of person that when compared to a graft would be the person that continually, consistently, and smoothly goes toward the goal and not have our graft looking like we are trying to draw a picture of the Alps. Although in this parable the word "talents" is used as a type of money, we can apply this word to the gifts and abilities that God gives us and expects us to use to the fullest of our capacity in His ministry.



***Matt. 25:14-30; For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves, and entrusted his possessions to them. And to one He gave five talents, to another two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. But he who received the one talent went away and dug in the ground, and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. And the one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, "Master, you entrusted five talents to me; see, I have gained five more talents." His master said to him, "Well done good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master." The one also who had received the two talents, came up and said, "Master, you entrusted to me two talents; see, I have gained two more talents. His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, Master I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed. And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground; see, you have what is yours." But the master answered and said to him, "You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow; and gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received by money back with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has ten talents. For to everyone who has shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*** The preceding parable explains how Jesus' followers are to keep watch and use their time during their wait for His return. While the previous parable about the wise and foolish bridesmaids stressed readiness, this parable focuses on using the waiting time well. So let's translate these words from the original Greek to possibly get a deeper, fuller meaning of what Jesus is teaching us: *Because the kingdom of heaven can be as this parable describes that uses a familiar picture of a master about to emigrate from his country to another, and while he is gone it compares the profitability of his servants whose master sent for them that were in servitude to him to be delivered over to the care and charge of his goods while he was gone. And so to one of them the master entrusted five talents or approximately \$1,000.00 in silver per talent, and so to another servant two, and finally to another one talent, he gave to each one proportional to and within his own moral capacity to invest and he then left to emigrate to another country. So then the servant that received the five thousand dollars worth of silver left where he was and went to do business and make profit with the money and so he gained five thousand dollars more. And so likewise the servant who had*

received the two thousand dollars worth of silver gained two thousand more. However, the servant who had received the one thousand dollars worth of silver departed and dug out some ground and concealed his master's silver. So now, following a succession of much time the master of the servants came to them to take up the matter of settling up his account with them concerning how they invested what he had given them. And so the servant that had taken the five thousand dollars worth of silver came toward him and also brought with him five thousand dollars more than he had been given, speaking these words to his master, "you entrusted me with five thousand of your dollars worth of silver; I call your attention to the five thousand more dollars worth of silver that I have profited, so that you will know what I have done while you were gone." His master spoke these words to him, "Well done, servant of good character and disposition, faithful in the performance of your duty; you were faithful in the performance of your duty with a few things, I will place you in an office where you will be in charge of many things, enter into the fruition of joy and bliss of your Lord." The one servant also, who was entrusted with the two thousand dollars worth of silver approached his master and said these words, "Lord, you entrusted to me two thousand dollars worth of silver; I call your attention to the two thousand dollars worth of silver I have profited so that you will know what I have done." His Lord said these words to him, "Well done, servant of good character and disposition, faithful in the performance of your duty; you were faithful in the performance of your duty with a few things, I will place you in an office where you will be in charge of many things; enter into the fruition of joy and bliss of your Lord." And then the one servant who had received the one thousand dollars worth of silver came toward his Lord and said these words, "Lord, I have come to know you to be a man of inhumane character, that is, harsh, stern, and severe, turning the labors of others into your own profit, and assembling and gathering together profits from the place where you did not invest. And so I was terrified, and departed from that place and hid your one thousand dollars worth of silver in the ground; I call your attention to what I have, to give you what is yours." However his Lord responded discreetly in reference to what the servant had spoken and took this opportunity to say these words to him, "You wicked and corrupt, slothful servant, I will set you aside because you are no longer useful, you remarked that I turn the labors of others into my own profit and profited from places where I did not invest. At the time you received the one thousand dollars worth of silver you would have done the right and proper thing to have placed the money with brokers, and then upon my returning to this place I would have acquired my money accompanied with interest. Now then, jailers, take away the one thousand dollars worth of silver and separate him from it and additionally give it to the servant that has ten thousand dollars worth of silver. Because to each and every one who has shall more be given, and additionally he shall have more than enough; however, from the one who is poor and does not have external possessions, even what he has shall be departed from him. Additionally forcibly throw out the unprofitable servant into the spiritual darkness of misery and damnation, the outer place where persons go that did not use their God given

*talents; in that place of final judgment where there shall be wailing and a grating and crunching together of teeth.*

This parable teaches us that when the Lord returns there will be true and false servants. The story revolves around a man who, before going on a long journey, assembled his own servants and gave to each one varying amounts of money, (coincidentally the money was referred to in Biblical times as talents), according to his own ability. One got five talents, another two, and the last one, one talent. They were to use the money to bring income to the master. The man with five talents earned another five. The man with two doubled his. But the man with one went and dug a hole and buried his. This is to explain the fact that we have all been given talents to minister to others according to our abilities; we are all expected to use our talent(s) and we will be held accountable as to how we used it. We have at times been tempted to be just casual observers of other's ministries and talents, but this attitude is not condoned by God and it will be judged by Him.

It is not difficult to see that Christ is the Master in this parable and the long journey is the inter-advent period. The three servants are Israelites living during the waiting period, responsible to represent the interests of the absent Lord. They are given responsibilities according to their abilities.

God, in Jesus Christ, revealed that He gives the basic gifts of life and opportunity to all and also differing talents to each according to that one's ability. Jesus does not present God as being unjust or unequal in His treatment of people, but as recognizing that He has made everybody as possessing natural life, but capable of accomplishing variably according to the strength or each one as we see in Matt. 25:15.

Paul calls the possessions of the Corinthians "surplus," meaning that they had more than what was necessary for their own needs. That was what they were able to earn, having been given greater ability to do so. They exercised their God-given talents to produce more than they needed. This is profit making, which is what is referred to in verses 16, 17, 20, and 22. There was nothing wrong with this, but a responsibility did ensue in the handling of the surplus. It was to meet the lack or the shortfall of others so that there might be equality, which meant the meeting of needs of others through giving according to their surplus.

Our God always provides for everyone's needs, however a problem arises when one has more than he needs and does not share his surplus, this causes an unfulfilled need. And then comes **2 Cor. 8:15; as it is written, "He who gathers much did not have too much, and he who gathered little had no lack."** This is also a quote from Ex. 16:18. The Greek translation says *"the one with much, implying over-gathering either by miscalculation, a lessened appetite, or greed.* He is the one who ended up with much more than he needed and was faced with a

problem. He could not store it because it would spoil. He would not have to waste it by attempting to store it if he had shared it with the one who miscalculated in not gathering enough. He would not have the problem of having too much becoming waste while others did not have enough. As we look at the whole of the earth this issue is magnified as we see some who go to bed hungry every night and even starve to death, while others have their cabinets stocked with more than enough food for themselves. God has blessed this earth with enough to feed everyone adequately. The lack to have enough to survive is only because of others refusal to share.

In this context then, the Greek word for “more than enough,” is used in contradistinction to the word for the Greek term “to have left over after the needs have been met because of the utilization of the abilities God has given someone.” Thus, “to have left over after the needs have been met etc.” means to recognize that one has more than he needs as a result of God’s direct gift, and not to allow it to go to waste but to share it with others so that they may not face the problem of their lack. The temptations faced in having too much can be alleviated by sharing with those who do not have enough. (Our garbage cans can provide the evidence of where we stand in this case). I believe that Jesus is emphasizing this point when He teaches us the lessons of the loaves and fish and intends for us to personalize what He is saying; ***Matt. 14:16-21; but Jesus said to them, “they do not need to go away; you give them something to eat!” And they said to Him, “We have here only five loaves and two fish.” And He said to them “Bring them here to Me.” And ordering the multitudes to recline on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food, and breaking the loaves He gave them to His disciples, and the disciples gave to the multitudes, and they all ate, and were satisfied. And they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets. And there were about five thousand men who ate, aside from women and children. Matt. 15:32-38; and Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, “I feel compassion for the multitude, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not wish to send them away hungry lest they faint on the way.” And the disciples said to Him, “where would we get so many loaves in a desolate place to satisfy such a great multitude?” And Jesus said to them, How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven, and a few small fish.” And He directed the multitude to sit on the ground; and He took the seven loaves and the fish; and giving thanks, He broke them and started giving them to the disciples in turn, to the multitudes. And they all ate, and were satisfied, and they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven large baskets full. And those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.*** These verses can have many applications, but on the subject of this study, one of the things that can be applied is Jesus’ concern that we can become selfish with what we have been given and the realization that all that we have been given is a gift (or talent) that comes from Him. I say again, that God has provided enough food for all the earth to “eat and be satisfied,” yet they are not. Why? As

we read in these verses everyone ate, all were equally fed according to their need, and nothing was wasted. The initial reaction of the disciples, when they checked to see what they had for provisions, sounds like they were tempted to keep what they had for themselves because the problem of the number of mouths to feed was bigger than the solution of some fish and some bread. We may be tempted to do the same thing when we think about the world hunger problem being so big that our simple one or two dollars a week will not make a significant difference. But let's think about how our Lord responded; **Matt. 16:7-10; and they began to discuss among themselves, saying, "It is because we took no bread." But Jesus aware of this, said; "You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? Do you not understand or remember the five loaves or the five thousand, how many baskets you took up? Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets you took up?"** Does it seem righteous and just that while we enjoy our 48 oz. soft drinks, our frappes and lattes, that we can feel comfortable while others are going to bed starving with the possibility that they may not make it alive through the night; our we convinced that we are helpless to their cause? Does our selfish lust for the latest in electronics or whatever else the world has to offer, that cause us to be in debt, which in turn causes us to not be able to be the steward that Jesus intended for us to be, justify our doing nothing or at least what we are capable? Are we so blessed by having enough food that we have a right to complain about how our food is prepared while we are being served, while others would walk miles for the same serving? Do we really think that we will not be judged for this? Have we convinced ourselves that we are not as bad as the servant that was given the one talent and did not invest it according to his master's plan and we will not be as equally judged as he? In our land of plenty we have so much that we grow to be obese by taking more than our worldly share. In a sense we are taking the food out of the mouth of a starving person to keep for ourselves. As the saying goes "if we are not part of the solution we are a part of the problem." What does Jesus have to say about this? **Luke 12:47, 48; and the slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but a few. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. Luke 16:10; "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.** Here, the temptation may lead to the sin of greed where one is never content with what he has been blessed with. A covetous person is one who increases his desires as he receives more, and thereafter never has enough for himself and therefore never has enough, in his mind, to share. We can also see that the servant who chose not to invest his master's money was a hoarder, lacked faith in God to provide his means for living. He chose rather to hold onto what his master had given him, kind of like a back-up plan, incase our Lord did not come through with an adequate provision, this lack of faith ultimately cost him his eternal life. This should cause us to

pause to check to see what kind of back-up plan that we may have in our life, do we *fully* trust in our Lord, or do we need a back-up plan just in case. If our Lord Jesus Christ's grace is not enough to trust in, rely on, or have faith in; if we need a back-up plan in addition to His, then there is nothing of what He wants to give us that is of interest to us relative to eternal life.

To receive wisdom which relies on grace over and against the folly which disregards grace, Jesus adds this parable to the one He taught of the virgins, concerning the faithfulness which makes full use of this grace by producing good works. The connective word "for" makes this parable an exposition of verse 13. It indicates the scope of the parable; our watching for the Lord's coming by faithfully using His talents in His service. Thus grace kindles faith and a new life that entitles us to enter the heavenly marriage is for this very reason to be followed by fruits of grace and faith and a new life which has as its results good works. We should not try to change the order of the two parables. Especially in these last times it is no less needful to admonish men to Christian discipline and good works and then of how necessary it is that they exercise themselves in good works as a declaration of their faith and gratitude toward God.

The sense is quite plain. Jesus is still speaking of the kingdom of heaven which He addresses in verse 1 and is adding another resemblance to that verse. This one is concerning a man who goes away from home to another country and remains away for a considerable time. He is a wealthy man who has investments and these consist mainly of money. This money he duly gives to his servants. The implication is not that they are entitled to this money, but that his plans necessitate this procedure. This man and his going abroad are a picture of Jesus who is about to leave His disciples to enter the glory of heaven, to be gone a long while, and then at last to return. The servants are to represent what the master would do if he would not have left.

He called his own servants who belonged to him and whose personal interests were identical with his own. He called them in order to inform them of his plans and of the great and honorable way in which he intended to employ them during his stay abroad. To turn all of his wealth over to men who were nothing but his servants implied that he was honoring them with a great trust. This appealed to the noblest motive in their hearts to show themselves worthy of such a trust. It involved a corresponding responsibility on their part and a resolve that they would measure up to this responsibility.

The master or lord that is mentioned in this parable is, of course, Christ, who in an everlasting covenant with the Father, agreed to become man, was prophesied as such, and frequently appeared in human form in the OT as well as in the NT. In the fullness of time He resided here on earth, though He was not a mere man, but was God as well as man. He had all the perfections and fullness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in Him. This is the man that traveled into a faraway country, by which heaven is meant, and is referred to as a faraway

country not only for its great distance from earth, which indeed is really great as far as moral righteousness is concerned, but because the greater land and country is out of sight and the views that we have of this country are very few and distant in respect to our pilgrimage here on earth. Christ was a pilgrim and a stranger too and a man of traveling while He was on this earth; He came from heaven and ascended back to heaven. While on earth He did a lot of traveling up and down the country doing good and when He had finished He ascended on to heaven again until it becomes time for restitution. Before He took this journey He called all of His disciples so as to commit some things to their trust and management and to give them instructions on how to conduct themselves during His absence. According to Jewish law a master that had a mind to go out of the country could not take his servants with him and this was the rule for all times leaving the management of the land in the hands of Gentile servants.

By “his own servants” is meant “not all of mankind.” For though they are all his servants, or ought to be, they are not called so in Scripture even though they are servants of Christ, and His own, not all of them that are entrusted with talents are truly His servants. One of them is wicked, slothful, graceless, and at last eternally lost, and perished; which is not true of the elect. In a deeper sense Christ is referring to ministers of His Word who are eminently the servants of Christ, His own, whom He has called, qualified and commissioned and sent forth. The ministers of the Word, whether faithful or slothful, good or bad, are in a lively manner described in this parable, which are gifted by Him, going all the way back to Judas. They were to invest in and deliver to Christ’s church the Gospel, that rich treasure of divine truth and gifts to preach it. These are all Christ’s goods and His gifts and not man’s. This came to fruition upon Christ’s ascension, but just before He was ready to go He gathered His disciple together and renewed and enlarged their commission to preach the Gospel and quickly after that He gave them greater and larger gifts of the Spirit. He has, ever since then, been giving ministerial gifts to men, to some more, to some less, but always as needed to accomplish His mission, and always within the bounds of one’s ability and circumstance.

The man in the parable did not want his assets to lay fallow while he was gone. The master divided his talents among his servants according to their abilities. No one received more or less than he could handle. Obviously the master knew his servants well, for the one that was entrusted with the least was the one that let him down. The different sums of money point out how God recognizes each person as a unique individual with varied circumstances and personalities. What He gives each person is exactly the right proportion. This removes the excuse that one of His servants failed because he was overwhelmed. God gives us the gifts of time, abilities, and other resources according to our abilities, and He expects us to invest them wisely until He returns. Jesus lists these talents in the next parable.

Only three servants are mentioned in the parable and for the purpose and demonstration of the parable that is enough to show diversity. In the parable the number of the servants is not important to make a point. The point that Jesus stresses here is the diversity, one getting more, another fewer. We might think of these talents as spiritual gifts alone, but we must also include our natural talents of the mind and body, position, influence, money, education, and every other earthly advantages and blessings. These also come from the same Lord as a sacred trust to be employed in His service. However valuable our gifts seem to us they aid in the Lord's work in only a very subordinate way. They were not intended to puff us up or cause one of us to be more or less attractive in a worldly sense.

The inequality; five, three, one, shows the height of His wisdom and love for us. We are not all alike even in nature. Both in the world and in the church there is endless variety. In both life is complex and calls for a variety of service and corresponding gifts; **1 Cor. 12:1-31; Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore, I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all of these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. For even as the body is one and yet many members, and all of the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews of Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each of them, in the body, just as He desired. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you;" or again, the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members**



***come to have more abundant seemliness, whereas our seemly members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets are they? All are not teachers are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have the gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret do they? But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.***

So, as we have read, the Lord alone apportions the gifts. He alone has the wisdom, the complete view, and the corresponding power to be appropriate with His gifts. Each person has his place to fill, his ability for that place, and receives his talent or talents accordingly to use that gift when the Lord brings about opportunities and they arise in our daily walk. What a calamity would result if a man who only had the ability to handle one talent is burdened with five or more. On the other hand, why only give one talent to a man who could well handle two? We see men doing this all the time especially to the detriment of their business or church, but the Lord does not.

Paul's questioning in verses 29 and 30 of Corinthians is extremely important, he seems to get very redundant, but it is with a purpose. It is put forth with the negative particle "not" which expects a negative reply. What we have as question, "All are not apostles, are they?" actually could be taken as a negative statement; "Not all are apostles! Not all are prophets!" If it is taken as a question, then the answer from the linguistic point of view must necessarily be a "no." Here Paul enumerates the gifts which do not pertain to all believers, but only to some. And since they pertain only to some, they are not and should not be placed by us as belonging to the first category of the gifts that God gives, (wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, etc.). When one subtracts these gifts, mentioned in verses 29 and 30, from the gifts mentioned in verses 8-10, we find which is the better of the two categories of gifts are. In this connection we must understand the Greek word used is not "the best gifts," but the "better gifts," since the Greek word used is a comparative of the word "good." There are "good" gifts, and these are not for all but for specific people in order to accomplish some special purposes for God in particular times designated by Him. These include apostles and prophets in their particular function as specific teachers to set forth rules of doctrine and conduct for all believers who were to follow. They also included those given the function of miraculous demonstrations of God's power, those with gifts of healings, and those speaking in unlearned languages and interpreting those languages. These are restricted gifts since only a few could and did have them. By virtue of their

restrictiveness, they are deemed inferior. But the gifts available to all at all time are those Paul calls the better gifts. Which then are the better gifts spoken of in verse 31 which we must seek? They are the balance of gifts mentioned in verses 8-10, not restricted to a few as per verses 29 and 30, the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, prophecy, and discernment of spirits. But there are two more which should be classified among the better gifts at the end of verse 28; helps and administrations or the gifts of administration. These administrations were most probably the elders appointed in apostolic days to examine whether the profession of faith of the candidates for baptism were genuine or not. Paul teaches us in verse 31 that these better gifts are to be sought after and not the gifts that are available to only a few. It is interesting to note that in my pride I would consider the gifts of verses 29 and 30 as the better gifts for the reason that they are restricted to only a few and thus are more impressive when in use. Which is probably the reason God did not discern that I should have these gifts.

Going back to the parable, in verse 16 we read that the first servant, the one with the five talents left immediately to begin investing his master's money. Here is a picture of Christ's followers as they deal with His gifts to this present day. Some are faithful and trusting and the results are accordingly; some are unfaithful with the result corresponding. The fact that the first servant went immediately is a sign of his faithfulness. He does not put off his commission and think that there is no need to hurry. With this attitude he is able to double the amount that his master gave him, which is equal to 100%. His going immediately shows us that he was committed to giving himself the maximum amount of time to make the most of what his master had given him and it also shows his unquestionable obedience and loyalty to his master which also enabled him to maximize his investment. We see this also when Jesus calls His Apostles to follow Him, they did not consider what they were leaving behind in a worldly sense, but in faith, immediately followed Him.

An account is given first of the servant who got the five talents; how he behaved, and conducted himself in his lord's absence. This should not be understood to indicate that there are fewer men in the five talent range than the 2 or the one talent range. But, this is what Christ sees as to what He desires as the norm for His servants, the ones that have the greatest talents. These do not stay to consult with flesh and blood; they get up immediately and begin the process of investing when they hear their calling. They are not deterred by the difficulty of discouragement, persecutions or reproaches. To think that we will immediately respond to the Lord's calling without difficulty would be to admit that there is no enemy to Christ's mission. But these that respond know that they can begin with courage and boldness; not in the name of their own strength, but in the strength of the Lord who sent him. The servant relies on His promise to be in His presence and to assist him wherever he needs assistance. So how does the process start? For each of us as individuals it can all be a little different, but a rule of thumb is that it starts by constantly reading and searching His Word. Then it is beneficial to meditate on

what you read and pray frequently. This will increase our spiritual knowledge, provide and recognize opportunities for us to practice our gifts and give us greater stock in divine wisdom and understanding.

In the time of Jesus' walking on the earth, it was not uncommon for a servant or slave to save enough money to enable his self to buy his freedom. These servants of the parable may have been given the opportunity to make money off of their master's money for such a purpose. That would explain, in the worldly sense, the immediacy of the servant to leave and start the investment process. This also would be true in the application for us today. The sooner we start investing in heavenly stock, the sooner we will experience the freedom from the bondage of the world; ***John 8:31-36; Jesus was therefore saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." They answered Him, "we are Abraham's offspring, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, You shall become free?" Jesus answered them, "Truly I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. And the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.***

In verse 17 we see that the second servant also gained or acquired 100% of what he was given. In regard to the percentage of the gain, the two of them are alike; one is as faithful as the other. The gains represent what the Lord requires of us, namely that we should return to Him, at minimum, an equal amount of what He has given us to work with. The talents gained are the graces and the gifts found in others whom we win for the church and whom we help forward in their Christian life. There is a constant extension and multiplication of gifts in the church, that is, talent is reproducing talent. But the point of the parable is the faithfulness of the servants. One has a higher office in the church, wider opportunities for service, and a greater measure of knowledge, etc.; so we should not be alarmed if we see equal faithfulness producing unequal results. Both servants had equal amounts of faith each producing different results. On the same hand, a man receiving 5 talents can also be lazy, careless, and waste time and only profit one talent. Why a man of this disposition would receive 5 talents is not a part of this parable, only the results.

As a contrast to the first two servants who were given the 5 and 2 talents, Jesus now presents the case of the servant that was given only one talent. This may be to cause us to look at ourselves and ask the question, "Lord, is it I?" To illustrate the unfaithfulness of this servant Jesus uses the servant who had received only one talent. This, of course, is not to teach that only those who have the fewest gifts are the only unfaithful ones. Jesus takes the one whose responsibilities were the lightest; he had no more than he could easily handle. If he had been burdened with more talents he would've had an excuse; but as it is he has none. Nor could he

claim that, if he had received the five talents, he would've proved himself to be faithful; all it would've done is to prove his unfaithfulness being even greater than it was. Since only three servants are used in the parable each stand for a type that includes lesser variations. So this servant was only burdened with the one talent since it was proportional to his capacity and ability. No more was required of him than was required of the others and it was a responsibility that could've easily been accomplished by him.

Jesus sketches the lightest type of guilt; the money was only buried and left to lie idle, unproductive, whereas it is the very nature of our gifts that they should be productive. Those whose gifts are remaining idle could represent those who come to church services only as an observer and do not participate in any other church activities. Jesus could've given us an example where the man squandered the money, spending it on his own pleasure, this would've even been worse than what he did, at least by burying it he did not give back less than he was given, but this misses the point that Jesus is trying to teach us. By burying it the servant regarded the gift as something he did not desire for himself, it aroused no response from his heart. Since he had it, he kept it, indeed, but only because he could not avoid having it. He kept it in a manner which revealed his real attitude toward the gift and the Giver, he buried it. He was thus like the one who had no gift at all, but he is the one who made himself like the one that none was given. He is a picture of all of those in the church who for any reason refuse to use their gifts of Christ in His service. By such non-use the gifts are buried, and those who have them put themselves into the same state with those who are without gifts. This servant's complete unfaithfulness includes all degrees of unfaithfulness. Do any of us want to be like this servant? By doing in part what he did concurs with his actions at least to that extent; e.g. to be given 5 talents but only use three or anything less than five, puts us into a category of being an unfaithful servant. These may seem like harsh words, but to bury any gift or part thereof is to reflect to that degree, unfaithfulness.

This verse seems to point out the worldly mindedness of this particular servant and his worldly disposition. He was eager to pursue the things of this present evil age. This is probably why he disregarded his talent and made no use of his ministerial gifts. He could not deny the world, nor leave all to follow Christ. But rather than to disregard the world he chose to bury his talent in the world. It was the Lord's talent and not his own and he is accountable to the Lord for that gift.

The servant's master returning from his long journey depicts the Lord in His Second Coming and His judgment according to the works that we have accomplished for His kingdom. The great moment that everyone has been waiting for since Adam's fall from the Garden has come; Christ has returned to settle accounts. When this verse says "After a long time" it seems that this is like a hint to His disciples that His Second Coming might not be as soon as they think;

of course a “long time” is a relative term. But this long time surely implies two things; the delay thoroughly tests out the faithful, and at the same time it gives the unfaithful a long period to repent and to make amends. Many have started out well but falter through life’s trials and tribulations, or they just fail from laziness or skepticism. The point of this verse is the reckoning at the end. It comes eventually. It is the judgment that accompanies the Second Coming. We are all going to have to give an account of our faithfulness, so does this mean that we just drop everything that we are doing, stop attending school, quit our jobs, and go live like hermits in a church somewhere? No, it just means that we are to use our God given talents to the best of our ability in serving God in whatever we do. We should be doing our daily work out of love and gratitude for God, being faithful in what He has given us. We can’t profess to be servants of the Lord and have nothing to show for what He has given us. So what is the test to tell if we are using our talents to the fullness of our capacity? We might consider this; everyone who is in our sphere of influence is an opportunity given to us to invest our talent in sent from God. The things that the ministers of the Word are entrusted with are things of value. The gospel is a pearl of great expense or a rich treasure that is put into our earthen vessels. The souls of men are of great worth and esteemed worthy, in Christ’s eyes, of spending our talents, or to multiply our talents, not just for the sake of multiplication, but for the love of Christ. This shows usefulness of the gospel ministry and our talents.

As we continue on in this parable we see how Jesus pictures the servant that was given two talents exactly the same as the servant that was given five talents. But behind all of this joy in their faithful accomplishments for Christ there appears the sure confidence of faith in Christ’s accomplishments for us; first this clear, significant, and grateful acknowledgment: “Lord, you have entrusted me with five talents.” The credit goes to Him; without this gift the servant could not have accomplished anything. If he had not been given 5 talents he would’ve had nothing to use as an investment. In the Greek it is better translated, “see, another five talents I have acquired.” This is not in the attitude of boasting, that is, “look see, what I have done... what I have done.” The gifts, those whom we bring to Christ that God gives us are in and of a different sense ours, and Jesus gladly accords us the feeling that our great efforts have not been in vain. **1 Cor. 15:58; Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.**

The servant that was the first one to receive his talents is the first one to come and report to his master as to what he accomplished with them. He is also the first to be reckoned with; he came freely and cheerfully, with a holy confidence and fearlessness of mind. He gave an account very readily both of what he had been given and what he had gained by them. True ministers of the gospel frankly own the talents that they have been given by Christ and as such should be willing to give them up with an increase. Christ will not be ignorant of what they have been doing and of what use they have made of their talents but the sense is that as all will

be manifest to Christ, the Searcher of our hearts, so an accounting will be given that will be fair and open and it will be known by all. This could be compared somewhat to parents who give their child tuition for college; the parents usually want an accounting from their child as to how well they have invested in the tuition.

The first two servants received exactly the same commendation...“Well done good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things; I will make you in charge over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.” The test of their service was not how much they earned, but how hard they tried. Each used his ability fully and earned one hundred percent. They represent the true believers whose reward it is to enjoy the blessings of the Messianic kingdom.

The servants are rewarded beyond what they deserve. Being a servant of their master, he and all his labor and skill belong to that master and so too everything that he profited from his talents. But this master is to be a picture of Jesus Christ with His heavenly generosity. When the master says “well” he means “it is well,” what he has done is complete in itself, rendering a judgment of verdict of what he has done. We, in our English would probably say something like “Fine” or “Excellent.” The same is true as in regard to the verdict of the servant, the servant is “excellent or reliable” and thus he furnishes his master great satisfaction. No higher commendation can come to any believer from Jesus. This significant approval outranks any flattery or honor that the world can bestow on a man. Jesus holds up this commendation to us in advance in order that we may keep it forever before our eyes and allow it to be a reminder to always be faithful.

This servant's master might have stopped with this approval, many masters would have; or they may have added something tangible like a small token of appreciation from the profits. But it is not so with this master who is to be pictured as Christ. “You were faithful over few things; I will put you in charge of many things. So all of these talents are referred to as “a few things,” just enough to try us out to see what kind of servant we are. So what then will the “many things be?” They are veiled by the multitude and their richness, partly because the imagery of the parable is so restricted, and partly because our poor earthly minds can't reach up to these coming heavenly glories. But here all of the Lord's goodness and grace appear: His one thought is our elevation and our joy. He places us first over a “few things,” and then over “many things,” and both of these phrases are placed forward for the sake of emphasis.

Gospel ministers do not say among themselves “well done,” because they know that they cannot do anything well within themselves and when they have done all that they can, they own up to being no more than unprofitable servants. They acknowledge that anything “well” that they accomplish is only by the grace of God and through the strength of Christ. No praise is owing to them nor do they expect or seek for such praise from men.

It was a very familiar theme for the Jews of Jesus time to praise their good servants by using the words that Christ used in this parable; “O man! Good and faithful” and if the servant made a profit they would add; “You have been faithful over a few things.” It was usual for the Jews to express the happiness of the world to come by using the word “joy.” This not only expressed the joy which is from the Lord, but also that which He Himself rejoices with His people. It was also a popular saying that they used speaking of joy that said; “there is no joy before or in the presence of the holy Blessed God, since the world was created like that joy with which He will rejoice with the righteous in the world to come.”

The first servant brought ten talents to his master when he returned and his master was pleased with his efforts and with the profit. The reward for the servant’s fulfilling his responsibilities faithfully is even greater responsibility. This should not be looked upon as a greater burden only; this is not unlike a faithful employee who proves to his boss that he can handle whatever responsibility that is put before him and he is rewarded with a promotion in the work place, which is usually accompanied with a greater responsibility than he had and a greater sharing in the profits as well.

The servant in verse 22 and 23 that had received the two talents faithfully responded to his master and fulfilled his responsibility also. He was given less money, but he had done everything that he could and brought to his master a 100% return also. His master rewarded him in kind as he did with the first servant.

The application here is that we are responsible to use well what God has given us. The issue is not how much do we have, but how well we use what we have. Each believer should faithfully carry out the duties entrusted to him or her by God and multiply his or her “talents” for the sake of the kingdom.

From this point of view we come to the third servant; he had nothing but excuses and insults to offer his master upon his return. He accused him of being hard and unreasonable, reaping where he did not sow and gathering where he did not scatter. He excused himself on the basis that he was paralyzed with fear, so he buried his talent so that he would not lose it. This servant was doubtlessly an unbeliever; no genuine servant would entertain such thoughts of his master. I get the feeling that this servant was speculating that his master may not return from his journey and he could later claim the talent for himself. So, after a time had elapsed, he could go to where he buried his money and spend it on himself instead of investing it for the kingdom. When his master returned, to save face, all he could do was to make up lies about his master to try to excuse his behavior.

The third servant, in spite of his attitudes and values concerning his master and his ways of doing business, was compelled to come to him after he returned from his journey. Every

unfaithful servant will be compelled to come to Him upon Christ's return. The words in the verse, "Now he also," adds him to the rest of the servants with whom he ought to belong but with whom he does not, in reality, belong. The characters in the parable speak frankly, we see exactly who and what they are. This will be especially true for us at the time of our judgment when every hidden secret of ours will be revealed. This servant starts out his presentation to his master with the brazen words, "Lord, I knew." The whole parable flatly contradicts this servant's alleged knowledge of his Lord. This servant perceives his master who is great with generosity to be as envious and as self-seeking as he is himself. He perceives his master to be the type of person that he would be if the roles were reversed. He calls his lord a hard man, like a dried stick that will no longer bend; set absolutely on obtaining his own advantage.

What this servant says is true in a certain sense; we all do work for the Lord and He is unbending morally. The trouble is that a half-truth may be the very worst kind of a lie. We are servants of Jesus Christ, and that may sound as though He profits from our labor; but we must consider what it cost him to elevate us to being in a position of being His servants; the price of His own blood. If we labored for Him a million years we could never, ever repay Him. Secondly all of our gifts are His, freely, generously, bestowed upon us; and they were given to us so that we might have the joy and honor of serving our rightful Master. We are servants no matter how we look at it or how we chose to use or not use our talents; if we are not a servant to the Lord we are a servant that serves Satan. Finally this morally blind servant saw only the gain that was turned over to his lord; he never saw what his lord had in mind concerning these talents and his beloved servants. This proposition is indeed one-sided, but not in the Lord's favor; it is all in our favor. It is not sufficient for us to retain what is given to us; it must be made use of and improved on because every spiritual gift is given for profit. This extends to our blessings also; blessings were never intended to be kept to our selfish desires but to be shared with someone who has less. This third servant had the audacity to not even bring his talent with him, but kept it buried in the ground; the only thing that he offers his master is excuses. ***1 Tim 4:8; for bodily discipline is only of little gain, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for that life to come. 2 Tim. 3:16; All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. Titus 3:8; This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.***

The last servant made excuses instead of realizing that, from the start, his responsibility was to serve his master to the best of his ability. To refuse to serve his master to the best of his ability reveals a lack of love and little desire to accomplish anything for the master. We must not make excuses to avoid doing what God calls us to do. God truly is our Master so we must obey Him. Our time, abilities, and money aren't really ours; we are caretakers, not owners.



When we ignore, squander, or abuse what we have been given, we are in a rebellious disposition and deserve to be punished.

The lord of the last servant rebuked him for being lazy and wicked. If this servant really thought of his master as being hard why didn't he deposit the one talent that he had in the bank to earn interest? And, oh by the way, the master is not agreeing with the servant's assessment of him. Rather he is saying, "If that's the kind of master you thought I am that's all the more reason to have put the talent to work. Your words condemn you, not excuse you."

The very way in which the master is addressed is a judgment and a verdict upon the servant. He is pronounced as being wicked and lazy namely in the active, vicious sense. And that wicked attitude prompted his action in seeing to it that his lord should not obtain any profit from the talent that he was given.

Instead of the master defending himself against the wicked, lazy servant's slanders his master turns the tables on him and convicts him out of his own mouth and shows him that he is basely lying and pronouncing his own condemnation. The guilty reveal their guilt and their sentences are pronounced accordingly. So this slave was afraid of losing the talent and knew what a harsh man his master was? This is his premise but look at the lying conclusion; he buries the talent. That is exactly what does not follow from his premise. But, wickedness always argues like a fool. The open falseness of his words displays the servant's inner character and attitude. The master, and in this case, it is easy to see how it figuratively represents Christ, remains silent while being accused, just as he did when he was on trial for His life; there was no need to speak because the lies that were being perpetrated, now and in His future trial, only judge the accusers.

Calling this man a "wicked" servant for going out and burying his master's talent, may to some, seem like rather harsh words for this servant. This man's wickedness lays in his slothfulness; in not doing the good that he was capable of doing, having gifts and abilities that made him capable. It also comes from his bringing false charges against his master, whom we can see by how he treated the other two servants, did not deserve the charges brought against him by this servant. He took no pains to improve his spiritual knowledge and instead of digging for the truth in the word, the true hidden treasure, he dug in the earth and hid his talent. He neglected the gift that was given to him; he did not stir up or study God's word to show himself a workman that did not need to feel ashamed of whom he is. He did not allow himself time to read, meditate, and pray, but trusted and depended on the diligent work that other men had done. His only concern was to gratify his lusts and he had no regard to his master's interest. This servant may have even had good intentions of digging up the silver to invest, but his procrastination took charge of him to a point where other worldly values took a higher priority in his life and the investing never got done. The master had every right to require the servants

to fulfill their responsibilities. He had not expected much from this particular servant in the first place; that's why the servant received so little.

If this man had earned as little as one talent with his talent, he would've received the same commendation as the others. Instead, all he had to show for his life was a hole in the ground! His talent was taken from him and given to the man with the ten talents. This follows a fixed law in the spiritual realm: *to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.* Those who desire to be used for God's glory are given the means. The more that they do, the more they are enabled to do for Him. Conversely, we lose what we don't use. Atrophy of talents is the reward for laziness.

The mention of the bankers in verse 27 suggests that if we cannot use our possessions for the Lord, we should turn them over to others who can. The bankers in this case may be missionaries, Bible societies, Christian publishing houses, gospel radio programs, etc. In a world like ours, there is no excuse for leaving money idle.

But the servant had never made the talent that he was given as his own in any true sense of the word. But the command to give this talent to the man who already had ten comes as a little bit of a surprise. However, which one of the three demonstrated that he was able to take on any additional burden? Evidently the first one does. Also this point can be made in the parable; none of the Lord's gifts are ever lost. He takes care of them because they are valuable to Him both here on earth and also in heaven. The one who neglects his gift only enriches another by providing him with an additional gift. To diligent ministers of the word more spiritual light and knowledge is given.

The master severed his relationship with this servant, took away his talent, and gave it to the one who had earned the ten talents. This parable describes the consequences of two attitudes regarding Christ's return. The person who diligently prepares for it by investing his or her time and talent to serve God will be rewarded. The person who has no heart for the work of the kingdom will be punished. God rewards faithfulness. Those who bear no fruit for God's kingdom cannot expect to be treated the same as those who are faithful. As we are studying this parable we should not lose sight of the purpose that Jesus is teaching this parable, that is, to show us how to be alert and prepared for His Second Coming.

The divine law of the kingdom is that the one who has, by using his gifts appropriately and thus getting more and more, shall be given, namely by his Lord's hand of grace. And the effect shall be that this man shall abound even more by his Lord's grace. And exactly the opposite is true according to this divine law; from him that has not, by his wicked refusal to

employ the gifts bestowed upon him, from him shall be taken away even what he has, namely, in an outward and merely apparent way.

While this is the law of the kingdom it appears also in the ordinary affairs of men. The wealthy miser who keeps his money locked up is really a poor man. The mentally gifted man who neglects his gifts is like a man who doesn't have a gift. And thus an *apparent* Christian who knows the gospel and confesses it but never appropriates it inwardly and makes it a part of his life is like a non-Christian. The very opportunity which one neglects to his loss is given to another for gain. Here in this age we may recover from a loss, but it will be too late to escape the operation of this law when Christ appears. So, it is entirely possible that at least some of the gifts that we have been given have been given to us because of lack of use in other persons.

The unprofitable servant was cast out—excluded from the kingdom. He shared the anguished fate of the wicked. It was not his failure to invest the talent that condemned him, that was only outward evidence of the condition of his heart; rather his lack of good works showed that he lacked saving faith. Here we learn that none who are useless to the Lord can remain in His kingdom. That is why He takes us into His trust, fits us out with great gifts and tries us out to see if we have any active faith and love for Him. The reality is that He doesn't need to "try us out." He knew before the creation of the world whether we would be one of His elect or not; this visible evidence is for our sake; it is meant to be evident to ourselves so that we can no longer lie to ourselves about if we are or are not using our gifts appropriately, rather than having our minds wandering around in space somewhere never knowing for sure, He makes the evidence plain and obvious.

All servants of Christ are unprofitable with respect to God, because man cannot give anything of profit to Him by means of merit. When we, as His servants, have done the most or the best, all that we have done is what it is our duty to do. But this servant was unprofitable with respect to himself. He did not improve the gift or the talent bestowed on him. And with respect to other men he was of no use to the conversion of sinners or the comfort of the saints. He brought no honor to his master and was of no use to the spreading of the gospel. Therefore, it seems that, he was good for nothing and the ministering angels were charged with the casting him into the outer darkness to join others like minded.

Watching and waiting for the kingdom means being prepared. Being prepared is defined as making ready for the Second Coming and our entering into our final destination by increasing the glory of God in this world through good deeds. Good deeds are best performed through the talents God has given us and should be done to the best of our ability. If our good deeds are done for anything other than for His glory, they are counted as null and void in His kingdom.

The Lord here stresses the element of exclusion awaiting the unrepentant. The background is the demonstration of great faith. The whole context is Jesus' teaching concerning the final exclusion from entrance to heaven of anybody who proves to be a hypocrite. "Shall be cast out" comes from two Greek words that mean "out" and "to cast." It refers to a particular time when this is going to happen and it is an action done by someone else other than themselves. It is not a capricious throwing or an erratic, flighty, disorderly, casting out of the hypocrites, but it is something that they brought upon themselves through their hypocritical pretense that they were the followers of Christ when they were not.

In the times that Jesus walked the earth the "outer darkness" was a reference to an area outside of the well lit banquet hall where there was darkness. The person who managed to sneak into the banquet hall without proper dress was cast into the outer darkness. That meant an area farther away from the immediate darkness next to the banquet hall where the darkness was not so dense as in the area that lay farther away. The "outer darkness" in this teaching refers to the place of suffering for the unbelievers contrasted to the light where the believers dwell. Unbelievers will be thrown into the furnace of fire, whereas believer will shine as the sun in the kingdom of the Father, ***Matt. 13:41-43, The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom everything that is offensive and a stumbling block, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place they shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.***

The expression "outer darkness," occurs at the end of the parable of the talents, a parable to show the necessity of serving Christ faithfully according to His investment in us. The expression must refer to the exclusion of the enjoyment of heaven. Entrance into heaven is through the acceptance of Christ's sacrifice for our justification. The neglect of the Christian's responsibilities and faithfulness to his task as a Christian in the world is considered of such paramount importance that the same simile is used by the Lord, "the outer darkness," to indicate the punishment for the unbeliever for his rejection of God's salvation. In the case of the unbeliever, it will be positive punishment, fire and burning. The weeping and gnashing of teeth refers to being angry at one's self for missing such marvelous opportunities the person had on earth; the same emotional attitude will be expressed for the lost opportunity of genuine and true repentance followed by the works of repentance. The unbeliever did not decide to go through the narrow gate and live in the straightway when he had the opportunity. The Lord wants to teach us that after death there are no do-overs, in repentance or in serving Him in our God given opportunities.

The lesson is that there is no one who can claim that God has given him nothing for which he must give an account. But the parable of the talents also teaches us that God

distributes His gifts unequally; to one He gave five talents, to another two talents, and to another one. He expects the proper yield proportionate to His investment in us. All that we have has been received from God and we are responsible for appropriate use of it. None of us can say that we have received nothing. No matter how much or how little we have, we must always recognize that it has come from God, and we are proportionately responsible to Him for all that He has given.

## **The Judgment**

### **Matt. 25:31-46**

#### ***Matt. 25:33 and He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left.***

Jesus started His discourse with Matt. 24:4-14 where He sketches out the entire course of the world until the end of this age. He follows up in vs. 24:15-28, with a sketch of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish nation; then to this He adds the account of His actual Second Coming in vs. 24:29-31. Then came the warnings sections that are marked by three parables and finally now He needs to add the description of the final judgment itself in Matt. 25:31-46. Everything that Jesus taught was vitally important, but, this discourse seems to confront, at least for me, in a way that erases all of my excuses for my sin and my unpreparedness for Him. I can't read this section of the Bible without realizing that some changes need to be made in who I am if (1) I truly want to call myself a Christian; and (2) that I have been given all that I need if I am to believe that I am saved from condemning judgment.

After Jesus teaches us all of the implications of using or not using our talents in the preceding parable; He now gives us examples of the talents in which He is referring. Jesus is, here in these verses, showing us specific talents that He expects each of His disciples to practice. We probably don't see these as talents and we may choose to call them random acts of kindness, but since they follow directly after the parable it makes sense that these are included in what He is teaching. And we must keep in mind that even if we would rather refer to these as random acts of kindness the capacity to perform them have still come from our Lord Jesus Christ and are as a result of our faith in Him. From these basic six talents other talents may sprout, much like the Ten Commandments in which every behavioral misstep stems from one of the foundational Ten Commandments. Here we have listed the six talents; feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing those who do not have proper clothing, being hospitable to a stranger, visiting the sick, and going to those in prison. Sometimes the cost of practicing these talents holds us back whether that would be in time, emotions, or money, but our Lord assures us that He will provide for all of our needs in any ministry that we pursue or are called to practice.

***Matt. 25:31-46; But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all of the angels with Him, then He'll sit on His glorious throne. And all of the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you invited Me in; naked and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?" And the King will answer and say to them, "truly I say to you to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me." Then He will also say to those on His left, "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger; and you did not invite Me in; naked and you did not clothe Me; sick and in prison, and you did not visit Me." Then they themselves also will answer, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?" Then He will answer and say to them, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to the least of these, you did not do it to Me." And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.***

These words, when taken in their proper context, teaches us that God takes notice of the way that we, especially those who claim to be Christians, treat other people. God promises us that He will have mercy on those whom practice acts of mercy and judge to condemnation those who do not. So let's take these verses apart so we don't miss any vital part of what He is teaching us: *However, when the time comes that is the appointed time for the Messiah, that is, the One being, the One who had come, and the One coming who is additionally a Man of heavenly origin or the God/man, who will return to earth in His exalted state of blissful perfection remaining in place, and in addition He will be accompanied with His messengers that are devoted to the service of the Deity, sharing in God's purity and abstaining from earth's defilement; He will at that time cause Himself to sit down on His emblem of royal authority to judge individuals on a universal scope and be recognized for all that He is; which will bring a sudden end to the seven years of tribulation and the ushering in of His kingdom. Additionally every one of the races of the earth will have cause to come together in the presence of Him for an accounting; and He will additionally cause separation of them one from another, corresponding to how the one who cares for flocks causes the separation of the pure white sheep from what is second in importance to them, the goats. He will also judge the sheep and the goats causing the pure white sheep to stand at His preferable right hand side, and the*

*secondarily important goats at His left side as being in opposition to the ones on His right. At that time the King will call for those on His preferable right hand side for the purpose of separation saying, "Come follow Me, as the choice first fruits you who have been acted upon by the Father and have been saved, you are friends of God and shall possess admission to His kingdom of heaven and its attendant privileges, which has been destined for you since the creation of the world. And this is the reason that I have separated you from the goats; at a time that I was starving you gave to Me of your own accord and good will something to eat; My mouth was dry and you gave to Me of your own accord and good will, something to drink; I was an alien from another place and you gave Me hospitality and protection; I was not properly dressed and you put appropriate clothes on Me; I was suffering from disease or the consequence of disease, and you nursed Me; I was in custody at a prison, and you came to Me." At that time those who have conditioned their lives by a standard which is not theirs but God's will take this occasion to answer Him in reference to the preceding statements, uttering these definite words, "Lord, at what time did we perceive that You were starving and give You nourishment, or have a dry mouth and give You a drink? And, also, at what time did we perceive You as an alien from another place and give You hospitality and protection, or not properly clothed and put clothes on You? Additionally, at what time did we perceive You to be suffering from disease or the consequence of disease, or in custody at a prison and come to You?" Then the Messiah will take this opportunity to answer them in relation to the preceding questions as He uttered these words to them, "In all truthfulness I say this to you, to the measure that you continue to do these things on behalf of one of these members of My community of brethren, even the least of them, you continued to practice it on behalf of Me." At that time He will additionally say these words to those who are in opposition to the ones on His right, "Go from My presence, you who have publically denied Me and are forever cursed; enter into the perpetual punishment and abode of demons and the souls of wicked men which has been appointed for the Accuser and his demons. Because I was starving and you did not give Me something to eat; My mouth was dry and you did not give Me something to drink; I was an alien from another place and you did not give Me hospitality nor protection; I did not have appropriate clothing and you had the means to clothe me but did not clothe Me; diseased and in custody and you did not come to Me. At that time the ones on the left will also take this occasion to speak this in reference to the preceding circumstance, "Master, at what time did we perceive You to be starving, or have a dry mouth, or an alien from another place, or have inappropriate clothing, or diseased, or in custody and did not serve You?" At that time our Lord will take this occasion to speak this in reference to the preceding circumstance, "I, as truth itself, tell you a most certain and infallible truth, in as much as you did not continually do it to one of the least in rank or dignity, you did not continually practice it on behalf of Me. And so these that have been judged to be in the position of being in opposition to Me and who I am will depart from Me for perpetual punishment, a state or place of the lost and condemned, because*

*of the violations of the eternal law of God, however the ones that have brought forth fruits of righteousness which is of God by faith will enter into the blessed life that satisfies, being indwelt by God.*

If we take a step back to see the whole picture that Jesus is presenting to us concerning His Second Coming and the events that will take place it is clear that He is connecting these verses (25:31-46) with the verses in chapter 24, namely verses 30 and 31; And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all of the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. He is now bringing His discourse to an end or a climax.

“The Son of Man” who is more than a mere man, the Incarnate Second Person of the Godhead, shall come as such; but this time not in humiliation as He once came for our redemption, but this time in His glory, the sum of all of His attributes, that is, in His non-moral attributes, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, immutability, and also in His moral attributes, holiness, righteousness-justice, love, mercy and grace, truth veracity and faithfulness, and sovereignty, in their unrestricted use and display and we will also see Him in His human nature. In 24:31 “His angels” are mentioned only incidentally, and are mentioned only as they receive their orders. Now Jesus teaches us that all of His angels shall be with Him at His coming and we will see who the “Son of Man,” in all of His glory, really is.

He is gathering every race of His people from every nation to be judged; it is more than a judgment of all of those currently living, it is for all men that ever have been in every nation under heaven since Adam to that last man that will be born.

The Judge Himself is first described who is said to be “the Son of Man.” This is a title that Christ has been frequently called and by which He calls Himself in His state of humiliation. It expresses both the truth of His human nature and the purpose of Him being in that state. He appeared to us as a humble servant, a man of sorrows, despised by some men, and subjected to unspeakable suffering and a horrific death on a cross, this is His human side. But when He comes again it will be in another manner; He will appear in His glory, the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father in the glory of His deity. He will appear in the glory of the perfection of His divine nature which was, for the most part, hidden from most persons. In His coming we will see Him with the entire honor that is due to Him, all the power He possess, and the authority to judge the whole earth. And all of His angels will add to His glory, not merely as attendants to make this event seem even more grand, but as ministers employed by Him to separate the wicked from the good and he will sit on His throne as judge, visible to everyone. Paul later wrote in **2 Cor. 5:10; For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that**



***each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 2 Thess. 1:6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.***

When we read in verse 31 “when the Son of Man comes” it means the One present being and the One who had been, and the One coming. This is used this way to indicate that God is timeless. It declares that there has never been a time when God was non-existent; hence He is self-existent. If we translate it as “who is” only, then we are acknowledging His present existence only. ***John 1:18; No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.*** This verse expresses the eternal unbroken relationship of the Son to the Father as two coequal and coeternal personalities of the Triune God. This verse answers the question, “Has God always been around?”

The second part of the expression answers the question, “since when has God been around?” “The One who had been,” takes us all the way back before the beginning of creation, to which He gave existence, He Himself having been self-existent. This is the same Greek grammar that is used in ***John 1:1; In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*** In the Greek grammar the verb “was” takes us back to a time before the beginning of the creation. A more adequate translation in this context would be “before there was a beginning, the Word (Christ in His eternal spiritual essence) had been.” This is a declaration of the coeternity of the Son with the Father. The Son’s relationship with the Father must not be taken as dormant but active. Some of us can be lured into a wrong thinking in thinking that since the OT does not mention Christ as obviously as the NT that Christ just sat around biding His time until the Father sent Him to earth to minister to us. Christ played an active role in the OT as well as the NT and has been molding and shaping creation since before creation until this day.

A literal translation of the Greek to English words and grammar of “to come” is “the Coming One.” This does not exclude the fact that He came at different times and in different ways speaking to His creation. He came, He is here, and He will yet keep coming in ways peculiar and necessary for the execution of His eternal plan until He creates a qualitatively new heaven and earth.

The Bible teaches us Theism, which is that God is One who keeps in touch with and sovereignly controls all things. God will finally intervene through His Son, the Lord Jesus, to ultimately realize His eternal purposes. At Christ’s return all men will stand before God in judgment to receive their due reward or judgment. Maybe, and we really can’t dwell on trying

to get into God's immense mind for too long, this designation of God as "the existing One, the One who was, and the coming One," is given only in the Book of Revelation is because it is only there that God's plan of sending Jesus Christ for the final bringing out of justice on earth is described more fully. **Rev. 20:11-15; And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.** In this passage the word that has been commonly translated in the NT as "judged," "vengeance" or "punishment," in reality is better translated as "the bringing out of justice." So it could better be translated; *and I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life, to bring out justice for the dead, according to their deeds.* This time mentioned in the Revelation, will be a time when Jesus Christ and everything on earth will be righteously rectified.

This declaration of the timelessness of God must be taken as applying to all three personalities of the Triune God, to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. On the surface, in its occurrences in the book of Revelation, it would appear as applying only to God the Father. But, this is not so, if we are true to the Greek and the references are carefully studied. It applies to both the Father and the Son. **Rev. 1:4-5; John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood.** In the Textus Receptus (text received as used in the KJV) it has "grace unto you and peace from God," and then gives the designation of God's timelessness, "the existing One, the One who was, and the coming One. The UBS (the text used by the United Bible Society) leaves out the phrase "from God," which the Majority Text (a reading as it occurs in the majority of texts) has it, and it should be translated "from God," the Triune God, (which includes God the Father but not exclusively). We should observe how the other two personalities are clearly mentioned: "and from the seven Spirits which are before the throne; and from Jesus Christ." The seven Spirits here are equivalent to the Holy Spirit. When in Revelation the Spirit is named as "the seven Spirits of God" this is the same symbolic seven that is found in the seven churches. Seven is the sum of three, (the symbolic number of God), plus four, (the symbolic number for men); through the Spirit, dealing with men. In the case of the churches seven indicates the union with God through the Spirit with His church. This

“seven” points to the Spirit’s commission to proceed from the throne and to make God and men united as one in spirit.

Who is the particular personality of the Trinity described in the Book of the Revelation as “the coming One?” It is Jesus Christ. The Revelation closes like this: **Rev. 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” “Amen. Come Lord Jesus.” Rev. 1:7; Behold, He cometh with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen.** In this verse there is no doubt that this refers to the Lord Jesus. **Rev. 1:8; “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, who is, who was, and is to come, the Almighty.** In this verse it is the Lord Jesus who asserts His divine titles, “the Alpha and the Omega,” the beginning and the ending. Here Jesus is speaking, assuming all the glory which belongs to God the Father as if confirming what He stated on earth: **John 10:30; “I and the Father are one,** making it to mean one in substance, power, glory, but not one personality. The same Jesus Christ speaking as God/man said, **John 14:28; “You heard that I said to you, I go away, and I will come to you.” If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I.”** We read in Rev. 1:8 that He calls Himself the “ruler of all” because that is how He presents Himself throughout the Book of Revelation in regard to His Coming.

Of these two instances (Rev. 1:4, 8), the claim of deity being beyond time must both apply to God the Father and to the eternal Son who has always been in the bosom of the Father. It is in His glory (His glorious moral attributes, excellence, and perfection), that He will return.

The third occurrence of the phrase (although slightly different) is in **Revelation 4:8; And the four living creatures, each of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.** Jesus is surrounded by His saints and the ascription of praise, correctly translated reads: *The One who had been, and the One being, and the coming One.* In the two previous occurrences the phrase started with “the One being,” while here it starts with, “The One who had been.” Why? Possibly because of the desire of the new heavenly worshippers wanting to identify the One on the throne as the One who had been on earth, the same Lord Jesus whom they believed while on earth.

The fourth occurrence is in **Rev. 11:17; We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast, because Thou hast taken Thy great power and hast begun to reign.** This verse presents us with the return of Jesus, the resurrection and worship of the saints in heaven and their prayer of thanksgiving.

**Rev. 16:5; And I heard the angels of the waters saying, "Righteous art Thou, who art and who wast, O Holy One, because Thou dost judge these things.** This verse takes place in the execution of the judgment of the third bowl. The only difference is the events described take place at the end of the Tribulation and take a very short time. Therefore, the Lord Jesus is no more described as "the coming One," but as "the One about to be here. "

Throughout the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus appears as the Judge of Men and is always discriminating in separating the good from the bad, the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the tares, the grain from the chaff, and the sincere man from the hypocrite. Our Lord Jesus is constantly separating men into two classes. The Father gives all judgment to the Son. Jesus came into this world for judgment, **John 5:22-27; For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given judgment to the Son, in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. Truly, truly, I say to you an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment because He is the Son of Man.** Jesus separates men under moral tests, those who love His righteousness and those who reject it. His judgment seat is at the same time the throne of His glory where we will see Him in all of His attributes.

Our Lord Jesus does not leave us ignorant as to the tests that He is going to apply as our Judge and he urges us to judge ourselves ahead of time for the purpose of self-correction. Therefore, everyone of us is called upon to evaluate his own life in looking at his works and deeds; **Matthew 16:27; For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds. Rev. 20:12; And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. Rom. 2:6; who will render to man according to his deeds.** These deeds will include the deeds that result from faith in Him and of kindness toward others and in taking care lest we be a cause of stumbling to one of His little ones, whether they are little in faith or in age.

Our Lord Jesus places Himself as the supreme and personal judge of our attitude toward Him and presents Himself as our moral standard whereby we must judge ourselves. These are some areas to test when judging ourselves in contrast to Jesus Christ:

- (1) Devotion to Him; **Matt. 10:38; And He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. Matt. 19:28; And Jesus said to them; "Truly I say to you,**

***that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Mark 8:34; And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let Him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”*** What Jesus is teaching us and saying, in effect, is that “I am going to suffer and die so that men might be saved through my work and example. If you desire to come after Me, or in other words attach yourself to Me as a disciple, you must deny your selfish impulses; you may have to forsake personal comforts, social enjoyments, earthly ties, grand ambitions, material riches, and even life itself.” Words like these make us wonder how we can really believe that it is alright for us to live in luxury and ease. How can we justify our materialism, selfishness, and our coldness of heart? His words call us to lives of self-denial, surrender, suffering, and sacrifice. To deny means to turn off, refuse association, companionship, and disown self. Not just one portion of a special habit or desire, but self completely! This is essential to a true conversion to the Christian life. Christ and self cannot occupy the same space. It is a mistake to call all of our suffering a cross, the cross is that suffering alone which results from our faithful connection with Christ. But we are assured that however heavy our cross may be He helps us to carry it. Three things are necessary to be a disciple of Christ, saying farewell to self, carrying our baggage or the cross, and proceed with the journey by following Him. The first two are preparation for the third and they always come in this order; Christ’s Word and grace alone can accomplish both.

- (2) Confession of Him; ***Matt. 10:32; Everyone who therefore shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. Luke 12:8; And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man shall confess him also before the angels of God.*** In view of the preceding considerations, what is more reasonable than that the disciple of Christ should fearlessly confess Him before men? Any shame or reproach that we might bear will be abundantly rewarded in heaven when our Lord Jesus confesses us before our heavenly Father. Confessions here involve commitment to Him as Lord and Savior and the resulting acknowledgement of Him by our mouth and our conduct. The last part of each of these verses should remove any fear that we might have when we are called upon to confess Him before men. “Before men” emphasizes the importance of doing this in public in the fullness of the term, that is, His work, teachings and doctrines. Whoever identifies himself with Christ; Christ will identify Himself with him. No spiritually sane person would consider the approval of men over the approval of Christ. It’s hard to imagine how we will feel when we hear Jesus Christ calling our

name and confessing us as belonging to Him before the Father and His host of angels in heaven!

- (3) Appreciation of His presence and work: ***Matt. 11:21; Woe to you Chorazin! Woe to you Bethsaida! For if the miracles has occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.*** We, as Christ's disciple can get comfortable in living in the results of His work and begin to assume or take for granted all that he has done for us and continues to do. The performing of miracles is a call to faith and trust in Jesus Christ in all that He says and does; if we reject any of what He has done we must reject all of it because it is all done on the same foundation, that is, to bring men to salvation. His work is the essence of who He is, so to deny His work is to deny Him.
- (4) Our accountability to Him: ***John 5:40; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life.*** To refuse to come to Jesus Christ is to reject life because He is the giver of life. Religious zeal—even involvement with the Scriptures—does not bring a person to eternal life. The religious leaders of Jesus' day knew what the Bible said but failed to apply its words to their lives. They knew the teachings of the Scriptures but failed to see the Messiah to whom the Scriptures pointed. They knew the rules but missed the Savior. They refused to let the Son of God change their lives. This is even more foolish than not allowing a doctor that had a cure for a terminal disease to apply his medicine free, while we applied every home remedy and self help program instead of making an appointment to be healed. Persons with this kind of attitude love their sin more than they love the Savior and they refuse to give up their sinful lifestyle. If it wasn't so tragic it would be hilarious to think of the number of people that think they have life eternal without Jesus. Here are some possible reasons that people refuse to come to Christ:
- a.** Life in Christ is too demanding; some think they have found an easier way.
  - b.** Life in Christ is too humiliating; people resist surrender to Jesus because they think that it is the same as surrendering to anyone else.
  - c.** Life in Christ is too costly; people value their power, position, or possessions too much to set them aside for Christ.
  - d.** Life in Christ is too disappointing; Christ seems no different from the Christians who have been a bad example.
  - e.** Life in Christ is not relevant; it is about as significant as some people's dim memory of a visit to Sunday School or the latest talk show discussion on religion.

f. Life in Christ is for later in life; someday some people might get around to giving Him serious consideration. But while they are pursuing “better” things their hearts and minds become insensitive.

(5) Our belief in Him; ***John 3:18; He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe is judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:36; He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides in him. John 5:24; Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. John 6:40; for this is the will of My Father, that everyone that beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.*** In these verses Jesus is appealing for a personal response from the individual believer to become a member of the redeemed. God values each person. Jesus demonstrated how valuable each person is by His teaching that says, (paraphrasing); God sent the Son to earth; the Son came to earth; the Son promised to both preserve and to resurrect the ones He received from the Father. What is the will of the Father for the Son? Verse 39 explains it: ***And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.*** To “see” the Son here does not mean to see Him with our eyes but rather with our faith. Everyone who does this will receive everlasting faith as a present possession and also receive the assurance that they will be raised on the last day. Our beholding and our trusting are the normal effect of the Father’s showing us His Son and bringing us into contact with Him. This is spiritual life, like our physical life, it is invisible but is strongly manifested by its activities. That Jesus will resurrect this person on the last day is the consummation of His mission that is of the Sender’s will.

(6) Our honoring Him; ***John 5:22-23; For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.*** The certainty of our salvation is in the hands of the Son because God entrusted Him with the judicial and executive authority to judge. Thus He has equal dignity and honor with the Father. In these verses Jesus is referring to that time when everyone will recognize His lordship. The tragedy will be that many will recognize Jesus’ true nature but will have lost the opportunity to receive His saving grace. Those who are unwilling to honor Christ now will discover that they have not been honoring the Father either. People should not say they believe in God while

ignoring that power and authority of His Son. Where the Persons and the work are equal, the honor must be likewise. This is the Father's gracious purpose, desiring that all men by thus honoring the Son receive the Son's salvation. Merely to disregard or to ignore the Son is spiritually fatal. Every religious profession and practice, whether by individuals or by organizations that does not honor the Son, our Redeemer, and our Judge, has its sentence of condemnation recorded here in this verse. This is a most important statement, and one of the clearest proofs in the Bible of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The only conclusion we can come to from this verse is that Jesus Christ is God. We must not forget that the Bible is the word of God, and accept in glorious truth that Jesus Christ is God manifested in the flesh.

- (7) Our willingness to stand with Him; ***Matt. 12:30; He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters. Mark 8:38; For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.*** It is impossible to know about Christ and remain neutral indefinitely. Anyone who is not actively following Him has chosen to be against Him. Any person who tries to remain neutral in the struggle of good against evil is choosing to be separated from God, who alone is good. Gathering and scattering are OT pictures of faithful and apostate people, respectively. To refuse to follow Christ is a choice to follow Satan. The great work of Jesus is to gather the lost sheep; the wolf, Satan, is the one that scatters them.
- (8) Our right fruitage; ***Matt. 21:31-42; Which of the two did the will of his father? They said, "The latter." Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you that the tax gatherers and harlots will get into the kingdom of God before you. "For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax gatherers and harlots did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him." Listen to another parable. "There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey. And when the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. And the vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and seize his inheritance.' And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.***



***Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?" They said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers, who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons." Jesus said to them, "Did you never read the Scriptures, the stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone; this came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes." Matt. 7:16; You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? Luke 6:44; For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from briar bushes.*** Fruit is a Jewish metaphor for both character and conduct. Jesus' followers would be able to discern false prophets by looking at their lives and conduct. The evil character and conduct of false teachers reveals that they are no more than wolves in sheep's clothing. No matter what a person claims to be, his or her true character will eventually reveal itself. Fruit is good or bad depending on the health of the tree. Healthy trees bear good fruit, and unhealthy trees bear bad fruit. It cannot be any other way. Jesus followers can discern false teachers by the way they teach, that is, if they minimize Christ and glorify themselves. Their fruit will be bad, revealing a bad character. Jesus' claims would've been seen as ludicrous or insane if He hadn't backed them up with results. Just as the cream, the richest part of the milk, always eventually rises to the top to be separated from the milk, so too, the richness of truth eventually always makes its way to the top to be separated from untruths.

- (9) Our outward conduct; ***Matt. 22:11-13; But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw there a man not dressed in wedding clothes, and he said to him, "Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?" and he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, "bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*** It was unthinkable to come to a wedding banquet in soiled clothes. This would insult the host, who could only assume that the guest was ignorant, had not been truly invited, or was not prepared for the banquet. When the king pointed this out, the man was speechless. He had no explanation for his appearance (he had plenty of time to get ready), so the king declared him unprepared and unworthy. The man had been invited but he needed his wedding garment or he would miss out on the banquet. The wedding clothes are metaphor for the righteousness needed to enter God's kingdom—the total appearance in God's eyes that Christ provides for every believer. Christ has provided this garment of righteousness for everyone, but each person must put it on (that is, accept Christ's gracious provision of His life given for us, in order to enter the King's banquet (eternal life). This is an

open invitation, but we must be ready. In the final judgment God's true people will be revealed. Claiming to belong at the wedding feast while refusing to wear the correct garments is like the general population that claims Christianity but refuses to conduct their life in a godly moral fashion. At God's banquet all will be perfect and any kind of corruption will stick out like a sore thumb. Perfection cannot allow for any excuse for any type of corruption because the corruption will nullify the perfection.

- (10) Our willingness to help men; ***Isa. 58:7; is it not to divide your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him; and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? James 2:15, 16; If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?*** This hypothetical person who has a need may be a person that we see on a regular basis or someone who is a stranger to us who has a real need of either food or clothing; satisfied hunger and appropriate clothing being the simplest but most foundational requirements of comfort. To be without clothing and food is to be in a desperate, yet all-too-common situation. The problem of world hunger is greater than most of us can visualize or respond to, so, we often fail to help the problem. But James asks us to just think of an individual, not necessarily all of the poor in town, or all the hungry in the state. Working towards those huge needs begins with a reaching out to someone in our sphere of influence. People are fed and clothed one at a time. To see someone in a desperate need and just say to them "I'll pray for you;" or as James says (paraphrased), "I hope you find some clothes and get something to eat," but are not moved to do anything, in your heart you know that it will probably never happen and it demonstrates a real lack of compassion and faith. The futility of words without deeds is part of the message to us from James. When we pray to God to do something there is a real chance that we may be the ones to fulfill our own prayer request and God demands that we consider that possibility. Among Paul's final words to the Galatians were, ***Gal. 6:10; so then, while we have the opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.*** James is describing Christians who missed opportunities to help. *Everything* that we have been blessed with is merely on loan to us from God and meant to be shared with all that we meet with a need. Rather than helping, a lot of us judge a person that we see with a need as it being, somehow, their own fault that they are in the condition that they are in, which may or may not be the

case. To hoard it for ourselves while others suffer is to bring judgment on ourselves.

- (11) Use of God's gifts; **Matt. 13:12; for whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.** This verse, upon first glance, seems contrary to what we just read and even to what Jesus taught us about giving to those in need. But, as we look at the Greek grammar and the understanding of the Jewish traditions and culture we see that there is a lot that the Jews understood about this statement that we do not, in our culture. This first part of the verse could be better translated in English this way; *To those who have the knowledge given by God; then, to those who do not have knowledge of God.* So, the point of this reading this verse is that we cannot use this verse to comfort our guilt of not giving to those who have a need when we have an opportunity to give, which so many of us do, that would be taking this verse out of context. **Matt. 13:11; And He answered and said to them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted."** The ones that have been granted to know are the ones that believe in Him and His teachings; the ones that have not been granted are those who are still sitting on the fence. He will offer even more knowledge and understanding to the ones that believe in Him and live their life accordingly, *so that they will have an abundance* of knowledge and understanding. In contrast are those *who have nothing*—no knowledge or understanding from God, (as explained in 13:11) because of lack of desire to know Him. And this only makes sense, even to the slowest of learners, that if you pursue something you are going to have more than if you do not pursue something, even what you have you will lose because it has no value for you. Jews, especially, had the privilege of being born into a race of God's original chosen people, but they will lose that status if they do not believe in the Son of God as being God in human form. This example is used every day in our business culture, if you are a person who works hard for the company and are responsible with what you have been given, under normal circumstances you will be given more; if you just show up to work to collect a check, even that will be taken away for not producing. In our relationship with Christ we either go forward or we go backward, there is no such thing as being "stagnant" as many would like to believe. If you are not gaining in knowledge you are losing knowledge. And even more than that, you are losing the natural sense of fairness, right, and justice. You begin to be unchangeable, immovable, and isolated. Disciples have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; therefore, they are given the capacity for more faith.

(12) Our attitudes toward His personal invitations; **Matt. 22:1-7; And Jesus answered and spoke to them again in parables, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son. And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. Again he sent out other slaves saying, “Tell those who have been invited, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.” But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. But the king was enraged and sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and set their city on fire.”** Jesus may have spoken in a parable but He made His subject of the message very clear—“the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus’ message was that God extends a gracious invitation for people to participate in His kingdom. Accepting the invitation leads to great joy, while rejecting it leads to punishment. When Jesus spoke these parables He spoke as one with authority. His parables convicted people’s hearts because He knew His audience. It makes the person under conviction ask the question; “Is this about me?” In this parable Jesus pictures His kingdom of heaven as being offered to those who are humble and might least expect it. It is about a king who invites guests to a wedding party; often in the Bible His disciples are referred to as His bride and He as the groom; **Rev. 19:7-9; Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And He said to me, “write, blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And He said to me, “These are true words of God.”** In this culture, two invitations were expected when banquets were given. The first asked the guests to attend; the second announced that it was ready. It’s a little bit like getting a “save the date” invitation and then getting the “true invitation.” In the parable when the king sent his slaves to call those who had been invited, this referred to the second invitation. These invitees had already accepted the first invitation. At this second one, however, these guests said they would not come. Not only that, but they refused yet another third invitation, these guests reneged on an earlier agreement or as we might say “their RSVP.” The king has already slaughtered and prepared his oxen and fattened calf, food that only the very wealthy could afford. The king invited them again, but again they refused placing a higher priority on their farms and businesses. They even went as far as to kill the messengers. The servants, in this parable represent the prophets whom God has sent to offer His invitation to salvation, the metaphoric wedding feast. But the

invitation was rejected with many of the prophets being killed or mistreated, so God's judgment fell on these murderers. This wedding and the invitations to attend picture the grace of God that provides salvation for the world of sinful men in and through Jesus Christ as it applies equally to all men. When the parable says "they were not willing" it cast a light on the attitudes that the Jews had toward God's Son, He meant nothing to the Jews. God's plan of salvation never captivated their hearts. Although this parable speaks to the Jews, these Jews could represent anyone who rejects God's offer of salvation.

- (13) Our willingness to hear His words; ***Matt. 10:14, 15; And whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake off the dust from your feet. Truly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for that city. Matt. 12:41-42; the men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South shall rise up with this generation at the judgment and shall condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.*** We should not think, after reading these verses, that Jesus is limiting the experience of the disciple to the first entrance into a house or a town. In the Greek it translates to a home or a town after *effectually hearing and definitely listening* to the disciple's message, then rejecting it. We, as a disciple of Christ, should also expect rejection, such as Jesus faced. So Jesus instructs us that if anyone refuses to listen to us as we teach or preach the gospel message, then we should shake the dust off our feet as we leave them. This symbolic act of shaking the dust off of our feet signifies that the feet of the heralds of the kingdom have actually been in the house or town and that they leave their dust as a witness to the fact that they were there but were forced to leave because they were unwelcome. This was not an act of contempt; nor was the dust of the place defiling, nor does it indicate that the apostles will have nothing to do with that place, nor was this an act of judgment excluding them from God's kingdom. The act merely showed the people that the disciples had discharged their duty, had nothing further to say, and would leave the people to answer to God. However, we should not take this verse to mean that if one member of our family refuses to accept Christ we should abandon our efforts to the other members. Nor should we stop our ministry to others in a community if there are some who reject our words. Jesus was making the point that the listeners were responsible for what they did with the message. As long as we faithfully and carefully present the gospel, we are not to

blame if someone rejects it, but we do have the responsibility to share the gospel clearly and faithfully. To lie in sin and thus to perish is bad; to lie in sin and in addition to reject grace and thus perish is worse.

(14) Our willingness to forgive an injury; ***Matt. 6:15; But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. Matt. 18:28-30; but the slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying "Pay back what you owe." So his fellow slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying, "Have patience with me and I will repay you." He was unwilling however, but went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.*** Jesus' words reinforce the petition in ***Matt. 6:12; and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*** Jesus gives us a startling warning about forgiveness: if we refuse to forgive others, God will also refuse to forgive us. This does not refer to salvation because salvation is not dependent on anything that people can do. The foundation of God's forgiveness builds upon His own character and ours. If we refuse to forgive others then we are not showing any acknowledgement for the forgiveness, (which we do not deserve, by the way), that he has offered to us and we are not the type of person that has the character that is needed to inherit His kingdom. Living in a relationship with God requires constant repentance of the sins that plague us. Because believers must come to God constantly for confession and forgiveness, refusing to forgive others reveals a lack of appreciation for the mercy we have received from God. All people are on common ground as sinners in need of God's forgiveness. If we don't forgive others, we are in fact denying and rejecting God's forgiveness of us. Remember that we are to pray and that means not only for each other but also in union with each other. The thing that makes us our Father's children and thus brethren who can pray in union is the fact that our sins are forgiven. If they are not forgiven, then we are out of the sacred loop and all of our praying is in vain. One of the marks that we can measure our Christian maturity by is our willingness to forgive others.

(15) Our obedience to His commandments; ***Matt. 5:19; Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*** No one has the authority to set aside or to alter any of God's laws. In addition, teachers have the responsibility to live correctly and to teach correctly so that they do not influence others to break, what we would consider, even the smallest law. Because His law and commandments point toward

Jesus and His teaching, people can “do” and “teach,” the commandments by following Jesus and adhering to His teachings. Those who do so, Jesus explained, will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. This does not refer to a rewarding status in heaven, as all who are in heaven will have handled His teachings and laws the same, so all in heaven will be called great. Jesus apportions His glory equally to all who are in His kingdom. In my opinion this is another way in which Jesus, as judge, makes a separation of mankind. We have two choices which Jesus contrasts; complete rejection of His requirements or full acceptance. There is no in-between or partial adherence; this would be similar to someone being partially pregnant. Jesus is not considering our setting aside any of God’s requirements, because most of them are vital; any disciple that would consider setting any of them aside would cease to be a disciple. Jesus explained to His disciples, the men who would be responsible to carry on His message, that they must live carefully, not take God’s will lightly. Jesus’ followers must respect and obey what they would consider even the least commandment if they want to accomplish great things for God. If Jesus did not come to abolish the law, does that mean all of the OT laws still apply to us today? Did Jesus mean that Christians today must follow every law recorded in the OT? Jesus never taught to follow laws just for the sake of keeping laws; not even Jesus stood for law keeping that was void of heartfelt worship; ***Matt. 5:20; For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.*** Jesus is emphasizing an attitude of respect toward God’s word and God’s will. This law abiding is more than legal commandments; it includes all that God asks of us as disciples, in particular repentance and faith in the Messiah. Through His word and His Holy Spirit God enables us to meet these requirements. The OT includes three categories of law; ceremonial, civil and moral.

- a. The “ceremonial law” (Lev. 1:2-3) related specifically to Israel’s worship. Its primary purpose was to point toward Jesus Christ; these laws, therefore, were no longer necessary after Jesus’ death and resurrection. While we need not follow all of these ceremonial laws, the principles behind them—to worship and love a holy God—still apply. Jesus was often accused of disobeying ceremonial law.
- b. The “civil law” (Deut, 24:10-11) applied to daily living in Israel. Because modern society and culture differ so radically from that time and setting, we need not keep all of these guide lines specifically. However, the principles behind the commands are timeless and should guide our conduct. Jesus demonstrated these principles by example.

c. The “moral law” (such as the 10 Commandments) is the direct command of God; thus, it requires strict obedience (Exodus 20:13). The moral law reveals the nature and will of God, and it still applies today. Jesus obeyed the moral law completely and expects His followers to do the same.

(16) Our spirit of judgment on others; ***Matt. 7:2; for in the way that you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.*** The word that is used in this verse for “judge” can mean to evaluate or analyze. It also refers to private judgmental attitudes that tear down others in order to build up oneself. The command to “judge not” does not refer to being judged in a court of law, nor is it a blanket statement against critical thinking. Believers should be discerning and make certain judgments. For example Jesus teaches us to expose false teachers and to admonish others in order to help them. Paul taught us that we should exercise church discipline. But followers of Christ should not be critical or condemning in their attitudes towards others. A judgmental critical attitude reveals a spirit that differs radically from a loving spirit. Believer’s special position with Christ does not give them license to take His place as judge. Those who do judge in that manner will find themselves likewise judged by God. God will have mercy on the merciful and forgive those who forgive and condemn those who condemn; ***Matt. 5:7; Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy. Matt. 6:14, 15; For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive men, then Your Father will not forgive your transgressions.*** The way that Jesus’ followers treat one another is the way that God will treat them. The religious leaders of the day taught that God judged the world by two measures—mercy and justice. Each person receives what him or her measures out, either with mercy or with severity. “Judge not, that you be not judged,” may be the most misquoted text from the Bible. People frequently apply it as if it were a flat command against all moral judgment. In fact, people use it to judge what they consider a judgmental attitude on the part of another. Jesus, however, gave these words as one negative application to the golden rule. That is, we should not treat others as we do not want to be treated. We should seek to measure ourselves and others by the same standards. Jesus declared as unacceptable excusing personal sin while holding others accountable for similar behavior. When you perceive a fault in others, your first impulse may be to confront or reject that person. But ask yourself first if your awareness of the failure mirrors your own life. Your effort to help will be in vain if the person can point out the same fault in you. Practice your own remedy before you ask others to do it. What Jesus forbids in this teaching is a self-righteous, hypocritical



judging. The very fact of having a righteousness that is far better than the scribes or Pharisees is what, ironically, could lead His disciples into a vicious fault of the scribes and Pharisees who set themselves up as judges over all, glorified in their own false holiness, and despised by others. The Pharisees acquitted each other while condemning everyone else, they were wrong on both counts. Here is a short list of areas that we as Christians are to judge:

**a.** When disputes arise between believers, they should be settled in the church before members who can decide the matter; **1 Cor. 6:1-8; *Does anyone of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more matters in this life? If then you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers.***

**b.** The local church is to judge serious sins of its members and take appropriate action; **Matt. 18:17; *And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer. 1 Cor. 5:9-13; I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.***

**c.** Believers are to judge the doctrinal teaching of teachers and preachers by the Word of God, **Matt. 7:15-20; *Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown in the***

***fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits. 1 Cor. 14:29; And let two or three prophets speak, and let others pass judgment. 1 John 4:1; Beloved do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.***

***d. Christians have to discern if others are believers in order to obey Paul's command in 2 Cor. 6:14; Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?***

***e. Those in the church must judge which men have the qualifications necessary for elders and deacons; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; It is a trustworthy statement; if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work that he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity, (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God); and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let those also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.***

***f. We have to discern which people are unruly, fainthearted, weak, etc., and treat them accordingly to the instructions in the Bible; 1 Thess. 5:14; and we urge you brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men.*** Jesus warns us that unrighteous judgment would be repaid in kind. This principle of reaping what we sow is built into all human affairs.

***(17) Our faith; Matt. 8:10; Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. Matt. 9:22; But Jesus turning and seeing her said,***

***“Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.” And at once the woman was made well. Matt. 9:29; Then He touched their eyes saying, “Be it done to you according to your faith.” Matt. 15:28; Then Jesus answered and said to her; “O, woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed at once.*** Matthew focuses in on Jesus’ authoritative words in the verse in Matt. 9:22. Someone had touched Him in order to be healed. Clearly the woman was healed, her faith appropriated the healing, and Jesus perceived what had happened. He turned and saw that the woman had been healed. Then he spoke reassuring words to her, “Take heart, daughter, your faith has made you well.” Jesus spoke to the woman in gentle words, as is usually the case when Jesus speaks to us, calling her daughter, revealing to her a “father” relationship. She came for healing and she received it, but she also received peace and a relationship with God Himself, because of her faith. Jesus explains that it was not the clothes that she touched that has the healing power, rather it was her faith in reaching out to the One person who could heal her and allowed that healing to take place. Not only did she have faith, but her faith was placed appropriately in the right person. This woman may have been embarrassed by her malady which would have caused her to be very discreet and she may have wanted to slip away from the crowd as she desired to do. He does this to affirm the healing and also to be a witness for the Father and His healing power and the power of faith. There were many in the crowd that day; many had touched Him without anything extraordinary happening. It was her touching in faith that made her different. Jesus dispels all of her fears and reveals His tender love and concern for her. She, with her condition, was considered a public menace, unclean, and condemned to live out the rest of her life in seclusion, but her faith changed everything about her life. She went from public condemnation and humiliation to the freedom of God’s grace and the faith strong enough to save her eternally.

(18) Our love of God; ***Matt. 10:37; He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.*** Jesus did not force His followers to break family ties to follow Him, as some of the cults of today require. Jesus was pointing out to His disciples that they must have a single loyalty toward Him. When discipleship conflicts with family loyalty, following Jesus must take priority over natural love of family, are ever in a situation where we must make a choice, we must choose Jesus. Christ calls us to a higher mission than to find tranquility and comfort in this life. Love of family is a law of God, but even this love can be self-serving and used as an excuse not to serve God or to do His work. We must not be so enmeshed or devoted to

family love that it causes us to push Christ into the background. Our need for Jesus surpasses any other need. No matter to whom the conflict comes from, parent or child, the issue is the same. We pray that it never comes to having to make that choice, but is it too late; have we already made choices that Jesus would not agree to?

- (19) Our love of Christ; ***Luke 7:47 for this reason I say to you, her sins which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little. John 21:16; He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep."*** Jesus' first question to Peter could have been translated in three ways; "do you love Me more than these men love Me?" "Do you love Me more than you love these men?" Or, "do you love Me more than these things?" (that is, the fishing boat, nets, gear). Of the three options, the first seems the most appropriate because Peter had boasted that he would never forsake Jesus, even if all of the other disciples did; ***Matt. 26:33; but Peter answered and said to Him, "even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away." Mark 14:29; But Peter said to Him, "even though all may fall away, yet I will not." John 13:37; Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You."*** This was Peter's way of saying that he had more love for Jesus than the rest. But Peter did the very opposite of what he claimed: He denied Jesus three times. As a consequence, Jesus asked Peter three times, "Do you love Me?" to affirm Peter's love and commitment. Each time Peter told Jesus, "I love You," Jesus exhorted Peter to care for His flock; "Feed My lambs;" ***John 21:15-17; so when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes. Lord; You know that love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him; "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." He said to him a third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him a third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep."*** Lambs and sheep can be taken as words of endearment. Jesus' love and concern is for all believers—the entire "flock"—that would grow as a result of the Apostle's ministry. Peter was charged to care for this flock by feeding and shepherding them. Jesus used action words to describe Peter's role as a disciple. Jesus did not ask Peter to be the leader, but to take specific action; "feed and take care of My sheep." If people in leadership assume that holding a position or being in charge is all that they must do, they miss the point. Leadership in ministry requires a servant's heart; contributing to others, not just directing; developing people, not just

demanding that tasks be done. Peter always remembered this commission; he came as a dedicated shepherd of the flock. And as a good shepherd, caring for the sheep, Peter would, like Jesus, be called upon to lay down his life. The number three was a significant part of the Jewish culture as we see in these three verses; a person needed three persons, as a witness or a testimony, in order to be declared truthful. The number three symbolizes a perfect testimony or completeness; ***John 5:6-8; This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with water only, but with the water and with the blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. Matt. 28:19; Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*** The Lord's three questions to Peter are by no means just repetitions with essential variations; they are a testimony to his veracity. The question whether Peter loves Jesus more than do the other disciples leaves it unquestioned that Peter loves Jesus at least as much as the others and reminds him not to put himself above the others. His threefold denial made it questionable whether Peter had any love left over for Jesus, that is, love in a higher sense. The questions point to an understanding by Jesus to Peter that to answer in the affirmative to these question means that all of the affection that Peter has for Jesus is to flow toward the flock which is so precious to Jesus. As he feeds and shepherds this flock, it will be, simultaneously, proving his affection for the Lord. What is so near and dear to the heart of Jesus will be equally near and dear to Peter's heart and should be to ours as well.

- (20) Our love of our enemies; ***Luke 6:27; But I say to you who hear, love your enemies; do good to those who hate you.*** In this teaching our Lord Jesus Christ unveils for us a secret spiritual weapon of sorts from the arsenal of God—the weapon of love that is not corrupted by prejudice. This is one of the most effective weapons in evangelizing the world. It will provide the ever effective element of surprise to our enemies. However, when He speaks of love, He is not referring to the human emotion of that name. This is supernatural love. Only those who are born again can know it and possess it. It is utterly impossible for anyone who does not have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to possess it. A murderer may love his own children, but that is not love as Jesus teaches it. The one is human affection; the other is divine love. The first only requires physical life; the second requires divine life. The first is a matter of the emotions; the second is a matter of the will. Anyone can love his friends, but it takes supernatural power to love one's enemies. This kind of love means to do good to those who hate you, to bless those who curse you, to pray for those who are nasty to you, and will cause you to now and forever turn the other cheek. Love like this is

unbeatable while we are battling even our supernatural enemies. The world can usually conquer the man who fights back. It is used to jungle warfare and to the principle of retaliation. But it does not know how to deal with the person who repays every wrong with a kindness. It is utterly confused and disorganized by such other-world behavior. The Genesis of this kind of love is our repentance of who we are in our natural state. The fruit of repentance is this kind of supernatural love. A new life and a new power are in our hearts, those of the kingdom of God, and it shows its presence in the most distinctive and tangible way. The fruits of repentance which Jesus names are those which the world cannot achieve by any ethics that it may invent or practice. At this point the ways of the world and those of the church not only part, they run in opposite directions. The usual conduct of our enemies, even after we demonstrate this supernatural love, is to keep on hating, cursing, and mistreating us. They may go on in their wickedness toward us, but we too, will persist in going on in our love and doing good toward them; they should never be able to outdo us! This kind of love denotes the love of intelligence, comprehension, and corresponding purpose, that is, the love that corresponds to what Jesus demonstrated toward us while we were persistently His enemy. It sees all of the hatefulness and wickedness of an enemy, feels its stabs and blows and we may even be able to ward some of them off; but this fills the loving heart with only one desire and aim and that is to free its enemy from his hate, to rescue him from his sin, and to save his soul. If we struggle with this kind of attitude or love, as I do, I believe it will do us good to revisit the beatitudes, the description of a disciple of Jesus. This higher love may not see anything attractive in the one that we are called to love, nor is this love called out by anything that is attractive; it's inner motive, whether the object that is worthy or not, is to bestow true blessing upon the one loved, to do him the highest possible good. I have often said and I think it is worth repeating again, we should not allow another person to change who we are in a negative sense. Retaliation, in a worldly sense, makes us no better than the person in whom we are opposed. We should know who we are in Christ and stand firm in that position without wavering. We don't necessarily have to like a filthy, vicious beggar and make him our personal friend; we don't necessarily have to like a low, mean, criminal who may have robbed us and taken everything from us short of our life; we don't necessarily have to like a false, lying, slanderous person who has perhaps mistreated us again and again, but I can, by the grace of Jesus Christ, love them all, by seeing what their weakness may be and desiring to work to remove that weakness, and to this end, do them good. It is in this sense that Jesus says "be doing well to those hating you." Oppose them with the exact opposite of their hating. One of the ways to overcome this hate is to keep meeting it with kind deeds, heaping coals of fire upon

the hater's head; **Prov. 25: 21, 22; If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.**

- (21) Our generosity to a disciple; **Matt. 10:42; And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward.** In Matt. 10:11-14, Jesus described how the disciples should go about their ministry—staying in homes of worthy people. In this verse 42 the fact that Jesus uses the term “in the name of a disciple” shows us that the “little ones” refers to His disciples. They are considered little because of their stature as judged by the world's standard of people. Those who would welcome the disciples would receive a great reward. The word for “welcomes” may refer to both the hospitality (receiving the messenger) as well as conversion (receiving the message). Jesus' representatives carry all of His authority. Those who welcome disciples welcome Jesus; those who welcome Jesus welcome the One who sent Jesus, God the Father. Again Jesus unmistakably claims His relationship to God. Jesus spoke these words to His twelve disciples, but then repeated the saying three more times using prophets, righteous ones, and little people. To give a cup of cold water was an act of courtesy and hospitality. It would not be out of the ordinary and, therefore, would deserve no reward. The disciples were definitely little ones in their social status who were insignificant and despised in the eyes of the world. Those who receive the disciples merely because they were disciples would not lose their reward. Because the disciples would come with God's authority, their acceptance by the people would test the people's attitudes toward God. It is a culmination of that attitude that leads either to reward or loss of reward. It is not the magnitude of the service that determines the greatness of the reward, but the motive behind the service; being a lowly servant of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this sphere this humble disciple and his act of service places him who performs the service as being “in a disciple's name;” and hence he is included in the blessing.
- (22) Our mercifulness; **Luke 6:36; be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.** To be merciful means “to forgive when it is in our power to avenge.” The Father showed us mercy by not giving us the punishment that we deserved. He wants us to show that same mercy to others. One of the outstanding attributes of the Father is His great compassion and desire to help everyone that suffers; **Matt.9:36; and seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd.** Since Jesus has this attribute, as a follower of Him we must ascend to that righteous position also and keep on being compassionate in the same way. The word for “compassion” in the Greek describes

the “inner mercy” of God. The words “distressed and downcast” are synonyms that stress a man’s position without a God. Jesus stepped up and became their shepherd, the Pharisees failed in their attempt and so the people were left without a shepherd, thus without a God, distressed and downcast.

- (23) Our humility as a child; **Matt. 18:4; whoever then humbles himself as this child; he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.** In the original language of Aramaic the same word is used for “child” as is the word for “servant.” Thus, when Jesus took a little child into His arms, He made the explanation of greatness even more distinct—to become great in the kingdom of heaven one must serve. Disciples must change and become like little children. What did Jesus want them to change? In this instance, it was their attitude toward greatness. As disciples we can become so preoccupied with the organization of Jesus’ earthly kingdom that we lose sight of its divine purpose. Instead of seeking a place of service, we seek a place that we see that has an advantage. Jesus uses a child to help our self-centeredness. We have to have a servant’s attitude and not one of a immature attitude that argues over petty issues; we must remain childlike with humble and sincere hearts. Children are dependent on their parents for everything necessary to survive, so must everyone who comes to God and be willing to depend on Him for life’s sustenance, both physical and spiritual. The kind of people that Jesus called “blessed” in the beatitudes are those who come to a point of complete dependence upon God in order to come to Him in faith. The fact that Jesus called a child as His example of greatness in His kingdom reveals the nature of the kingdom. God’s people are called to humility and unconcern for social status. Anyone who persists in the pride of “ladder climbing” for the sake of status in this world and remains that way will never enter the kingdom of heaven. By contrast, those who are humble and realize their need for a Savior, accept Him, and move into the world to serve Him as they serve others no matter what position they hold in the church, not only enter into the kingdom of heaven but will also be considered greater than those who do not choose this path of life. **Matt. 20:26-28; It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to become first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.** True humility means to deny oneself, to accept the position of servant-hood, and to completely follow the Master. Here are three examples where we can become like children, not naïve simpletons, but to trust Him and have confidence in Him as a typical child:



**a.** With your money, avoid schemes which play to your greed (get rich quick schemes), and cooperate with programs that really help the poor, foreigners and the sick.

**b.** With your mouth, avoid gossip, backbiting, and lying to gain an advantage. Be someone who tells the truth without exaggeration, who doesn't badmouth people.

**c.** With your mind, avoid teachers whose foundational commitments exclude the possibility of God, sin, or human freedom. Learn all you can about science, the arts, history, literature, and foreign cultures from teachers who respect biblical ideas or, better yet, who embrace the Bible as true.

"Oh, do not think to be great, but to be little. Becoming great will come of itself if you have become little;" *Martin Luther*. This growing humbleness of mind which makes us greater and greater in the kingdom after we have entered makes no claims, insists on no rights, and comes with no demands. It yields completely to the Lord and is happy and content to do so. This humility claimed nothing for itself, pointed to no merits, and was not proud of any achievements. It's every joy delights in being nothing, its own character is its greatness. God can only fill an empty vessel; the emptier we are, the more He can fill with His riches, honors, and glories. It is hard for us to make this motivating principle work in our lives, being trained in the ways of the world as far as greatness is concerned, but God's grace will not prove to be not in vain.

(24.) Our endurance in well-doing; ***Matt. 24:13; But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.*** This verse obviously is not teaching us that men's souls will be saved at any time by enduring; salvation is always presented in the Bible as a gift of God's grace, received by faith in Christ' substitutionary death and resurrection and ascension. Neither can it mean that all who endure will escape physical harm; we have already learned that many believers will be martyred. Although saving faith may have its lapses, it always has the quality of permanence. Only Jesus' faithful followers will enter God's kingdom. The stress here, in this verse, should be on salvation rather than endurance. This verse offers both a promise and a warning. "The end" refers to the consummation of the earthy kingdom of Christ upon His return. This is a precious promise to believers who are struggling during intense persecution. Enduring to the end does not earn salvation for us; it marks us as being already saved. The assurance of our salvation will keep us going through these times of persecution. While some will suffer and some will die, none of Jesus' followers will suffer spiritual or eternal loss. ***Rev. 2:7; He who has***

***an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, God.***” To endure means to bear whatever a true upon us. Jesus Himself declares that in the case of

***the churches. “To him who which is in the Paradise of confession of Christ brings some this will mean death.***

- (25) Our obedience to God; ***Matt. 12:50; For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven. He is My brother and sister and mother.*** The types of people who can have a relationship with Jesus are those who do the Father’s will. They listen, learn, believe, and follow. Obedience is the key to discipleship. In these words, Jesus explained that in His spiritual family, the relationships are ultimately more important and longer lasting than those found in His physical family. Jesus was not denying His responsibility to His earthly family. On the contrary, He would criticize the religious leaders for not following the OT command to honor their parents. He would even provide for His mother’s security as He hung on the cross; ***John 19:25-27; Therefore the soldiers did these things. But there were standing by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, “woman, behold, your son.” then He said to the disciple, “Behold your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household.*** His mother and brothers would be present in the upper room at Pentecost’ ***Acts 1:14; these all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.*** Instead, Jesus was pointing out that spiritual relationships are as binding as physical ones and He was paving the way for a new community of believers to be formed as Jesus’ spiritual family. This family would be characterized by love; the members should desire to be together, work together, and share one another’s burdens. Jesus states in this verse (Matt. 12:50) what really makes us one with Christ and He sums it up into one point in a person’s life, “Doing the Father’s will,” the will of “My Father in heaven.” “My Father,” Jesus says, not “your Father,” because He must connect Himself and His entire mission with this Father of His, this Father’s will is what we are to do. If we need help in determining His will the Scriptures are filled with statements declaring His will:

***A. John 6:29; This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.*** Jesus tells every potential disciple that the first thing he must do is to trust in, rely on and have faith in and accept the One that the Father has sent. And so it is today. Many are seeking ways, in which they

can earn their way to heaven by good works, but good works do not precede salvation, they follow it. The only thing a person can do is to agree with God concerning his sin and ask Him for His forgiveness.

**B. John 6:40; for this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.** This is how a disciple becomes a family of the redeemed. By beholding the Son with the eyes of faith and he must recognize that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. All who will do this will receive everlasting life as a present possession and receive the assurance that they will be raised on the last day.

the last

**C. 2 Pet. 3:9; The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.** God has promised to end the history of ungodly men with judgment. If there seems in your eyes to be a delay, it is not because God is unfaithful to His promise. It is because He is patient. He does not want any to perish. His desire is that all should come to repentance. He purposely extends His period of grace so that men might have every opportunity to be saved. **Isaiah 61:2; To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;** in this verse we read of the year of the Lord of the Lord's favor and the day of His vengeance, suggesting that He delights in showing mercy and that judgment is His strange work, that is, this is not only what He desires to do, but what His righteousness and justice requires Him to do as God. **Isa. 28:21; to do His task, His strange task, and to work His work, His extraordinary work.** This would seem to be an indication that He can extend His merciful days for thousands of years and condense His judgments into one day.

**D. 1 Tim. 2:4; Our God and Savior who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.** In order to be saved it is God's will that man must come to the knowledge of the truth. God does not save men against their will. Jesus tells us that He is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Although it is God's desire that all men be saved, yet not all men will be saved, because they have made other objects, people, or places their god.

This is just a very small sampling of the hundreds of verses proclaiming His will for which can be wrapped up by saying that the Father's will is that by His grace we repent and believe, turn from our sins, and by faith receive His pardon in Christ Jesus. The gravest perversion of doing His will is a work-righteousness, which call on us and our power to do the works of the law and thus to earn heaven. As Jesus came to do His Father's will, the will that involved our salvation, so we are one with Him when we do His Father's will, that same will regarding our salvation.

(26) Our hypocrisy; ***Matt. 23:13-36; But woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men; for you do in. Woe houses, receive because becomes nothing; but and blind the swears Therefore he on it. And he, Him who dwells the throne of God and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you neglected the weightier provisions of faithfulness; but these are the things you should others. You blind guides, who strain out a you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For and of the dish, but inside they are full of blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup of it may become clean also. Woe to you, For you are like white-washed tombs which beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones Even so you too outwardly appear righteous to men, but of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Woe to you, scribes and***

***hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men; for not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows even while for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you shall greater condemnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, you travel about on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. Woe to you, blind guides, who say, "whoever swears by the temple, that is whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obligated. You fools men; which is more important, the gold, or the temple that sanctified gold?" And whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever by the offering upon it, he is obligated. You blind men, which is more important, the offering or the altar that sanctifies the offering? that swears by the altar swears both by the altar and everything who swears by the temple, swears both by the temple and by within it. And he who swears by heaven, swears both by by Him who sits upon it. Woe to you, scribes and tithe mint and dill, and cumin, and have the law; justice and mercy and have done without neglecting the gnat and swallow a camel! Woe to you clean the outside of the cup robbery and self-indulgence. You and of the dish, so that the outside scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! on the outside appear and all uncleanness. inwardly you are full Pharisees,***

***hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say "If we had been living in the days of the fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets." Consequently you bear witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up then the measure of the guilt of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell? Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation.*** These seven woes were spoken with all the power of Jesus' divine personality, without angry passion, without the heat of excitement, with deadly calmness, with absolute truth, with crushing power. Through every "woe" there rings a tone of sadness. Every one of the seven woes is an exclamation like the "blessed" in the beatitudes. He is not stating wishes, but facts! If we keep in mind that this study is about being prepared for the last day, He is, in His teaching mode, gently pointing out areas of their life (and ours), that need to be reconciled in order to be prepared. The word "hypocrite" has the sense of showing how their lives have been nothing more than an acting job, suggesting that the masks that they are wearing is hiding their true identity. The reality of what they are doing in their teaching and conduct is paramount to locking the doors of the kingdom of heaven to them. Not to imply that they have the keys of heaven, but that the falsity of their teaching and their life deceives those who would follow them, so that the heavenly rule of grace is kept away from them. Let us not lose sight of the fact that this lesson is not just for the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day. If it were there would be no need to include it in the Scriptures, these words apply today as much as 2000 years ago. This is more apparent as Jesus goes deeper into His teaching and talks about taking oaths and then searching for loop holes to invalidate them. The oath taking can be compared to the times that we declare ourselves to be rock solid Christians but we become more rubbery in our convictions when it comes to making purchasing contracts in a way that allows us to pay less tax. Or we make the white robes of righteousness that we take possession of, a little bit grey, by mixing our dirty hypocrisy with our clean truth, by fudging on our income tax. Or we find it necessary to reinforce what we are about to say by adding "I swear to God," while hoping that God is not listening. Swearing an oath should not be necessary if we are known to speak the whole truth all the time.

- (27) Our idle words; **Matt. 12:36; And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the Day of Judgment.** The word “careless” refers to words that we might consider insignificant or innocuous. “Careless” means inactive, idle, and worthless. This word doesn’t necessarily refer to mindless, small talk or carefree jokes, but to broken promises, unkept commitments and unpaid vows. Such words are better indicators of a person’s true character than his carefully planned and prepared statements and speeches. No word is insignificant to God, because every spoken word reveals what is in the heart. Because God knows our hearts, our words are vitally important to Him. Words will be the basis for judgment because words reveal who a person truly is: **Matt. 12:37; For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.** This condemnation applies only to the unbeliever, because all of the sins of the godly will have been dismissed and will have utterly disappeared on that day. A true believer, after realizing what he has done, will immediately repent and seek God’s forgiveness.
- (28) Our lip service that does not come from the heart; **Matt. 15:8; This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me.** This verse is a quote from the book of Isaiah and they, that is, the Pharisees of then and now, by the hypocritical crafty twisting of words, have fulfilled His prophecy. They pretend to be holy and close to God, thus judging all other people as sinners, teaching human concepts as doctrine. The problem is that the authority for their teaching is human. They taught human made rules as though they had come from God. When we claim to honor God while our hearts are far from Him, our worship means nothing. Our words and our actions must align with each other otherwise the words of Isaiah apply to us. The two are always found together, “words and actions.” For the moment the heart keeps far from God it leaves also His Word. The very first requirement of His word which is also fundamental for all true worship of God is genuine sincerity toward Him and His Word.
- (29) Our selfish conceit; **Matt. 6:2; When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.** It seems incredible that hypocrites would noisily attract attention to themselves as they give offerings in the synagogues or handouts to beggars in the streets. The Lord dismissed their conduct with this comment, “they have their reward in full.” Their only reward is the reputation they have gained for themselves while on earth; it has accomplished nothing in achieving eternal salvation. The first response to righteousness that Jesus used as an example was

alms giving. Jesus expects His disciples to follow the law of God. He said “whenever (not if) you give alms,” that is, give to someone in need. However, Jesus’ followers should have a different attitude about giving than did the hypocrites. They, metaphorically, wanted a trumpet to sound whenever they gave to draw attention not only to the fact that they are giving, but the amount that they are giving. The example of the Pharisees is bold and strong, yet as such it includes every kind of hypocrisy of this kind down to the secret desire to have our good deeds praised by men for our own sakes. Luther points out that but a few respond when we say that God and His angels will be pleased and that God will reward a hundredfold; evidently, in our greed, this is not enough! So do we have a tendency to hold back and grow slack in our giving when men ignore and show ingratitude for what we have given? If any man’s duplicity goes so far as to think that he will also receive glory from God as well as from man, he certainly fools himself. Some of us think that after we give our alms, we have to follow them to make sure that our hard earned money is truly being put to good use; this also is a form of hypocrisy. After all it is not our money that proves our claim to righteousness before God, it is our heart. We can’t buy our

<p>righteousness, we after we have, with a need. After that money need to allow God to direct impact the other person’s life version of a good investment deter us outward appearance it looks like we may scammed. God is only concerned with the does not put us in charge of another person’s judge another person’s spending habits. Let God enough just dealing with our own daily living. Am I everyone that comes begging for money, even are being scammed? No. God has also given us the shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves, but if we follow our money to see that it is spent in a way that we us we have not yet let go of the money and our gift is conditional hypocritical act by not trusting our Lord that He even if we are scammed. If a need is being presented to us we our skepticism better to give to 99 scammers from our heart than to risk not giving to 1 who genuine need.</p>	<p>should not put conditions on how that money is spent sincere heart, given to someone that we see as being in leaves our hand our part in the giving is done. We how that money (or any other form of charity) will and we need not allow another person’s from giving again, just because from have made a mistake and have been sincerity of our heart; our giving life nor give us permission to deal with them, we have saying that we should give to when it is obvious that we gift of discernment to be as think that we have to consider approved by depleted to be only a will provide for us should not let It is has a</p>
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- (30) Our wicked pride; **Mark 12:38; And in His teaching He was saying: “Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the market places.** The scribes were outwardly religious. They loved to parade in long robes. This distinguished them from the common herd and gave them a sanctimonious appearance; they loved to be greeted with high sounding titles in public places. It did something for their ego! They sought out the places of honor in their synagogues, as if physical location had something to do with godliness. They not only wanted religious prominence, but social distinction as well. They wanted the best places at feasts. It is noteworthy to see that Jesus not only warns us against merely the conduct and practices, but also against the persons who are given to such conduct and practices. Association with such persons is dangerous and so the reason for the word that begins this verse, “Beware!” Literally this word, in the Greek, means “be looking away from them”, turn your backs on them and leave them.” The reason for this is because these scribes were professional interpreters of the Torah and they constantly abused what was written, by the examples previously mentioned in the verse; bringing attention to themselves.
- (31) Our love of darkness; **John 3:19; And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.** Jesus is the light that is referred to that came into the world. He was the spotless, sinless, Lamb of God. He died for the sins of the entire world. But do men love Him for this? No—they resent Him. They prefer to have their sins rather than having Jesus as a Savior, and so they reject Him. Just as some creepy things scurry away from the light to hold onto their sin; so too do the wicked men flee from the presence of Christ. The “light” really means the Son Himself who is the Truth that brings the complete revelation of God and makes it shine into men’s minds and hearts. In Jesus all of the divine realities (the definition of truth) concerning God, His grace and His love, His power to redeem and to save, are laid open and bare so that men must see His shining. This “light” has come and the perfect tense of the Greek tells us that it is here presently and will continue to be here. Normally, one would expect that by being made to see these realities that men would react accordingly; but no, they deliberately do the very contrary. The desires of our flesh, the pride of life, and the lust of the eyes are a very strong force in our life, one that we have to be continually on guard against as these three oppose everything that Jesus is. These are the conceptions of sin. This is what is meant by “and men love the darkness rather than the light,” they allow their fleshly appetites to be in control of their life and heart instead of the morality that Jesus brings to it. The persons



that chose the darkness over the light loved with the love of intelligence and of purpose. They loved making a deliberate choice for a deliberate purpose. Jesus says in this verse that “men” love the darkness, but He is not referring to all men, He has already addressed those who believe in Him, these words are addressed to those who have chosen to not believe. “The darkness” is not the mere absence of light but is always conceived as a hostile power. It is the specific power of sin and death that actively wars against the Light. As the Light is the actual reality concerning God, His love, etc. so the darkness is the direct opposite, it is the unreality that men imagine and invent regarding God; all of the untruths that have been spoken about Him. To say that they chose the darkness rather than the Light is a soft way of saying they “hated” the Light. Their works are not scattered lapses of choosing darkness, their individual deeds, but those that make up and display their real inner nature and will, the sum of their lives. However, these are not necessarily just the gross immoralities that Jesus is speaking but all forms of ungodliness, all self-righteousness, all religious perversions, carnal and material hopes and every action and practice that displays these inclinations. The implication is not that men lie helplessly in the toils of wickedness but that, when the saving power of the Light comes to them and battles to free them, they fight the Light and embrace their works and continue to make them the sum and substance of their lives. We should not think that “unbelief” ever means that a person cannot see the Light. The Light is not deficient or weak. God’s grace is always sufficient. The issue is not intellectual, but moral; ***Romans 1:18; for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.*** Every person who rejects the divine Light of Truth when it comes to him to draw him from the evil unto God and instead determines to hold to the darkness of untruth and lies, does this for a base reason, namely because the person will not part from the evil that he loves and this puts a mark of condemnation on his life. This is how judgment works. With the coming of Jesus we have the absolute source of truth, condemnation of sin, guidance for daily decisions, and illumination to learn more about God. Jesus is the revelation of God in human form. Even for believers there is probably no more painful moment than when we honestly confront our tendency to love the darkness, to twist or withhold the truth.

moral

- (32) Our rejection as His disciples; ***Luke 10:10, 11; But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, “even the dust of your city which clings to your feet, we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.”*** Christ here in this verse directs

how to behave towards cities that they come to and are rejected because of the message that they bring with them. It may happen that, upon entering a city the entire population may prove hostile and turn against you. The Lord gives us directions as to how to proceed in such a case. Go to several public thoroughfares, where they will encounter most of the people that will hear them and make a declaration. They will take nothing with them from that city, not even the dust, so that this dust may testify that we, messengers of the kingdom and of its rule of grace and salvation, were here and had to leave because they refused us and our message. Nevertheless, in spite of this shaking off of dust against the inhabitants they are to keep realizing that the greatest grace has come near, the kingdom of God itself, and, perhaps some may later regret their actions and accept that kingdom. They are to thus leave with a kind word. When we are rejected because of the message that we bring, whether to one person or to one-thousand people, we should not give them more reason to reject us by being impolite as we leave. All that we have accomplished by being defensive and rude is to put more distance between them and the gospel and nothing good has been accomplished.

- (33) Our adultery; ***Matt. 19:9; And I say to you, “Whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”*** In Jesus’ day, people commonly made oaths, or vows, not just in marriage, but in every facet of the daily living. I suppose Jesus spoke about marriage because it is a vow that would stand the test of time and not change. Although God’s law took these vows very seriously, many of the religious leaders had invented legal maneuvers to get around keeping their oaths just as the scribes of today have done. Jesus told His followers not to use oaths—their word alone should be enough; ***James 5:12; But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any oath; but let your yes be yes, and your no, no; so that you may not fall under judgment.*** One question we should judge ourselves by is this: Are we known as a person that keeps our word? Truthfulness in this present evil age seems so rare that we must end our statements with “swear to God” or some other oath. But, if we tell the truth consistently, we will be under less pressure to back up our words with an oath or a promise. And, if someone is really skeptical about what we are saying and questioning our veracity swearing an oath usually does little to convince them otherwise. Jesus, in this specific teaching, explains and enlightens us to the fact that divorce dissolves a divinely formed union. Some of the men (and women) during Jesus’ time and now get a divorce for the sole fact that they want to try marriage with someone else, much like trying something new that comes on the market that seems to be better than what you

have. The way that the rabbis interpreted God’s law made it perfectly legal to do with marriage. Jesus warns us that this is not a legal interpretation of His law and to proceed with that attitude is being disobedient to God and causes you to live in the sin of adultery. He did give one exception; if he “sent his wife away” for the reason of her “sexual immorality.” This verse seems solely aimed at the husband, the reason for this is that the book of Matthew addresses Jews and in the Jewish culture it was the man that initiated a divorce. In the book of Mark the reading is slightly different and includes wives; **Mark 10:11, 12; And He said to them, “whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.”** While the application of Jesus’ words requires interpretation to specific situations, one truth is inescapable: God created marriage to be a sacred, permanent union and partnership between a husband and wife. When both husband and wife enter into this union with understanding and commitment they can provide security for each other, a stable home for their children, and strength to weather any of life’s storms or stresses.

- (34) Our commercializing worship; **Matt. 21:13; And he said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you are making it a robbers cave.’** Combining quotations from Isaiah and Jeremiah, He condemned desecration, commercialism, and exclusivism. He reminded them that it has been written and as such would stand forever that God intended the temple to be a house of prayer. They had made it a hangout for unscrupulous sales people. This cleansing of the temple was His first official act after entering Jerusalem. By it He unmistakably asserted His Lordship over the temple. This incident has a twofold message for today. In our church life, we need His cleansing power to drive out bazaars, suppers, and a host of other money-making gimmicks. In our personal lives, there is a constant need for the purging ministry of the Lord in our bodies, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Obviously Jesus’ actions stunned the many people crowded into the temple area and probably drew spectators from both inside and outside. Jesus recognized this opportunity to teach, and He didn’t waste it. All of the merchants that were inside the temple were no more honest than thieves. The word for “thieves” here is better translated as “robbers;” those who worked in organized bands and committed large scale robberies. No organized band of robbers could possibly match the thievery going on inside the temple. Just as the temple is not a refuge for robbers the church is not a refuge for sinners who go on in their sin and think that they are safe when they go to church.

- (35) **shall** Our blasphemy against the Spirit; **Matt. 12:31, 32; Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit not be forgiven. And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of man it shall be forgiven him; but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age, or in the age to come.** Whenever Jesus starts a statement by saying “therefore I say to you,” it is prior to a solemn warning or pronouncement. The words are divinely self authenticating and guarantee that the truth and importance of what Jesus is saying next. The unpardonable sin is not the same as rejecting the gospel; a man may spurn the Savior for years, then repent, believe, and be saved. Of course, if he dies in his unbelief, he remains unforgiven. Nor is the unforgiveable sin the same as backsliding; a believer may wander far off from the Lord, yet be restored to fellowship in God’s family. Many people unreasonably worry that they have committed the unpardonable sin. The fact that you are concerned about it proves that they did not commit such a sin. This fact will remain forever; no sin is beyond Jesus’ forgiveness. Those who commit the unpardonable sin are hard and unrepentant. This is what makes it unpardonable. They have no issue with insulting the Holy Spirit and no hesitancy in plotting the death of the Son in their life. They show neither remorse nor repentance. Blasphemy does not refer to a single word or action, but to an attitude. Deliberate, ongoing rejection of the work of the Holy Spirit is blasphemy because it rejects God Himself. We cannot “accidentally” commit the unforgiveable sin, it must be a conscious, deliberate, ill intentioned, attitude toward the Holy Spirit, who is the One that convicts us of our sin and leads us to repentance.
- (36) Our deeds in general; **Matt. 16:27; for the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds.** Now the Lord reminds us that we are His believers of the glory that follows the suffering. He points forward to His Second Coming when He will return to earth with His angels in the transcendent glory of His Father. Then He will reward those who live for Him by allowing them to enter into His kingdom. The only way to have a successful life is to project oneself forward to that glorious time, decide what will really be important as that day arrives; then go after that with all of one’s strength. Divine judgment awaits every man; hence everything depends on where we follow Christ irrespective of what we lose in the world, or we disregard Him and seek as much as possible of the world for our life. As the One who is Man and yet more than man He will appear as Judge. Our Redeemer will be our Judge. This verse states that Jesus will be coming in full display of all the divine attributes. This refers to the human

nature of Jesus, that nature according to which He would undergo suffering and death which, however, possessed the divine attributes by virtue of its union with the divine nature and person of the Son, and which would be rendered glorious and radiant in His exaltation and heavenly enthronement. God's glory is always the sum of His attributes or any number of them shining forth so that His creatures may see them. Jesus shall appear in His Father's glory, as possessor of that glory equally with the Father. The final, public judgment shall be regarded as a just one by the entire universe; hence the Judge will pronounce sentence according to their works, namely those mentioned in verse 24, (deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Him), whether they are present in a man's character or not. Not that his salvation shall accomplished by these works but shall be a demonstration of his belief in having a relationship with the Son.

(37) Our inward thoughts and motives; ***Mark 7:21-23; For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting, and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All of these evil things proceed from within and defile the man. Luke 5:22, 23; But Jesus aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, "Your sins have been forgiven you, or to say, rise and walk?"*** Jesus gives us a list of examples of what defiles a person or defines an immoral man. First He explains what he means by "out of the heart," it is that which goes out of a person. It is something that starts from within, in the center of a person's being, or commonly called a person's heart, where these things that we consider first, and then proceed to let them come out, originate. These are well considered thoughts and reasonings, things that our wicked heart has decided that we have a moral right to proceed with as a need to defend ourselves or to establish where we fall in the chain of immorality. These things that a person eventually says are well-thought out, even tested on other persons first to get their reaction and support; to say that we did not realize what we is just to add more fuel to the judgment fire, because it is a lie. Jesus refers to these thoughts as "base," far below the moral standard and thus harmful, "bad" morally. The fact that some of these sins in the list are acts while others are vices, makes no difference, either defines who we are; they define an immoral person's character. There is no closely linked order for these lists of sins and vices, but some may need a further Biblical definition:

A. evil thoughts; intentions of being evil, disputing, questioning, contradictory, plotting.

- B. fornications; sexual sin, idolatry, lack of self-restraint, waster.
- C. Thefts; stealing.
- D. murders; slaying, cutting.
- E. Adulteries; sexual sin that involves at least one person that is married.
- F. coveting; greediness, love of money, hoarding, frugality, extortion, fraud; the longing of the creature which has forsaken God to fill itself with the lower objects of nature.
- G. wickedness; evil disposition, malice, vicious ill will, active malevolence toward others.
- H. Deceit; craftiness, lying, fraud, ingenuousness, shifty, sneaky.
- I. Sensuality; sexual excess, absence of restraint, insatiable desire for pleasure.
- J. Envy; mean, bad, hurtful, malicious, trivial.
- H. Slander; verbally abusive, wounding someone's reputation, evil speaking, insulting, railing and reviling.
- I. Pride; arrogance, vain glory, unrestrained boldness, contempt.
- J. Foolishness; lack of sense,

“Foolishness” appears as the last one on the list of vices, probably indicating that it is basic to the other sins mentioned; as if to say that all of these are the result of not being able to think properly and arrive at an adequate conclusion. However, verse 21 establishes foolishness or the inability to think properly according to God's intended gift of mind, as caused by the heart. The mind becomes corrupt; unable to think properly, when the heart is sinful and unregenerate. It can only function according to God's intent and purpose as the heart becomes purified by Him. The mind sees nothing correctly if the heart is not pure. Jesus reveals to us what a cesspool the unregenerate heart is.

Upon Christ's Second Coming all of the formalities of a court are going to be fully observed. He will come in glory and sit on His throne, with all of His authority. The word for “throne” conveys the thought that this is a King that has come to judge. The angels are always as heavenly ministrants to the Judge.

The Lord Jesus will be the final Judge. He will appear as the final Judge when He comes in His glory with His angels after the resurrection from the dead. All races and individuals will be

judged at this time. Evil spirits are also to stand in the judgment, but it is clear that the holy angels do not come into judgment, for they accompany and serve the Holy Judge.

The whole human race will be assembled for the final judgment. Through the agency of the angels the whole human race will be divided into two groups, one being placed on the right and the other on the left of the heavenly Judge. This division and placement by the judge are already a judgment and a verdict. What follows only justifies the act. During all of these centuries sheep and goats (wheat and tares) have been intermingled and no man could really separate them; but now at last the separation is made and shall stand forever. When Jesus is talking about this separation being “just as a shepherd” does, He is using a comparison that the shepherds of Palestine would be familiar with. In Palestine the sheep and the goats are often pastured together and then divided into separate folds at night because goats needed shelter at night because their coats were thinner; while the sheep, with their heavier coats, would rather stay in the open air.

The Greek words for “young goat,” or “kid,” appear in the picture of the last judgment where they are contrasted with sheep. The point of contrast lies in the color rather than in the character of the animals, the sheep being pure white while the goats are mostly covered with black hair. Sheep and goats pasture together, but never trespass on each other’s domains; they are kept together but they do not mix; they may be seen to enter the fold in company, but once inside they are kept separate.

The whole population of the earth shall be gathered before Him as they were, together, in the visible church-state, as they all declared their profession of religion. Some of them are wise, some are foolish virgins; some of them are sheep, while others are goats; some of them are industrious, diligent, faithful, and laborious servants that used all that was given to them while others are wicked, slothful, and unprofitable. Many of these have lived on earth undistinguishable and undiscovered until now, but then the Judge, who is quick in understanding, will easily discern the one from the other. Some have the oil of grace in the vessels of their hearts, together with their lamps; while others only have the outward visible lamp of a profession, but destitute of the grace of God. Some of these are good and faithful servants who have made rightful use of their gifts, while others have been negligent, careless, and remiss. Though they have been folded together, sheep and goats, in the fold of the church, where they have all borne the appearance of being sheep of Christ; the time has come, the Great Shepherd appears, who knows His own sheep, and calls them by name, He will easily separate the one from the other, and more so than any human shepherd can separate *goats from sheep*.

Jesus uses the terms sheep and goats figuratively as designations for the elect and the non-elect. Thus, by contrast it is easy to see and determine who is referred to by the sheep as

in ***Ezek. 34:11,12; For thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and I will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day.*** The sheep in these verses are those who do the works of faith which Jesus will recognize as having been done unto Him. The goats are those who fail to produce the works of faith, whose works, whatever they are, Jesus cannot recognize as having been done unto Him. All the sins of the unbelievers are brought forward, and it is on the basis of these sins they are damned forever, because they did not confess their sin.

The sheep are going to be on the right side of the King, a position of honor. Sheep were commercially more valuable than goats and throughout Scripture they are an image of God's people. Here they are identified as "the elect" of God or God's "chosen" people and are the one's God refers to when He says "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This kingdom has existed before the beginning of time and it is sure and unchangeable. Believers never need to doubt its existence, nor the glory of it as their inheritance. This has been God's plan since the beginning, even before time.

What I stated in verse 32, that is, in defining the word "throne," has led us to expect what the heavenly King says now in this verse 34. Here is judgment, but it is a royal judgment of our heavenly King, which is, on the one hand a dispensing of His royal grace and favor, and on the other hand, a dispensing of the justice that we longed for all of our lives, the justice that we were tempted to take into our own hands, but we were patient and faithful to allow for this time, a perfect judgment. He uses the words "you who have been blessed of My Father" to specify those who will receive the fullness of grace. It is spelled out more clearly when He enumerates them in His Sermon on the Mount. Their blessed state is not due to themselves or anything that they have done, but due to the Father. The Father has blessed them through the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is an act that occurred in the past and continues on into the present. When God blesses He does more than to pronounce words of blessing and praise as we do when we bless Him; He bestows His grace with all of its gifts upon us and thus makes us persons that were, and still are, blessed. As the "elect" we will physically die in this grace and after having been raised from the dead we will be counted as those "who have been blessed."

This phrase is sometimes thought to mean that the blessed are to be subjects of Christ, the King, in heaven. But none of us shall be subjects in heaven; all of us shall be kings, actual reigning kings, reigning conjointly with Christ in heaven. Heaven will be a kingdom that is composed entirely of kings, a kingdom raised to the highest degree and thus Christ shall be King of kings and Lord of lords. This plan has been instituted since the beginning of time and is here waiting for those who were prepared and watchful at His Second Coming.



In verse 34 Jesus uses the phrase “Come, you who are *blessed* of My Father.” To be blessed of the Father refers to one upon whom God has acted or who has experienced the blessing of God. The blessing of God is His action or intervention into men’s lives to bring them into the desired relationship with Himself. “Blessed” is used in joyful salutations to indicate that the blessing of the individual is due to God’s intervention in his or her life. when we say terms of endearment such as “God bless you,” we are, in actuality, asking God to intervene into that person’s life.

In the case of the Messiah and His reign, “blessed” (or well favored) is the One coming in the name of the Lord as having the concurrence of God the Father; ***John 12:13; when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, they took the branches of the palm trees, and went out to meet Him, and began to cry out, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”*** In the verse that we are studying, “the blessed ones of the Father” means those who have been acted upon by the Father and have been saved. In ***Luke 1:28; You are blessed above all women***” is speaking of the Virgin Mary and it means: uniquely favored or acted upon favorably from among all women. The word means “blessed” but is more accurately translated to English as “one who is the recipient of God’s action.”

There is a slight difference in the “blessed” that means “well spoken of” and the “blessed” of the beatitudes. The blessed as meaning well spoken of means inherently praiseworthy, which is spoken only of the personalities of the Triune God. The “blessed” in the beatitudes means to be indwelt by God permanently because of Jesus Christ and thereby fully satisfied. In the Greek these are two entirely different words.

The King places the sheep on His right hand side, referring to a place of honor, but the goats on the left. He then invites the sheep to enter His glorious kingdom, prepared for them from the foundation of the world. The reason given is that they fed Him when He was hungry, gave Him drink when He was thirsty, welcomed Him when He was a stranger, clothed Him when He was not adequately clad, and visited Him in sickness, and went to Him while He was in prison. The righteous sheep, in their humility, professed to not knowing that they were doing these things unto Him while demonstrating these kindnesses to other needy humans, probably because their compassion came from their heart and their only motive was to help someone that needed help...just as Jesus had done, does, and will do. Jesus had not even been on the earth during their generation, so how can He say that they did it unto Him? So to answer their curiosity as to what He meant by saying they had done it for Him, He explains that in the act of befriending one of the least of the brothers, they befriended Him. Whatever we do for one of the disciples of Christ is rewarded as being done to Him. This list describes acts of mercy that people can do every day. These acts do not depend on wealth, ability, or intelligence; they are simple acts freely given and received. No special talent is needed. Jesus demands our personal

involvement in caring for other's needs; ***Isa. 58:7; Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked, to cover him; and to not hide yourself from your own flesh?*** That this list is repeated four times in this parable indicates its importance as a guide for practical discipleship. This list is not exhaustive; instead it represents all the types of good deeds. This parable is also not teaching salvation by works, but evidence of salvation and a life influenced by the Holy Spirit, by good works. These acts establish the King's judgment and verdict as being just.

The list that He gives us states the grounds on which the judgment and the reward rest, and these grounds are beyond question our good works. They are decisive in the final judgment, not because of their inherent meritorious quality, but because of their evidential quality. As is true, even in our courts today, the law of evidence decides if the deeds are in harmony with the law. This verdict is rendered before the whole universe of angels and men. The evidence of faith is used which are namely the works which faith alone is able to produce. This is the point in judgment when every sham and every deception will fall away forever. For those of us with righteous intentions that may have been caught up in a sham with are faith oriented works, we need not worry about the validity of our works, the judgment of our acts is not based on what our acts accomplished, but by the intent of our heart. The love, properly understood, that is involved in these acts, brings us back to the ultimate source of these works of faith. Love for the King is what should have prompted these works, without any other motive. Having received His saving grace by faith, our gratitude responds by works that are intended for Him.

All of these acts are of the humblest and lowliness kind. Not one work is mentioned that would probably give us notoriety or special mention. All of these are works that the smallest of faith can easily produce. Even the smallest of faith saves. The kingdom of God is one that is gained by inheritance and not by merit. A paraphrase of the Jewish Scriptures (Targumist) has a passage similar to this one that says: *Solomon said, by a spirit, of prophecy from the Lord; the Lord of the world shall say to all the righteous in the presence of everyone, go taste, with joy, thy bread which is returned unto thee, for thy bread which thou hast given to the poor and the needy, who were hungry; and drink with a good heart the wine which is laid up for thee in paradise, instead of thy wine, which thou hast mingled for the poor and needy, who were thirsty; for lo! Now are thy works accepted before the Lord.*

When we read about the "nakedness" in these verses it is not used to designate the putting on of any kind of clothing, it refers to insufficient covering, especially in the cold, not necessarily absolute nakedness. The last on the list, "going to prisons" helps to cast a light on all of these works. They recall what Jesus said about the persecutions that His followers would have to suffer. Any comfort and any help, be it ever so slight, offered to believers in these

circumstances would really be a confession of Christ and thus in the highest sense a work of faith. What is called charity, namely works done from humanitarian impulses are ruled out. The works of faith are far more than such charity, they are confessional in that the act itself professes Christ as the influence for these acts. For example, one country helping with the aid to another country cannot be called an act of faith. It is a righteous act of kindness, but it is not done as a profession of belief in Christ.

The righteous are surprised at His words when He says that these works were done to Him. He commends them for their acts of kindness to Him, but they realize that they did not have opportunity to do such kindness to Him directly. The righteous are those who have God's verdict in their favor. The great Judge pronounces them free from guilt and declares them to be righteous. And, as the righteous Judge He must do so on the strength of the righteousness of Christ, which all of the righteous have as their possession, by faith. The entire doctrine of justification is by faith through the atoning merits of Christ only.

The astonished questions of the righteous are the best evidence as to how far their thoughts are from any idea of merit on their part. They have learned through the gospel to serve Christ their King, even in the lowliest of his brethren. But when they now notice infinite glory as their inheritance in the heavenly kingdom, the award of this inheritance on the grounds of such little works seems impossible. In their humility they kept no record of their works, they trusted solely in God's grace and their works were just a natural outcome of that faith. This is the truth that Jesus wants to bring out by means of these questions. It is further evidence to show how just and righteous the award is that He gives to us.

*The love of our neighbor is the only door out of the dungeon of self...George MacDonald.* The basis of reward rests on the acts of kindness each individual believer did for others, for in so doing, they did kindness for the King Himself. Jesus Himself, through the Holy Spirit, is present in even the most humble, lowly, or insignificant (as we see insignificance on a human level) follower of Christ. The point of this parable is not the "who," in who are we expected to do kindness to, but the "what"—the importance of serving where service is needed. Jesus' original intent in this passage seems to be that how we treat the lowly and the needy determines the importance of Jesus in our hearts. We are continuing the work that Jesus started. To not serve the needy or the lowly is showing the partiality that James taught against and he did so because in God's kingdom there is no separation or separating based on social status or any other reason for separation or discrimination that man can think of. We are all a part of one greater whole. Righteousness has no prejudices. If Christians who have resources would help the needy then non-Christians would possibly be persuaded of the validity of Christian love. Such love for others glorifies God by reflecting our love for Him. **Rev. 17:14; these will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will over-come them, because He is Lord**

***of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.***

Since Christ will defeat the kings and the lords that come against Him in the end times, what kings and lords will Christ be King and Lord over, since those who fought against Him will have lost their title? The Lamb is not the King or the Lord of these. These “kings and lords” that are spoken of in these verses are the ones which have pledged their loyalty to Him. They are who are described as the “called” by the gospel, the “elect, faithful, trustworthy, or believers.” How these can be called kings and lords, which is a synonym for the previously mentioned, comes from ***1 Peter 2:9; but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Rev. 1:6; and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*** In this final battle of good conquering evil the Lamb is the Conqueror, the saints are with Him only in order to share in His royal victory even as their royalty is bestowed upon them by Him.

The unrighteous goats are told to depart from Him into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, because they failed to care for Him when they failed to care for their brothers and sisters in Christ. When they excuse themselves by saying they have never seen Him, He reminds them that their neglect of His followers constituted neglect of Him. We now see the spiritual make-up of those who were placed on His left and subjected themselves to His curse.

Some of us are curious about the nature of this fire that Christ says awaits those who did not serve Him. It is my belief that this is not a literal fire. In the OT and the NT fire is always associated figuratively with judgment. I believe that the word “fire” is used because of the continual, frustrating pain of the burns that it causes and this type of pain is the closest thing that we have on earth to compare to the torture, both mentally and physically that the condemned will experience. It is a punishment that was prepared a long time ago for the devil and his angels. It is a type of pain that causes suffering for both spirits and humans. If we think about a place or a condition that causes separation from God and all of His attributes, but is minus the effectiveness of His presence, this truly would be a pain that both spirit and human alike would experience that would cause an even more painful existence than the continual burn from fire. This figurative fire is terrible indeed, but being “eternal” increases its terribleness and it, being one prepared for the devil, raises its terribleness even higher. To those of us who would reduce the pain of hell to a shorter or longer period, as in a reprieve, are associating it with our judicial punishments where mercy comes into play, however, with “mercy” being one of God’s attributes, and the effectiveness of His attributes missing, this could not be possible and even if it were possible we could not adjust the period of time, either longer or lesser, without also adjusting the time of our presence in the joys of heaven.

One added thought, not to dwell on an unpleasant notion, but I believe the importance of our eternal judgment requires a full measure of understanding, so we must remember this thought; the redeemed in Christ will receive a glorified body, that is, a body modified perfectly for the environment in which it exists. It seems to me, that in contrast to those who choose not to be redeemed, they will remain in their natural body, thus the pains that they suffer in their natural body will remain to eternity and probably progress as it does in this natural state, without the help of cures or remedies. This will be hell indeed.

The unspoken warning, that accompanies this verse, is spoken to those who are preachers of the Word and professors of religion that are mere nominal ones who profess to be on Christ's side. They have been in His visible church, and hoped to have been with Him forever, but having nothing but the lamp of a profession, and some external works to trust in, they are bid "be gone, I never knew you." This phrase expresses the wrath of God and the intolerable fierceness of it. This wrath is not one that God will eventually get over and find forgiveness for as eventual passing of time and the sting of what they have done, their words and actions, subsides and begins to have less of an impact, like could happen in the human experience. This exclusion from Him and all that is associated with Him is a continual exclusion without an end. Its intermission will never be felt and will be forever felt in their conscience. This same punishment will be inflicted on the hypocrites and the carnal professors, as on the devil himself. These goats that have mingled everyday with the sheep may think that they have lived their lives unnoticed by God; after all, up to this point, they are not aware of any ill effects of their behavior! But God will separate them and their punishment will be severe. There is no middle ground in the judgment; either a person is a sheep or he is a goat. The result is either the joy of the kingdom of heaven or the sufferings of hell for all of those who refuse to repent.

Of the eternal fire, the place of punishment and the abode of demons and wicked men in Hades, is represented under various images, a fiery furnace, the Ghenna fire, the fire that is not quenched, the eternal Lake of Fire, or simply fire. Because fire is a frequent apocalyptic figure for divine judgment, one need not imagine that the flames spoken of in reference to hell are material flames. Undoubtedly fire signifies a horrible, painful, and real judgment. Still, its' symbolic usage in Scripture must be taken into account when interpreting these passages. Also, the fire associated with baptism in the Holy Spirit is considered by many to be eschatological, alluding to the final judgment of the wicked in contrast to the baptism and gift of the Spirit given to the righteous. ***Matt. 3:11; As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire, (judgment).*** In this case fire is used as a purifying agent that purifies the faith in the hearts of Christians.

A similar verse to this one is found in **Luke 12:8, 9; And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man shall confess him before the angels of God; but he who denies Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.** The first verb “denies” should be literally translated “he who did deny Me”. It has in view any single moment in one’s lifetime (although we should not be dogmatic about it because it could also be considering the entirety of one’s lifespan). This word “denies” stands in contrast to “acknowledge, witness, or confess,” which refers to the acts of acknowledgement of Jesus Christ before men. The second time it is used it is in regard to the Son of Man, which again refers to the occasion of acknowledgement by Christ of those times in which the believer confessed Him before men. In verses eight and nine this acknowledgment by the Lord Jesus Christ of the confessing or the denying believer is said to be made before the angels of God. This has to be in heaven because that is where the angels of God dwell. It is difficult for us to imagine that these angels and believers would be found in the eternal fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. The angels referred to in Luke 12:9 are God’s un-fallen angels, while in Matt. 25:41 the reference is made to the devil’s messengers, those angels who became demons because of their disobedience to God. In Luke 12:9 the verb used could be taken as meaning that the denial by the Lord Jesus Christ is in direct proportion to man’s denial of Him. **2 Tim 2:12, 13; If we endure we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He will also deny us; If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself.** In this verse we have another occurrence of the denial by Jesus Christ in the future. In the proportion that we refuse to confess Him, He will also deny us in the future, which refers to occasions of not confessing before His Father and His angels as indicated in Luke 12:9. There is no indication of a greater or lesser denial in this verse. The expression in 2 Tim. 2:13 “He cannot deny Himself” refers to the occasions of denying Himself, meaning not to live up to His character of justice or reward proportionate to our witnessing for Him on earth. At no time will the Lord show Himself inconsistent in His judgments of our works, i.e., confessing Jesus Christ before men as well as our lack of such confessions which is denying Him. It is indeed noteworthy that in **1 John 2:22, 23; Who is the liar but the one that denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also,** the verb which is the present participle, indicates a life of continuous denial that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of the Father. He who constantly denies the Lord Jesus Christ cannot be a believer. He is called an antichrist. These of course are called ungodly men, worthy of condemnation; **Jude 1:4; For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.**

The sin noted by the King was the same as the sin committed by the bridesmaids and the servants, not active evil doing but a sin of omission or a failure to do good acts when the

opportunity presented itself. The apostle James wrote later; **James 4:17; to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.** This list that Jesus teaches to us and gives to us is not exhaustive, but it represents the common good deeds that people often fail to do. Doing wrong in ignorance may be excusable, but when a believer neglects to help those in need, they disobey Christ. These actions mentioned in the list do not take special gifts, talents, or lifestyles. One does not need to be rich to carry these out. Failure to do them then, as with the man who buried the talent, shows lack of love and trust for Christian brothers and, by extension, for the Lord Himself.

Not in one instance did these cursed people do even the slightest little deed for Christ the King. Not in a single case was there a motive that the King could recognize as an intention to really trust and to accept Him. In these verses Jesus is speaking as a prophet and is prophetically revealing how the verdict pronounced on the damned will be established as a righteous verdict in the sight of the whole universe. Each one of them and all of them definitely, positively, unalterably, thrust Christ the King away.

In the last analysis it is not sins as such that damn, whether they are great or small, many or few, commissions or omissions. For all and any sin can be pardoned and wiped out forever by grace. In the final analysis it is unbelief that damns; the unbelief that always says “no” to grace, continues to say this “no” even in hell and thus retains the guilt and the damnation of all its other sins; **Luke 16:29, 30; But Abraham said, “They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them.” But he said, “No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead they will repent.”** This “no” was first spoken by Satan in Eden and by means of this man’s murdering lies he instills it into all of his children; **Gen. 3:4; And the serpent said to the woman “You surely shall not die.” John 8:44; You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is not truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.** It appears that these persons were ones who lived among Christians and professed to be Christian and yet disregarded the helpless members of Christ that were in distress, when it was in their power to help them. But when they were hungry, etc., they did not communicate to them that they were Christ’s and by their not helping they showed that they had no faith or love in Him and were therefore justly condemned by Him. Their conduct, behavior, and character are just the reverse of the righteous and it is therefore no wonder that their sentence should be different than the righteous.

In verse 44 when the unrighteous answer to their verdict there is a slight contrast in their answer as compared to the answer that is similar that the righteous give to Jesus. The righteous repeat the words of Jesus in full, the condemned only abbreviate them. Just as in

their character and in their lives they have tried to abbreviate what is expected of them as a follower of Christ. Some believe that this abbreviation is only a formal difference in order not to tire the reader by complete repetitions. But if that is the case, why not abbreviate the answers that the righteous gave also and why the complete repetition, even a third time, by the King Himself? In any part of the Scriptures that you may read, verses were never shortened to save space, time or repetition. As a matter of fact repetition has often been used to stress the relative importance of what is being said. In this case of the final judgment the condemned care so little for the King's words that they abbreviate them. By that neglect, they had shown to have no true interest or belief salvation, for their salvation has not manifested itself in good deeds, as it would naturally do. Their failures were not acts of wickedness, but refusals to do good deeds and to show compassion. It is clear again, that these men were nominal Christians who had made a profession of Christ; they own Him as Lord and even suggested that they have seen Him and known Him, though never in the circumstances that He now brings up. For if they had their love and respect for Him as they pretended it was, it would've driven them to have ministered to Him. But Christ points out the hypocrisy in what they say in that they've had adequate opportunities to minister to Him through His needful followers who are a part of Him; whatever affects them affect Him.

Just to clear up any confusion that may have been caused from reading this passage I want to bring out two points as this study comes to a close. The passage seems to teach that nations are saved or lost en masse. Second the narrative creates the impression that the sheep are saved by good works, and the goats are condemned through failure to do good works. As to the first point; it must be remembered that God does deal with nations as such. OT history abounds with instances of nations being punished because of their sin. It is not unreasonable to believe that nations will continue to experience divine retribution. This does not mean that every single individual in the nation will be involved in the outcome, but that the principles of divine justice will be applied on a national, as well as, an individual basis.

The Greek word that is translated as "nations" in this passage can equally well be translated as "Gentiles." Some believe that the passage describes the judgment of individual Gentiles. Whether nations or individuals there is the problem with how such a horde could be gathered before the Lord in Palestine. Perhaps it is best to think of representatives of the nations or individual classes assembled for judgment. A nation can be judged for its immorality, for example, and effect everyone that lives in that nation, however, it would only affect a believer to the extent that he has to deal with the present evil age or while he inhabits a place on the earth. The judgment of his nation would not carry over to his individual judgment as to the destination of his eternal existence.



As to the second issue, the passage cannot be used to teach salvation by works. The uniform testimony of the Bible is that salvation is by faith and it cannot be earned by our works, money, or by any other means. But the Bible is just as emphatic in teaching that true faith produces good works. If there are no good works, it is an indication that the person was never saved. So we must understand that the Gentiles are never saved by befriending the Jewish remnant, but that this kindness reflects their love for the Lord.

Three other points should be mentioned as we come to a conclusion of this study. First, the kingdom is said to have been prepared for the righteous from the foundation of the world, whereas hell was prepared for the devil and his angels. God's desire is that all men should be blessed; hell was not originally intended for the human race. But if people willfully refuse life, they necessarily choose death.

The second point is that the Lord Jesus spoke of the eternal fire, eternal punishment, and eternal life. The same One who taught eternal life taught eternal punishment. Since the same Greek word for "eternal" is used to describe each, it is inconsistent to accept one without the other. If the word translated "eternal" does not mean "everlasting," there is no Greek word to convey the meaning. But we know that it does mean "everlasting" because it is used to describe the eternity of God; **1 Tim. 1:17; Now to the King *eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever, amen.***

Finally the judgment of the Gentiles reminds us forcefully that Christ and His people are one; what affects them affects Him. We have vast potential for showing kindness to Him by showing kindness to those who love Him. This should be forever planted into our minds and hearts, indelibly and non-reversibly.

For those who have not chosen to show this kindness while they had an opportunity, they, in effect, disowned Christ; they repudiated His grace and His salvation. The evidence for this are these negative acts of theirs which even they themselves admit as facts though for a false and a lying purpose. At the judgment the time of grace has passed, now the hour of judgment has struck. The evidence is clear to the universe; the sentence of hell-fire for those who chose not to perform these acts of kindness is the only sentence the eternal Judge can pronounce if he Himself is to remain absolutely righteous and just.

There is no evidence or indication that even a slight interval occurred between the Judge's announcement of His verdict and the execution of His verdict. So brief are His words, so tremendous the realities they state. Thus both the righteous and the damned go to their eternal abodes escorted by God's angels. The true punishment is existence in the absence of the enjoyment of God and the effect of His attributes; there will be no holiness, no justice or righteousness, no love, no truth, no mercy or grace, no faithfulness or veracity (honesty). Their

senses will be gone, touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing, all of which could be considered an act of His mercy and grace. Instead of the light in the company of God, they exist in a lonely, dark, place left to create their own environment but having nothing to use as creative material. The only persons who would argue the existence of hell and the devil are those who are not counted as the righteous and have contradicted the King and are in danger of arriving at hell themselves. The Day of Judgment is not a day for arguing, but a day for presenting facts.

To treat all persons that we encounter as if they are Jesus is not easy, for we may not know if they are believers, but in my opinion it is better to treat a non-believer as a believer rather than to treat a believer as if he were a non-believer. 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, (regardless of the circumstances that caused this condition for them). So this begs the question that each of us has to be asking ourselves internally; do our actions separate us from the pretenders and the unbelievers? Of course it's hard to give the homeless a place to stay if we don't know them and hard to look after a stranger that is sick, because we don't know if the outcome of such actions are physically dangerous to us or pose any other kind of threat to our well-being, but there has to be a time and place where we come to a point in our lives where we trust that God will protect us no matter what environment we are in and trust that He will not lead us to persons that are harmful to us. ***Ezra 8:22; For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we said to the king, "The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him." Psalm 41: 1-2; How blessed is he who considers the helpless; the Lord will deliver him in a day of trouble. The Lord will protect him, and keep him alive, and he shall be called blessed upon the earth; and not give him over to the desire of his enemies. Psalm 121:7; The Lord will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. 2 Thess. 3:3; But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. Eccl. 7:12; For wisdom is protection just as money is protection. But the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its possessors. Isa. 27:5; Or let him rely on My protection, let him make peace with Me, let him make peace with Me.*** We have to eventually come to trust that God is our Provider and no matter what may get stolen from us or whatever has been taken away from us, He will always provide for our needs; if the things taken are what we need to further His kingdom, He promised us that He would replace them. If we are unfortunate enough to be in a position that something gets stolen from us while doing our expected good deed and He doesn't replace it, this may be an indication that we didn't really need it anyway. This could be an act of God's grace and mercy by stripping us of things that are keeping us bound to this world and coming between us and our relationship with Him.

