



Some of the Parables.

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Some of the Parables

PREFATORY.

The Parables of our Lord form an important part of His ministry. They are beautiful in their simplicity, and yet they contain such deep and essential truths, and, in fact, as is the case with the Revelation given to Saint John, they are prophetic, and cover not only the whole period of this Age, but also of the "Age to come."

It is not the thought to treat these Parables in any exhaustive way, but we trust that what is presented may lead to more earnest study of the Words of our Lord, and result in further illumination by the "Lamp to our feet and guide to our pathway."

It appears to have been customary with our Lord after uttering His messages of grace and truth to illustrate His teachings by parables and often a sequence of parables, each of which may deal with a particular feature or side view of the matter concerned. For instance, all the parables in the 16th of Luke have respect to the changing dispensation from the Jewish Law Covenant to the Covenant of grace and faith. Also, in Matthew 13 the parables of "The Sower," "The Good Seed and the Tares," "The Mustard Seed," and "The Leaven hid in Three Measures of Meal," all illustrate the progress of truth in contact with error during the Gospel Age, and then "The Drag Net" also shows that the Gospel would attract all classes so that there would need to be a separating or harvest work when the fishing or sowing work was done.

"O where are the reapers that garner in
The grains of wheat from the tares of sin?
With sickles of truth must the work be done,
And no one may rest till the harvest home."

There is also an important series of parables in Matthew 25 illustrating the Return of Christ, and the work which He will then accomplish. The "Ten Virgins" and "The Talents" parables illustrate the condition of the Church at our Lord's Return and how He will first deal with His people before commencing His judgment of the world generally as shown in "The Sheep and the Goats."

Many of the parables have been greatly misunderstood because of wrong teachings which have come to us from the Dark Ages, and which ever since the Reformation, we have been gradually discarding, as the truth has been shining more and more.

How important it is that all true followers of Christ should have a proper supply of "oil" in their vessels, or, in other words, of the holy spirit in their hearts, for the parable clearly shows that there will be some prepared and some who will not be prepared and who will therefore fail to enter into the promised feast (Luke 12:37; Revelation 3:20).



The Parable of the Sower.

Matt. 13:1-9 and 18-23.

THE Evangelist, in this chapter, just seems to give us one of those beautiful little views of our Lord Jesus and His methods. There was the multitude of people waiting upon the Lord, not only to listen to the gracious words which ever proceeded from His lips and to see the wonderful works of mercy, but there was surely a holy influence in His presence. Even though His disciples could not understand, at the time, much that He said to them they knew that He had the words of eternal life, and that there was no one else to whom they could go. As the crowds pressed around the Master He came to where there was a boat. He stepped on to the ship and sat down; from that position He could talk to the people. No doubt He understood that in that congregation there were all kinds of hearers. Some were attracted only by curiosity, and the words of grace would not sink far into such hearts, others had inclinations to learn the way of life, but their hard hearts would not allow the sanctifying work of the truth to proceed. Others had good hearts, and while in the influence of those of like precious faith would be able to make good progress, but when the influences of the world and the flesh would come in contact with them they would be impeded; then there were those who hungered for truth and righteousness, who would stand all the trials of adverse influences, quickly enter into the joys of the truth and its service, prove faithful unto the end of the way, and "like the tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth its fruit in its season," the work of sanctification would steadily proceed and the fruits of God's spirit be attained.

So our Lord just told this simple little story about the Sower, and thus illustrated how God would make the selection of "The little flock to whom He would give the Kingdom." The message of the kingdom which our Lord and the Apostles began to proclaim, and which would be continued by others all down the age, would be the means of finding the class which would inherit the kingdom.

The "Seed" is the Word, and the "ground" represents the heart into which it may enter. There is nothing at all wrong with the "seed," all depends upon the nature of the "ground," or, in other words, the condition of the heart. The message has gone into all nations; it has gone broadcast; most of it has been wasted, has produced no result, but yet there will have been found sufficient good ground by the end of the age to have produced the required number of "children of the kingdom," or those who will be "joint-heirs with Christ" when He shall set up His Rule of Righteousness, under which "all the families of the earth will be blessed." There is no difficulty at all regarding this parable, for the Lord Himself explained it to the disciples.

The Wayside.

As in the following parable, Satan is referred to as the great opposer of truth and Christian progress, so here the "seed" that falls on the wayside is caught away by the "wicked one." Those on whose ears the message falls fail to understand it because they never gave it proper consideration; their minds and hearts were evidently preoccupied with other things, and thus there was no fruitage. That, however, does not mean that all such people are to be forever lost, but they lose the great and wonderful opportunity of the heavenly calling.

The Stony Ground.

The stony ground represents another class. The Word seems to take root and springs forth; they make profession of being followers of Christ, but they do not develop the Christian graces. Evidently

they are hard hearted and too selfish; the sacrifice of taking up the cross and denying themselves does not appeal to them at all, and they, therefore, do not go on to make consecration to God. They would be Christians if there were no trials, or if the way were not so narrow. The selfishness of their own nature crushes out what good desires they had, and they fail of the grace of God, or, as the Apostle has put it, "They receive the grace of God in vain." It is only "through much tribulation that we may enter the kingdom," and they are not prepared for that. They counted the cost and thought it too much, not realising the wonderfulness of the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The Thorny Ground.

The thorny ground is quite different, the ground is good, for it can grow thorns abundantly. The thorns will hinder, but the ground can produce good Christian characters. The matter is to be decided as to whether the thorns are to be left to flourish, or whether they are to be uprooted and thus better growth of the "seed" be permitted. Both the "seed" and the thorns cannot well grow together. This represents how that many who receive the great invitation to be "children of the kingdom" gladly respond and give their hearts to the Lord in consecration to be "dead with Christ," that they may "live with Him," and yet many of the old ways and desires still cling to them; things of the world and its socialities, the flesh and its likes and longings are not thoroughly cast off and therefore are obstacles continually hindering progress in the Christian life. These are not those in gross sin or immoralities as some have supposed, they are believers who have started the Christian way and are seeking to walk righteously, but the things which they have determined to leave behind still make some appeal to them, and they are apt to excuse themselves for some indulgence of earthly good things. The Lord's words respecting them are, "He that receiveth seed among thorns is he that heareth the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word and he becometh unfruitful."

There are many noble characters represented in this class. It is their environment that holds them back. If they were freed from the spirit of the world and its ambitions, if they did not have the riches and ease of life, its wealth and influence and the many good things surrounding them, they would no doubt be very fruitful.

How many there are in this condition. As we look about us we see many Christian people who seem very earnest and are even busy in good works, preaching and teaching, etc., yet enjoying the honour of position, even the honour of men in respect of their good works. How many are there who while trying to be true Christians still have great ambitions to be rich and have the honour of this world in being prominent even in good social works. How many are taken up with pride of home and with cares of this life, and thus they are unable to bring forth a full fruitage. We cannot give our time, strength and influence to worldly matters and at the same time "make our calling and election sure" to a place with Christ in His throne. "Whoever," says Jesus, "would be My disciple, let him take up his cross and follow Me. Where I am there shall My disciples be."

The Good Ground.

"Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit," said the Master. We notice that the good ground varies in its productiveness—thirty, sixty and one hundred fold. The greater the fruitage the greater will be the Lord's pleasure and the reward.

The good ground represents "Those who hear the Word, and understanding it, energise themselves to the bringing forth of the desired fruit."

The parable shows that the responsibility of producing fruitage rests with each individual who receives the good Word of God. In other words, the knowledge of God, of His purpose, and His provision for salvation brings with it a responsibility which we cannot elude. If we, like Esau of old,

have so little esteem for the Divine favour and blessing that we let it slip from us for a mess of pottage, or pleasure of earth, no doubt like Esau we shall be rejected, "for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." "Hold fast that which thou hast that no man take they crown."

Those who inherit the kingdom will be those who "hear the word and understandeth it," whose hearts are so loyal to the Lord that they gladly free themselves from all possible hindrances and, like the Apostle, determine "This one thing I do."

It is not sufficient that we hear the Word and that we have good hearts, or mean well. We must be so attracted by the good message that we shall seek earnestly to understand it and become active in its interest. First we must have the work of sanctification proceeding in ourselves in the developing of the fruits of the spirit. Then, our own hearts having been so gladdened, and our minds having been so enlightened by the good news of God's grace, we must let our light shine and proclaim the Divine message to others.

The different degrees of fruitfulness illustrate the earnestness and diligence in our desire to learn and to do God's will and to be found working in line with His purpose and plan. The rewards in the kingdom will be proportionate, as "one star differeth from another in glory." No one who has no fruitage can be acceptable for the kingdom; only those who have brought forth a good measure of increase will receive the "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou unto the joys of thy Lord."

"Keep striving, the winners are those who have striven,
And fought for the prize which no idler has won;
To the hand of the steadfast alone it is given,
And before it is gained there is work to be done."

The Marriage Feast.

Matthew 22: 1-14.

A CAREFUL scrutiny of this parable, as found in Matthew's record, shows it to be in full accord with the similar parable recorded in Luke 14: 16-24, though they differ somewhat in minor details. It is, therefore, wise to study the two records in unison.

Both records show three distinct calls to the marriage supper, or rather three divisions to the call which gathers the guests. There can be no difference of opinion respecting what the parable signifies; the thought brought to our attention is the same which pervades the Scriptures throughout, namely, that God is selecting from among mankind a peculiar people, a little flock, to be joint-heirs with Christ Jesus, their Lord, in His Kingdom and in all the gracious work of that kingdom, and symbolised as a "chaste virgin" who enters into a covenant of betrothal to the King's Son, her Redeemer and Lord, in harmony with which ultimately the great marriage shall take place, and the virgin becomes "the Bride, the Lamb's wife."

This thought was enunciated by John the Baptist, who, in introducing our Lord, presented Him as the Bridegroom, saying, "He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom, but the friend of the Bridegroom, when he heareth the Bridegroom's voice, rejoiceth greatly: this my joy, therefore, is fulfilled." John heard the Bridegroom and rejoiced, though he was not invited to become one of the Bride class.

The First Call.

The Lord had specially called Israel as His peculiar people, and had made ready His arrangements by which the first invitation to be the Bride of Christ was extended to the people of that nation. This invitation was given at our Lord's first advent during the three and a half years of His ministry. His message, sent throughout all the land of Israel, was, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand; repent and believe the good tidings." This was the invitation mentioned in verse 3, which was not heeded by Israel as a people. Following this, their "house", or nation, was left desolate—Messiah was slain.

The Second Call.

But our Lord did not abandon the people of that nation when He rejected the nation as a whole, and hence at His resurrection, in directing His apostles no longer to confine their efforts to Israel, but to preach the Gospel to every creature, He added, "beginning at Jerusalem." And we know that for a number of years following the crucifixion the Gospel message went again to Israel under the power and blessing of the holy spirit. Speaking of this, the Apostle Paul said to some of the Jews, "It was necessary that the Gospel should be preached first to you"—Acts 13: 46.

There was the second call to the marriage, recorded in verse 4. It says: "Tell them which were bidden"—previously bidden, and who had during the three and a half years of our Lord's ministry refused to come. Moreover, now the servants were commissioned to tell them that "the oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things ready." This comprehensive statement of readiness could not be made in the first invitation before our Lord's death, for He Himself, in His own sacrifice for sin, was the bullock that was killed (as typified in Lev. 16), and it is the eating of His flesh, given for the life of the world, that is to bring eternal life to as many as receive Him.

To the first call none seem to have responded, save the servants only who bore the message. To the second call some responded, though only a remnant, as is shown by Luke's account (Luke 14: 21, 22).

Moreover, the second call is shown to have been not to the righteous and prominent ones among the Jews, but to the morally and mentally poor, blind and maimed; not to the Temple class of Israel, the leaders of religious thought, the Scribes and Pharisees, but to the poor, found in the streets and lanes of that city or kingdom. This second message found a considerable number of this apparently inferior and unsuitable class, and gathered them to the wedding, where they were made presentable under the provided "wedding garment." Respecting the gathering, under this call, notice the record found in Acts 2: 41-47 and 4: 4—three thousand were found willing in one day and five thousand subsequently.

Nevertheless, as the Apostle Paul clearly shows, these Israelites who received the message of grace after the day of Pentecost, under this second call of the parable, were but a remnant as compared with the whole of Israel, but a part as compared to the entire number predestinated to be the number of the elect Church, the Bride of Christ.

In proof of his assertion that only a remnant of Israel was acceptable to God, Paul quotes Isaiah, in Romans 9: 27—"Though the number of children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved." Paul proceeds to show that "the fall of them was the riches of the world", and that in consequence of their not completing the elect number, not providing the full complement of guests to the great marriage feast, therefore, the invitation was extended beyond them to the Gentiles. He points out that God spared not the natural branches of the olive tree, but broke off the unfit ones, and during this age has been grafting Gentiles into the places formerly reserved for Israelites according to the flesh in connection with the root and fatness of the great Divine promises to Abraham's seed (Rom. 11).

It was after the remnant had been gathered out from the "streets and lanes", and after the great and influential of that nation had rejected the Divine invitation to the marriage feast, and had imprisoned the King's messengers, the Apostles, and had slain some of them (see Acts 8: 1-4; 12: 1-3, etc.) that God sent His judgments against that city or government, and utterly destroyed it, in a great time of trouble, referred to in verse 7. John the Baptist, speaking of that trouble, likened it in parable to "fire", which was to burn up the chaff of that nation. This was the baptism of fire which came upon them in contradistinction to the baptism of the holy spirit, which came upon the Israelites indeed, who accepted the invitation to the marriage feast (Matt. 3: 11). It was respecting this fire and wrath that John said to the Scribes and Pharisees who came to his baptism, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matt. 3: 7, Luke 3: 7). Concerning this same destruction of these rejectors of the Divine favour, the Apostle Paul wrote, saying that they "killed the righteous and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved; to fill up their sins always; for wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess. 2: 15, 16).

The Third Call.

Thus the way was left open for the third division of the call to the marriage feast (the call of the Gentiles) by reason of an insufficient number of worthy ones being found amongst those which were originally bidden—the Jews, the natural seed of Abraham. This third call, mentioned in verse 9 and in Luke 14: 23, is in both accounts designated as a call in "the highways" among the nations, the Gentiles, outside the city of the parable, which represents Israel. This call among the Gentiles has progressed for nineteen centuries, and according to various lines of testimony in the Lord's Word, it has almost accomplished the purpose intended, namely,

the filling up of the elect, predetermined number which shall constitute the joint-heirs in the kingdom, by becoming the Bride, the Lamb's wife.

Both evangelists state that a sufficient number will be found: and Matthew declares that "both good and bad" were amongst those found willing to participate in the feast. His description reminds us of another of our Lord's parables, illustrative of the same point, namely,

The Parable of the Drag Net,

which, being cast into the sea, caught fish both good and bad—suitable and unsuitable. The separation of the fish, gathering some into baskets for use and casting the remainder back into the sea, implies a discrimination on the Lord's part, as between the numbers who eventually would profess to be of His kingdom class and seek to share the feast, but who in some way come short, and those whom the Lord will esteem worthy, according to certain conditions and tests of character.

This part of the parable brings us down unquestionably to the close of the Gospel Age, because the Gospel Age is for the very purpose of calling those who shall participate in the marriage feast.

We read in 1 Peter 4: 17 that "judgment must begin at the house of God." This judgment of the consecrated church is shown in the parable by the statement that the king inspected or examined the guests. Among them He found worthy ones evidently, and also unworthy ones which, in the parable, are represented by one man—a representative of the class.

The unworthiness of this guest is represented in his lack of a wedding garment, hence it is important for us to ascertain the significance of such a garment. Secular history shows that the custom of that time amongst the Jews was that when any notable person made a feast of this kind he provided for the occasion an outer robe for each guest, so that however different the guests might be in respect of their circumstances, wealth or apparel, on this occasion,

while at the feast, as guests of one host, they were on a common level; for the wedding garments were alike, probably of white linen, embroidered.

The significance is readily seen. The Lord's people, gathered from every nation and people and tongue, are dissimilar in their intellectual, moral, physical and financial conditions, but when they have accepted the Lord Jesus, the redemption which His blood provided and an invitation to the wedding, they are reckoned as "new creatures in Christ Jesus", and all are on a common footing, the robe of Christ's righteousness making up for the deficiencies of each one, so that there is no difference as respects previous situation or condition, bond or free, male or female, they are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3: 28).

Without a Wedding Garment.

The class represented as without this wedding garment of Christ's righteousness is, therefore, very evidently a class which denies the necessity, value or merit of the great atoning sacrifice accomplished for us at Calvary—denies totally any necessity for a covering for their sins—attempting to appear at the feast in the filthy rags of self-righteousness.

It is one of the explicit terms or conditions of the call of the great feast that God has prepared, that all who will come to it must first accept by faith the redemption which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, otherwise they can gain no admission. It follows, therefore, logically, that the guest found without a wedding garment must have taken off the wedding garment after he had entered as one of the guests, since he would not have been admitted without it. We can readily see the application of this in the Church. While none could have access to the grace of God in Christ without first accepting by faith the merit of His sacrifice as the ransom price for their sins, yet after having entered the grace of God, we find so many who do despite not only to the King who made the marriage feast, but also to the King's Son, by rejecting the robe of His righteousness, while attempting to enjoy the benefits of His grace.

Where may we look for this class? We answer we may look for them among the others, who still retain the wedding garment. As we should expect, we find now, at the end of the Gospel Age, that various no-ransom doctrines have come to the front, "denying that the Lord bought them." These theories, in derogation of the ransom, seem to have a special fascination for certain classes: (1) For a class which is anxious to appear more independent in thought, and to be known as critics and advanced thinkers. (2) They have a fascination for a class whose consecration is lax, or partial only, and who like to take a broad view and to claim universal salvation, partly because they realise that they are not walking in the narrow way of self-sacrifice.

At all events, such a class is to be expected at the present time, and such a class we find quite numerous, some of them openly scoffing at the thought that a ransom was necessary or was given; others tacitly acknowledging the ransom, but in heart and in life denying it, ignoring the logical consequences, and propriety of participation with the Lord in the sufferings of this present time.

The parable shows at this juncture the full number of the guests had been gathered and are now in the house of their host. We may imagine the provision for their entertainment, etc., and these correspond in our case to the blessings enjoyed by the living members of the consecrated Church now; we are enjoying many of the blessings provided by our host, the Lord, and we have before us the menu describing to some extent "the things which God hath in reservation for them that love Him." We can even occasionally see some of the preparations for the great feast progressing, and it is from such favourable conditions, into the ignorance, uncertainty and "outer darkness" of the world that all who do not have on the wedding garment shall be thrust.

Into Outer Darkness.

We may question how the latter part of the parable is fulfilled. We see it accomplished by the presentation of the truth, in contradistinction to the error, the influence of the truth being the binding or restraining influence circumventing the error on this subject.

It is the duty of all who see the truth on the subject of the ransom to be thoroughly loyal to the King, and to thus assist in binding, restraining with the truth those who may be exercising an influence to the contrary. In the parable it is said that in the outer darkness there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is generally understood to mean "eternal torment" (hell-fire), although those who offer such interpretation seem to entirely ignore the fact that outer darkness and inner fire would be opposites of thought; wherever there is fire, the darkness is absent. Moreover, they claim that people will be shut up in hell, whereas in the parable the place or condition is an outside place. None of the conditions favour the ordinary interpretation, though all favour the interpretation which we are giving. The wailing and gnashing of teeth has not yet commenced; but, as the parable states it, "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Those who are now ejected from the light and from all participation in the joys and blessings of the present time will have their portion, their share in the great time of trouble coming upon the whole world, which is thus signified, "a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation." None then living shall escape that trouble, except the little flock, the kingdom class, the Bride class, to whom the Lord said, "Watch ye that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things coming upon the world."

Our Lord sums up the significance of this parable as meaning that "many are called, but few are chosen." How true! Not all have been called to this marriage feast. Hundreds of millions never heard a word about it all through these nineteen centuries, and hundreds of millions are living to-day without the slightest knowledge of it, and none of these can in any sense of the word be reckoned among the "called." Nevertheless, many have been called—all of the Jewish nation who had ears to hear the message were called, because they, by Divine arrangement, were a covenanted people to whom the first call belonged, but only a few of them were chosen. And so, during the offer of the Gospel to the Gentiles it has gone to a comparatively small proportion of the whole Gentile world; nevertheless, it has reached millions during these nineteen centuries.

A considerable portion of these, we may reasonably suppose, have had ears to hear, but generally the call has been ignored; the vast majority have found other attractions and ambitions. Comparatively few, therefore, care to accept the invitation. Finally, of those who have accepted, the Lord makes choice, and separates and rejects all who do not accept the invitation and all its privileges as a grace, a favour. The others constitute the little flock, addressed by our Lord, saying, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

"Go out in the by-ways and search them all;
The wheat may be there, though the weeds are tall;
Then search in the highway and pass none by,
But gather from all for the calling high."

Labourers in the Vineyard.

Matt. 20: 1-16

UNLESS this parable be correctly located respecting the time of its application and of whom it is spoken it would indeed be difficult to explain. If we were to apply the different intervals mentioned to different epochs in this Age, we would have difficulty, for the Apostles and others, called early in the Age, did not live and labour throughout the entire period. Again, in so applying it, we would face the proposition that only those at the beginning of the Age had definite promises respecting a reward—that all others got merely the assurance that they would receive what would be right.

Another difficulty which we encounter in interpreting the parable is how to apply the murmuring of those who were first called and last rewarded. Other Scriptures show us that the Apostles and others first called in the Gospel Age will experience their resurrection change before those who will be living at the Second Coming of Christ. St. Paul declares that the dead in Christ shall rise first, and that then those of us who are alive and remain shall be changed. Furthermore, it would be unthinkable that the Apostles and others of the early Church would murmur at the reward to be given them.

All of these difficulties must be borne in mind when we attempt to find a solution of this parable that would fit the experiences of the Church as a whole during the Gospel Age.

If we attempt to apply the parable to the individual experiences of God's people, we have trouble also. Applying it thus, we might say that those who begin a Christian life early, and are found faithful in the Lord's service at the evening-time of life, would be the ones first called and promised a reward. Others coming in later, and serving the Lord's cause with only a portion of their time, strength and talent, would correspond to those who heard the later call—some even at the eleventh hour. If we interpret the parable as meaning that all these will get a similar reward regardless of the time spent in the Master's service, we would still have difficulty with the fact that those called earliest murmured, complained, were dissatisfied.

On the contrary, we are surely convinced that any who would murmur against the Lord's will and His just and loving arrangements for His people, will never obtain the Kingdom reward beyond the veil. We may feel assured that any who receive the Master's "Well done" and the resurrection change will be far from murmuring. They will rejoice and be glad, and feel more than rewarded for every little service and sacrifice. How, then, can we apply this parable consistently, in harmony with the teachings of other Scriptures respecting the reward of the Kingdom class?

For about sixteen hundred years the Jews waited for the First Coming of Messiah and the blessed opportunities which then would come. When Jesus began His ministry, He preached, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," and gave the Jews the privilege of entering into it. That privilege was a "penny," or a reward for their faithful endeavour to keep the Law all their lives. But when the offer of the Kingdom was promulgated, some publicans and sinners were attracted—some who had previously neglected God's service and labours in the vineyard. These new labourers were received by the Lord Jesus and given an opportunity to become His disciples.

The privilege of discipleship was the penny, or reward. The Scribes and the Pharisees, who had been faithful to the Lord God all their lives, considered that they should have had some pre-eminence or preference over the publicans and sinners; and they murmured at any arrangement as unfair which would not give them preference respecting the Kingdom. If publicans and sinners were to obtain the blessed privilege or discipleship with Messiah, then surely, they thought, some still higher favour should come to them. They murmured that Jesus received publicans and sinners and ate with them.

One of the Master's parables was intended as a special reproof to the Pharisees along this line. The prodigal son represented a class of Jews not living up to their privileges, while the elder brother represented those who had continuously sought to be earnestly and actively engaged in the Father's business. When some of this prodigal class received the Message of God's Love from the lips of Jesus and His disciples, and returned to the Father's House and were treated graciously and given the same privilege of sonship as those who had not gone astray, but who had laboured faithfully, the elder-brother class was offended. They murmured, and refused to participate in the feast. Thus there were some who were first in opportunity, but who were last so far as the blessing was concerned, and others who were last and least found opportunity for receiving the Divine blessing sooner and more effectively.

Applicable to the Jews.

It would appear to be clear that the intention of the Lord in giving this parable was in connection with the Jews. It was given in those days when the Scribes and Pharisees realised that the parables He was speaking were directed against them. For instance, in regard to the Parable of the Vineyard (Luke 20: 19). The chief priests and scribes . . . perceived that He had spoken this parable against them. All will admit that certain parables apply only to that time, while others apply all down the

Age, and again some apply only to the end of the Age. It would seem necessary that we rightly divide the word of truth in this way, and thus place each interpretation in its appropriate season. This would not, however, hinder us from using the same as an illustration or as a correspondency.

Among other parables which can only apply at the time they were spoken would be the following:—The Rich Man in Hell and Lazarus in Abraham's Bosom, The Unjust Steward, The Prodigal Son, The Vineyard and Wicked Husbandmen, and The Great Supper.

We find, then, that the Parable of the Penny has had its fulfilment. First the priests and scribes had the opportunity of entering the Service. Those who responded were rewarded with the penny or the privilege of entering into the Kingdom Class, "the Law and the Prophets were until John, since then the kingdom of heaven is preached." "To as many as believed gave He power (or privilege) to become the sons of God." The "penny" was handed to the labourers by the Steward who would represent the Lord, and when the Law was satisfied the Steward could hand the penny, which might then represent Justification. This opened up the way for the Kingdom.

After the first call to the priests, Scribes and Pharisees, the Lord turned to the publicans and sinners. Then the Scribes and Pharisees did the murmuring. (See Luke 15: 2; 19:7.) The offer of the Kingdom later went to the Gentiles, and even among the disciples there were those who could hardly accept the thought that Gentiles might also be fellow-heirs of the Kingdom and they would anyway insist that they should be bound under the Law. On this question the conference was called at Jerusalem, and the Lord made the matter plain through the Apostles. While, as stated, there may be a correspondency in conditions which now exist in Christendom, it

would appear certain that the Lord's intention in connection with the parable of the penny was to reprove a wrong condition of heart in the Scribes and Pharisees of that time.

The "Vineyard" of the Householder would be in accord with Isaiah 5: 7—"For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant," and the Lord uses the same word in the Parable of the "Wicked Husbandmen." (See also Psalm 80: 8, etc.)

We find a similar expression in the Parable of the Good Shepherd, where the word "Porter" is used in the same way. By the death of Jesus the Law was satisfied and the "Door" was opened to allow the sheep to pass out in response to the voice of the Good Shepherd, who was "an end to the Law to them that believe." "That the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit" (Rom. 8: 4).

Lessons to Christians.

The general lesson of the parable would seem to be that we should appreciate the fact that whatever God has to offer is a gift. We should enter His service with loving loyalty to principle, to righteousness. If we have served for many years, that privilege of service should be esteemed; and our interest in the Lord's cause should make us happy. From such a standpoint of appreciation of the privilege of service we should be glad to see the Lord's work going on, glad to see others enter the service and glad to see them get the same reward that we hope for ourselves. Only those who have such a broad spirit, such an appreciation of the privileges of the vineyard, such a sympathy for "as many as the Lord our God shall call"—only these will be fit for the Kingdom proper and in readiness to receive the special privileges of knowledge and opportunity when the Kingdom is ready to be announced.

As the typical kingdom was offered to the Jews in Jesus' day, and as those who were newest in Divine service received the same opportunities for a share in the Kingdom with those who had been long engaged, so apparently it is to be in the end, or Harvest time, of the Gospel Age. Those who have all their lives been seeking to be faithful to the Lord and to serve His cause should remember that they have had that much more of privilege and blessing. If some shall enter the Divine service later, they should be rejoiced with as fellow-servants.

Let us rather rejoice in the Lord's ways. Let not our hearts be angry because of His graciousness to those who have come into the service even during the eleventh hour. Are they not brethren? Under the terms of the Golden Rule should we not wish them to have the same blessings that we enjoy? Any aloofness on the part of those who have been longer in the Lord's service—any feeling on the part of such that they must have more manifestation of the Lord's favour now—is evidently wrong.

More and more we are learning that in a very large and important sense our forefathers during the Dark Ages lost the proper conception of God's character and of His Plan for human salvation. Instead of picturing Him in the creeds as loving and gracious, they portrayed Him in very different colours. The creeds of the Dark Ages, which have been handed down to us, have given us coloured and distorted views of the teachings of the Bible. Only in recent years are Bible students beginning to discern this fact. Nearly all people of intelligence have now cast away the creeds as irrational in the general trend of their teaching—in their representation that God from the beginning purposed a Hell of fire and everlasting torture for nearly all His human creatures, numbering thousands of millions, and a Paradise of bliss for only a saintly handful, an elect few.

But, alas, while we have been realising the errancy of our creeds, and have been discarding them, many of us have failed to notice how different their teachings are from the teachings of the Bible! But the

Bible is being sought after again. The coloured creed-spectacles which distorted our view are being broken to pieces. We are learning to read the Bible in its own clear light, and a blessing proportionately is coming to us.

Notice, for instance, this text: "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven." Many during the Dark Ages committed horrible atrocities in the name of religion, in the name of Jesus, in the name of the Father, thinking that they were copying God, being like their Father in Heaven. But, alas, they knew Him not aright! They had been following demon-drawn pictures which represented the almighty, gracious God, the Father of mercies, as most devilish in His plans and arrangements for His human creatures. Now we are seeing what Jesus really means when He said, "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven." Now we are including the remainder of His statement: "for He is kind to the unthankful"; and "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

Two of the very noblest of Jesus' disciples caught the wrong thought, even though they were for awhile personally present with the Master. How much more should we excuse those who, during a long period of energetic creed-making and of neglect of Bible study, lost all proper conception of the Divine character!

The two disciples referred to were James and John, the sons of Zebedee. When the Lord and His disciples had run short of food, James and John went to a city of Samaria to purchase bread. The Samaritans inquired why Jesus did not come to their city to heal the Samaritan sick, as well as the Jews. When they learned that His mission for the time was exclusively for the Jews, they were offended and said: Buy your bread from the Jews, then; we

will sell you nothing. Then it was that James and John, indignant that their Master, the Heir of all things, should be thus dishonoured, asked permission of Jesus to call down fire upon the Samaritans, to consume their city. These disciples thought that they had the spirit of God. But Jesus said: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

And if these two dear disciples needed to be corrected—needed to be shown that they had a wrong spirit in wishing to destroy the Samaritans—how much more would Jesus' reproof be appropriate to those who in the name of God would consign all opponents to an eternity of torture!

But such were some of us in our ignorance, in our superstition, in our creed-intoxication—as a result of drinking the wine of false doctrine (Revelation 17: 1-5; 18: 3). Thank God for the deliverance! Praise His name for the saner views coming to His people. The dawning of the Morning of a New Dispensation is giving enlightenment! "Tell the whole world these blessed tidings."

Take Thine Own way with me, dear Lord,
Thou cannot otherwise than bless,
I launch me forth upon a sea
Of boundless love and tenderness.

The Rich Man and Lazarus.

(Luke 16:19-31.)

IT would seem that few, if any, passages of Scripture have been more misunderstood than this parable, which, when taken in its connection, and when interpreted by comparing Scripture with Scripture, becomes a very graphic and historical picture concerning Israel and the turning of God's favour towards the Gentiles.

We must remember that up to the time of our Lord, and a little beyond, God had no dealings with other people than Israel—the Jewish nation. "Thee only have I known (recognised) of all the families of the earth." He declared by the prophet Amos 3:2. "He suffered other nations to walk in their own ways winking at their ignorance" (Acts 14:16; Acts 17:30).

A great change of dispensation came at the time of our Lord, and the Jews were, because of unbelief and their rejection of Christ, cast off from God's peculiar favour, and the godly from all nations have since been carried into Abraham's bosom, which signifies the place of God's favour.

Many of our Lord's parables had reference to the change which was then taking place. In the previous chapter we have the beautiful picture of the Prodigal Son. This was evidently illustrating the self-righteousness of the Pharisee towards the publicans and sinners, as was also the parable of the two men who went to the temple to pray. The one said, "I thank Thee that I am not as other men nor as this poor publican." The poor publican said, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

Commencing the 16th of Luke we have the parable of the Unjust Steward, who was dismissed from his stewardship, which pictures the stewardship being taken from Israel, and would teach them how to be wise towards the Gentiles while they still had opportunity of acting graciously in respect of the Divine favours which were still in their possession. Then in verse 16 the clear statement is made: "The Law and the prophets were till John, since then the Kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." Then comes verse 18, which, with the usual understanding of the following parable could have no connection whatever, but when we see the meaning of the Rich Man and Lazarus, this verse is quite relevant to the subject. "Whosoever putteth away his wife and marrieth another committeth adultery, and whosoever marrieth her that is put away committeth adultery." By reference to Rom. 7:1-6, the connection with the parable will be seen. They could not belong to the Law covenant and also be married to Christ. Then the Lord gave the parable illustrating the nation of Israel dying to God's favour—going out of Abraham's bosom and the godly among the Gentiles coming into Divine blessings and becoming heirs of the promise made to Abraham (Gal. 3:16 and 29). So we see that the Lord was not at all speaking about the wages of sin or the eternal punishment of the wicked, but He was foretelling the punishment which did come to Israel on account of their unbelief and rejection of Him who "came unto his own and his own knew him not."

The Rich Man.

How well this rich man illustrates that favoured nation who were so rich in Divine blessings and promises contained in the covenant with Abraham. "To whom pertaineth the adoption (to as many as received Him gave He the power to become sons of God—John 1:12), and the glory and the covenants, and the giving of the Law and the service of God and the promises" (Rom. 9:4).

Everything belonged to Israel. They were clothed in purple, a symbol of royalty (Deut. 8:6, 7), and in fine linen, a symbol of purity, holiness. "The Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people, as He hath promised thee, and that thou shouldst keep His commandments, and to make thee high above all nations which He hath made, in praise and in name and in honour, and that thou mayest be a holy people unto the Lord thy God as He hath spoken." (Deut. 26:18 and 19; Deut. 28:9-13). They fared sumptuously every day, so God's rich blessing and providence were over them according to their obedience to the Law .

A Certain Beggar.

Just as Dives, the rich man, pictured the nation of Israel as represented in our Lord's day, so Lazarus, the poor beggar, represented the Gentiles without God and without hope, "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephes. 2:11, 12). The Lord had come to Israel only, He had told His disciples to go not into the way of the Gentiles nor into the cities of Samaria, for said He, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Then there came to Him the Syro-Phoenician woman and besought Him, "Lord, help me. But He answered, It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs"; and she answered, "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Then Jesus answered and said unto her, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." (Matt. 15:22-28; Matt. 10:5, 6).

What a beautiful exception the Master made in this case. Surely no one ever came in faith and simple trust to the Lord who went away empty. "He that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." However, the exception proves the rule. Israel was rich, the Gentiles were poor and called "dogs," outsiders,

Then came the great change. The beggar died and was carried by angels (messengers) into Abraham's bosom. That is to say that the godly among the Gentiles were no longer "beggars." There were no more "beggars" like Cornelius waiting until the full time of Israel's special favour should end. Cornelius was evidently the first "beggar," godly Gentile, who was carried into Abraham's bosom, received into Christ, and became "Abraham's seed" (Gal. 3:29). Peter was the angel or messenger to bring Cornelius into the heavenly call of the Gospel Age.

The rich man also died, and was buried. Just so the Jewish nation died to the condition of Divine favour, or, as the Apostle puts it in Rom. 11:20—"Because of unbelief they were broken off," and verse 17—"For if some of the branches were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree (Gentiles) were grafted in among them, and with them, partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree," (the Abrahamic promise); and verse 11 says distinctly "through their fall (through the rich man's death) salvation is come to the Gentiles." The rich man died to God's favour when Jesus declared their house desolate; it was not, however, until about A.D. 70, thirty-seven or thirty-eight years later, that he was buried. Then it was that Israel was scattered and buried as a nation, and in this buried condition has indeed been in torment all down the Gospel Age: Now the rich man becomes the "beggar" while Lazarus has become rich in heavenly blessings. So the rich man (Jewish nation) begs for some relief from the godly among the Gentiles. The reminder is given that the positions have just been reversed. "Thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; now he is comforted and thou art tormented. And besides this, there is a great gulf fixed; so that they that would pass hence to you cannot." This seems to indicate the difficulty of reaching the Jew with the drop of water of truth. The Law prejudices form the great gulf; they cannot accept Christ and salvation by faith in the great ransom sacrifice.

The rich man was not wholly corrupt. He had allowed Lazarus to lie at his gate and receive the crumbs from his table, and again he now appeals for mercy for his brethren, and that some one might go to them from the dead and warn them lest they, too, come to the same condition of torment and trouble. This may refer to other Jews scattered abroad, while Dives may represent principally those in Jerusalem and the holy land. The answer shows that the rich man and his brethren were Israelites—"They have Moses and the prophets; if they hear not them, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead."

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus is practically the same teaching as Romans 11. Peter (1 Peter 2:10), referring to the Lazarus class, says, "Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."

When it is seen just what the Lord's intention was in giving this parable, how much it is to be deplored that it should have been so misrepresented and used to support the most unreasonable doctrine of eternal torture. Yet when we consider how craftily the doctrines of Hell and Purgatory were brought in during the dark ages, and that children were inoculated with the error from infancy, it can be seen how easy it would be, without giving much thought to the subject, to just take for granted that the Lord was speaking of the penalty of sin in regard to the world of mankind.

However, God is just, and also merciful, and neither quality would be operating in such a diabolical scheme for miraculously preserving alive anyone, let alone the great majority of the race, just so that they might groan in continual agony. God is wise, but such a purpose would be foolish. God is just, but one could not, in a short space of man's present existence and under such imperfect conditions, justly incur any such penalty.

God is love, and love could not consent to torture even a brute, and if a man becomes too vile to live, love will demand that he become "as though he had not been," "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." "The wages of sin is death." "All the wicked (the incorrigible when brought in touch with the knowledge of God's benevolent provision in Christ) will God destroy" (Rom. 6:23; Psalm 145:20).

When we get this matter of Eternal Torture cleared out of the way, it is possible to appreciate, as never before, the great Plan of Salvation and how the death of Jesus Christ redeemed us all from the curse and sentence of death. He paid the penalty—"The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." The penalty suffered by our Redeemer was not eternal torment, but "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."

The Ten Virgins.

Matthew 25:1-13.

“Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh.”

IT was probably on the last Sunday of His earthly career that our Lord foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, the scattering of His followers, a long period of wars and rumours of wars, etc., and finally His second coming, as recorded in Matthew, chapter 25. This information was most appropriate to the Apostles at that time, for their expectations had run in a different direction. They had thought of the Lord being exalted as the Messiah, and that Jerusalem would be the seat of His empire. It was given in answer to their questions—“When shall these things be”, and “What shall be the sign of Thy presence.”* Jesus, in His great prophecy of Matt. 24, had explained these matters, and indicated that His second coming would be in strenuous times, when, if it were possible, the very elect would be deceived—in which, as it was in the days of Noah, so it would then be in the days of the Son of Man, that the people would be eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage, and be unaware of the coming trouble with which the present Age would pass away preparatory to the beginning of the new Age—His kingdom.† To impress the matter upon their minds, He gave the parable of the Ten Virgins—five were wise and five were foolish. The parable then clearly relates to the end of the Gospel Age, as is indicated by its opening statement: “Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins who took their lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom.” It has not been applicable all the way down the Age, but to the particular time when the Bridegroom should come.

* (See booklet “Manner of Christ’s Return and Appearing,” supplied at 9d. per copy.)

† (For a full explanation of Matt. 24, the booklet “Our Lord’s Great Prophecy” is recommended: it is supplied at 9d. per copy.)

Throughout the Scriptures the Church is represented as a Bride in preparation for her marriage. The Bridegroom is uniformly the Lord Jesus, to whom belongs the entire inheritance, and the opportunity granted to the Lord's followers in the present time is that of becoming His Bride and joint heirs (Rom. 8: 17). They have no status or relationship to the King eternal except as they obtain it by union with the King's Son. The type of this in the Old Testament is a very beautiful one; Abraham typified the Heavenly Father, very rich; Isaac typified our Lord Jesus, the seed of promise, the heir of all; Abraham's servant sent to call a wife for Isaac beautifully typified the holy spirit, which during this Gospel Age has been selecting the Church of which the Apostle says: "I have espoused you as a chaste virgin unto one husband, which is Christ" (2 Cor. 11: 2).

Throughout this Age the Church, under the guidance and protection of the holy spirit, has been approaching the Father's house of many mansions, the heavenly home promised. If we rightly understand the matter, we are now approaching the end of the journey. Soon the Bride, like Rebecca, will alight from the camel and pass under the veil and will be received by the heavenly Bridegroom. It is in harmony with this thought that the Apostle assures us that the Church will share in the covenant made with Abraham—"If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3: 16, 29).

Several of our Lord's parables related to this marriage of the King's Son, and His last message to the Church tells us of how ultimately the Bride, the Lamb's wife, shall shine forth resplendent in the kingdom. She is symbolised by the New Jerusalem. The announcement of Rev. 19: 7-9 reads: "Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. . . . Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

John the Baptist, as a prophet, referred to this relationship between Christ and the Church, saying, "He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom; but the friend of the Bridegroom, when he heareth His voice rejoiceth greatly. This my joy is fulfilled." John realised that he was not a member of the Bride class. He recognised Jesus as the Bridegroom, and was glad to be honoured of God as the servant of the Bridegroom to give the introduction. Our Lord referred to John, saying that there had been none greater. John will surely occupy an honourable position in the future, yet it is stated that "the least (in the Bride company) in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." for these are to be joint-heirs in the spiritual kingdom, partakers of the glory, honour, immortality, while John and the faithful of past ages will be upon the earthly plane as representatives and princes of the kingdom among men (Matt. 11: 11; Heb. 11: 39, 40; Psalms 45: 16).

Two Classes Of Virgins.

Having the parable located before our minds as relating to the Second Advent, we note the fact that it refers to virgins—pure ones. The parable does not refer to the world at all. Both the wise and the foolish virgins represent Christians—the kingdom of heaven class—consecrated believers, believers who have heard the Gospel of the kingdom, who are expecting the King at His second advent, and who have lamps, and who get from their lamps light, information, and instruction.

These two classes of pure ones, separate from the world, informed respecting the Bridegroom's coming and kingdom, represent the two classes of the consecrated—the "Little Flock" and the "Great Company," the "more than conquerors" and those who come "through great tribulation and ultimately become conquerors" (Rom. 8: 37; Rev. 7: 14). These are the same two classes that are represented in the Tabernacle type by the two goats, one of which became the Lord's goat for sacrifice, and the other the scapegoat, only that in the Tabernacle

type the goats represent the two classes all the way down through the Gospel Age, while the two classes in the parable under consideration represent the Church only at the end of the Age.

Evidently the Lord's object in giving the parable was twofold; first to give a salutary lesson to the Apostles and the entire Church of the Gospel Age on the necessity for alertness, watching and praying, anticipating and preparing for the coming King and His kingdom that they might be constantly ready for a share therein. Second, the parable was specially intended for us living in this time to let us see that it would not be sufficient to be hoping and praying for the kingdom and in a general way expecting the Bridegroom, but that we must be so alert and so full of enthusiasm for the event that it would lead us to make the wisest possible preparation for it, that we might not be disappointed at the final moment.

Second Adventists In The Parable.

True to the picture, a movement took place amongst the Lord's people of all denominations in the last century which culminated in what was known as the Second Advent movement. The virgins, the pure ones amongst Christians all over the world, were aroused with the thought that the coming of the Bridegroom was near, and a general lamp trimming, and a general investigation of the Bible, especially on that subject, resulted. True to the parable, the expectation of those dear people was unfulfilled—"The Bridegroom tarried," and while He tarried they all slumbered and slept. The lamps were measurably neglected, and a general stupor fell upon this class. But by and by came the midnight announcement, "Behold the Bridegroom!" This cry has been going forth for the past seventy years, and in response to it the wise virgin class all over the world has been awakening to a fresh examination of the Divine word. Among those who hear the announcement are some who insist that it is a false alarm; they have become so drowsy, so

overcharged with the cares of this life, so comfortably nestled, that although they love the Bridegroom and desire above all things to be ready to receive Him, they are unprepared, refuse to investigate, and merely murmur to themselves, "Yes, we love the Bridegroom; we will surely be ready to receive Him, we have long been waiting for Him, but not yet, not yet. Soul, take thine ease—no one knows anything about the matter; those announcing the Bridegroom are surely in error."

As time goes on more virgins awaken, and as they do so the investigation begins, the trimming of their lamps. Then it is discovered that some who thought they were ready to enter into the joys of their Lord find that they are deficient in the all-important oil, which represents the holy spirit, and from which alone comes their enlightenment. The delay of the Bridegroom thus serves as a test to the virgins who are invited to go in with Him to the marriage. The delay serves to prove who are wise and who are foolish

A certain amount of oil, a certain amount of consecration and of the holy spirit was necessary to be counted in with the virgins at any stage; but a larger measure is necessary now in the actual presence of the Bridegroom—more truth, more light is now due and must be possessed by those who would go into the wedding.

The virgins merely represent the Lord's people in general, so that those now living had nothing to do with the movement of the last century. However, the general spirit must be the same, love for the Bridegroom, expectancy of His presence and a desire above all things to be prepared to enter in with Him. Who, then, may we ask, has a sufficiency of oil, of light, of the holy spirit, from which this illumination proceeds, to be able to be in the procession of virgins who will go in with the Bridegroom? This is an important question to every Christian. How necessary that we see to it that we have our lamps trimmed and burning and also a good supply of oil, the holy spirit, in our vessels—

our hearts. If we have, there will be the fruit to be seen—meekness, patience, gentleness, long suffering, brotherly kindness and love. Depend upon it, that unless we have a good supply of God's holy spirit thus evidenced our lamps will go out.

“Give Us Of Your Oil.”

To illustrate this holy spirit, this spirit of consecration which all of the wise virgins must have in full measure in order to maintain their light and their place in the Bridegroom's favour, and to gain an entrance into the marriage, the Lord, in the parable, represents the foolish virgins as asking the wise ones for some of their oil, and then shows the impossibility of its being thus obtained from one another.

The fruits and graces of the holy spirit cannot be obtained by the asking—they must be bought in the market of experience; they are of gradual growth, and cost painstaking care of words and thoughts and doings. It is because these fruits of the spirit are so difficult of attainment and cost such a price of self-sacrifice of worldly interests that they are valuable in the Lord's sight. None can get too much of this holy spirit, none can secure an over-supply for his own use so that he might supply others from his abundance.

The Bridegroom has in advance made abundant provision by which all who are invited may be properly equipped, not only with robes and lamps, but also with oil. If any are careless in the procurement of the oil, they thus indicate their unfitness to enter in with the Bridegroom. This seems to be the very essence of the teaching of the parable. Those who hope to enter the kingdom and share its glories must make proper preparation in advance. If they wait until the moment for the door to close, however willing they may be, however anxious, they will not be prepared. The preparation requires time, patience and care.

We meet continually those who give evidence of being true Christians, "virgins," pure of heart, of intention, who are considerably interested in the Heavenly Bridegroom and in the gathering at the marriage supper, but who have little light upon these interesting subjects. They sometimes say to us, "Give us of your light; tell us how you know these things, why you feel so sure about them; while others are doubtless asleep, we are awake enough, but our lamps give no light." We answer that it is not possible to give them faith in these things by proxy, that there is only one way to obtain the light, and that is by patient, diligent study of God's Word, under the guidance of His holy spirit.

Patient perseverance in well-doing, in Scriptural study in calculating the fruits of God's spirit, are necessary in order to have this oil in proper proportion. Many express regret, for they are so overcharged with the cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches or family pride, or what not, that they have not the time to give to their spiritual development. We wish that they could enjoy with us the blessings of a good supply of oil and the clear light of our lamps as they are now shining. We can only tell them how and where the oil may be obtained. We must go on with our personal preparation and hasten to hold up our lights in salutation of the Bridegroom, with expressions of joy in respect of His presence and the prospect of entering with Him into the marriage.

And The Door Was Shut.

Soon it would seem that the First Resurrection will be completed, the last member will be changed. Then the door will be shut, and no more will be permitted to enter. Thank God that this does not indicate such a dreadful condition as many Christian people have thought. It does not mean the close of the door of hope, and that all outside, the foolish virgins as well as the world, will go down to hopeless despair. It does mean, however, the close of

the great and grand opportunity of the Gospel Age. It signifies the completion of the kingdom class—the Bride class, the close of the narrow way to glory, honour and immortality and joint-heirship with Christ. The foolish virgins go and buy the precious oil and get their lamps trimmed and burning, but too late for the marriage, too late to be of the Bride—the Lamb's wife. In the parable it is represented that when they knock the Bridegroom will say, "I do not recognise you as being members in my Bride class; you must not come in." Instead of entering into the joys of the Lord, they will be permitted, for a time at least, to have their portion in the great time of trouble which will then prevail throughout the world; weeping and gnashing of teeth, sorrow, disappointment, chagrin, will be the portion not only of the foolish virgins, but of all the families of the earth in that time. We are glad to know that the great day of trouble will prepare the world of mankind for the glorious conditions of the kingdom which will then shortly be ushered in. "The Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in its beams," and many people shall go and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord's house; He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For the law shall go forth from Mount Zion (the glorified kingdom, the heavenly kingdom), and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem (from the earthly representatives of the heavenly kingdom)" (Mal. 4: 2; Isa. 2: 3).

How inconsistent the thought that the folly of these virgins should not only exclude them from the kingdom blessings, but that even after they get the oil of the holy spirit later on they should be consigned to an eternity of torture or loss! How unreasonable, how inconsistent! On the contrary, how much in harmony with the Divine character and programme is this parable, as we have endeavoured to picture its fulfilment. We can sympathise with the foolish virgins, while we cannot commend them. We can look forward to the time when they as the "great company" of Revelation 7 shall wash their

robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, and be ushered into the presence of the Lord and the Bride, and become as represented in Psalm 45—the virgins, the Bride's companions and co-labourers in the kingdom work—servants before the throne. They might have been, had they been more filled with love and zeal, members of the Bride class, in the throne.

“Neither The Day Nor The Hour.”

Our Lord concludes the parable with the words, “Watch, therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour.” The Revised Version omits from verse 13 the words, “wherein the Son of Man cometh” because these are not found in any of the old Greek MSS. The thought, however, is practically the same—watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour in which this parable will be fulfilled. The watching, no doubt, has been beneficial to the Lord's people all through the Gospel Age, and is still more profitable to the wise virgin class of the present day, because it explained to these their circumstances, conditions, etc. All of the wise virgin class should be in the attitude commanded in this parable; they should have a knowledge of the fact that the Bridegroom is coming; they should have lamps and a full supply of oil. Those living in this ready condition should be neither alarmed nor surprised at the message when they hear it, as it is now going forth, “Behold the Bridegroom is present.” We are living in the “parousia” (presence) of the Son of Man—the wise virgins are already falling into line in the procession and entering into the marriage. The full number will soon be complete and the door will be shut. All in this watching attitude of heart, with the full measure of the spirit of the Lord in their hearts, will be quickly attracted by the intimation that the Bridegroom is present. Those trimming their lamps, examining the Scriptures, will quickly discern the truthfulness of the announcement and speedily prepare and take their places with the wise virgins. The announcement, the truth upon this subject is indeed a testing, proving

which of the professed virgins of the Lord have the oil in their vessels—the right spirit of humility, patience, love, devotion, interest in the things of the Bridegroom. Such only will be permitted to enter.

In view of this it is evident that our work in the present time is not only to proclaim the Bridegroom's presence, but to assist those who have the oil in their vessels, to trim their lamps—to arouse those who are drowsy or still asleep and who need to have the announcement, "Behold the Bridegroom." brought kindly and patiently to their attention, that they may secure the oil and have their lamps trimmed and burning ere it be too late.

Let us praise God for the blessings and mercies already ours and go on faithfully rejoicing in the light of our lamps and in the anticipation of the glorious nuptial feast and the later glorious work with the Bridegroom of blessing all the families of the earth. He that hath this knowledge will, by it, be separated more and more from the world and its spirit, and be gradually more and more transformed from glory to glory into the likeness of the Bridegroom.

Our lamps are trimmed and burning,
Our robes are white and clean,
We've tarried for the Bridegroom,
And now we'll enter in.
We know we've nothing worthy
That we can call our own—
The light, the oil, the robes we wear
Are all from Him alone.

The Talents.

Matt. 25:14-30.

AS seen in the preceding parable, even the arrival of our Lord at His second advent would prove to be a testing time among those who were looking for Him. This parable shows that the first work in which Christ would then engage would be in connection with believers, inspecting their condition and progress and rewarding them according to their faithfulness respecting their talents and opportunities.

The man travelling into a far country is identical with the "young nobleman" of Luke 19:12, and represents the Lord, who ascended to the right hand of the Father until He would come again to claim His Bride, the Church, and exalt her to reign with Him. "Whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:20, 21). The "long journey" intimates that the interval between these two events would be a long period of time.

Every Christian has been entrusted with certain talents, an account of the use of which the Lord will, in due time, require. The position in the kingdom depends upon faithfulness. If James and John were to occupy the chief places next to the Lord, then they must be "baptised with His baptism and drink of His cup" of suffering.

In the parable but three illustrations are given: one man receives five talents, another two, and another one. These talents would represent such things as the opportunity of entering the race for the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus,"—health, time, money, ability to speak, or sing, or other means of serving the Lord, His cause and His people.

Then the Apostle says, "A measure of the spirit is given to every man to profit withal." We must use all our talents for the Lord as good stewards in His service and for our own spiritual progress.

When we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ we were "justified by faith," and were then in a position to offer ourselves as living sacrifices to God (Rom. 12:1). We there devoted ourselves entirely to God, all we are, all we have or hope to have. The Lord accepts the offering but leaves us in possession of such talents (circumstances, etc.) as we have; not, however, to be used according to our own will, but as good stewards of God's gifts, to make the most of such health, time, money, business ability, etc., to God's glory, in His service, and for our own growth in grace and character building. According to the use of our talents is the reward in the Kingdom.

The same commendation is to the one who, having only two talents and faithfully used them, as to the one who had been faithful with five talents. "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter into the joys of thy Lord."

The man who hid his talent illustrates those who, having received the opportunity of running the Christian way, did not appreciate the privilege of sacrifice in the cause of Christ. Hiding his talent in the earth seems to indicate that he loved the world and the things of the world, socialites and pleasures of this life. He sought to save his life and thus lost it, "He that loses his life for My sake shall save it." This man lost all the privilege he had had. "Take the talent from him and give it to him that hath ten talents." "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." That is, that such an one has the light of truth taken from him and he goes into the outer darkness, losing even the justification which he had by faith, he becomes an outsider, an unbeliever, in sorrow realising how great reward he has missed.

It is when the Lord's work of rewarding His saints is complete and thus all His joint-heirs in His kingdom are selected and initiated in their respective positions in glory that the great work in connection with the world of mankind will begin, as illustrated in the next parable,—Matt. 25:31-46.

“Take my life, and may it be
Lord, acceptable to Thee;
Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet and let them be
Swift on errands, Lord, for Thee;
Take my voice, and let it bring
Honour always to my King.

Take my lips and let them be
Moved with messages from Thee;
Take my silver and my gold;
Nothing, Lord, would I withhold.

Take my moments and my days;
Let them flow in constant praise;
Take my intellect and use;
Every pow'r as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it Thine;
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, it is thine own;
Thus in me Thyself enthrone.

Take my love, my God; I pour
At Thy feet its treasure-store;
Take myself—I wish to be
Ever, only, all for Thee.”

—F.R.H.

The Sheep and the Goats.

Matt. 25:31-46.

“These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”

WHILE the Scriptures, as we have shown, do not teach the blasphemous doctrine of everlasting torment, they do most emphatically teach the everlasting punishment of the wicked, the class represented in the parable as “goats.” Let us examine the parable, and then the sentence pronounced at its close.

It has been truly said that “Order is Heaven’s first law”; yet few, we think, have realised how emphatically this is true. In glancing over the Plan of the Ages there is nothing which gives such conclusive evidence of a Divine Director as the order observed in all its parts.

God has had definite and stated times and seasons for every part of His work; and in the end of each of these seasons there has been a finishing up of its work and a clearing off of the rubbish, preparatory to the beginning of the new work of the dispensation to follow. Thus in the end of the Jewish age order is observed—a harvesting and complete separation of the “wheat” class from the “chaff,” and an entire rejection of the latter class from God’s favour. With the few judged worthy in the end of that age, a new age—the Gospel Age—began. And now we find ourselves amidst the closing scenes, the “harvest.” of this Age; the “wheat” and the “tares,” which have grown together during this Age, are being separated. With the former class, of which our Lord Jesus is the Head, a new Age is about to be inaugurated, and these “wheat” are to reign as kings and priests in that new dispensation, while the “tare” element is judged as utterly unworthy of that favour.

While observing this order with reference to the Jewish age and the one just closing, our Lord informs us through the parable under consideration that the same order will be observed with reference to the age to follow this Gospel Age.

The harvest of the Jewish Age was likened to the separation of wheat from chaff; the harvest of this Age to the separation of wheat from tares; and the harvest of the Messianic Age to the separation of sheep from goats.

That the parable of the sheep and the goats refers to the Messianic Age is clearly indicated in verses 31 and 32—"When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations; and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." As in the present age every act of those on trial (the Church) goes to make a part of that character which, in due time, will determine the final decision of the Judge in our case, so will it be with the world (the "nations") in the Age to come. As in the present Age the trial of the majority of the individual members of the Church ends, and the decision of their case is reached, long before the end of the Age (2 Tim. 4:7, 8), so under the Messianic reign the decision of some individual cases will be reached long before the end of the Age (Isa. 65:20); but in each Age there is a "harvest" or general separating time in the end of the Age.

In the dawn of the Messianic Age, after the "time of trouble," there will be a gathering of the living nations before Christ, and, in their appointed time and order, the dead of all nations shall be called forth to appear before the judgment seat of Christ—not to receive an immediate sentence, but to receive a fair and impartial, individual trial (Ezek. 18:2-4, 19, 20) under the most favourable circumstances, the result of which trial will be a final sentence, as worthy or unworthy of everlasting life.*

*See Divine Plan, Chapter VIII, "The Day of Judgment."

The scene of this parable, therefore, is laid after the time of trouble, when the nations shall have been subdued, Satan bound (Rev. 20:1, 2) and the authority of Christ's kingdom established. Ere this, the Bride of Christ (the overcoming Church) will have been seated with Him in His throne of spiritual power and will have taken part in executing the final judgments of the great day of wrath. Then the Son of Man and His Bride, the glorified Church, will be revealed and be seen by men, with the eyes of their understanding, and shall "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43).

Here is the New Jerusalem as St. John saw it (Rev. 21), "that holy city [symbol of government] . . . coming down from God out of heaven." During the time of trouble it will be coming down, and at the end of it, it will be manifest on the earth. This is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands (but by the power of God), and it will then have become a great mountain (kingdom), filling the whole earth (Dan. 2:35), its coming having broken to pieces the evil kingdoms of the prince of darkness (Dan. 2: 34, 35).

Here is that glorious city (government), prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2), and early in the dawn of the new age the nations will begin to walk in the light of it (Verse 24). These may bring their glory and honour into it, but "there shall in no wise enter into it [or become a part of it] anything that defileth," etc. (Verse 27). Here, from the midst of the throne, proceeds a pure river of water of life (truth unmixed with error), and the Spirit and the Bride say, Come, and take it freely (Rev. 22:17). Here begins the world's probation, the world's great Judgment Day—a thousand years.

But even in that favoured time of blessing and healing of the nations, when Satan is bound, evil restrained, mankind in process of release from the grasp of death, and when the knowledge of the

Lord fills the earth, two classes will be developed, which our Lord here likens to sheep and goats. These, He tells us, He will separate. The sheep class—those who are meek, teachable and willing to be led, shall, during that Age, be gathered at the Judge's right hand—symbol of His approval and favour; but the goat class, self-willed and stubborn, always climbing on the rocks—seeking prominence and approval among men—and feeding on miserable refuse, while the sheep graze in the rich pastures of the truth furnished by the Good Shepherd—these are gathered to the Judge's left hand, the opposite of the position of favour—as subjects of His disfavour and condemnation.

This work of separating sheep and goats will require all of the Messianic Age for its accomplishment. During that Age, each individual, as he comes gradually to a knowledge of God and His will, takes his place at the right hand of favour or the left hand of disfavour, according as he improves or misimproves the opportunities of that golden age. By the end of that Age, all the world of mankind will have arranged themselves as shown in the parable, into two classes.

The end of that Age will be the end of the world's trial or judgment, and then final disposition will be made of the two classes. The reward of this "sheep" class will be granted them because, during the age of trial and discipline, they cultivated and manifested the beautiful character of love, which St. Paul describes as the fulfilling of the Law of God (Rom. 13:10). They will have manifested it to each other in their times of sorest need; and what they will have done for one another the Lord will count as done unto Him, counting them all as His brethren—children of God, though they will be of the human nature, while He is of the divine.

The condemnation of the "goat" class is shown to be for the lack of this spirit of love. Under the same favourable circumstances as the "sheep," they wilfully resist the moulding influence of the Lord's discipline, and harden their hearts. The goodness

of God does not lead them to true repentance, but, like Pharaoh, they take advantage of His goodness and do evil. The "goats," who will not have developed the element of love, the law of God's being and Kingdom, will be counted unworthy of everlasting life, and will be destroyed; while the "sheep," who will have developed Godlikeness (love), and who will have exhibited it in their characters, are to be installed as the subordinate rulers of earth for future ages.

In the end of the Age, in the final adjustment of human affairs, Christ thus addresses His sheep: "Come, ye blessed, . . . inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

It is manifest the "sheep" here addressed are not the sheep of the Gospel Age, the Gospel Church, but other sheep (Acts 15:17). And the kingdom prepared for them in the Divine Plan, from the foundation of the world, is not the kingdom prepared for the Gospel Church. The Church will receive her kingdom at the beginning of that Age, and will reign with Christ, as shown in the reward of the faithful servants in the last parable, "enter into the joys of thy Lord"; but this is the kingdom prepared for the "sheep" of the Messianic Age. Their kingdom will be the dominion of earth which was originally given to Adam, but which was lost through sin, and which is again to be restored when man is brought to perfection, and so made fit to receive and enjoy it. That dominion will not be a dominion of some of the race over others, but a joint dominion, in which every man will be a king, and all will have equal rights and privileges in appropriating and enjoying every earthly good. It will be a sovereign people—a great and grand republic on a basis of perfect righteousness, wherein the rights of every man will be conserved: because the golden rule will be inscribed on every heart, and every man will love his neighbour as himself. The dominion of all will be over the whole earth, and all its rich and bountiful stores of blessing (Gen. 1:28; Psa. 8:5-8). The kingdom of the world, to be given to the perfected and worthy ones of the redeemed

race at the close of the Millennium, is clearly distinguished from all others by being called the kingdom prepared for them "from the foundation of the world," the earth having been made to be the everlasting home and kingdom of perfect men. But the kingdom bestowed upon Christ, of which the Church, his "Bride," becomes joint-heir, is a spiritual kingdom, "far above angels, principalities and powers," and it also shall "have no end"—Christ's Mediatorial Kingdom, which will end, being merely a beginning of Christ's power and rule (1 Cor. 15: 25-28). This endless heavenly, spiritual kingdom was prepared long before the earth was founded—its inception being recognised in Christ, "the beginning of the creation of God." It was intended for Christ Jesus, the First Begotten: but even the Church, His Bride and joint-heir, was chosen or designed also, in Him, before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4).

The kingdom or rule of earth, is the kingdom that has been in preparation for mankind from the foundation of the world. It was expedient that man should suffer six thousand years under the dominion of evil, to learn its inevitable results of misery and death, in order by contrast to prove the justice, wisdom and goodness of God's law of love. Then it will require the seventh thousand-years under the reign of Christ, to restore him from ruin and death, to the perfect condition, thereby fitting him "to inherit the kingdom prepared for him from the foundation of the world."

That kingdom, in which all will be kings, will be one grand, universal republic, whose stability and blessed influence will be assured by the perfection of its every citizen, a result now much desired, but an impossibility because of sin. The kingdom of Christ during the Millennium will be, on the contrary, a theocracy, which will rule the world (during the period of its imperfection and restoration) without regard to its consent or approval.

The brethren of the Gospel Church are not the only "brethren" of Christ. All who during the Millennial age will have been restored to perfection will be recognised as sons of God—sons in the same sense that Adam was a son of God (Luke 3:38)—human sons. And all of God's sons, whether on the human, the angelic or the divine plane, are brethren. Our Lord's love for these, His human brethren, is here expressed. As the world now has the opportunity to minister to those who are shortly to be the divine sons of God, and brethren of Christ, so they will have abundant opportunity during the age to come to minister to (each other) the human brethren.

The dead nations when again brought into existence will need food, raiment and shelter. However great may have been their possessions in this life, death will have brought all to a common level; the infant and the man of mature years, the millionaire and the pauper, the learned and the unlearned, the cultured and the ignorant and degraded: all will have an abundant opportunity for the exercise of benevolence, and thus they will be privileged to be co-workers with God. We are here reminded of the illustration given in the case of Lazarus; Jesus only awakened him from death and then were the rejoicing friends permitted to loose him from his grave clothes and to clothe and feed him.

Further, these are said to be "sick and in prison" (more properly, under ward or watch). The grave is the great prison where the millions of humanity have been held in unconscious captivity; but when released from the grave, the restoration to perfection is not to be an instantaneous work. Being not yet perfect, they may properly be termed sick and under ward; not dead, neither are they yet perfected in life; and any condition between those two may be properly symbolised by sickness. And they will continue to be under watch or ward until made well—physically, mentally and morally perfect. During that time there will be abundant opportunity

for mutual helpfulness, sympathy, instruction and encouragement, and any failure to assist will mark a lack of the Lord's spirit of love.

Since all mankind will not be raised at once, but gradually, during the thousand years, each new group will find an army of helpers in those who will have preceded it. The love and benevolence which men will then show to each other (the brethren of Christ) the King will count as shown to Him. No great deeds are assigned as the ground for the honours and favours conferred upon the righteous; they will have simply come into harmony with God's law of love and proved it by their works. "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10), and "God is love." So, when man is restored again to the image of God—"very good"—man also will be a living expression of love.

"Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" does not signify a rule independent of the divine law and supremacy; for although God gave earth's dominion to man at first, and designs restoring it to him when He has prepared him for the great trust, we are not to suppose that God intends man to rule it, otherwise than as under, or in harmony with, His supreme law. "Thy will be done on earth as in heaven," must forever be the principle of government. Man thenceforth will rule his dominion in harmony with the law of heaven—delighting continually to do His will in whose favour is life, and at whose "right hand [condition of favour] there are pleasures forevermore" (Psa. 16:11). Oh! who would not say, "Haste ye along, ages of glory!" and give glory and honour to Him whose loving plans are blossoming into such fulness of blessing?

Let us now examine the message to those on the left—"Depart from Me, ye cursed" (condemned)—condemned as unfit vessels for the glory and honour of life, who would not yield to the moulding and shaping influences of divine love. When these, "brethren," were hungry and thirsty, or naked, sick,

and in prison, ye ministered not to their necessities, thus continually proving yourselves out of harmony with the Heavenly City (Kingdom): for "there shall in no case enter into it anything that defileth." The decision or sentence regarding this class is—"Depart from Me into everlasting fire [symbol of destruction], prepared for the devil and his angels." Elsewhere (Heb. 2:14) we read without symbol that Christ "will destroy . . . him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

"And these [the "goats"] shall go away into everlasting [Greek, *aionios*—lasting] punishment, but the righteous into life eternal [Greek, *aionios*—lasting]." The punishment will be as lasting as the reward. Both will be everlasting.

Everlasting Punishment

The wages of sin is death (everlasting destruction, 2 Thess. 1:9), but the gift of God is eternal life (Rom. 6:23).

THE everlastingness of the punishment being thus established, only one point is left open for discussion: namely, the nature of the punishment. Take your Concordance and search out what saith the great Judge regarding the punishment of wilful sinners who despise and reject all His blessed provisions for them through Christ. What do you find? Does God there say—All sinners shall live in torture forever? No; we find not a single text where life in any condition is promised to that class.

God's declarations assure us that ultimately He will have a clean universe, free from the blight of sin and sinners—because "All the wicked will He destroy" (Psa. 145:20).

But while we do not find one verse of the Bible saying that this class can have life in torment, or in any other condition, we do find numerous passages teaching the reverse. Of these we give a few merely as samples—"The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezek. 18:4, 20). "The wicked shall perish" (Psa. 37: 20). "Yet a little while and the wicked shall not be" (Psa. 37:10). Thus God has told us plainly the nature of the everlasting punishment of the wicked—that it will be death, destruction.

The false ideas of God's plan of dealing with the incorrigible, taught ever since the great "falling away," which culminated in Papacy, and instilled into our minds from childhood, are alone responsible for the view generally held that the everlasting punishment provided for wilful sinners is a life

of torment. This view is held, notwithstanding the many clear statements of God's Word that their punishment is to be death. Here St. Paul states very explicitly what the punishment is to be. Speaking of the same Millennial Day, and of the same class, who, despite all the favourable opportunities and the fulness of knowledge then, will not come into harmony with Christ, and hence will "know not God," in the true sense and "obey not," he says: "Who shall be punished." Ah, yes! but how punished? He tells us how: They "shall be punished with everlasting destruction" [a destruction from which there will be no recovery, no redemption or resurrection—Heb. 10:26-29] from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2 Thes. 1:9). This destruction is represented in the parable as the everlasting "fire" prepared for the devil and his angels; it is "the lake of fire and brimstone," which is the Second Death (Rev. 20:14), into which the "goat" class of this parable are sent (Matt. 25:41).

Thus the meaning and reasonableness of this statement concerning everlasting punishment are readily seen when looked at from the correct standpoint. The fire of the parable, by which the punishment (destruction) is to be accomplished, symbolises destruction, and not in any sense preservation.

We might well leave this subject here, and consider that we have fully shown that the everlasting punishment of the "goat" class will be destruction; but we direct attention to one other point which clinches the truth upon this subject. We refer to the Greek word "kolasin," translated "punishment" in verse 46. This word has not in it the remotest idea of torment. Its primary significance is to cut off, or prune, or lop off, as in the pruning of trees; and a secondary meaning is to restrain. The wicked will be everlastingly restrained, cut off from life in the Second Death. Illustrations of the use of "kolasin" can easily be had from Greek classical writings. The Greek word for "torment" is "basinos," a word totally unrelated to the word "kolasin."

"Kolasin," the word used in Matt. 25:46, occurs in but one other place in the Bible, viz., 1 John 4:18, where it is improperly rendered "torment" in the Common Version, whereas it should read, "Fear hath restraint." Those who possess a copy of Young's Analytical Concordance will see from it (page 995) that the definition of the word "kolasin" is "pruning, restraining, restraint." And the author of the Emphatic Diaglott, after translating "kolasin" in Matt. 24:46 by the words "cutting off," says in a footnote:

"The Common Version and many modern ones render 'kolasin aionion' as 'everlasting punishment,' conveying the idea, as generally interpreted, of 'basinos'—torment. 'Kolasin' in its various forms occurs in only three other places in the New Testament: Acts 4:21; 2 Pet. 2:9; 1 John 4:18. It is derived from 'kolazoo,' which signifies: 1. To cut off; as lopping off branches of trees, to prune. 2. To restrain, to repress. The Greeks write: 'The charioteer restrains [kalazei] his fiery steeds. 3. To chastise, to punish. To cut off an individual from life, or from society, or even to restrain, is esteemed as a punishment; hence has arisen this third or metaphorical use of the word. The primary signification has been adopted [in the Diaglott], because it agrees better with the second member of the sentence, thus preserving the force and beauty of the antithesis. The righteous go to life, the wicked to the cutting off from life, death (2 Thes. 1:9)."

Now consider carefully the text, and note the antithesis, the contrast, shown between the reward of the "sheep" and the reward of the "goats," which the correct idea of "kalosin" gives—the one class goes into everlasting life, while the other is everlastingly cut off from life—forever restrained in death. And this exactly agrees with what the Scriptures everywhere else declare concerning the wages or penalty of wilful sin.

Consider for a moment the words of verse 41: "Depart from me, ye cursed [once redeemed by Christ from the Adamic curse or condemnation to death, but now condemned or cursed, as worthy of the Second Death, by the One who redeemed them from the first curse], into everlasting fire [symbol of everlasting destruction], prepared for the devil and his messengers (servants)."

Remember that this is the final sentence at the close of the final trial—at the close of the Millennium; and that none will then be servants of Satan ignorantly or unwillingly, as so many now are; for the great Deliverer, Christ, will remove outside temptations, and provide assistance toward self-improvement, which will enable all who will to overcome inherent weaknesses and to attain perfection. These "goats" who love evil and serve Satan, are the messengers ("angels") of Satan. For these and Satan, and for no others, God has prepared Second Death—the everlasting destruction. Fire will come from God out of heaven and consume them. Consuming fire and devouring fire all can appreciate, unless their eyes are holden by false doctrine and prejudice. No one ever knew of a preserving fire; and as fire never preserves, but always consumes, God uses it as a symbol of utter destruction (Rev. 20:9).

There are other symbols and figures of speech in the Scriptures which have been greatly misunderstood or misrepresented as supporting the Eternal Torture theory. When rightly understood these will be found to teach something quite different and to be in perfect accord with justice and love. God's great purpose for mankind is a benevolent one, reasonable and satisfying to both heart and mind. We invite all interested to write to us if they have any difficulties regarding this subject. Every passage in the Bible where the word "hell" occurs has been thoroughly examined, and there is nothing in the Bible to teach so terrible a doctrine as that God would preserve the wicked alive just in order that they might suffer eternally.



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