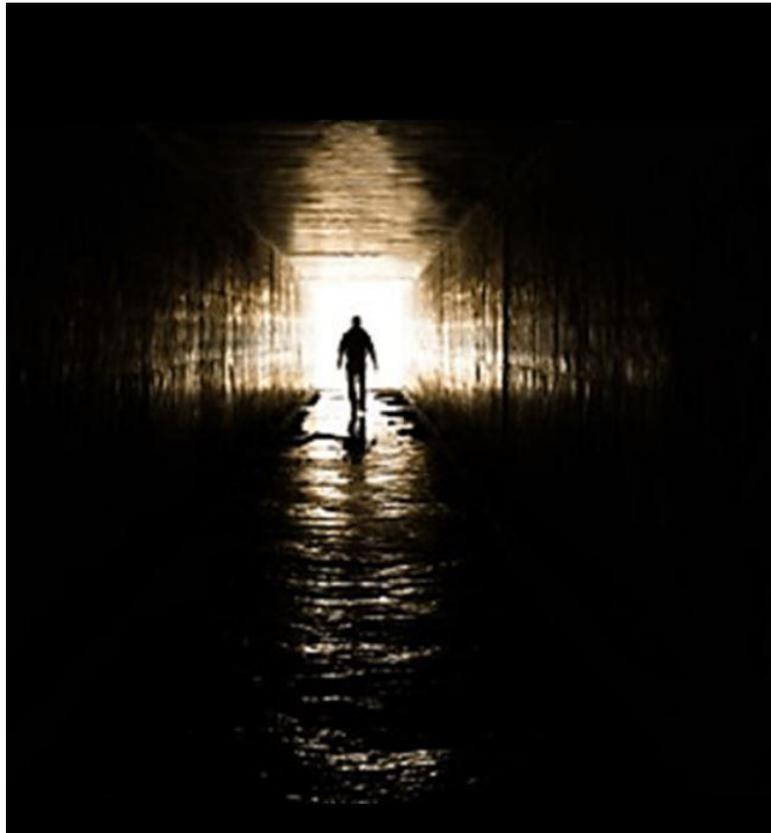


# Basic Training Bible Ministries

presents

## Shedding Ancient Light on the Outer Darkness Controversy



*“And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” 2 Peter 1:19*

**Arizona Cowboy Conference  
September 6–8, 2019**

**Shedding Ancient Light on  
the Outer Darkness Controversy  
Arizona Cowboy Conference  
September 6–8, 2019**

Matthew 8:5–13; 13:36–43; 21:33–45; 22:1–14; 24:45–51; 25:14–30

**Introduction**

Only within the last generation has the issue of eternal reward, or the loss of it, become much of an issue among Christians. It is an important doctrine, and the relatively recent teachings and books on inheritance for believers have filled an important gap in our understanding.

However, as always happens, some have pushed the teaching beyond biblical bounds. Today, many believe that the passages dealing with “*outer darkness*” (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30) refer to a place of punishment for Church Age believers who have not “measured up.” The fact that the term only occurs in Matthew, the Gospel written specifically to Jews, and often called “the Gospel of Judgment,” should tell us something. This current study is a refutation of the idea of outer darkness being some kind of “Christian purgatory,” and will present ancient data to show that “outer darkness” was a term understood by the Jews of Jesus’ day to refer to Gehenna, or Hell.

Biblical analysis and interpretation are very much like the investigative work of a detective. In order to put a given text into its proper context, many questions need to be asked and answered. This process helps us rule out some possibilities, while narrowing down other certainties until we reach a final conclusion.

Determining context requires assembling and evaluating a complex mixture of history, language, theological absolutes, and parallel passages. A good place to begin is to ask six basic questions: what, why, when, how, where and who. As Kipling wrote some time ago:

*“I keep six honest serving men,  
(They taught me all I knew).  
Their names are what and why and when,  
And how and where and who.”*

In other words, as Jesus said in Matthew 18:3–4, we need to approach our study of the Scriptures with the faith of a little child. This requires humility, simplicity, and endless curiosity. Little children never tire of asking questions: “Why? How? What for?”

As we approach the story of the centurion in Matthew 8, as well as our other passages, we should remember that Matthew is the most Jewish of all the Gospels. It is written to Jews, from a Jewish perspective and world-view. However, as we will see, Matthew presents Jesus as constantly redefining accepted, rabbinical terms and teachings. He is staunchly refusing to put His “new wine” into the old wineskins. Also, we should remember that Matthew, the human author, is building a theme to show the Jews’ rejection of their promised Messiah, and to warn of the

coming wrath poured out on Israel in the Roman destruction of 70 A.D. It is also of great interest to note that the Apostle Paul, in Romans 9–11, is an interpretation of Matthew’s message from a Church Age perspective.

Furthermore, it is worth considering that the writers of the Gospels, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote these accounts quite some time after the Church Age began. Yet, they took extreme caution not to let New Testament theology (doctrines from the Epistles) bleed into their accounts. When we read the Gospels, we are seeing events from the perspective of those alive while they were happening—at the end of the Old Testament, Jewish Dispensation. Does it really make any sense at all, in light of their caution to guard this perspective, for us to then read back into the accounts our own understanding of New Covenant/Testament theology? As a principle of interpretation, it is critical that we not read history backwards!

The Gospel writers were the first ones of their era to reinforce the dictum that **Scripture must be interpreted in light of the time in which it was written** (or, in this case, the time which it records). We must never fall into the trap of reading and interpreting the Gospels in light of the Epistles. Rather, we must always read the Epistles in the light of the Gospels. The Gospels speak of the Age of Law; the Epistles speak of the Age of Grace (Eph. 3:2).

Remember, also, that Jesus has just concluded presenting His kingdom platform in the “Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew 5–7). He is the King setting forth the standards of His offered kingdom. All the doctrines of the Church Age (the “Mystery”) are yet in the unrealized future. The Spirit of God so guided Matthew that he gave us a record of the incarnation of the Messiah—and of His earthly life, death, and resurrection—as if we were eyewitnesses. Therefore, we must read it with “Jewish” eyes, as it were, and from a Jewish perspective. Alfred Edersheim, a Jewish believer, is of great help as he was familiar with all the literature of the ancient Jews in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages.

Jesus’ final challenge in the Sermon on the Mount was to be wise builders, and build on the solid rock of Him who proclaimed, “*You have heard that it was said ... but I say to you ...*” (Matt. 5:27–28, 31–32, 33–34, 43–44), and of whom “*the people were astonished ... for He taught them as one having authority ...*” (Matt. 7:28–29). **In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke as the God of Mt. Sinai!**

In concluding His Sermon with the warning not to build as fools, who build on the sand, He is giving warning to Israel. For, if they reject His Word, the storm will come, and the “*house*” will fall, and “*great*” will be the fall of it. Is there any wonder that in His last words to the nation at large, He said in Matthew 23:37–38:

*“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your **house** is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’”* (emphasis added)

The warning of Matthew 7:24–29 had been ignored; the time of judgment was at hand, and Israel is lost! Jesus’ tearful farewell to His people follows the most awful declaration of impending doom found anywhere in the Bible. The seven “woes” of Matthew 23 are a preview of the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Tribulation Period itself, which will conclude the Age of Israel.

It is, therefore, imperative that we read and understand the Gospel of Matthew within the boundaries set by the Spirit of God. We cannot hope to come up with accurate interpretation and, therefore, right applications, unless we are faithful to the time-frame of the text itself.

Again, remember that the events of Matthew (and of all of the Gospels in general) occur before the inauguration of the “New Covenant” and the “new creation” of the Church—the Body of Christ. It is a grave error of interpretation to take passages where Jesus is addressing Jews, within the last days of the Old Covenant, and to apply those words directly to the Church Age. There is certainly application in abundance, but application is **not** interpretation. Apart from Jesus’ words to Peter in Matthew 16:13–20 and in the Upper Room in John 13, passages in the Gospels need to be seen in the context of the Age of Israel.

An extended quote by C. I. Scofield in the Scofield Reference Bible may be helpful:

*“The Old Testament is a divinely provided Introduction to the New; and whoever comes to the study of the four Gospels with a mind saturated with the Old Testament foreview of the Christ, His person, work, and kingdom, will find them open books ...*

*“One of His (Jesus’) last ministries was the opening of their (the disciples’) understandings to understand the Old Testament...”*

*“Especially is it necessary to exclude the notion—a legacy in Protestant thought from post-apostolic and Roman Catholic theology—that the Church is the true Israel, and that the Old Testament foreview of the kingdom is fulfilled in the Church ...*

*“The mission of Jesus was, primarily, to the Jews (Mt. 10:5, 6; 15:23–25; Jo. 1:11). He was ‘made under the law’ (Gal. 4:4), and was ‘a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers’ (Rom. 15:8), and to fulfill the law that grace might flow out ...*

*“The Sermon on the Mount is law, not grace, ... the doctrines of grace are to be sought in the Epistles, not in the Gospels ...*

*“The Gospels present Christ in His three offices of Prophet, Priest, and King ...*

*“Distinguish, in the Gospels, interpretation from moral application. Much in the Gospels which belongs in strictness of interpretation to the Jew or the kingdom, is yet such a revelation of the mind of God, and so based on eternal principles, as to*

*have a moral application to the people of God whatever their position dispensationally.”*

C. I. Scofield, *Scofield Reference Bible*, “Introduction to the Four Gospels”

It is precisely in reading the Church back into the Gospels that many have erred and, by **starting with a premise that is false**, have erected a vast structure of teaching, however ingenious, that is both false and harmful. No sound doctrine can ever be built upon a faulty premise!

Tragically, due to a departure from sound hermeneutical principles, many leaders today are adopting extreme views and teachings. Author J.B. Hixson, once a leader in the “free grace” movement, has listed eight teachings, now adopted by many of his former associates, that he cannot agree with:

<u><b>False Teaching/Issue</b></u>	<u><b>Refuted by Scripture</b></u>
1. The adoption of the “cross-less Gospel”	1 Cor. 2:2; 15:1–2
2. The deity of Christ not essential to the Gospel	1 John 5:5
3. Sin not a relevant issue to the Gospel message	Rom. 3:22–26
4. Punitive damages at the Bema Seat	Rom. 8:1; Heb. 10:17
5. Kingdom exclusion for unfruitful, “loser” believers	Heb. 13:5
6. Believers can be under the wrath of God	Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9
7. Marked departure from traditional dispensational theology	Matthew 24–25
8. Doctrinal compromise on “non-Gospel” issues	Jude 3

His statements below give a clear explanation of what is happening in many theological circles today:

*“The grace view of the Gospel is born out of a theological tradition that understands the Bible in its literal/grammatical/historical context, and understands the Bible theologically from a dispensational framework and arrives, necessarily, at a grace-oriented view of the Gospel ...*

*“All of these views [the eight points listed above] stem from a faulty hermeneutic, a faulty theological method: bad cross-referencing of one verse to another, a melding together of Gospel passages with epistolary passages, not understanding genre, original audience and original intent, and so forth. This particularly relates to the distinction between Israel and the Church. If you blur the distinction between Israel and the Church, then you are likely to apply passages meant corporately to Israel to individual believers of the Church Age” (from this same video).*

**J. B. Hixson: “Why I am no longer free grace”**  
(from YouTube video by same title, used by permission)

## **The Miracle and Message of Matthew 8:5–13**

The miracle of the healing of the centurion’s servant almost fades into the background due to the prominence of the words of the centurion and of Jesus. The value of the healing, however, is that it validates both the faith of the centurion, and the claims of Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah of Israel.

Regarding the slightly different accounts of Matthew and Luke of this incident, Edersheim remarks: *“If we keep in view the historical object of St. Matthew, as primarily addressing himself to Jewish, while St. Luke wrote more especially for Gentile readers, we arrive, at least, at one remarkable outcome of the variations in their narratives. Strange to say, the Judaeian Gospel gives the pro-Gentile, the Gentile narrative the pro-Jewish presentation of the event,”* Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. I, p. 544.

The story of the Centurion’s faith, and of Jesus’ response to it, sets the stage—as a providentially arranged event—for the unfolding drama of the entire book. Consider the implications of Jesus’ coming and His rejection by the nation, leading up to the close of the book with the commission to the apostles to go out to the uttermost parts of the Gentile world (Matt. 28:18–20). This also accords with the coming of the Greeks, seeking Jesus and His words of response in John 12:20–26.

## **Jesus Enters Capernaum, Matthew 8:5a**

It is very significant that this incident took place in Capernaum. It was in Capernaum that Jesus began His public ministry (Matt. 4:12–17; John 6:59). Capernaum became famous for two things: the number of miracles Jesus did there (Luke 4:23), and the persistent unbelief of the populace (Matt. 11:23–24; Luke 10:15). It is the unbelief that is significant here in this story, for we must determine to whom Jesus is speaking based on where He was when He spoke.

## **The Roman Centurion, Matthew 8:5b–9**

The centurion made a plea to Jesus on behalf of his servant, *“who was dear to him”* (Luke 7:2), and who was *“dreadfully tormented.”* Luke informs us that this was done through Jewish mediators (Luke 7:3–5). When Jesus began to go with them, the centurion objected that he was unworthy for Jesus to even enter his house. This shows not only his humility, but that he understood something about Jewish custom (Acts 10:28). Like the Syro-Phoenician woman (Matt. 15:27), he was not ashamed to take an inferior and humble position in relation to Israel.

As we consider this centurion, we see a unique man indeed. He greatly loved his Jewish servant, as well as the Jewish nation (Luke 7:2, 5). He was considerate of their customs, and was not only humble, but aware of his unworthiness in the presence of Jesus. We should not forget that in Jesus’ conception of *“greatness,”* humility was essential (Matt. 5:3–5; 18:4; 20:26). The centurion becomes a fitting example of the character of those *“blessed”* in the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:1–12).

Here, we are considering ancient history (Roman and Jewish), culture and custom, along with geographic location and multiple accounts. We should also read this story in the light of the recent Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), which demanded inner reality as opposed to religious ritual. All of these things are a part of what we call “context.”

### **The Centurion’s Faith, Matthew 8:10**

After sending the initial messengers, the centurion then sent others to Jesus, protesting that he was unworthy to receive Jesus into his home (Luke 7:3–7). It is here that we find the key to the entire story, for the centurion says, “*But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed*” (Matt. 8:9b). In contrast to the four friends who tore up the roof to get their friend to Jesus (Mark 2:4), this centurion bids Jesus stay where He is, and simply give the healing command. This is an entirely new element to faith in the Gospel story.

But why was he convinced that Jesus needed only to speak a word? His conviction is based on what he says next:

*“For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me.  
And I say to this one ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and  
he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”* Matthew 8:9

This statement is based on his own understanding of how authority works, himself being a man under higher authority, and in authority over those under him. In essence, he rightly sees Jesus as one under the authority of God who, therefore, has authority over all earthly things. Note how close this is to Paul’s own understanding in 1 Corinthians 11:1–3.

I would suggest that the word “*also*” is the most critical word in all that statement. It gives the idea, “[Like You,] *I also am a man under authority.*” It tells us of an amazing conclusion that the centurion had reached based on what he knew of Jesus. Being a Gentile, and without the benefit of having been raised with all of the spiritual benefits of the Jewish people (see Rom. 9:4–5) and without having been taught the prophets since childhood, yet he was able to conclude—simply by what he had heard of Jesus and knew of Jewish hopes—that this was indeed the Messiah of Israel!

He knew that his authority came from Rome, the empire that ruled the world at that time. But he saw in Jesus one under the direct authority of God, whose kingdom ruled over all creation. Therefore, all Jesus needed to do was “*speak a word,*” and the servant would be healed. This is what made his faith so “*great.*” It is worth noting that even the disciples did not arrive at this conclusion until much later, after extensive teaching, and having seen many, many miracles (Matt. 16:13–18). This centurion was far ahead of even Simon Peter!

Therefore, Jesus was able to say, “*I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!*” (Matt. 8:10). Certainly, there were those who knew Jesus’ true identity, such as Joseph and Mary (Matt. 1:20–23; Luke 1:26–35), along with Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:25–38) and John the Baptizer (John 1:29–34). However, this knowledge was gained by direct, divine revelation. **In the**

**centurion, we see the very first person in the Gospel of Matthew to reach this conclusion unaided by anything more than hearsay and observation.**

Let me put the importance of this in context. In Matthew, the most Jewish of Gospel records, written specifically to the Jewish people, and immediately following Jesus' presentation of His kingdom platform (Matthew 5–7), a despised and lowly Gentile (and what is worse, a Roman soldier) comes to an insight of faith that the Nation of Israel could not and would not arrive at. This incident, recorded in Matthew 8, is crucial to the message of the entire book! It is also the first indication in the New Testament that Jesus' ministry also includes the Gentiles, again pointing to Matt. 28:18–20.

### **The Statement in Context**

1. The Lord Jesus has been clearly identified as the promised Messiah in Matthew 1–4.
2. In Matthew 5–7, He has laid down the “platform” of His coming Messianic kingdom. In this message, He repeatedly rebukes the legalistic and ritualistic nature of the Judaism of His day. There runs through the whole message a challenge to Israel to forsake reliance on works and come to repentance and faith.
3. The response of the multitude to the Sermon on the Mount is to be “*astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes*” (Matt. 7:28–29). This “*authority*” was over even Moses and the Law, not to mention the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20–48). He spoke as one in authority even over the Word of God itself! This was because He spoke as the Giver of the Law on Mt. Sinai, clarifying His original intent of the Law—both as a condemnation of sin, and as a way of life for Old Testament believers who “*live by faith*” (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:38).
4. Immediately after preaching the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus touches and heals a leper, demonstrating His power to cleanse all that is unclean (leprosy being a figure of the corruption of sin and death). This incident, recorded in Matthew 8:1–4; Mark 1:40–42; and Luke 5:12–15, is the first of only two healings of lepers recorded, the other of the ten healed, of whom only the Samaritan returned to give thanks (Luke 17:11–19).
5. For the full significance of this act of healing, following His presentation of Himself as Israel's Messiah, consider the following:

*“It has been often pointed out that, whereas the cure of disease in general is called ‘healing’ (iasthai), that of the lepers is called ‘cleansing’ (katharizein). This was, no doubt ... primarily because the miracle enabled the leper to become ceremonially clean ... it meant restoration to the worship and service of God.”*

Hastings, *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, vol. II, pp. 26–27

*“The ceremonial prescribed for the purification of persons cured of leprosy is based upon the idea that this malady is the bodily symbol, not so much of sin merely, as of death ... The readmission of the sufferer (Lev. 14:1–9), who had*

*been looked upon as dead, into the society of the living, and preparation for his return to fellowship with the covenant people. This ceremony, therefore, took place without the camp ... the leper was saved from death by intervention of divine mercy ...”*

*Unger’s Bible Dictionary, p. 654*

6. So the story of the Gentile centurion, acknowledging Jesus as one commissioned by God, and having authority from God, recognizes what the Jewish nation as a whole missed.
7. This incident is prophetic, both as to the fulfillment of God’s promises to the Gentiles, and of His ancient warnings to Israel:

*“Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem ... may God enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem.” Genesis 9:26–27a*

*“They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation.” Deuteronomy 32:21*

*“This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord.” Psalm 102:18*

*“For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them ... For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” Romans 11:13–14, 25*

8. The point is this: Matthew is documenting the historical events that lead up Israel’s destruction, which at the time of writing was in the near future (70 A.D.). These very events, as recorded by Matthew, lead to Paul’s doctrinal conclusions in Romans 9–11.
9. Israel, with all her national and spiritual privileges (Rom. 9:4–5), did not recognize her Savior, but a Roman centurion did! Note that the Gospel of Matthew begins (Matt. 1:1) with Jesus’ descent from David (thus the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant, 2 Sam. 7:12–17), and from Abraham (thus the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant to “*all the nations,*” Gen. 22:15–18).
10. The Gospel of Matthew is not a didactic epistle written to warn lazy Christians of the danger of ending up in “*outer darkness.*” It is a record to unbelieving Israel of the reasons for their judgment, and a challenge to all men—Jew or Gentile—to believe in Jesus as the “*one Mediator between God and men*” (1 Tim. 2:5).
11. In this light, the story of the Roman (Gentile) centurion takes on its true purpose: as a rebuke and condemnation of all unbelief. Bear in mind that the two most awful warnings

of coming judgment found anywhere in the Bible come later in the book of Matthew (Matt. 23:13–39; Matthew 24–25).

### **Jesus' Commendation and Condemnation, Matthew 8:10–13**

Notice first that “*He [Jesus] marveled*” (v. 10), something He is recorded as doing only twice: here, at the **centurion’s faith**, and in Nazareth, at the **unbelief of His own hometown** (Mark 6:6). This contrast reinforces the theme of Gentile faith versus Jewish unbelief.

Then, He comments on the centurion's “*great faith.*” We now understand what He meant by “*great faith.*” He is not making a contrast between faithful and unfaithful believers! If He were, then He is saying that every believer in Israel, including His disciples, will be cast out into outer darkness! Rather, He is identifying the very first person during His incarnation who, unaided by direct revelation, “put 2 + 2 together” and, without all the advantages of the Jewish nation, concluded that He was indeed the promised Messiah—the “*Savior of the world,*” just like the Samaritan woman and her village did (John 4:42). It is not without significance that a Roman centurion, a Syro-Phoenician woman, and a Samaritan woman stand out in all four Gospels as excelling in faith (compare Matt. 8:5–10; Mark 7:25–30; Luke 7:1–10; John 4:7–42).

Since Jesus also speaks of the “*great*” faith of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Matt. 15:28), we need to ask, what constitutes “*great faith*”? In Matthew 17:20–21, Jesus contrasts the unbelief of the disciples at that time to “*faith as a mustard seed,*” which He said could move mountains. Elsewhere, He said that the mustard seed was “*indeed ... the least of all the seeds*” (Matt. 13:32). If the mustard seed is the least of seeds, yet “*mustard-seed faith*” is great enough to move mountains, then how can we define “*great faith*”?

The answer is very simple: A faith that is “*great,*” as Jesus defined the faith of the centurion and of the Syro-Phoenician woman, is not great because of the size of the faith, but rather because of **rightly identifying the object of that faith**. It is simply unquestioning faith in the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. In essence, both the centurion and the woman believed in the power of Jesus’ word. He did not need to come to the servant to heal him, nor to the woman’s daughter, but only needed to “*speak a word,*” and they would be healed.

### **Great Faith**

Jesus commends both the centurion, and the Syro-Phoenician woman for their great faith. This commendation was for one act of faith on the part of each, at a single point of time in their life; and this faith was not even for the gift of eternal life! It was for healing in both cases. Can we actually assume that the faith of either was greater than that of those who trust Jesus Christ for eternal life?

When Thomas finally saw Jesus after the resurrection, he exclaimed, “*My Lord and my God!*” (John 20:28). I would suggest that this displayed even a greater faith than that of the centurion or the Syro-Phoenician woman. There is no sure evidence that either of them fully understood His divinity. But what was Jesus’ response to him? “*Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have*

believed. **Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed**” (John 20:29). This applies to each and every one of us.

I would conclude that anyone today who believes, simply on the promise of Jesus Christ, that eternal life is a gift based on His finished work at the cross, has greater faith than either the centurion or the Syro-Phoenician woman:

*“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment [condemnation], but has passed from death into life.”* John 5:24

### **A Summary: What Constitutes “Great Faith”?**

1. It is faith motivated by **love**. The centurion’s servant was “*dear to him*” (Luke 7:2), and he loved the nation of Israel (Luke 7:5). Paul tells us that, “*Faith [works] through love*” (Gal. 5:6).
2. It is faith moved through **hope**. Unless Christ was who He claimed to be, there was no hope for the centurion’s servant, or the Syro-Phoenician’s daughter. “*The Lord Jesus Christ, our hope*” (1 Tim. 1:1).
3. It is faith that does not need sight or signs, but rests on **the Word** of the Lord. “*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*” (John 20:29).
4. It is faith that is grounded in deep **humility**. “*Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof*” (Matt. 8:8). “*Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table*” (Matt. 15:27). “*Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt. 18:4). By the way, the last statement by Jesus shows that greatness in the kingdom is based, not on works, but on attitude!
5. It is a faith that acknowledges **Jesus Christ** for who He is and what He has done: Son of God, Son of Man, Savior of the world, King of kings, and Lord of lords!

### **The Contrast: Faith vs. Unbelief, Matthew 8:11–12**

When Jesus speaks of “*many [who] will come from east and west,*” He is speaking of those who are Gentiles, yet have a faith like that of the centurion. He is, in fact, referring to a prophecy from Psalm 107:1–3, 13–15:

*“Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south ... Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their chains in pieces. Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.”*

How strange is an interpretation that takes the fulfillment of this prophecy and turns it into a teaching that believers “*brought ... out of darkness and the shadow of death,*” will then be cast into “*outer darkness*”!

But rather, where the Gentile believers “*will come ... and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt. 8:11), Jesus says that “*the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*” (v. 11). The contrast here is clearly between Gentile believers and Jewish unbelievers. Not until very recently has it ever been suggested that the contrast here is between faithful believers vs. unfaithful believers. Consider the following quote from Edersheim:

*“Never, surely, could the Judaism of His hearers have received more rude shock than by this inversion of all their cherished beliefs. There was a feast of Messianic fellowship ... a joyous festive gathering with the fathers of the faith. But this fellowship was not of outward, but of spiritual kinship [see Rom. 2:27–29, my note]. There were ‘children of the Kingdom,’ and there was an ‘outer darkness’ with its anguish and despair. But this child-ship was of the Kingdom, such as He had opened it to all believers; and that outer darkness theirs, who had only outward claims to present.”*

Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*  
vol. I, p. 551 (see Appendix 2, pt. 7)

### **Sons of the Kingdom and the Outer Darkness, Matthew 8:12**

The phrases “*sons of the kingdom*” and “*outer darkness*” were **terms in common usage in Jesus’ time** for the Jewish people. Absolutely no one listening to Jesus would have missed the meaning.

Furthermore, if we look at two parallel passages, we see Jesus’ precise meaning:

*“Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it ... Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, **they perceived that He was speaking of them.**”* Matthew 21:43, 45 (emphasis added)

*“There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you [unbelieving Jews] see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, and **yourselves thrust out.** They [believing Gentiles] will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.”* Luke 13:28–29 (emphasis added)

*“‘The sons of the kingdom’ ... A favorite Hebrew idiom like ‘son of hell’ (Matt. 23:15), and ‘sons of this age’ (Luke 16:8). The Jews felt that they had a natural right to the privileges of the kingdom because of descent from Abraham (Matt. 3:9).”*

A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*  
vol. I, p. 65. (See Appendix 1, pt. 9)

Regarding Matthew 8:11–12, The Expositors Greek Testament says:

*“Jesus expresses Himself here and throughout this logion in the language of His time and people. The feast with the patriarchs, the outer darkness, the weeping and the gnashing of teeth (observe the article before skotos, klauthmos, Brugmos, implying that all are familiar ideas) are stock phrases. **The imagery is Jewish, but the thought is anti-Jewish, universalistic, of perennial truth and value.**”*

*The Expositor’s Greek Testament*  
vol. I, p. 140. (see Appendix 2, pt.14) (emphasis added)

Again, Edersheim, himself a believing Jew, writes:

*“The infinite contrast, just set forth (in the Sermon on the Mount), between the Kingdom, as presented by the Christ and Jewish contemporary teaching is the more striking, that it was expressed in a form, and clothed in words with which all His hearers were familiar; indeed, **in modes of expression current at the time** ... No part of the New Testament has had a larger array of Rabbinic parallels adduced than the ‘Sermon on the Mount’; and this, as we might expect, because, in teaching addressed to His contemporaries, **Jesus would naturally use the forms with which they were familiar.**”*

Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. I, p. 531

No Jew living in Jesus’ time would have misunderstood His use of either “*the sons of the kingdom*” or the phrase “*cast out into outer darkness*”. Take careful note of the contrast: “*in the kingdom*” (v. 11), versus “*cast out [of the kingdom] into outer darkness*” (v. 12). The concept of “*outer darkness*,” or “*the darkness outside the kingdom*,” was well known to the Jews of Jesus’ day. The common perception was that this was a place reserved for the Gentiles.

The first portrayal of darkness as judgment is found in Exodus 10:21–23. God said to Moses, “[Let there be] *darkness over the land of Egypt, darkness which may even be felt ... But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.*” (See Appendix 2, pts. 2–3.)

When Jesus speaks of “*outer darkness*,” He is speaking within a biblical framework that is familiar to His listeners. The darkness was understood to be the place of eternal punishment, Gehenna:

*“Gehinnom ... was in the valley of Hinnom ... which lay beyond the ‘mountains of darkness.’ It was a place of darkness, to which, in the day of the Lord, the Gentiles would be consigned. On the other hand, the merit of circumcision would in the day of the Messiah deliver Jewish sinners from Gehinnom. ‘Outer darkness’ ... intended to designate ... a place of hopeless, endless night.”*

Edersheim, vol. I, p. 550

Here, he footnotes the Targum (ancient Aramaic paraphrase or interpretation) on 1 Samuel 2:9, “*But the wicked shall be silent in darkness*,” and Psalm 88:12, “*Shall Your wonders be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?*” (Note: the Targum translations

from Hebrew into Aramaic began with the oral translations of Ezra's reading of the Law of Moses, Neh. 8:1–8). (See Appendix 2, pts. 4–5.)

According to the Old Testament Scriptures, the darkness represented the place of the wicked dead, the place where they would “gnash their teeth” in pain and rage (Psalms 107:14; 112:10). The concept of “outer darkness” was quite well-developed in all the ancient Jewish translations and commentaries of the rabbis. Nowhere in the vast store of Jewish thought and writings was it ever considered a place for believers. Again, the Church is not in view in any of the six passages we will study!

In all of these passages, the “*weeping and gnashing of teeth*” is “*a term used to refer to the punishment of those who fail to enter the kingdom*” (Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p. 256. (See Appendix 3.)

*“The punishment ... described as ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’ ... invariably throughout Matthew this phrase refers to the retribution of those who are judged before the millennial kingdom is established (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 25:30).”*

*Ibid.*, p. 282

**Note:** See Appendix 2, “Outer Darkness”; Appendix 1, “Sonship.”

### **The Condemnation of Israel's Unbelief in Seven Passages**

There are common themes running all through the seven passages which we will study (Matt. 8:5–13; 13:36–43, 49–50; 21:1–14; 24:45–51; 25:30, 41, 46; Luke 13:27–30):

1. That the only way, even for Jews, to enter into His kingdom, is by faith. Contrary to popular Jewish thought, physical lineage from Abraham and possession of the Law, combined with circumcision, did not guarantee entrance into the kingdom.
2. That those who do not believe will be “*cast out into outer darkness*,” which is synonymous with “*the furnace of fire*” and “*everlasting punishment*” (Matt. 8:12; 13:42; 22:13; 25:30, 41, 46).
3. That multitudes of believing Gentiles will join Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom banquet, while the unbelieving Jews will be cast out (Matt. 8:11–12; 21:43; Luke 13:28–29).
4. That the response of all the unbelieving will be “*weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth*” (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28).
5. That ultimately, and temporarily, the kingdom will depart from Israel, and be the possession of the Gentiles (Matt. 8:11–12; 21:43, 45; Luke 13:28–29). Again, consider Paul's historical overview in Romans 9–11.

### **Something to Consider**

Is it conceivable that Jesus would speak of the fate of both unfaithful believers and unbelieving Jews in the same terms? Since at least five of these passages speak undoubtedly to the unbelieving in Hell (Matt. 21:42–45; 24:51; 25:41, 46; Luke 13:27–29), where there is “*weeping*

*and gnashing of teeth,*” are we to assume that Jesus in His teaching sometimes speaks of believers vs. unbelievers, then on other occasions switches to the topic of faithful believers vs. unfaithful believers, **using the same terms for judgment in both cases?** Not likely!

### **Eight Questions about Matthew 8:5–13**

1. **Where** did the miracle and message occur? **Capernaum!**  
What did Jesus have to say of Capernaum? (Matt.11:23; Luke 10:15)
2. **Why** was the centurion’s faith “*great*”?  
He simply believed in the power and authority of the Word, without having to see Jesus (Luke 7:6). Remember Jesus’ word to Thomas? (John 20:29). See also the Syro-Phoenician woman’s “great faith” (Matt. 15:28). It is “*faith as a mustard seed*” (Matt. 17:20).
3. To **what** does Jesus contrast the centurion’s faith?  
The unbelief of Israel! A Gentile believer versus unbelieving Jews.
4. **Who** are those who will come from east and west? (see Psalm 107:1–3; Isa. 45:6).  
They are believing Gentiles, believed by the Jews of Jesus’ day to be fit only to ignite the fires of Hell!
5. **How** did the Jews identify as “*sons of the kingdom*”? Israel? Lineage?  
Doesn’t Matthew 13:38 prove that Jesus, here, is referring to believers? No.  
Why? A different audience, different context.  
Can the same phrase mean two different things in two different passages? Check out “seed of Abraham” (*sperma Abraam*) in John 8:33, 37 vs. Paul’s use of the exact same phrase in Galatians 3:29.
6. **When** will those self-identified “*sons of the kingdom*” be cast out?  
At the inauguration of the kingdom! Note v. 11 “*in the kingdom,*” vs. “*cast out into outer darkness.*” Believing Gentiles will go “in” while unbelieving Jews will be “*cast out.*”
7. **What** was the Jewish understanding of “*outer darkness*”?  
It was a term used by their rabbis in the Talmud for Gehenna!
8. To **whom** does “*weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth*” occur?  
“*He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever; His horn will be exalted with honor. The wicked will see it and be grieved; he will gnash his teeth and melt away. The desire of the wicked shall perish*” (Psalm 112:9–10). This is a direct reference to the establishing of His kingdom! See also Acts 7:54 with Psalm 37:12. The use of “*gnashing*” in the Old Testament is reserved for those who hate God (Job 16:9–10; Psalm 35:16; Lam. 2:16).

**Conclusion:** None of these passages are talking about the Church or the Bema Seat of Christ!

## **Study Two: The Parable of the Tares, Matthew 13:36–43**

Having spent a great amount of time in Matthew 8, we can move through this section with much greater ease.

Once again, it is critical to note the context of these parables. They were designed to conceal the truth from those who were hardened (Matt. 13:10–15) and, at the same time, to reveal new and deeper revelation to the disciples (Matt. 13:16–17). This is the meaning of the use of the term “*mysteries*,” occurring here for the first time in the Bible.

### **The Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven**

Here, Jesus is beginning to introduce to the disciples new revelation regarding His kingdom. The seven parables of Matthew 13 are designed to show that the kingdom is entering a strange new phase (Matt. 13:10–17). Not that it is now about to appear or be inaugurated, but rather that it will be postponed indefinitely due to the unbelief of the Nation of Israel as a whole. It is worth stressing repeatedly, that the theme of Matthew is the presentation of the Messiah to Israel, in exact accordance with Old Testament prophecies, and with undeniable proofs of His identity, and yet they would “*not receive Him*” (see Matt. 23:37, along with John 1:10–11). The Church is nowhere in view in these parables, but the “*remnant [of Israel] according to ... grace*” is (Rom. 9:27; 11:5).

Specifically, the explanation of the “parable of the tares” is given privately to the disciples (Matt. 13:36). This is critical to understand that now, Jesus uses the term “*sons of the kingdom*” (v. 38), not as commonly and wrongly understood by the Jewish rabbis (Matt. 8:12), but in its true sense, as it applies to all who believe in Him.

Contrary to the idea that the same term must mean the same thing every time it is used, it is common—within a different context—to use the same term in two different ways, or to apply the term in a different way. (See points 1–6 under Appendix 1, “Sonship.”)

In both passages (Matt. 8:12; 13:38), the phrase “*sons of the kingdom*” means the same thing. It’s just that, in Matthew 8, Jesus uses it as the Jews did in wrongly assuming that it applied to them by right of lineage. Here, in Matthew 13, Jesus Himself uses it rightly, as applied to all who believe in Him.

The contrast in this parable is between “*sons of the kingdom*” and “*the sons of the wicked one*,” obviously believers vs. unbelievers. The phrase “*the furnace of fire*,” again common to rabbinic teaching at the time, is the same as the “*outer darkness*” in Matthew 8:12. Note that the consequence is the same, “*wailing and gnashing of teeth*.”

To assume that in Matthew 8 Jesus is contrasting faithful vs. unfaithful believers, and in Matthew 13 is contrasting believers vs. unbelievers, is totally contrary to the theme of Matthew, which is that the King has come, and His people have rejected Him, and thus rightly deserve the judgment to come.

### **An Example of Use of Terms**

1. In John 8:33, Jesus' enemies (the Pharisees, v. 13), declare that they are "Abraham's descendants" (*sperma Abraam*, literally: "Abraham's seed"). They are speaking of physical lineage.
2. In John 8:37, Jesus concedes that they are "*Abraham's descendants* [seed]," in so far as lineage is concerned. In other words, He acknowledges that they are right, in the sense that they are using the term.
3. Then, in v. 39, He denies that they are "Abraham's seed" from a higher, spiritual point of view. They are unbelievers.
4. Therefore, He identifies their real father as the devil, vv. 38, 44.
5. In v. 56, He again refers to Abraham as their father, according to the flesh.
6. In Galatians 3:16, Paul refers to the promise of Genesis 22:18, and clarifies that "*Seed*" is singular, therefore referring not to Abraham's physical lineage, but rather to all who believe in Jesus Christ.
7. Thus, Paul is able to apply the phrase "*Abraham's seed*" to all believers, Jew or Gentile, Galatians 3:28–29 (see also Rom. 2:28–29).

The fundamental principle here is that a word must always be interpreted in light of its use in the context.

### **The Great Final Harvest, Matthew 13:41–43, 49–52**

*"The idea of the coming final world harvest was first introduced by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:7–12). John warned of 'the wrath to come' and of the 'ax ... laid to the root of the trees.' This theme, of the final separation between the good and the bad, the holy and the profane, is what runs all through the Gospel of Matthew. It is the central focus of all the teaching of Jesus in this Gospel.*

*"Thus early in the history of the Kingdom of God was it indicated, that alike that which would prove useless straw and the good corn were inseparably connected in God's harvest-field till the reaping time."*

Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. I, p. 273

The Lord has already identified the timing of this event in v. 39, "*the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.*" Jesus has been explaining that, during the postponement of the Millennial Kingdom, the kingdom will enter into a "mystery phase," during which it will grow and flourish within the world, but "*not of [this] world*" (John 17:14–16).

The "*sons of the kingdom*" (used here of true believers) will live among the tares, "*sons of the wicked one.*" Many unbelievers will profess faith and do good deeds, which makes it difficult to distinguish the true from the false. However, God is not mocked, and He knows those who are His (2 Tim. 2:19).

At the "*end of the age,*" the end of the Tribulation, the Lord Jesus will send out His angels (Matt. 13:41, 49) to separate the true believers from the false professors (compare Matt. 24:30–31;

Matthew 25: Rev. 14:14–20). The unsaved are cast into “*the furnace of fire*” where there is “*wailing and gnashing of teeth*” (Matt. 13:42, 50). Thus, the response of these unbelievers to the furnace of fire is exactly the same as that of the fake “*sons of the kingdom*” in Matthew 8:12.

It is interesting to note that in the parable of the tares, Jesus makes it clear that men cannot always distinguish between the good seed and the bad. This precisely makes the point of His change of application of the term “*sons of the kingdom*” from Matthew 8:12 to 13:38. In the earlier usage, the Jews (like the tares) claimed to be “*sons of the kingdom*” by virtue of lineage (a fact that is well-attested in Appendix 1), and Jesus accepts their usage and tells them they will be “*cast out*” of the kingdom. But here, in the parable of the tares, speaking to His own disciples, Jesus uses the term “*sons of the kingdom*” to refer to spiritual sons by virtue of faith and regeneration.

### **The Wise Scribe, Matthew 13:52**

Jesus concludes His personal instruction to the disciples by giving them a challenge. The “*scribe*” or interpreter who has understanding of the kingdom is able, “*like a householder,*” to bring out from God’s Word “*treasure[s] ... both new and old.*” Jesus made it clear that He did not come “*to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill*” (Matt. 5:17). Though He came to bring new wine, new revelation, and the new covenant of forgiveness and regeneration, He sought to preserve the old (Matt. 9:17; Luke 5:38).

The goal of the Bible teacher is to be able to distinguish what is “old,” as relating to the Age of Israel, and what is “new,” and relating to the Church Age. They cannot be mingled without damage to both. What we are studying in these passages of Matthew relates to Jesus, the promised King, presenting Himself to the chosen people, Israel. Their persistent unbelief is the topic of warning that runs all through His parables. The coming age of the Church is anticipated (Matt. 16:13–20; John 13–17), but the doctrines of it were not able to be borne (John 16:12–15) and were yet to be revealed (John 16:25–28).

One last point is worth making. Even as Jesus was teaching the disciples about the “*mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*” and expounding about the wheat and the tares, **there was one among them, who was a “tare” and a “son of the wicked one”** whose name was **Judas**. None but the Lord could discern him as such, for his deception was complete over the other disciples. We will meet him again in our study, and the role he will play is, in itself, a commentary on all of these parables. Matthew, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, intersperses events and teachings so that the one illustrates and explains the other. Also, Jesus’ parables sometimes give an overview of Israel’s past history and, at other times, a prophetic preview of her future, as we will see in our next study.

### **Study Three: The Lord’s Vineyard (Matthew 21:33–45)**

As we progress through the Gospel of Matthew, we can see an increasing thread of warning to the nation like a growing thunderhead, filled with flashes of lightning and peals of thunder. Doom is slowly coming down on the Nation of Israel!

No doubt, even at the time the human authors were writing the synoptic Gospels, they must have felt the impending awful judgments spoken by Jesus closing in on the land. They wrote, therefore, again under divine inspiration, not only to record the life and ministry of the Lord for future generations, but also as a final warning to their hard-hearted countrymen.

This is why all three synoptic Gospels carry the same thread of warning: of impending doom, that was about to fall on the nation. Most scholars believe that John wrote his Gospel much later, after the fall of Jerusalem, but even here there is some dissent. The one thing that is undeniable is that the Spirit of God moved the authors to show that the guilt of the nation, from the religious leaders down to the lowliest peasant, was inexcusable. The Light had come into the darkness, but *“the darkness did not comprehend it”* (John 1:5). He who was promised from ancient times had come to His own, with irrefutable claims, yet *“His own did not receive Him”* (John 1:9–11). It is as a final plea that these Gospels were written to those who were still a part of *“this generation”* (Matt. 23:36).

### **The History of Israel in a Parable, Matthew 21:33–45**

In the parable of the vineyard, we have the history of Israel in a nutshell, as well as a prophetic look at the coming crucifixion of Christ, and even the final destruction of Jerusalem and the nation.

The figure of Israel as the Lord’s vineyard is an ancient one (see Appendix 4). Probably the best-known passage is found in Isaiah 5, the song of the vineyard (Isa. 5:1–7):

*“For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel,  
And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant.  
He looked for justice, but behold oppression;  
For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.”* Isaiah 5:7

The most heart-wrenching part of Isaiah’s song, which is more of a funeral dirge, is the sorrowful question of the Lord to His people:

*“What more could have been done to My vineyard  
That I have not done in it?  
Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes,  
Did it bring forth wild grapes?”* Isaiah 5:4

The Lord’s plaintive appeal here is paralleled in other passages, such as Jeremiah 2:1–5 and Micah 6:1–5. These passages are a prophetic preview of the tearful farewell of Jesus to His people, as He wept outside Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37–39.

The parallel does not stop here though. The appeal of the Lord is followed by seven “woes” (Isa. 5:8–23), just as Jesus, in Matthew 23:13–33, declares seven woes upon the religious leaders of the nation. In both passages, doom is predicted on Israel:

*“Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble,  
And the flame consumes the chaff,  
So their root will be as rottenness,  
And their blossom will ascend like dust;  
Because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts,  
And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel ...  
Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come  
upon this generation.”* Isaiah 5:24; Matthew 23:36

As the hatred of the Pharisees against Him intensified (Matt. 12:2, 14, 24), Jesus increased the severity of His teaching against them. In Matthew 21–25, we will see this trend increasing in the warning of coming judgment, both temporal (70 A.D.) and eternal.

When seen in this light, it is impossible to imagine that Jesus is addressing the Church in any of these parables and warnings. His focus is on a final attempt to awaken His people Israel, and to warn them of the impending disaster of their spiritual blindness.

Earlier (Matt. 12:37), Jesus had warned the scribes and Pharisees that *“by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”* Now, Jesus sets the trap by which the arrogant and judgmental Pharisees will condemn themselves (Matt. 21:40–41). After telling the parable, He asked, *“Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-dressers?”* (v. 40). Note that their response matches perfectly what Jesus said He would do:

*“Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation [the Church, 1 Pet. 2:9] bearing the fruits of it.”* Matthew 21:43

By quoting Psalm 118:22–23, about the rejected cornerstone, He reveals to them both their crime, and their guilt. By rejecting Him, after so many proofs in word and deed of His true identity as the long-awaited Messiah, they have doomed themselves and their nation.

Verse 43 is critical, because it echoes what He had told them earlier, in less clear terms. Compare these two passages:

*“And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* Matthew 8:11–12

*“Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken, but on whomever it falls, it will grind Him to powder.”* Matthew 21:43–44

In order to specifically clarify who Jesus was talking to, go back to Matthew 21:23 to “*the chief priests and the elders,*” then follow the references to “*them ... they ... we ... you*” in vv. 24–28, 31–32, 41–43 and 45. These were the religious leaders of Israel who hated Christ and were deceiving the people. It is here that we can compare a similar statement from the Gospel of Luke—the only place where he uses the term “*weeping and gnashing of teeth*”:

*“There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.”* Luke 13:28–29

Jesus’ condemnation grows stronger as we move through the book. Here, as in Matthew 8:13, He warns them of the loss of the kingdom, along with all their assumed spiritual privilege, which they based simply on physical lineage from Abraham. Imagine how confusing it would be to the believers of Jesus’ day if He had the Church in mind in Matthew 8 (of which they knew absolutely nothing), and Israel plainly in mind in Matthew 21.

The one thing that is devastatingly clear is that the Pharisees got the point:

*“Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them.”* Matthew 21:45

Earlier, He had trapped them in much the same way with the parable of the two sons (Matt. 21:28–32). When Jesus said to the religious leaders:

*“Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.”* Matthew 21:31

He is not suggesting that the scribes and Pharisees will get in—just behind the others. He is saying that the “sinners” will enter into the kingdom, and that the religious leaders will be “*cast out.*” And why? Because the issue of entering or being cast out of the kingdom always boils down to faith or unbelief:

*“For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did **not believe** him; but tax collectors and harlots **believed** him, and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent [repent] and **believe** him.”* Matthew 21:32 (emphasis added)

This is the first time they would have seized Him, but for their fear of the multitude (v. 46). The building conviction of truth from His focused and consistent teaching had finally broken through to them. From this point on, it was a fight to the death!

In the next parable, Jesus makes it clear that all are invited to the kingdom banquet. It is because of willful refusal to come that some are cast out. And it is because of a voluntary response to the call that others enter in. And in this parable, we will meet again the “*tare among the wheat*”!

## **Study Four: The Wedding Feast, the Invitations, and the Intruder, Matthew 22:1–14**

Here again we have a parable full of well-developed Jewish themes regarding the coming kingdom. The idea of the Messianic banquet was one of the most commonly used figures of the inauguration of the kingdom:

*“The Jews looked forward with all their hearts to the Messianic banquet; but it never for a moment crossed their minds that any Gentile would ever sit down at it.”*

William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible*, vol. 1, p. 309

*“It was the common belief at that time that, when the Messiah came in the golden age of His reign, all of the Jews would be invited in to sit down at the Messiah’s table. Jesus made use of this popular notion and taught that the Kingdom is like a banquet.”*

Neil R. Lightfoot, *Lessons from the Parables*, p. 102

### **The Invitation to the Wedding Feast, Matthew 22:1–7**

In these verses, we again see an overview of the history of Israel. The actors in the story are crucial to its interpretation.

First, we have the father/king who is hosting the banquet, representing the God of Israel. He is arranging a marriage for his son, who represents the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Then we have the servants, who are sent out to proclaim the invitation. These represent the prophets down through the ages (see Matt. 23:34), who called the children of Israel to enter into the kingdom by faith.

The people, of course, represent the children of Israel. Their responses include outright unwillingness (v. 3), those who mocked and made light of it (v. 5), and those who abused and killed the servants (v. 6).

### **Two Critical Observations**

There are two crucial things to be noted in these first seven verses. First, **there is no mention of the bride**. This presents a huge hurdle for those who teach that this parable is to the Church. It is interesting that when questioned some will say, “Well, the Church was not known at the time.” So, somehow the Church was not known, but the parable is about the Church? If John the Baptizer knew and understood his role in the Messianic wedding scheme, and identified himself as a “*friend of the bridegroom*” (John 3:29–30), and even mentioned the bride, does it not make sense that the Lord Jesus had a far more developed understanding of end-time events than he?

This parable is not addressed to the bride!

Secondly, most commentators see this wedding feast as the inauguration of the kingdom. That is impossible for a very simple, but often overlooked reason. The word “dinner” in v. 4 is mistranslated. It should read, “my early meal”; we would call it a “brunch” or “lunch.”

*“In the parable of Matthew 22:1–14, the ‘dinner’ mentioned in v. 4 is actually a mistranslation, as well as a misunderstanding of the Jewish wedding protocol. ‘... the king sent forth other servants to tell them to come, for he had made ready his ‘early meal’ (ariston, not ‘dinner’ ...) and that, no doubt with a view to the later meal, the oxen and fatlings were killed.’”*

Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, p. 427

*“Ariston—breakfast, toward midday, with which the series of meals connected with the marriage was to begin (Meyer) ...”*

As quoted by Rienecker/Rogers,  
*Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, p. 65

*“‘My Dinner’ (Matt. 22:4) (to ariston mou). It is breakfast, not dinner. In Luke 14:12 both ariston (breakfast) and deipnon (dinner) are used (as distinct from each other). This noon or midday meal, like the French breakfast, at noon, was sometimes called deipnon mesembrinon (midday dinner or luncheon).”*

A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. I, p. 174

*“This meal was not the banquet supper, but the early meal. The early meal had already been prepared; therefore the banquet was very near.”*

Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p. 253

So, it is clear that the invitation was to join in the early celebration, before the main festivities of the wedding. This will be very important later on.

### **The King’s Wrath, Matthew 22:7**

What is described here is precisely what happened when, first Vespasian and later his son Titus, brought the Roman legions and besieged Jerusalem. The “murderers,” who had cried out, “*Let Him be crucified ... His blood be on us and on our children*” (Matt. 27:23, 25), were brutally destroyed, and the city was burned with fire. Note how accurately Jesus portrays not only past history, but the very near future for those to whom He is speaking.

### **The Invitation Extended, Matthew 22:8–10**

More servants are now sent, not to the initial group, but to the outcasts. Note that the original guests were “*not worthy*” (see Acts 13:46), due not to any other factor than their scorn and contempt for the king’s invitation.

*“Yet this is one of the main points in the Parable. The first invitation had been sent to selected guests—to the Jews—who might have been expected to be ‘worthy,’ but had proved themselves unworthy; the next was to be given, not to*

*the chosen city or nation, but to all that travelled in whatever direction on the world's highway ..."*

Ederheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. II, p. 428

When the second group of servants are sent out, they brought in “*both bad and good*,” like the Gentiles of Matthew 8:11 and the “*tax collectors and harlots*” of Matthew 21:31. With these guests, the wedding hall is filled. The rejection of Jesus, by the nation as a whole, serves only to further the plan of God to include all the nations.

### **The Party Crasher, Matthew 22:11–14**

In the man without the wedding garment, many commentators see an example of one who is a believer, but fails to have sufficient personal righteousness (imparted righteousness) to share in the feast. To rightly understand why this man plays a role in the story, and what it means, we need to remember several facts:

1. Israel is not the bride; the Church is the Bride.
2. The guests at the feast are not the bride; they are guests.
3. This is not the “main event” but, as seen earlier, the “early meal.”
4. Absence of a wedding garment represents unwillingness to be properly clothed by the robes provided by the king (imputed righteousness).
5. The improperly dressed man represents those who, like the “tares,” must be identified and rejected before the wedding banquet begins.

It is important to note that the Greek says in v. 11, *But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man who did not have on [not dressed (ouk endedumenon, perfect, passive, participle)] a wedding garment.*” The king goes on to ask the man how he came in “*without [not having (me echon)] a wedding garment.*”

The use of the two negatives (*ouk* and *me*), together with the passive participle, demonstrate that provision had been made for his garment; he should have been properly clothed, but he willfully chose not to do so!

As a result of his blatant refusal to receive what was offered in grace, he is bound, forcibly removed, and “*cast ... into outer darkness [where] there [is] weeping and gnashing of teeth.*”

*“The alternative to entrance into the kingdom is weeping and gnashing of teeth, a term used to refer to the punishment of those who fail to enter the kingdom (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28).”*

Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p. 256

Proponents of the teaching that the “*outer darkness*” is punishment to unfruitful believers, teach that this is just such a case. They appeal to the fact that the king addressed the man as “*friend*” to prove that he is a believer. However, as has been stressed from the beginning, we ought never to read Church-Age theology back into the Gospels, which deal with the final days of the Age of Israel.

### **The Scenario Played Out, John 13:18–30**

It may be shocking to some, **but the very events contained in the parable were soon to become reality**. In this sense, the parable is not only didactic or instructive, but it is also prophetic.

When we turn to the Gospel of John, in chapter 13, we find Jesus in the Upper Room with the disciples. He is about to host the “early meal,” a preview of the Millennial Feast, as Jesus Himself said (Mark 14:25; Luke 22:14–22).

At this feast sat one who was a tare among the wheat, Judas, Jesus’ betrayer. According to Jesus’ own words, Judas was never a believer (John 6:64, 70–71). The Lord now declares to them what He has known all along, that one of them would betray Him. Shocked, the disciples all wonder if they are the one (except Judas) (Matt. 26:22–25; Mark 14:18–21; Luke 22:23).

At this point, due to prompting from Peter, John asks the Lord directly who it is, and learns that it is Judas. The Lord gives the bread to Judas as a sign, Satan enters into him, and Jesus says, “*What you do, do quickly*” (John 13:24–27).

It is at this point that Judas, the “unclothed guest” at the early feast, goes forth from the meal. And John adds ominously, “*And it was night*” (John 13:30). As a final touch, when Judas approaches Jesus in the Garden to betray Him, Jesus asks, “*Friend, why have you come?*” (Matt. 26:49).

The only part of the parable left unfulfilled is the destruction of the city (Jerusalem). This will come in 70 A.D., and its approach was known to each of the human authors of the synoptic Gospels. These were written, not only to leave to the world a record of the incarnation, life, crucifixion, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, but they were written as a final warning to a stiff-necked and hard-hearted people, as a last appeal before it was eternally too late.

### **The Issue of Election, Matthew 22:14**

It is very strange that those who hold extreme views of election are unwilling to take Jesus’ own definition of the term, as used here:

*“For many are called, but few are chosen.”*

Taking the parable in the simplicity in which it is taught, we see that the “*called*” included all who were invited. It is also clear that their failure to join the feast was due to no influence or hindrance from the king, who greatly desired their presence. Rather, they judged themselves “*unworthy*” of participation, and so rejected the open invitation (Acts 13:46).

Then, there were those obviously unworthy, the “*good and bad*” (Matt. 22:10), and the “*poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind*” (Luke 14:21). These came willingly and gladly to partake of that which they knew they were unworthy. They received the invitation as it was

given, by grace alone, and they came. These are the ones Jesus identifies as the “*chosen*” or the “elect.”

The doctrine of New Testament election is actually so very simple: We are “[elect] *chose[n]* in *Him*” (Eph. 1:4) because He is ...

“... *My Servant, whom I uphold, My Elect One  
in whom My soul delights.*” Isaiah 42:1

## **Study Five: The Warning to Watch, the Unfaithful Servant, Matthew 24:42–51**

This passage is easily dealt with if we just pay attention to the context. In Matthew 24–25, Jesus is teaching the disciples the end-time scenario for the Nation of Israel. This is called the Olivet Discourse. Again, nowhere in this teaching is the Church in view. It is a warning to unbelieving Jews, and instruction to those Jews who have believed. It encompasses both the coming destruction of Jerusalem, as well as the end-time events of the Tribulation.

### **Jesus' Three Dispensational Discourses**

1. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7)  
The King presents His Kingdom Platform (relates to the Millennial Kingdom).
2. The Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24–25)  
An outline of Daniel's 70th week/the Tribulation (Dan. 9:24–27)
3. The Upper Room Discourse (John 13–17)  
Preparation for the Church Age

### **The Historical Setting**

It is worth taking note of Jesus' own timeline, so clearly given in this section. He is dealing with "tribulation" (v. 9), "great tribulation" (v. 21), and "the sign of the Son of Man" (v. 30) at His Second Advent. He is dealing with the conclusion of the Age of Israel.

Concerning "that day" (v. 36), *i.e.*, the Second Coming, "no one knows" the time, it will be "as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2). "... be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matt. 24:44). The context has now brought us to the end of the Tribulation Period, and Jesus is giving warning, not to the disciples who will not be there, but specifically to Jews who will be on the Earth at that time.

### **The Two Servants**

The faithful servant, who is doing the will of the master (God), will be made a "ruler over all his goods" (be given the reward of greater service in the Millennial Kingdom) (vv. 46–47). Let us remember that a great portion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount placed an emphasis on the potential of rewards (Matt. 5:46; 6:1–5, 16–21). We have many New Testament passages in the Epistles dealing with rewards for Church Age believers, but we should never equate the two. We need to keep apples, apples and oranges, oranges! There is simply no comparison between Israel and the Church!

The unfaithful "servant" is unprepared, due to self-indulgence and carelessness. His end is terrible: "cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (v. 51). See Appendix 6, Israel as God's Servant (again, Romans 9–11).

Two terms need to be considered for us to keep this parable within its historical and theological context. These two terms are "servant" and "hypocrite." To begin with, we need to understand

that all Israel was called to be the “servant of Jehovah.” Of a multitude of Old Testament passages, consider these:

“... *Behold My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One  
in whom My soul delights!*” Isaiah 42:1

“*But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen ...*” Isaiah 41:8

“*‘You are My witnesses,’ says the LORD, and My servant whom I have chosen,  
that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He ...*” Isaiah 43:10

“*Yet hear now, O Jacob My servant  
and Israel whom I have chosen.*” Isaiah 44:1

Because Israel was the “elect” nation, they were also given privileges above all other nations on the Earth (Rom. 9:4–5). They were to be a light to the Gentile nations, to bring the Word of God into the world—both written and Living. With these awesome privileges came great accountability.

Every Jewish man, woman, and child were possessors of these blessings, and custodians of their use. Some would prove to be wise servants, but the majority would prove to be foolish (Matt. 7:24–27; 24:45–51). Just as the foolish builder in Matthew 7:26–27 represents an unbeliever, so does the foolish servant of Matthew 24:50–51. Which brings us to our second word.

### **Jesus’ Definition of “Hypocrite”**

Throughout our study, I have stressed the importance of maintaining our contextual bearings. Jesus does not jump in His teachings from an Old Testament context to a New Testament context. Neither does He switch from an Age of Israel context to an Age of the Church context. Nor does He consign unbelievers to the place (a specific place “*there*”) of “*weeping and gnashing of teeth,*” and then switch and consign unfaithful believers to another place of “*weeping and gnashing of teeth.*” He is gloriously consistent, for which we should all be thankful!

In Matthew 23, we find the most awful and fearful condemnation—we may even say “damnation”—in all of the Bible. While it parallels and builds on Isaiah 5, it goes to a much greater warning of eternal doom.

It is not without significance, relating to the topic of our current study, that Jesus began His ministry in Matthew with eight beatitudes, and He now ends it, after being rejected by His own people, with seven woes of coming judgment.

Seven times from Matthew 23:13–36, Jesus pronounces “*woe*” on unbelieving Israel. These warnings are aimed at the “*scribes and Pharisees,*” who were the “*blind leaders of the blind*” (Matt. 15:14). It has been said that the word “*woe*” is a word that cannot simply be spoken. So awful are its connotations, it must be screamed!

With these seven woes, which would fall on that very generation (Matt. 23:36), Jesus reserves another term of absolute contempt and condemnation: “*Hypocrites.*” **Not only does Jesus apply this term to the scribes and Pharisees, He applies it seven times, to match the seven woes!** (Matt. 23:13–15, 23, 25, 27, 29).

In the parallel passage to this, found in Luke 12:41–48, two significant points stand out: First, that Peter specifically asked if this truth applied only to the disciples, “*or to all people.*” The Lord makes it clear that all mankind is accountable for the truth concerning His offer of grace.

Secondly, using the same parable as in Matthew 24, He ends this one not with the word “hypocrites,” but instead says, “... *cut him in two and appoint him his portion with unbelievers*” (Luke 12:46).

Now, imagine how ludicrous it would be—within the same scriptural context, dealing with the same historical context—for Jesus to use this term for the hardest-hearted of unbelieving Jewish religious leaders, and then to apply it to an unfaithful believer! Our Savior was far too careful of every word He spoke to make such a “mistake.” As a final confirmation, consider that Jesus used the word “*hypocrites*” nine times outside of this context, and always and only in addressing hardened unbelievers (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16; 15:7; 16:3; 22:18; Mark 7:6; Luke 11:44; 12:56).

The “hypocrite” pretends to be righteous when he is far from it. His righteousness is that works-righteousness so dear to the heart of scribes and Pharisees. And the Lord Jesus set the record straight when he said:

*“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”* Matthew 5:20

No one possessing the righteousness of Christ will ever be considered a “hypocrite” in His presence. Especially for those who are members of the Body of Christ, Paul declares, “*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God,*” Romans 5:1–2.

**Note:** See Appendix 7, “Hypocrites.”

### **Three Great Doctrines (not to be overlooked or minimized)**

The Nature of Grace (adapted from Chafer’s *Systematic Theology*)

1. Grace can be known by revelation only.
2. It is accomplished by God alone on the basis of the cross of Christ.
3. It can be received by faith alone, in Christ alone.
4. It is not received, nor improved, by human merit.
5. Once received, it is not diminished due to human demerit or failure.

### The Nature of Light

1. God is light (1 John 1:5). He is holy; there is no darkness in Him.
2. This light is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6).
3. Light is also the new nature of all who believe in Him (Eph. 5:8; 2 Cor. 4:6; 1 Thess. 5:5).
4. Light describes the life of those who walk by faith (1 John 1:7; Eph. 5:8).
5. Light also describes our certain and assured inheritance (Col. 1:12–13; 1 Pet. 1:4–5; 1 Pet. 2:9).

### The Certainty of Glory

1. The true nature of glory is revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6).
2. Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ brings glory to God (Eph. 1:12).
3. Every believer is assured of sharing in His glory forever (Col. 1:27; Heb. 2:10).
4. Every believer will be glorified in the likeness of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:17–18; 2 Cor. 3:18).
5. At the Rapture of the Church, every believer will be glorified and share in His glory (Col. 3:4; Rom. 8:18).

## Study Six: The Parable of the Talents, Matthew 25:14–30

In this parable, we have many of the same themes as in the parable of the unfaithful servant of our last study. Note that we are still in the same context of the Olivet Discourse. Therefore, the same parameters should guide our interpretation.

### A Brief Note on the Ten Virgins

Since the parable of the ten virgins uses neither “outer darkness” nor “weeping and gnashing of teeth,” we will not spend time on it. It should be sufficient to say that it deals with Israel, the “*virgin daughter*” of Israel:

“... *Let my eyes flow with tears night and day, and let them not cease; for the virgin daughter of my people has been broken with a mighty stroke, with a very severe blow.*” Jeremiah 14:17

“... *O virgin of Israel! You shall again be adorned with your tambourines, and shall go forth in the dances of those who rejoice.*” Jeremiah 31:4

The parable begins with the word “*then*,” which is **the** key word in the Olivet Discourse. Here, it connects us back to Matthew 24:30 and the Second Coming of the Lord. Here, we have five wise and five foolish virgins, all representing Israel. By now, we should catch a trend in Jesus’ parabolic teaching. “*Wise*” equals a believer, and “*foolish*” equals an unbeliever. See how the terms are used for the builders (Matt. 7:24–27), the servants (Matt. 24:45–51), and the virgins (Matt. 25:2). Remember that the careless use of the word “*fool*” was condemned by Jesus (Matt. 5:22). “... *a person who calls someone a ‘fool’ (more) as an invective is condemned to Gehenna*” (Hans Scharen, *Gehenna in the Synoptics*, p. 456). Also, Jesus only uses the word against the same people He called hypocrites (Matt. 23:17, 19; Luke 11:40). When Jesus rebukes His disciples for not believing He had risen (Luke 24:25–27), He uses an entirely different word. Though translated “*O foolish ones*,” the word is *anoetos*, meaning “ignorant, not understanding.”

The wise virgins bring oil—long a Jewish symbol of the Holy Spirit—from the sense of “anointing.” The foolish bring no oil; this is precisely why they were fools. They anticipated the coming of the bridegroom but did not prepare for it. They are like the many Jews at Jesus’ First Coming, who ardently longed for His arrival, but expected Him to come in might and power and, as a result, rejected the humble and lowly Savior.

In the end, the foolish virgins come asking admittance. The answer of the Lord to them should remove all doubt as to their spiritual status:

“*Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.*” Matthew 25:12  
(emphasis added)

This is the same response the Lord gives to the false prophets (Matt. 7:23). It is the same response given to those who refused to enter by the narrow way (faith alone in Christ alone) in Luke 13:27–29:

*“But He will say, ‘I tell you **I do not know you**, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.’ There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you [unbelieving Jews] see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.”* (emphasis added)

To assume that the Lord Jesus would ever say to those who have believed in Him, “*I never knew you*,” to me is the height of careless interpretation.

### The Wise vs. the Foolish

1. The wise builder (believer) vs. the foolish (unbeliever), Matt. 7:24–27
2. The wise servant (believer) vs. the foolish (unbeliever), Matt. 24:45–51
3. The wise virgins (believers) vs. the foolish (unbelievers), Matt. 25:2

### The Principle of Accountability

*“For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”* Luke 12:48b

God gave, to the chosen people of Israel, treasures far surpassing His gifts to other nations. It is worth noting that whereas Matthew 25:14–30 deals with Israel, Matthew 25:31–48 is dealing with the Gentile nations. Again, our historical context is the Second Advent of Christ to this world, and the Church is not in view at all.

### The Talents and the Nations

Whereas the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30) deals with Israel at the end of the Tribulation, the parable of the sheep and goats (Matt. 25:31–46) deals with Gentile nations. The issue in both is that of believers vs. unbelievers.

Keep the context in mind. We are in the Olivet Discourse. Jesus is answering the disciples’ questions about “*the end of the age*” and “*the sign of Your coming*” (Matt. 24:3). The Church is nowhere in view. Neither is the Bema or Judgment Seat of Christ!

**Jesus’ theme throughout all the parables is the same: the promise of life and blessing to those who believe in Him; the warning of cursing and condemnation to those who reject Him.**

## **The Giving of the Talents, Matthew 25:14–19**

Remember that all Israel was called (“Elect”) to share in “*the commonwealth of Israel*” (Eph. 2:12), consisting of divine privileges given to no other nation. To the nation as a whole, and to each member individually, were given eight spiritual treasures, listed by Paul in Romans 9:4–5 (see also Rom. 3:1–4):

1. The name “Israelite”: signifying Jacob’s transformation by faith (Gen. 32:28)
2. Adoption as sons: Israel called “*My son*” (Deu. 1:31; Hos. 11:1)
3. The glory: The Shekinah (glory of the presence) (Exodus 19)
4. The Covenants: Abrahamic (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:18); Mosaic (Exo. 19:1–6; 20:1–17); Davidic (2 Sam. 7:12–16)
5. The Law (Exod. 20:1–17)
6. The service of God: temple/priesthood (Book of Leviticus)
7. The promises: The Kingdom and the King (Psalms 2:6; 10:16; 24:7; Eph. 2:12)
8. The “*fathers*,” and the Christ (Isa. 28:16; Rom. 9:33; 11:26–28)

Paul has carefully crafted this list to show that all other privileges point to and culminate in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Genuine, humble faithfulness to the first seven would lead naturally to faith in the Messiah. Meanwhile, the religion of the Pharisees made a mockery of the first seven and, therefore, could not respond in faith to the Savior.

These spiritual treasures were to be utilized by each and every Jew according to their station. Some—the kings, prophets, and priests—were given “*ten talents*.” Others—scribes and judges—were given “*five talents*.” But even to the lowliest Israelite, the most humble peasant, was given “*one talent*.” No Jew was exempt from accountability for the treasures that were given to the nation:

“... you ... your son ... your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates ...” Exodus 20:10

This statement, though specifically relating to observing the Sabbath, was in force regarding the whole Law, which encompassed all the covenant privileges of Israel.

## **The Accounting, Matthew 25:19–30**

When Jesus said, “*after a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them*” (Matt. 25:19), He is reinforcing the truth He introduced in Matthew 13. Due to Israel’s rejection, the kingdom would enter its mystery phase. He would be gone for a long time, but when He returned, a full accounting would be given:

“*See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.’*” Matthew 23:38–39

Both the servant given ten talents and the one given five were faithful to multiply and make gain. This is the analogy of spiritual growth and fruit. To each is given the commendation, “*Well done ... I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord*” (vv. 21, 23). The critical issue is not the amount of gain, but rather the degree of faithfulness. As Stanley D. Toussaint comments, “*the joy of your master*” is a designation of the bliss in the coming kingdom” (*Behold the King*, p. 287).

The unfaithful servant represents every Jew, given God’s gracious privileges, who did not believe, and was found to despise what they had:

*“It must be remembered that the slaves are not Christians of the Church Age, but Jews in the tribulation period. And the large sum of money ... ‘suggests the greatness of the privileges entrusted by God to the Jews.’ It may be that the responsibility involved is the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom to the ends of the earth. Those who have a heart for the kingdom faithfully discharge their responsibility, while those who have no real concern for its spiritual realities fail.”*

Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p. 286

The unfaithful servant first loses what he had been given. **We have a perfect example of this, again, in Judas.** Note the precise wording used by the apostles after his suicide:

*“And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples ... and said, ‘Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry’ ... For it is written in the Book of Psalms; ‘Let his dwelling place be desolate, and let no one live in it’; and, ‘**Let another take his office ...**’”* Acts 1:15–17, 20 (emphasis added)

Here, the early disciples are applying, based on prophecies well understood from the Scriptures (Psalms 69:25; 109:8), exactly the punishment spoken of in Matthew 25:28–29. This will be carried out against all unbelieving Jews at the end of the Tribulation.

Finally, the unprofitable servant is cast into the “*outer darkness,*” with weeping and gnashing of teeth. As we have seen in Matthew 8:12; 22:13 and here, **the only uses of this phrase in the Bible are found in Matthew—the Gospel written to Jews and whose main themes include that of judgment!** This is the end of all who are unbelievers but, specifically in these passages, of the unbelieving Jews.

### **Judgment of the Nations, Matthew 25:31–46**

Only a brief sketch is necessary here. The sheep nations are those who show kindness to persecuted Jews during the Tribulation, due to their faith in Jesus Christ; those who mistreat the Jews do so in unbelief. To quote Stanley Toussaint again:

*“The Gospel of Matthew has been called ‘the Gospel of judgment.’ Throughout this Gospel there are allusions to judgment which justify this statement (Matthew 3:12; 6:2, 5, 16; 7:24–27; 13:30, 48–49; 18:23–34; 20:1–16; 21:33–41; 22:1–14; 24:45–51; 25:1–12, 14–30). This is only natural since one of the main subjects of Matthew is the kingdom, and preceding the kingdom is judgment. The closing words of the Olivet Discourse concern the judgment of the nations, the last event before the kingdom on earth is established.”*

*Behold the King, p. 288 (emphasis added)*

Notice again the precise timing: *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory [Second Advent] and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him ...”* Matthew 25:31–32.

The judgment spoken of here is anticipated by a prophecy of Joel:

*“Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will grow dark [note Matt. 24:29], and the stars will diminish their brightness. The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; But the LORD will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.”* Joel 3:14–16

To the sheep on the right hand, the reward is entrance into the *“kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”* (Matt. 25:34). This shows the kingdom to be part of God’s eternal plan for mankind, and also the fulfillment of all the covenant promises to those who believe in Jesus Christ:

*“Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. Just as many were astonished at you, so His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men; so shall He sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; for what had not been told them they shall see, and what they had not heard they shall consider.”* Isaiah 52:13–15

When the righteous ask Jesus when had they shown regard and care for Him as a *“stranger,”* He will answer:

*“Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”* Matthew 25:40

It is interesting that the term *“stranger”* is used here. It reminds me of the lament of Jeremiah, when he spoke of the Lord as the outcast Savior of Israel:

*“O the Hope of Israel, his Savior in time of trouble, why should You be like a stranger in the land, and like a traveler who turns aside to tarry for a night?”* Jeremiah 14:8

The reward of the righteous here can certainly have application for every one of us, and especially for those who serve in children's ministry:

*"Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me."* Matthew 18:5

But how awful is the judgment for those who have treated with scorn and contempt the little child, and carried a hatred for the Jews! Even as I write these words, the country is just beginning to learn of the abuse of children by the high and mighty, and our national leadership is polluted by those who hate Israel with a passion! Yet, God's promise to Abraham still stands:

*"I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."* Genesis 12:3

And so, to the heartless and unbelieving nations, the word comes down:

*"And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."* Matthew 25:46

### **Summary of the Teaching**

1. The theme running all through Matthew is the presentation of the King, His rejection by Israel, and the justice of the coming judgment.
2. All of the parables/teachings we have studied are consistent in the promise of reward to those who believe and warning of eternal judgment to those who reject their King. In light of this, how significant is the act of Pilate in posting over Jesus' head the crime for which He was crucified, *"This is Jesus the King of the Jews"* (Matt. 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19)?
3. The term *"outer darkness"* was well understood by the Jews of Jesus' time to refer to Gehenna/Hell.
4. Though the Jews assumed a right to enter the kingdom based on their lineage, Jesus makes it abundantly clear that each one *"must be born again"* by faith in Him.
5. Nowhere in these passages is the focus on the Church, nor are they describing events at the Bema Seat of Christ.
6. Sound biblical interpretation demands that passages be studied in the light of their literal, historical, grammatical, and cultural setting.

**Appendix 1**  
**The Concept of “Sonship”: Jesus vs. the Jews**  
**“Sons of the Kingdom”**

1. The argument is used by Marty Cauley, and others, that since “*sons of the kingdom*” is used both in Matthew 8:12 (of those cast out into outer darkness), and by Jesus in Matthew 13:38 (of “*the good seeds*”), the phrase must refer to the same persons (*i.e.*, believers) in both passages.

Marty Cauley, *The Outer Darkness*, pp. 429–431

2. To draw this conclusion, one must ignore the contextual differences in time, place, and purpose in the two passages, as well as how other similar terms are used two different ways in two different passages.
3. In Matthew 8:12, Jesus is speaking to Jews, using the phrase as they used it, assuming that to be a descendant of Abraham was equal to being a “[son] *of the kingdom.*” In Matthew 13:38, Jesus is speaking only to His disciples (Matt. 13:36), and uses the term as they would understand it, of believers. Remember that in the parables of Matthew 13, Jesus is introducing new revelation, as a part of the “*mystery*” of Israel’s blindness and of the creation of the Church (Rom. 11:25).
4. For example, note that in John 8, the Jews claim to be “sons of Abraham” (*sperma Abraam*), a claim Jesus concedes to **on physical grounds** (vv. 33 and 37), but denies on spiritual grounds (vv. 39–44).
5. This is very much like the use Paul makes of Abraham’s “sons” in Galatians 4:21–27. But one (Ishmael) was a son of the flesh and bondage, while the other (Isaac) was a son of promise. Both are “sons,” but not with the same relationship. One is physical, while the other is spiritual.
6. The very same words used by Jesus and the Jews in John 8 are used by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 3:29 of Gentile believers, who have absolutely no physical lineage from Abraham, but by regeneration are considered his spiritual sons.
7. In Matthew 8:12, Jesus is speaking to unbelieving Jews, who considered themselves to be “*sons of the kingdom,*” by right of physical lineage. In Matthew 13:38, Jesus is speaking to believers, His disciples, of “*the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt. 13:11) (*i.e.*, new revelation), and, therefore, uses the term rightly of those who have believed.
8. Edersheim points out the different starting points between Rabbinism and the teaching of Jesus. The order of the quotes is changed for the sake of clarity:

*“And here we may mark the fundamental distinction between the teaching of Jesus and Rabbinism ... Rabbinism started with demand of outward obedience and righteousness, and pointed to sonship as its goal ... The teaching of Jesus occupied the opposite pole. Its starting point was the inner sanctuary in which*

*God was known and worshipped ... The Gospel started with the free gift of forgiveness through faith and of sonship, and pointed to obedience and righteousness as its goal ... It may be fearlessly asserted that, as regards their substance and spirit, there is not a difference, but (rather) a total divergence, of fundamental principle between Rabbinism and the New Testament, so that comparison between them is not possible."*

Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. I, p. 106–107

9. Concerning the vast difference in the teaching of Jesus vs. the rabbis, *"Again, as from this point of view the Sermon on the Mount differs from all contemporary Jewish teaching, so also is it impossible to compare it with any other system of morality ... Every moral system is a road by which, through self-denial, discipline, and effort, men seek to reach the goal. Christ begins with this goal, and places His disciples at once in the position to which all other teachers point as the end. They work up to the goal of becoming the 'children of the Kingdom,' He makes men such freely, and of His grace: and this is the kingdom. What the others labor for, He gives. They begin by demanding, He by bestowing: because He brings good tidings of forgiveness and mercy."*

*Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 528–29

Regarding points 7–8 above, see also points 9–10, 14 in Appendix 2

10. *"'The sons of the kingdom' ... A favorite Hebrew idiom like 'son of hell' (Matt. 23:15), and 'sons of this age' (Luke 16:8). The Jews felt that they had a natural right to the privileges of the kingdom because of descent from Abraham (Matt. 3:9)."*  
A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. I, p. 65

Note: When Jesus called the Pharisees *"son[s] of hell"* (Matt. 23:15), he is using the very term they used for the Gentiles, while they called themselves *"sons of the kingdom"* (Matt. 8:12; 13:38).

11. Remember the words of Paul, to both spiritual and carnal believers, *"You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness"* (1 Thess. 5:5).

**Appendix 2**  
**Outer Darkness/Gehenna**  
**(as it was understood by the Jews of Jesus' time)**

1. In the Jewish thought of Jesus' day, "*outer darkness*," the place of "*weeping and gnashing of teeth*," referred to the place of eternal judgment of the lost.
2. The first portrayal of darkness as judgment is found in Exodus 10:21–23. God said to Moses, "[Let] *there ... be darkness over the land of Egypt, darkness which may even be felt ... But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.*"
3. This practical portrayal of future eternal judgment will again be seen during the Tribulation, when, "*the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains ... and did not repent of their deeds*" (Rev. 16:10–11).
4. When Jesus speaks of "*outer darkness*," He is speaking within a biblical framework that was familiar to His listeners. The darkness was understood to be the place of eternal punishment—Gehenna.
5. "*Gehinnom ... was in the valley of Hinnom ... which lay beyond the 'mountains of darkness.' It was a place of darkness, to which, in the day of the Lord, the Gentiles would be consigned. On the other hand, the merit of circumcision would in the day of the Messiah deliver Jewish sinners from Gehinnom. 'Outer darkness' ... intended to designate ... a place of hopeless, endless night.*"

Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. I, p. 550

Here, he footnotes the Targum (ancient Aramaic paraphrase or interpretation) on 1 Samuel 2:9, "*But the wicked shall be silent in darkness*," and Psalm 88:12, "*Shall Your wonders be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?*" (Note: The Targum translations from Hebrew into Aramaic began with the oral translations of Ezra's reading of the Law of Moses, Nehemiah 8:1–8.)

6. The teaching of the rabbis was that "*the Gentiles could not possibly share in the feast of the Messiah, so Israel had claim and title to it. To use rabbinic terms, the former were 'children of gehinnom,' but Israel 'children [sons] of the kingdom,' or, in strictly rabbinic language, 'royal children,' 'children of God, or heaven,' [and] 'children of the upper chamber and 'of the world to come.'*"

Edersheim, vol. I, p. 551

7. Regarding the call of John for not only repentance, but fruits worthy of it, Edersheim says, "*Or else did they imagine that, according to the common notion of the time, the vials of wrath were to be poured out only on the Gentiles, while they, as Abraham's children, were sure of escape—in the words of the Talmud, that 'the night' (Isa. 21:12) was 'only to the nations of the world, but the morning to Israel.'*"

Edersheim, vol. I, p. 271

8. *“Never, surely, could the Judaism of His hearers have received more rude shock than by this inversion of all their cherished beliefs. There was a feast of Messianic fellowship ... a joyous festive gathering with the fathers of the faith. But this fellowship was not of outward, but of spiritual kinship [see Rom. 2:27–29, Gene’s note]. There were ‘children of the Kingdom,’ and there was an ‘outer darkness’ with its anguish and despair. But this child-ship was of the Kingdom, such as He had opened it to all believers; and that outer darkness theirs, who had only outward claims to present.”*

Edersheim, vol. I, p.551

9. *“And so this history of the believing Centurion is at the same time an application of the ‘Sermon on the mount’ ... it placed the hope of Israel, and the fellowship with its promises, within the reach of all faith, whether Jew or Gentile.”*

Edersheim, vol. I, p.551

10. On Jesus’ use of familiar rabbinical terms, with entirely new sense: *“To the reader of ... Rabbinic quotations there is this further source of misunderstanding, that the form and sound of words is so often the same as that of the sayings of Jesus, however different their spirit ... The new teaching, to be historically true, must have employed the old forms and spoken the old language. But **the ideas underlying terms equally employed by Jesus and the teachers of Israel are, in everything that concerns the relation of souls to God, so absolutely different as not to bear comparison.**”*

Edersheim, vol. I, p. 527 (emphasis added?)

I would suggest that teachers of the “outer darkness” today have done precisely as the rabbis, and turned the teaching of Jesus to exactly the opposite!

11. *“The infinite contrast, just set forth, between the Kingdom as presented by the Christ and Jewish contemporary teaching is the more striking, that **it was expressed in a form, and clothed in words with which all His hearers were familiar**; indeed, in modes of expression current at the time ... in teaching to His contemporaries, Jesus would naturally use the forms with which they were familiar.”*

Edersheim, vol. I, p. 531 (emphasis added)

12. In the parable of the tares (Matt. 13:36–43), Jesus says the tares would be “cast ... into the furnace of the fire” (v. 42). Concerning this, Edersheim says, “with the two articles: the well-known oven of the well-known fire—Gehenna.”

Edersheim, vol. I, p. 591

It is worth pointing out here that Jesus is consistently referring to the very same place He spoke of in Matthew 8:12, which He referred to as “outer darkness.”

13. On Matthew 13:42, regarding “the furnace of fire,” Edersheim remarks, “On v. 42, the expression ‘oven of fire,’ for Gehenna, is the popular Jewish one. Similarly, the expression, ‘gnashing of teeth,’ chiefly characteristic of the anger and jealousy of those in Gehinnom, occurs in the Midrash (commentary on the Hebrew Scriptures) on Ecclesiastes 1:15, ‘What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered.’”

Edersheim, vol. I, p. 597

14. Edersheim shows how, in the Jewish thought of Jesus' time, Gehenna was the eternal abode of all the Gentiles. If the Jew, due to wickedness, came into it at all, it "*proved [to be] a kind of purgatory, from which they were all ultimately delivered by Abraham ... [or] by the Messiah, [but] no such deliverance was in prospect for the heathen ...*"  
Edersheim, vol. II, p. 440
15. Regarding Matthew 8:11–12, *The Expositor's Greek Testament* says, "*Jesus expresses Himself here and throughout this logion in the language of His time and people. The feast with the patriarchs, the outer darkness, the weeping and the gnashing of teeth (observe the article before skotos, klauthmos, Brugmos, implying that all are familiar ideas) are stock phrases. The imagery is Jewish, but the thought is anti-Jewish, universalistic, of perennial truth and value.*"  
*The Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. I, p. 140
16. Regarding Matthew 22:11–14, "*cast him into outer darkness, **there** will be weeping and gnashing of teeth,*" (*ekai estai*—"in that place"), "*How weird and frightful, for the wanderer who has lost his way, the night, when clouds cover the heavens, and through the deep darkness the howling and teeth-grinding of hungry wolves strike the ear of the lonely one! Truly no figure could more impressively describe the anguish of the God-forsaken.*"  
*The Expositor's Greek Testament, Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 272 (emphasis added)
17. The importance of the little word "*there*" (*ekei*), used in **every single reference** to the outer darkness and weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28), cannot be overlooked. "*There*" means "in that place," speaking of a certain location.
18. While Joseph Dillow denies that this refers to a specific place (Dillow, *Final Destiny*, pp. 776–781), Dennis Rokser remarks, "*Contextual usage is always the primary factor in determining meaning. In the context of the Lord's seven 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' statements, He repeatedly associates 'weeping' with a location—'in that place.'* Note that the weeping occurs only after a person is forcibly cast out or put 'there.'"  
Dennis Rokser, *Should Christians Fear Outer Darkness*, p. 150
19. "*Always in Jewish thought, 'the inheritance of sinners is darkness,' (Psalms of Solomon 15:11). The Rabbis had a saying, 'the sinners in Gehenna will be covered with darkness.'* To the Jew the extraordinary and the shattering thing about all this (referring to Matt. 8:5–13) was that the Gentile, whom he expected to be absolutely shut out, was to be a guest at the Messianic banquet, and the Jew, whom he expected to be welcomed with open arms, is to be shut out in the outer darkness."  
William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible*, vol. 1, p. 309–310
20. Regarding the historical significance of the "*outer darkness*," Randolph O. Yeager comments on Matthew 8:12, "*'But' (de) is adversative here, as Jesus distinguishes clearly between those of verse 11, who, although only Gentiles, will be citizens of the kingdom of the heavens, and those of verse 12, who, though 'sons of the kingdom' by virtue of genetics are nevertheless unbelievers. Sitting with the Patriarchs in the kingdom is strongly contrasted*

*with the outer darkness and its agonies ... this prophecy was fulfilled in a temporal way in A. D. 70, when Jerusalem fell. Spiritually it finds its application for everyone, Jew or Gentile, when he dies outside of Christ.”*

Randolph O. Yeager, *The Renaissance New Testament*, vol. 2, p. 21

21. “‘into the outer darkness’ (uses a) comparative adjective like our ‘further out,’ the darkness outside ... one of the figures for hell or punishment (Matt. 23:13; 25:30). The repeated article makes it bolder and more impressive, ‘the darkness the outside,’ there where the wailing and gnashing of teeth is heard in the thick blackness of night.”

A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. I, p. 65

22. We have now come full circle in history, from the reformers’ staunch opposition to the Roman Catholic teaching of purgatory, to embracing the idea! “*Is there a Protestant Purgatory? I believe evangelicals should be open to thinking about this ... involving a time of rebuke, regret, reflection, and repentance ... punishment (and) Millennial disinheritation.*”

Joseph Dillow, *Final Destiny*, pp. 902–903

23. Ezekiel 20:38 anticipates the outer darkness, saying, “*I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.*” These are unbelieving Jews, as also in Matthew 8:12.

24. The use of “darkness” in ancient Greek thought and language:

- “*In Homer skotos is almost always the encompassing darkness of death ... Hades is dark as the realm of the dead and the place of punishment ... a shadowy existence in it is no true life,*” Homer II, 4, pp. 428–429, 461.

Kittle/Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. VII, pp. 424–425

- (In usage) “*the field is consistently translated by scotia ... darkness denotes the whole range of what is bad for me, as well as in that of moral evil ... Similarly Job 10:20–22 declares: as light means happiness and life, so darkness means disaster and death. Hence the realm of the dead is the land of darkness ...*”

*Ibid.*, Kittle, vol. VII, pp. 427–428

- In the New Testament: “*skotos (neuter) is most common. John prefers scotia ... the use is also literal when skotos denotes the future place of punishment in Matthew’s phrase: to skotos to exoteron (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30) and also Jude 13, 2 Pet. 2:17.*”

*Ibid.*, Kittle, pp. 438–439

- It is interesting to note the contrast, in one context, between “*the power of darkness*” (ruling over the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus) and “*the power of God*” by which He was victorious (Luke 22:53, 69).

25. *“And the final fate of the impenitent sinner is to be cast into outer darkness (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). There is a kingdom of darkness which wars against the light, and which has power at times to prevail (Luke 22:53).”*

James Hastings, *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, vol. I, p. 408

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Weeping, Wailing, and Gnashing of Teeth**

1. These terms are used in Matthew 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30 and Luke 13:28.
2. *“The phrase ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’ is confined to the Gospel of Matthew and one occurrence in Luke ... It occurs three times in conjunction with ‘outer darkness’ (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30) and twice in conjunction with ‘furnace of fire’ (Matt. 13:42, 50). These five references, each spoken by Jesus, refer to the experience of those rejected from the kingdom of God who will suffer eschatological judgment.”*

Hans Scharen, *Gehenna in the Synoptics*,  
*Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 149, No. 595, p. 335
3. In all of these passages, this is *“a term used to refer to the punishment of those who fail to enter the kingdom.”*

Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p. 256
4. *“The punishment ... described as ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’ ... invariably throughout Matthew this phrase refers to the retribution of those who are judged before the Millennial kingdom is established (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 25:30).”*

*Ibid.*, p. 282
5. We see the phrase as used in Matthew 13:42, 49–50; Luke 13:27–28 is without question referring to unsaved people, since they are referred to as *“cast ... into the furnace of fire,”* (literally, “the furnace of the fire”), and as those Jesus does not know, *“workers of iniquity.”* If we accept the current teaching on the *“outer darkness”* as relating to saved people, then we have the dilemma of Jesus using the same terms for the fate of the unsaved as well as for unfaithful believers alike.
6. Some would argue that, when applied to believers, this is only “metaphorical language.” Is it then a metaphor when Jesus uses the same language for the fate of unsaved people in the Lake of Fire?
7. In Matthew 13:42 and 50, Jesus says that *“wailing and gnashing of teeth”* is the response of those who are cast *“into the furnace of [the] fire.”* Can any serious Bible student actually claim that this is other than the eternal fate of the lost?
8. In Matthew 13:41, Jesus is speaking of *“those who practice lawlessness”* and in v. 49, of separating *“the wicked from the just.”* This is clearly not speaking of unfaithful or unfruitful believers—but of unbelievers.

**Appendix 4**  
**Israel is God's Vineyard, Matthew 21:33–45**

1. *“The picture of the Jewish nation as the vineyard of God was a familiar prophetic picture.”*  
William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible*, vol. I, p. 289
2. *“Restore us, O God of hosts, cause your face to shine, and we shall be saved! You have brought a vine out of Egypt; You cast out the nations, and planted it. You prepared room for it, and caused it to take deep root, and it filled the land ... Why have You broken down her hedges, so that all who pass by the way pluck her fruit? ... Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts; look down from heaven and see, and visit this vine and the vineyard which Your right hand has planted, and the branch that You made strong for Yourself ... Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand, upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself ... Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved!”*  
Psalm 80:7–9, 12, 14–15, 17, 19
3. *“Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; so He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes. ‘And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?’”* Isaiah 5:1–4
4. *“Many rulers [shepherds] have destroyed My vineyard. They have trodden My portion underfoot; they have made My pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. They have made it desolate; desolate, it mourns Me; the whole land is made desolate, because no one takes it to heart.”* Jeremiah 12:10–11
5. Is there any wonder that, when Jesus told the parable of the vineyard, in Matthew 21:33–46, and called on the religious leaders to judge between Him and His vineyard, that, *“... when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them”* (Matthew 21:45).
6. The same parable, in Mark 12:1–12, ends with these words, *“And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left and went away”* (Mark 12:12).
7. Then, in Luke 20:9–19, we have a parallel passage of the same parable; but in this one, Jesus Himself makes the conclusion, *“He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others”* (v. 16). After this, we read, *“And the chief priests and the scribes that very hour sought to lay hands on Him, but they feared the people—for they knew He had spoken this parable against them”* (Luke 20:19).

8. How then, when the interpretation is given to us by both Matthew and Luke, can these parables be so twisted as to refer to the Church Age believer? Especially when the interpretation given refers to those who absolutely refused to believe in Jesus as the Messiah?
9. You will also notice that there is a common theme running through these parables: The disinheritance of Israel for unbelief, and the re-apportioning of the vineyard (or the kingdom) to another people or nation. Compare Matthew 21:41; Mark 12:9; Luke 20:16.
10. This terrible outcome for Israel was, in fact, prophesied by Moses in Deuteronomy 32:21, *“They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation.”*
11. This prophecy is so critical to understanding end-time events that Paul refers to it repeatedly in Romans (Rom. 10:19; 11:11, 14), as he declares why Israel has been blinded and set aside, and why the Church is the agency that has temporarily taken her place:

*“But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says, ‘I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.’”* Romans 10:19

*“I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles ... For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them.”* Romans 11:11, 13–14

12. This same truth of the Church supplanting Israel for a time is the point Paul is making with the figure of the olive tree in Romans 11:16–25.

**Appendix 5**  
**The Wedding Feast/Messianic Banquet**

1. The idea of the Messianic banquet was a common theme of teaching and belief of the Jews at the time of Christ. *“The Jews looked forward with all their hearts to the Messianic banquet; but it never for a moment crossed their minds that any Gentile would ever sit down at it.”*  
William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible*, vol. 1, p. 309
2. *“It was the common belief at that time that when the Messiah came, in the golden age of His reign, all of the Jews would be invited in to sit down at the Messiah’s table. Jesus made use of this popular notion and taught that the Kingdom is like a banquet.”*  
Neil R. Lightfoot, *Lessons from the Parables*, p. 102
3. Remember that in the wedding analogy of Messiah’s coming, John the Baptist rightly identified himself as the “best man,” not the “bride.” *“He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease,”* John 3:29–30.
4. In the interpretation of the “wedding” figures/parables (Matt. 8:11; 22:1–14; 25:1–13), Israel is always seen as those friends or guests who are invited to the feast, never as the bride. The bride is never mentioned because the bride is the Church, and the Church is not yet in existence, and Jesus’ listeners could have had no understanding of it, since the Church was yet an unrevealed mystery.
5. In the parable of Matthew 22:1–14, the “dinner” mentioned in v. 4 is actually a mistranslation, as well as a misunderstanding of the Jewish wedding protocol. *“... the King sent forth other servants to tell them to come, for he had made ready his ‘early meal’ (ariston, not ‘dinner’ ...) and that, no doubt with a view to the later meal, the oxen and fatlings were killed.”*  
Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, p. 427
6. *“Ariston, breakfast, toward midday, with which the series of meals connected with the marriage was to begin (Meyer).”*  
Rienecker/Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, p. 65
7. *“My Dinner” (Matt. 22:4) (to ariston mou). It is breakfast, not dinner. In Luke 14:12, both ariston (breakfast) and deipnon (dinner) are used (as distinct from each other). This noon or midday meal, like the French breakfast, at noon, was sometimes called deipnon mesembrinon (midday dinner or luncheon).”*  
A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. I, p. 174
8. By proper exegesis, we see that both John and Jesus were inviting Jews to join in the early celebration, before the “main event” of the kingdom wedding feast.

9. Much ado has been made about the “guest” who had no wedding garment in Matthew 22:11–13. The question posed, is, “how could an unbeliever be present in the kingdom wedding feast?” Therefore, based on faulty interpretation, the even more faulty conclusion is made: this must be an unfaithful believer!
  
10. However, Jesus is not only teaching the multitudes, He is also teaching His disciples. These lessons were not only didactic, they were also prophetic. And they would, in fact, sit down with Him in the Upper Room, which He Himself said was a preview of the coming Millennial Feast (Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:15–16, 18, 28–30). And at that time there was a “friend” (see Matt. 22:12 with Matt. 26:50), who had no wedding garment (see John 13:10–11, 21–26), and that unsaved “friend” was indeed cast out of the meal, “*and it was night*” (John 13:27, 30).

## **Appendix 6**

### **Israel Identified as the Servant of Jehovah**

One of the arguments of those teaching that “*outer darkness*” applies to believers is the use of the word “*servant*” in Matthew 24:15–51 and its parallel passage in Luke 12:42–48. In the Matthew passage, the unfaithful servant is “*appoint[ed] his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*” In the Luke passage, we read, “*cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers [apistos]*” (Luke 12:46).

The erroneous conclusion of many is that since the man was a “*servant*” of the Master, he must be a believer. Once again, this conclusion is due to a failure to stick to the context, both textually and historically.

1. If we are faithful to the context, the point being made by Jesus in Matthew 24:50 is the same as in reference to the days of Noah in Matthew 24:42–43. He is speaking of the last days of Israel, at the end of the Tribulation. Jesus is the Master, and Israel is the “*servant*” nation. This is entirely in keeping with Old Testament teaching and the thinking of Jesus’ day.
2. Throughout the Old Testament, the same terms used of the Messiah were also applied to Israel, because Israel was to be a reflection of her Lord.

*“Behold My Servant whom I uphold,  
My Elect One in whom My soul delights!”* Isaiah 42:1

*“But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen ...”* Isaiah 41:8

*“‘You are My witnesses,’ says the LORD, and ‘My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He ...’”* Isaiah 43:10

*“Yet hear now, O Jacob My servant, and  
Israel whom I have chosen.”* Isaiah 44:1

3. Note that in all the above passages, two designations are given to all of Israel; chosen (elect) and servant.
4. To quote Dennis Rokser, “*Matthew’s Gospel is a thoroughly Jewish book that explains the Jew’s rejection of their Messiah and His promise to return to fulfill His covenantal promises to Israel. So, it should not surprise us to read a parable that distinguishes the saved from the lost; faithful and wise servants versus ‘evil servants,’ those servants who were prepared and watching (for they believed in the Messiah and anticipated His return) versus those servants who were unprepared and not watching (i.e., unbelievers or unrighteous).*”  
Rokser, *Should Christians Fear Outer Darkness*, p. 119
5. Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb, David, the priests and all the prophets were spoken of as “*servants of the Most High God.*” However, they were merely examples to all of Israel of

what each of them was to be, as the boy Samuel declared, “*Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears*” (1 Sam. 3:9–10).

6. The entire story of Israel in the Old Testament is the distinction of those Jews who were faithful servants of Jehovah, versus those who were not. Consider Hebrews 11 as a roster of faithful believers in the Old Testament dispensation.

**Appendix 7**  
**The Meaning of “Hypocrites” in Matthew 24:51**

1. As for the use of the term “*hypocrites*” in Matthew 24:51, we once again refer to the context. In Matthew 23, the most awful warning of judgment found anywhere in the Bible, Jesus pronounces seven “woes” on unbelieving Israel, specifically singling out the “*scribes and Pharisees,*” and seven times denouncing them as “*hypocrites.*”
2. Does anyone actually believe that Jesus would use the most awful condemnation upon unbelieving Israel, and then in the same message, suddenly change and use the same terminology for the Church, using the term “*hypocrites*” both for unbelieving Israel and for unfruitful believers alike? This is beyond biased exegesis!
3. Note that in Matthew 23:15, Jesus also equates “*hypocrites*” with those who are “*a son of hell as yourselves.*”
4. Also, where the warning in Matthew 24:51 uses the term “*hypocrites,*” in the parallel passage in Luke 12:46, the word is “*unbelievers*” (*apistos*). Some argue that the word can mean “unfaithful,” however, only four times in the New Testament is it ever translated with this idea, and a quick read of Matthew 17:17; Mark 9:19; Luke 9:41; John 20:27 will make the meaning clear. For example, “*O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?*” (Matt. 17:17). It is evident that the meaning here, as throughout the New Testament, is “unbelieving.”
5. Again, Jesus is using terminology that would have been familiar to the Jewish people, in particular the scribes and Pharisees, because of the same usage in the Old Testament Scriptures:

*“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him. He also shall be my salvation, for a hypocrite could not come before Him.” Job 13:15–16*

*“Therefore the LORD will have no joy in their young men, nor have mercy on their fatherless and widows; for everyone is a hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly.” Isaiah 9:17*

*“The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness has seized the hypocrites. ‘Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?’” Isaiah 33:14*

6. Jesus was consistent in His use of the term hypocrites for those who are unbelievers, but who profess to have faith:

*“Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets,*

*that they may have glory from men. Assuredly I say to you, they have their reward ... And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites ... Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites ...” Matthew 6:2, 5a, 16a*

*“Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me, and in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’” Matthew 15:7–9*

*“Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said to them, ‘When it is evening you say, it will be fair weather for the sky is red’; and in the morning, ‘it will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening’. Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.” Matthew 16:1–3*

*“But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, ‘Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?’” Matthew 22:18*

7. It is evident, if we compare the above passages with Mark 7:6; Luke 11:44; 12:56 that this term is reserved by Jesus for the most hardened of unbelievers.

**Appendix 8**  
**Promises/Doctrines Violated by the “Outer Darkness” Teaching**

1. John 6:37, “*All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means [ou me] cast out [ekballo].*” This is the same verb used in Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30 used in relation to the “outer darkness.”
2. Colossians 1:13, “*He has delivered [saved] us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.*”
3. Psalm 107:14, “*He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their chains in pieces.*”
4. John 14:3, “*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, you may be also.*” Note that this promise included Peter, who Jesus had just declared would deny Him (John 13:37–38).
5. Ephesians 2:4–6, “*But God, who is rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*” If we are already enthroned with Christ, how can we ever be dethroned?
6. Hebrews 10:14, “*For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.*”
7. John 5:24, “*Most assuredly I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.*” This fits with Romans 8:1, “*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.*”
8. Consider that when we believe in Jesus Christ, God the Father “*raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places. That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*” (Ephesians 2:6–7). The outer darkness teaching would have us believe that the Father then will “*cast out*” a major portion of the Body of Christ into “*outer darkness,*” where there is “*weeping and gnashing of teeth*”! Quite a display of “*His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*”
9. The doctrine of the Rapture itself is a refutation of the idea that God desires that carnal or unfaithful believers should be separated from faithful believers. In 1 Thessalonians 5:4–11, Paul speaks of spiritual believers as those who are “*sober*” and “*awake.*” Those who are carnal, he speaks of as “*sleeping.*” However, at the Rapture, no distinction is made between them:

*“For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake [are spiritual]*

*or sleep [are carnal], we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.”* 1 Thessalonians 5:9–11

10. It should be pointed out that the word translated “*sleep*” in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 is a different word (*koimaomai*), used for taking restful sleep, and is used of the death of the Christian. However, in 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul changes to another word (*katheudo*), which has the connotation of being “unconscious, not aware, indifferent,” which is a picture of carnality.
11. Paul tells us, in 2 Corinthians 5:8, that when we die, we are “*absent from the body and ... present with the Lord.*” While we live on this Earth, we are “seated with Christ” positionally; but when we die, we are seated with Him practically. Can anyone really imagine that then, at the Bema Seat, Christ is going to “*cast out*” one who has been with Him in position, and then in reality, because of any failure on their part?
12. The New Testament has much to say, legitimately, about rewards and their loss due to unfaithfulness. However, the loss of a potential reward is a far cry from judgment and penalty being imposed for not gaining it. John warns in Revelation 3:11, “*Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.*” We should all desire to “*lay up ... treasures in heaven*” (Matt. 6:20), not for our renown, but because this is the token of our love and gratitude to our Savior for all He has done for us.  
  
The idea that we should all “work harder” so as to avoid being cast into outer darkness is fear-mongering, akin to teaching one can lose their salvation, and no service rendered because of fear-motivation will be rewarded. As Paul says in Galatians 5:6, “*Faith [works] through love,*” and as John tells us, “*Love has been perfected among us in this, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love,*” 1 John 4:17–18.
13. The promise in Hebrews 13:5, “*I will never leave you or forsake you,*” is an outright lie and mockery if the “*outer darkness*” teaching is true.
14. How is it possible that our “*blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ ...*” (Titus 2:13) should instead be turned into a dreadful anticipation by “*outer darkness*” teaching?
15. In 1 Corinthians 12:21, Paul says, “*the head [which is Christ] [cannot say] to the feet [lowliest members of His body] ‘I have no need of you.’*”
16. Last of all, in Romans 8:37, Paul declares, “*Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*” This is not expressing a hope or potential, but a present reality!
  - He is simply re-stating what Jesus said in John 16:33, “*In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*”

- John says the same thing in 1 John 5:4–5, “*For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*”