

CHAPTER 25

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW 25

Ver. 1. *Then shall the kingdom of heaven*, etc.] The Gospel church state; (See Gill on ^{“4034”}Matthew 13:24”) either as it would be a little before the coming of the son of man to take vengeance on the Jews; or as it will be a little before his second coming to judgment: for the parable is manifestly connected with, and refers to the preceding chapter, which chiefly treats of Jerusalem’s destruction: but though the Jews were in great security before their utter ruin, yet it does not appear that the Christian church was then in such a lukewarm, drowsy, and sleepy condition, as this parable represents; and since, in the latter part of the preceding chapter, there are some hints of Christ’s second and last coming; when the servant found doing his Lord’s will, will be greatly honoured, and the wicked, cruel, and licentious servant will be severely punished; and since, at the close of this and the following parable, there is a very lively description given of the last judgment; as also, because it appears elsewhere, that such will be the formal, lukewarm, cold, indifferent, secure, and sleepy state of the church, before the second coming of Christ: it seems right and best to understand this parable, and the following, as having respect to that: and that the design of it is to show, what will be the case of professors at that time; the difference between nominal and real Christians; how far persons may go in a profession of religion, and yet, at last, be shut out of heaven: as also the suddenness of Christ’s coming; the necessity of being ready for it; and how watchful the saints should be, that they be not surprised with it. Now some time before this, the Gospel church state, or the body of professing Christians, will

be likened unto ten virgins; to “virgins” for quality; being betrothed ones to Christ, at least in profession; and because of the singleness of their love, and chaste adherence to him, however, as they will declare, and which, in some of them, will be fact; and for their beauty, comeliness, and gay attire, being, as they will profess, clothed with the righteousness of Christ; with that fine linen, clean and white, with cloth of gold, and raiment of needlework, and so perfectly comely through his comeliness: and for their

purity and uncorruptness of doctrine, worship, and conversation, at least in appearance, and which will be true of many of them; and all, from their profession, will bear the same character: these for their quantity and number, are compared to “ten” virgins; which may, perhaps, denote the small number of professors at this time; (see ~~<OR&>~~Genesis 18:32) that there will be but few, that will then name the name of Christ, and fewer still who will not have defiled their garments, and be virgins indeed. The number “ten” was greatly taken notice of, and used among the Jews: a congregation, with them, consisted of ten persons, and less than that number did not make one ^{f1432}: and wherever there were ten persons in a place, they were obliged to build a synagogue ^{f1433}. Ten elders of the city were witnesses of Boaz’s taking Ruth to be his wife, (~~<OR&>~~Ruth 4:2,9,10). Now it may be in reference to the former of these, that this number ten is here expressed, since the parable relates to the congregated churches of Christ, or to Christ’s visible church on earth: moreover, they say, that

“with less than ten they did not divide the “shema”, (i.e. “hear O Israel”, and say any part of the blessings that went before it;) nor did (the messenger of the congregation) go before the ark (to pray); nor did (the priests) lift up their hands (to bless the people); nor did they read in the law (in the congregation); nor did they dismiss (the people) with (a passage out of one of) the prophets; nor did they make a standing, and a sitting (when they carried the dead to the grave, which used to be done seven times, to weep over the dead); nor did they say the blessing of the mourners, nor the comforts of the mourners (when they returned from the grave, and stood in a row to comfort the mourner; and there was no row less than ten); μντj tkrbw, “nor the blessing of the bridegrooms”,”

which consisted of seven blessings, and this was not said but in the presence of ten persons ^{f1434}: to which there may be an allusion here: for the whole alludes to the solemnities of a marriage among the Jews, when the bridegroom fetched home his bride from her father’s house, attended with his friends, the children of the bridechamber, and which was usually done in the night: and, at the same time, the bride was waiting for him, accompanied with virgins, or bridemaids; (see ~~<OR&>~~Psalm 45:14) who, when they perceived the bridegroom coming, went out with lamps, or torches, to meet him, and conduct him to her; hence it follows,

which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. The Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Persic versions, add, “and the bride”, contrary to the “Greek” copies, excepting the Cambridge copy of Beza’s. Nor do the Arabic and Ethiopic versions so read; nor Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; nor does it agree with the above custom. By “the bridegroom” is meant Christ, who stands in this relation to his church and people; he saw them in the glass of the purposes and decrees of God, and loved them, and asked them of his father to be given him as his spouse and bride; and who did give them to him, when he secretly betrothed them to himself, in the everlasting covenant, as he does their particular persons at conversion, and will consummate the marriage of them all at the last day; and, in the mean while, acts the part of a bridegroom to them; he loves them as a bridegroom loves his bride, with a love prior to theirs, free and unmerited; with a love of complacency and delight, which is single and chaste, strong and affectionate; constant and perpetual, wonderful, matchless, and inconceivable: he sympathizes with them, nourishes, and cherishes them as his own flesh; providing spiritual food, and rich clothing for them; and indulging them with intimate communion with himself, and interests them in all he has; and when he comes again a second time, he will appear under this character. His first appearance was mean, in the form of a servant, in the likeness of sinful flesh, in garments rolled in blood; but when he comes a second time, he will appear as a bridegroom in his nuptial robes; all his elect will be prepared for him, beautified and adorned as a bride for her husband; when he will come and take them home to himself, and will avow them to be his before his Father, and his holy angels: and which will be a time of great glory, and great joy. Now these virgins are said to take their lamps, and go forth to meet him: by their lamps are meant, either the word of God, the Scriptures of truth, particularly the Gospel, and the doctrines of it; which, like a lamp, were lighted in the evening of the Jewish dispensation, and will shine the brightest towards the end of the world: these are like lamps both to walk by, and work by, and were a light to all these virgins; some were savingly enlightened into them, and by them; and others only notionally, but were taken up, owned, and professed, as the rule of faith and practice, by them all; and that in order to meet and find the bridegroom, for they testify of him: or rather an external profession of religion is designed by the lamps, which is distinct from the oil of grace, and the vessel of the heart, in which that is; and is that into which the oil is put and burns, so as to become visible: and must be daily recruited, and trimmed with fresh supplies of grace from Christ, without which it cannot

be kept up, nor will be of any use and service; and is what may go out, or be dropped and lost, as some of these lamps. Now this was what was taken up by them all; they all made a profession of Christ, and his Gospel: some of them took it up aright, upon an experience of the grace of God, and principles of grace wrought in their souls; others, without any experience, and without considering the nature, importance, and consequences of a profession: and so they all went forth to meet the bridegroom: some in the exercise of faith on him, and in his coming; in love to him, and his appearance; desiring, and longing to see him; expecting, and waiting for him: others only in a way of a visible profession of religion, and an outward attendance on ordinances. The custom here alluded to of meeting the bridegroom, and attending the bride home to his house in the night, with lighted torches, or lamps, and such a number of them as here mentioned, was not only the custom of the Jews, but of other eastern nations ^{f1435}. Jarchi says ^{f1436}, it was the custom of the Ishmaelites; his words are these:

“it was a custom in the land of Ishmael, to bring the bride from her father’s house to her husband’s house, **hl yl b**, “in the night”, before she entered the nuptial chamber; and to carry before her **ˆysdnwq rç[k**, “about ten staves”; and upon the top of the staff was the form of a brazen dish, and in the midst of it, pieces of garments, oil, and pitch, which they set fire to, and lighted before her.”

Something like this is the custom of the East Indians now, which is thus related ^{f1437}:

“on the day of their marriage, the husband and wife being both in the same “palki”, or “palanquin”, (which is the ordinary way of carriage in the country, and is carried by four men upon their shoulders,) go out between seven and eight o’clock “at night”, accompanied with all their kindred and friends; the trumpets and drums go before them; and they are “lighted” by a multitude of “massals”, which are a kind of flambeaux; immediately behind the “palanquin” of the newly married couple, walk many “women”, whose business is to sing verses, wherein they wish them all kind of prosperity. — The newly married couple go abroad in this equipage, for the space of some hours; after which they return to their own house, where the “women” and domestics wait for them: the whole house is enlightened with little lamps, and many of these

“massals”, already mentioned, are kept ready for their arrival, besides those that accompany them, and go before their “palanquin”. This sort of lights are nothing else, but many pieces of old linen squeezed hard against one another, in a round figure, and forcibly thrust down into a mould of copper; those who hold them in one hand, have, in the other, a bottle of the same metal, with the mould copper, which is full of oil; and they take care to pour out of it, from time to time, upon the linen, which otherwise gives no light.”

Ver. 2. *And five of them were wise*, etc.] The order of these words is inverted in some versions, as in the Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic, and in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel, which read, “and five of them were foolish, and five of them were wise”; but this is of no great consequence. There is a parable of R. Jochanan ben Zaccai ^{f1438}, who lived before, and after the destruction of the second temple, which bears some likeness to this part of the parable, and others in it, and is this;

“a certain king invited his servants, but did not fix any time for them; those of them that were **μyhqp**, “wise”, adorned themselves, and sat at the gate of the king’s house, and said, is there any want at the king’s house? but those of them that were **μyϙpj**, “fools”, went and did their work, and said, is there any feast without trouble? on a sudden, the king inquired after his servants: the wise went in before him, as they were, adorned; but the fools went in before him, as they were, filthy: the king rejoiced at meeting the wise, and was angry at meeting the foolish; and ordered, that those who had adorned themselves for the feast should sit and eat, and those that had not adorned themselves for the feast should stand.”

The wise virgins are such, who are wise, not in their own conceits, which is the case of natural men, and empty professors; nor in the things of nature, or in the things of the world, of which the saints are oftentimes less knowing than others; nor in notional and speculative knowledge, much less in things that are evil: but they are such who are wise unto salvation; who not only know the scheme of it, but are sensible of their need of it; apply to Christ for it; venture their souls on him, and commit them to him: they trust in his righteousness for justification; in his blood for pardon; in his sacrifice for atonement; in his fulness for daily supplies; in his grace and strength to perform every duty; and expect eternal life in, and from him: they know

him, prize him, and value him as their Saviour; rejoice in him, and give him all the glory; and they are such who are also wise in the business of a profession, as well as in the affair of salvation; they are such who take up a profession of religion aright, upon principles of grace, and after mature thought and deliberation; and when they have so done, hold it fast without wavering, walk becoming it in their lives and conversations; and yet do not depend on it, or trust to it:

and five were foolish; not in their own apprehension, in which they might be wise enough; nor in the judgment of others; nor in natural knowledge; or with respect to the things of the world; nor in speculative notions of the Gospel; nor merely so called, because unconverted; every unconverted man being a foolish man: but they were so in the business of salvation; as all are who build their hopes of it on birth privileges; on a carnal descent from good men; on a religious education; on their own righteousness; or on the absolute mercy of God; and not on Christ, the one only, and sure foundation: they are such who know not themselves; the impurity of their hearts, and nature; their impotency to that which is spiritually good; and the imperfection and insufficiency of their own righteousness: they know not Christ, and his salvation, neither the worth, nor want of him, or that; and are altogether strangers to the power of godliness, and spiritual experience: and are also as foolish in the affair of a profession, which they take up without a work of the Spirit of God upon their souls, and without considering the cost and charge of it; and either in a little time wholly drop it, or, if they hold it, they foolishly depend upon it, or lead lives unsuitable to it. The number of wise and foolish virgins being equal, does not imply that there will be just the same number of nominal, as of real believers in the churches, in the latter day, a little before the coming of Christ; only that there will be a large number of such among them.

Ver. 3. *They that were foolish took their lamps*, etc.] The Vulgate Latin, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel, read, "the five foolish", whose folly is here exposed; and which lay not merely, or only in taking up the lamps of a profession in a wrong way, and upon a wrong bottom, but chiefly in what follows;

and took no oil with them: by oil is meant, not temporal blessings, nor spiritual ones, nor the Gospel, nor the gifts of the Spirit, all which are sometimes signified by oil; but either the Spirit of God himself, who is the oil of gladness, and the anointing which teacheth all things; or the

regenerating and sanctifying grace of the Spirit, even all the graces which are implanted by him in conversion: this is so called, in allusion to the anointing oil under the law, in its excellent nature, its costly matter, its curious make, and particular application; and in the use of it to anoint both things, the tabernacle and its vessels, and persons, prophets, priests, and kings; (see ^{EXOD}Exodus 30:23), etc. The grace of the Spirit being of an holy and sanctifying nature, exceeding valuable and precious, and a curious piece of workmanship, and what is only applied unto, and bestowed on the elect of God; and with which all the vessels of mercy, small and great, are anointed, and are made prophets, priests, and kings, and is what is, as that was, lasting and abiding: or else with respect to the precious oil, or ointment poured on Aaron's head, which was emblematical of the grace of the Spirit, which was poured forth, without measure, on Christ, and from him descends to all his members: or to the lamp oil for the candlestick in the tabernacle, which was oil olive, pure, beaten, and was for light, to cause the lamp to burn always; and fitly represented grace, which comes from Christ, the true olive tree; is pure, and of a purifying nature; and comes through a bruised, crucified Christ; and being put into the heart, causes the light of good works, and a becoming conversation, to shine forth: or else to oil in common, which is of a cheering and refreshing nature; is beautifying and adorning, supplying and healing, feeding and fattening, searching and penetrating, and will not mix with any thing else; upon all which accounts grace may be compared to it. Now these foolish virgins, though they took up a lamp of a profession, yet were unconcerned for the oil of grace, to fill, maintain, and trim this lamp: they were ignorant of the nature and use of true grace; they saw no need of it, and therefore did not ask for it, or about it; they neglected it, made light of it, and denied it as useless; and being destitute of it, took up their profession without it; and in this lay their folly.

Ver. 4. *But the wise took oil*, etc.] They were concerned for the true grace of God, being enlightened by the Spirit of God; they saw their need of the grace of God, and being directed by him where it was to be had, went to Christ for it; and having received it from him, through the power of the Holy Ghost, exercised it on him; and herein lay their wisdom: for a stock of this in the heart, daily renewed by Christ, will supply the lamp of a profession well. This they had

in their vessels, their oil vessels; by which are meant their hearts; so called in allusion either to the vessels in which the oil was put, when pressed out

of the olives, (²⁴⁰⁰Jeremiah 40:10) or to the oil vessels of the candlestick, (⁴⁰⁰⁰Numbers 4:9). These are vessels of God's making, though through sin are become impure, and empty of all spiritual good: they are indeed large and capacious; here's room for Father, Son, and Spirit, and for abundance of grace; they are capable of comprehending much of the love of God, and besides natural, a great deal of spiritual knowledge: here, in these vessels, sanctified by the Spirit of God, the wise virgins had the oil of grace, which is an internal thing: it is nothing in the head, in the tongue, or in the hand, but something in the heart: it does not lie in notion, in talking, nor in doing; a man may know much, say a great deal, and do many external works, and yet be destitute of the grace of God; nothing external is that: it is not a mere outward reformation of life, an external humiliation for sin, an abstinence from the grosser sins of life, or a conformity to the ordinances of the Gospel, or a profession of religion: it is a principle of light, life, love, and holiness wrought in a man's heart; it has its seat in the mind, understanding, and judgment, in the will, conscience, and the affections. This oil of grace was not naturally in them; nor was it obtained by the power of their freewill; but was freely given unto them, and powerfully wrought in them: the case is this; all grace was put into Christ's hands for them; the Spirit of God was sent down to apply it to them, and work it in them; Which is generally done by means, which they made use of by his direction and assistance, and so may be said to take it:

with their lamps, of an external profession; they did not take up a profession before they had grace, or without it; but when they received the one, they took up the other; and which was acting the wise part.

Ver. 5. *While the bridegroom tarried*, etc.] The space of time here referred to, is either from the ascension of Christ, to his coming to take vengeance on the Jews; or from thence to his second coming; or rather from the time of some general expectation by the saints, of the near approach of Christ, till such time he does come: for as there was a general expectation of the coming of Christ before he came in the flesh, so there will be a general expectation of Christ being near at hand some time before his second coming; and because such an expectation will not be answered, or Christ will not come so soon as was hoped for, and expected, a general drowsiness, and security, and unconcernedness, especially about the coming of Christ, will fall upon the churches. Thus, in the last century, there was among the people of God, in these kingdoms, a general expectation of Christ's speedy coming; but being in this disappointed,

professors of all sorts are fallen asleep, and do not at all, or very little, at least very few, concern themselves about it: in a word, this interval of time seems to regard that period which is pointed out by the Laodicean church state, which will usher in the coming of Christ, and the last judgment. Now Christ, the bridegroom, may be said to tarry, not with respect to the time fixed by the Father and himself; for as this is settled, though unknown to man, it will not be passed by him; he does not, nor will he tarry beyond the appointed time: but either with respect to the time fixed by men; or with respect to the declaration of Christ, and his apostles, that he would come “quickly”, and the length of time since; or rather with respect to the expectations of the saints, and their impatience. The reason why he tarries is, because his time is not come, and there are many things to be done first; there is to be a glorious spread of the Gospel all over the world; all the elect must be gathered in, both among Jews and Gentiles; and the man of sin must be destroyed; and the ungodly must fill up the measure of their iniquities; and Christ tarries to try the graces of his people, who should exercise faith in his coming, by looking, watching, and waiting for it, desirous of it, and hastening unto it; being ready for him, prepared to receive him, and to go with him to the nuptial-chamber; but instead of this

they all slumbered and slept: which is not to be understood as if that one only slumbered, and the other slept; that is, that the wise virgins slumbered, and the foolish virgins slept; for the wise virgins, or true believers, are elsewhere said to sleep, and formal professors to slumber; but both these are spoken of them all: and by this slumber, and sleep, is not meant a natural death; though that is sometimes called a sleep, and to which true believers are subject, as well as others; yet all at the coming of Christ will not be asleep in this sense: and were this intended, their resurrection would be designed by their “arising”, in the seventh verse; and so the resurrection of the saints, and of others, would be together, which is not true, for the dead in Christ will rise first; and would be also before the coming of Christ, whereas the resurrection of the saints is not till at his coming; and it would look, by the account in some following verses, as if grace might be had, or, at least, be thought to be had, after the resurrection: nor is this to be understood of the dead sleep of sin: a death in sin may be signified by sleeping, and be so called, and conviction be an awakening out of it; but the foolish virgins were always asleep in this sense, and were never truly and thoroughly awaked; and wise virgins never do, nor can, fall into this sleep; for being quickened by Christ, they never die again: nor of a judicial

slumber and sleep, which the saints are never given up to; but a dead, lifeless, and sleepy frame of spirit in the wise virgins: which lies in grace not being in exercise; in a slothfulness to perform religious duties; in taking up a satisfaction with the outward parts of religion; in an indifference about the interest of Christ; in an unconcernedness at the omission of duty, or commission of sin; and in an entire ease of mind with regard to such a frame and state: the causes of it are a body of sin; an anxious care of the world; a being weary of spiritual exercises, and a leaving them off; abstaining from an awakening ministry, and spiritual conversation; and keeping company with sleepy and slothful professors, or the men of the world: and often it arises from ease, peace, and liberty; and sometimes from long watchfulness, and waiting for the bridegroom's coming; in which, being disappointed, such a frame of spirit ensues: and also in the foolish virgins it intends great carnal security in themselves; a rest and confidence in their external profession; and a laying aside all thoughts of Christ, and his coming to judgment: for a difference there is between the sleep and slumbering of the one and of the other; the wise virgins are children of the day, and not of the night; though they sleep, their hearts wake, and they sleep with grace in their hearts; neither of which can be said of the foolish virgins, or formal professors: as to the phraseology here used, the Jews would distinguish upon it, for they make a difference between slumbering and sleeping:

“they do not dismiss (the company) after the passover with the sweet-meats: if some of them sleep, they may eat, but if all of them, they may not eat. R. Jose says, *wmmntn*, “if they slumber” they may eat; *wmdrn*, “if they sleep they may not eat”^{f1439}: which Maimonides thus^{f1440} explains, “if they slumber”; that is, if they begin to sleep, but are not yet overwhelmed with sleep, but bear when others speak to them, and answer immediately to them that call them: “if they sleep”: if they are oppressed with a deep sleep.”

Though the phrase *bykçw μyyn*, which I should choose to render, “he slumbered and slept”, is often said^{f1441} of the same person, without any distinction, as here.

Ver. 6. *And at midnight there was a cry made*; etc.] Which is no other than the following notice of the bridegroom's coming, expressed in these words:

behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him: which supposes that then all things will be ready for his coming: all things respecting this world; all the strange and surprising events that were to come to pass, before the coming of Christ, will now be accomplished; an end put to all the monarchies of the earth; and all the preparations in nature, for the burning of the world finished: all things respecting the ungodly of the world: they will have filled up the measure of their iniquities, and finished their persecutions of the saints: and all things respecting the elect of God, they will be all born, and born again; they will have gone through all their sufferings for Christ, and have all their graces tried and perfected; for when the bridegroom comes, he will come to espouse them openly to himself, for which they must be prepared and adorned, and to take them to himself, that they may be for ever with him. It also supposes, that his coming will be very nigh at hand; it was so represented long ago; it is greatly desired by the saints to be quickly; and it will be in a very short time after this notice: and it signifies that there will be some notice given of it, a little before he comes; and that partly for the glory of his majesty; and that his own people, the wise virgins, may be ready; and that the foolish ones may be left without excuse: and this being prefaced with a “behold”, shows the certainty of his coming, than which nothing is more certain, and to be depended on; as appears from Enoch’s prophecy, and others of the Old Testament; from Christ’s own promise; from the testimony of angels: from the words of the apostles; and from the ordinance of the Lord’s supper: and also the importance of it; for things of the greatest moment will follow on it; such as the resurrection of the dead, the judgment of the whole world, the complete happiness of the saints, and the destruction of the wicked: and likewise, that it will be wonderful and astonishing; Christ will come in amazing glory, in his own, in his Father’s, and in the glory of the holy angels, and of his power and authority, as the judge of quick and dead. And in this notice advice is given to the virgins,

go ye out to meet him; (see ²¹¹ Song of Solomon 3:11), and may intend either a going forth internally, as the wise virgins did in the exercise of grace, of faith in the coming of Christ, of love of his appearance, and earnest desire after it; or a going forth externally, as all the virgins did in a way of visible profession, taking up and trimming their lamps; or literally and corporeally, as the saints will, that will be found alive at Christ’s coming. Now this notice is called “a cry”; and refers not to the voice of Christ in raising the dead, for this will be before the coming of Christ,

whereas that will be when he is come; and for the same reason, not to the voice of the archangel, if he can be thought to be distinct from Christ. Some think it regards a secret general impulse, that will be upon the spirits of the people of God, with respect to the bridegroom's coming, but this does not seem to answer to a cry; rather it should intend some remarkable providence, as the earthquake in (^{f1113} Revelation 11:13) when a tenth part of the city shall fall, seven thousand men of note be slain, and the rest affrighted; or the sounding of the seventh angel, (^{f1115} Revelation 11:15), or, what is most likely, the voice of a great multitude, as of many waters, and of mighty thunderings, declaring, that the marriage of the Lamb was come, and the bride ready, (^{f1116} Revelation 19:6,7), and will be a very loud one: it will awaken all the virgins, and will be the cry, not of one, but of many; and will be very sudden and surprising, though joyful to the saints: this cry will be made, not by the virgins, for they will be asleep; nor by Christ himself, for he will not be come; nor by the angels, for they will come with him, and not before; rather by the ministers of the Gospel, who are the angels so often spoken of in the book of the Revelations, who sound the trumpets at different times, and on different occasions; who also will sound this trumpet, and give this last and general notice of Christ's coming; who will be all at once apprized of it, and give an universal alarm of it together in all the churches: thus, as the notice of Christ's first coming was made by the prophets, the notice of his second coming will be made by the ministers of the Gospel: and this will be at "midnight": which expresses the state of the church a little before the coming of Christ: it will be a night season with it, a time of darkness both with respect to Gospel light, and the presence of God with his people; a time of coldness and lukewarmness, as to zeal for God, love to his people, and concern for the interest of Christ; a time of drowsiness and sleep, of insensibility and security, of indolence and inactivity: so as the coming of Christ will be later than was first expected; it will be sudden, and at unawares, and like a thief in the night; but whether it will be literally in the night season, as his first coming, is not certain. The Jews expect ^{f1442}, that at the end of the world Moses and Messiah will come in the night, the one from the wilderness, and the other from Rome: and they make frequent mention of God's going into the garden of Eden, or paradise, at midnight, and there rejoicing with good men. It is said ^{f1443}, that R. Eliezer and R. Jose

“were sitting one night, and studying in the law, and about midnight, a man cried (or the cock crowed), bless ye the blessing;

says R. Eliezer, now is, the time that the holy, blessed God goes into the garden of Eden, to rejoice with the righteous.”

Ver. 7. *Then all these virgins arose*, etc.] Not out of their graves; for the righteous and wicked will not rise together; the dead in Christ will rise first, and this first resurrection will not be till Christ is come; nor will grace be to be had, or be thought to be had after the resurrection; nor will there be any trimming of lamps then, in order to meet the bridegroom, for he will be come: nor out of the graves of sin; for the wise virgins were not in such a state, and the foolish virgins were never brought out of it: but the meaning is, that they arose out of their sleepy and slumbering frame. True believers may fall into a very low condition, with respect to the exercise of grace, and discharge of duty; but they shall arise again, for they are held and upheld by the right hand of God: it is sometimes midnight with them, and they are fallen fast asleep, but they shall be awaked, and arise; which arising here, as it respects them, signifies, that they were thoroughly awaked, that they quitted their former place and posture, were upon their feet, and ready to meet the bridegroom. The foolish virgins also arose; which may intend some awakenings of conscience, and reformation of life, and a more diligent attendance on duties and ordinances; all which they did to make them meet for Christ, and to obtain salvation; but after all it appears, they were destitute of the oil of grace:

and trimmed their lamps: both wise and foolish: the former by removing what hindered the clear burning of them; by casting off the works of darkness, and causing the light of good works to shine before men, in the discharge of them, from a principle of grace; and chiefly by applying to Christ for fresh supplies of the oil of grace, to fill their lamps, revive their light and heat, and keep them burning: and the latter, only by a few outward decorations, and external performances; to make their outward profession of religion look as bright as possibly they could.

Ver. 8. *And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil*, etc.] A graceless person may be able to see the grace of God in others, be convinced of it, and acknowledge it, as these foolish virgins did: they saw that the wise virgins had oil, that is, grace; this they knew by the bright burning of their lamps, by their readiness in trimming them, and that in a different way from them; by their sedate composure of mind, and confidence of soul, notwithstanding the midnight cry; and by their ardent and affectionate desire to meet the bridegroom. A graceless person may

also see a need of grace: these foolish virgins had no such sense, when they first took up their profession; they went on a long time in a course of religion, without any thoughts of it; and the sense they had now was not of the need of it, in the vessels of their hearts, but in their lamps only; nor was it from the Spirit of God, but through the surprise and terror of the midnight cry. Such persons may also be desirous of the grace of God; not because of the intrinsic nature and worth of it, nor for the service and glory of God, but from a mere principle of self-love; and when they can go on no longer with the lamp of profession; and then they desire to have it any where, rather than from Christ, as did these foolish virgins; and who betrayed their folly by applying to saints for it. Had they asked their advice in this their distress, it would have been wisely done; or had they desired their prayers for them; or that they would impart some spiritual instructions to them; but to ask their grace of them was exceeding foolish; when grace only comes from God, who is the God of all grace, through Christ as mediator, in whom the fulness of it dwells, and by the Spirit, who is a Spirit of grace and of supplication; but is never to be had from men, no, not from the best men on earth, nor from the angels in heaven. The reason of this their request follows,

for our lamps are gone out; which may be said to be when professors neglect the duties of religion, drop, or deny the doctrines of the Gospel formerly professed by them, become bad in their principles, and scandalous in their lives, or withdraw themselves from the churches of Christ; though neither of these seem to be the case here: wherefore this going out of their lamps seems to intend the insufficiency of an external profession of religion to meet the bridegroom, and support a person with confidence and intrepidity in his presence: these foolish virgins now saw, when too late, that their lamps availed them nothing; they were gone out, and become useless and unprofitable, because they had not the oil of grace with them; or what they had was only counterfeit grace, or only an appearance of it; a mere form of godliness, without its power; or only gifts which are perishable, and now failed, ceased, and were vanishing away; wherefore this is no instance of the loss of true grace, nor at all militates against the perseverance of the saints.

Ver. 9. *But the wise answered, saying, not so*, etc.] A flat denial; and which sprung not from want or compassion; for the saints are taught not only to compassionate one another, and to pity fallen professors, but even to regard their very enemies in distress: nor from a narrow, niggardly spirit,

since such are directed and exhorted to communicate freely, both in things temporal and spiritual, they are capable of, to them that are in need, and even to lay down their lives for the brethren; nor from an uncivil, morose, and churlish disposition; or from a careless and indolent one, as being unconcerned what became of these persons; but from an indignation at the honour put upon them, and the slight put upon God and Christ, and the Spirit of grace: saints know that all grace comes from Father, Son, and Spirit; and frankly own, that what they have is from thence; and they give God all the glory of it, and cannot bear any such application to them for it, as this; but show the same spirit, as Paul and Barnabas did, when the Lystrians were going to sacrifice to them. Moreover, this denial arose from a consciousness of insufficiency to help them in this respect: it is the saints' mercy that they cannot lose the grace they have, nor can any take it away from them, and it is not in their power to give it away; nor can any be sanctified, or justified, or saved, by another man's grace: the reason alleged by them is,

lest there be not enough for us and you; saints have a large abundance of grace communicated to them; some have more, others less; at least it so appears, as to exercise; but they that have the most, have none to spare, and see their need of more; and ask for more, being sensible that present grace in them, is not sufficient for time to come, but grace in Christ only; wherefore their answer, and the reason of it, were like themselves, wise; and this destroys the notion of supererogation;

but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. This advice is thought by some, to be ironical and sarcastic; but it seems rather to be serious, and in good earnest; directing them to go to proper persons for grace; not to men, even ministers of the Gospel, nor to angels; but to God the Father, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, who sits on a throne of grace, and gives it liberally to them that come to him for it through Christ, and ask it of him; and to Christ the mediator, who is full of grace and truth, and counsels persons to buy of him gold tried in the fire, grace more precious than the purest gold; and to the Spirit of grace, who gives it to all severally as he will: who are said to "sell", and "men" to buy; not in a proper sense, by giving any valuable consideration for the grace of God, which is impossible to be done; but in an improper sense, without money and without price; or in other words, by giving and receiving freely.

Ver. 10. *And while they went to buy*, etc.] The foolish virgins so far took the advice of the wise, as to go forth to buy oil for themselves: they not only had some thoughts about it, and resolutions to do it, but they really did go out to buy; which may design their attendance on the word and ordinances, where they stopped: they did not go to Christ for grace, for if they had gone directly to him, they had met him; but they went another way, and missed him; they took buying in a proper sense, and thought to have obtained grace by their own works: wherefore, though they went to buy, they did not, nor could they, their attempts were vain and fruitless; and while they were employing themselves in this way, to no purpose,

the bridegroom came; in person, to raise the saints that were dead, to change the living ones, to espouse them all openly, and take them all to himself, and to judge the world; for this must be understood of his second and personal coming:

and they that were ready; not by a mere profession of religion, or submission to Gospel ordinances, or by an external righteousness, or negative holiness, and abstinence from the grosser sins of life, or an outward humiliation for them, or by a dependence on the absolute mercy of God; but through being clothed with the wedding garment, washed in the blood of Christ, being regenerated and sanctified, and having the oil of grace in their hearts, a spiritual knowledge of Christ, faith in him, and interest in him: such are ready for every good work, and to give a reason of their faith and hope, to confess Christ, and suffer for his sake; and are ready for death and eternity, and to meet the bridegroom, and for the marriage of the Lamb, to enter into the new Jerusalem. The Jews say^{f1444}, that

“the Jerusalem of the world to come, is not as the Jerusalem of this world: the Jerusalem of this world, everyone may go into it that will; but the Jerusalem of the world to come, none may go into it, but **hl ʿynmwz mh**, “those that are prepared for it”.”

And these

went in with him to the marriage: the Syriac reads it, “into the wedding house”, and the Persic, “the nuptial parlour”; the marriage chamber, where the bridegroom and bride celebrated their marriage; kept their marriage feast; and where were received the bridemaids, and friends of the bridegroom, called in Talmudic language, **hyyl [ynb**, “the children of the

bridechamber”^{f1445}. Such as were these that went in: and the marriage may here denote, either heaven, Christ’s Father’s house, and the mansions of glory in it, which the saints shall enter into along with Christ; or the act of celebrating the marriage between Christ and the Lamb, and the whole body of the elect; when these virgins will not be bare spectators and witnesses, but parties concerned; and which will only be a publication before his Father and the holy angels, of what has been already done: for these were secretly betrothed to him from everlasting, and were particularly espoused to him, one by one, in conversion; but it now will be declared of them all together, that they are his spouse and bride: or the marriage feast, or supper, is here intended; and which designs not the provision of the Gospel in Christ’s house, or church on earth, in general, nor the ordinance of the Lord’s supper in particular, nor the feast in the latter day, but the heavenly glory; and happy are those, who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and who will be ready when he comes; these shall partake of it: they will go in with Christ, and be for ever with him, and never return more.

And the door was shut: which expresses both the happy and comfortable case of the wise virgins, and the sad and miserable state of the foolish ones. The door being shut, the wise virgins will at once be freed from the disagreeable company of profane sinners, and formal professors; their state and condition will be everlastingly settled, their communion with Christ will be free and uninterrupted, and that, for ever; no enemy of their souls can follow them, to give them any disturbance; and they shall never return to a state of sin, sorrow, and imperfection: and it also represents, the woeful and miserable condition of the foolish virgins, in whatsoever sense the word “door” is taken. The church is a door, (~~200~~ Song of Solomon 8:9), and an open one, to receive in proper persons, and will be so more especially in the latter day; but this will be shut, when all the elect of God are called and gathered in; there will be no longer a church state on earth, or ordinances. Christ himself is called a door, (~~600~~ John 10:7), he is the door into the church and into the blessings of grace, and into heaven itself; and which stands open in the ministry of the word, to receive sinners, but will now be shut; Christ will be no more preached, and held forth in the word, as God’s salvation: and there is the door of faith, (~~4107~~ Acts 14:27), which is the Gospel, so called, because faith is hereby let into the soul, and souls are by it let into the doctrine of faith; and this is sometimes an open door, when ministers have a fair opportunity of preaching it, and have freedom and liberty in it; when attention is given to it, and many souls are

gathered in by it; and this will be shut when Christ comes; there will be no more preaching; and there is also the door of hope, (²⁰²⁵Hosea 2:15), which now stands open, whilst the Gospel church state lasts: whilst Christ is preached, the word and ordinances administered, and whilst there is life, and Christ not yet come, there is hope of salvation, pardon, and eternal life; but when Christ comes, either by death, or at judgment, and finds persons in a graceless state, there is then no hope: add to all this, that the door of Christ's heart is now open, to receive all coming sinners; but then will be shut, against all their cries, entreaties, and importunities: it will be shut by himself, who opens and no man shuts, shuts and no man opens; and that against all wicked and profane sinners, all hypocrites and formal professors; even all without his righteousness, and the grace of the Spirit of God.

Ver. 11. *Afterwards came also the other virgins*, etc.] The “other five virgins”, as the Persic version reads. The “other”; that were only virgins in name, not in reality; they were different from the wise, they were foolish ones; they were other than those that were ready, they were unprepared ones; and in another situation than those that entered in; they were without, they were now separated from the company of the wise virgins, with whom they had been so long; and what was worst of all, they were to be so for ever. These “also came”; from buying oil: they went about, and came just as they went without any; they came to the door of the bridechamber, being desirous to be let in, and hoping to partake of the marriage feast, and join in the solemnity: but alas! they came too late, they came “afterwards”; after the bridegroom was come, after they that were ready had entered in, and after the door was shut;

saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. They do not call him their Lord, for they had no interest in him, nor could they claim any; though the Syriac version reads it, “our Lord, our Lord”: they give him the title, and the bare title, without having yielded that obedience, which was due unto him. They double the word, to show their importunity, earnestness, sense of danger, and confusion: this title or character is the rather used, because Christ will then appear more clearly to be Lord and God, and every tongue shall confess him to be such: their request to him is, that he would “open” the door unto them, and let them in: they were sensible that the door was shut, and that none but Christ could open it; they did not at once conclude that their case was desperate, but were willing to hope the door might be opened, through their entreaties, and what they had to say for themselves;

for though no pleas or arguments are here mentioned, yet, as elsewhere, such as these will be made by the foolish virgins; namely, prophesying in the name of Christ, casting out devils in his name, doing many wonderful works in his name, hearing his word preached, and eating and drinking in his presence; but all in vain, and to no purpose.

Ver. 12. *But he answered and said,* etc.] The Lord and bridegroom from within, thought fit to give them an answer, but an unexpected and awful one to them:

verily I say unto you, I know you not; which must be understood in consistence with the omniscience of Christ: he knew their persons, conduct, and state; he knew they were foolish virgins, graceless professors, who had made no account of him and his righteousness; but had trusted to, and depended upon, their external profession of religion: they were none of the people whom he foreknew, or knew as his own, and loved with an everlasting love; he never knew them as his father's choice in him, or as this father's gift to him; he never knew them in the everlasting covenant, or as his sheep, for whom he died; he never knew them to believe in him, or love him; nor ever exalt his person, blood and sacrifice, at his table, nor do any good work with a single eye to his glory; he never approved of them, liked their persons, or their conduct; or ever owned them as the true companions, either of his bride, or of himself: which answer implies, that as the door was shut, so it should remain; there was no admittance for them, nor any to be hoped for; and it is all one as if he had said, begone, and depart hence. The Persic version adds such a clause, "begone from my door".

Ver. 13. *Watch therefore,* etc.] In ordinances, in prayer, public and private, in hearing the word, at the Lord's supper, and in every religious exercise; over the heart, the thoughts and affections of it; over words, actions, life, and conversation; and against all sin and unbelief, Satan's temptations, the world, and its charms and snares, false teachers, and their doctrines, and for the bridegroom's coming. This is the use and application of the whole parable, and shows the general design of it; the reason to enforce watchfulness follows:

for ye know neither the day nor the hour; of death, or of judgment, or of the coming of the son of man, of one or the other; for it is added,

wherein the son of man cometh: that he will come is certain, and that quickly; the time is fixed, but when it will be is unknown; and therefore it becomes us to be our watch and guard. This last clause is not in the Vulgate Latin, nor in the Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, and was wanting in three of Beza's copies, but is in most Greek copies, and in Munster's Hebrew Gospel, and seems to be necessary.

Ver. 14. *For [the kingdom of heaven] is as a man travelling*, etc.] Our Lord adds another parable to illustrate the Gospel dispensation, or its visible church state; or the state of things respecting the church of Christ, before, and at his second coming, and during the interval between his ascension and that: for by the man here, is meant Christ, who in the everlasting covenant agreed to become man, was prophesied of as such, frequently appeared in human form, under the Old Testament dispensation; and in the fulness of time, really became man; though he was not a mere man, but was God as well as man; having all the perfections and fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in him: this man is said to travel

into a far country; by which heaven is designed, and is so called, not only because of its great distance from the earth, and which is very great indeed; but because the better country and land afar off, is out of sight; and what views we have of it, are very distant ones; and is afar off, in respect of our state of pilgrimage in this world, in which, whilst Christ was here, he was a pilgrim and a stranger too; who might be said to be as a "man travelling", whilst he was in it, and when going out of it, and ascending to heaven: he came from thence, and stayed here a while, walking up and down, and doing good; and when he had finished what he came about, he ascended on high, went to his God and Father, entered into heaven, where he is received until the times of the restitution of all things:

who called his own servants; before he took his journey, to commit some things to their trust and management; and to give them some instructions how to behave during his absence: for, according to the Jewish ^{f1446} canons,

"a master that had a mind to go out of the land (of Israel) could not take his servant with him, unless he pleased; and this is a rule at all times, even at this time, that the land is in the hand of the Gentiles."

And here no mention is made of any going with him, only how they were to be employed whilst he was gone: by "his own servants" are meant, not all mankind; for though they are all in some sense his servants, or ought to

be, yet they are not so called in Scripture, much less with such an emphasis, his own servants; and besides, more than what are in the kingdom of heaven, or Gospel church state, cannot be intended; since the parable reaches to, and concerns no other: nor all the elect of God only, or all are not the elect of God that are designed; for though these are the servants of Christ, and his own peculiarly, yet all intrusted with talents, are not such; one of these was wicked, slothful, graceless, and at last was eternally lost, and perished; which is not true of anyone of the elect: but ministers of the word are here meant, who are eminently the servants of Christ, his own, whom he has called, qualified, commissioned, and sent forth; for the ministers of the word, whether faithful or slothful, good or bad, are in a very lively manner described in this parable, which is a distinct one from the former; for whereas that gives an account of the different members of the visible church, this describes the several ministers of it: nor can it be any objection to this sense of it, that these servants are all of them said to be his own servants, and called, commissioned, and gifted by him; since Judas, as well as the rest, was called, ordained, qualified, and sent forth by Christ, as an apostle.

And delivered unto them his goods; the Gospel, that rich treasure of divine truths, the dispensation of it, and gifts to preach it; all which are Christ's goods and his gifts, and not man's; and which was in a very eminent manner done, when Christ ascended on high, and received gifts for, and gave them unto men. Just before it, as he was ready to go, he gathered his disciples together; he renewed and enlarged their commission to preach the Gospel; and quickly after it, gave them greater and larger gifts of the Spirit than before; and has been ever since giving ministerial gifts to men, to some more, others less, and which are signified by the talents following.

Ver. 15. *And unto one he gave five talents*, etc.] A "talent" with the Jews, if of silver, was, according to Brerewood^{f1447}, of the value of 375 l. of our money; according to Bishop Cumberland, 353 l. 11 s. 10 1/2 d.; and if of gold, was equal to 4500l. and, according to the latter, 5075 l. 15 s. 7 1/2 d.: so that five of these talents, if of silver, were 1875 l. and if of gold, 22,500 l. according to Brerewood; a very large sum for one servant to be intrusted with. The Persic version reads "pounds", as in (~~2193~~ Luke 19:13). By these talents, special grace is not meant; for the parable speaks not of what was wrought in these servants, but of what was committed to their trust, and of what might lie useless by them, and be taken away from them; whereas special grace is internal, something, implanted in man, and is an

incorruptible seed, that can never be lost, or will be taken away; and it is certain, that one of these servants had not special and saving grace, but was wicked, slothful, and unprofitable, and was cast into utter darkness: but outward gifts are designed by the talents; and these not merely the gifts of natural knowledge and riches, the gifts of nature and of providence; nor the external ministry of the word, Gospel ordinances, and opportunities of enjoying them; but ministerial gifts, such as fit and qualify men to be preachers of the Gospel, as appears from their name, “talents”: they being the greatest gifts for usefulness and service in the church, as talents were the greatest of weights and coins among the Jews; from the nature of them, being what may be improved or lost, and for which men are accountable; from the persons to whom they were delivered, the servants of Christ; from the time of their delivery, when Christ went into a far country, to heaven, when he ascended on high, and received gifts for men, and gave them to them; and from the unequal distribution of them, being given to some more, and others less; all which perfectly agree with ministerial gifts: for it follows,

to another two, and to another one; and these were given *to every man, according to his several ability*, or “according to his own power”; his proper power that belonged to him, as the Lord of these servants: for the sense is, not that he gave these talents, or gifts, according to the different capacities, abilities, stations, and employments of these men; but according to that power and authority which he, as Mediator, had, to dispense these gifts to each as he would; to some more, others less, as he knew would best serve his interest and kingdom:

and straightway took his journey; after he had signified, that all power in heaven and earth was given to him, by virtue of which he ordered them to go into all the world, and preach his Gospel, and administer his ordinances; for which he had, and would abundantly qualify them; with a promise of his presence with them to the end of the world; he took his leave of them, blessed them, and was parted from them, and went up into heaven.

Ver. 16. *Then he that had received the five talents*, etc.] The largest measure of gifts; an account is first given of him, how he behaved, and conducted in his Lord’s absence, and what use he made of the gifts bestowed upon him: this must be understood, not of a single man, but of that sort of the servants of Christ, who have the greatest ministerial gifts: he

went; it denotes immediate application to business, and signifies that such servants went according to their commission, preached the Gospel to every creature, and administered the ordinances to proper subjects; they went directly, as soon as they had their talents; they did not stay to consult with flesh and blood, whether it would be for their interest and credit or not; they did not stick at any difficulties and discouragements, nor were deterred by the cross, reproaches, and persecutions; but went forth with courage and boldness, not in their own name and strength, but in the name and strength of Christ, who sent them, and promised them his presence and assistance, on which they depended:

and traded with the same: with the five talents, or their ministerial gifts. The ministers of the Gospel are traders, not in their own name, nor on their own stock, and for themselves, but for Christ, and for the good of immortal souls: they closely attend unto, and work at, their business and employment; by constant reading, and diligent search into the word of God; by studious meditation on it; by frequent prayer; and continual preaching the Gospel, and administering ordinances; and their success follows:

and made them other five talents; that is, increased in spiritual knowledge; gifts were improved and enlarged; a greater stock of divine things were laid in; and many souls gained to Christ: such are they whom Christ has ordained to go forth, and bear and bring forth fruit in their ministry, and whose fruit remain.

Ver. 17. *And likewise he that received two*, etc.] Talents, or a lesser measure of ministerial gifts:

he also gained other two; he worked and laboured, and traded, in proportion to the gifts he had received; and his improvements and success, under a divine blessing, were answerable.

Ver. 18. *But he that received one*, etc.] Talent, or the least degree of gifts, for the ministry of the word:

went and digged in the earth, and hid his Lord's money. The Syriac and Arabic versions read, "silver", and the Ethiopic, "gold"; but whether these talents were silver or gold, is not certain. Where he buried it; that is, he neglected the gift that was in him, he made no use of it, either to his own advantage, or to the good of others, and the interest of his Lord; he either never went into the ministry, or if he did, he left it as Demas did, having

too great affection for the world, and the things of it: he minded earth and earthly things, and employed himself in them, and not in his master's work and service. The phrase seems to point out the earthly mindedness of the man, his worldly disposition, and his eager pursuit after the things of life; which were the reason why he disregarded his talent, and made no use of his ministerial gifts: he could not deny worldly self, nor leave all to follow Christ; but rather than drop the world, he chose to bury his talent in it: it was his Lord's money and not his own, and he was accountable to him for it, and should have used it in another manner.

Ver. 19. *After a long time, the Lord of these servants cometh,* etc.] Either in a providential way, by a fit of illness, or in a time of persecution, and awakens the conscience, and calls them to give an account of their stewardship; or by death, when their trading or working time is over, and they become accountable for their whole conduct, throughout their ministrations; or rather, at the last judgment, when all must appear before the judge of quick and dead, ministers as well as others, and give an account of their gifts, and the use of them, to their Lord, from whom they have received them, and whose servants they profess to be. Which coming of his is after a long time; for seventeen hundred years are now past, and he is not yet come; which is a long time in man's account, though not in God's account, with whom a thousand years are as one day; and in the apprehension of the saints, who love long for, and hasten to, the coming of Christ, are desirous of it, and impatient for it. But though it may seem long, he will certainly come: he stays long, to give time to his laborious ministers to exercise all those gifts he has bestowed upon them, and to leave slothful ones without excuse. It is not to be inferred from his delay, that he will not come: he is not unmindful of his promise, or slack concerning it; though he tarries long, he will not tarry beyond the appointed time; at the end he will come, though it is long first:

and reckoneth with them; what talents they received from him, what they had done with them, and what they had gained by them. The things that ministers of the word are intrusted with, are things of value; the Gospel is a pearl of great price, or rich treasure, that is put into their earthen vessels; it is the unsearchable riches of Christ; gifts to preach it are spiritual, and preferable to gifts of nature, and providence; and the souls of men committed to their care, are of great worth and esteem with Christ; nor are any of these their own, but Christ's, and therefore must give an account of them: this shows both the awfulness and usefulness of the Gospel ministry.

Ver. 20. *And so he that had received five talents,* etc.] Or the greatest gifts: as this man is the first to whom his Lord gave any talents, and the first that went and traded with them; he is also the first that is reckoned with; who

came and brought other five talents: he came freely and cheerfully, with a holy confidence and intrepidity of mind, and gave in his account very readily, both of what he had received, and of what he had gained;

saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents, behold I have gained besides them five talents more. True ministers of the Gospel frankly own, that what gifts they have are delivered to them by Christ; and such are willing that he should have all returned to him, principal and increase: it is not to be imagined that this will be said in so many express words by them, nor will there be any need thereof; for Christ will not be ignorant of what they have been doing, and of what use they have been of; but the sense is, that as all will be manifest to Christ the searcher of hearts, with whom they have to do, so the account will stand fair and open; and it will be seen and known by all, that such and such faithful ministers of Christ have behaved in this agreeable manner, and have been thus and thus serviceable in his interest.

Ver. 21. *His Lord said unto him, well done,* etc.] Gospel ministers do not say so to themselves; they know they can do nothing well of themselves, and when they have done all they can, they own they are but unprofitable servants; they acknowledge all they do is owing to the grace of God, and strength of Christ, and that no praise is due to them; nor do they expect or seek for such eulogies from men: but this is said, to show how acceptable a diligent laborious ministry is to Christ, and to encourage industry in the preachers of the word, whose works will follow them, though not go before them:

thou good and faithful servant: such may be said to be good, who have the grace of God implanted in them, some good thing in them towards the Lord God; a good work begun in their hearts, without which men can never be good ministers of Christ; and who have good abilities, not only natural and acquired parts, but ministerial gifts; which are the good things committed to them, and that dwell in them, which they are to keep by the Holy Ghost; and who make a good use of them, and freely communicate and impart their spiritual gifts, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; and who being employed in a good work, as that of the ministry is,

do it well, and abide in it: and such may be said to be “faithful”, who preach the pure Gospel of Christ, and the whole of it; who neither mix it with the inventions of men, nor keep back any part of it from the saints; who seek not to please men, but their Lord and Master; and not their own honour and applause, but his glory; and who abide by him and his cause, notwithstanding all reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions. In such language as this, the Jews used to praise their servants,

“*manw bwj çya ywh* “O man! good and faithful”, and from whose labour one had ^{f1448} profit.”

Thou hast been faithful over a few things: not as considered in themselves; for the truths of the Gospel which ministers are intrusted with, and in which they are faithful, are neither few, nor inconsiderable; they are the manifold grace of God, and the unsearchable riches of Christ: nor are their gifts mean and despicable; nor are their labours worthless, and of no account; but in comparison of the unseen and eternal things of glory, which are prepared and laid up for them; so that there is no proportion between their works, and the glory that shall be revealed in them:

I will make thee ruler over many things; either on earth, where they shall reign with Christ a thousand years; and when the kingdom, and the dominion, and the greatness of it, will be given to the saints of the Most High; and when they who have turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars in that kingdom: or else in heaven, where as kings, they shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them, sit down with Christ in his throne, and wear the never fading crown of glory, life, and righteousness;

enter thou into the joy of our Lord; not their own, or what was of their own procuring, but their Lord's; which Jehovah the Father has prepared for his people, and gives unto them; which the son possesses for them, and will bestow on them; and which the Holy Spirit makes them meet for; and which will chiefly lie in the enjoyment of Christ their Lord: this happiness of theirs is expressed by “joy”, which will be full and perfect, and without any interruption or mixture; will be unspeakable and glorious, and continue for ever; for when the saints shall enter into it, as into an house or mansion, they shall take possession of it, and abide in it for ever. It was usual with the Jews to express the happiness of the world to come by “joy”; not only that which is from the Lord, but that with which he himself rejoices with his people: for they say ^{f1449},

“there is no joy before, or in the presence of the holy blessed God, since the world was created, *hj mç htwak*, “like that joy”, with which he will rejoice with the righteous, in the world to come.”

Ver. 22. *He also that had received two talents*, etc.] A lesser degree of ministerial gifts; and who as he received next to the other, and was the next, who in proportion to what he had received, had traded and gained, he is mentioned in the next: place, as giving in his account; who

came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents, behold I have gained two other talents besides them: his account, abating the sum and gains, is given in, in the same form as the other.

Ver. 23. *His Lord said unto him*, etc.] The same words as he did to the other servant,

well done good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord: where the same commendation is made, and the same characters are given, as before; for a man that has lesser gifts, and is of less usefulness, may be as good and as faithful in his service, and as praise worthy, as a man of greater gifts, and more extensive usefulness; and the same happiness is bestowed on one, as the other, which in neither is of merit; but of grace; and whatever difference may be made between the saints, or between one minister and another in the Millennium state, yet in the ultimate glory, their joy, bliss, and happiness, will be alike. It is not to be established from this parable, that man has a power to improve the stock of sufficient grace given him, and by his improvement procure eternal happiness to himself; since such a stock of grace is not designed by the talents; nor is that either gotten or improved, by the industry of man; nor does the parable suggest, that men by their improvement of the talents committed to them, do, or can, procure eternal happiness: “good and faithful” servants are indeed commended by Christ, and he graciously promises great things to them, which are not proportioned to their deserts; for whereas they have been “faithful over a few things”, he promises to make them “rulers over many things”; and bids them “enter into the joy of their Lord”; into the joy, which of his grace and goodness, he has provided for them, and not which they have merited and procured for themselves: nor is it to be inferred from hence, that true grace once given, or implanted, may be taken away or lost; for the parable speaks not of what is wrought in

men, but of goods and talents bestowed on them, and committed to their trust; which may be lost or taken away, or be wrapped up in a napkin, and lie useless by them; when true grace is the incorruptible seed which never dies, but always remains; that good part which shall never be taken away nor lost, but is inseparably connected with eternal glory.

Ver. 24. *Then he which had received the one talent came,* etc.] For he that has the least gifts, is accountable for them; and therefore ought to make use of them to the good of his fellow creatures, and the interest of his Lord and Master; though these often lie neglected, and frivolous, and even wicked pretences are formed to excuse such neglect, as here:

and said, Lord, I knew that thou art an hard man; he calls him “Lord”, though he had not served him, and pretends he knew him; but if he had, he would have had a true affection for him, faith in him, and would have observed his commands; and he would also have appeared altogether lovely to him, and of an amiable character, and not in such a light as he represents him; which makes it a clear case, that he was ignorant of him, or he would never have said, that he was an hard, severe, or austere man; one very difficult of being pleased, cruel and uncompassionate to his servants, unjustly withholding from them what was due unto them, and rigorously exacting service that could not be performed by them: all which is the reverse of Christ’s true character; who accepts of the meanest services of his people: and takes what is done, though ever so little, as even a cup of cold water, given to the least of his disciples, as done to himself; is merciful and compassionate, both to the bodies and souls of men; and is not unrighteous to forget any labour of love, shown to him or his; and makes his strength perfect in the weakness of his servants, and his grace always to be sufficient for them: but this wicked servant goes on to traduce him, and adds,

reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: which seem to be proverbial expressions; (see ^{<Q>}John 4:37), describing either a covetous man, that is desirous of that which does not belong to him; or an hard master that requires work to be done, and gives neither tools nor matter to work with; like the Egyptian task masters, who demanded the full tale of bricks, but gave no straw: whereas Christ is neither niggardly, nor exacting; he requires nothing that is not his, and gives his grace, and bestows his gifts liberally, and upbraids not; nor does he call any to service, of whatsoever sort, but he gives them grace,

strength, and abilities, proportionate to it; and as he has promised, he makes it good, that as their day is, so shall their strength be.

Ver. 25. *And I was afraid*, etc.] The Persic version adds, “to negotiate with thy money”: he was afraid, lest by trading he should not gain what his Lord expected; and most of all, lest he should lose the talent itself; and dreaded his Lord’s austerity, should that be the case, fearing that he would have no mercy on him. This was his pretence; but the true causes were sloth and earthly mindedness:

and went and hid thy talent in the earth; that it might not be lost, though it lay useless, and turned to no account. The Arabic version renders it, “and buried thy goods in the earth”: he owned the money to be his Lord’s, and thought he did very well, and enough, that he preserved it, though he had not improved it; and this he hoped would be a sufficient excuse, and on which he laid the greatest stress:

lo! there thou hast that is thine: he again acknowledges, that the gifts he had were not his own, but his master’s; and whereas he had kept them entire, as he had received them, and there was the full sum he was intrusted with, he hoped no more would be required: but it is not sufficient to retain what is given, it must be made use of and improved; for every spiritual gift is given to profit with: and besides, there seems to be a degree of rudeness in these words; he does not bring the talent with him, and return it, but only signifies that he had hid it in the earth, in such a place, and “there” it was, where his Lord might take it, and have it again, if he pleased.

Ver. 26. *His Lord answered and said unto him*, etc.] Resenting, as he well might, not only his indolence and sloth, his neglect of his duty, and his worldly disposition, but the abusive character he had given of him, in order to cover his own wickedness:

thou wicked and slothful servant; a very just character of him: he was a “wicked” servant; all men in a state of nature are wicked; they lie in wickedness, and are under the power of the wicked one; and there are many wicked men among professors of religion, and many wicked ministers, who, though not openly profane, yet either trusting to their works, or doing the work of the Lord deceitfully, or wholly neglecting it, justly merit this character. This man’s wickedness lay in his slothfulness, in not doing the good he might, and had gifts and abilities for; and in entertaining wrong thoughts of, and in bringing false charges against his

Lord: and he might be truly said to be “slothful”; since he took no pains to improve in spiritual knowledge; and instead of digging for that, as for silver and hid treasure, dug in the earth, and hid his talent there: he neglected the gift that was in him; did not stir it up, or study to show himself a workman that needeth not to be ashamed; did not give himself up to reading, meditation, and prayer; but trusted to, and depended on what other men had done; stole away his neighbour’s words, reaped that for which he had not laboured, and entered into the labours of others; and being afraid of difficulties, indulged himself in ease and pleasure, served his own belly, and not the Lord Jesus; he gratified his worldly lusts, and had no regard to his master’s interest.

Thou knowest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: not granting that he was such an one, and that his servant knew him to be such, and had given a true character of him; but supposing he was such a person he had wickedly represented him to be; he turns the argument upon him, that therefore he must needs know, that he expected to have had his money improved, and to have received it with an increase; and that upon such a consideration he ought to have been the more diligent and industrious, in using and improving his talent, and not to have indulged sloth, and idleness; and thus he convicts, judges, and condemns him, as a wicked, slothful servant, by his own words.

Ver. 27. *Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers,* etc.] “Trapezites”, or “tablets”, the same whom the Jews ^{f1450} call

μυνη | ὠς, and is the same word which is here used in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; who were so called from the table that stood before them, on which they told, and paid their money, and the exchange and use: hence all the Oriental versions here read, “thou shouldest have put my money to, or on the table”; put it into the hand of these bankers, where it would have been not only safe, as in the earth, where it was hid, but also would have made some increase, and would have been returned with profit;

and then at my coming I should have received my own with usury: this is said not so much to encourage usury, though it may be lawful; and it seems to have been a practice in those times to put money out to use upon a reasonable interest; but to reprove the sloth and inactivity of this servant, upon his own reasonings, and the character he had given of his master.

Ver. 28. *Take therefore the talent from him*, etc.] This shows it was not special grace, which is intended by the talent; for the gift and calling of special grace are without repentance, and are that good part which shall not be taken away: but gifts may fail, cease, and vanish; they may be taken away from men, and men from them; a right arm may be clean dried up, and a right eye be utterly darkened:

and give it unto him which hath ten talents; for to diligent and laborious ministers of the word, more spiritual light and knowledge is given: but this is not to be understood, as though other men's gifts are, properly speaking, taken away from them, and bestowed on them; but that their gifts appear the more illustrious through the slothfulness of others.

Ver. 29. *For unto everyone that hath shall be given*, etc.] This seems to be a frequent saying of Christ's, or a common maxim of his, which he made use of on different occasions; (See Gill on "⁴⁰³²Matthew 13:12"), and accords with some usual sayings, and proverbial expressions of the Jews; who say ^{f1451}, that "the blessed God does not give wisdom, but to him that has wisdom"; and of a man, in other respects, they use this is a common proverb ^{f1452},

"if he adds or increases, they add unto him, and if he lessens, they lessen to him:"

and so here; he that has gifts; and talents, shall have an addition to them.

And he shall have abundance of spiritual gifts and knowledge;

but from him that hath not, shall be taken away, even that which he hath.

The Vulgate Latin reads, "that which he seemed to have", and so reads Munster's Hebrew Gospel, and so it is read in some Greek copies; though it seems to be taken out of (⁴⁰³³Luke 8:18).

Ver. 30. *And cast ye the unprofitable servant*, etc.] All the servants of Christ are unprofitable with respect to God; for no man can be profitable to him, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself, or others; or in a way of merit, since when they have done the most and best, they have done but their duty: but this man was unprofitable with respect to himself, having not improved the gift and talent bestowed on him; and with respect to men, being of no use for the conversion of sinners, or the comfort of saints, or the edifying of the body of Christ; and brought no honour to his master, and was of no service for the spreading of his Gospel, and the enlargement

of his kingdom and interest; and therefore, as one good for nothing, the ministering angels are bid to take him, and cast him

into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth: he shall be turned out of doors into outer darkness, to be a companion of other unhappy creatures; who are also without, bewailing their miserable condition, and reflecting on their past conduct; whilst faithful, diligent, and laborious servants will be within, partaking of a rich entertainment, prepared by their Lord, accompanied with joy unspeakable, and full of glory: (See Gill on “⁴¹⁸²Matthew 8:12”).

Ver. 31. *When the son of man shall come in his glory,* etc.] What is before signified in the two preceding parables, is here clearly and distinctly represented without a parable: and it should be observed, that as the foregoing parables only regard the Gospel church state, and the ministers and members of it, good and bad, or all sorts of Christian professors; so this account of the last judgment only concerns them; for though all men that ever have been, are, or shall be in every nation under heaven, from Adam to the last man that will be born, will be judged; yet the part or it here described, though it gives a general and lively idea of the whole, only regards the judgment and final state of such who have made a profession of the Christian religion. The judge himself is first described, who is said to be “the son of man”; a name by which Christ is frequently called, and by which he styles himself in his state of humiliation; expressing both the truth of his human nature, and the meanness of it in that state: but as despicable as he appeared then in human nature, in the form of a servant, a man of sorrows, despised by men, and subject to sufferings and death; yet when he comes again, it will be in another guise manner: he will appear “in his glory”; in the glory of the only begotten of the Father, in the glory of his proper deity, in the glory of all the perfections of the divine nature; which glory was, in a great measure, and from most persons, hid in the days of his flesh, though he was in the form of God, and equal with him. He will also come in his mediatorial glory, which he had with the Father before the world was, and with all the honour, power, and authority of the judge of the whole earth, to execute judgment upon men; and in the glory of his human nature, of which his transfiguration on the mount was a pledge and emblem.

And all the holy angels with him; which splendid retinue will add to the glory of his appearance; and who will accompany him not merely, or only

as his attendants, to make the solemnity more grand, pompous, and magnificent; but as ministering spirits, who will be employed by him in gathering all before him, separating the wicked the good, and conducting each to their several apartments of bliss or woe: and when he thus appears,

then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; or glorious throne, upon the clouds of heaven, where he will sit as judge, and be visible to all.

Ver. 32. *And before him shall be gathered all nations.* etc.] That is, all that have professed the Christian religion in all the nations of the world, whether Jews or Gentiles, high or low, rich or poor, wise and foolish, such as have had greater or lesser talents; though it is also true of every individual of mankind of every nation, tribe and family, of every sex, age, and state, that ever has been, is, or will be. Yet Christian professors seem only here intended, as the following distinction of them, their final state, and the reasons of it show. This collection of them before Christ, the righteous judge, will be made by the holy angels, who will come with him for this purpose; and being mighty, as they are, will be able to accomplish great a work; and especially as being under the direction, influence, and authority of so divine, glorious, and illustrious a person, as the son of man will then to all appear to be.

And he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: they shall be gathered before him, as they were together in their visible church state, as being all under a profession of religion; some wise, some foolish virgins; some sheep, and others goats; some industrious, diligent, faithful, and laborious servants; others wicked, slothful, and unprofitable ones; many of whom pass undistinguished and undiscovered now: but then the judge, who is of quick understanding, will easily discern the one from the other; such as have the oil of grace in the vessels of their hearts, together with their lamps, from such as have only the outward visible lamp of a profession, but destitute of the grace of God; and good and faithful servants, who have made a right use of their gifts, from such who have been negligent, careless, and remiss; and though these have been folded together, sheep and goats, in the sheepfold of the church, where they have all bore the character of the sheep of Christ; yet now when the chief shepherd appears, who knows his own sheep, and calls them by name, he will as easily separate the one from the other, and more so, than any shepherd, among men, can part a flock consisting of sheep and goats. Hypocrites in Zion shall now be no more, nor sinners stand any

longer in the congregation of the righteous, nor both together as one body, and on one side in judgment.

Ver. 33. *And he shall set the sheep on his right hand*, etc.] That is, the elect of God, and true believers, such as have the grace of God truly implanted in them; the sheep the Father gave unto Christ, and made his care and charge, whom he, as the good shepherd, laid down his life for; and who know his voice in effectual calling, and follow him in the way of his ordinances and appointments; and are comparable to sheep for their meekness and innocence, their simplicity and usefulness, and their harmless and inoffensive lives, and conversations: these Christ will set on his right hand, as a token of his affection for them, and a mark of respect and honour shown them, and as a pledge of that exaltation and glory he will be about to raise them to.

But the goats on the left; that is, the foolish virgins, wicked, and slothful servants, graceless professors, who, because of the impurity of their hearts, the filthiness of their lives, and their offensiveness to Christ, are compared to goats: these he will place at his left hand, in token of his disaffection for them, as a brand of disgrace upon them, and as an intimation of that dishonour, and miserable condition they will quickly be in. These different situations plainly pre-signify how things will go with each, that one will be acquitted, and made happy, the other will be condemned, and become miserable. Agreeable to which the Jews say ^{f1453}, that there is a right hand and a left hand with the Lord: they that are on the right hand, are such as have done well, and are **twkzl**, “for absolution”; and they that are on the left hand are criminals, and are **hbwj l**, “for condemnation”. Some think the allusion is to the two Scribes in the sanhedrim, who stood before the judges, one on the right hand, and the other on the left, and wrote the sentences; the one of those that were acquitted, and the other of those that were condemned ^{f1454}.

Ver. 34. *Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand*, etc.] Before Christ is called “the son of man”, now “the king”; who is not only king of saints, but king of the whole world; the king of kings, and lord of lords, the judge of all the earth; he appearing in glory and majesty, sitting on a throne of glory, being attended with his glorious angels, and all nations gathered before him, waiting for the final sentence to be pronounced upon them by him; and who accordingly begins with those on his right hand, his sheep, the chosen, redeemed, and called of God, saying to them,

come. The Arabic version adds, “to me”: by such a phrase he sometimes had invited, and encouraged poor sensible sinners: to come and partake of his grace: and here by it he calls the righteous, and bespeaks them in the most tender and endearing manner, and yet with the majesty of a king, and the authority of a judge, to come near unto him, with intrepidity and confidence, and take possession of a glorious kingdom; bestowing on them this high and illustrious character,

ye blessed of my Father: so called, partly because they were his Father’s, not only by creation, but by his choice of them to grace and glory, and therefore most happy and blessed; and partly, because, as such a choice shows, they were dear unto him, highly in his favour, and loved by him with an everlasting love; as also, because they were blessed by him as the Father of Christ, and theirs, with all the spiritual blessings of the everlasting covenant in him; with the pardon of their sins, the justification of their persons, the sanctification of their nature, with adoption, and a right unto, and meetness for the eternal inheritance: hence it follows,

inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

The happiness of the saints, in the other world, is here expressed by a “kingdom”, because of the glory, riches, grandeur, and magnificence of it; as it is sometimes by a crown, for the same reason, suitable to their character and dignity, who are made kings and priests by Christ: and is likewise represented as an “inheritance”, as it is elsewhere, being not acquired by industry, or obtained by merit; but is the gift of their heavenly Father, and in right of adoption, as the children of God, being made such by his free grace and favour, and denotes the stability and perpetuity of it: and this is said to be prepared, not only appointed and designed in the council purposes, and decrees of God, but got ready; it is a kingdom erected, an inheritance reserved, and a crown of righteousness laid up in heaven; a glory really provided and secured in an everlasting covenant, and that for you: for some, and not others; for the sheep on the right hand, and not the goats on the left; for the peculiar favourites of God, the objects of his love and choice, the redeemed of the Lamb, and that are born of the Spirit; and that for them,

from the foundation of the world. The place itself, where this happiness is to be enjoyed, was actually made on the first day of the creation, when the heavens were formed, and the foundations of the earth were laid, and the glory itself long before. The Ethiopic version here reads, “before the

world”; and the Persic, “before the foundation of the world was laid”; and Grotius himself owns, that the phrase is the same as “before the foundation of the world”; and Dr. Hammond’s paraphrase is, “before all eternity”: for as early were these persons, the beloved, the chosen, and blessed of the Father: so that this glory must be of free grace, and not merit, or owing to any works of righteousness done by men; since it was not only designed and appointed, but prepared and laid up for persons before they had a being, and had done neither good nor evil. The Jews ^{f1455} speak of the law being an inheritance for all Israel, from the six days of the creation; but a much more glorious one is here spoken of: nearer to this is what they say ^{f1456} that Bathsheba was appointed to be David’s wife from the day that the world was created; and add, but the mystery of the thing is, *al y[l d atwkl m*, “the kingdom that is above”, which is called by her name. So in 2 Esdras, “the kingdom is already prepared for you”:

“Go, and ye shall receive: pray for few days unto you, that they may be shortened: the kingdom is already prepared for you: watch.” (2 Esdras 2:13)

Ver. 35. *For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat.* etc.] This, and the following, are not mentioned as causes of the kingdom being prepared for them, or of their being entitled to it, or of their being put into the possession of it; but as descriptive of their characters, and as testimonies and evidences of the grace of God in them; by which it appeared, that they were the blessed of his Father, having his special grace vouchsafed unto them; and that they were the children of God, to whom the inheritance of the kingdom belonged, and for whom it was prepared: for what was done by them in time, could never be the cause of what was done for them in eternity, or before, or from the foundation of the world; nor is there any proportion between a kingdom, and such services as here mentioned: and besides, this kingdom is by inheritance, and not, merit; is prepared by God, and not procured by men, and was got ready for them before they had a being; and therefore could not be caused by any actions of theirs: what is here, and in the following instances, said to be done to Christ, is not to be understood of him personally, but mystically, of the members of his body, as he himself explains it, (⁴¹⁵⁴ Matthew 25:40), and the sense is, that when some of the servants of Christ, ministers, or private Christians, were in distress for want of the necessaries of life, these gracious souls supplied them with food; which to do, especially in a time of persecution, showed

not only love to Christ, but great faith in him, and that they were not ashamed of him, and their profession of him, nor of his poor ministers and members; for this was done by them, not as the effect of mere humanity to the poor in general, but as an instance of affection to Christ's poor; and was done for his sake, and because they belonged to him, were preachers of his Gospel, and professors of his name; and therefore was considered as if done to himself personally:

I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; not gall and vinegar, as the Jews did, but a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, prophet, and righteous person, and because belonging to Christ: this is taken notice of with acceptance by him; and such shall not lose the reward of grace. The Targumist ^{f1457} has a passage which may be compared with this:

“Solomon said, by a spirit of prophecy from before the Lord; the Lord of the world shall say to all the righteous in the presence of everyone, go taste, with joy, thy bread which is returned unto thee, for thy bread which thou hast given to the poor and needy, who were hungry; and drink with a good heart the wine which is laid up for thee in paradise, instead of thy wine, which thou hast mingled for the poor and needy, who were thirsty; for, lo! now are thy works accepted before the Lord.”

I was a stranger, and ye took me in, or “gathered me”: an Hebraism; (see ~~<0127>~~ 2 Samuel 11:27), and the Septuagint there. Such servants of Christ as were obliged to quit their habitations through the violence of persecution, and were scattered abroad, or went about preaching the Gospel; such were by these righteous ones taken into their houses, and provided for with food and lodging, and every convenience of life; as they were by Gaius, and others.

Ver. 36. *Naked, and ye clothed me*, etc.] For in such a condition sometimes are the dear children of God, and members of Christ; (see ~~<0411>~~ 1 Corinthians 4:11), when others, who, Dorcas like, have made coats and garments for them, and clothed them with them; and which will be shown another day, or taken notice of as the fruits, and so evidences of the grace of God in them.

I was sick, and ye visited me, or “looked after me”, or “over me”: or, as the Persic version renders it, ye had the care of me; and which is the true sense and import of the word: for it not only intends visits paid to sick

persons in a Christian manner, relieving them with their substance, giving good advice, or speaking comfortable words to them; but attending them, and waiting on them, and doing such things for them which, in their weak state, they are not capable of doing for themselves. Visiting of the sick was reckoned, by the Jews, a very worthy action: they speak great things of it, and as what will be highly rewarded hereafter.

“Six things, (they say ^{f1458}), a man eats the fruit of them in this world, and there is a stable portion for him in the world to come:”

and the two first of them are, *ʿyj rwa tsnkh* “the taking in of travellers”, or “strangers”, which is mentioned in the preceding verse, and *myl wj rwqyb*, “visiting the sick”. One of their Rabbins ^{f1459} says,

“he that does not visit the sick, is as if he shed blood: says another, he that visits the sick is the cause of his living; and he that does not visit the sick, is the cause of his death: and, says a third, whoever visits the sick shall be preserved from the damnation of hell.”

I was in prison, and ye came unto me: which has been often the lot of the saints, as it was frequently of the Apostle Paul, who had this respect shown him by many of the people of God, as by the house of Onesiphorus, and by Epaphroditus, who brought him a present from the Philippians, when in bonds; and which will be remembered another day.

Ver. 37. *Then shall the righteous answer him,* etc.] From whence it appears, that only such shall be at the right hand of Christ, who are righteous persons, who have the righteousness of Christ imputed to them; and, in consequence of which, are created anew unto righteousness and true holiness; and, under the influence of divine grace, live soberly, righteously, and godly: and those, upon hearing such works ascribed unto them, will, with wonder and astonishment, reply,

saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? which answer arises partly from not attending to, or thoroughly understanding the words of Christ, which they seem to take in such sense, as if he meant these things were personally done to him; whereas the far greater part of them had never seen him in the flesh, and much less in such circumstances as required such things to be done to him; and partly from surprise and astonishment, that he should take notice of such mean actions, and so highly extol them, and graciously reward them;

as also from a forgetfulness of them, their left hand not knowing what their right hand had done: which shows, that they had put no confidence in their works, or depended upon them for their justification before God, and acceptance, with him; these were out of sight, and mind; their only trust being in the person, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ.

Ver. 38. *When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in?* etc.] As they had never seen him hungry and thirsty, in his own person, though he was both in the days of his flesh, and were ministered to, both by angels, and by good women out of their substance; so they had never seen him a stranger, and took him into their houses; yet they had, seen him hungry and thirsty, and as a stranger in his members, and had done these good offices to him in them, and to them for his sake:

or naked, and clothed thee? for so Christ in person never was, until stripped of his raiment by the soldiers, and officers; but they had seen many of his poor saints without clothing, and had covered their nakedness.

Ver. 39. *Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?*] For though he bore the sicknesses of his people, yet we never read of his being sick himself, nor was he ever cast into prison; but this has been the case of many of his servants, as John the Baptist, Peter, and Paul, and multitudes of others, who have been tenderly and affectionately used by their fellow Christians.

Ver. 40. *And the king shall answer, and say unto them,* etc.] Christ, though a king, and now appearing in great glory and majesty, yet such will be his goodness and condescension, as to return an answer to the queries of his people; blushing and astonished at his notice of their poor services, which they know to be so imperfect, and are always ready to own themselves unprofitable servants; and this he will do in the following manner:

verily I say unto you; a way of speaking often used by him, when here on earth, when he, in the strongest manner, would asseverate anything as truth, and remove all doubt and hesitation about it.

Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me: which is to be understood, not in so limited a sense, as to regard only the apostles, and the least of them, for these were not the only brethren of Christ; nor in so large a sense, as to include all in human nature; but the saints only, the children of God, and household of faith: for

though acts of charity and humanity are to be done to all men, yet especially to these; and indeed, these only can be considered as the brethren of Christ, who are born of God, and do the will of Christ; for such he accounts his mother, brethren, and sisters; and who are not only of the same human nature, but in the same covenant with him, and the sons of God, not by nature, as he is the Son of God, but by adoption, and so are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: now he that does any of the above acts of kindness to these “brethren” of Christ, and because they stand in such a relation to him, even the “least” of them: though he is not an apostle, or a martyr, or a preacher of the Gospel, or has any considerable gifts and abilities for usefulness, but is a weak believer in spiritual things, as well as poor in temporal things; and though it is but to “one” of these opportunity and circumstances not allowing it to be done to more; yet as such is the humility and condescension of this great king, as to account such mean persons his brethren; such also is his grace and goodness, as to reckon every instance of kindness and respect shown to them, as done to himself in person; and will take notice of it, accept and reward it, as if it had been so done.

Ver. 41. *Then shall he also say unto them on his left hand,* etc.] The goats, the foolish virgins, and slothful and wicked servants,

depart from me: a like expression is used by him to preachers of the word, and professors of religion, that are mere nominal ones. (^{<4073>}Matthew 7:23) and such are intended here, who professed to be on Christ’s side, had been in his visible church, and hoped to have been with him for ever; but having nothing but the lamp of a profession, and some external works to trust to, they are bid to be gone from him; they are banished his presence, which is what is commonly called the punishment of loss; the loss of the presence of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, angels, and saints; and is thought to be greater than the punishment of sense, hereafter expressed. The character given of them, which is the reverse of the former, is,

ye cursed; for having sinned against God, and his righteous law, they are cursed by it, which curses everyone that is under its works, as these were, and do not perfectly fulfil whatsoever it requires; and so were justly rejected of God, and hated by him: and therefore are condemned and sent,

into everlasting fire: by which is meant, the wrath of God; and the phrase expresses the intolerable fierceness of it, and its perpetual continuance; the sense of which, without intermission, will ever be felt in the conscience;

and is the punishment of sense, the wicked will for ever endure: it may also intend the pit and prison of hell, where these torments will be for ever inflicted; and so hell is called by the Jews ^{f1460}, the hell מל [twdyqy, “eternal fire”, or “everlasting burning”: and is here said to be

prepared for the devil and his angels; for Satan, or Beelzebub, the prince of devils, and all his principalities and powers under him: it is not said to be prepared for these persons, though it was, and who were foreordained to this condemnation, but for the devil and his angels; showing, that the same punishment will be inflicted on hypocrites and carnal professors, as on the devils themselves; and it is indeed of such, that the devouring fire, and everlasting burnings are spoken, in (²³³⁴Isaiah 33:14), to which this passage seems to have some respect; for no where else is mention made of this everlasting fire: it is not said neither when it was prepared. It is a notion of the Jews ^{f1461}, that the angels were created on the second day; and it should seem by them, that they fell the same day; hence it is a prevailing opinion among them ^{f1462}, that hell was made on the second day of the creation; though at, other times, they reckon hell among the seven things which were created before the world was ^{f1463}, and which may be reconciled together: for as heaven, the place of the saints’ happiness, was prepared from the foundation of the world, or on the first day of its creation, though the happiness itself was provided long before; so hell, the place of the torments of the devils and wicked, though it was not made or prepared until the second day of the creation, when, according to this opinion, the angels were made and fell; yet the punishment they were to endure there, was appointed before the world was; and so hell is said to םמל [םמ ardsמ, “be ordained from eternity”, because of their sins ^{f1464}.

Ver. 42. *For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat*, etc.] Hence it appears, that these were such as dwelt among Christians, and professed the Christian name, and yet disregarded the poor members of Christ in distress, when it was in the power of their hands to help them; but when they were hungry and ready to starve for want of food, did not communicate to them for Christ’s sake; which showed I that they had no true faith in him, and love to him, and therefore are justly condemned by him; whereas such who never knew Christ, nor any of his people, or any obligation they were under to regard any for Christ’s sake, these will never be condemned for the non-performance of these things:

I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; as not the least morsel of bread to eat, so not so much as a cup of cold water to drink; which with what follows, are manifest tokens and evidences, that they did not belong to Christ, were not true believers in him, nor had they any real love to him: the grace of God was not in them, and therefore had neither right unto, nor meetness for, the kingdom of heaven; but were righteously banished from the presence of the Lord, and sent to dwell among everlasting burnings; for righteous it was, that such as they who would not show any love to him here, should not dwell with him for ever hereafter.

Ver. 43. *I was a stranger, and ye took me not in*, etc.] Did not take the poor members of Christ into their houses, and take care of them in their families, when they were obliged to flee from their places of abode, or wandered about preaching the Gospel; and who must have perished in the streets, if others, that bore the Christian name; had not been more compassionate than they:

naked, and ye clothed me not: sick and in prison, and ye visited me not: their conduct, behaviour, and character, are just the reverse of the righteous, and therefore it is no wonder that their sentence is different.

Ver. 44. *Then shall they also answer him*, etc.] As well as the righteous, being likewise astonished at what he had said, but on a different account;

saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to thee? Hence it is clear again, that these men were nominal Christians, who had made a profession of Christ: they own him as Lord; and suggest that they had seen him, and known him, though never in such circumstances; for if they had, such was their love to him, and great respect and veneration for him, as they pretend, they would, to be sure, have ministered unto him; and if ever they had seen him in such a case, which they could not call to mind, they could not believe, but they must have supplied him with all things necessary and convenient.

Ver. 45. *Then shall he answer them*, etc.] With a stern countenance, in great resentment, as one highly offended, and with the authority of a judge:

saying, verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me: since they had given no food not to the least of his brethren and friends that stood at his right hand, no not to anyone of them; not so much as the least bit of bread to them when hungry, nor a

drop of water to them when thirsty; had not taken them into their houses, nor provided the meanest lodging for them, when they were exposed in the streets to the inclemency of the weather, and insults of men; nor gave them the least rag to cover them, when they were almost naked, and ready to perish; nor did they minister to their wants, either physical, or food, or give attendance, when on sick beds, and in prison houses; therefore he reckoned this neglect of them, and want of compassion to them, all one as if he himself in person had been so treated: and if then judgment will righteously proceed against men for sins of omission, much more for sins of commission; and if such will be dealt with in this manner, who have taken no notice, and shown no respect to the members of Christ; what will the end be of those, who are injurious to them, their persons, and properties, and persecute and kill them?

Ver. 46. *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment*, etc.] Their excuses will not be regarded, their pleas will be of no avail, their pretensions to interest in Christ, and love to him, will be set aside; the sentence will remain irrevocable, and there will be no appeal from it, for there is no higher tribunal to bring the cause before; judgment having passed, the execution of it immediately follows: these goats, or formal professors, shall be obliged, whether they will or not, to depart from the presence of Christ; the angels will be ordered to take and cast them into everlasting burnings; they will be driven by them into hell, the place appointed for them; where they shall endure $\gamma\upsilon\sigma\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ $\chi\alpha\iota$ $\tau\omicron\nu\alpha\iota$ [“everlasting punishment”, as the Jews^{f1465} also express it; and that both in soul and body, as the just desert of sin; which being committed against an infinite God, cannot be satisfied for by a finite creature; who therefore must ever bear the punishment of it, because its pollution and guilt will always remain:

but the righteous into life eternal; such as are justified by the righteousness of Christ, and who, though they have done works of righteousness under the influence, and by the assistance of the grace of God, yet have not depended upon them, but upon Christ, for life and salvation: these shall go into heaven, the place appointed for them, to enjoy that eternal life in soul and body, which is the free gift of God, through Christ; and will be a life free from all the sorrows of the present one; a life of perfect holiness and knowledge, and inconceivable pleasure; a life of vision of God, and communion with him, and which will continue for ever; and which ascertains the eternity of the punishment of the wicked: for as the

happiness of the righteous will be eternal, the punishment of the wicked will be so too; for no reason can be given why the word which is the same in both clauses, should be taken in the one for a limited time, and in the other for an eternal duration. The Jews have a saying^{f1466} which agrees with this last clause, “the world to come is not made but for the righteous”.