

# Matthew 24 and 25

by John Nelson Darby

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*The sermon explores the Lord's ministry as a prophet, the character of prophecy, and the significance of the Jewish, Christian, and Gentile advent of the Lord.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 6:9-10, Hosea 5:15, Matthew 23:37 - 24:2, Matthew 24:14, Matthew 25, John 12:40, Acts 28:26-27

**Topics:** "Prophecy", "Preparedness for Christ's Return"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the prophetic nature of Matthew 24 and 25, detailing Jesus' ministry as a prophet and the implications of His rejection by the Jewish people. He explains how these chapters serve as a warning and a testimony of God's character and purpose, addressing the Jewish remnant and the future of the Gentiles. Darby highlights the importance of understanding the context of prophecy, the call to faithfulness, and the consequences of apostasy. He concludes with a call for believers to watch and wait for Christ's return, echoing the urgency of being prepared for His coming.

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## Transcript

These chapters constitute the most distinct and definite portion of our Lord's service as a prophet. Strictly speaking, they only are the prophetic part of His ministry. The previous part of the Lord's history was the presentation of Himself as the object of previous prophecy, to those who were responsible for His rejection as coming in by the door, according to that which those oracles of God had spoken concerning Him. This character and place of the Lord is particularly the subject of this Gospel, which bears in all its statements on the circumstances and condition in which the Jews were placed by previous scriptures. It closes in a very marked way in the previous chapter. The Lord had begun His ministry with the blessings of the character suited to His kingdom, revealed by the introduction of His Father's name. He closes on the continued and wilful rejection of Him by that people, by the woes justly denounced on them for their hypocrisy and iniquity. (Compare Matt. 5, 7, and 23.) From one evil they claimed exemption, but in terms which shewed their birthright in sin; they had not killed the prophets as their fathers had done. Jesus, assuming the character of Lord, hereon declares that He would send such unto them, and they should have an opportunity of shewing the difference of their spirit and conduct; then they would treat them in the same way, and, the measure of iniquity being filled up to the brim, God would dash the cup out of their hand to fill it with His own wrath to be poured upon them. Then the Lord apostrophises Jerusalem, for all this He speaks as the Lord; His beloved Jerusalem given up for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein, but still loved in itself and abstractedly in her children, and rejected with a "till," and not cast away as not foreknown, "Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye say, Blessed be he that cometh in the name of

Jehovah."

Here came in the proper place of prophecy, this people and Jerusalem the special and immediate subject. This will be more apparent if we see the character attached to prophecy, as originally given and brought forth to light. Previously, as His rejection of the Jewish people and the glories of a better hope and of a higher character began to dawn through the veil of their prejudiced hopes and His humiliation, the Lord had given privately to His disciples the intimation of His rejection and deliverance to the Gentiles, and the resurrection which was to be the foundation of a future state of things; but they understood it not. Nor was it to be revealed till after His resurrection; it might be instruction to them, but was no general prophecy of what should happen concerning God's inheritance, though the centre on which all those counsels hung. But here the Lord resumed the prophetic character; I say "resumed," for so it was. Prophecy is not the law, but the warning testimony of judgment when the law has been departed from, and the turning the eye of them that believe to better hopes, and foreshewn deliverance for the remnant. It supposes (though it may be in different form or extent) apostasy. Therefore we have, "beginning with Samuel and all the prophets," for then Ichabod was written.

220 The great definite presentation of the place, end, and character, of prophecy is in Isaiah 6 (however the world might be affected by it), as to the great object of Jehovah's care - the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts (for the nations He suffered to walk in their own ways). The whole head was sick and the whole heart faint, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot it was wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores. As to the vineyard it brought forth wild grapes, its wall was to be broken down, it was to be laid waste. This was the state of things as to the righteousness of that people who formed the object of Jehovah's care, the centre of His earthly plans, the place of Messiah's visitation; but Jehovah was unaltered in character and purpose: in character, and therefore He must throw down; in purpose, and therefore He would not cast away.

But His throne is now to be set up as that from which prophecy was to flow, so it is, and His train fills the temple; and a man, though of unclean lips, is sent with lips purged by a coal from the altar, and then willing to go, but still dwelling among a people of unclean lips, having seen what the Lord was, the holy, holy, holy, Jehovah of hosts. His soul filled with and affected by the contrast, but touched with the coal, it is - "Here am I, send me"; and He said, Go; but what was His message? - "Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not; make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed"; and this till the cities be waste without inhabitant; and there was a great forsaking in the midst of the land. But in it there shall be a tenth, the holy seed was to be the substance thereof.

221 Now Jehovah had long patience - He sent prophets till there was no remedy; He smote and cut them short; He let them go captive and restored them again; so that the land was filled, and the temple built; still the word ran on, though the prophets did not live for ever. Jehovah had long patience, till having yet one Son, He said, "it may be they will reverence my Son"; round His head prophetic testimony and present blessing closed for a crown of glory and witness. The word of the Lord, and the works of the Lord; the righteousness, and the patience, and the grace alike, with the Father's voice, testified who He was, but the awful knell of God's judgment still filled the unholy air of that favoured country - "Make the heart of this people fat." Now it was after long patience and marvellous love that it really came out; the sentence of God's judgment came to the earth, for all the patience of love had been tried. God had nothing more than His Son to be testified of. "How often would I have gathered" was now the word of reluctantly departing

lovingkindness and favour, but stored in a heart from which it could not be abstracted, which nothing could reach to alter. If sin could drive it in there and shut it up, there it dwelt untouched in its own blessed and essential perfectness: no sin or failure could enter there to mar its perfectness or diminish its power. Such is God - such must He be known to us in Christ.

If love and favour be driven back by sin, it is but to separate it into the power of His own essential and unmingled perfectness, and there retired to dwell on, and delight in itself. Judgment shall make a way for it to break forth only in its own unhindered excellency, and unqualified and unparalysed blessing. Such is God, and such is the Lord's way; but it was now only proved by His long patience, that well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias, the prophet, to their fathers (Acts 28:26), for in them was fulfilled his prophecy which said, "By hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand," Matt. 13:14. For the people's heart was waxed gross; and what Isaiah had prophetically pronounced, when he saw His glory, was now fulfilled, when He whose was the glory came; John 12:40, 41. This, known to the Lord, was parabolically communicated in Matthew 13, for then His patience had not had its perfect work; now it had: and God's dereliction, His going and returning to His place (Hosea 5:15), was publicly announced, and their house left to desolation. Then, on this same footing again prophecy begins, whether the vineyard, or (in closer judgment) the house itself left desolate; the broad foundation is the same; the remnant understand, believed, and are comforted. Nothing can be more solemn than our blessed Master's word at the close of the previous chapter. How much does a little word from His mouth! What depth and terribleness the gentlest often convey! It was not in severest judgment: "make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." He had left it. It was their house: what was it worth? goodly stones, which a poor heathen would throw down. No self-exaltation - no harsh reproach - His heart, the Lord's heart, yearned over Jerusalem; but so alas! it was. Terrible might be His judgment on the leaders of this people, who caused them to err, but of them, of the inhabitants of loved Jerusalem, He would only say in tenderness and sorrow, yet how terrible; "Your house is left unto you desolate for . . . ." And He went out and departed from the temple. Thence came the prophecy. One's heart is little disposed to turn, from the grace which filled the Lord's, to the sad and needful sorrows and judgment which were the consequence of the rejection of that grace; but it was the Lord's portion and our path, the path in God's counsels, to make even that a small thing.

222 This temple, and the circumstances of it, were then discussed by the Lord. The previous observations will have shewn how entirely Jewish in its character this discourse is; how Jewish is the base on which it rests. It is addressed to them, to whom all prophecy has its burden, the remnant who listened to the word, and here the Jewish remnant. They might obey the voice of His servant, but they were here walking in darkness, and seeing no light; for the Lord had left the house, and heavenly and resurrection glory was not yet brought in; nay they understood none of these things, no - nor after the resurrection, till He opened their understandings; "they saw and believed, for as yet they understood not the scriptures, that he must rise again from the dead."

This then is the position of those to whom this Instruction or prophecy was addressed: the Jews in a rejected state, though not cast off - in the land - the house there but their house, not God's; disobeying and rejecting the Lord; a remnant ignorant of a resurrection Saviour,\* entirely as to the truth, but obeying the voice of God's servant, but in the dark as to what such a state of things would be - when, or how, to look for His coming - what sign of it - where the end of this state of things should be, and Messiah in glory be on the earth, even amongst them and they in the midst of, and connected with, though separate from, the body of the Jewish nation, and they (I do not say all Israel as well as the remnant who were obedient) all in the land together.

{\*"We thought that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel."}

223 This state of things is most important, I might say essential, to the right or any real understanding of these chapters; and to the close of them the prophetic word proceeds on this earthly basis, though it may superinduce other things. But it is the Lord Christ speaking as a prophet raised up from among His brethren, on and from earth, not as afterwards in Paul's epistle to them, and elsewhere, "from heaven," "partakers of the heavenly calling." It may leave room for other things, as old prophecy did for the gospel; these are not the ground of the prophecy. This it is which makes the prophecy, while it might apply to the then condition of the disciples and direct their spirits in the details of present evil, have its force and weight, when the remnant should be in the condition which the disciples were then in, Christ only being gone; and here He spoke only as a prophet, so that it was the same thing, and that much more fully than when they were looking for heavenly things, seeing they were to put off their tabernacles, not to have "flesh saved," but to suffer in it, that they might be conformed to Him, and suffering reign with Him, having a good conscience by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who was gone into heaven; the God of all grace having called them to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus.

The Lord does not therefore immediately answer them as to the time, because it would afford direction in many details then; its accomplishment is yet future, for the end of the age is not yet come. The Jewish remnant were still in His mind, those with whom He had identified Himself in their earthly sorrow (though not with them only), of which the Psalms are so full and blessed a declaration. And as Isaiah's prophecy had its accomplishment in the foreseen coming of Messiah, though it had truth in principle then, so Messiah's prophecy has its accomplishment at the period of the second coming and of the trouble preceding, though it had truth of application, while Jerusalem lasted as to many of its principles then, and would have guided the saints aright at the time, though it could not have fulfilled the types it created.

224 The chapters are clearly divided into three portions: the Jewish, Christian, and Gentile advent of the Lord, or, His advent as applied to these three classes, as the apostle designates them - the Jews, and Gentiles, and the church of God. The first portion, which is strictly Jewish in all its parts and exclusively so, reaches down to chapter 24:44, then the church, or Christian part, begins, which is continued in different characters to chapter 25:30. Verses 31-46 are the Gentiles.

Let me briefly recapitulate the position of the prophecy. Prophecy is the testimony of God's character and purpose upon the departure of those set in relationship with Himself from the standing in which they were originally placed by His revealed will and power. It condemns this departure, recalls to the original position and gives the purpose, and therefore object of hope, out of this state of ruin to the believing remnant, sorrowing over the evil; but it does this by shewing future incoming of blessing and glory in a new principle of grace and purpose. It necessarily refers therefore to Christ's coming, for His is the glory, and by Him comes the grace; but it always therefore testifies of abiding apostasy, because His coming is the proof of all previous failure, whether He come in grace or judgment; and this comforts and sustains the remnant under the failure. Thus Isaiah's prophecy - "make the heart of this people fat" - was on their departure from God; but it had, as we have seen (Matt. 13; John 12; Acts 28), its accomplishment in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord first comes as the presented object of hope to the nation, fulfilling prophecy and doing every attractive work of mercy, and speaking as man never spake; but the heart of the people was fat. Then as Lord, for such He was, that Lord whose glory Isaiah had seen, and whence the word came, which glory was the judgment of their state, He gives them up, and, though He often would have gathered them, their house is left desolate. Here the prophecy met its accomplishment, and "this generation" stands the witness of its truth on the rejection of the Son; abidingly true has it proved the heart

of the people was fat. The first coming of Christ, under the influence of which they still are, was its fulfilment, true as it always was. Our Lord then, on this state of things, takes up the prophetic character which is to have its consummation and fulfilment in His second coming; and hence (though there are many principles true in mediate application, just as the dullness and fatness of Israel's heart in the former prophecy) the prophecy treats of what is brought out in connection with the Lord's second coming, involving therefore not the Jews only, but the church and the Gentile, but as to all at His second coming. We have nothing then to look for here as fulfilment, but what takes place then.

225 The relinquished temple is the thesis - the Mount of Olives, the place whence He was to depart, and where His feet were to stand on His return, the suited place where His communications to the remnant of what was to be expected are given. I shall only very briefly present, after this introduction, what the chapters themselves present, without framing any system. It appears to me far the most wholesome way of inquiry; we know in part, I have seen no system which I do not believe false or extremely deficient. I repeat we know in part and yet all. These two statements shew the form of our knowledge.

What precedes the coming of Christ is divided into two parts, general and particular, at verses 14, 15; verses 5 and 6 stand by themselves as a warning - let no man deceive you - be not troubled - the end is not yet - there would be false Christs - and wars and rumours of wars; then the instruction. We must remember Jews are the subjects of it, but Jews owning Christ as a prophet, listening to Christ as a prophet, after He has given up Jerusalem, as Messiah, as the Lord had ceased to present Himself as the present object of faith. Nation should rise up against nation (v. 7). These were the beginning of sorrows, by which name we may describe this period, the beginning not the end. They were to be afflicted and delivered up to the Gentiles for His name sake, and be killed. This in the beginning of sorrows, evil amongst many associated with them apparently, treachery, coldness, false prophets, and many deceived, not yet false Christs; Antichrist being not yet distinctly revealed as a Jewish oppressor, and they (not he) should deliver up and kill them; the hatred was to be from the nations - Gentiles.

At the same time whoever endured unto the end should be saved. Further, as a great general fact, this gospel of the kingdom would be preached in all the world, for a witness to all the Gentiles, and the end of Jewish circumstances would not come till then; then it would. Now whatever analogy of principle there may be in the Lord's dealings (and I think there is), I believe strictly this is put in contrast with what we call the gospel. The death and resurrection of Christ could not be preached as the gospel before He was crucified and risen (previous to that His death was man's sin, though it were God's purpose); in the resurrection it could, because God had received it as atonement; but even Peter preaches it as their sin, and speaks of His return on their repentance, until further things came in. Stephen's death was the point of change as to this; but this gospel of the kingdom was, that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, that God was going to set up His kingdom, though from heaven, among the Jews, in the person of His Son, even the Lord Jesus Christ; and this was to be preached to the Gentiles before He did it, for this would be the end, and the Lord would, as He always does, send the testimony before He did the fact. It is this gospel of the kingdom, then, that is to be preached before the end comes of Jewish circumstances to Jewish disciples, and this to the nations. The cry to the virgins is the personal approach of Christ, the Bridegroom of the bride.

226 From verse 15 we have a much more precise scene, a local scene; we have the holy place, and Daniel, and Judaea, and definite local circumstances, and prescribed conduct, when the abomination of desolation was seen standing in the holy place. "He that readeth, let him understand." Then those in Judaea were to flee to the mountains, for then shall be great tribulation here when this idol dishonour is

set up in the holy place; no more testimony, for they are the days of vengeance, in Jerusalem or Judaea; they are to flee to the mountains; for the elect's sake, however, these days of tribulation shall be shortened. Isaiah 65:9-22 Will shew who these elect are. During this period there will not only be false prophets, but false christs, present promised deliverers from the great tribulation, "Jacob's trouble"; but the elect were told beforehand; they were to pray, being Jews, that their flight might not be on the sabbath.

This was Jewish tribulation, from which the obedient remnant were exempt (they fled), and in which there was therefore no immediate testimony; not a period in which they were delivering up the remnant to the Gentiles. Nothing now was to be done. After this (v. 29) earthly power was to be put out in its imperial, derivative, and subordinate character, and the powers generally should be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of man would appear, and the tribes of the land (and indeed every eye) should see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven; and next, after this, He would send and gather, by His power and providence, the scattered remnant of Israel yet abroad in the world. These days of tribulation were shortened, that flesh might be saved - the only salvation spoken of in this part of the chapter; and the taking would be as the taking in the days of Noah in judgment, the left as Noah's family in mercy.

227 From verse 45 we have another scene, the place in which the then disciples were really going to be set, put on the ground of responsibility in which any would so stand who were in it, when the Lord came - Who then is a faithful and wise servant? They were made rulers over his household. We are the household of God, the Son's house; meat was to be given; the effect of faithfulness in this, reigning with Christ when He comes, "He shall make him ruler over all his goods" (v. 47).

The apostasy of the church consists in saying in heart, as settling itself here, "my Lord delayeth his coming." And so it did. The effect shewn in ruling as lords over the fellow-servants (hierarchical or clerical assumption in the absence of Christ), beating instead of feeding, and intercourse and communion with the world, eating and drinking with the drunken. A portion with hypocrites (for they never lose the profession of servants) is adjudged to them, the Lord of that servant coming. At this coming of the Lord, the church will be viewed and brought into its real aspect as regards those that make profession.

It is like ten virgins who went forth to meet the Bridegroom the original character of the instruction is here maintained. The bride is not mentioned; the virgins are Christians - the bride would be earthly Jerusalem. The virgins are called to meet Him in His coming to the marriage. But the bride is entirely omitted and passed over; for as yet, till the Lord came, the bride though loved, was nothing and nobody, hidden and lost, as it were, save to Him who, though He tarried long, still loved her. The virgins then, in whom we find therefore the similitude of the kingdom of heaven\* again introduced, present the professing church as to its character and position in grace, as the talents do its service and gifts; of this we have to note some simple but very important testimony.

{\*The kingdom of heaven I believe to be the setting up of Christ's kingdom consequent upon His taking His place in heaven.}

228 First, the original character and calling of the church: "they went forth to meet the bridegroom"; the condition they were found to be in - "they all slumbered and slept." When the end was coming, the godly and ungodly were found mixed together. Nor was this all: the godly had as much lost sight of their calling and original character as the mere professor, they all slumbered and slept. The sense of the Bridegroom's immediate approach they had lost; they became all insensible to this\* while the Bridegroom tarried.

{\*We have thus the clear scriptural statement of what has actually taken place, and God's judgment of the state godly men were in, men who had oil in their vessels with their lamps.}

Christ the Bridegroom tarried in His return to earth. The church at large, gracious or merely professing, all lost the present sense of this as their calling. Next, that which awoke them - awoke the professing church - was the cry, Behold the Bridegroom [cometh], go ye out to meet Him. The original call of the church they were aroused to, and in language which implied that, though not nominally, they had practically sunk into that world, out of which they had originally been called to meet Him: "Go ye out to meet him." This then, and this only, is the cry which awakens the church to its original position. In the next place, it finds all sleeping, and in a situation out of which they were to go to meet Him. Further, some time elapses before the Bridegroom comes, after the cry, so as to prove who had grace and who had not; for the effect of putting them in this position was to try if they had grace, which could alone sustain awakened life-giving position. The separation of professors from the church who join with Him is revealed to be the effect of the cry before the Lord comes at all. The wise only are there to meet Him. There cannot be a more simple, or more important parable than this, if the force of the words, by divine aid and teaching, be simply followed. I believe the words, "in which the Son of man cometh," chapter 25:13, should be omitted. The term Son of man being properly always of His earthly or Jewish coming.

229 The next parable is not the position and character of the church tried as ready to meet Him, but the service done in His absence.\* The Lord called His own servants and gave them according to their several ability, and took His journey. Grace, we shall see, made all the difference in character and acceptance, though gift might meet, according to divine appointment, its appropriate reward, being exercised through grace. There are three things in the parable. First, the talents conferred by Christ on His own servants, which shews that they are not natural faculties or worldly opportunities, but such as are peculiar to the servants of Christ, as such, given on His departure; next, these are conferred according to the competency or fitness of the vessel, "a man is a chosen vessel" who receives the gifts, and there is the capacity of the vessel, as well as the extent and character of the gift. The use of it was a different thing, the one talent was given according to ability as well as the five; the giving according to ability proved the fitness of God's appointment, and responsibility it may be in him to whom it was given; but the just or any use of the talent did not depend upon this. The possession of the talent constituted the responsibility for its use, for even men do not light a candle to put it under a bushel. That which led to its use is another thing, not the recognition of man or appointment through man; on the contrary, it is rested on something which is first framed to condemn and exclude that. The grace which used it is personal confidence in the character and acceptance of God; the grace is proved by, and rests for its exhibition on, that confidence in the Lord, which uses the talent by virtue of its personal acquaintance with and trust in His character; this is the thing characterising the difference between the good and evil servants. He was a good servant who acted on his personal confidence in the Lord's character, a bad servant who did not. This absolutely and pointedly excludes human appointment or recognition as the ground of the use of the gift.

{\*This is characteristic of both these parables: - they suppose the knowledge of a Lord absent, of a Bridegroom coming, with whose coming in love to the Jews they are familiar and take an interest in. Consequently we find in the Jewish part previous signs, warnings, and what would happen, given to a remnant wanting all these things in the midst of a careless nation, "not desired", to the church none, for they are supposed to know and have their direction from a known but absent yet returning Lord. In the Gentile judgment it is neither of these, but a fresh testimony sent out, and they dealt with according to the manner they had received His witnesses who bore it.}

230 However the gift may be clearly recognised, and will be by spiritual judgment after it is used, yet faithfulness consists in using it in confidence in the Lord's character; unfaithfulness in waiting for something else. It cannot be personal grace thus characterised, if human appointment or any appointment by man be waited for.\* The points marked as the consequence on the Lord's return are two. First, there is a large reward given in government, ruler over many things. Secondly, actual personal association with Christ in blessing, not being blessed under Him as ruled over, but "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." It does not seem that the energy and power of the Holy Ghost is taken away, though the scene of its exercise may be different (rule and joy instead of trading as a servant), save from the unprofitable servant, who is cast outside the light and glory of the kingdom. Let us remember that faithfulness consists in the use of a gift upon the ground of personal individual confidence in the character of the Lord as our master; and that this is the evidence of grace; waiting for anything else, of the want of it. The not using the talent when he had it flowed from positively false notions of God, thoughts of evil, the absence of grace, and a principle entirely condemned by the Lord as the proof of evil.

{\*Some running before they are sent, and having no gift, does not prove that they who are sent should not run; rather the contrary, these are the counteracting good. It is not, ought to have a talent to run, but ought they, having it, to wait for man's sanction, or any sanction, before they run?}

Lastly. We come to the Gentiles; hitherto it has been instruction to a remnant on the earth, the Jews previous to His coming; then how He would deal with Christians upon His coming, they being caught up to meet Him, and going in with Him to the marriage (to wit, with Jerusalem and the Jews). Here we have what is consequent on His coming, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." This shall not be a passing act, but He shall then sit upon the throne of His glory, the glory of the Son of man, for now He is spoken of as coming as such to earth; not till then shall He sit upon the throne of the Son of man's glory, though divine glory be ever His. Then He shall not only come in His glory, but He shall sit upon the throne of it, and the nations, the Gentiles, as before the Jews and the church are brought before Him. As to them it is in elect purpose they are spared; the kingdom was prepared for them before the foundation of the world; they have life eternal, though as yet it is in earthly blessings; and the evidence of their condition was in the way they had treated His brethren, a distinct class from both sheep and goats (the former for that reason not being called "children," that is, a title peculiar in its fulness to this dispensation, "there shall they be called the children of the living God"). Further, we find that the judgment to which the goats are subjected is previous to, and only one as yet prepared for, the devil and his angels.

231 There is no association here for the blessed with the Lord in His own joy and fellowship - the first-born among many brethren, but merely the enjoyment of the prepared kingdom by reason of the way in which they had treated certain other persons whom the Lord calls brethren. This, then, is the session of the Son of man in the throne of His glory, all nations gathered before Him; and the one portion adjudged to blessing in the kingdom prepared for them, and possessing eternal life, judged according to the manner in which they had treated the brethren, the messengers of the kingdom; the rest, to the place prepared for the devil and his angels.

Thus the Jews, the Christians, the Gentiles, are judged as to the position in which the Lord finds them here (Christians, however, actually meeting Him in His return). The judgment is taken up at the close, and none of the statements in many of the details are specifically applicable to any but those found ready or unready then, but the principles would apply even according to that which we have seen at the outset, concerning Isaiah's prophecy. It would always apply. It did so definitely for desolation on the rejection of

Messiah; so here the principles will apply at any time. The time of real application and fulfilment is previous, at, and subsequent to, the personal coming of the Lord; then the words directly lay hold, and the description simply applies, and as all those to whom it simply applies meet with present temporal judgment, so those to whom it applies in principle are reserved for the day when God shall judge the secrets of men's hearts. So was it with Isaiah's "make the heart of this people fat"; in the case of blessing, there is a difference, because all the saints are to be then brought into the blessing. There the long tarrying is mentioned, and the virgins are looked at as a corporate representation of the professing church during this tarrying, with the effects added not of the coming but of the cry (for they were indeed to meet Him) in rousing them for His approach, the cry being here, and the immediate application therefore earthly as to the rest. This special application at the close, when the judgment actually reached, of what was true in principle all along, while judgment did not reach, but which shall take place as to them at the judgment, when God judges secrets, is nothing more than we find to be God's ordinary way of dealing. Thus the way in which any whom Jesus is not ashamed to call brethren are treated would be ground of judgment in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men's hearts; but it has an actual manifested accomplishment in the judgment of the quick upon earth, instruction too and the object of faith. I mention this because it is often a difficulty, while this is the usage of God in His application of His word.

232 I have now gone through as simply as I could these passages, deriving merely from the passage, according to that given me, what the passage actually taught. Thus it seems to me most is really communicated, and most progress made, such as can be relied upon as sure; however our minds may work under the influence of the Spirit of God, and connect many passages together for our own profit. And I pray the Lord to bless it, simple as it is, to the edification of His people, and to teach them in heart to watch and wait for His appearing. Having heard Him announce "Behold I come quickly," may they say in guileless truth by the Spirit, "Even so, come Lord Jesus," separate in the power of the Holy Ghost, and longing beyond all thought or human wish for that; and if He who is the Yea and the Amen of every promise, says "Yea, I am coming quickly, Amen!" answer in the power of the same Spirit, the echo of the Spirit in His heart from Him who says it, "Yea, Come!" and say Amen to grace as our only, constant, and sure hope of being with Him. Amen.

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