

## REJECTION IMAGERY IN THE SYNOPTIC PARABLES\*

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Synthesizing a biblically based soteriology, especially when attempting to relate works to faith, is an area of theology that attracts much attention.<sup>1</sup> One aspect of the relationship of works to faith pertains to the requirements for entrance into or rejection from the kingdom of God. This two-part series discusses how Jesus' parables contribute to this area of theology.

After clarifying the meaning of "rejection," this first article identifies the parables important to the topic and explores the imagery used to describe this rejection. The second article addresses the impact of the imagery on the interpretation of the parables themselves, identifies the nature of the criteria God will use to accept or reject an individual from the eschatological kingdom, and suggests how Jesus' parabolic teaching may help in synthesizing Synoptic and Pauline expressions of soteriology and the relationship of faith to works.

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\*This is article one in a two-part series.

<sup>1</sup> For example John F. MacArthur Jr., *The Gospel according to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988); Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation: What It Means to Believe in Jesus Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1989); Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free: A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989); Livingston Blauvelt Jr., "Does the Bible Teach Lordship Salvation?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 (January–March 1986): 37-45; Darrell L. Bock, "Jesus as Lord in Acts and in the Gospel Message," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 (April-June 1986): 146-54; idem, "A Review of The Gospel According to Jesus," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146 (January–March 1989): 21-40; Zane C. Hodges, "Review of 'A Review of The Gospel according to Jesus,' by Darrell L. Bock," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 2 (1989): 79-83; S. Lewis Johnson Jr., "How Faith Works," *Christianity Today*, September 22, 1989, and 21-25.

## THE "REJECTION" MOTIF

The "rejection" motif found in certain parables is the element that describes a judgment to be carried out at the end of the age. The description of judgment most frequently focuses on the one being rejected. When an acceptance or "reward" element is also present, it is usually employed as a dramatic foil to highlight what is missed by those who are rejected.<sup>2</sup> Each parable with such a motif is designed to challenge all hearers in light of their current response to Jesus: Is the listener prepared for the end? While many portions of the Gospels present Jesus' teachings on the kingdom or eternal life, or a challenge to discipleship (including the demands to believe in the Son of Man, to give up all, to take up one's cross, and so forth), few passages picture the end-time consummation of the kingdom and the subsequent judgment (rejection or acceptance) as clearly as do the parables.

Ten parables include material that reflects such an eschatological rejection motif: the Tares (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43); the Dragnet (Matt. 13:47-50); two banquet parables: the Wedding Banquet (Matt. 22:1-14)<sup>3</sup> and the Narrow Door (Luke 13:22-30, because of its allusion to the eschatological banquet); and four parables from Matthew's eschatological discourse along with two Lucan "parallels": the Good and Bad Servants (Matt. 24:45-51; Luke 12:41-48), the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30), the similar Minas (Luke 19:11-27), and the Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats (Matt. 25:31-46).

<sup>2</sup> This is clearly seen, for example, in the parables of the Narrow Door (Luke 13:22-30), the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), and the Sheep and the Goats (Matt. 25:31-46). In each parable those who are given "rewards" are specifically contrasted with those who are omitted. In the Narrow Door, those left out attempt to gain entrance but are denied since they are unknown to the head of the house: "I do not know where you are from" (Luke 13:25).

<sup>3</sup> The Great Supper parable of Luke 14:15-24, while similar to Matthew 22:1-14, is viewed as inappropriate for this discussion because in Luke its primary application is to the coming rejection of national Israel (certified by the destruction of Jerusalem). Luke's version is indeed a kingdom parable (Luke 14:15), but the criteria for inclusion in the present discussion are more narrow. The emphasis in Luke is on the rejection of those who have been invited (the Jewish people) and their replacement by those who inhabit the highways and the hedges in the city. Luke's primary focus is the filling of the house for the dinner (14:21b-23)—not the rejection of those who might finally fill that house. This filling, in Luke's account, is to be made up of the "outcasts" of Israel. (This does not ignore Lucan hints of Gentile inclusion [e.g., 20:16], but this parable is presented as directed at the people of Israel, or more specifically, their leaders; 14:1.) This example of rejection is directed toward those who have been previously invited, a reference to Jesus' contemporaries and His audience. There is no comment about the nature of the acceptance of those subsequently invited, as in the Matthean account. For these reasons Luke 14 is omitted from the following study.

## REJECTION IMAGERY

Several elements of rejection imagery in these parables require attention: (1) the picture of "the furnace of fire" (Tares, Dragnet; cf. Sheep and Goats); (2) the phrase "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Tares, Dragnet, Wedding Banquet, Narrow Door, Good and Bad Servants [Matthew's version], Talents); (3) the image of "outer darkness" (Wedding Banquet, Talents); (4) the concept of a shut door (Narrow Door, Ten Virgins); (5) the phrase "I do not know you" (Narrow Door, Ten Virgins); (6) the force of *διχνοτομέω* ("cut in pieces," Good and Bad Servants [both Lucan and Matthean versions]); and (7) the concept behind the removal of the talents and minas from the unfaithful servants (Talents, Minas). Other important elements cannot be developed at length here,<sup>4</sup> but some conclusions about them will be noted in the second article.

## "THE FURNACE OF FIRE"

Jesus spoke of the "furnace of fire" in His interpretation of the Tares (Matt. 13:42) and of the Dragnet (13:50).<sup>5</sup> In these parables the phrase *εἰς τὴν κάμινον τοῦ πυρός* speaks of separation. The tares will be separated out to be burned at the harvest,<sup>6</sup> and the bad

<sup>4</sup> Examples include the wedding garment of Matthew 22, the tares and various kinds of fish in Matthew 13, the conceptual framework of the banquets, and the varied judgments of those slaves who do or do not know the master's will in Luke 12:47-48.

<sup>5</sup> The concept of eternal fire (*τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον*) is also found in the judgment of the sheep and goats (Matt. 25:46). In Matthew 13:40 Jesus simply used the dative *πυρὶ* ("burned with fire"), another common usage for judgment. The symbolism of such a fire is found in the Old Testament, in intertestamental writings, and in the New Testament (e.g., Gen. 19:24; Exod. 9:24; Lev. 10:2; Num. 11:1; Dan. 3:6; Amos 1:4, 7; *T. Levi* 10:2; 4 *Ezra* 7:38; 13:10; *Bar.* 37:1; 44:15; *Jub.* 9:15; 3:10; *Sib. Or.* 2:186ff., 238ff.; Matt. 3:10; 7:19; Luke 3:9; John 15:6). In addition this was a common motif in the Qumran writings: (1QS 2:8; 4:13; 1QH 3:25ff. [the "little apocalypse"]; 17:13). Revelation 9:17 also identifies horses coming on the scene to execute God's judgment with smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. In several cases "fire" is seen as representing the opposite of the kingdom of God (Matt. 13:42; 18:8-9; 25:41; cf. Mark 9:43, 45, 47; 9:48; the "hell of fire"). There seems to be no doubt that fire emphasizes eternal judgment on God's enemies. "In the post-exilic period it was expected that Yahweh would appear to bring history to its consummation, and fire is the token announcing the day of Yahweh (Joel 2:30). The enemies of Yahweh will be destroyed by fire and the sword (Isa. 66:15f.; Eze. 38:22; 39:6; Mal. 4:1). According to Isa. 66:24, the effects will be far-reaching: those condemned in the judgment will be continuously tormented by fire" (Hans Bietenhard, "πῦρ," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* [1975], 1:655).

<sup>6</sup> The picture of the "harvest" is commonly used as a reference to the eschatological separation of those who follow after God and those who do not. Old Testament verses that speak of a harvest in reference to the eschatological judgment and separation include Isaiah 17:11 and Joel 3:13 (cf. Jer. 51:33; Hos. 6:11; these last two refer to the temporal judgment of God on Babylon and Ephraim, though the idea of coming judgment and rejection is still clear).

(σαπρός, v. 48) fish will be separated out for destruction.<sup>7</sup> Jesus identified the tares as "sons of the evil one"<sup>8</sup> in contrast to "the sons of the kingdom" (v. 38), and the bad fish are identified as the wicked in contrast to the righteous (v. 49). In other words the parable depicts a separation between the righteous and the wicked at the end of the age (ἐν τῇ συντελείᾳ τοῦ αἰῶνος). For the wicked this separation involves the destruction and punishment of a furnace of fire.

Fire in relation to eternal punishment is mentioned in Matthew 5:22 and 18:9, which refer to the Gehenna of fire (τῆν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός).<sup>9</sup> Mark 9:43-44 identifies hell as a place of unquenchable fire; Matthew 25:41 refers to a place of eternal fire, specifically reserved for the devil and his angels (cf. Rev. 19:20-21); and Luke 16:23-24 refers to the rich man crying out in his agony in the flames of Hades.<sup>10</sup> Other Old Testament and intertestamental<sup>12</sup> passages strongly support the notion that such

<sup>7</sup> Some have objected that a furnace of fire seems out of place for a separation of fish, raising questions about the authenticity of the interpretation of the dragnet (e.g., David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New Century Bible Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981], 238). But as Carson points out, the so-called problem of the mixed metaphor (throwing the fish into the furnace) only occurs when one does not shift from the reference to the referent. The reference in verses 47-48 is to fish; but, as with the tares, it is clear that the referent is the wicked. "To be consistent . . . [an interpreter] would also have to object that the tares, when burned (v. 42), do not weep and gnash their teeth" (Donald A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984], 8:330). Cf. Jack Dean Kingsbury, *The Parables in Matthew 13: A Study in Redaction Criticism* (Richmond: Knox, 1969), 165-66, n. 143.

<sup>8</sup> These "sons of the evil one" (13:38) correspond to τοὺς ποιῶντας τὴν ἀνομίαν in 13:41. Cf. John's accusatory "offspring of vipers" (Matt. 3:7) and Jesus' words, "You are of your father the devil" (John 8:44). Such a division into two radically opposed groups is common in biblical literature. The Qumran covenanters would identify the "good" as the sectaries, while the "evil" are those who are outside (cf. 1QS 2.4; 4.17). But part of the difference between Qumran and the New Testament is that Jesus exhorted His disciples to leave the ultimate separation until God Himself performs the deed on the last day; Qumran insisted on the separation while men still reside in this world.

<sup>9</sup> *Second Esdras* 7:36 also uses "Gehenna of fire" to refer to hell.

<sup>10</sup> One must be careful about arguing from a parable for details concerning the nature of the abodes for punishment. Still this picture created by Jesus probably reflects common thinking of the time and His hearers would have understood His reference. For recent study on the topic of Gehenna, see Hans Scharen, "Gehenna in the Synoptics," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (1992): 324-37, 454-70.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Isaiah 66:15-16; Jeremiah 29:22; Ezekiel 38:22; 39:6; Daniel 3:6 (a text that clearly connects the furnace with death); Zephaniah 1:18; 3:8; and Zechariah 12:6.

<sup>12</sup> An example of a verse that clearly connects this fire and eternal soteriological rejection is 1 Enoch 103:2: "Their names shall be blotted out of the book of life and out of the holy books . . . and they shall cry and make lamentation in a place that is a chaotic wilderness, and in the fire shall they burn." Cf. 1 Enoch 18:11-16; 27:1-2; 54:1-6; 90:25-27; 91:9; 100:9; 102:1; 103:8; 2 Apoc. Bar. 37:1; 44:15; 48:39, 43; 59:2-3; 85:13;

imagery refers to a separation that is eschatological and ultimately soteriological.

Jesus used the imagery of the furnace of fire in the Tares and Dagnet parables to picture the eternal separation of "the sons of the kingdom" (Matt. 13:38), also called "the righteous" (13:49), from "those who commit lawlessness" (13:41), also identified as "the wicked" (13:49). Neither the imagery itself nor the context suggests anything other than eternal separation from God at the end of the age.

#### "WEEPING AND GNASHING OF TEETH"

The expression "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων)<sup>13</sup> occurs seven times (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28). Since this phrase does not appear in this specific wording in either classical Greek or the Septuagint,<sup>14</sup> the source of the suffering depicted by the phrase must be discerned from its context.

Six of the seven occurrences are found in the parables.<sup>15</sup> In the parable of the Tares (Matt. 13:41-42), the imagery refers to the grief experienced by "those who commit lawlessness" (τοὺς ποιοῦντοὺς τὴν ἀνομίαν), who will be cast into the furnace of fire. This is in contrast to "the righteous," who will "shine forth as the

*2 Esdras* 13:10–12; *Psalms of Solomon* 15:4–5; *Jubilees* 9:15; 36:10; 4 *Maccabees* 9:9; *Sibylline Oracles* 2:285–310; 3:54; 72–73, 542–44, 618, 672–73, 761; 4:160–61; *Assumption of Moses* 10:10; 1QS 2.8. Many more could be added.

<sup>13</sup> The use of the Greek article "indicates the unique and extreme character of the action" (Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d ed., rev. F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979], 434).

<sup>14</sup> The conceptual framework may be derived from verses such as *Psalms* 37:12 or 112:10. Although these examples are not eschatological, the idea of suffering is clear. The picture of "gnawing" one's tongue as a result of eschatological judgment from God, a conceptual parallel, is used in *Revelation* 16:10.

<sup>15</sup> Since this phrase is used outside parabolic texts only in *Matthew* 8:12, its use there is quite suggestive. (All the other examples are directly related to the study at hand.) Jesus used the phrase here to refer to the grief and pain of those who will recognize "Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven," while they, even though they are "sons of the kingdom," will be cast out (*Matt.* 8:12). An important fact to observe is the immediate connection this vignette has with the account of the centurion (8:5-10). Jesus' point in juxtaposing the exclusion of the "sons of the kingdom" with the centurion was to highlight the centurion's faith. (This is confirmed by Jesus' return to the topic of the man's faith after his denunciation in 8:13 of those who would be left out.) In other words their lack of faith would keep them out of the kingdom, in contrast to a Gentile's faith that gained Jesus' sanction and blessing. The implication is that his faith would allow him to be in the kingdom with those heroes of the faith all Jews would recognize, while "the sons of the kingdom" would ultimately be denied the kingdom experience. Such a comment about sonship is all the more pointed in light of *Matthew* 12:46-50, a pericope about true sonship and the importance of deeds that demonstrate such sonship.

sun in the kingdom of their Father" (v. 43). In the Dragnet parable the phrase describes the suffering of "the wicked" who will be separated from "the righteous" and cast into the Furnace of fire (13:49-50).<sup>16</sup> In the Matthean version of the Wedding Banquet (22:1-14), the man who is unprepared because of not having the appropriate garment is bound hand and foot and cast into outer darkness where "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (v. 13). In other words he will be rejected from the wedding banquet, to which the kingdom of heaven is compared (22:2). In the parable he came because he was invited; but he was rejected because he was not properly prepared. Luke's account of the Narrow Door (13:22-30) focuses not only on the narrowness of access to the kingdom,<sup>17</sup> but also on the certainty that the door will be shut sometime in the future so that those who do not enter before it closes will be locked out. (The imperative "to enter by the narrow door," v. 24, is motivated not by the narrowness of the door but by the assurance that it will be closed.) Those left outside<sup>18</sup> will ob-

<sup>16</sup> The term "righteous" is extremely important in Matthew. The word is used by Matthew to highlight those who are in conformity with God's requirements (whether based on God's demand or God's juridical provision) and thus will be a part of the kingdom, in contrast to those (the unrighteous) who will have no inheritance in the kingdom (J. A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972], 20; Gottlob Schrenk, "δικαίος, δικαιοσύνη," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 2 [1964]: 182-210; Gunther Bornkamm, "End-Expectation and Church in Matthew," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, ed. Gunther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, trans. Percy Scott [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963], 31; Benno Pryzbylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980], 41, see esp. 105-15 for an excellent summary of this discussion; and Horst Seebass and Colin Brown, "Righteousness, Justification," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* 3 [1978]: 352-77).

<sup>17</sup> That the door is being compared to some element of the kingdom is not made explicit in the parable itself, but is clear from the comparative element in the preceding two parables of the Mustard Seed (Luke 13:18-19) and the Leaven (13:20-21). The connection is further clarified by the question concerning how many shall be saved (v. 23). (The verb used is σώζω. That it refers to entry into the kingdom is strongly suggested both by the context and by passages such as Luke 18:18-26 where the phrases "to inherit eternal life" [v. 18], "to enter the kingdom of God" [v. 24], and "who then can be saved?" [v. 26] are synonymous concepts.) The kingdom in the preceding short parables was portrayed as growing and being very expansive. But the question of the real size of the kingdom, as measured by the total number being saved, is an appropriate one. Some writers see the question in 13:23 as reflecting how some will speculate long and hard on worthless subjects: "Much time wasted in vain speculation could be put to better use in gospel proclamation" (Hendriksen, *Luke*, 717). G. B. Caird puts it a little more diplomatically: "Idle speculation can only distract men's attention from the one clear and urgent fact that the kingdom of God is present and the door is open" (*The Gospel of St. Luke* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963], 172).

<sup>18</sup> Again, those who are left out are identified as evildoers (πάντες ἔργαται ἀδικίας, Luke 13:27). The description of those who are rejected is frequently related to terms associated with their deeds.

serve those who are at the banquet of the kingdom (v. 29) and, knowing that they have missed the privilege of being in the presence of the heroes of the faith, will experience grief expressed in "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (v. 28).

Matthew used the phrase again in his version of the Good and Bad Servants (24:45-51), applying the experience of remorse to the wicked (κακός) servant (v. 48) who is assigned a place with the hypocrites (v. 51).<sup>19</sup> To intensify the severity of the punishment, Jesus said that the master will "cut him in pieces" (διχοτομήσει αὐτόν). Jesus also used the phrase in referring to the woeful experience of the wicked and lazy slave (25:26) who will have "even what he does have taken away" (v. 29) and will be cast into outer darkness (v. 30).

Such examples show that Jesus used this phrase idiomatically, specifically when referring to the suffering experienced by those rejected from the kingdom. The phraseology by itself need not require an eschatological/soteriological setting for the suffering and grief,<sup>20</sup> but the contexts show that Jesus consistently used the phrase that way.<sup>21</sup> As Jeremias summarizes, "Weeping and

<sup>19</sup> In light of the previous reference to hypocrites in Matthew 23, it is difficult to escape the notion that Jesus assumed that such an assignment is to be equated with rejection from the kingdom. In Matthew 23:13 Jesus spoke of hypocrites as those who not only shut the kingdom off from others but who also themselves do not enter. In 23:15 Jesus identified them (specifically referring to the scribes and the Pharisees) and their "converts" as "sons of hell" (υἱὸν γέεννης). Hodges takes an alternative view here: "This servant had become a hypocrite. Not a hypocrite in the sense that he only pretended to be a Christian. Such a thought is totally extraneous to this text" (*Grace in Eclipse*, 30 [italics his]). However, this understanding of "hypocrite" is not extraneous, but is the very point of the text. R. T. France writes, "The unfaithful disciple can therefore expect no better fate than the 'hypocrites' who have been castigated in ch. 23 for not doing what their professed position demanded" (*The Gospel according to Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985], 249 [italics his]). In the Septuagint the word for "hypocrites" could be translated "godless." In the Psalms of Solomon 4:7, 25 the term is used by the Pharisees of the Sadducees who were considered worldly (Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew*, trans. David E. Green [Atlanta: Knox, 1975], 143). Although the term initially refers to one who is an actor, and could indicate unconscious hypocrisy, the clear assumption in this parable is that the man did it on his own volition: "he said in his heart" (Matt. 24:48). Therefore the consignment is to be understood as a divine passive: the deliberate sinner is cut off by God (cf. 1QS 2:13).

<sup>20</sup> Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, 89-90, 118-19, nn. 3, 5.

<sup>21</sup> The term κλαυθμός refers to weeping because of sorrow over a loss (cf. Luke 6:25; Acts 20:37; James 4:9; 5:1; Rev. 18:11). On the other hand βρυγμός refers to "rage" as seen in the grinding chatter of teeth in anger (cf. Acts 7:54; Prov. 19:12; Sir. 51:3) and is often used in the Septuagint to express the hatred shown by enemies (Job 16:9; Pss. 35:16; 37:12; 112:10; Lam. 2:16). See Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, "κλαυθμός," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 3 (1965): 725-26; idem, "βρυγμός," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 1 (1964): 641-42; Hermann Haarbeck "κλαίω," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* 2 (1976): 417. "While it is true that in many instances the usage of [βρύχω] in the expression 'to

gnashing of teeth is . . . a symbol of despair, always because salvation has been forfeited through one's own fault."<sup>22</sup>

### "OUTER DARKNESS"

The phrase εἰς τό σκότος τό ἑξώτερον (literally, "into the darkness that is farthest out"<sup>23</sup> occurs only three times in the New Testament (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). In 8:12, Jesus described where the "sons of the kingdom" (οἱ δὲ υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας) will be cast (ἐκβληθήσονται) because of their lack of faith.<sup>24</sup> The rejection of the way of faith (exemplified by the centurion) by the people of Israel would remove them from their rightful and expected role as sons and heirs of the kingdom. In the parable of the Wedding Banquet (Matt. 22:1-14) the man who is bound hand and foot is cast into outer darkness. And in the Talents parable (Matt. 25:14-30) outer darkness is the place to which the third servant (the wicked and lazy slave, v, 26) will be sentenced.

The most common interpretation of this phrase, that it refers to hell itself, is consistent with Jewish and intertestamental literature. Texts uniting judgment, darkness, and the dead abound: "Behold they have surely died; and from now on they shall never see light forever" (1 *Enoch* 102:8). "But when the judgment of the world and of mortals has already come, which God himself will perform, judging impious and pious at once,

gnash the teeth' connotes anger, the association of the word with [κλαυθμός] (weeping), and the figure of torment that accompanies the term in Matt. 13:41, 50 seems to indicate that the gnashing of the teeth is not an indication of rage but of extreme suffering and remorse" (Thomas McComisky, "βρύχω," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* 2 [1976]: 421).

<sup>22</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *Rediscovering the Parables* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1966), 82.

<sup>23</sup> Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 279. While it could simply carry the idea of something that is outside in comparison with something that is inside, the usage here probably favors the nuance noted above.

<sup>24</sup> While it is true that Matthew 13:38 uses "sons of the kingdom" explicitly in contrast with those who are "sons of the evil one" (οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ πονηροῦ), it is difficult methodologically to assume that 13:38 informs the very differing context of Matthew 8:12 (contra Gregory P. Sapaugh, "A Call to the Wedding Celebration: An Exposition of Matthew 22:1-14," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Theological Society* 5 [1992]: 29). The imagery used in 8:12 relates to national heirship on the part of the Jews. The natural antecedent to "sons of the kingdom," they will be rejected from enjoying the kingdom banquet because of their lack of faith. (The banquet motif is made clear by the presence of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob reclining.) The pointedness of the whole pericope (8:5-13) is that those who were prepared as "sons" will ultimately forfeit their covenantal right to look forward to the messianic kingdom. Israel had been selected for the kingdom, but their disobedience and lack of faith (unlike the centurion) doomed their national rights, consistent with the conditions of the Deuteronomic promise to curse them if they did not stay faithful to Yahweh (cf. Deut. 28:15-68; 31:14-21).



then he will also send the impious down into the gloom of fire, and then they will realize what impiety they committed" (*Sib. Or.* 4:40-44). "Therefore their [sinners' and criminals] inheritance is hades, and darkness and destruction; and they will not be found on the day of mercy for the righteous" (*Pss. Sol.* 14:9). "And the inheritance of sinners is destruction and darkness, and their lawless actions shall pursue them below into hades" (*Pss. Sol.* 15:10).

Frequently intertestamental literature mentions hell and fire together.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, intertestamental writers did not have a problem relating darkness and fire,<sup>26</sup> in contrast to some modern writers. Lang, for instance, feels that hades or hell cannot be the meaning of "outer darkness." Since the rich man in Luke 16:23 (who, Lang says, was clearly suffering eternal perdition) was able to see Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, hades could not have been a place of darkness. Nor does it square with the imagery of the lake of fire (Rev. 14:10; 19:20; 20:10), according to Lang. As he writes, "Darkness and flaming fire are incompatible."<sup>27</sup> But such an approach lacks semantic sensitivity. He attempts to apply this binding and casting into outer darkness to believers. But it is far more likely that fire and darkness are different pictures of the same reality.

The New Testament consistently affirms that belief in Christ unites an individual with God's kingdom of "light." Therefore the casting of a child of light into the outermost reaches of darkness contrasts with the motifs of light and darkness and the revealed realities of salvation.<sup>28</sup> To be in outer darkness indicates that one is not related to light. They are incompatible. This separation is most clearly seen in the Gospel of John. Those who be--

<sup>25</sup> Cf. 1 *Enoch* 1:18, 23, 24, 38, 71, 72, 81, 84, 88; 2 *Enoch* 1:118-19, 188; *Sibylline Oracles* 1:323, 324, 333, 385, 409, 469, 471; and many others. "Casting out" is associated with "the darkness" in 1 *Enoch* 10:4, which is an especially appropriate parallel to Matthew 22:13.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Sibylline Oracles* 4:40-44.

<sup>27</sup> George Henry Lang, *The Parabolic Teaching of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 305-8. Lang's point that most feasts took place at night—suggesting that the darkness simply refers to a place outside the palace lights from a banquet, is difficult to sustain. Lang admits that much is not clear about this imagery, but he affirms that there is a clear distinction between "outer darkness" and the "furnace of fire" mentioned in Matthew 13. His point is that some believers are "experientially" outside the kingdom of God, whatever that means.

<sup>28</sup> Hans Conzelmann, "φῶς," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 9 (1974): 310-58, esp. 343-56; idem, "σκότος," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 7 (1974): 423-45, esp. 438-45; H-C. Hahn, "φῶς," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* 2 (1976): 490-96; idem, "σκότος," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* 1 (1975): 421-25.

lieve in Christ become "sons of light" (υἱοὶ φωτός, John 12:35-36) and no longer remain in darkness (v. 46; cf. Matt. 5:14, 16; Luke 16:8; John 1:4-9, 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5).

In all three occurrences the phrase εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον (as with "weeping and gnashing of teeth") is used virtually as a technical idiom for the place where people are cast when rejected from the kingdom.<sup>29</sup> More precisely, they are cast into hell.

Calvin's comments on the Banquet parable in Matthew summarize the view adopted here: "Outer darkness is contrasted with the light which is within the house; for, as banquets were held, for the most part, at night, and were illuminated by numerous torches and lamps, of those who are banished from the kingdom of God, Christ says, that they are cast without into darkness."<sup>30</sup>

#### THE DOOR THAT IS SHUT

In the parables of the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) and the Narrow Door (Luke 13:22-30) Jesus referred to a door that is shut. In the parable of the Virgins the door is pictured as the way of entrance into a wedding banquet—the feast being a picture already

<sup>29</sup> Each time the phrase is used there is either a clear connection to a banquet or an allusion to it (or a similar conceptual context). In the Talents the phrase "enter into the joy of your master" (Matt. 25:21, 23) is viewed by many writers as suggestive of an invitation to a banquet (many connect this directly with the eschatological banquet). Some see a connection between the Hebrew term חַבְדָּה and banquet feasting (Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1907], 970; 2 Chron. 30:23; Neh. 8:12; 12:27). The connection is rather strongly made in Gustaf Hermann Dalman, *The Words of Jesus: Considered in the Light of Post-Biblical Jewish Writings and the Aramaic Language* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1909), 117-18. Also see Hans Conzelmann, "χαρά," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 9 (1974): 363; Johannes Schneider, "εἰσέρχομαι," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 2 (1964): 677-78, n. 6 (his comment on the usage of this verb in eschatological contexts is very suggestive: e.g., Matt. 5:20; 7:13, 21; 19:17; cf. Mark 10:15; Luke 11:52; 13:24; 24:23); Joachin Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, trans. S. H. Hooke, 2d rev. ed. [New York: Scribner's Sons, 1972], 60; H. Benedict Green, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, New Clarendon Bible, New Testament (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 205; Pierre Bonnard, *L'Évangile selon Saint Matthieu*, Commentaire du Nouveau Testament (Paris: Delachaux et Niestle, 1963), 362-63.

<sup>30</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Harmony of the Evangelists*, trans. T. H. L. Parker, 3 vols. (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 2:445. For the same conclusion by a wide variety of interpreters, see Francis Wright Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 491; Floyd V. Filson, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew*, Harper's New Testament Commentary (New York: Harper & Bros., 1960), 266 ("complete and final rejection"); R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 986 ("none who are ἀρχρῆιος, useless to the Lord, can remain in his kingdom"). Craig Blomberg comments, "To argue . . . that the 'darkness' of Matt 25:30, which is 'outside' and in which there is 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' is simply a less desirable compartment in heaven defies all credulity" ("Degrees of Reward in the Kingdom of Heaven?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35 [1992]: 168).

used by Jesus to depict one's presence in the kingdom.<sup>31</sup> Those who were prepared (the five wise virgins) entered the feast through that door (25:10); after they entered, the door was shut. The five foolish virgins returned after the door was closed, but were rejected in their attempt to enter. Once the door was closed, it was too late to enter.

The same picture is drawn in Luke 13:22-30. While the parable initially depicts the door as "narrow" (διὰ τῆς στενῆς θύρας, v. 24), the movement of the parable is toward the closing of that door whereby the "evildoers" (πάντες ἐργάται ἀδικίας, literally, "everyone working unrighteousness," v. 27) will be kept out—even when they insist that they really do belong.<sup>32</sup> Ultimately the door leads not only to the joys of the festive banquet (13:28-29), but also to the eschatological kingdom.<sup>33</sup> Those who are shut out miss not simply a fine meal, but also the kingdom itself.

### "I DO NOT KNOW YOU"

Connected closely to the imagery of the door that closes is the response of the one who closes the door<sup>34</sup> to those who attempt to enter after it is shut. This response is important since it shows the finality of the closure and the reason for rejection. In the Narrow Door parable, the retort of the master of the house to the ones pleading for entrance is straightforward and is given twice: "I do not

<sup>31</sup> The feast depicts full communion with God in the kingdom (Isa. 25:6-8; Matt. 8:11; 22:1-14; 26:29; Luke 12:37; 14:15-24; 15:23-24; 22:36; Acts 10:41).

<sup>32</sup> That the door refers to entrance into the kingdom is suggested by the nature of the judgment declaration (its severity) and the subsequent punishment, the immediately preceding context of the kingdom parables (Luke 13:18-21), and the clear connection with the presence of the righteous dead (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, v. 28) who will be seated (ἀνακλιθήσονται) in the kingdom (v. 29). While some argue that the closing of the door cannot be equated with the eschatological consummation, this view usually results from supposing that Luke's view of the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 influenced him to include the following pericope (13:31-35) concerning Jesus' travel to Jerusalem and His assertion that "your house is left to you desolate" (13:35). See Helmuth L. Egelkraut, *Jesus' Mission to Jerusalem. A Redaction Critical Study of the Travel Narrative in the Gospel of Luke*, Lk 9:51–19:48 (Frankfort: Lang, 1976), 172, n. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Joachim H. Jeremias, "θύρα," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 3 (1965): 173-80, esp. 178.

<sup>34</sup> Luke 13:25 has ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης ("the owner of the house"), whereas Matthew 25:10 has ὁ νυμφίος ("the bridegroom"). Matthew 24:42-44 confirms that the reference to the groom in the Virgins is eschatological and ultimately points to Jesus Himself. That the "head of the household" in Luke 13:25 is also an allusion to Jesus Himself is suggested by the nature of the objection of those who are shut out. They press a claim on the kingdom because they were present when He taught in their villages. They had even eaten with Him. The connections with the ministry of Jesus seem obvious. Besides, with the closing of the door being identified in Luke 13:28-29 as the eschatological consummation, no other identification would make sense.

know where you are from" (οὐκ οἶδα ὑμᾶς πόθεν ἐστέ, Luke 13:25, 27). The phrase is worded somewhat differently from that which is used in Matthew 7:23 ("I never knew you"<sup>35</sup>), but the impact is identical. The context of Matthew 7:23 indicates some will claim they had performed deeds in His name, similar to those in Luke 13 who will contend they deserve the kingdom because they were present when Jesus performed miracles or because they ate with Him; yet they will be excluded. The idea is that, despite the "associations," the Master did not know these people, their concerns, nor "their antecedents."<sup>36</sup> As in Matthew 7, to have known Christ in the flesh gives those in Luke 13 no claim to admission into the kingdom. The reason for their exclusion is identified in the Old Testament quotation that follows (Luke 13:27): they were workers of iniquity (cf. Ps. 6:8, LXX).

In the Ten Virgins parable, the response of the groom to those who plead for entrance after the door is shut is virtually identical to the response of the head of the house in Luke 13: "Truly I say to you, I do not know you" (ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐκ οἶδα ὑμᾶς, Matt. 25:12).<sup>37</sup> Again the notion is that the groom claims to have no personal association with the five foolish virgins trying to gain entrance. This specific form of response does not occur in the rest of Matthew, but the close connection with the rejection passages noted above seems obvious: they will be left out of the wedding banquet. The implication for the kingdom teaching of this parable is that those represented by the five foolish virgins will not be allowed into the kingdom. "In the face of this chilly reception all that the late-comers can claim is superficial contact with Jesus [Luke 13:25-26]. They have sat at the same table with Him or have heard Him preach. They say in effect, 'You are one of us,' to which the answer is, 'You are none of mine.'"<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> The phrase "I never knew you" (οὐδέποτε ἔγνων ὑμᾶς) simply means "I will have nothing to do with you." The concept is likely rooted in the Old Testament; those who are God's people are "known" by Him and those not known by Him are not His people (Ps. 138:6; Isa. 63:16; Hos. 5:3; 13:5; Gal. 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:19).

<sup>36</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 566.

<sup>37</sup> This phrase was used by a rabbinic teacher in forbidding his student access to him for a period of seven days (Herman Lebrecht Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud and Midrasch*, 6 vols. (Munich: Beck, 1924-61), 1:149; 4:293. Obviously the time limitation does not seem to apply in this parable, though the essence of the rejection is apparently similar (whether or not the evidence used is anachronistic). Cf. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 175; Jan Lambrecht, "The Parousia Discourse: Composition and Content in Matt. xxiv-xxv," in *L'Évangile selon Matthieu: Redaction et théologie*, ed. M. Didier (Gembloux: Duculot, 1972), 160.

<sup>38</sup> T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (1949; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 125.

## THE VERB διχοτομέω

The parable of the Good and Bad Servants occurs in both Matthew (24:45-51) and Luke (12:41-48), and while there are some differences there is also much in common. One important shared element is the specific nature of the judgment handed down to that servant who is unfaithful in his assigned duties (Matt. 24:51; Luke 12:46). The Matthean servant is given punishment fitting for "hypocrites," while the Lucan servant is assigned a place with "unbelievers."<sup>39</sup> Both servants are subjected to severe judgment described in the phrase διχοτομήσει αὐτόν. The Revised Standard Version rather blandly translates these words "and [he] will punish him," but the New American Standard Bible suggests a different force: "and [he] shall cut him in pieces." The interpretation of this occurrence of the verb διχοτομέω is a thorny problem.<sup>40</sup>

Little doubt exists about the meaning of the verb. Yet because of its harshness in these parables, many try to soften it. Six options are suggested. The first three suggest that something in the Semitic original argues against the form found in the New Tes-

<sup>39</sup> These terms strongly suggest that the unfaithful servant is viewed as rejected from the kingdom. On Matthew's use of οἱ ὑποκριταί, see note 19 above, especially concerning the important link with the term in Matthew 23:13. While Luke used οἱ ἀπίστοι only two other times, neither time as a substantive (9:41; Acts 26:8), the term is used in the New Testament almost exclusively of unbelievers, and not simply of those who are unfaithful to a calling (with the possible exception of Matt. 17:17 = Mark 9:19 = Luke 9:41). This is similar to Paul's epistles, in which all 14 examples refer to unbelievers (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:6; 7:12-15; 2 Cor. 4:4; 6:14-15; Titus 1:15), and Johannine usage (John 20:27; Rev. 21:8). One may object to this interpretation on the grounds that a soteriological interpretation of "unbeliever" goes beyond the bounds of the parable's point. But the eschatological context of both parables and the obvious soteriological connections surrounding them indicate the salvific impact of the term.

On the other hand Hodges interprets οἱ ἀπίστοι as "the unfaithful" rather than as "the unbelievers" (*Grace in Eclipse*, 80, n. 9). Alfred Plummer (*The Gospel according to St. Luke*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: Clark, 1922), 333), and every other commentator consulted, interpret of οἱ ἀπίστοι as "unbelievers." Hodges's view also creates problems of consistency for the following elaboration on the punishments in Luke 12:47-48.

<sup>40</sup> The problem is identified by Paul Ellingworth, "Luke 12:46—Is There an Anticlimax Here?" *Bible Translator* 31 (1980): 242-43. In other words, is the assignment to the place of the nonbeliever in Luke 13 anticlimactic after διχοτομέω? Perhaps the question overstates the problem, but it does help identify the perplexity of the verb διχοτομέω. C. G. Montefiore suggests that dichotomizing is too strong (*The Synoptic Gospels*, 2 vols., 2d ed. [1927; reprint, New York: KTAV, 1968], 2:315). Cutting in two seems to make the following assignment irrelevant. (Is not "firing" strong enough? But to shoot the man and then burn him seems simply to add insult to injury.) Cf. C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, rev. ed. (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1961), 126, n. 1; John Drury, *The Parables in the Gospels: History and Allegory* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 102; Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 118 (who also identifies Luke 12:47-48 with the punishment in verse 46, making a larger problem out of the "anticlimax," for dichotomization is seen as virtually equivalent to lashings); and John R. Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable: Metaphors, Narrative and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 100.

tament. First, Manson proposes that the original Aramaic verb  $\text{ܡܚܠܝܩ}$ , "to take away, separate," was confused with the Hebrew verb  $\text{פָּרַק}$ , "to cut in pieces."<sup>41</sup> Second, Black believes that the original Aramaic statement was, "he will divide him his portion [with the hypocrites]" for the whole phrase  $\text{διχοτομήσει αὐτὸν καὶ τὸ μέρος αὐτοῦ μετὰ τῶν ὑποκριτῶν [ἀπίστων, in Luke 12:46] θήσει}$ .<sup>42</sup> But this stretches the meaning of the Greek verb, omits the impact of the  $\text{καὶ}$ , and ignores the final verb  $\text{θήσει}$ , all of which suggest two separate subject/compliment constructions in the phrase, not one.

Third, Jeremias takes a similar approach, though he wants to keep two phrases ("he will give him blows and treat him as a profligate") in the text. "The mention of the punishment of hell, introducing an element which transcends the limits of the parable, must, as has been independently recognized by various scholars, go back to an erroneous translation of the original Aramaic form of the parable. Originally, the ending preserved its earthly setting."<sup>43</sup> He suggests that the object of the verb  $\text{διχοτομήσει}$  was intended to be in the dative case, possibly rendering, "he will give him blows." Thus the translator wrongly took the  $\text{ܡܚܠܝܩ}$  in  $\text{ܡܚܠܝܩ ܡܚܠܝܩ}$ , as accusative and came up with "he will divide him."<sup>44</sup> But difficulty arises when trying to insert the word "blows."<sup>45</sup>

More profitable are the three views that assume the present text adequately reflects the original intention. Fourth, many take the wording to reflect its literal meaning.<sup>46</sup> The punishment is harsh, but not unheard of in ancient literature.<sup>47</sup> Those who object

<sup>41</sup> Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 118. Marshall suggests the linguistic basis for this shift is doubtful (*The Gospel of Luke*, 543).

<sup>42</sup> Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 3d. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 256-57. Cf. Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, 115.

<sup>43</sup> Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 57.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 57, n. 31.

<sup>45</sup> Otto Betz suggests that the insertion of "blows" was not important enough for the severe eschatological theme of judgment the text is trying to convey. This is a reasonable criticism ("The Dichotomized Servant and the End of Judas Iscariot [Light on the Dark Passages: Matthew 24, 51 and Parallel; Acts 1, 18]," *Revue de Qumran* 5 [1964]: 44).

<sup>46</sup> Carson implies this is his view ("Matthew," 511). Hill suggests that the severity of this verb is no worse than the tortures Jesus would endure (*The Gospel of Matthew*, 324).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. 1 Samuel 15:33; 2 Samuel 12:31; 1 Chronicles 20:3; and Amos 1:3. It was used in the Old Testament of dichotomizing an offering to be sacrificed (Gen. 15:10, 17; Exod. 29:17; Lev. 1:6; Ezek. 24:4 [cf. Heb. 11:37]). Such severity is also suggested in Luke 19:27. Cf. *Sus.* 59; Homer, *The Odyssey* 18.339; Suetonius, *Cal.* 27; and Herodotus 2.139.2; 7.39.5. Donahue sees a connection with the Persian punishment of dismemberment (*The Gospel in Parable*, 100). For other uses of the term  $\text{διχοτομέω}$  in antiquity, see Heinrich Schlier, " $\text{διχοτομέω}$ ," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 2 (1964): 225-26.

because it is too harsh (compared to its cause or because of the so-called "anticlimactic" quality of the subsequent punishment) miss the fact that the eternal consignment to hell (where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth") is worse than anything that could happen to a person's body (cf. Luke 12:4-5). Closely related to that is the fifth view that the verb *διχοτομέω* is a metaphorical reference to severe punishment. Several writers suggest it may be equivalent to the idiom, "I'll tan your hide."<sup>48</sup>

A sixth view, drawing on Qumran literature, suggests that the servant will be "cut off."<sup>49</sup> Betz has drawn together much literature to suggest that *διχοτομήσει αὐτὸν* is virtually equal to the phrase *ךְתִּכַּר מִתּוֹךְ*, "to cut off from the midst of."<sup>50</sup> In some passages the hypocrite is singled out for an evil end so that he will be cut off from the midst of the sons of light and be consigned a "portion" with those who are accursed eternally. One example reads, "May he be cut off from the midst of the sons of light because he swerved from following God. . . . May He place his lot in the midst of the eternally cursed" (1QS 2:16-17).<sup>51</sup> This text, besides showing that *διχοτομέω* can refer to separation from the believing community for judgment, also reflects the two-step consignment described by Jesus: first dichotomization, then assignment with the hypocrites/unfaithful (the arrangement that led the second element to be viewed as "anticlimactic" in the first place).

On the whole, the sixth view seems to carry the most weight,

<sup>48</sup> Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 543; Ellingworth, "Luke 12:46—Is There an Anti-Climax Here?" 242; Simon Kistemaker, *The Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 125 ("skin him alive"); John Martin Creed, *The Gospel according to St. Luke* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), 177; and Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, 79.

<sup>49</sup> This view is developed fully by Betz ("The Dichotomized Servant and the End of Judas Iscariot," 43-58). Marshall, who favors this view, indicates that the verb *διχοτομέω* is an "over-literal translation" of the original saying (*The Gospel of Luke*, 543). Carson finds the Qumran evidence "unconvincing," since he thinks the verb best reflects the Qumran view of excommunication ("Matthew," 511). Agbanou agrees with Betz in general, but he suggests that the Qumran covenanters allowed time for reformation within a temporal setting, while Jesus did not. But both writers seem to have missed the fact that Betz recognizes the differences and argues that the term points to eschatological judgment, not simply excommunication ("The Dichotomized Servant and the End of Judas Iscariot," 54).

<sup>50</sup> Betz suggests that the background for this whole teaching is rooted in Psalm 37 which contrasts the good with those who will be cut off (*כַּרְתִּי* in vv. 9, 22, 28, 34, 38) (ibid., 47). He points out that the normal translation of *כַּרְתִּי* would be *ἐκβάλλω*, which also carries eschatological overtones as seen in Matthew 25:30 (ibid., 56).

<sup>51</sup> The idea of cursing or dichotomizing is usually found in the passive and is to be understood as a divine passive. (Other passages of note include 1QS 1:10-11; 6:24-25; 7:1, 2, 16; 8:21-23). See the discussions in Andre Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran*, trans. Geza Vermes (1961; reprint, Gloucester, MA: Smith, 1973), 84-85, 87-89, 91-93; and Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1962), 82-86.

but views four and five are also possible. In view five the literal "dichotomization" works well within the parable for shock effect, but when applied to the eschatological judgment it is probably to be understood metaphorically. This distinction between the parabolic context and its symbolic referent may account for much of the concern to soften the harshness of the terminology and even to search for alternative approaches to the verse through Aramaic or Hebrew reconstruction.

The one who is "cut off" will also be assigned "a place with the hypocrites" (Matt. 24:51) or "with the unbelievers" (ἀπίστων, Luke 12:46). This "place" (τὸ μέρος αὐτοῦ) refers to one's share in something, and in this context means "to give someone [his or her] just due."<sup>52</sup> In other words after being dichotomized, he is to receive the same reward or punishment the hypocrites or unbelieving receive.<sup>53</sup> This condition is eschatological and permanent. If he takes no note of the coming return and deludes himself into thinking either it will never happen or he will have time to reform, there is no recourse for him; the punishment is both severe and eternal.

#### REMOVAL OF TALENT AND MINA FROM THE UNFAITHFUL SERVANT

While there are several differences between the parables of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30) and the Minas (Luke 19:11-27), the description of the rejection of the third, unfaithful servant has similar elements in both parables, and thus they will be dealt with together.<sup>54</sup> In both versions the third servant is pictured as demonstrating traits that are the exact opposite of the ones highly praised in the other two servants.<sup>55</sup> The offending slaves in both Luke and Matthew are described in terms far from flattering. In

<sup>52</sup> Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 57, n. 31; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 543; and Johannes Schneider, "μέρος," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 4 (1967): 594-98, esp., 596.

<sup>53</sup> See notes 19 and 39 above. Perhaps, as Marshall suggests, the consignment is exegetical to the dichotomization and is not an additional punishment (*The Gospel of Luke*, 543). But that changes none of the solutions suggested for the interpretational problems of διχοτομέω.

<sup>54</sup> The last verse in the Matthean version (25:30) carries motifs already noted above ("outer darkness," and "weeping and gnashing of teeth"; cf. Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; Luke 13:28). Luke omitted these elements, thus not specifying the "death" of the third servant, and he included a subtheme of the so-called "Throne Claimant" (specifically 19:14, 27, and the role of ἄνθρωπος τις εὐγενής, v. 12). While there are obvious similarities, the fact that these two parables are dealt with together is not to overlook their differences. Yet the lack of "death" terminology in the Lucan account, in relation to the servant, does not change his status as a rejected servant.

<sup>55</sup> The δέ in Matthew 25:24 is probably contrastive. The term ὅ ἕτερος in Luke 19:20 suggests immediately that the outcome of the third servant would be different from the previous two.



Matthew 25:26 he is called a "wicked, lazy slave" (πονηρὲ δοῦλε καὶ ὀκνηρὲ), while in Luke 19:22 he is referred to as a "wicked slave" (πονηρὲ δοῦλε). These seem rather strange terms to use if these men are to be viewed as simply wayward individuals. They are qualitatively different from the preceding faithful servants.

Ostensibly the servant was not faithful in his assignment, because of his view of the master.<sup>56</sup> The servant claimed that he did not want to risk the master's property because of how "hard" (σκληρῶς, Matt. 25:24) the master was on his servants or because of how "exacting" (αὐστηρῶς, Luke 19:21) he was, something the master of both stories finds incredibly foolish. With this argument the servant attempted to make his laziness a necessity and a virtue. By defaming the master, portraying him as one who enriched himself by exploiting others, he attempted to excuse his own actions.<sup>57</sup> The description of the servant's attitude suggests something qualitatively different from the other two servants found faithful in both versions. The statement that returns the talent to the master is succinct and blunt, reflecting his attitude: "Here, you have what is yours" (ἴδε ἔχεις τὸ σόν, Matt. 25:25; cf. Luke 19:20).<sup>58</sup> In both accounts the third slave essentially severed himself from any liabilities.<sup>59</sup>

In both accounts the master is pictured as angry at the third servant. His response is to judge the man according to the characteristics the man attributed to him.<sup>60</sup> In both versions, the master raised the question of why the wicked slave (πονηρὲ δοῦλε) did not at least take his money to the τραπεζάν.<sup>61</sup> His view of the master as hard and unbending, were this an honest reaction to the mas-

<sup>56</sup> Luke 19:22 uses the phrase ἀῦρεις ὃ οὐκ ἔθηκας ("carry off what you did not deposit") instead of συναγών ὅθεν οὐ διεσκόρπισας ("gathering where you did not winnow," Matt. 25:24). For Luke's terminology, see Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.30 §30; Plato, *Leges* 11.913c; Philo, *Hypothetica* 7.6; also see J. D. M. Derrett, "Law in the New Testament," 184-95, esp. 191, n. 30.

<sup>57</sup> A similar argument was used by Adam to blame God for giving him Eve; that act of transferring blame became one of the first failures of the fallen condition, and it occurred despite the obvious joys of the garden (Gen. 3:10-12).

<sup>58</sup> Derrett views this statement as a disclaimer of responsibility ("Law in the New Testament," 191).

<sup>59</sup> The phrase is apparently a commercial statement that declares the speaker's disconnection from liability concerning his trust. Cf. m.B.Q. 9.2; 10.5; b.B.Q. 97a; 98a; 116b; 117b; b.Sheb. 37b. Bertram T. D. Smith argues that the attitude prevalent among the rabbis was that the return of a gift intact would be the expected action of the day (*The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels: A Critical Study*, 163-65). But this was clearly not the master's expectation in this parable.

<sup>60</sup> Literally, "Out of your mouth I will judge you" (Luke 19:22; cf. Job 15:6). Certainly this pronouncement has an insinuation of condemnation here.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Matthew 21:12; Mark 11:15; John 2:15; Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews* 12.2.3.

ter, should not have pushed him into inaction; rather it should have prompted him to at least put the talent/mina into the bank. Even if the interest rates were not high by their standards, at least some profit would have been shown for the benefit of the master.<sup>62</sup>

Two interrelated elements found in both the Matthean and Lucan versions are worth noting: the removal of the talent from the third servant (Matt. 25:28; Luke 19:24), and the brief aphorism explaining why it was removed (Matt. 25:29; Luke 19:26). First, because of the slave's laziness,<sup>63</sup> the master ordered that the talent be removed from the servant's possession and given to the first servant. With this command Jesus (the master) highlighted the example of the first servant as one to be followed by His hearers. The failure to use what was entrusted is viewed by the master as a grievous wrong, and so he severed his relationship with the servant by removing the resources granted to him.<sup>64</sup>

In addition Matthew 25:29 and Luke 19:26 give virtually identical reasons (cf. yap in Matt. 25:29) to justify the master's removal of the servant's talent/mina and the severance of their relationship: "For to everyone who has shall more be given [Matthew includes, 'and he shall have an abundance']; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away."<sup>65</sup> This saying in both parables has been criticized as hav-

<sup>62</sup> Derrett discusses various rates of return on investments in that time period ("Law in the New Testament," 192). The rates of the moneychangers might be considered high by today's standards, but not in their time. For example Derrett suggests that 24 percent was quite low for international trade (ibid., 192, n. 32b). The aorist participle ἐλθὲν in Luke 19:23 (along with the αὐτὸν) suggests that the last phrase of verse 23 acts as a contrary-to-fact apodosis to a conditional phrase begun in verse 22b with the verb ἤδειξ. He should have collected the interest, if the servant invested it, but he had not done so. In actuality he did not fear the master as much as he suggested.

<sup>63</sup> The οὖν in Matthew 25:28 makes clear the connection between laziness and the removal of the servant's talent. While the conjunction οὖν is not used in Luke 19:24, the logical connection is as clear as in Matthew.

<sup>64</sup> Such consequences are not so different from the destruction due to disobedience to the lending laws in the Old Testament (cf. Deut. 28:44-45). Derrett suggests that this parable may actually allude to the chapters at the end of Deuteronomy (esp. chap. 28) that deal with the blessings and cursings in order to reinforce the book's recommendation of service with joyfulness of heart (ibid., 193). Whatever the case, the command to remove the talent is consistent with contemporary financial laws indicating a severance of slave/master relations (ibid., 194). Manson reads Matthew 25:28 and Luke 19:24 simply as a deprivation of opportunity (*The Sayings of Jesus*, 248).

The basic thrust concerning the third servant is virtually identical in both the Talents and the Minas. The only distinct element is the lack of specific final judgment found in Matthew 25:30. Otherwise the verses on the third servant are in close literary and verbal parallel between the parables—a fact that has not been lost to those who argue that the two parables come from a common origin.

<sup>65</sup> This maxim occurs in similar forms in several places. For example Matthew

ing nothing to do with the rest of the story.<sup>66</sup> The problem is that none of the servants had anything to start with. Even the initial capital was given to them. How can anything be taken from one who has nothing? Derrett suggests a viable solution: "If a merchant possessing capital shows a profit, people eagerly offer him further capital; the trader who reports no profit loses the capital entrusted to him. From him that has not (profit to show) it is taken (withdrawn) even that (capital) which he still has."<sup>67</sup>

The strength of Derrett's approach is, as he argues throughout his article, that the whole parable is filled with commercial terms, and that an interpretation supporting complete severance would be in keeping with such a motif and terminology. Money is entrusted to a man consistent with his success. The one who is successful will be given more. The one who is unfruitful with entrusted capital will have that capital taken away, since the depositor no longer has need for such a man. This maxim would have been viewed as reasonable then as it is today.

The logical implication of the saying in both versions of the parable is that the evaluation made of those who have something entrusted to them goes beyond simply having, but includes whether things are put to use. The phrase "everyone who has" implies praise for the activity of the good servants, specifically their faithfulness in trading with or using what was given. Manson's paraphrase is suggestive: "To him who has added something of his own to what I entrusted to him, more of mine shall be entrusted and he shall have abundance. But from him who has added nothing of his own to what I entrusted to him, shall be taken away what I entrusted to him."<sup>68</sup> The nuance may be slightly different, but

13:12 has the same conceptual maxim in discussing response to a revelation of the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Jesus spoke parables in such a way that those who were responding to the kingdom would gain more knowledge. Those who have not been granted insight into the kingdom and who do not respond to even the "crumbs" before them will find that even what they do have will be removed. In Luke 8:18 essentially the same maxim is given in a context concerning how a person responds to what he hears ("take care how you listen"). The implication is that the one who does not respond properly will find that even what he thinks he has (or "seems" to understand—*δοκέω*), even a relationship with the kingdom, will be taken from him. The verbs *δοθήσεται* and *ἀρθήσεται* (used in each of these examples and in the Talents/Minas parables under study), while suggesting the favor of the master within the parable, should be understood as divine passives.

<sup>66</sup> Beare sees an obvious analogy at the spiritual level which suggests that spiritual gifts need to be used lest they atrophy, and they will increase when they are exercised (*The Gospel according to Matthew*, 491). Although such may be true and even be implied by this parable, it does not explain how this saying fits into this situation. Manson says this verse is simply a general principle, though he feels that it is so brief that it is cryptic at best (*The Sayings of Jesus*, 248).

<sup>67</sup> Derrett, "Law in the New Testament," 194.

<sup>68</sup> Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 248.

the point is identical. It is not simply the possession of what was entrusted, but how it was employed. In light of the command to "Watch!" in 25:13, such preparedness does not lead to passivity but to doing one's duty.<sup>69</sup> The lazy disuse of entrusted gifts is considered blameworthy, and such is also true in light of the expectation of the coming kingdom. Such an unfaithful servant will be severed from his relationship with the master.<sup>70</sup>

### CONCLUSION

This study has surveyed Jesus' phrases and statements used in some of His parables to describe the nature of the "rejection motif." The imagery central to these parables shows that the rejection will be severe and complete. Jesus' kingdom parallels strongly suggest a rejection that is not simply that of a follower losing out on an esteemed position in the kingdom, but a soteriological rejection from the eschatological kingdom.

In the next article in this series these parables will be examined to discover the nature of the criteria used by the master/king to determine a servant's rejection or acceptance. Since the application of these parables teaches that the judgment made on the servants is soteriological (determining entrance into or rejection from the kingdom), the relationship of these criteria to soteriology will be discussed.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Filson, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew*, 266; and R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1964), 985.

<sup>70</sup> Additional support that the third servant is rejected completely might be drawn from the strong terminology used in the parallel (Matt. 25:30). The radical rejection is not quite so clear in the Lucan account (19:26-27), since the final rejection in 19:27 shifts back to those who, as the king's enemies, were trying to thwart his accession to the throne (19:14). More will be noted when the flow of these parables is discussed in the next article; but it should be highlighted that the third servant is distinguished from the enemies of the king. They actively defied the king's wishes. Yet the third servant's clear misperceptions of the master (in both accounts) suggests that he did not really know the master at all. And the strength of the Lucan phrase *πονηρέ δοῦλε* is suggestive. *Πονηρέ* often refers to the evil that is connected with the underworld (7:21; 8:2; 11:26) and the sin of the world (3:19; 11:29). His release from employment in the removal of the entrusted gift combines with all the other elements to argue that the man is ultimately removed from his relationship with the master.

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Jillicher's definition of parable and his rejection of anything. 1 Quoted from Quaestiones Evangeliorum, ii. 19 in the slightly abridged.Â which might remotely suggest allegory in the parables has dominated their modern interpretation almost as tyrannically as the allegorical method of the earlier centuries. In his important study The Parables of the Kingdom Dr. C. H. Dodd accepts the conclusions and method of Jillicher without hesitation and as (more or less) self-evident propositions Hebrew. Rejection Imagery in the Synop Description. Cite this.Â The parables and the synoptic problem by: Hedrick, Charles W. 1934- Published: (2011). The earthly Jesus in the synoptic parables by: Gerhardsson, Birger 1926-2013 Published: (2000). Fabulous parables. The storytelling tradition in the synoptic Gospels by: Hauge, Matthew Ryan Published: (2016). Les paraboles dans les Synoptiques by: Lambrecht, Jan 1926- Published: (1980). Le parabole di GesÃ¹ nei vangeli sinottici by: De Rosa, Giuseppe 1921-2011 Published: (2010). The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are referred to as the synoptic Gospels because they include many of the same stories, often in a similar sequence and in similar or sometimes identical wording. They stand in contrast to John, whose content is largely distinct. The term synoptic (Latin: synopticus; Greek: ἰστορικὴ σύνopsis, romanized: synoptikÃ³s) comes via Latin from the Greek ἰστορικὴ σύνopsis, synopsis, i.e. "(a) seeing all together, synopsis"; the sense of the word in English, the one specifically applied to Parable-like Images in the Gospel according to JOHN: The Greek word παραβολή (parabolÃ©) is never used in the Fourth Gospel. However, the Johannine Jesus does use some metaphors and images that are somewhat similar to but also significantly different from the Synoptic parables. John's Gospel four times also uses the related word παροιμία (paroimia = "proverb" or "figure of speech"). Shepherd and Sheep (John 10:1-16).