

The Outer Darkness: Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth – Part II

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In our last discussion, we reviewed Matthew 8, with its references to the outer darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth. The primary focus was on Israel, and one conclusion is that the general nation of Israel is currently in outer darkness. Without a standing Holy Temple in Jerusalem, and others trying to claim the location, you can easily see that they appear to be outside the bright glory of God.

As usual, we can find ourselves being drowned in our focus on the failure of Israel, *excluding the remnant*, so that we might miss the obvious purpose of God, which is to get everyone through the church age and enter into the Millennium without so many casualties. Since God is all-knowing, He allows us to hear the higher law of the Kingdom of Heaven, but at the same time, He shows us the why and the how many that could miss that glorious season. The pattern of discipline appears to be, to the Jew first, then to the Gentiles.

The Outer Darkness Contextual Use

- The *outer darkness* is judgment experienced by God's servants, past, present, and future, because of disobedience.
- The *outer darkness* is being *outside* of the horizon of God's Light to sense His presence in the soul. *A clean and repentant heart minimizes this and restores fellowship.*
- The *outer darkness* is the darkness that remains when one does not accept the LIGHT and the LIFE of the Gospel to become a new creature in Christ.
- The *outer darkness* is the darkness outside the bright glory of God during the manifestation of the Kingdom of Heaven known as the Millennium.

Acts 26:18 (KJV) *¹⁸To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth

We defined weeping and gnashing of teeth. *Weeping* indicates *regret*, and *gnashing of teeth* indicates *self-blame*. The result can be in three conditions: Spiritually, Mentally, or Physically; either temporary or eternal.

It is appropriate to pray for Israel and especially for the remnant of Israel who call Jesus Lord and Savior. Paul assures us that God has a plan.

Romans 11:1-5 (HCSB) ¹I ask, then, has God rejected His people? Absolutely not! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. ²God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah — how he pleads with God against Israel? ³Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars. I am the only one left, and they are trying to take my life! ⁴But what was God's reply to him? I have left 7,000 men for Myself who have not bowed down to Baal. ⁵In the same way, then, *there is also at present a remnant chosen by grace. Emphasis mine*

It leads me to conclude that, despite the outward divisions in the Body of Christ, God is still found in a remnant within the denominations.

Romans 11:7-10 (HCSB) ⁷What then? Israel did not find what it was looking for, *but the elect did find it*. The rest were hardened, ⁸as it is written: God gave them a spirit of insensitivity, eyes that cannot see and ears that cannot hear, to this day. ⁹And David says: Let their feasting become a snare and a trap, a pitfall and a retribution to them. ¹⁰Let their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent continually. *Emphasis mine*

If outer darkness can indeed happen to Israel, it is a good chance it can happen to the Gentiles as well.

Romans 11:20-22 (HCSB) ²⁰True enough; they (*Israel*) were broken off by unbelief, but you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, *but be afraid*. ²¹For if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you either. ²²Therefore, consider God's kindness and severity: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness toward you — *if you remain in His kindness. Otherwise, you too will be cut off. Emphasis mine*

The Foundation Law of God's New Israel (*Some notes from T. Austin Sparks*)

Please note that the terminology “New Israel” is not a replacement for the current Israel's position or God's covenant with the nation. The term is a spiritual position because of its literal meaning of Israel, “he will rule as God, or one who

has power with God.” Therefore, the New Israel is a composition of Jews and Gentiles who have faith in Christ Jesus. All that God has promised to do with the nation is irrevocable, and He has a 100% track record. Therefore, it is the reason why you might find iniquity, or the twisting of the truth, which is needed to defend a theological position of a replacement theology for Israel.

God’s covenant is bound up with this spiritual position, and yes, it can be a serious matter. God has made a covenant with His Israel, but that covenant demands that they are *out* of somewhere and *in* somewhere else, and for us, *that means a different spiritual position*.

God’s covenant is a covenant of blessing, of life, of service – that is, Divine vocation – but all that blessing, that life, and that vocation are bound up with this matter of spiritual position. Spiritually, we are outside the world (even though we are physically in it), and we are different. Our spirits are different from those of those who are physically and spiritually in the world, because their position has not changed; judgment will eventually come, with eternal consequences.

That first Israel (*excluding the remnant*) ***is not now in blessing***, nor in life, nor is it in the Divine vocation. (*Note: We have to be careful how we say blessing*). Israel is where the Lord Jesus said it would be if it rejected Him – in outer darkness, where there would be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, and for these many centuries the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem has fulfilled that prophecy!

Why is that? There is one little fragment of Scripture that is tremendous. Still, it has a terrible statement in it: “The covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; ***which my covenant they brake***” (Jeremiah 31:32). Israel broke the covenant of separation and distinctiveness.

The Difference Between the World’s Darkness and Israel’s Darkness

The world is in darkness. *The world that lies in the hands of the evil one has never had the spiritual light*. It is not as in the dark as anyone who has had the light, and has not responded to the light, i.e., the power of the flesh and the influence of the world govern the reasonings of the mind. It is sometimes as simple as desiring and doing what is right in our own eyes rather than the righteous ways of God, which come only through walking by faith in Him.

There is a darkness deeper and darker than the darkness of having never been enlightened. T. Austin Sparks says, ***"It is called 'the outer darkness,' and the outer darkness is for those who have had the light presented and have rejected, or who have not appreciated, that light."***

Sparks says, *"That is a very strong word, and it may sound harsh. It is only by way of getting to the heart of this matter of the importance and value of spiritual light, and what that light is intended to bring about when the Lord gives it, and of course, **what great peril there is bound up with having light, and it is not shining.**"*

Knowledge without Light and Life is an Outer Darkness

Light was God's first work. To darken that light was the devil's first work.

Light being God's first work clearly implies that everything else comes from light, where God is concerned. Darkening, being the devil's first work, implies that all that God intends by light can be frustrated if the light is darkened (*can't be seen by others*). That is a contemplation of considerable seriousness.

Israel, *as a nation*, missed the Kingdom of God. Jesus said a most terrible thing about them, that the children of the Kingdom would go into outer darkness. There would be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. I ask you, isn't that true for the last two thousand years, where Israel is concerned? Israel has been in the outside darkness for two thousand years. Israel's history for that time has been one of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Let's take up the issue of the second use of the term "outer darkness." Jesus mentions it in the parable of the *Wedding Feast* in the Kingdom of Heaven.

To fully appreciate the Wedding Feast parable in Matthew 22, consider Jesus' parable of the vineyard owner, which indicates a shift in focus within the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 21:42-45 (HCSB) ⁴²Jesus said to them, ***"Have you never read in the Scriptures: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This came from the Lord and is wonderful in our eyes? ⁴³Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing its fruit. [⁴⁴Whoever falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whoever it falls, it will grind him to powder!]"*** ⁴⁵When the chief priests and

the Pharisees heard His parables, they knew He was speaking about them.
Emphasis mine

Notes from The King and the Kingdom of Heaven by Watchman Nee

v. 42 "The builders" are the scribes, the Pharisees, and the priests.

"The stone ... the head of the corner" is the Lord Jesus.

"Marvelous in our eyes" – The Jews who are related to the Lord in the flesh will not believe in Him, while those of the nations do believe. The cornerstone also speaks of resurrection (see Ps. 118.22-23, Acts 4.11).

"Did ye never read in the scriptures?" – Ask yourselves.

v. 43 "The kingdom of God" – Again, the emphasis is on spiritual reality, since only spiritual experience can be taken away.

The Kingdom of God was already there among the Israelites, but the kingdom of heaven had only drawn near.

Matthew 3:2 (NKJV) ²and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" *John the Baptist*

Matthew 4:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, **"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."**

These verses suggest that the kingdom of heaven is different from the kingdom of God. Of course, the kingdom given to another nation is the church, the many who are One in expression.

v. 44 To the Jews, the Lord is a stumbling block. They fall on Him because they do not see earthly splendor and the outward dignity of a king in Him (see Is. 8.14-15, Rom. 9.32-33, 1 Cor. 1.23, 1 Peter 2.8). But to the church He is the Rock, and the Head Stone of the corner (1 Cor. 3.11, Eph. 2.20-22, 1 Peter 2.4-5). To the nations, He is the Stone that smites (Dan. 2.34,44-45). Hence, the first part of verse 44 points to the Jews, and the second part points to the Gentiles or the nations. The Jews stumble at Him today, for even now many still call Him the son of a carpenter, a deceiver, and so forth. And the nations will be scattered as dust at the coming of the kingdom.

It may sound like gloom and doom in a sense, but we have Paul's assurances concerning the nation of Israel; we can conclude that Jesus gives us the blessing of the good news to those who hear and obey His voice.

Matthew 22:2-13, the Parable of the "*Wedding Feast*," is considered the third parable of warning. Let's walk our way through it.

Matthew 22:2 (NKJV) ² "*The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son,*

The previous parable shows how the Gentiles are accepted (*yet not every Gentile is saved*) after God has rejected the Jews. The parable here discloses how the Jews are rejected because they first reject the Lord.

This parable is needed for Jesus to illustrate how the kingdom people, who are in the kingdom of the heavens, will be dealt with strictly. Both parables indicate that the kingdom is a serious matter.

The king is God, and the son is Christ.

"The kingdom of heaven" — It does not say the church, but the kingdom of heaven, for it is the domain of the kingdom of heaven that is here presented. In the church, the whole body of believers is saved, whereas in the outward sphere of the kingdom of heaven, there are still those unsaved. (Please note that the parable in Luke 14:15-24 focuses on the gospel. It is not the same parable as the one given here.)

"Marriage" speaks of a covenant relationship. "Feast" denotes God's prior prepared abundance.

There is no mention of the bride because this parable does not deal with the purpose of God. The New Testament is likened unto a wedding feast, with the focus mainly on enjoyment under grace.

Matthew 22:3 ³ *and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come.*

His servants here are the disciples of John the Baptizer and of the Lord.

Call them that were bidden” — This points to the children of Israel. God sends His servants to invite the children of Israel to come and enjoy His abundance. Such is the mission of the disciples of John and of the Twelve, and the Seventy sent out by the Lord.

“They would not come” — They do not believe the testimony given by these disciples.

Matthew 22:4 ⁴ Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle *are* killed, and all things *are* ready. Come to the wedding."

“Other servants” — The apostles and the disciples on the day of Pentecost and afterward. The apostles and the disciples testified to the Jews for the second time on the day of Pentecost. They bore witness in Jerusalem but failed to go even to the neighboring city of Samaria. So, God allowed persecution to come upon them that they might be scattered to the nations. Paul began his ministry in the same manner. He first went to the Jews in the Dispersion, and after they rejected the Lord, he declared that he would go to the Gentiles.

Verse 3 gives the invitation; verse 4 says that oxen and fatlings are killed and that all things are now ready — that is, this refers to the Lord Jesus, who was killed so that God’s chosen people could enjoy Him as a feast. Therefore, by this, Jesus had fulfilled all the requirements of the Law and is in resurrection to be our life.

Matthew 22:5 ⁵ But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. ⁶ And the *rest* seized his servants, treated *them* spitefully, and killed *them*. *Emphasis mine*

“But they made light of it” — This depicts exactly the situation on the day of Pentecost. Even though 3,000, and later 5,000, in Jerusalem were saved, they were but a little flock compared to the great multitudes gathered in that city. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, on the day Christ was crucified, three million people gathered in Jerusalem.

“Farm” speaks of agriculture; “merchandise” signifies commerce.

“The rest” are those who are neither engaged in agriculture nor commerce — people such as the priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and so forth.

“Treated them shamefully, and killed them” — They killed Stephen and James, and they imprisoned the other apostles. These verses are thus completely fulfilled.

Matthew 22:7 ⁷But when the king heard *about it*, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

“But the king was wroth; and he sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers” — This was literally fulfilled in 70 A.D. when Titus destroyed Jerusalem, and blood flowed in the streets.

Matthew 22:8 ⁸Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹Therefore, go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.

“They that were bidden were not worthy” — Those that were bidden were obviously the Jews, but simply because they had rejected the invitation does not mean that the abundance of God is going to be wasted. He will give it to others.

Those who are called have been bidden before, but we Gentiles are saved by the preaching of the New Testament gospel: “As many as ye shall find” — and this is grace. All who believe have eternal life.

Matthew 22:10 ¹⁰So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding *hall* was filled with guests.

“Both bad and good” — God’s calling today ignores the question of a good or bad historical background. The abundance of the gospel has no respect for former good or bad, because the ultimate purpose of the gospel is to glorify God’s Son.

Forest Gump had a saying, “*Stupid is as stupid does.*” The phrase means that a person should be judged by their actions rather than their words, appearance, or perceived limitations.

Matthew 22:11 ¹¹ But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment.

“Wedding-garment” – In Oriental countries, the wedding garments are not prepared by the guests but provided by the host. The wedding garment is Christ, our robe of righteousness. We need to be clothed with Christ (cf. Rom. 13.14, Gal. 3.27). God has covered us with “the robe of righteousness” (Is. 61.10).

God has provided the wedding garment for us, but the man in the parable thinks his own garment is good enough (self-righteousness). He refuses to take off his own garment and put on another. He will not trust in Christ as his righteousness. Many like to say, “Well, God knows my heart.” The biggest issue here is that very few can fully understand their own heart.

Matthew 22:12 ¹² So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

“And he saith unto him” – The Lord does not ask why we beat people, tell lies, or violate the law several days before. He merely asks us why we did not put on the wedding garment. No question about history; He only asks if Christ, our righteousness, is present upon us.

“And he was speechless” – This proves that the man knowingly does it, because he could not offer any reply. It really does not matter if one is poor, because the king has already made provision. If anyone considers himself unworthy, the king has the wedding garment ready for him. What there needs to be a concern for is any unwillingness to take off the old and put on the new.

Whoever does not trust in Christ as righteousness will be cast into outer darkness. To be cast out into the outer darkness is not to perish; it is to be dealt with dispensationally (*a period of time appointed by God*).

It is suggested that one be disqualified from participating in the enjoyment of the kingdom during the Millennium for not having lived an overcoming life by Christ.

In the Millennium, the overcoming believers will be with Christ in the bright glory of the kingdom. *See full context in Col. 3:1-17.*

Colossians 3:4-10 (NLT) ⁴ *And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.* ⁵ So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. ⁶ Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. ⁷ You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. ⁸ But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. ⁹ Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. ¹⁰ *Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.* *Emphasis mine*

When one hears or reads Colossians 3:1, one will hear two different thoughts of what it means. The same is true when you compare the NKJV and the NLT.

Colossians 3:1 (NKJV) ¹ *If* then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. *Emphasis mine*

Colossians 3:1 (NLT) ¹ *Since* you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. *Emphasis mine*

We can conclude that both translations are accurate. The NKJV version allows for the truth of the believer's free-will nature.

If, as we have learned from Brother Lane's study, it means maybe we will, *maybe we won't*. The NLT is just as accurate because we have been raised and seated

Ephesians 2:6 (KJV) ⁶ And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

Since God is righteous, not if, we can conclude that if we choose a "maybe we won't" attitude, it will come with discipline. What type of discipline may be interpreted differently, but one school of thought appears to bypass the Millennium altogether and cast the disobedient into the eternal Lake of Fire.

I must admit, though, I can truly see how they justify themselves. Let's review Matthew 22:13 again.

Matthew 22:13 (NKJV) ¹³ Then the *king* said to the *servants*, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

The king in this parable, many conclude, represents God the Father, and the servants are the angels. The king has sovereign rule, and the servants obey the king's explicit orders. We can *slightly* imply that a designated authority can speak for the king. The same could be said for the servants. The servant uses the Greek word diakonos. It is commonly used to describe a deacon, a minister, or someone in a position to be very obedient.

The school of thought that casts the person who is not properly dressed into the Lake of Fire uses the reference verses in Matthew 13:49-50. Jesus is the one speaking.

Matthew 13:49-50 (NKJV) ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, ⁵⁰ and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be *wailing and gnashing of teeth*." *Emphasis mine*

Here is a question: "Is it possible for Jesus to make a mistake?" Many will tell you that what Jesus did not say is sometimes as important as what He did say.

Let's take a look at Matthew 22:13 again.

Matthew 22:13 (NKJV) ¹³ Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Matthew 13:50 "cast *them* into the furnace of fire." (*Eternal*)

Matthew 22:13 "cast *him* into outer darkness." (*Temporal*)

Weeping and gnashing of teeth is still the result. *Weeping* indicates *regret*, and *gnashing of teeth* indicates *self-blame*.

In our last lesson, we explored how Peter felt after denying Jesus three times, but we know it was temporary.

In **Matthew 22:13**, some conclude that the defeated believers will suffer discipline in outer darkness as their chastening. No matter how deep the regret and self-blame are, it is better to suffer on this side of glory than to experience 1000 years of regret during the Millennium. Some even say it might be part of the BEMA judgment when we all will have to give an account of every idle word (*none productive word*), our self-righteousness, etc.

Paul, by the authority of Christ Jesus, writes this to the carnal church at Corinth.

1 Corinthians 5:1-5 (NKJV) ¹It is actually reported *that there is* sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles--that a man has his father's wife! ²And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. ³For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. ⁴*In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, when you are gathered together, *along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ*, ⁵deliver such a one to Satan *for the destruction of the flesh*, that *his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*. *Emphasis mine*

Can you imagine being turned over to Satan to use and abuse until you are dead? It gets worse. When the man rises from the grave, he still has to give an account to Christ Jesus.

Grace gives us the gift of eternal life to live eternally with the Triune God and keeps us out of the Lake of Fire. We can clearly see that “Mercy” does not allow us to get what we do serve.

I love the way T. Austin Sparks ended his teaching about Israel with a prayer.

“They (*Israel*) went out on other lines and other things, and have been dismissed by God, like the tent in Shiloh, which became an empty shell, and like the temple in Jerusalem, wrecked and ruined, and dismissed from God’s purpose, for its object was lost.”

*Shall we pray: "Lord, don't let that happen to me! Don't let the thing for which You have brought me to Yourself lose its purpose, and I no longer bring You in. Does my presence mean Your presence?" Let us pray like that, **for there** must be the impact of God.*
Let the church say, AMEN.