

25:31-46 In Mt. 25:31-46 we have a parable depicting the last judgment, where the Lord sits as judge and we come before Him. Usually, a person comes before a judge regarding things which they have committed wrongly. But our expectations, which are set up by the story of a judge and people coming before him in judgment, are shattered. The issues the people are judged about aren't acts of commission. It's all about what they *omitted* to do, continuing the theme of the preceding parable of the talents, which concludes with the one talent man being condemned for what he omitted to do. We tend to be all so freaked out about our committed sins, rather than realizing the tremendous importance the Lord attaches to our *omissions* of acts of kindness and thoughtful love, and perceiving the image of Christ in our brethren. It's rather like how Paul starts writing to the Corinthians. He doesn't start as we might have done with their gross immorality, false doctrine, perversion of the Lord's supper into a drunken orgy [although he comes to those things]... rather, he begins with and spends most time discussing their lack of love, their divisiveness etc.

It is worth observing the very simple fact that the New Testament is essentially a missionary document- all the expressions and articulations of doctrine / theology found there are all in the context of the preaching of the Gospel and the immediate problems of men and women in responding to it. This is why we aren't given a cold statement of faith or catechism in the New Testament, but rather the history of the mission of Christ at its first beginning. Even parables like that of Mt. 25:31-46 were relevant in a missionary context- regarding the perils of not supporting the itinerant missionaries in the first century. And this is why the power of the early Christian witness lay in who they were- for this was the real advertisement for the doctrine they preached.

25:31 *The Son of Man shall come in his glory*- A clear allusion to Dan. 7:13, which is interpreted later in Daniel 7 as referring to the coming of Jesus with the accepted believers with Him. There is a sense in which we will be involved with judging others; thus the men of Nineveh will condemn the first century Jews at the day of judgment (Mt. 12:41). In this case, the judgment of the nations could be a judgment of people from all nations concerning how they have treated the faithful who were recently under tribulation in all nations. This would make good sense of the allusion to Joel 3:2 "I will gather all nations... into judgment" which we have in :32. The nations gathered to judgment in Armageddon or at least, in Israel somewhere, would then be judged according to how they have treated God's people. However, the stubborn problem for this interpretation is the reward given to some of these unbelievers- eternal life in the Kingdom just for helping God's people under persecution. Such salvation is surely predicated upon faith in Christ, rather than the doing of good works.

All the holy Angels with Him- If all the Angels accompany the Lord Jesus and relocate from Heaven to earth, then we can better understand why the Kingdom of God on earth is described as “the Kingdom of Heaven”. The future Kingdom of God seems to involve Heaven, including God Himself, ultimately, descending from Heaven to earth. This is certainly the scene presented in the final chapters of Revelation.

The throne of His glory- The Lord's throne is the restored throne of David, in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is called the throne of God's glory (Jer. 14:21, and Mt. 23:22 may have the same reference), and the Lord's glory is ultimately God's glory. But His glory is ultimately His character and personality- God's revelation of His glory to Moses was the revelation of His Name and character. Yet the Son attained that glory through His own perfectly God-like character, and this is the basis upon which He shall be enthroned as King of the cosmos. There is surely here also a reference to Zech. 6:13, where the Messianic "Branch" sits upon a throne of glory and rebuilds the temple. But that prophecy was clearly intended to have had a fulfilment in Zerubabel's intended rebuilding of the temple when the exiles returned. But the exiles who returned, and their leadership especially, dropped the baton. The intended temple outlined in Ezekiel 40-48 was not built by them. And so the prophecy was rescheduled in fulfilment. Not every detail needs to be literally fulfilled [e.g. the rebuilding of a temple], but the essence will be fulfilled in the second coming of Christ to earth. The Lord spoke of how the disciples would sit with Him in His throne of glory (Rev. 3:21), judging the twelve tribes of Israel (19:28). This would support our earlier suggestion that the Son of Man coming in judgment is in fact a picture of the Lord Jesus along with the faithful coming in judgment. This is why there are thrones [plural] of judgment (Rev. 20:4). The contrast is with the man of sin, who at that time will also be sitting upon a throne in the temple (2 Thess. 2:4 s.w.); the Lord Jesus shall come and depose him.

25:32 *Before Him-* *Emprosthen* could just as well mean 'against' Him, referring to the gathering of the nations against Christ which is spoken of in Joel 3, Zechariah 14 and Psalm 2. But the sense is likely the more obvious one, of being gathered in front of Him.

Gathered See on :31 *The Son of Man shall come in his glory.* This is a figure used about the gathering of individuals to judgment and both to condemnation and salvation (3:12; 13:30; 24:28; Jn. 15:6 "men gather them and cast them into the fire"; "bring / gather here, and slay them before Me", Lk. 19:27). And yet right now the gathering is going on as the net of Gospel preaching gathers in people (13:47; 22:10; the fragments are gathered that no man be lost, Jn. 6:12, the other sheep are brought / gathered into the fold, Jn. 10:16). Our first steps in responding to the Gospel call are in fact our first steps towards meeting the Lord at judgment. The Lord has just been falsely accused of gathering where He did not sow, and therefore I suggest that those

gathered are those from all nations who have received the seed of the Kingdom message. When we are called to judgment, the immediacy of our response will be a summary of how we have progressively responded to that call to go to Jesus. But the word for 'gather' is used extensively by the Lord in this section of His teaching. The one talent man has complained that the Lord is unreasonably gathering him to judgment (25:24), and the Lord now goes on to say that indeed people from all nations will be gathered to Him. And He goes further to say that the basis of acceptability with Him is whether we 'gathered' [AV "took me in"] *Him* in this life, when He was manifested to us in the least of His brethren (:35,38). Again we see the idea of mutuality. We gather Him, He gathers us. And this will be literally, visibly manifest in that when the call comes, those who voluntarily, immediately gather towards Him will be confirmed in that by being snatched away towards Him, and will thereby come with Him in glory to His throne (1 Thess. 4:16,17). The nations will gather themselves together against Christ at the last day (Rev. 16:14,16; Psalm 2, s.w. Acts 4:26).

All nations- Frequently, New Testament references to "all men" really means "all true believers" or those who have become responsible to God. Hebrews 2:14 states that Christ killed the devil (the power of sin) on the cross; but this is only true for those in Christ. Those who are ignorant of the saving power of God's Truth are under the active control of sin- the Biblical devil. Revelation 20:5 speaks of "the dead" as those responsible to judgment, whereas many other Bible passages show that not all the dead will be raised. Only those who have heard the Gospel will be resurrected to judgment. Thus "the dead" in God's usage does not refer to everyone who has ever died. 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 speaks of "the dead" as those in Christ. Matthew 25:32 describes "all nations" coming before Christ for judgment. This indicates that to God, the world He sees is comprised of those who are responsible to Him; not literally "all nations" will come before Christ, only those people from them who are responsible to Him. We must surely read in an elipsis here, 'People from all nations', because the Gospel will have gone to all nations before the Lord returns (24:14). The great commission to take the Gospel to all nations (28:19 s.w.) will finally have been fulfilled. Knowledge of the Gospel is the basis of accountability to judgment, and that fact alone means that if people from all nations come to judgment, then the Gospel must have gone to all nations; the believers [spiritual Israel] will be persecuted in all nations (24:9 s.w.) at the same time as Jews [natural Israel] are lead away captive into all nations (Lk. 21:24) and this likely will be the basis of our witness to all nations, just as the early church needed persecution to make them take the Gospel to the Gentiles. If we do that now in this day of opportunity, maybe that final persecution by "all nations" will be unnecessary. The whole scenario could have been allowed a first century fulfilment in that Jews from all nations were converted at Pentecost (Acts 2:5 s.w.), but clearly they did not return home and take the Gospel further to the Gentiles of literally all nations. it took Peter until the Cornelius incident to realize that people from literally all nations could be accepted (Acts 10:35 s.w. "all nations"), but the church generally struggled with that understanding. Rev. 14:6 explains that only in the last days will the Gospel go to all nations, during the tribulation period; only when God's judgments are

revealed in maybe literally the very last days before the Lord's coming will people from "all nations" come to Him (Rev. 15:4).

Separate them- The separation between sheep and goats is not, therefore, ultimately visible now. Mt. 13:49 uses the same word to describe how "the Angels" shall do this work of separation. And yet the essence of separation does go on in this life, insofar as men "shall separate [s.w.] you from their company" (Lk. 6:22; Acts 19:9). The final judgment will be a confirmation of processes which have been ongoing in our lives today. Likewise, separating ourselves from our brethren as Peter did in weakness due to political pressures (Gal. 2:12 s.w.) is effectively separating ourselves from the sheep, and placing ourselves with the goats. Significantly, the only other occurrence of the phrase "from one another" is in Acts 15:39, where Paul and Barnabas "departed asunder the one from the other". The Greek translated "separate" in these passages means to set a boundary, a limit. And in this lies the danger of the misuse of Statements of Faith and legalistic fellowship boundaries. Any drawing of a line in the wrong place can lead to our condemnation, so it's better to be open to all our brethren.

As a shepherd divides- Sheep and goats were similar looking. The sheep of the first century would typically have been dirty and with dark patches, making it possible to separate them from goats only by an experienced shepherd who knew his flock. The point may have been that from a distance, sheep and goats looked quite similar. The Lord Jesus was the shepherd during His ministry, and commented that "I know My sheep" (Jn. 10:14). He knew who were the goats and who the sheep. But His judgment will only be made manifest in the last day. But the purpose of the last judgment is not, therefore, to gather information about us; for the judgment in essence is ongoing now as we live our lives before the shepherd of our souls.

The sheep from the goats- The way the Lord speaks of dividing the sheep from the goats and not vice versa could suggest that there are far fewer sheep compared to goats (Mt. 25:32). This would imply that the majority of those who are responsible are in the goat category. The word used for 'goat' here strictly means a kid, and the purpose of the division may well have been because the goats were to be killed for meat.

25:33 *He shall set-* Gk. 'to stand'.

His right hand- The paradox is that seeing the Lord will be facing the people, His right hand is their left hand. Those who place themselves at His left hand from their perspective, those who condemn themselves, are thereby on His right hand, and saved. The Lord Himself was rewarded with a place on the right hand (of the Father), and He shares that reward with His people by

likewise placing them on the right hand.

On the left- The Greek *euo-numos* means literally the good named or good omened. The Greeks understood the left hand as being the side of good fortune. The Lord turned this idea upside down. His culture is radically different to that of the world.

Initially, it does not appear that there will be much compulsion to come to the judgment. After a meeting of the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17), both sheep and goats eventually appear before the judgment seat. The point has been made that when the Angels first come to call us to judgment at the second coming (Matt. 13:39), there will be an element of choice as to whether we immediately accept the call to go and meet Christ. "In that day" we will have the choice to go and take our goods from the house, or to go immediately with the Lord (Lk. 17:31). Under the law, the trumpet sounded and Israel had to gather themselves together (Num. 10:4); yet Paul says in Thessalonians that the Lord comes with a trumpet to gather His people together. If this is indeed based upon the Old Testament pattern, then there is an element of choice as to whether we gather ourselves unto Him- at least initially. Noah and Lot were invited, not forced, to leave the world. Those who respond to Christ's return "immediately" will be accepted, implying that the unworthy delay. This means that the response is optional in the first instance (Lk. 12:36). There are other indications of this. The most obvious is in the parable of the virgins, where the wise go out to meet their Lord immediately, whilst the foolish delay in order to spiritually prepare themselves. Our attitude in that split second is so vital. The rejected will mourn and wail, in anticipation of their future condemnation, when they see the sign of the Son of man indicating His imminent coming (Mt. 24:30,31). And this is why there is the implication that effectively, the division between sheep and goats happens in the gathering process (Mt. 25:33); our response to the gathering is our judgment. The parables invite us to see the Lord gathering the wheat to one place and the tares to another, as if the gathering is the judgment (Mt. 13:30); the wheat is gathered to the garner, and the chaff to the place of burning (Mt. 3:12). The Angel who reaps for judgment 'thrusts in' his sickle, and 'casts out' the wicked in rejection (Rev. 14:19). But 'thrust in' and 'cast out' in that verse both translate the same Greek word *ballo*- the implication being that the gathering-to-judgment process is in fact the separation process. Likewise the net is "cast" into the sea in order to gather people for judgment, and then the rejected are "cast" away (Mt. 13:47,48).

25:34 *Then-* If indeed the Lord comes to judgment with the faithful with Him (in line with the allusions to the Son of Man of Daniel 7, the faithful saints, coming in judgment), then we would have a chronological problem- if the sheep here represent the responsible from all ages standing before Him. We note too that He speaks to them of "the least of these My brethren" (:40), as if His brethren are standing somehow in another group. These considerations have led some to think that the group now being judged are those who have ministered to the Lord's people during their final tribulation. The nakedness, being in prison etc. is exactly the language of persecution found in Rom. 8:35. But I think this is unnecessary, and this suggestion in turn raises problems

when analysed further- for will unbelievers in the world enter eternal life and the Kingdom simply on the basis of good works? And the whole language of gathering and separation [as demonstrated above] is elsewhere used about the judgment of all the responsible at the judgment seat of Christ. It seems to me that there is abundant evidence for a collapse of time and space at the period around the Lord's coming- see Digression *God and Time*. This means that such chronological issues need not concern us. Another possibility is that there are various possible chronologies of events in the last days, and there may be different scenarios for the gathering and judgment of the Lord's people.

Come- The invitation to come to Him is what we respond to now, in this life, in daily situations (11:28; 19:21; 22:4; Mk. 10:21 s.w.). The judgment seat will simply be a continuation of that principle. Perhaps "*Come*" suggests a hesitancy of the faithful to enter the Kingdom. Ps. 36:8 says that God will "make us" partake of the blessings of the Kingdom of God. It reminds us of how the Lord Jesus said that in his Kingdom, He will "make us" sit down at a table, and He will come and serve us (Lk. 12:37), knowing full well that he who sits at meat is greater than he who serves (Lk. 22:27). It isn't so difficult to imagine this scene: the Lord of glory wanting us to sit down to a meal, and then *He* comes and serves us. He *will* have to "make us" sit down and let ourselves be served. And perhaps the way the Lord had to 'make' the healed blind man look up and use his new sight was some kind of foretaste of this. There is even the suggestion in Rev. 7:15 that after the judgment process, the Lord will come down off His throne and mix with us, after the pattern of Joseph.

You blessed- The Greek means literally those who are praised. The Greek *eu-logeo* is literally those who are spoken well of. And this is exactly what the Lord proceeds to do. He praises the righteous, bewildered as they appear to be, for their good works. Righteousness is imputed to them. This connects with other New Testament pictures of the righteous being praised by the Father and Son at the last day.

These words are spoken collectively: "Come, *ye* (not 'thou', singular) blessed... *ye* [plural] gave me meat... then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, When saw *we* thee an hungered...". Yet we know that there must be an individual judgment. These words sound as if we are all judged together, at the same time. Again, the reconciliation of this is in appreciating that the meaning of time will be collapsed. In similar vein, the rejected going off to try to get oil and then turning up later at the judgment (Mt. 25:10) probably describes a process that occurs in the minds of the people, rather than something which occurs in real time- although it may *feel* like real time to them. The existence of these two groups at the judgment explains how the men of Nineveh and Sheba will "rise up in the judgment" and condemn the rejected Jews; if they are in the group of sheep facing the group of goats in which the faithless Jews will be. The wicked will walk naked, and the accepted believers will then see their shame (Rev. 16:15). The rejected will

experience "shame and everlasting contempt" at the judgment (Dan. 12:2). Shame and contempt must be in the eyes of others- i.e. the group of 'sheep'?

My Father- The King is therefore the Lord Jesus. Yet He judges as God because God has given Him authority to do this, because He is the Son of Man (Jn. 5:27).

Inherit- 'Be heirs of'. But we are right now "heirs of the Kingdom" (James 2:5 s.w.). What we are now by status will be realised in a more physical sense. Note that inheriting the Kingdom parallels inheriting the earth (5:5), inheriting eternal life (19:29), inheriting incorruption (1 Cor. 15:50), inheriting salvation (Heb. 1:14), inheriting the promises (Heb. 6:12) and "all things" (Rev. 21:7). In no way could these things have been inherited in AD70. These words of Jesus at the judgment, inviting the faithful into the Kingdom (Mt. 25:34), rung in Paul's mind: Acts 20:32; Gal. 3:29; 4:7; Eph. 1:11; Col. 1:12; 3:24; Tit. 3:7.

Prepared for you- We each have a specific, unique role being prepared for us in eternity; and the process of that preparation is ongoing now, and is the reason for all our current experiences. This brief life prepares us for eternity, who and what we shall eternally be; this is why life is so intense now, even if at times it seems so repetitious. We prepare ourselves (Lk. 12:47 "that servant.... prepared not himself", "His wife has prepared herself", Rev. 19:7; 21:2 s.w.), and God works through this in preparing us. This perhaps explains the irregular dative translated "for you"- it could equally mean 'prepared *by* you'. The 'preparation' of God's people for that eternity was a major theme of John the Baptist, and it involved repentance (Lk. 1:76; 3:4). The cross was a major part in that preparation (Jn. 14:2,3 s.w.); each of us was somehow represented in Christ then. We are now being "prepared unto good works" (2 Tim. 2:21)- which we shall eternally do. For the Kingdom of God will not be a passive state. We will be active in the good works for which we are now being prepared. I have made the point that the parables of Matthew 25 all address the issue of preparedness for the Lord's coming with which He concluded the Olivet prophecy in Matthew 24. He concluded it with an appeal to be "ready", the same word as "prepared" here (24:44). If we have this sense of being prepared for an eternity of service, then we will be prepared for His coming even though we don't know the day nor hour.

The parable of the pounds describes the reward of the faithful in terms of being given ten or five cities (Lk. 19:17). This idea of dividing up groups of cities was surely meant to send the mind back to the way Israel in their wilderness years were each promised their own individual cities and villages, which they later inherited. The idea of inheriting "ten cities" occurs in Josh. 15:57; 21:5,26; 1 Chron. 6:61 (all of which are in the context of the priests receiving their cities), and

"five cities" in 1 Chron. 4:32. As each Israelite was promised some personal inheritance in the land, rather than some blanket reward which the whole nation received, so we too have a personal reward prepared. The language of inheritance (e.g. 1 Pet. 1:4) and preparation of reward (Mt. 25:34; Jn. 14:1) in the NT is alluding to this OT background of the land being prepared by the Angels for Israel to inherit (Ex. 15:17 Heb.; 23:20; Ps. 68:9,10 Heb.) . We must be careful not to think that our promised inheritance is *only* eternal life; it is something being personally prepared for each of us. The language of preparation seems inappropriate if our reward is only eternal life.

From the foundation of the world- In a literal sense, perhaps, our unique genetic structure has been under preparation from the beginning. We were intended to be who we are and to do something specific for the Lord, to be someone unique, throughout eternity. For we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), our names / personalities written from the foundation of the world (Rev. 17:8).

:35 *I was hungry-* The Lord was hungry (21:18; Lk. 6:3), wanting to be satiated by fruit on the fig tree, the repentance of Israel.

I was thirsty- The Lord was thirsty, and satiated by the food and drink of the Samaritan woman's interest in the Gospel (Jn. 4:13,14). She 'gave Him to drink' (Jn. 4:7); the same words are used here. And He thirsted on the cross (Jn. 19:28) and was 'given to drink'- the same words are used (Mk. 15:36). Hunger, thirst, prison and nakedness are all part of the sufferings of Gospel preachers (1 Cor. 4:11; 2 Cor. 11:27). It may be that Matthew is making this connection because he sought to remind his converts of the need to support the itinerant preachers who were going around reciting the Gospel of Matthew at his time. Further, the spread of the Gospel worldwide is one of the preconditions for the Lord's return, according to the preceding Olivet prophecy. And the point is being made that those who do this are to be supported.

The Lord's focus on the positive is shown by the way He quotes Job 22:7 in the parable of the sheep and goats: "Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry". These words are part of Eliphaz's erroneous allegations against Job- for Job was a perfect man, and not guilty on these counts. Yet the Lord extracts elements of truth from those wrong words, rather than just contemptuously ignoring them. Likewise Job 22:25 speaks of God being our "treasure... our precious silver" (RV). Surely the Lord had this in mind when saying that our treasure must be laid up "in heaven", i.e. with God (for He often uses

‘Heaven’ for ‘God’). And James follows suite by approvingly quoting Job 22:29 about the lifting up of the humble (James 4:6).

A stranger- The Lord was buried in the place of "strangers" (27:7 s.w.); He was treated as a Gentile especially in His death on the cross.

Took Me in- The same word translated "gathered" in :32. As they gathered Him, so He now gathers them.

25:36 *Naked-* The Lord Jesus was naked or at least without clothing on the cross.

Clothed Me- As the believers clothed Him, so He will clothe them (Rev. 3:5; 7:9; 19:8; being clothed upon with immortality is definitely a picture of salvation). He will act spiritually to us, in terms of salvation, as we have acted materially to His brethren as they in their lives, as the body of Christ, experience various aspects of His life, sufferings and death.

Sick- Gk. 'weak'. "He was crucified in *weakness*... we also are *weak* in Him" (2 Cor. 13:4). His crucifixion 'weakness' is manifest in all who are in Him, part of His body. Both in His life and supremely in His death, the Lord carried our weakness / sickness (Mt. 8:17, quoting from the prophecy of the crucifixion of Jesus in Isaiah 53). He fully shared in "our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15 s.w.) and was "compassed with infirmity / weakness" (Heb. 5:2 s.w.). Clearly the weakness / sickness of the Lord is to be found in all those in Him, and we are to minister to that as we would minister to Him personally.

1 Cor. 8:9 is one of several passages which warn us not to make "the weak" to stumble. There are weak members amongst every group of believers, and therefore we should watch our behaviour, because it will have an effect upon whoever is weak. But this doesn't mean that *we* actually know who the weak ones are. Because we don't know who is especially weak we must always be careful in our behaviour, *whoever* we are with. Indeed, we have to adopt the perspective that in a sense we are *all* weak. The Greek word translated "weak" usually means one of two things: physical illness, or spiritual weakness. Sometimes these two senses are combined (e.g. when James speaks of praying for the "sick" brother, or when Jesus talks of how pleased he was that brethren had visited the "sick" brother in Mt. 25:36). Paul often uses the word in his letters to Corinth. He says that we are *all* weak because of our natures (1 Cor. 15:43), and that Christ died on account of the fact that we are weak (2 Cor. 13:4 Gk.). Because of this, Paul reasons, we're all weak, because Christ died for every one of us. He therefore says that to sin against a weak brother is to sin against Christ; because Christ has associated himself with our spiritual weakness, in order to save us from it (1 Cor. 8:12). Thus he says that when we visit a

weak brother (spiritually? it's the same word), we visit *him*. He so closely associates himself with the weak brother. Christ on the cross carried the sins of "the weak" (i.e. all of us), and thereby left us an example of how we should behave towards the "weak". In this context, Paul says that we should likewise love our neighbour (in the ecclesia; Rom. 15:1-4). What he seems to be saying is that we should understand that we are *all* weak, and therefore try to help each other, in the same spirit as Christ died for the weakness of each of us. If we recognize that we are *all* weak, we'll avoid two common mistakes: 1) Thinking that some brethren aren't weak and should therefore be followed blindly; and 2) Thinking that some believers are "weak" whilst the rest of us are "strong". Paul didn't want the Corinth ecclesia to think he was wagging the finger at them and implying: 'You lot are so weak, but I'm strong'. Several times he speaks of his own weakness, and he glories in the fact that although he is so (spiritually) weak, God works through him so mightily; indeed, he comes to the conclusion that God's strength is perfectly expressed through his spiritual weaknesses (2 Cor. 11:30; 12:5,9,10). He says that he preached to Corinth in the first place in (spiritual) "weakness" (1 Cor. 2:3)- because it seems that when he first got to Corinth, he wasn't spiritually strong enough to grasp the nettle of witnessing to the city as he should have done (Acts 18:9,10). Having admitted to Corinth that he himself was weak, he can say that whenever one of them is weak, he feels weak too; in other words he's saying that he can totally empathize (not just sympathize) with a weak brother's feelings (2 Cor. 11:29).

Visited Me- The idea is not really to pop around to someone's house or hospital ward. The idea really is of identity, with a view to salvation. Thus God visited us in Christ to save us (Lk. 1:68,78; 7:16 "God has visited His people"; Acts 15:14 God "visited the Gentiles to take out a people"; Heb. 2:6 "what is man that You visit him"). This is the 'visiting' in view. As He ultimately 'visits' us to save, crossing the huge distance between God and man to do so, likewise we are to 'visit' our brethren. Again, what we do materially for those in Christ is a reflection of what He spiritually does for us. This is to be the motivation; to perceive that their poverty, their imprisonment, all of which may be their fault, is a reflection of our spiritual need and poverty, as we like them miss chance after chance to pull ourselves out of our poverty, and fall down too easily into survival and coping mechanisms that bind us to our poverty. And we are to show the same compassionate care to them as the Lord does to us.

In prison- Prison is a metaphor for where sin and spiritual debt leads us. We are all hopelessly in spiritual debt and therefore in the debtors' prison (18:30). The Gospel which saves us is of freedom for the spiritual prisoners. And we are to reflect that experience in visiting others in prison, even if it is their fault they are there, just as it's our fault that we too are imprisoned spiritually. And "prison" was understood by Peter as a fair description of the Lord's sufferings, "to prison and to death" (Lk. 22:33). In His death, the Lord went to the "spirits in prison", He was with them / us there (1 Pet. 3:19). But "prison" wasn't necessarily understood as a building with "Prison" written on it. Legion was 'bound', imprisoned, with fetters (Lk. 8:29 s.w.); and yet

still free. Likewise Paul was 'bound' or 'imprisoned' to a soldier (Acts 28:16 s.w.). The Lord's binding could therefore be fairly understood as an imprisonment. And He was imprisoned at least for 24 hours before His death. The wonder of all this is that those imprisoned even by the effect of their own sin are thus still fellowshipping the Lord's crucifixion sufferings; and we are to minister to them as we would have done to Christ on the cross. Would we not have rushed to provide something in response to His plea "I thirst"? Of course. But we are to do so in response to the need of His brethren. Even "the least" of them, who are suffering for their sins.

So we can say that hunger, thirst, being a stranger, naked, weak and imprisoned are all things which the Lord experienced during His life and especially in His death. His brethren, His body, share His sufferings. We are to minister to them as we would have done were we there beholding the sufferings of Christ on the cross. We should emerge from such 'beholding', as we do it at the memorial meeting, practically resolving to reflect it to His brethren. And we are the more motivated by realizing that all those situations of hunger, thirst, imprisonment, weakness and nakedness are in fact metaphors for our own spiritual poverty, which the Lord through the cross responded to, in utter grace. As He has done spiritually to us, so we are to do, spiritually and materially, to others. All those symptoms of poverty are often (although far from always) the result of mismanagement, weak motivation, unhealthy coping patterns, chronically missed chances... and yet in spiritual terms, those things are the story of our lives. In the materially poor we see exact reflections of ourselves, of our spiritual poverty and failures. As the Lord has graciously responded to us in our weakness and self-inflicted poverty, so we are to do so to His people.

25:37 *Answer*- The parable implies the day of judgment will be such a surprise. Both righteous and wicked will find that they are criticized and commended for things which surprise them. There are several indications that because of this, the rejected will begin to argue back with Christ (e.g. Mt. 7:22), until eventually they realize their errors, stop speaking (Mt. 22:12) and gnash their teeth in anger against themselves (Mt. 22:13). This should truly be a sobering thought to us all. We must strive, really, to examine ourselves, to know ourselves, to try to see our motives and actions a little more from God's perspective; because it is His perspective, not ours, which is ultimately important; and it is this lesson which the day of judgment will ultimately teach each of us.

When did we see you?- "See", *eido*, means effectively 'to know'. The Lord has just used the same word in warning that He will have to tell the foolish virgins "I know you not" (:12). Here He explains that this is in fact because they knew *Him* not, in that they didn't recognize His brethren. To not recognize His brethren means that He will not recognize us. It becomes crucial, therefore, to recognize the Lord's brethren- and upholding a statement of faith as a basis of

brotherhood seems to be a sure way *not* to do that. Such a system may work well in secular life, but in spiritual terms, we end up creating fellowship boundaries which effectively treat others as not the Lord's brethren because we do not recognize them as *our* brethren, seeing they fail to meet some curious criteria of theology or practice.

One major characteristic of the judgment will be *surprise*- for both rejected and accepted (Mt. 25:37,44). Firstly, incomprehension (Mt. 25:37) and surprised anger, then realisation of the Lord's verdict. Both sheep and goats register their surprise at their Lord's comments on various specific actions of theirs which he discusses with them- "When saw we thee...?" (Mt. 25:44). The judgment will be a surprise for all. The thought that at least some of our deeds will be discussed with us at the judgment should surely make some impact on our present behaviour. Lk. 19:23 implies not only that there will be a discussion with our judge, but that Jesus will point out to the rejected what they should have done to be accepted: "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee... wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank?". The rejected are to be cut in two, shown as the two faced hypocrites which they were. But the idea of cutting in two was immediately associated in the Jewish mind with making a covenant. When Abraham placed the sacrifices in two parts and the Lord passed between them, the idea was really that God would cut in two the man who broke the covenant. Hence the Jews spoke of 'cutting a covenant'. Those who have made the covenant with God but not kept it will be cut in two, as they initially agreed. God will keep His side of the covenant.

We need to observe that the goats are rejected not so much for their lack of actions, but for failing to discern Christ in the least of His brethren. Then, the rejected will finally see their good works in context. They will realize how little works really meant. The faithful already knew that- for they objected when the Lord told them all the good things they had done. The list of works in Mt. 25:35,36 include the following: giving food to the hungry, clothes to the naked, a bed to the homeless, help to the sick. Yet these are the very things which Job claims he had done, when he clears himself from all his accusers (Job 31:17-20). But the voice in the whirlwind soon reduced him to realize "I am vile"; all his good works became as filthy rags before the supremacy of salvation by grace alone. The connection with the parable isn't merely incidental. Surely the Lord is saying that the self-righteous in the ecclesia may seem as righteous as Job was before his conversion; but they must either in this life realize the totality of grace, or the whirlwind of judgment condemnation will reduce them to the same realization. Job seems to oscillate between believing and not believing in the resurrection (consider Job 14:7-15). At the end, Job confesses he has not spoken the right things; and Yahweh then says that he has only spoken that which was right. The friends likewise said some true things and some false things; and yet because they did not repent, their bad words were remembered against them. The final revealing of Yahweh in Job was some kind of judgment day for all concerned. Job, the righteous, had only his good deeds

and words remembered; whereas the wicked friends had only their bad words remembered. It seems it will take a while for the penny to drop for the rejected- that they're "out", and actually never were "in". This Jesus, in whose presence they had broken bread (although note the difference between this and Jesus breaking bread with us, Lk. 13:26 cp. Mt. 26:29), actually doesn't know them. The Lord has to repeat the very same words twice to the rejected: "I know not whence you are" (Lk. 13:25,27)- as if they are dumbfounded and slow to comprehend the eternal implications of His words.

The righteous gave to the poor, the sick, the hungry- without even realizing they had done it. They will confidently deny it when Jesus points it all out to them. They served with no expectation of reward; so much so that they even forgot what they did. And *every* one who is accepted at the judgment, all the sheep, will have been like that. Giving without any thought of getting anything back is a *must* for all of us who seek to truly manifest God: for this is exactly what He does and has done, minute by minute, down through the millennia of indifferent, unresponsive human history (Lk. 6:35,36). The accepted will feel so certain of all this that they will almost argue with the Lord Jesus at the day of judgment that he hasn't made the right decision concerning them (Mt. 25:37-40). It's only a highly convicted man who would dare do that. Thus the Father will have to comfort the faithful in the aftermath of the judgment, wiping away the tears which will *then* (see context) be in our eyes, and give us special help to realize that our sinful past has now finally been overcome (Rev. 21:4). We will be like the labourers in the parable who walk away from judgment clutching their penny, thinking "I really shouldn't have this. I didn't work for a day, and this is a day's pay". Therefore if we honestly, genuinely feel that we won't be in the Kingdom, well, this is how in some ways the faithful will all feel.

There is surely an intended contrast between the accepted denying the righteous acts that the Lord reminds them of, and their telling Him how much they have gained (spiritually) by trading (Mt. 25:37-39 cp. 20,22). These quite different attributes of the accepted are recorded within the same speech of the Lord. He frames those parables as if He is getting over global lessons rather than describing the response of different people. Perhaps the point is that first of all, the accepted feel as if they have done no righteous acts, and feel their unworthiness so strongly that they even dare to genuinely disagree with the Lord's praise of them. But then they come to accept themselves as He sees them, and later on in the judgment dialogue, He teases out of them a realistic self-assessment of their spiritual growth. There is a similar intended contrast in the attitude of the rejected; they begin by denying the Lord's criticism of their spiritual barrenness, and later in the conversation claim that well, He is being unreasonable, looking for fruit which He can't reasonably expect. Their tone changes from a loving 'Lord, Lord...' to a more bitter, critical spirit (Mt. 25: 4 cp. 25).

25:39 The parable of the sheep and goats clearly suggests that after the judgment, the worthy and unworthy will be in two distinct groups to the right and left hand side of the Lord. The group of "sheep" then enter the Kingdom all together, at the same moment. This explains how the Lord will address the faithful and unfaithful as groups (note "ye" in Mt. 25:37,39); how the men of Nineveh stand together in a group, as the men of Sodom and Gomorrah will (Mt. 12:41; Mk. 6:11). In some way, there will be a collective sense at the day of judgment, as well as an individual one. If there will be a collective sense then, before the presence of His glory... there ought to be now.

At judgment day, the Lord will commend the righteous for feeding Him etc.- and they will reply in genuine surprise, feeling that they truly have *not* done any of those things for which He commends them. The point is, their way of life was an unconscious doing of good; it is the mindset which legalistically remembers every act of righteousness which will be finally rejected.

25:40 *The King*- The day of judgment was an important theme with the Lord. There is an element of unreality in the way he speaks of the King as being the judge (Mt. 25:40); the implication is that our judgment will be an extremely important event; the King himself is the judge (actually, the King of heaven and earth). This indicates that the Lord wishes to put before us the picture of those who have been called to the Kingdom but reject His offer.

Shall answer- They answer to Him (:37), and He likewise to them.

Inasmuch- The Greek suggests an exact correspondence. Whatever is done to the Lord's brethren is done to Him. This is the point of the Lord's teaching. He is not simply saying that if we do good practical works we shall be saved, and if we don't, then we shall not be. He is saying that it is what is done or not done *to Him* which is significant. So the point of the teaching is an appeal to recognize and serve His brethren, rather than to simply do good works. The rejected of Mt. 7:22 "*did* many wonderful works"- and the same word is used here, "you *did it* unto one of the least of these my brothers". It's not so much works that are being appealed for, as recognition of the Lord in His brethren. It's the same word used in :16 for the faithful man who 'made' talents for his Lord. The making of talents is therefore parallel with serving the Lord's brethren. It's also the word used in 24:46 [which introduces the parables of chapter 25]- the watching servant will be found 'doing' care for his brethren.

One of- This word may seem superfluous until we realize that ‘one of the least of these’ is an invitation to look at the group of sheep and focus upon any one of the faces. This is a unique insight into the day of judgment. We are enabled to imagine ourselves there. The Lord is inviting us to imagine the colossal importance of perceiving Him in His brethren, and treating them as Him. If only this principle were understood in church life now, the church would be a beacon of light in this world’s darkness. All rejection, spitefulness, hard speaking against other believers... would disappear. We are to treat others in Christ as if they were Him. And that is the basis of our acceptance or rejection.

The least- See on :34 *Then*. The ‘little ones’ in the Lord’s earlier teaching are believers in Him (10:40-42; 18:6,10,14). 10:42 is strikingly similar: “And whoever gives one of these *little ones* even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple; truly I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward”. The least of the Lord’s brethren refer to His disciples, and not to needy humanity generally. The purpose of the parable is to continue the theme of watchfulness which began at the end of chapter 24. There the Lord taught that watchfulness and readiness for His return will be achieved by feeding the household, and here that is defined in terms of practical care for His brethren. Careful reflection on the parable surely indicates that the Lord doesn’t condemn people for not doing acts of kindness; that would be salvation by works. Rather is the basis of their condemnation whether or not they perceived the Christ in the least of the Christ’s brethren. The Lord’s point is that things were done or not done *to Him*. If He meant ‘If you feed the hungry, you’re a sheep; if you don’t, you’re a goat’, He would have expressed it otherwise. He’s not teaching salvation by works, but rather the crucial importance of perceiving Himself in His brethren and not denying their connection with Him. This lifts the whole issue to a far more personal and demanding level than doing a few acts of kindness to needy folks.

The ‘least’ of the Lord’s brethren are those who are spiritually weak. The “least in the Kingdom” are those who break commandments and teach others so (5:19 s.w.); Paul felt “the least of the apostles” (1 Cor. 15:9 s.w.), “the least of all saints” (Eph. 3:8 s.w.). The parable describes those on whom the righteous expend effort as sick, hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, in prison: *every one of which* is a description used elsewhere in Scripture concerning our spiritually weak state. Therefore the parable is teaching that one of the grounds upon which we will be rejected or accepted relates to how we have treated spiritually weak brethren. The wondrous, wondrous thing is that the Lord of glory identifies himself with the spiritually *weakest* of his brethren: and structures his judgment seat around how others have behaved towards them. Yet the description of “the least” brethren exactly match the Lord’s own experience in His death- one who is imprisoned (Mt. 26:50), sick (Mt. 27:26), naked (Mt. 27:35), thirsty (Mt. 26:29; 27:48), friendless like a stranger (Mt. 26:56). In responding to “the least” of the Lord’s brethren, we are

responding to His cross. For our brethren, in their poverty, nakedness and imprisonment, are fellowshipping the sufferings of their Lord.

Of these- We imagine a nod towards the crowd of sheep, with an invitation to focus upon “one” of those faces. There will be a public element to the judgment process. This is why the rejected shall walk naked and have their shame seen by others (Rev. 16:15). The purpose of judgment is to teach us all, to prepare us for eternity together as we behold each other’s lives revealed and perceive the same patterns of God’s amazing grace. This is why hypocrisy is pointless; we shall then be revealed for who we really are before all.

25:41 *Depart from Me-* The same word has just been used about the foolish virgins when they were told to “Go [s.w. ‘depart’]” to buy more oil (:9). The rejected will be told: "Depart from me" (Lk. 13:27); and yet in their lives, they will have already departed themselves. In time of temptation some *fall away* (s.w. "depart from"; Lk. 8:13). Some *depart* (s.w.) from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:12). Demas departed (2 Tim. 4:10), as the rejected will depart (s.w. here in Mt. 25:41). The same word is used about how the seed sown among thorns *goes forth*, it departs (Lk. 8:14) to condemnation. They departed, and so He tells them to depart. Now they willingly absent themselves from the Lord, but then they will not want to depart from Him. God will gather up the nations to thresh them, but they gather themselves to Him (Mic. 4:11,12).

Eternal fire which is prepared for the Devil and his angels – Clearly alluding to the Gehenna myth. This is a phrase taken straight from Jewish apocalyptic thinking and literature. It was the worst category of punishment conceivable in Judaism. And yet Jesus in the context is talking of the way that religious people who claim to believe in Him will not go unpunished for ignoring the needs of their poor brethren. This all too easy to commit sin... The Lord uses Judaism’s toughest language to condemn. But this doesn’t mean that He actually believed in the literal existence of either “eternal fire” nor a personal Devil. The Devil’s angels are those who ignore their needy brethren. It’s a powerful and telling juxtapositioning of ideas by the Lord Jesus. The warning that the wicked will be cast into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil (Mt. 25:41) was referring to the apocryphal fate of supposedly ‘wicked angels’ as recorded in 1 Enoch 54. The references to Tartarus and sinful angels in 2 Peter and Jude are also clear references to wrong beliefs which were common in Jewish apocryphal and pseudo-epigraphical writings. These wrong ideas- and they *are* wrong- are not corrected directly, but rather a moral lesson is drawn from the stories. This is the point of the allusion to them; but there is no explicit correction of these myths in the first instance. It is the Angels of Jesus, and not of the Devil, who punish the wicked (Mt. 13:42–50). A wresting of Scripture to make out that the Devil is the

tormentor of the wicked simply runs in straight contradiction to these plain statements of the Lord Jesus.

Prepared- It is a common theme that the wicked snare themselves, falling into their own pit, rather than God specifically snaring them (e.g. Ps. 7:15; 9:15; 57:6; Prov. 26:27; 28:10; Ecc. 10:8). Their condemnation, the nature of their punishment, will have been specifically prepared for them (Mt. 25:41). The bitter self-hatred and ineffable regret of the rejected will be their punishment; and in accordance with the specific, personal way they mistreated and neglected God's Truth in this life, so they will mentally torture themselves. From their own mouth and words men will be judged (Mt. 12:37; Lk. 19:22 cp. 2 Sam. 1:16).

25:44 *Answer Him-* The figures of judgment can be taken literally to an extent. However, the actual process will be slightly different for each of us. Thus for some, Christ gives his verdict immediately and then discusses it with them (Mt. 25:33,34,41). Others are apparently given the reasons for the verdict first, and then explicitly told the verdict (Mt. 25:27). Others tell the Lord of their spirituality and are then told his comment (Mt. 25:20). Others don't realize the spiritual growth they've achieved (Mt. 25:37), others see it quite clearly (Lk. 19:16). To some, Jesus speaks first; in other cases, the believer starts the dialogue (Mt. 25:41-44 cp. 11,12,24-26). Some sense their rejection coming and plead to be let in to the Kingdom (Mt. 25:11,12); others complain at their Lord's apparent unfairness, as if they're sorry, but they just have to make their point to him (Mt. 25:44).

The Lord points out their failings, then they give an explanation of their behaviour (Mt. 25:24), justifying themselves (Mt. 25:44). There is an intended contrast in the attitude of the rejected within the Lord's parables of judgment in Mt. 25; they begin by denying the Lord's criticism of their spiritual barrenness, and later in the conversation claim that He is being unreasonable, looking for fruit which He can't reasonably expect. Their tone changes from a loving 'Lord, Lord...' to a more bitter, critical spirit (Mt. 25: 44 cp. 25). According to the type of Cain, he was questioned by God, answered back, and then changed his tune and begged for mercy (Gen. 4:9). Adam likewise began by answering back, blaming the woman and the fact God gave her to him (Gen. 3:12). So they go through three mood swings: 'Lord, Lord', assuring Him they have never omitted to serve Him (Mt. 25:44), then a more bitter feeling that He is unreasonable (Mt. 25:25), and now a desperate begging for mercy.

Minister unto You- This is the word commonly used about people ministering to Jesus, and the ministering women at the cross. Again the point is established that the language used about ministrations to the historical Jesus is applied to ministration to the least of His brethren. The shock of both sheep and goats reflects their shock at the degree to which their brethren really had been the very same as the Lord Jesus. The parable suggests that we shall never in this life appreciate the degree to which He perceives His brethren as Himself, and our actions to them are our actions to Him. Any exclusion or spitefulness towards them is directly felt as action against Him. The thought of not ministering unto the crucified Christ is unthinkable, and is so clearly expressed by the goats in their denial of having been guilty of this. And yet to ignore our brethren who are part of Christ, who are Him to us, is to do the same. We wish to minister to the Lord in His time of need. But He is not here personally. And yet effectively He is, insofar as His brethren are His body, and are right before our eyes.

25:45 *The least-* See on :40 *The least.*

Many of those who ungraciously storm out of fellowship with the rest of the body, do so because they complain that other believers are weak, unloving, hypocrites, don't practice what they preach etc. And in many ways, their complaints are true (seeing that the Lord came to heal those who need a doctor rather than shake hands with the healthy). And again, Paul has a comment on this situation. He says that those parts of our bodies "that seem to be weaker... that we think are less honourable... the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty... with special honour" (NIV). The private parts of our bodies are the parts we are most sensitive to, although on the outside they seem weak and hidden. And so Paul reasons that the weaker parts of the ecclesial body should be treated the same. The Greek for "feeble" (1 Cor. 12:21) is used (notably in Corinthians) to describe spiritual weakness: Mk. 14:38; Rom. 5:6; 1 Cor. 8:7,10; 9:22; 11:30; 1 Thess. 5:14. And in some ways, we are all "weak" (1 Cor. 1:27; 4:10). So those we perceive ("that seem to be... that we think") to be spiritually weak in their external appearance, we should be especially sensitive towards. Significantly, the "sick" (s.w. "feeble") in the parable of Mt. 25:44 are the "least" of Christ's brethren, the spiritually weakest; and at the day of judgment, the rejected are condemned because of their attitude towards these spiritually weakest of Christ's brethren. As John realized the tendency of some to think they could love God without loving His Sons, so Paul tackled the same problem at Corinth. He reasons that "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee... if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if they were all one member, where were the body?" (1 Cor. 12:21). He knew that some would want to go off on their own, and he shows that such behaviour would suggest that they alone were the whole body. He knew that some would think that they had no need of other parts of the ecclesial body; he saw that some would feel that they were so inferior to others that they had no place in the body. All these are reasons why believers

push off on their own. But notice that Paul doesn't actually say 'the eye *shouldn't* say to the hand, I have no need of thee'; but rather "the eye *cannot* say to the hand...". Although some may say or feel this, ultimately, from God's perspective, it's simply not valid. Christian disillusion with Christianity mustn't lead us to quit the body. The same logic applies to those who think that the body of Christ is divided; ultimately, there is one body, and from God's perspective this is indivisible. The divisions only exist in the minds of men. Those who say that they don't need fellowship with their brethren "cannot say" this, according to Paul. If they continue on this road, ultimately they declare themselves not of the one body of Christ; although I trust there are many brethren who have done just this who may still receive God's gracious salvation.

Of these- The suggestion is that the righteous are present and visible at the time of the verdict given to the goats. Again we see the public dimension to the judgment process.

A telling chronology is suggested by putting together a few Scriptures. The foolish virgins will knock on the door, as it were, and be told by the Lord "I know you not" (Mt. 25:12). Lk. 13:27 says that He tells the rejected *after* they have justified themselves to Him: "I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity". Mt. 7:22,23 describes a dialogue in which the rejected justify themselves by listing their good works, and the Lord will profess unto them: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity". All their good works He will see as works of sin, because they were not of faith. Mt. 25:41-45 gives more information: the rejected are told "Depart from me", but they argue back with self-justification, and then they are told that they had not shown love to the least of Christ's brethren, and are sent away to punishment.

25:46 *Go away into-* After the pattern of Cain and Adam (Gen. 3:24; 4:14), and also the idea of the wicked being *cast* into the darkness of condemnation, it seems that the rejected will be forcibly driven away. Cain was driven out from the faces, the presence of the land of Eden, where the Lord's presence was (Gen. 4:14). Presumably this driving out was done by the Angels. We are left to imagine the ultimate tragedy of Cain going forth from the presence of the Lord (Gen. 4:16 s.w. "face" 4:14), and the rejected 'going away into...' (Mt. 25:46). The tragedy of rejection is well reflected in the way the Lord speaks of how "great was the fall" of the poorly built house (Mt. 7:27). We are invited to see worthy and unworthy walking away from the throne *into* different futures. The sheep will enter *into* the city (Rev. 22:14), *into* the temple (Rev. 15:8), *into* their rest (Heb. 4:11), *into* the Kingdom (Acts 14:22; Jn. 3:5; Lk. 18:24; Mt. 18:3); *into* life (Mk. 9:45; Mt. 18:9; 19:17); *into* the joy of Christ (Mt. 25:23).

The rejected going away into... (Mt. 25:46) is only a reflection of the position they themselves adopted in their lives. They thought that they could flee away from the judgments of God (Rom. 2:3 Gk.)- and so they will flee from His judgment seat, although so, so unwillingly. The man who refuses to immediately respond to the Lord's call to service says that he must first *go away* from the Lord and bury his father (Mt. 8:21); the young man *went away* in sorrow (Mt. 19:22); people hear the Gospel and then *go away* to all their petty businesses of this life (Mt. 22:5). Those who couldn't handle the demanding Lord *went away* from Him (Jn. 6:66); and Judas *went away* of himself to hang himself (Mt. 27:5). He condemned himself. These are all the same words as in Mt. 25:46- those who of their own choice went away from the Lord now, although that isn't maybe how they saw it, will then go away from Him into condemnation. This point is made even within Mt. 25. The foolish virgins *went away* to buy oil- they didn't want to immediately go to their Lord (:10); the one talent man *went away* and buried his talent (:18,25). And then at judgment day they again *go away from* the Lord (:46). Their going away from the Lord is simply being confirmed by Him.

Notes

(1) *b. B. Mes'ia* 42A, quoted in R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) p. 954.