

THE GOSPEL MESSENGER,

OR UNIVERSALIST ADVOCATE.

["AND THE ANGEL SAID UNTO THEM, FEAR NOT, FOR BEHOLD! I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY WHICH SHALL BE UNTO ALL PEOPLE."—LUKE 2:10.]

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Everlasting Punishment.

Matt. xxv: 46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into eternal life.

There is not a passage in the Bible that is more frequently quoted, or more confidently relied on in proof of the doctrine of endless punishment in this. We suppose, that if the believer in this doctrine can be satisfied that it is not taught in the text, they will be willing to concede that it is not taught in the Bible. Let us, therefore, give a fair, and careful, and candid investigation.

The text forms the conclusion of the celebrated parable of the sheep and the goats. The first question to be considered is, does this parable have any relation to the concerns of another world? If this question is answered in the affirmative, then the following inferences are perfectly plain and undeniable. 1. Calvinism, or the doctrine of election and reprobation, is false. It is not said to those who were placed on the right hand, 'come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for God out of his mere good pleasure was pleased to elect you to the enjoyment of his favor and everlasting life.' Nor is it said to those on the left hand, 'depart ye cursed, &c. for God was pleased to pass you by, and preordain you to everlasting wrath.' No. Those on the right hand were placed there because their works or deeds had been good, and those on the left, because their works had not been good. 2. It is equally undeniable that mankind are not to be admitted into heaven, because they have exercised faith in the Gospel while on earth, nor because they have experienced any miraculous change of nature whatever, nor because they have made a profession of religion, nor because they have joined any particular church. Nor are mankind to be excluded from heaven, and go to hell, because they have not been born again; nor exercised in the Gospel, nor experienced a radical change of nature, nor made a profession of religion, nor joined a particular church. No. They are to go to heaven because their works have been good. And some are to be excluded, and go to hell because their works have not been good. 3. Mankind are not to be saved by grace, nor is immortality and endless enjoyment in a future state the gift of God; but these things are conferred as the reward of merit. The King says to those on the right hand, 'Come ye the blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom, &c., for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in. Naked, and ye clothed me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.' And to those on the left hand he says, 'Depart from me, ye cursed! &c., for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in. Naked, and ye clothed me not: sick and in prison, and ye visited me not.' And when those on the right hand inquire when they had done these good deeds, the King answers, 'inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' When those on the left ask when they had neglected to perform these duties, the King answers, 'inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.' Hence, it is plain that if this parable is to be applied to a future judgment, and the concerns of another world, it overthrows the whole scheme of Gospel grace, and converts that which is the gift of God, not of works, least any man should boast, into a reward, which is an equivalent for our good works.

But, that this parable has no relation to the concerns of another world, is evident from the following considerations:

1. The 24th and 25th chapters of Matthew evidently from one continued discourse, which was delivered by our Lord in answer to a question put to him by his disciples in relation to the time of his coming, and the destruction of Jerusalem. The 24th chapter commences thus: 'And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him, for to show him the building of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these

things! Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? The phrase end of the world here, is what has led many to conclude that our Lord blends with the subject of the destruction of Jerusalem, the subject of the material world. But this is a very great mistake. The word which is rendered world here, is not 'kosmos,' a word which signifies the material world, but 'aion,' a word which is expressive of duration, and not a substance. and which signifies an age or dispensation. Hence, Campbell, Clarke, Wakefield, Whitby, Thomas Newton, and others, render this phrase, 'the conclusion of this state; the end of this age; or the end of this dispensation.' The question of the disciples then was, 'what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the Mosaic or Legal dispensation.' But that the question of the disciples did not relate to the end of this material world, is further evident from the fact, that neither Mark, nor Luke, in their account of this discourse, say any thing about the end of the world. This fact shows that they did not understand by this phrase, what many understand by it in our day. Mark says, 'And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering, said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, over against the temple, Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, asked him privately, Tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?' Mark xiii: 1, 3, 4. Luke says, 'And some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things come to pass?' Luke xxi: 5, 7. It is evident from these quotations, that the disciples understood our Lord's discourse to relate solely and entirely to the destruction of the temple, and the city of Jerusalem. In both these chapters our Lord speaks particularly, and frequently of his coming. He mentions it ten times in the 24th, and six in the 25th; see Matt. xxiv: 3, 27, 30, 37, 39, 42, 46, 48, 50, and xxv: 6, 10, 13, 19, 27, 31. But he gives no hint of intimation whatever, that the coming mentioned in the 25th, was any different in its nature, or was to take place at any different time than the coming spoken of in the 24th. Again, let it be borne in mind that the language of the 24th, and 25th chapters of Matthew, to whatever it may relate, was addressed by our Lord to his own immediate disciples, and in the hearing of no other persons. Now our Lord in both chapters addressed the disciples as if he expected they would be alive when the events predicted should take place. Matt. xxiv: 6. 'And ye shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars.' Verse 15. 'When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation.' Verse 20. 'But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.' Verse 23. 'Then if any man shall say unto you, &c. Verse 33. 'So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, &c. Matt. xxv: 13. 'Watch, therefore: for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.' Once more. The instructions which our Lord gives to his disciples are precisely the same in both chapters. In chap. xxiv: 42, 44, he insists upon the duty of his disciples to be watchful. 'Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.' In the 25th chapter he insists on the same duty. The 1st to the 12th verses contain the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. The design of this parable is clearly seen from the moral which Christ himself de-

scribes in verse 13. Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.' In chap. xxiv: 42, the duty of faithfulness is insisted on. 'Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? The same duty is inculcated in the 25th chap. The 14th to the 30th verses contain the parable of the talents. Every one can see that this parable was designed to enforce the same duty of faithfulness. And, again, the consequences which our Lord states would follow according as the disciples were watchful and faithful, or not, are the same in both chapters. In chap. xxiv, from the 46th to the 51st verse, these consequences are clearly stated. 'Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' In the 25th chapter, from the 28th to the 30th verse, the same consequences are stated. 'Take therefore the talent from him. (the slothful servant) and give unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness. there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' From the similarity of instructions contained in both chapters, and the peculiarity of the style in the 25th, it is evident that what is contained in the 24th is put into a parabolic form in the 25th; and that the latter was designed to illustrate and enforce the same truths that are contained in the former. Lastly, that these two chapters form one connected discourse upon the same subject, is further evident from the fact, that the 25th chapter commences with the word then. The word then refers to something which had been previously stated. 'Then, When? What other time could this refer to, but the period which is clearly stated in the 24th chapter? It is pretty generally acknowledged at the present day, that the whole of the 24th chapter relates to the destruction of Jerusalem. If this be true, it clearly follows that the word then, with which the 25th chapter commences, shows conclusively that all that is contained in the 25th, was to be fulfilled when Jerusalem should be destroyed.

2. Another fact which shows that the parable of the sheep and goats has no relation to another world, is, that not one word is said in the parable in the 24th and 25th chapters of Matthew about a resurrection. Now it is thought by those who apply it to another world, that it relates to a judgment to take place in another world, and that this judgment is to take place immediately after the resurrection. How then is it accounted for that Christ throughout his whole discourse was entirely silent respecting a resurrection?

3. It is also a fact, that the same word is said in this parable, nor in the whole of the discourse with which it is connected, about a judgment in another world. Christ to assure the nations before his resurrection would be placed after death, nor after the resurrection, nor in a future world. On the contrary, he affirms that it was to take place at the time of his coming. What time this was to be seen all see presently.

Another important fact is, that although Mark and Luke have recorded the substance of what is contained in the 24th chapter, yet neither of them have recorded what is contained in the 25th. This shows that in their estimation the 25th chapter was a mere amplification of the same subject, that is treated upon in the 24th. How can it be supposed now, that Mark and Luke, understood the 24th chapter to be the subject of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the 25th on the subject of a future

general judgment—to be followed by the endless happiness of a portion of mankind, and the endless misery of the rest—and yet, that they should record the former, and not the latter? Can it be supposed we ask, that they could attach so much importance to a subject of comparatively little importance as the one, and none at all to a subject of such vast, such infinite importance, as the other? Such a supposition is absolutely inadmissible.

Let us now more particularly examine the parable itself, and see if there is any thing contained in it, which would lead us to suppose that it refers to any thing beyond the present world. The parable then commences thus: 'When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations.' &c. From this it is evident that every thing contained in the parable was to take place 'when the Son of man should come in his glory.' Well, when was this coming to take place? This is an important question; because, on the answer to it depends the application of the whole parable. We presume it will not be disputed, that Jesus knew as much about the time when he should make his appearance, as any other person. Let us then appeal to his own testimony on this point. We have shown that the 24th and 25th chapters of Matthew, form one connected discourse; and that the coming of Christ is frequently spoken of in both chapters. Well, is there any thing said in either of these chapters respecting the time when this coming was to be? We answer, that although Jesus acknowledges that the precise day and hour were known to God only, see Matthew xxiv: 36, Mark xiii: 32, yet, he did know that it would take place within a certain period of time, and that period is clearly stated in both chapters. We have already shown that Christ addresses his disciples in both chapters, as if his coming was to take place during their natural lives. But in the 24th chapter there is some thing even more definite than this. Our Lord says, (see from the 29th to the 34th verses,) 'Immediately after the tribulation of those days (the days just preceding the destruction of Jerusalem) shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all tribes of earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye (the disciples) shall see all these things, know that it is near even to the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.' Compare Mark xiii: 24-30. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds, with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, That this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. See also Luke xxi: 25-32. 'And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see