

WHAT IS MEANT BY OUTER DARKNESS IN THE BIBLE?

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Occurrences Of "Outer Darkness" In The New Testament, Phrase Explains Itself, Heavenly City, New Jerusalem, City Of Light, The Saved Walk Within The Wall And Gates Of The City Of God, Psalm 100: A Prophetic Psalm?, Purpose Of Towering Perimeter Wall, Definition Of A Cubit, Unsaved Are Kept Out By A Wall, Parable Of The Wedding Garment, "Outer Darkness" And "For Without", Jesus Suffered Without The Gate, Suggested Reading

Recently, while scanning my Facebook news feed, I came upon a post by one of my friends who was wondering what the phrase "outer darkness" means in the Scriptures. As it turns out, the phrase "outer darkness" is only used three times in the entire New Testament. Furthermore, in all three instances, it is found in the Gospel of Matthew, as we can determine by the following group of verses:

"But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 8:12, KJV

"Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 22:13, KJV

"And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 25:30, KJV

So what exactly did Jesus mean when He used this phrase? Personally, I believe that the phrase is self-explanatory. In other words, for one thing, it is a place of utter or complete darkness. Based on the previous three verses and how Jesus described this foreboding place, we also know that it is a place of terrible suffering; both mental and emotional suffering, and quite possibly physical suffering

as well. Finally, whatever this place is, Jesus gives us an indication that it is likewise located outside of something else. So the question in my mind is this: Exactly what is that something else? I believe that the New Testament tells us plainly in the following group of verses:

"And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel . . . And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there."

Revelation 21:10-12, 23-25, KJV

"And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever . . . Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Revelation 22:5, 14, KJV

Thus we are given an amazing, awe-inspiring description of the Heavenly City, New Jerusalem, the very light of which emanates from God Himself. Wow! Furthermore, we are told that "the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it", and that "there shall be no night there." Thank you Lord! The fact that those people who have obeyed the Lord are given permission to enter in through the pearly gates, and to walk in the midst of New Jerusalem, reminds me of a wonderful Psalm. In retrospect, this Psalm now seems rather prophetic, in my view. Consider this and decide for yourself:

"[A Psalm of praise.] Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. ENTER INTO

HIS GATES WITH THANKSGIVING, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."

Psalms 100:1-5, KJV

But please notice that the City of God has twelve gates and is surrounded by a great perimeter wall, which according to the following verse, towers about two hundred feet in height. Please note that a cubit represents the distance from a man's elbow joint to the tip of the middle finger. However, three different cubits were in use during Biblical times. As such, a cubit could be anywhere from eighteen to twenty-one inches in length:

"And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel."

Revelation 21:17, KJV

That great wall, my friends, surrounds the City of God for a very specific reason. It is in fact used to keep out all of the undesirables, the varmint, the rebellious, the unsaved, and the incorrigibles. In contrast to the previous wonderful picture of all of the Saved walking within the walls and gates of God's beautiful City of Light, consider now this very sad, dark picture:

"For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

Revelation 22:15, KJV

So as you can see, it is not so for the rebellious unsaved. They can't go anywhere near the Heavenly City. They've all been marked as rejects, just like the man in the Parable of the Wedding Garment who thought that he could sneak in to the marriage feast without the proper attire -- that is, a robe of righteousness -- as we saw earlier in Matthew 22. Following is the entire Parable to refresh your memory:

"And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared

my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."

Matthew 22:1-14, KJV

In case you were not aware of it, and as I also mention in other articles such as "The Marriage of the Lamb", in this Parable, Jesus is actually talking about the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, which is hosted by God the Father Himself. In other words, in this Parable, God the Father is represented by the king, and the king's son is obviously Jesus, who is getting married to His faithful bride, the Church. It is for this reason that we also find the following similar verses in the nineteenth chapter of the Book of Revelation:

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God."

Revelation 19:7-9, KJV

Now, being as the king and his son -- that is to say, God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son -- live in the Heavenly City, then it is safe to assume that it is also there where the Marriage Supper of the Lamb occurs as well. After all, that

wonderful City of Light is the capital of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, it also stands to reason that in the Parable, when the foolish man who is not wearing a wedding garment is cast out because he is not truly saved, it must mean that he is being cast out of the Heavenly City, beyond the great wall we discussed earlier.

Please notice that Revelation 22:15 above says "For without". Doesn't that remind you of the phrase "outer darkness"? So, based on the previous Scriptures, my current belief is that the phrase "outer darkness", as used by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, refers to a dark, dreadful region of unknown proportions which lies outside of the walls of the Heavenly City, New Jerusalem. It is a terrible place for the unsaved. In thinking about this scene, I can really see God's divine justice in effect here. Do you know why? Well, because just as these unsaved people suffer without the gates of the New Jerusalem, Jesus was likewise made to suffer without the gate of the earthly city of Jerusalem two thousand years ago, when He was crucified by ungodly men. Consider the following set of verses which confirm this point:

"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, SUFFERED WITHOUT THE GATE. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

Hebrews 13:12-14, KJV

Thus, the roles have now been reversed. Jesus was rejected and cast out by the hardhearted, unbelieving Jews of old Jerusalem, and now we see the unbelievers being rejected and cast out of New Jerusalem by God the Father and His Son. So there you have it in a nutshell. With these thoughts, I will bring this article to its conclusion. It is my hope that you have found it to be both informative and enlightening, and I pray that it has been a blessing in your life as well. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr or with any other social network, I would really appreciate if you would take the time to click or tap on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were also mentioned in this article, or which contain topics which are related to this article, and which are likewise located on the Bill's Bible

Basics web server.

The Children of Light: Are You One of Us?

The Heavenly Vision: Have You Got It?

One From Beyond: Hebrew of Hebrews

This Little Light, Glory of the Lord and Our Bright Future

New Jerusalem: Heavenly City and Mountain of the Lord's House

The Marriage of the Lamb

Do You Want Love and Light, or Rod and Wrath?

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