

Judgment of Sheep & Goats

Matthew 25:31-46

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³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. ³³ And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’

³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?

³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’

⁴¹ “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’

⁴⁴ “Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ ⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

This passage is often referred to as the judgment of nations... why is it better to instead refer to it as the sheep and goat judgment?

- People will not be judged in-mass as being part of the right or wrong nation.
- All nations will fail in honoring God and being friendly toward God’s people, Israel (Zech 12:3)
- Each of us will be accountable for our own actions as demonstrated in the criteria used to distinguish the sheep from the goats.

V31 – When & where will this judgment take place?

- When Jesus returns to earth to establish His Millennial Kingdom... probably soon after the rebellion at Armageddon is put down.
- He will be sitting on His throne probably somewhere in Jerusalem which is where He will be ruling from during the Millennial Kingdom.

V32 – If this judgment is ultimately about sheep & goats, why does it say the nations are gathered?

It refers to everyone besides Israel. The nation of Israel is not judged probably because all Jewish survivors of the Tribulation are believers... “*And so all Israel will be saved*” (Romans 11:26).

V33 – Why would the sheep be put on the right hand of Jesus with the goats on the left?

The sheep are those who are right with God, the goats are not... don’t you love this pun...

Ecc 10:2 – *The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left.*

V34 – How will the sheep be blessed?

They get to inherit the kingdom of God... both the spiritual kingdom like we are part of now, the physical Millennial Kingdom that was about to begin, and the eternal kingdom that all God’s faithful will experience.

What is the significance of inheriting the kingdom?

That is what family members receive, an inheritance. It is being blessed with something we did not earn but what our Father made possible for us... eternal life.

V35-40 – How did the sheep merit the kingdom?

They demonstrated their faithfulness to God by showing kindness and mercy to His people (Israel & Gentile believers)

So, is this advocating salvation by works?

No, the faithful will reveal their faith through works that please God...

James 2:17 – *Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

What acts of kindness and mercy are cited here?

- Feeding the hungry
- Quenching the thirst of the thirsty
- Provided lodging for the stranger
- Providing clothes for the naked
- Visiting the sick & those in prison

Why didn't the sheep recognize the Lord when doing these acts of kindness?

They were just serving the needs of other people. They did not realize that God would equate that to serving Him.

How do the “social gospel” crowd twist these verses into advocating just serving people as sharing the gospel? Note: they love to quote Saint Francis Assisi: “Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words.”

- It is always good to help people in need and this quote is in the spirit of Matthew 5:16, but do not confuse this with sharing the gospel. In order to share the gospel, it is always necessary to use words:
Romans 10:14 – How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?
- It smacks of salvation by works to think we can earn God's favor at the judgment by just doing good things for others.
- A “social gospel” interpretation ignores the context here that the people being helped are already

believers (brethren of Christ) & that this judgment is just for Tribulation survivors.

Why would these acts of kindness be especially significant during the Tribulation?

Helping the brethren of Christ would be considered to be aiding and abetting enemies of the State, not just a counter-cultural act but a criminal offence probably punishable by death.

V41-46 – What would be the fate of those who did not help the brethren of Christ during the Tribulation?

They'd be separated from God and suffer eternal punishment in the lake of fire (aka hell).

Would it have made any difference if the goats knew that they were rejecting Christ by not helping the brethren of Christ?

- No, they knew what they were doing when they swore allegiance to the Beast.
- By aligning themselves with the Antichrist, they were the enemies of Christ along with His brethren

V46 – What does this verse have to say about the doctrine of annihilation? Note: this is the idea that hell is not really eternal punishment but punishment for some period of time followed by ceasing to exist.

- Everlasting punishment is treated the same as eternal life. All people will exist into eternity either in the presence of God, eternal life; or separated from Him in everlasting punishment.
- We are all made in the image of God. One aspect of that is that we will all exist into the eternal future.

So What? What applications do the Judgment of the Sheep and Goats have for us in the here and now?

- We should love the brethren.
- We should recognize that acts of kindness to others is essentially acts of kindness to Jesus.
- We should rebuke proponents of the social gospel.
- It will be much better to go into the Millennial Kingdom as a resurrected Saint than a mortal who had to survive the Tribulation.