

Matthew Chapter 25 Second Continued

Verses 31-46: The judgment of the nations concludes our Lord's prophetic discourse. This judgment of "all nations" must be distinguished from the Great White Throne judgment at the end of the Millennium. The nations (Greek ethnos), are those peoples living through the Great Tribulation on earth at the time of Christ's return. This is a judgment of separation: "sheep on his right ... goats on the left."

At this judgment, all nations (better, "all Gentiles"), stand before Christ who then separates the sheep (the saved), from the goats (the lost), in a manner reminiscent of the wheat and tares parable. Note that these are living nations, whereas the Great White Throne judgment is one of the wicked dead whose bodies are resurrected to face the final judgment of the lost.

Thus, the saved are invited to come into and share the blessings of His kingdom: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom." The basis of their acceptance seems to be their treatment of the "least of these my brethren," the saved of the Great Tribulation.

Matthew 25:31 "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:"

"Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory": This speaks of the earthly reign of Christ described (in Rev. 20:4-6). The judgment described here (in verses 32-46), is different from the Great White Throne judgment of (Rev. 20:11-15).

This judgment precedes Christ's millennial reign, and the subjects seem to be only those who are alive at His coming. This is sometimes referred to as the judgment of the nations, but His verdicts address individuals in the nations, not the nations as a whole (verse 46).

This Scripture is speaking of Jesus' return to the earth when He will be King of kings and Lord of Lords. He will rule with an iron hand.

Verses 32-33: "Sheep": I.e., believers (10:16; Psalm 79:13; Ezek. 34). They are given the place on "His right", the place of favor.

"Goats": These represent unbelievers, consigned to the place of dishonor and rejection.

Matthew 25:32 "And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth [his] sheep from the goats:"

"And before him": At his coming to judgment the world will be burned up (2 Peter 3:10, 2 Peter 3:12; Revelation 20:11). The dead in Christ that is, all true Christians, will be raised up from their graves (1 Thessalonians 4:16). The living will be changed - i.e., will be made like the glorified bodies of those that are raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:52-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:17). All the wicked will rise and come forth to judgment (John 5:28-29; Daniel 12:2; Matthew

13:41-42; Revelation 20:13). Then shall the world be judged, the righteous saved, and the wicked punished.

“And he shall separate”: Shall determine respecting their character, and shall appoint them their doom accordingly.

Matthew 25:33 "And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left."

"Shall set the sheep" The sheep are denoted here as the righteous. The name is given to them because the sheep is an emblem of innocence and harmlessness (See John 10:7, John 10:14-16, John 10:27; Psalms 100:3; 74:1; 23:1-6).

"On the right hand": The right hand is the place of honor, and denotes the situation of those who are honored, or those who are virtuous see (Ecclesiastes 10:2; Ephesians 1:20; Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:25, Acts 2:33).

The goats are the wicked (see Ezekiel 34:17).

“The left”: That is, the left hand. This was the place of dishonor, denoting condemnation (see Ecclesiastes 10:2).

Jesus is Judge of the earth. Every individual shall stand before Jesus to be judged. There are only two kinds of people; the saved and the lost. The sheep belong to God, and the goats belong to Satan. The right hand side is for God's people, and the left is Satan's side.

Matthew 25:34 "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:"

“Prepared for you”: This terminology underscores that their salvation is a gracious gift of God, not something merited by the deeds described in verses 35-36. Before “the foundation of the world”, they were chosen by God and ordained to be holy (Eph. 1:4). Predestined to be conformed to Christ's image (Rom. 8:29).

Ephesians 1:4-5 "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love" "Having predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will"

Romans 8:29 "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

So the good deeds commended (in verses 35-36), are the fruit, not the root of their salvation. The deeds are not the basis for their entrance into the kingdom, but merely manifestations of God's grace in their lives. They are the objective criteria for judgment, because they are the evidence of saving faith (James 2:14-26).

Jesus in this verse, calls Himself "King" for the very first time. That will be His title when He returns to the earth. Messiah, Jesus, Lord, Word, now King. He is inviting the saved to come and reign with Him. We Christians, will be joint-heirs with Jesus.

You see, God did predestinate us to be saved, but God knew (had foreknowledge), that we would accept the grace that Jesus provided us. This kingdom has truly been prepared from the foundation of the world. God knew that we would be saved even then.

Matthew 25:35 "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:"

“I was an hungered”: The union between Christ and his people is the most tender and endearing of all connections. It is represented by the closest unions of which we have knowledge (John 15:4-6; Ephesians 5:23-32; 1 Corinthians 6:15).

This is a union, not physical, but moral. A union of feelings, interests, plans, destiny; or, in other words, he and his people have similar feelings. They love the same objects, share the same trials, and inherit the same blessedness (John 14:19; Revelation 3:5, Revelation 3:21; Romans 8:17).

Hence, he considers favors shown to his people as shown to himself, and will reward them accordingly (Matthew 10:40, Matthew 10:42).

They show attachment to him, and love to his cause. By showing kindness to the poor, the needy, and the sick, they show that they possess his spirit, for he did it when on earth; they demonstrate an attachment to him. For he was poor and needy; and they show that they have the proper spirit to outfit them for heaven (1 John 3:14, 1 John 3:17; James 2:1-5; Mark 9:41).

Was a stranger. The word "stranger" means a foreigner or traveler in our language, one unknown to us. To receive such to the rites of hospitality was, in Eastern countries, where there were few or no public houses, a great virtue (see Genesis 18:1-8; Hebrews 8:2).

“Took me in”: Into your house, you received me kindly.

Matthew 25:36 "Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

“Naked”: Poorly clothed. Among the Jews they were called "naked" who were clad in poor raiment, or who had on only the "tunic" or inner garment, without any outer garment.

For in such a condition sometimes are the dear children of God, and members of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 4:11). When others, who like Dorcas have made coats and garments for them, and clothed them with them. And which will be shown another day, or taken notice of as the fruits, and so evidences of the grace of God in them.

I was sick, and ye visited me, or "looked after me", or visits paid to sick persons in a Christian manner, relieving them with their substance, giving good advice, or speaking comfortable words

to them. And attending them, and waiting on them, and doing such things for them which, in their weak state, they are not capable of doing for themselves.

“I was in prison, and ye came unto me”: Which has been often the lot of the saints, as it was frequently of the Apostle Paul. Who had this respect shown him by many of the people of God, as by the house of Onesiphorus, and by Epaphroditus, who brought him a present from the Philippians, when he was in bonds; and which will be remembered another day.

Matthew 25:37 "Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed [thee]? or thirsty, and gave [thee] drink?"

“Lord, when saw we thee an hungered”: This barbarous expression, "an hungered", should be banished out of the text, where ever it occurs, and the simple word hungry substituted for it. Whatever is done for Christ's sake is done through Christ's grace; and he who does the work attributes to Jesus both the will and the power by which the work was done.

And seeks and expects the kingdom of heaven not as a reward, but as a gift of pure unmerited mercy. Yet, while workers together with his grace, God attributes to them that which they do through his influence, as if they had done it independently of him. God has a right to form what estimate he pleases of the works wrought through himself: but man is never safe except when he attributes all to his Maker.

Matthew 25:38 "When saw we thee a stranger, and took [thee] in? or naked, and clothed [thee]?"

When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in?” As they had never seen Him hungry and thirsty, in His own person, though He was both in the days of His flesh, and were ministered to. Both by angels, and by good women out of their substance.

They had never seen Him a stranger, and took Him into their houses; yet they had, seen Him hungry and thirsty, and as a stranger in his members, and had done these good deeds to Him in them, and to them for His sake.

“Or naked, and clothed thee?” For so Christ in person never was, until stripped of his raiment by the soldiers, and officers. But they had seen many of His poor saints without clothing, and had covered their nakedness.

Matthew 25:39 "Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?"

“Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?” For though he bore the sicknesses of his people, yet we never read of his being sick himself, nor was he ever cast into prison. But this has been the case of many of his servants, such as John the Baptist, Peter, and Paul, and multitudes of others, who have been tenderly and affectionately used by their fellow Christians.

These are valid questions. They had never literally fed Jesus, or visited Him, or given Him water to drink, or clothed Him. They could not understand what Jesus was saying, because they could only think of literally doing these things for Jesus and not His brethren.

Matthew 25:40 "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done [it] unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done [it] unto me."

“Unto one of the least of these my brethren”: This refers in particular to other disciples. Some would apply this to national Israel; others to needy people in general. But here Christ is specifically commending “those on His right” (verse 34), for the way they received His emissaries.

You see, when we do anything to help someone else, Jesus counts it as we doing these things for Him. We cannot directly do these things for Him, but everything, regardless of how small it is, that we do for our fellowman is counted as being done for Jesus. God really smiles on those who help women and children who cannot help themselves.

We read love your neighbor as yourself. This is not a principle that the world understands. But besides getting a reward stored up in heaven for the good things we do, doing good makes you feel good about yourself.

Matthew 25:41 "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:"

“Depart from me, ye cursed”: These words are from the king to the sinners; and contain the reason why they are to be separated from blessedness. Ye are cursed, because ye have sinned, and would not come unto me that ye might have life. No work of piety has proceeded from your hand, because the carnal mind, which is enmity against me, reigned in your heart; and ye would not have me to reign over you.

“Depart!”: Into everlasting fire. This is the punishment of sense. Ye shall not only be separated from me, but ye shall be tormented, awfully, everlastingly tormented in that place of separation.

“Prepared for the devil and his angels”: The devil and his angels sinned before the creation of the world, and the place of torment was then prepared for them. It never was designed for human souls; but as the wicked are partakers with the devil and his angels in their iniquities, in their rebellion against God, so it is right that they should be sharers with them in their punishment.

We see here plainly, why sinners are destroyed, not because there was no salvation for them, but because they neglected to receive good and do good. As they received not the Christ who was offered to them, so they could not do the work of righteousness which was required of them.

They are cursed, because they refused to be blessed; and they are damned, because they refused to be saved.

As I said before, there are only two destinies that we can choose from. The right leads to heaven, and the wrong (left), leads to hell. Hell has been prepared from the foundation of the world, as well. God does not want anyone to go there, but He is just. If that is the choice one makes, that will be one's home for eternity.

We make the choice. We cannot blame God. It is our choice to make. He just carries out our decisions.

Matthew 25:42 "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:"

‘For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat’: Hence it appears, that these were such as dwelt among Christians, and professed the Christian name, and yet disregarded the poor members of Christ in distress, when it was in the power of their hands to help them. But when they were hungry and ready to starve for want of food, these professing to be Christians did not communicate to them for Christ's sake.

Which showed that they had no true faith in him, and love to him. Therefore, are justly condemned by him; whereas such who never knew Christ, or any of his people, or any obligation they were under to regard any for Christ's sake, these will never be condemned for the non-performance of these things.

“I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink”; as not the least morsel of bread to eat, so not so much as a cup of cold water to drink. Which with what follows, are manifest tokens and evidences, that they did not belong to Christ, were not true believers in him, nor had they any real love to him.

The grace of God was not in them, and therefore had neither right unto, nor fitness for, the kingdom of heaven. But were righteously banished from the presence of the Lord, and sent to dwell among everlasting burnings. For righteous it was, that such as they who would not show any love to him here, should not dwell with him forever hereafter.

Matthew 25:43 "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."

"I was a stranger": If men were sure that Jesus Christ was actually somewhere in the land, in great personal distress, hungry, thirsty, naked, and confined, they would no doubt run unto and relieve him.

Now Christ assures us that a man who is hungry, thirsty, naked, etc., is his representative, and that whatever we do to such a one he will consider as done to himself. Yet this testimony of Christ is not regarded! Well, he will be just when he judges, and righteous when he punishes.

Matthew 25:44 "Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?"

"Then shall they also answer him": As well as the righteous, being likewise astonished at what he had said, but on a different account. Saying, Lord, when did we see thee an hungry or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to thee?

Hence it is clear again, that these men were nominal Christians, who had made a profession of Christ: they own him as Lord; and suggest that they had seen him, and known him, though never in such circumstances.

For if they had, such was their love to him, and great respect and veneration for him, as they pretend, they would, to be sure, have ministered unto him; and if ever they had seen him in such a case, which they could not call to mind, they could not believe, but they must have supplied him with all things necessary and convenient.

You see, they too never saw Jesus in person, so they did not understand this statement. This is the picture of a very selfish person. Someone who has no feeling for the infirmities of others. This person lives just for himself, not caring what destitute condition their neighbors are in.

This person is caught up in self, and has gone so far as to make a God of Himself alone. What a pitiful sight. Then in the next verse, Jesus told them of their error.

Matthew 25:45 "Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did [it] not to one of the least of these, ye did [it] not to me."

"Then shall he answer them": With a stern countenance, in great resentment, as one highly offended, and with the authority of a judge. "Saying, verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me". Since they had given no food not to the least of his brethren and friends that stood at his right hand, no not to anyone of them.

Not so much as the least bit of bread to them when hungry, or a drop of water to them when thirsty. They had not taken them into their houses, nor provided any lodging for them, when they were exposed in the streets to the inclemency of the weather, and insults of men.

Nor gave them the least rag to cover them, when they were almost naked, and ready to perish. Nor did they minister to their wants, either physical, or food, or give attendance, when on sick beds, and in prison houses. Therefore, he reckoned this neglect of them, and want of compassion to them, all one as if he himself in person had been so treated.

And if then judgment will righteously proceed against men for sins of omission, much more for sins of commission. And if such will be dealt with in this manner, who have taken no notice, and shown no respect to the members of Christ; what will the end be of those, who are injurious to them, their persons, and properties, and persecute and kill them?

Of course, anyone who saw Jesus in person would do all these things for Him. Jesus was speaking here, of the condition of this person's heart. The heart will be judged even more than the deeds, because it is actually what a person is.

If someone in this kind of need cannot prick your heart, then you are definitely not right with God. We are responsible to help those who are before us, if they cannot help themselves. These are opportunities that come to see what we really are inside.

Matthew 25:46 "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

‘And these shall go away into everlasting punishment’’: No appeal, no remedy, to all eternity! No end to the punishment of those whose final impenitence manifests in them an eternal will and desire to sin. By dying in a settled opposition to God, they cast themselves into a necessity of continuing in an eternal aversion from him.

But the righteous into life eternal; such as are justified by the righteousness of Christ, and who, though they have done works of righteousness under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and by the assistance of the grace of God, yet have not depended upon them, but upon Christ, for life and salvation. These shall go into heaven, the place appointed for them.

To enjoy that eternal life in soul and body; which is the free gift of God, through Christ. And will be a life free from all the sorrows of the present one; a life of perfect holiness and knowledge, and inconceivable pleasure. A life of vision of God, and communion with him, and which will continue forever.

And which guarantees the eternity of the punishment of the wicked: for as the happiness of the righteous will be eternal, the punishment of the wicked will be so too. For no reason can be given why the word which is the same in both clauses, should be taken in the one for a limited time, and in the other for an eternal duration.

You see, the things you do, tell what you really are. This method that Jesus used to determine the ones in right standing with Him and the lost is a good one. This happened when this person thought none of the church group was watching, so he did not have to make it look good.

The things that are done in secret will be made manifest, whether they be good or bad. Jesus knows without a doubt from this who should inherit eternal life, and who should be condemned to hell.

Matthew Chapter 25 Second Continued Questions

1. When shall Jesus sit on His throne here?
2. What will be His title then?
3. Who will be gathered before Him?
4. For what purpose are they gathered?

5. Which side are the sheep on? Which side are the goats on?
6. Who is the Judge of all the earth?
7. What shall the King say to those on the right?
8. How long has the preparation been made?
9. What is the King inviting the Christians to do?
10. Is the knowing of God predestination or foreknowledge?
11. Who sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven?
12. Who is the Right Hand of God?
13. Why do those on the right deserve heaven? Besides their faith, what did they do? Five things
14. Finish this; "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done unto _____."
15. Besides getting a reward in heaven, what is great about helping others?
16. What does Jesus say to those on the left?
17. Who is responsible for us going to heaven or hell?
18. What is this a picture of?
19. Where do the righteous go forever?