

Matthew 25, 31-46, “Jesus Loves Me, But He Must Judge”

5.27.18

Today we’re going to finish looking at Jesus’ teaching on the Mount of Olives, called the “Olivet Discourse.” Jesus has been describing what will happen in a season of time called The Tribulation. We’ve been studying this discourse for several weeks now and today we’ll see Jesus conclude His teaching by describing something that is very, very unpopular: Judgment.

Certainly, judgment is not a popular word. In fact, it’s a word that’s seldom used in most pulpits across America, because it’s not comfortable. What we’re going to see today is a description by Jesus of a scene that will happen in the future where those who believe in Jesus will be separated from those who don’t...the separation of the sheep from the goats. This passage here in Matthew 25 is often described as the “Sheep/Goat Judgment.”

Before we look at this passage about judgment, I want to frame our time together in this way... Think about this with me in regards to judgment. Who is the Judge? Jesus, right? And what kind of judge is He? Jesus is righteous, good and fair, correct? Yes, and in that righteousness, goodness and fairness, He, as judge, will judge people according to those standards. A good judge **MUST JUDGE** those who do wrong if he’s a good judge. Think about Jesus, He is the righteous Judge, and yet, He did this...



He died. He died for those who condemned Him. He died for you and for me! In other words, the Righteous Judge, took our judgment!

Listen, think about this... Think about the marvelous privilege those of us here today have, who are Christians... Jesus took **OUR** judgment...as the Bible says (2 Cor. 5:21), **“He became sin who knew no sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God!”** Do you understand? As the righteous Judge...Jesus took off His royal robes and stepped down from the bench of heaven and came to this earth...to become like us...and took the sentence of my sin upon Himself. The righteous and holy and blameless judge paid for my crime, your crime, with His own life!

Listen, if you wonder why Jesus had to die on the cross, that's it. He died on the cross so He could bear your sin, my sin. He carried my guilt and your guilt, even though He was innocent...so that we might be delivered from Judgment and a sentence of eternal DEATH. Oh listen this morning...we can rejoice and say: “Hallelujah,” because **HE TOOK OUR JUDGMENT!**

But keep listening, on the other hand, for those who refuse to receive Jesus Christ by faith...for those who refuse to accept His Lordship and His payment for their death sentence, they themselves will bear the punishment and the judgment for their sin. They will bear their own death sentence, because Jesus cannot take from them, what they refuse to give Him. And therefore, as we'll see today, those who accept Christ are the sheep and those who refuse Christ are the goats.

Now, let's see if we can set the scene for what we're going to read in a moment from Matthew 25. It's Tuesday evening of the last week of Jesus' life before His crucifixion. He's left the Temple, where He's been teaching and He's making His way back to the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, 2 miles away in Bethany, where He's looking to get some supper and to rest. But, as He trudges up the Kidron Valley onto the Mount of Olives, He stops to answer all the questions He's being asked by His disciples. Remember the image...



They are asking about His Second Coming... They keep saying: **“Tell us about Your Second Coming. Tell us about when you are going to set up your Kingdom and you rule and reign as the Messiah. What are the signs and when will it happen?”**

And so, Jesus teaches them... He tells them about the Antichrist and how this wicked man will come on the scene one day and will desecrate the Temple by setting up an image of himself and requiring people to take his mark. He describes wars and famines and pestilences that will come by way of judgment upon the Antichrist and all those who take His mark. (We've been studying about these judgments in the Revelation series on Wed. nights.) And He warns them: BE READY! Why? Because, when He returns, He's going to judge...separate the sheep from the goats.

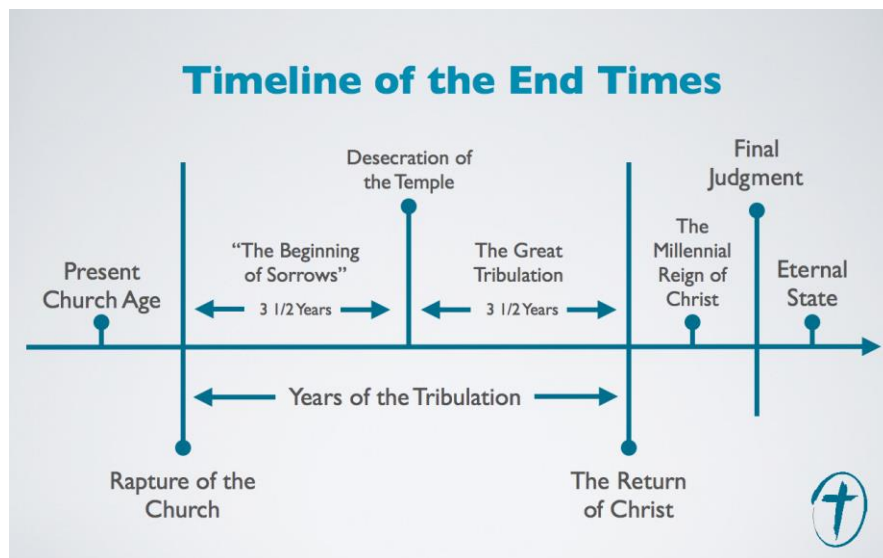
Matthew 25:31-46

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by 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 welcomed me, 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 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal 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 welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, 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, 'Truly, I say to you, 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 eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Now let's be reminded as we seek to understand this passage...when does all of this happen? See our timeline...



We are living in the Age of Grace or the Present Church age, but at any moment, we (the Church) could be snatched off this earth...**RAPTURED** to heaven... It will happen in a moment...in the twinkling of an eye! And once that happens, it will usher in a season of time called: "The Time of Jacob's Trouble," a period of 7 years where the nation of Israel will become once again the focal point in God's timeline.

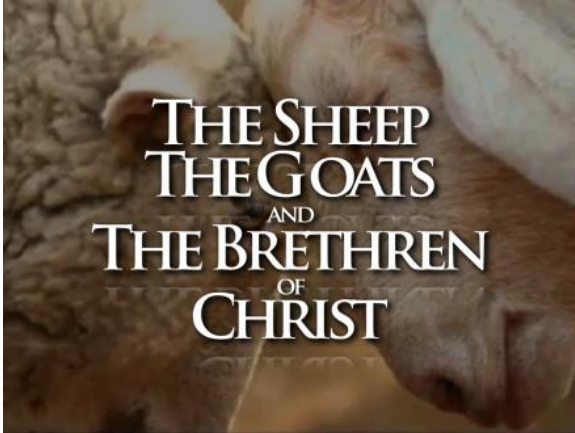
Remember, during the Tribulation Period, the Church is gone...we're in heaven receiving our rewards at the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ. But, on earth, wrath and judgment are being poured out upon the Antichrist and his followers...**and all of this** is leading up to Jesus' Second Coming when He will set up His Millennial kingdom in Jerusalem where He will keep His promise to the nation of Israel and He will rule and reign for 1,000 years on the throne of David.

Now remember church family, Jesus is talking to primarily Jews...



Jews who have given their lives to Jesus Christ. In other words, He is talking to people who understand the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah who would come and restore the nation of Israel to the Promised Land and sets up His kingdom on earth for 1000 years. That's what this passage is all about. It's about who is going to enter into the Millennial Kingdom!

Jesus describe three groups in the passage we just read. He talks about...



The Sheep, the Goats and the Brethren. Quite plainly, for those people on that hillside, this was very common language of that day...they all knew about shepherds separating sheep from goats. This was a common practice... See the image...



Shepherds separated the sheep from the goats for several reasons. One of which is their grazing patterns... As I studied this week, I discovered that sheep graze closer to the soil than other animals. Therefore, shepherds liked for the goats to feed in a pasture before the sheep, or the sheep would not leave enough grass for the goats. Sheep are also better producers clothing, in that their wool is much better than the hide of goats. So, there would be the separation from time to time by the Shepherds.

So, we have Sheep, Goats and the Brethren. This is very simple and straightforward. The sheep represent those who follow Christ, the goats are those who don't...but, what about the Brethren? Who is that? Look again at verse 40... Jesus, who is depicted as the King is speaking to the sheep... watch it...

Matthew 25:40

⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

The brothers...the brethren...is quite simply the nation of Israel. Remember, this is during the Tribulation Period, the "Time of Jacob's Trouble." Jacob is Israel and the nation of Israel is suffering through the Tribulation literally to get to the place where Jesus, the Messiah comes back to the earth after the Battle of Armageddon and sets up His kingdom, thereby, keeping His promise to the nation of Israel, to rule and reign from the Throne of David. All of which was prophesied in the Old Testament over and over again.

And you see, Church Family, those standing on that mountain knew the OT...



They knew the Old Testament like we know the alphabet. They knew what the prophets said. Like Amos and Joel, who chronicle the words of God describing the return of the Messiah at the end of the Tribulation period... Here is Joel's prophecy...

Joel 3:1-2

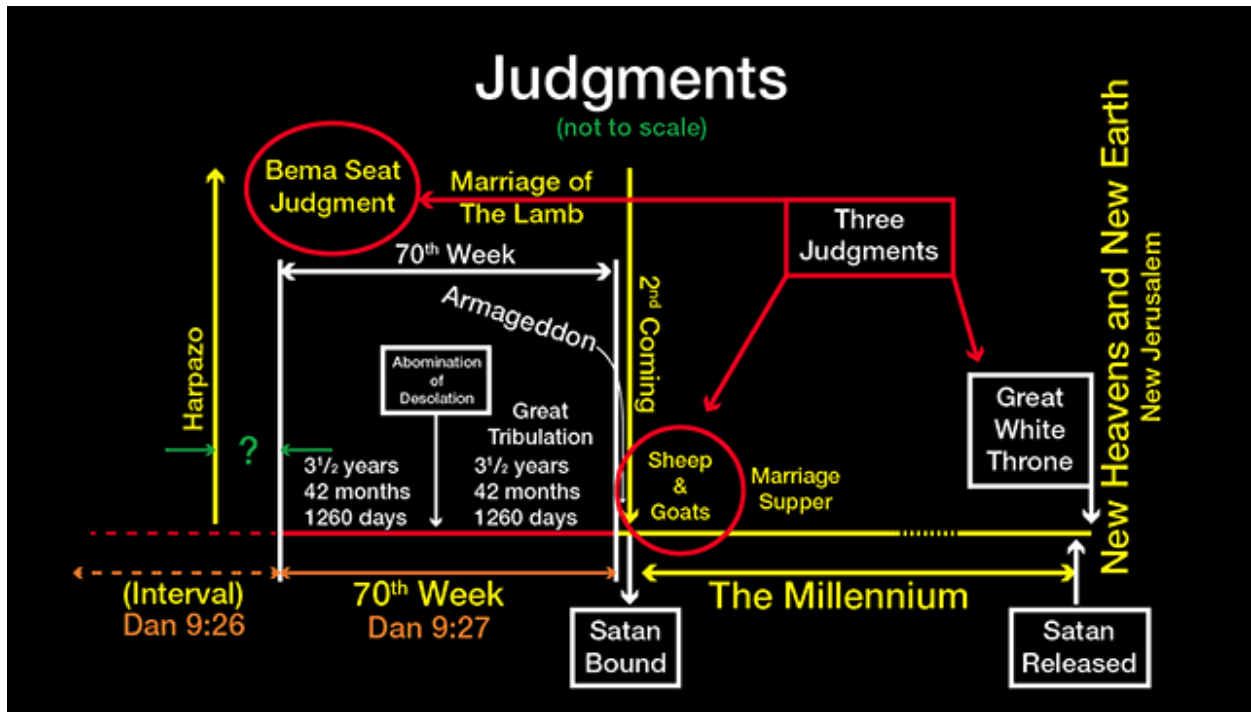
¹“For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, ²I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land.

Part of the reason for the Tribulation is the regathering of the Nation of Israel in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom. The prophet Ezekiel describes in Ezekiel 36 and 37 the vision of the valley of dry bones coming back together until they stand again as a living nation. The prophet Jeremiah records the words of God saying the same thing...

Jeremiah 30:10-11a

¹⁰“Then fear not, O Jacob my servant, declares the Lord nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from far away, and your offspring from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return and have quiet and ease, and none shall make him afraid. ¹¹For I am with you to save you, declares the Lord; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end...

God said, "I'll make a full end of all the nations..." That's judgment. And that's what we see after Jesus comes back to earth. **Now listen carefully, this is going to be new to many of you.** Did you know there are three judgments, not two? Take a look at this chart. Just focus on the red...



See the red circle at the top? This is the Bema Seat Judgment, where we, the believers, the Church, the Bride will receive our rewards in heaven after we have been raptured off the earth. Look at the white square on the far right that says: "Great White Throne Judgment." That judgment is for all non-believers who have died throughout time and that will happen at the end of the 1,000 year Millennial Reign of Jesus.

But, take a look at the bottom red circle that says: "Sheep and Goats." That's the third judgment that most people have never heard about. Or if they have, they're confusing it with the Great White Throne Judgment. Why? Because many preachers teach Matthew 25 like it's speaking of the End of Time...but, it's not. It's the of the Tribulation Period, leading into the Millennial Kingdom.

This Sheep/Goat Judgment simply means Jesus is not going to allow any unbeliever to enter into the Millennial Kingdom. Instead, they will be cast into the Lake of Fire. See verse 41...

Matthew 25:41

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'

Look at this chart to see the difference between the Great White Throne Judgment and the Sheep/Goat Judgment...

TWO JUDGMENTS CONTRASTED

Chart by Richard Schmidt, Prophecy Focus Ministries; adapted by Dispensational Publishing House

| MATTHEW 25:31-46 – SHEEP AND GOATS | REVELATION 20:11-15 – GREAT WHITE THRONE |
|---|---|
| Occurs after the second coming of Christ | Occurs after Christ’s millennial kingdom |
| Those judged will have physically survived the seven-year tribulation | The wicked dead will be resurrected to stand before the Lord Jesus for final judgment |
| Righteous enter the millennial kingdom Unrighteous cast to eternal torment | No positive outcome – All who are judged are cast into the lake of fire for eternity |

The sheep, those who have received Jesus by faith during the Tribulation will enter the Millennial Kingdom, but the Goats will be cast into eternal fire. So, you may ask, “How do we tell who are the sheep and who are the goats?” Simple. They will be separated by whether or not they are saved. How do you tell if someone is saved? The same way you do now...by their fruit. Jesus is going to judge them by what their fruit. Look back at verse 34.

Matthew 25:34-36

³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by 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 welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’

But, I know what some of you may be thinking: “Are they saved by their works.” No! But it’s their works...their fruit, which show they are saved. Listen, after we’re saved, our works are a manifestation and an identification of whether or not we are a sheep or a goat. Our works are an identifying mark. You see, the mark of salvation is always the same, FRUIT... Salvation is marked by the selfless love of acts of kindness and service. Our deeds reveal our true spiritual condition, particularly when we’re put under pressure.

Now think about the people living in the tumultuous times of the Tribulation Period, under the despicable reign of the Antichrist. For those who accept Christ...they will suffer greatly. They will be hungry and thirsty and starving because they haven’t taken the mark of the Antichrist (666). So, the sheep, at great risk to themselves will help the “brethren,” one another, believers. They will reach out and provide food and shelter for those who have accepted Christ and are suffering.

People are going to be desperate and those who help these desperate folks will do so at the literal risking of their lives. The words of the Apostle John embody this sentiment...

1 John 3:16-18

¹⁶ By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

So, how do we make application of this passage, since it's speaking of period of time...the Tribulation...when we won't even be here? Well, the principle still applies today...

Matthew 25:40

⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

Oh, but this is hard, because we live in an utterly indulgent society and it's so easy just to feed our desires and pleasures. We can so easily be consumed with materialism and a wanton and an almost insatiable lust for more. It's so easy, even as believers, to lose touch of the fact that we ought to be giving ourselves away and helping others, instead of pampering ourselves with all the stuff of this earth.

Remember the parable of the Talents from last week? We are to invest for the Master and not ourselves. No! We don't bury what the Lord gives us in our own indulgent selfishness, but instead we use our resources, our talents, to bring people to the Kingdom.

So, what are you doing? How are you living? Do you give to the work of the Kingdom? What will you do when you are put under pressure and you have to choose to obey versus going along with the crowd? There's not Antichrist here today...so, we should be able to willingly give to help grown the Kingdom! But, will we? Will we set aside our comforts, our pleasures to help someone, to bring people to the Kingdom or will cave to our selfish desires that knows little sacrifice and little forfeiture of for the Kingdom?

Yes, the application is clear... We are to be like Jesus. We are to invest to bring people to the Kingdom. We are to even be willing to suffer persecution and even yes...if asked...even death for our Master. Because after all...isn't that what He did for us. He suffered...



...as the Righteous Judge, to take our penalty our sentence, our judgment, so that we might be delivered one day to His Kingdom. Oh that we would be willing to do the same for others.
