

ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF GOD

In all of the parables in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24-25) the prominent issue is ultimately who will go into the kingdom and who will not. Christ repeatedly goes to the end of the matter and speaks in terms of the ultimate issue of who will be saved and who will not be.

“[In] the last three parables...[t]he principle which underlies each is the same... The fruit of faithfulness and preparedness would indicate the character of those living in the days before His coming. **In each parable, character is manifested by works.** (emphasis mine) This thought forms the key to the [next] passage which deals with the judgment of the nations (Matthew 25:31-46).” – ***Stanley Toussaint***

This brings us to the end of the discourse where Christ presents the climactic culmination of His second coming to the earth (cf. Matthew 24:31-46).

Matthew 25:31 (NKJV)

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.

This clearly has in view Christ’s second coming to the earth where He will sit on the throne of His glory in the kingdom. The kingdom is clearly in view as Christ in verse 34 says to the blessed, “***inherit the kingdom***”.

“***Son of Man***” is the Messianic title Christ most used of Himself (80 times) in the gospels. It is traced back to Daniel 7:13-14 where the connection of the Son of Man with His glory and kingdom are all tied together (cf. Dan. 7:9-14; 22-27).

When Christ comes at His second coming all the holy angels will be with Him (cf. Matt. 13:41-42; 2 Thess. 1:7). What a glorious sight that will be. As the Son of Man comes He will sit on the throne of His glory and the first order of business will be judgment.

Christ’s throne of glory will serve as a throne of judgment. The purpose of this judgment will be to judge among the living who have survived the Tribulation, to see who will be allowed to go into the kingdom. It will be HIGH drama for the entire world!

There are various judgments described in the Bible. After the Rapture the believers who make up the Church will be judged at what is called the Bema Seat of Christ (cf. Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:9-10). This is the believer's judgment to determine degrees of rewards. After the millennial reign of Christ comes the Great White Throne judgment which is the final judgment of all the lost through all the ages which will determine degrees of eternal punishment (Rev. 20:11-15).

Matthew 25:32 (NKJV)

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.

The word "nations" (Gk. *ethne*) normally refers to Gentiles as distinguished from the Jews (cf. Lk. 21:24; Acts 14:16; Rom. 3:29; 9:24; 11:13; 15:27; 16:4; Gal. 2:12), although in some contexts it can refer to all people including Jews (cf. Mt. 28:19; Mk. 13:10; Lk. 7:5, 23:2; Jn. 11:48, 51, 52; 18:35; Acts 10:22; Rom. 16:26; Rev. 15:4).

Although all the nations at large are collectively gathered before Him the people will be judged individually. "**Nations**" is neuter while "**them**" is masculine in gender. The very personal activities defining the judgment further show this is a judgment of individuals.

It is important to note that there are THREE groups of people spoken of in this passage.

v. 32 – Sheep

v. 32 – Goats

v. 40 – Christ's "brethren"

"The key to the identification of all three is the interpretation of 'brothers of Mine'." – **Stanley Toussaint**

If the sheep are Christians from the Gentile nations and the goats are unbelievers from the Gentile nations then "**My brethren**" must refer to converted Jews.

“The best understanding of ‘brother’ in this context is that they are faithful Jews who are suffering in anticipation of Messiah’s return.” – **Ed Glasscock**

I take it that Christ’s “brethren” in this context is probably referring to Jewish believers. The context is that the Jews have just come through what the Bible calls “***the time of Jacob’s trouble***” (Jer. 30:7). Jer. 30:7 says, “***Alas! For that day is great so that none is like it***”. Dan. 12:1 specifically mentions the Jews and says then, “***there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time***.” And Jesus said this will be a time of “***great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be***” (Mt. 24:21; also cf. Rev. 12:5-6, 13-16).

In addition, note what Joel the prophet says in relation to Christ’s second coming....

Joel 3:1-2 (NKJV)

1 “For behold, in those days and at that time, When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem,
2 I will also **gather all nations**, And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat [the Kidron Valley]; And I will **enter into judgment with them there On account of My people, My heritage Israel**, Whom they have scattered among the nations; They have also divided up My land.

The Bible very specifically mentions one of the KEY reasons for judgment in relation to Christ’s second coming involves the issue of how the nations have mistreated His people Israel.

It would seem that there is no specific judgment for Israel (the Jews) at this time because in the course of the Tribulation Period God will have already purged out all the unbelievers (Ezek. 20:34-38).

Zechariah 13:8–9 (NKJV)

8 And it shall come to pass in all the land,” Says the Lord, “That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, But one-third shall be left in it:
9 **I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine** them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. **They will call on My name**, And I will answer them. I will say, ‘**This is My people**’; And each one will say, ‘**The Lord is my God.**’ ”

Jeremiah 30:7 describes the “time of Jacob’s trouble” but then says, “he shall be saved out of it.” Deliverance is going to come to Israel because Israel at this point has been purged and a believing remnant is looking to the Lord in faith (cf. Zech. 12:10-13:1).

It seems that at the time of the second coming there will be a great turning to the Lord in Israel – so much so that Romans 11:26-27 says this:

Romans 11:26–27 (NKJV)

26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
27 For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”

In Isaiah 40 it says to speak comfort to Jerusalem because her warfare is ended and her iniquity is pardoned (Isa. 40:2). Then it speaks of the voice preparing the way of the Lord which while having application to John the Baptist will ultimately be fulfilled in the person of Elijah in the Tribulation Period (Isa. 40:3-4). And then it says the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all flesh will see it together (Isa. 40:5). Note that in the flow of thought Israel’s pardon and the Lord’s coming are closely connected.

All this to say it would seem consistent to think that here in Matthew 25 the sheep and the goats are saved and unsaved Gentiles (respectively) and that Christ’s brethren in this context refer to converted Israel.

Matthew has been often been dubbed “The Gospel of Judgment” because it often addresses the subject (Matt. 3:12; 6:2, 5, 16; 7:24-27; 13:30, 48-49; 18:23-34; 20:1-16; 21:33-41; 22:1-14; 24:45-51; 25:1-12, 14-46).

Christ is often referred to as a “Shepherd”. The language of judging between the sheep and the goats is perhaps drawn from Ezek. 34:17-19. Shepherds in the time of Christ often herded sheep and goats together but at night would separate them because the sheep with their heavy wool needed less shelter.

Matthew 25:33 (NKJV)

33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

The right hand represents the position of favor and blessing.

In the end God will separate the saved and the lost and this will be an eternal separation. The saved on His right hand will go into the kingdom and the lost on the left will not. And it all depends on what we do with Jesus in the here and now!

1 John 5:12 (NKJV)

12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

And if we truly believe in Jesus the expectation of Scripture is that this will show in how we treat His chosen people (Israel). God blesses those who bless His chosen people and He curses those who curse them (Gen. 12:3).

People talk about being on the “right side of history”. The great issue is to be on the “right side of God” which in the end results in being on the “right side” for all eternity. God help us to be on the right side of God!