

**The Parables of Jesus #42**  
**The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats**  
**(Mt. 25:31-46)**  
**Bill Denton**

**INTRODUCTION**

**A. In our study of the parables of Jesus, we have learned that judgment is a frequent theme**

1. Judgment belongs to God as creator and sovereign ruler
2. The expectation of judgment is sure and certain
3. Judgment is both positive and negative
  - a. negative for those out of God's favor
  - b. positive for those in God's favor
4. Judgment can and will come at God's discretion and on his timetable
5. Judgment can occur both in time and at the end of time
6. We can prepare for judgment and thus determine whether, for us, judgment will be positive or negative

**B. The Jews had made a terrible mistake concerning God's judgment**

1. They believed that since they were God's chosen people, then he would never judge against them
2. It is a mistake that we can make today
  - a. do we assume that once we have obeyed the gospel, that our "membership" on the church roll assures security in judgment?
  - b. are we aware that preparation for judgment is an on-going thing

**C. In the parable of the sheep and goats, we are given great insight**

1. We learn about some of the things God is concerned about
2. We are challenged because Jesus speaks about the condition of a person's heart
3. How we respond to other people determines the kind of preparation we have made for God's judgment

## I. THE PARABLE (Mt. 25:31-46)

### A. Jesus sets the scene (25:31-33)

1. It is when the Son of Man comes in His glory
  - a. it is a picture of judgment
  - b. it is not necessarily a statement that gives any timeframe (ie., we do not know if it's "in time" or "end of time")
2. Note some other passages that use this kind of judgment picture
  - a. sometimes it appears to be "in time" judgment
    - 1) Matt 16:27-28 -- For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. (NKJ)
    - 2) Matt 26:64-65 -- Jesus said to him, ""It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, ""He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! (NKJ)
  - b. sometimes it appears to either "in time" or "end time"
    - 1) Mark 8:38 -- For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." (NKJ)
  - c. sometimes it appears to be "end time"
    - 1) 1Thes 4:16-17 -- For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. (NKJ)
    - 2) II Th. 1:7-9 -- and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, (NKJ)
3. The point is not "when" but the "fact" of judgment, and that's the scene

**B. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and he will separate them**

1. The picture is that of a shepherd separating sheep and goats who have been allowed to pasture together
2. Judgment is an act of distinguishing between different things
  - a. in the parable it is between sheep and goats
  - b. in application it is between one kind of person and another
3. The fact that Jesus said “all nations” will be gathered leads many to believe he is speaking specifically about “end time” judgment here
  - a. that may well be, but not necessarily
  - b. again, in principle, all judgments of God against mankind function essentially in the same way
  - c. regardless of the specific judgment Jesus spoke about, the principle of judgment applies to all, regardless of specific event

**C. Jesus then surprises us with the basis for judgment**

1. Those given the place of honor at his right hand
  - a. these are people called “blessed of My Father”
  - b. these are the ones who will inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world
  - c. these gave food to the Lord when he was hungry
  - d. these gave him a drink when he was thirsty
  - e. these took him in when he was a stranger
  - f. these clothed him when he was naked
  - g. these visited him when he was sick
  - g. these ministered to him when he was in prison
2. The righteous are confused because they aren’t aware of having done any of these things for the Lord
  - a. “When did we do these things for you?”
  - b. Matt 25:40 -- 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.' (NKJ)
  - c. this may say a great deal about the “body concept” of the church, in which Jesus is the head and the members are the body
3. The judgment of punishment is given to those on his left hand
  - a. these are instructed to depart from him
  - b. these are cursed and assigned to everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels
  - c. these did not feed the Lord when he was hungry
  - d. they did not give him a drink when he was thirsty
  - e. they did not take him in when he came to them as a stranger
  - f. they did not clothe him in his nakedness
  - g. they didn’t visit him when he was sick or in prison

4. These are confused too because they cannot remember having failed to do any of these things for the Lord
  - a. "When did we not do these things for you, Lord?"
  - b. Matt 25:45 -- 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.' (NKJ)
  - c. when we fail to care for one another, we fail to care for the Lord

#### **D. Proclamation of Judgment (25:46)**

1. Those who failed to serve others (and thereby the Lord) will go away into everlasting punishment
2. The righteous (those who served others and thus the Lord) will go into eternal life
3. This really does make it sound as if Jesus is discussing "end time" judgment
  - a. this is why many believe he is
  - b. regardless, what better way to express the final, ultimate result of the judgment of God
  - c. are you ready for that kind of examination and judgment?

## **II. LESSONS TO LEARN**

### **A. This parable reminds us that God often looks at us differently than we look at ourselves**

1. 1 Sam 16:7 -- But the LORD said to Samuel, ""Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (NKJ)
2. Mark 7:21-22 -- For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. (NKJ)

### **B. The parable reminds us that what God looks for may be different than we think**

1. How would you determine the "faithful"
2. If this was your story about judgment would you have centered on:
  - a. obeying the plan of salvation?
  - b. some popular doctrinal position
3. It surprises us that Jesus' story simply promotes good people with good hearts who do good things for others

**C. The parable emphasizes how important our caring for the needy is to God**

1. Acts 20:35 -- I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (NKJ)
2. Rom 12:13 -- distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. (NKJ)
3. Gal 6:10 -- Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. (NKJ)
4. 1 Tim 6:17-19 -- Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. (NKJ)
5. Heb 13:16 -- But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. (NKJ)

**CONCLUSION**

**A. The judgment of God will come**

1. It is a fact, about which, we can be confident
2. It is totally unavoidable
3. Therefore, it is completely reasonable that we should be prepared

**B. Preparation is not simply a matter of doing some things, rather it is a matter of the heart**

1. The story doesn't teach a "works salvation"
2. It does teach that what one does is a product of one's heart
3. God is looking for good hearts - how's yours?

**C. Invitation**