

## 19 THE SHEEP AND GOATS JUDGMENT IS NOT WHAT YOU THINK

### Summary of sheep and goats judgment: Mt. 25:31-46

The King/Judge placed the tender-hearted, generous sheep on one side and the hard-hearted, negligent goats on the other. The nations, populated by sheep and goats, were divided on the basis of giving/not giving food, drink, hospitality, clothing, help in infirmity, and visitation when in prison to the brothers of Jesus. Jesus said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me." (Mt. 25:40) and "Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me." (Mt. 25:45). The King/Judge gave the kingdom and eternal life to the sheep and fire and eternal punishment\* to the goats.

### Using Matthew 10, Matthew 16:27-28, and Matthew 25:31-46 we will show:

1. "These brothers of mine," with whom Jesus identified so strongly, were the original disciples.
2. The judgment of the sheep and goats took place at the end of the Old Covenant.
3. The fiery punishment the goats received was the Roman and Jewish War in AD 67-70.
4. Israel/Judea were the nations being judged.

### 1. The 12 disciples were "these brothers of mine" with whom Jesus identified.

#### A. The twelve disciples were to preach the message of the coming kingdom to the lost sheep of Israel and perform all manner of miraculous healings.

"Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, preach, saying, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons." Mt. 10:6-8

#### B. Matthew named the twelve specifically.

"Simon, who is called Peter; Andrew, his brother; James the son of Zebedee; John, his brother; Philip; Bartholomew; Thomas; Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus; Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite; and Judas Iscariot..." Mt. 10:2-4

#### C. The apostles were not to take money or supplies, but rely on the hospitality of those in Israel.

"Don't take any gold, nor silver, nor brass in your money belts. Take no bag for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff: for the laborer is worthy of his food. Into whatever city or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy; and stay there until you go on." Mt. 10:9-11

#### D. Those who accepted the apostles, received peace. Those who rejected them, would receive utter destruction on judgment day, even worse than Sodom and Gomorrah had suffered.

"As you enter into the household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come on it, but if it isn't worthy, let your peace return to you. Whoever doesn't receive you, nor hear your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake off the dust from your feet. Most certainly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city." Mt. 10:12-15

#### E. The apostles would be delivered up to authorities, imprisoned, and beaten.

"Men...will deliver you up to councils, and in their synagogues they will scourge you. Yes, and you will be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the nations." Mt. 10:17-18

#### F. The apostle's identity was Jesus's identity. If they received the apostles, they received Jesus.

"He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward. He who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. Whoever gives one of these little ones just a cup of cold water to drink in the name of a disciple, most certainly I tell you he will in no way lose his reward." Mt. 10:40-42

### 2. The judgment of the "Sheep and Goats" took place in the apostles's generation.

#### A. The judgment was simultaneous to the coming of the Son of Man (Mt. 25:31) and the Son of Man came in the apostle's generation. Therefore, the judgment took place in the apostle's generation.

"You [apostles] will not reach all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes." Mt. 10:2

**B. When we compare Mt 25 with Mt. 16, we see they are parallel passages with the same elements:**

**(a) Son of Man (b) coming in glory (c) angels (d) judgment, but Mt. 16 adds the coming is in their generation.**

- "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. Before him all the nations will be gathered, and he will separate them one from another. He will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." Mt.25:31-33
- "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he will render to everyone according to his deeds. Most certainly I tell you, there are some standing here who will in no way taste of death, until they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom." Mt. 16:27-28

**3. The fiery punishment was national judgment and defeat by the Romans AD 67-70.**

**A. National judgment entailed God sending a warring nation against an errant nation. Israel was warned repeatedly of the coming destruction.**

- John the Baptist warned: "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing floor. He will gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire." Mt. 3:12
- John the Baptist said, "Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." Mt. 3:10
- Jesus declared, "I came to throw fire on the earth. I wish it were already kindled." Lk. 12:49
- Jesus warned, ""Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." Mt. 11:21
- Jesus warned, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is at hand." Lk 21:20

**B. We see "fire" language used many times in reference to national judgment in the Old Testament. Fire was the most effective weapon of war as well as symbolic of God's wrath.**

The following passage pertains to the judgment of Edom due to its mistreatment of Israel around 583 BC and is illustrative of national judgment language. "Yahweh has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. Its streams will be turned into pitch, its dust into sulfur, And its land will become burning pitch. It won't be quenched night nor day. Its smoke will go up forever. From generation to generation, it will lie waste. No one will pass through it forever and ever." Is. 34:8-10

Note: This is clearly hyperbolic, metaphoric language since smoke is not rising from Edom today. To understand the language of prophecy, it requires immersion in the O.T. prophets just as one would immerse oneself in a different culture to understand it. (see #2 The Day of the Lord Has Happened Many Times.)

**4. Jesus called Israel "nations" (plural) in this text, apparently, because the land at this time was divided into 4 kingdoms with their own ethnarch.** There were changing rulers and divisions over the years leading up to the war. The word nation (Gr. #1484) refers to "a multitude, men or beasts, associated or living together; a company, troop, or swarm." There were distinct regions in Palestine with defined cultural distinctions and rulers.

**Concluding thoughts:**

In Matthew 10, Jesus tells the disciples not to take money (presumably for food & drink) or extra clothing but to depend on the hospitality of others. In Matthew 25, we see the sheep had given food, drink, clothing, and hospitality to Jesus's brothers. In Matthew 10, Jesus said the disciples would be beaten and imprisoned (delivered). In Matthew 25, the sheep had provided help for the infirmed and prison visitation to Jesus's brothers.

Jesus used the giving of help and hospitality to the Apostles as symbolic of receiving their gospel message. He was referring to the apostles' evangelistic efforts after His ascension from approximately AD 30 to AD 66 because he spoke of the disciples being beaten in the synagogues and imprisoned which did not occur before the ascension. It was those who rejected the gospel (goats) who would be caught up in the fiery punishment of the Jewish-Roman War, while believers in Jesus heeded his warnings and escaped.