

Lesson 94 – THE FINAL SEPARATION

Matthew 25:31-46

(Matt. 25:31-33) – When Christ returns to this world in His second coming, attended by the “*HOLY ANGELS*” (His servants), He will “*COME IN HIS GLORY*” and “*SIT UPON THE THRONE OF HIS GLORY.*” This is not like His first advent when He came in His holy, sinless humanity, as a helpless babe in a manger who had to be cared for by His parents. That first advent was to “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb. 9:26), as He, having the sins of His people imputed to Him, bore “the sins of many” (God’s elect given to Him before the world began). In His second coming, He will “appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:28). The “*THRONE OF HIS GLORY*” is the throne of judgment which He earned by His obedience unto death for His people. From this throne of judgment, He will gather “*ALL NATIONS: AND HE SHALL SEPARATE THEM ONE FROM ANOTHER, AS A SHEPHERD DIVIDETH HIS SHEEP FROM THE GOATS.*” The “sheep” are the elect of God, chosen in Christ and given to Him before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4-6). They are justified by God’s grace based on the righteousness of Christ imputed to them (Rom. 4:1-8). They are redeemed by His blood, and, in God’s appointed time, they are given spiritual life in the new birth by the Spirit of God and called to faith in Christ and true repentance (John 10:27-30). The “goats” are the non-elect, reprobates, whom God “fitted to destruction” (Rom. 9:22). They are all who go through this life in unbelief and die in that state without having Christ as their Savior and Mediator (John 3:18-19,36). The Lord “*SHALL SET THE SHEEP ON HIS RIGHT HAND.*” This is the right hand of acceptance and fellowship, acceptable to God in and by Christ. He will set “*THE GOATS ON THE LEFT,*” which is the left hand of the judgment unto condemnation and rejection.

(Matt. 25:34-36) – The Lord said to the sheep, “*COME, YE BLESSED OF MY FATHER, INHERIT THE KINGDOM PREPARED FOR YOU FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD:*” – This describes how they are saved and accepted with God totally by His grace in the merits of Christ (Rom. 5:21; Eph. 2:8-10). The kingdom is an inheritance, not an earned reward. Christ Jesus did the work and bought them and all the blessings of kingdom citizenship. He bequeathed to them giving them freely all the blessings of salvation and glory (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

The works that He mentions are not works they did to earn their place and blessings in the kingdom. They are evidences worked in and through them by God that proved their faith in and love for Christ and their love for all the brethren. He calls them “*THE RIGHTEOUS*” as they appear before God in the righteousness of Christ imputed to them (Rom. 4:1-8; 2 Cor. 5:21; Php. 3:7-9).

(Matt. 25:37-40) – Notice how God’s true sheep cannot remember when they did these to Christ. He tells them, “*INASMUCH AS YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ONE OF THE*

LEAST OF THESE MY BRETHREN, YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ME.” “Least” does not speak of degrees of position or reward in the kingdom of heaven. All true believers are equal in the kingdom of heaven because they are all saved by God’s grace in Christ Who alone merited all spiritual blessings for His people. “Least” shows that they did these deeds to those brethren from whom they could derive no material gain in helping them.

(Matt. 25:41-45) – The Lord said to the goats, *“DEPART FROM ME, YE CURSED, INTO EVERLASTING FIRE, PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS.”*

Consider how these words will absolutely shock those who stand before God expecting to be saved and enter glory for their works (cf. Matt. 7:21-23). What a horrible end for sinners who took pleasure in their self-righteous, legalistic works or their free-will religion which they believe that they made the difference between saved and lost. God tells us plainly that *“it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy”* (Rom. 9:16). This is why Paul wrote that we who believe and rest in Christ know “the terror of the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:11). This is the terror of standing before God in one’s own works instead of standing before God washed in the blood of Christ, cleansed of all our sins, and clothed in the righteousness of Christ, fully justified and certain for heaven’s glory (Rom. 8:28-39).

Notice how the goats respond. They thought they had done all of these works towards Christ and His people, but in reality they hated and persecuted the true Christ and His true sheep (John 3:19-20; 15:18—16:3). Their minds and hearts were focused upon themselves and their works, not Christ and His work of redemption.

(Matt. 25:46) – Here is the final sentence of the goats – *“THESE SHALL GO AWAY INTO EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT.”* This is what sinners to whom sin is imputed receive. The final pronouncement for the sheep is – *“BUT THE RIGHTEOUS INTO LIFE ETERNAL.”* *“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Rom. 6:23). There is no other hope for sinners than that which is found in Christ, saved by God’s grace, and secure for heaven’s glory in and through Him Who to know is life eternal. This is a glorious thought for the people of God as it glorifies God, exalts Christ, and removes all grounds for boasting in those whom God saves. Realizing that if God were to judge any of us by works, we would all be condemned and perish, we stand amazed that He has saved us, is preserving us, and will bring us to glory by His free and sovereign grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. Always remember that in order for any of us to enter heaven’s glory, we must have a perfect righteousness that answers all the demands of God’s law and justice. Always remember that this righteousness can only be found in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ as our Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, and Preserver (Acts 17:31).