

THE LATTER PARABLES OF JESUS

Message 18

Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

Words: 5076

Scripture: Revelation 19:1-10

INTRO: We have come to the very last parable the Lord Jesus ever gave. It is the parable of the 'Sheep and Goat' judgment. This is the second longest parable Jesus gave. Only the parable of the prodigal son is longer than this one, so we have a very important parable. Go to Matthew 24 (read 1-3). I have mentioned to you that the disciples asked three questions of Jesus in verse 3. First, "Tell us, when will these things be..." I mentioned to you that the 'these things' do not refer to verses 1-2, but to the things Jesus told them about as they went from the temple to the Mount of Olives. They would have descended down the slopes of the temple mount, through the valley of the Kidron, and up the slopes of the Mount of Olives and on into the Garden of Gethsemane. This is where Judas found Jesus when he came with the band of soldiers.

And as I understand this Olivet Discourse, Jesus answers their first question in 24:4-31. Here is a whole listing of the 'these things' the disciples asked about and they end at the second coming of Christ.

The second question they asked is, "And what will be the sign of Your coming...?" And all the parables we have looked at here, as I see it, deal with answering that question. That includes Matthew 24:32-25:30. Their third and last question then was, "...and what will be the sign of the end of the age?" And I believe that Matthew 25:31-46, where we are this morning, is the answer to that question.

And we need to answer this question: what is the end of the age? In the Bible, there are two major ages. There is 'this age', and the age to come. Go to Matthew 12:32. It says, "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come." There you can tell, they were still in 'this age'. And from there we learn as well that there is an age to come. This age to come is the true 'New Age.'

Now in Matthew 24:3, the disciple's question was, "What will be the sign of the end of this age?" Well, when we come to the end of 'this age', we will begin a 'new age', the age to come. So,

what is the sign of the end of this age? I believe it is that which is given to us in Matthew 25:31-45. When Jesus comes back down to earth, sets up His judgment chair and gathers the last of the people left on earth and judges them, that is the sign of the end of this age. After this, the New Age, the next age will begin.

Now, in the last message I told you about a number of passages that refer to the judgment at the end of the tribulation. So all of those passages we went over refer to the end of the tribulation. And the sheep and goat judgment takes place at the end of the tribulation. This judgment that takes place at end of the tribulation is also the end of this age. So the two great ages are this age, which ends at the end of the tribulation and the age to come, which begins after that.

Today there is much talk of the New Age. I am not surprised it is called that. The new age the world is scrambling after, including the religions of the world, is the devil's counterfeit new age. He wants to begin the new age before its time. But God will begin it in the right time. And the parable we are about to look at marks the close of the old age, and thus the beginning of the new.

M. The Sheep And Goat Judgment (Matt. 25:31-46)

1. The Parable (Matthew 25:31-46)

So let us read our parable now beginning in Matthew 25:31 (Read the parable.) Our Scripture reading earlier was Revelation chapter 19:1-10, which happens at the same time as this parable takes place. We will see more of that later in this message. We go then to the setting of this parable of the sheep and the goats.

2. The Setting (Matthew 25:31-32a)

I want to give you three settings for this parable. Let me give you first the broader context of Matthew 24:1-25:30. This setting began with the three questions the disciples asked Jesus in 24:1-3. They said, "When will these things be?" And Jesus gave them the whole course of history in brief, right up to the time when He comes at His second coming. So look at Matthew 24:29-31 (read). So there is the end of the tribulation.

Their second question was, "What will be the sign of Your coming?" And as I interpret the passage, He shares with them that His return is imminent. No man knows the day or the hour. And so He gives numerous parables of warning and that takes in 24:32-25:30. And now, in answer to their third question: "What will be the sign of the end of the age", He gives, as I interpret it, Matthew 25:31-46.

Notice now the immediate setting of our present parable in 25:31-32a (read). The immediate setting is the time when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him and He sets up His throne to judge the people who are still left on earth. The Lord will sit on the throne of His glory, and all the nations will be gathered before Him for judgment. This is now the immediate context.

So let us begin by considering the words of this near context. Note that when He comes at the second coming that He comes in all His glory! He came to earth once as a Man, but He had laid aside His glory. But though, at the second coming, He still comes as a Man, He now comes in all His glory! Do you see these Rock bands with the blue haze of smoke on the stage and the lights flashing? I think that is Satan's duplicate for glory. But this will be real glory. Only those three disciples on the Mount of transfiguration have ever seen anything that gives some idea of what this will be like. I want to read that event for you harmonizing the synoptic Gospels of that account in the KJV:

"And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took with him Peter, and James, and John, his brother, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and he was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light and glistering; shining, exceeding white, as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And, behold, there appeared unto them two men, which were Elias with Moses: and they were there talking with Jesus, who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

"But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass, as they departed from him, then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here. And if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias,' not knowing what he said for he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. And while he yet thus spake, behold, there came a bright cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And behold there came a voice out of the cloud, which said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.'

"And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, 'Arise, and be not afraid.' And suddenly, when the voice was past, when they had lifted up their eyes, [and] looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves. And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen again from the dead. And they kept that saying close, with themselves, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen; [but] questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean."

There we have a taste of glory. But back to our verse in Matthew 25. It says, "When the Son of Man comes in all His glory..." That is what we have seen a little of. But then it says, "... and all the holy angels with Him..." Now, we must stop there. He comes with all His holy angels. I want to call into question something that we have believed without further consideration. We have believed that these holy angels are spirit being angels. And I want to propose to you that they are not angels in that sense. I want to further propose to you that these holy angels are actually the raptured Church.

Now, please do not string me up yet. Wait at least until I have given the evidence for this. And let me say this, that if you differ with me in the end, that will just be no problem to me. I would understand that and would say, "You may be right." So, somebody tell

me, and I have given you the answer in other messages: What does the word angel mean? Well, I will allow you to pull out your cell phones to check me out on omniscient Google. Don't turn the ringer on. It might be my homiletics teacher.

The original word is *angelos*. The Online Bible says it means first, a messenger, an envoy, or one who is sent. And second it means an angel as we think of them, spirit beings. Now the difference between these two can be that one is a physical human messenger and the other, a spirit being. Listen to Matthew 11:10 "For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.'" That word messenger is 'angelos'. But it refers to John the Baptist. That is also given in Luke 7:27. And then Luke 9:51-52, says, "Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and He sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him." Those messengers, *angeloi*, were human beings.

Now listen to James 2:25, "Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?" Who were those messengers, these *angeloi*? Israelis. And you could go to Revelation 2-3 and each church had an 'angel', *angelos*, that was addressed, and those messengers are pastors.

Now, when Jesus comes at the second coming, Revelation 1:7 says, "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen." Now, in the original it says, "the clouds". And we ask, what clouds are those? Vapor clouds? Or could they be clouds of people?

Go to Revelation 19 that was read for us earlier. Look first at verses 7-9 (read). Who is that? Well, that is the Church. And where is that? It is in heaven. Now look at verses 11-14 (read). Who is this army? Well, look at the first group in verse 8, and note the words, 'fine linen'. Now look at verse 14, and note again the words 'fine linen'. There is no doubt this is the same

group. By the way, I cannot find that angels are ever said to be dressed in fine linen.

Four times it says that Christ will come in THE clouds of heaven. Now that could refer to the clouds in the sky, as we always think of it. But three of the four times the Greek says He comes in THE clouds of THE heaven, singular. Though I did not work through all the references necessary to come to a conclusion, I think when it says He comes in the clouds of the heaven, it may refer to the clouds of the third heaven, the dwelling place of God, the place spoken of in Revelation 19. And these clouds are formed by millions of white robed saints or messengers on white horses.

If you had millions of such in the sky in one group, no doubt, that would be clouds, white clouds! And all of that to say this: I believe these clouds are the Church dressed in fine linen riding on white horses. And I think it most likely that these are the holy angeloi, or messengers of Matthew 25:31!

I want you to look at our verse again. Tell me what word modifies the word 'angels'? It is 'holy' angels. Now this phrase 'holy angels' occurs only four times in the Bible. Listen to them. Mark 8:38, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Luke 9:26 says very much the same thing.

Revelation 14:10, "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." Matthew 25:31, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." Did you notice that each of those references had one thing in common? They all refer to the second coming or later. So, it may be that these clouds refer to the holy messengers, or the Church.

So we have looked at the broader setting, Matthew 24:3-25:30, and the immediate setting Matthew 25:31-32a. And

now I want to set these words in their prophetic setting. Notice in 25:31 that it talks about when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him. There we have a snapshot of a moment at the end of this age. Then notice it says, "...then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him." Now what is important to understand is that between the time when He comes, and the time when He sits on His throne, a lot of things happen. I want to give you some of those now to set this parable in its prophetic context or setting.

When Jesus comes in the clouds, according to Revelation 1:7, every eye will see Him! I believe it will be televised worldwide! All over the world there will be some thing like this on television: "We interrupt this program to bring this important news!" It will be a truly awesome moment! Here is the picture you must get. Throughout the great tribulation, which by this time has been almost seven years, millions of people have died in God's judgments as He pours out His wrath on people. This is a picture the promoters of unconditional love should fix in their minds. And a large number of Jews have fled to the hills, according to Matthew 24:15-21. And Bible scholars believe they will be holed up in Petra, the city in the rocks. And Jerusalem will be in the last moments of the death grip of the antichrist.

And between the time when Christ comes down in glory, in our passage, and when He sits on the throne, I believe one of the first things on His agenda will be to go to Bozrah. Listen to Isaiah 34:6, "The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the LORD hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea." This is well possibly Petra of Jordan.

Now turn to Isaiah 63 (read 1-6). Many prophecy teachers believe that when the Jews flee Jerusalem in the middle of the tribulation, that they will flee here, and that the Lord will go and deliver them when He returns. Then I believe He goes to Jerusalem, and delivers the Jews out of a most desperate situation. Now maybe these things don't happen in this order, but

they happen between when He comes in His glory, and when He sets up His throne.

Then He destroys the armies that have gathered to fight Him. This is what we know as the battle of Armageddon. I do not know if He goes to Jerusalem first, to deliver that city and then to Armageddon or in which order these occur. But after the Lord Jesus is done warring, I believe all non-professing Christians have died under the wrath of God. This picture may not be acceptable to our modern image of the unconditionally loving Jesus. But it is high time that that picture was destroyed in Evangelicalism!

So go to Revelation 19 to get a picture of the end of the battles the Lord wages here (read 11-21). As I see it, all unbelievers have died, and the antichrist and the false prophet have been cast into hell. And then, finally the sounds of war die out all over the world. For the first time since Adam and Eve fell into sin, the sounds of fighting and warfare come to an end.

Now let us go to Revelation 20 to read what happens right after chapter 19 (read 1-3). Here we find that He has also cast Satan into hell and bound him for a thousand years. All physical warfare has come to an end, and wrestling with the principalities and powers of the demonic hordes and Satan comes to an end as well. And now we stand on the threshold of the true new age. And I expect that that cloud of messengers we saw earlier, now goes to work to gather together the Lord's elect. Go to Matthew 13:37-43 (read). Now look at 13:47-50 (read).

Let me make a note here. We often hear that we need persecution to purify the Church. There may be some truth to that. But I want to tell you that no amount of persecution weeds out those who profess to be believers but are not. The post tribulationist says that the Lord will purify His church in the great tribulation. It is no doubt that tribulation weeds out some professing believers. But even in times of persecution, professors want to abound. That seems unbelievable, but our parable will show that most clearly. We think people are true believers when they persevere through persecution, and that is some indication of being a true believer, but it does not yet prove it. And what



is most amazing is that at the end of the worst persecution and tribulation this world will ever know, there will be myriads of professing believers who are not truly saved! You find it in these two passages we just read and we will find that again in Matthew 25, the sheep and goat judgment.

Now Matthew 13:41 says, "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness..." I have mentioned that I think it is well possible that these 'angels', or 'messengers' are Church age believers. You will remember that Paul said, "Do you not know that you will judge the world?" (1 Cor. 6). When does that happen? I believe it begins right here.

So, what happens after the Lord comes down to earth in all His glory? Well, we have seen that a number of things happen. First, all unbelievers will be destroyed, at least as I see it. Second, all the people who are left alive after this will be gathered for judgment. A throne will be set up because He will sit on the throne of His glory. I expect it will be a high and glorious throne! If ever there was a stage with true glory, it will be this one. And now, judgment will begin and it is given to us in parable form.

I have sat in court when a judge enters. I was there as support for a Christian brother. There is some sense of glory by the way the judge is dressed. When he enters, everyone stands to their feet. This is a sign of subjection to the law and a sign of respect. And for those who don't respect the law, are forced to make a physical gesture of respect. I don't know if you have ever sat down to ponder what it will be like to stand before God someday. If not, it would be worth your while.

If ever all the people rose for the entrance of the judge, I have no doubt it will be so when the judgment of Matthew 25 takes place. Everyone will wish they had been obedient to the smallest detail. Everyone will wish they had repented of every little thing they ever did that was wrong. I don't suppose that ever, in all the tribulation, there will have been a more fearful moment than when the Judge enters for this judgment,

and that will be true, I think, for both saved or unsaved. And I wonder what it will be like to hear your name called?

But before we look at that judgment, look at the first part of 25:32. All the nations will be gathered before Him. Well, the holy messengers have gathered them. And here they are, all in one spot. And I want you to notice who they are. It says, "All the nations will be gathered before Him..." Now the word translated 'nations' is *ethnos*. Can you tell what word we get from this word? *Ethnic*. We speak of *ethnic* groups. These are groups bound by certain cultures.

Now it is of utmost importance that we understand this word *ethnos*. This word is used 164 times in the NT. 93 times it has been translated Gentiles. That refers to the Gentiles as distinct from the Jew. Sixty four times it has been translated as nation. Five times it has been translated heathen, and twice, people.

There is a common interpretation among pre-tribulational believers that says of the word *ethnos*, that it refers to the Gentiles. Of the 164 uses of this word, 93 uses, it seems to refer to the Gentiles. So it is very simple to the conclusion that this is the case here too. I will mention more of this in the parable itself, as it becomes an important interpretational point.

But, what is interesting is that of the 164 uses of this word, 64 it has been translated as nations, and Israel is a nation too. So consider with me now Acts 10:22, which says, "And they said, 'Cornelius the centurion (a Gentile), a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation (*ethnos*) of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you.'" Here, the Jewish nation is considered an *ethnos*.

Turn to Luke 7 (read 1-5). The word 'nation' is again 'ethnos' and again refers to Israel. Listen to John 11:48, "If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation (*ethnos*, referring to Israel)." Then in verse 50 the High Priest said, "...nor

do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation (ethnos, referring to the Jews) should perish." Now, I believe the translation, 'nations' is the right translation, and it includes all the nations of the world including the Jewish nation.

Now notice the last piece of information given in verse 32, before the parable begins. It says, "All the Nations will be gathered before Him." The Lord Jesus has come from heaven with the Church. He has destroyed all of the unbelieving world. He has destroyed the false prophet and the antichrist. He has cast Satan into hell. The Lord's throne has been set up. And before Him are all the nations of the world in one big mass of people. As I see it, these are all professing believers, but not all possessing believers. And now, all is set for judgment, and our parable begins.

Now here is what I recommend to you. Earlier we saw the holy messengers gathered all these sheep and goats together. They are all the nations of the world, that is all those who are left after the tribulation, which is a small number in comparison to what was on earth before the tribulation began.

And I propose to you that the Lord Jesus sends them out to judge who is a sheep and who is a goat, and to separate them into two different groups. Turn to Revelation 20 while I read 1 Corinthians 6:1-3, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?"

Let us read now Revelation 20, (read 1-6), 1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released

for a little while. 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection."

I have mentioned before that I believe the pronouns 'they' and 'them' in verse four refer to the Church. It says judgment was committed to them. The Lord gave the judgment to them, and they carried it out. And when the sheep and goats have been separated, the Lord, according to Matthew 25:3 will set the sheep on His right hand, and the goats on His left. And now judgment is ready to commence.

These then, are the three settings in which we find this parable. The first is the broader context of Matthew 24:3 through 25:30. The second, the immediate setting is 25:31-32a. The third is the prophetic setting and we looked at what happens between when Christ comes, and when He sits on His throne to judge the world.

CONCL: Well, let us conclude. We have, this morning, simply placed our parable in its setting. We looked at three settings. We considered the broader setting of Matthew 24:3-25:30. Then we looked at the immediate setting. We looked at two snapshots given to us in 25:31-32a. First, there is Christ's coming in all His glory. Second, He then sits on His judgment throne, and all the nations are gathered before Him. At this point judgment is ready to commence and the parable is about to begin.

But we saw that between those two snapshots a lot of things happen in Bible prophecy. So we put this parable in its prophetic setting. We considered that the clouds in which Jesus descends may be clouds of believers dressed in fine white linen, and mounted on white horses. We further considered that when it says that Jesus comes with all the holy angels, this could possibly refer to the Church age believers as well.

We saw that the Lord makes war when He is on earth and that He delivers the Jews who had fled into the hills, and He delivers

Jerusalem. In Revelation 19, we saw that the vultures are invited to a feast on the flesh of people and horses. And it says it is the flesh of all people, both slave and free and small and great. I proposed that all unbelievers who do not profess to be Christians will be destroyed.

We saw that the antichrist and the false prophet were cast alive into hell. We saw that Satan and his demonic hosts were cast into hell. And for the first time ever, the world is free of physical and spiritual warfare. And now, all is set for this final judgment, which is a sign of the end of the age. And in the next message we want to zero in on this judgment.