

MSB246

MORE Seed and Bread

BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

Otis Q. Sellers, Founder - David R. Hettema, Director

THE PARABLES OF MATTHEW 25: THE JUDGMENT

by Milton B. Hammond

Students of Scripture have been interested for many years in the presumed "sheep and goat judgment" recorded in Matthew 25:31-46. They question, "Is it an actual happening? Is it some sort of a parable?" The record of this judgment is found only in this gospel and has been generally misunderstood by scholars who are unaware of the premillennial Kingdom of God. They seem to look for it as an imminent happening, which also leads to the questions, "When does this event take place? Is it for today, or for the Kingdom, or for some other time? Could it be for the Day of the Lord?" For those who are fearful, we need to note that even if it were an actual event, and even if the Kingdom of God were to begin shortly, it might be hundreds of years before it takes place.

Other questions arise. "If it is a parable, what does the sheep and goat judgment mean? What law is it based on? Who are 'the sheep' and who are 'the goats'?" Of course, the Dispensationalists have their answers ready. Some of them say that the sheep are "the saved" and the goats "the unsaved" of this world. They contend that "believing Gentiles are likened to 'sheep' and unbelieving Gentiles are called 'goats'." They like to say, "At the beginning of the millennium all living adults will be believers and this is a judgment of the Gentiles in which the unsaved (goats) will be purged out, and the saved (sheep) will be allowed to enter the kingdom." Such Dispensationalists apparently ignore the facts revealed in Matthew 25:31-46, which do not specifically refer to "the saved" and "unsaved" or even to "Gentiles." Some other Dispensationalists believe that this judgment of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25 takes place at the end of the age (this present age). They do not tell who the "sheep" and "goats" are or why the specific

sins presented lead to such severe penalties or what is the purpose for this judgment. These presumed Biblical scholars are not aware of God's provision for blessing and preparing mankind for the test by the necessary insertion of the premillennial Kingdom of God when men come to know Jesus Christ-who He is and what He is in the sight of God.

This passage depicting "the sheep and goats judgment" in Matthew 25 begins with the statement, **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: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on His left** (Matt. 25:31-33). There are two facts immediately obvious here. First, the word for "come" is *erchomai*, which means to arrive, and not *parousia*, which refers to a personal presence to benefit men. Second, we are presented with a judicial scene in which Christ, accompanied by the holy angels, is seated on the throne of His glory judging nations, not individual people. He is seated as a judge, prepared to render verdicts regarding those nations gathered before Him.

If this judgment takes place at His *parousia*, then Revelation 20:4 is in question, wherein individuals bearing the mark of the beast are sentenced to death. It is important to note that nations stand before Him in their representation, awaiting His verdicts. However, the judgment here is based on behaviors consistent, with Christ's teachings, and not the mark of the beast on individuals as described in Revelation 20:4. Further, the judgment in Revelation seems to include a judicial group of chosen ones not just Christ. The possibility that this judgment will cover many billions of people on earth is not discussed, and neither is the possibility that some nations may cease existence as a result. Further, it is evident that neither the sheep nor the goats are aware of the conditions of the adjudication. Jesus identifies the Jews as the abused people, found in Matt. 25:40 which is the subject of the passage. This is how the nations treat well or badly His chosen people, Israel (His brethren), during a time of testing.

Since no passage in Scripture is lacking in context, before going on with the parable of "the sheep and goat judgment," we must realize that it occurs in conjunction, with the parable of "the ten virgins and the marriage feast" and the parable of "the talents." In the parable of "the ten virgins and the marriage feast," we see that five wise virgins took extra oil for their lamps,

while the five foolish virgins did not take extra oil for their lamps (Matt. 25:2-4). They slumbered, and when the bridegroom arrived, the five wise virgins were ready to go in to the marriage feast, but the foolish virgins were out of oil and could not go in and, in fact, were shut out because they were late (Matt. 25:6-13). The last verses give the moral of the story saying, **Afterward came the other (the foolish) virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh** (Matt. 25:11-13). The coming of the bridegroom symbolizes the *parousia* of the Son of Man, and the oil for the lamps symbolizes the preparation of men who had lived in the Kingdom, and implies that some had not learned righteousness, or the Law of Christ, which is the whole purpose of the Kingdom. It is obvious that after a few hundred years many people living in the Kingdom may take its abundant blessings for granted and will not use the time wisely to study Christ's words. Thus, their behaviors will not be instinctively righteous. When the restraints are lifted, they allow the wicked one to creep into their hearts and forget to resist evil (Matt. 5:39), including to give to those who ask of them (Matt. 5:42) or love their enemies (Matt. 5:44) as Christ taught

The second parable is called the parable of "the talents," because it says, **For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his servants and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability (his particular ability); and straight way took his journey** (Matt 25:14-15). The man who received five talents traded with them and made five more, and the man who had two, made two more, but the man who had one talent was so afraid he hid it in the ground (Matt. 25: 16-18). After a long time, the lord of the servants returned and asked an accounting of them. The one with the five talents presented the ten to the lord and, **His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord** (Matt. 25:21). When the second man presented his four talents, he was accorded the same praise (25:23) and reward. The man with one talent said, **Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed (scattered seed), and I was afraid, and went and hid my talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast what is thine. The lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have**

not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury (interest) (Matt 25:24-27). The lord then instructed them to take the talent from him and give it to the man with ten talents. The final verses say, **For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt 25:29-30).** Men today would criticize God for such presumed unfairness, but this moral is not about money. Rather, it concerns sloth in learning the righteousness of God directly from men who are commissioned by God to instruct the people of the earth. There are dire consequences for men who take the blessings of the Kingdom for granted and fail to consider God's training seriously

With this, we see "the sheep and goat judgment" as a real parable. It says, **Then the King will say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungered and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and you took Me in: naked and ye clothed Me: I was sick and ye visited Me: I was in prison and ye came unto Me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee and hungered and fed Thee? or thirsty and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me (Matt. 25:34-40).** The surprise which this parable reflects makes it clear that not all men will completely internalize the grace of God that men must learn to emulate. Just making appearances of piety and worship toward God is foolishness as Matthew 6 explains. A man's heart and mind must remain true to God. An example is Paul's instruction in Ephesians 4:30-31 which says, **Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye gracious to one another, tenderhearted, dealing graciously with one another, even as God for Christ's sake deals graciously with you.** This was how Otis Q. Sellers rendered this verse, having discovered three forms of the root *charis* (grace) in it. This does not just mean being gracious to your brethren in Christ, but in the Kingdom it includes everyone: your friends, your enemies. Upon going into the Millennium, men must pass this

most stringent test. To do this they will be turning their backs on the short-term benefits of the mark of the beast, and they may have to suffer death or imprisonment from the evil sector. The moral of this parable is that those nations, who do not provide comfort for the hated people (Israel) and do not learn the teachings of Christ, will not join the righteous ones going into life eternal (flowing out of God) (Matt. 25:46).

It is my conclusion that these parables of Matthew 25 describe how important it will be for men to habitually exhibit the character of God (Isa. 26:9-10, His grace and righteous order). It is futile to say that we know how His judgment will be applied and that herein has been presented a literal picture of His judgment. There are many things that He may make allowances for when judging individual people.

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ISSUE NO. MSB246
Published Nov. 15, 2000