

Judgment Day (Matthew 25:31-46)

1. Intro

- a. Before we read text of judgement day
 - i. First let me state what some think obvious (needs to be said)
 - 1. There is such a thing as judgement!
 - a. May sound abrasive to modern sensibilities
 - i. But God's Word is clear
 - 1. He has created right/wrong
 - a. Moral/Immoral
 - 2. He has clearly laid out laws¹
 - ii. We are not the sole judge of our thoughts/words/deeds
 - 1. Deep inside we know this
 - a. Conscious & sense of guilt testify
 - ii. Now, what we are about to read is in a legal setting
 - 1. Often don't think Scripture having much in way of legalities
 - a. But think of the terms we see throughout
 - b. Our God is a Lord
 - i. Title of not only respect, but overseer, boss, sovereign
 - 2. We see whole books covering ceremonial laws
 - a. And 10 commandments are a summary listing of moral laws
 - 3. Often speaks of the lost as being lawless (criminals)
 - a. Of transgressor (against the law)
 - iii. And in the end there is a judge on a judgement seat
 - 1. Beginning to end we see the divine-human relationship has a very pronounced legal side to it.
 - iv. Our God is Creator, Savior, Father, Provider
 - 1. But also our great and final judge
- b. So today, thought it good to look at the issue of judgment
 - i. The final judgment
 - 1. We can learn much by looking
- c. Think of this as a court room drama, similar to television show

¹ Paul refers to Ten commandments (Exodus 20) as summary of moral laws of God, see Romans 7:7 and his use in Romans 2

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick & you visited me, I was in prison & you came to me.’

Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’”

Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’

Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

A. Few important things we can immediately see 4 important things:

1. Jesus Christ is the Judge, the one who sits on the great judgment throne.
2. On that day, Judge Jesus will look at what you ARE before what you have done.
3. This passage (contrary to many teachers) is NOT about going out and doing good.
4. What you are is shown by what you have done.

B. 1st - ? Who is doing the judging?

1. Verse 31 states , “*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne*”
 - a. “Son of Man” Jesus uses this title often for Himself
 - b. Christ Himself is the great judge²

² Isaiah describes Jesus on His throne in Isaiah 6

- i. Amazing how many folks do not realize the eternal roles actively plays
 - A. Many preachers teach Jesus saves you, then takes back seat to:
 - a. Our obedience & faithfulness
 - b. The “Christian life”
 - i. How we should live and treat others
- ii. But we must note Scripture says:
 - A. It was thru Jesus all creation made
 - a. “All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.” - John 1:3
 - B. See Jesus subject of OT - Moses/psalms/prophets
 - a. “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” - Luke 24:27
- C. Now we see here Christ is the one on the throne of judgment

Truly Jesus Christ is the Alpha/Omega the Beginning/End... It is ALL about HIM!

- i. It is important we recognize this
 - 1. The full truth of who Jesus Christ is has been greatly lost
 - a. And what He has done and will do is seldom discussed

C. 2nd - On that day, separated by species before any deeds are discussed

Let us Re-read v32 & 33

Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.

- 1. ? What is the **first** thing that happens?
 - a. The sheep and goats are separated by WHAT THEY ARE
 - i. There is a separation by species before anything else
 - ii. There is no mention yet whatsoever of what they did (good or bad)
 - iii. They are separated by “who” before discussing “what”

This is an extremely important point, one that we will come back to...

- 2. Let us stop for a moment and consider v34

³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

- a. It is good to pause and note the phrase, “Come, you who are *blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*”

- i. ? Why doesn't it say, "Come, you who fed & clothed others"?
 - ii. ? Why doesn't it say, "Come, you who lived good, clean lives"?
 - iii. ? Or, "Come, you obeyed my commandments pretty well"?
 - iv. ? Or "Come, you who made the right choices and said the right prayers"?
- b. Because this isn't about rewards for a good life, or a religious life!
- c. **And** because salvation is by God and from God
- i. Salvation is a blessing... a gift from God
 - 1. "Blessed by the Father" means those blessed are passive
 - a. It is the Father that acted – He blessed
 - 2. So salvation is not earned
 - 3. It is not *partially* earned
 - a. Nor is it retained by good/religious deeds
 - 4. It is "by grace that we are saved, through faith, not of ourselves. It is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9)

D. 3rd - Deeds. Let's look at deeds of the sheep:

re-read v35 – 45

³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

- A. Did you notice reaction of the sheep (remember – those blessed by the Father)
- i. They are surprised, and puzzled.
 - 1. "When did we do all that?" they wonder
 - a. If they had been doing it to earn something
 - i. They would have smiled and been proud
 - ii. "He noticed!" they would happily exclaim!
 - iii. Wouldn't be puzzled
 - 1. Not if merit was the goal all along
 - 2. But No. Nothing but surprise here!
 - a. Were simply doing good things because it was their nature.
 - b. Sheep do "sheepy" things
 - i. They don't do it to earn something
 - ii. They aren't reward motivated
 - iii. They were simply living like sheep

1. Why? Because they're sheep!
 3. Please notice *what* it was these sheep were doing
(a detail many today miss)
 - a. The texts states they were showing charity to "*The least of these my brothers*"
 - i. Righteous weren't simply feeding & clothing people
 1. They were taking care of Christians
 - a. Brothers & sisters in Christ
 - b. The redeemed
 - c. Think about it logically
 - i. Means fellow Christians of their local church
4. When sheep/Christians live Christian life together
 - a. "Sheepy" things tend to happen between them.
 - b. They cared for & took care of each other
 - i. In their eyes, they were simply living life
 1. Explains why surprised when deeds mentioned
 - c. They saw it as natural, but Jesus saw it as more than that:
 - i. When Jesus said:
 1. "as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me"
 - ii. Saying He saw the good things done between them as being towards Him!

B. ? How can this be?

C. **Example:** *Oldest Son learning about state history and capitols*

- i. Wife took him to Michigan visit friends/family
- ii. Friend volunteered take him to state capitol, museum, eat
- iii. I called & thanked friend

? *Why would I call and thank my friend*

- iv. Didn't do anything for me personally!
- v. When my friend showed respect/love for my son, he showed it to me
- vi. I thanked him because I took it personal

D. Likewise here, Jesus takes it personal when kind things done to His people

E. Now let us look at the judgment of the goats:

Re-read v41-45

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’

a. Notice the reaction of the goats:

a. Tone of surprise...as if they expected good things

i. I suspect had an “I’m not so bad” view of their guilt before God’s Law

b. Defensive

c. Felt entitled

i. “When didn’t we” they say...

1. ? Why would they ask that?

2. They thought they had done good things

a. Good enough to merit our Lord’s favor

b. Had probably lived relatively decent & clean life

i. Maybe even good religious lives

A. May have even been part of the same local church as sheep!

d. Whatever their thoughts, now surprised by what Jesus now saying

i. Instead of the “Atta’ boy!” they were expecting

1. They were separated by what they were

2. Their deeds used to prove what they were

3. It was made clear they had no true love of the people of God

b. 4th Point – Our deeds are fruit, show us for what species we are

a. Our passage shows that the deeds (actions) of people are evidence

i. This is court room, remember?

1. All-knowing Judge is making His decision

a. He knows it to be fair & just

i. But presents evidence so all others will know

A. And it is our deeds that are the proof

b. This isn’t unique to this passage, either

i. Consider for a moment Matthew 7:21

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ *Matt 7:21-23*

- c. This is another scene of Judgement Day
 - i. We see same thing as in today’s passage
 - 1. Sincere surprise by those being condemned
 - a. Look at their response
 - i. “Lord, Lord” – familiarity/intimacy
 - ii. Listing of works
 - A. Note these are religious deeds
 - b. Despite assumed familiarity
 - i. Condemned
 - A. ? The justification for condemnation?
 - He never knew them
 - Lawlessness
 - i. Their life lived as if no law
 - ii. Once again – deeds given as evidence
 - 1. Sheep do sheepy things
 - a. But these folks have record of goat stuff

D. Must be clear: ²³ These passages NOT telling us “Go and do good” (2x)

- A. Consider again *How* fruit/deeds was discussed
 - i. Their fruit, their deeds ***given as evidence***, showed what they truly were,
 - ii. In no way did it make them what they were!
 - 1. Their deeds didn’t establish species
 - a. Instead, their species led to their deeds
- B. Some may say “You’re wrong! This passage is about loving God/loving others”
 - i. Jesus said that was Great commandment
 - 1. Sheep lived out
 - 2. Goats didn’t
 - 3. They both got what they deserved
- C. But if that were what this passage were about, it would contradict:
 - i. Matt 22:37-40 Jesus said love god/love others is summary of the law
 - ii. Romans 3:20 Nobody saved by doing what law commands
 - iii. Romans 3:23-24 All guilty before the throne, Salvation by grace thru faith
 - iv. Ephesians 2:8-9 Salvation/faith thru grace, solely gift of God, not earned

- D. Simple fact is: We all deserve punishment, but by God's grace some are saved
 - i. The guilty cannot be simply pardoned
 - ii. There is penalty for breaking of God's law
 - 1. That price must be paid
 - a. If it isn't, then the judge would not be just
- E. To take this text as meaning we should go do more good, or more religious stuff
 - i. Would be to completely miss the point!
- F. Also notice what our Lord did NOT do:
 - i. Didn't end this teaching with commands such as :
 - 1. "Go do sheep stuff"
 - 2. "Go be good people and get more involved in church"
 - a. He simply taught us that judgment is by species

E. Close: What do we do with passage like this?

- A. I suggest that we use it to take a long, hard look at ourselves
 - i. I have heard old-time preachers say we don't need to think about such things
 - 1. That once we say "The prayer", all is settled
 - ii. But an even older-time preacher said this:
 - 1. "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves"³
- b. Myself, I find these passages a bit scary
 - i. In both, those condemned thought themselves in right-standing
 - 1. In the Matt 7 passage, these were religious folk
 - a. Who were working in the name of Christ
 - b. Who thought they had a relationship
 - i. That's what we think! This is terrifying

2. So let us take this passage, this nervousness (or fear & terror)

- a. And take an analytical look at our salvation
 - i. First let's consider our fruit:
 - 1. Are you doing sheepy things or goat stuff?
 - a. Do you care for and love other believers
 - i. Do you treat them well?
 - ii. Reach out in compassion or turn a blind eye?
 - iii. Do you speak well of them or back-bite ?
 - 1. Gossip/complain or build up?

³ 2 Corinthians 13:5

- b. We must remember
 - i. Jesus takes it personal when someone treats His people
 - 1. Good...or bad
 - c. What about motives> Why do you do what you do?
 - i. To do good because deep down you think you have to?
 - ii. Maybe out of a sense of obligation or even tradition?
 - 1. Or because you genuinely care?
2. Some may take offense that I make such challenges
 - a. May think I shouldn't be saying things to church-folk
 - i. But in all honesty, it would be very un-loving not to
 - ii. Jesus said in that Matt 7 passage
 - 1. "Many will come to me on that day"
 - a. And be proven to be false converts
 - b. I don't want any of that "many" to be you!
 3. Be honest as you examine the regular fruit of your life
 - a. What does the fruit point to?
 - i. Now is the time to consider these things
- b. Now let's consider our faith:
- i. Are you placing any trust at all in your deeds and good lifestyle to save you?
 1. Do you think yourself saved because of religious things you've done?
 - a. Here's one that might push your buttons a bit:
 - i. Do you think you're saved because said certain prayer?
 1. Because closed your eyes and said right words?
 - ii. Before you get angry, consider this
 1. Prayer is simply a telephone
 2. Prayer itself isn't what saves, it's the one on the other end of the line
 - iii. We are told that Christ saves those who repent & believe
 1. Repent - Turn from their sin, all their sin (even the legal ones w/o earthly consequence)
 2. Believe – Trust that Christs death pays for all their crimes, and abandon the idea that their good deeds pay for anything
 - iv. If the examination of your fruit got you nervous:

1. Throw yourself at the feet of Christ now
 - a. Turn from your sins
 - b. And trust that His work on the Cross paid for each/every one
2. Beg help from His hand in running from sin
 - a. Not so He will save you
 - b. But because He already has!

**Remember: Our Salvation results in good deeds;
Good deeds don't result in our salvation**

- c. What we're really talking about looking at here is Regeneration
 - i. If we examine ourselves and get worried
 1. We can't change ourselves into sheep
 - a. Only our Lord can do that
 - b. Jeremiah 13:23 tells us:
 - i. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil"
 - ii. In other words – *it is impossible!*
 2. Can a white man turn self black ?Chinese man turn self Hispanic?
 3. Can zebra change himself from stripes to dots?
 - a. Neither can a man change himself from a goat to a sheep!
3. The good news of the Gospel is this:
 - a. The miracle of species change is available through Jesus Christ
 - i. It is called being "born again" (John 3:7)
 - ii. Being made a "new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17)
 1. When God changes us, we are given a new heart
 - a. One that obeys God because we want to!
 - iii. This new birth is a miracle performed by God on those repent/believe
4. So can I ask you (us) to carefully examine yourself today?
 - a. To be honest
 - b. To repent and believe where you find sin and doubt
 - c. And to rejoice and smile if you realize that your deeds didn't save you
 - i. And your deeds don't keep you saved
 - ii. Instead you have incredible peace and joy knowing it was all Him
 1. From beginning to end
 - a. And you can simply rest in that!