

THE COMING JUDGMENT OF GENTILES

Matthew 25:31-46

In **Chapters 24** and **25** of the **Olivet Discourse**, Jesus has spoken directly about His return to earth and the warning of judgment that is to come. The theme of Christ's second coming permeates the New Testament and is...or should be...the anticipated reality of every Christian.

- There are **2,445 biblical references** to the *second coming*.
- References to Jesus' *second coming* in the bible *outnumber* references to His *first coming*...**8 to 1**.
- There are **260 chapters** in the New Testament...the *second coming* is mentioned **321 times** in those chapters.
- Jesus' *return* is emphasized in no less than **17 Old Testament book**.
- The New Testament authors mentions His *second coming* in **23** of their **27 books**.
- **1 out of every 30 verses** in the New Testament teaches of Christ's *return*.
- Jesus, Himself referred to His return **21 times**.

The **second coming** is *second* only to **salvation** as the most dominant subject in the New Testament. Everything that Jesus has been talking about has given the disciples "*signs*"... "*birth pains*"...that will signal that His time of return is near.

- The *birth pains* (**Matthew 24: 4-14**)...*Wars and rumors of wars... nation will rise up against nation...kingdom against kingdom... famines and earthquakes...tribulation and killing of believers... betrayals...arising of many false prophets and false teachers... increase in lawlessness...the love of Christ will grow cold.*
- The *abomination of desolation* (**Matthew 24:15**).
- The *need to quickly flee because of the impending dangers* (**Matthew 24:16-28**)...return to retrieve nothing...not even a coat.
- The *catastrophic chaos of the universe* (**Matthew 24:29**).
- And the supreme sign of *His own appearing on the clouds of heaven* (**Matthew 24:30**).

Jesus then began to illustrate what His coming will be like...

- *Parable of the fig tree* (**Matthew 24:32-35**)...signs of the season when He will return.

- *The days of Noah* (**Matthew 24:36-39**)...everyone will be going about life as usual...regardless of the signs being given them.
- *The faithful householder* (**Matthew 24:40-44**)...a warning to be alert and to be ready...the anxious anticipation of His return.
- *The wise slave* (**Matthew 24:45-51**)...the faithful servants.
- *The ten virgins* (**Matthew 25:1-13**)...the need to be prepared for His coming.
- *The talents* (**Matthew 25:14-30**)...the need to continue to be faithful in our service...don't be idle or lazy while waiting for His return.

When the Lord returns in **His glory** (**vs. 31**), He will judge not only the nation of **Israel** (as in the **Parable of the 10 Virgins, vs. 1-13**, and the **Parable of the Talents, vs. 14-30**) but also the **Gentiles**.

This is not the same as the **Great White Throne Judgment** which follows the Millennium (**Revelation 20:13-15**). This judgment...the judgment of the Gentiles...will occur 1,000 years earlier in order to determine who will and will not enter the kingdom following the Tribulation.

Only those who belong to the King...believers who have been born into God's family and are citizens of His kingdom...will enter His kingdom.

But now, in Jesus' closing words in the **Olivet Discourse** come some of the most severe and sobering warnings of judgment in all of Scripture for sin. The Bible makes clear that all sin is known to God and that all sin must be punished. What may appear to many to be secret is actually in the full, clear view of God.

"...You have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out."

~Numbers 32:23

"You (God) have placed our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence."

~Psalm 90:8

No sin escapes God's notice...and no sin and no sinner is exempt from God's judgment and punishment.

Not even the sins of Christians are exempt. But it's God's grace that is granted to Christians that placed their judgment and punishment for all their sins upon the Lord Jesus Christ...the One who died as the substitute for sinners.

But those who do not receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord must bear the penalty for their own sins...which is *spiritual death* and *eternal damnation*. The warnings to unbelievers is stated over and over again in Scripture.

I. THE SECOND COMING: (vs. 31-32a)

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne (vs. 31)...

Son of Man...He comes as Sovereign...to judge over the separation of the *sheep* and *goats*...Christ Himself. God the Father has delegated all authority for judgment to the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

“For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son.”

~John 5:22

Comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him...Accompanying and assisting the Lord at His appearing in glory and judgment will be a host of heavenly **angels**. **Paul** stated...

“...The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”

~II Thessalonians 1:7-8

Then He will sit on His glorious throne...When Jesus returns to earth He will reign personally *on a literal throne...in a literal Jerusalem...and over a literal people*.

All the nations will be gathered before Him (vs. 32a)...

Nations...Gk. *ethna*, has the basic meaning of *peoples*...and *refers to every person on earth when the Lord returns*.

II. THE SEPARATION: (vs. 32b-45)

And He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left (vs. 32b-33)...The process of Christ's judgment will include the infallible separation of the *saved* from the *unsaved*. When all the *nations* and *peoples* of the earth will be gathered before Him at His return, the Lord Jesus Christ will separate *believers* from *unbelievers*. **He will put the**

believing sheep on His right...the place of *favor* and *blessing*. But the *unbelieving goats* He will put **on the left**...the place of *disfavor* and *rejection*.

- **The Separation allows for the Inheritance of the Saved: (vs. 34-40)**

Here, Jesus reveals unequivocally that the **Son of Man** who sits on the glorious **throne (vs. 31)** is also the **Son of God**...the divine **King**.

Then the King will say to those on His right, “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (vs. 34)...These will be the believers who will have survived the *Tribulation* and are now ushered alive into the millennial **kingdom**.

Come, you who are blessed of My Father...The *source* of salvation is the *sovereign blessing* from the **Father**. The *reception* of salvation is through *faith*.

“For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the first-born among many brethren.”

~Romans 8:29

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

~I Peter 1:3-5

Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...Anticipating the *salvation-by-works* interpretation that would be made of **verses 35-45**, the Lord makes clear that believers will not **inherit the kingdom** based on *good works* or *good deeds* performed here on earth. Their *inheritance* was determined at **the foundation of the world**.

Those who enter the **kingdom** will not do so on the basis of the service they have performed *for* Christ...but on the basis of their

being **blessed** by the **Father** because of their *trust* in His Son. They will in no way *earn* a place in the kingdom.

A child doesn't *earn* an inheritance but *receives* it on the basis of his being in the family. In exactly the same way, a believer doesn't *earn* his way into *heaven*...into the *kingdom of God*...but *receives* it as his rightful inheritance as a *child of God* and a *fellow heir* with Jesus Christ.

“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”

~Romans 8:16-17

The *good deeds* commended in **verses 35-36** are the *fruit*...not the *root*...of salvation. It can't be over emphasized that they are *NOT* the basis of entrance into the kingdom.

For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me (vs. 35-36)...These are *measurable evidences* of salvation...and the Father *highly commends* those who have performed them.

The Lord lists **six areas of need** that were met: being **hungry...thirsty...a stranger...naked...sick...and in prison**. In meeting each of these needs, God's people have shown *evidence of true, living faith*.

“If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.”

~James 2:15-17

“But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.”

~I John 3:17-18

These believers are addressed by God as **the righteous**...because they have been *made righteous* by Christ...*positional righteousness*. They demonstrate that righteousness *through* their good works.

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

~Ephesians 2:10

Then the righteous will answer Him, “Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?” (vs. 37-39)...This was such a part of their lives that they didn't see anything special. To these believers this was routine...day-to-day kindness.

The King will answer and say to them, “Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me” (vs. 40)...Whatever believers do for each other they also do for their Lord Jesus Christ...as unto the Lord. And the person who genuinely receives and serves others in Christ's name proves himself to be a Christian. The *dying to self* and *servicing in Christ's name* is a key external mark that identifies a true believer as a child of God.

- The Separation allows for the **Condemnation** of the **Unsaved**: (vs. 41-45)

Then He will also say to those on His left, “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me” (vs. 41-43)...Christ doesn't *condemn* these people because they *failed to serve Him*...just as He didn't *save* the others because they *did serve Him*. They are **accursed** because they *rejected Christ*. Their rejection of Christ left them in a state where they were not able to do righteous deeds.

Then they themselves also will answer, “Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?” (vs. 44)...Lostness creates blindness.

Then He will answer them, “Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.” (vs. 45)...To fail to serve God’s people is to fail to serve Him...and to fail to serve Him is to prove one doesn’t belong to Him.

III. THE SENTENCE: (vs. 46)

These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life (vs. 46)...

Eternal...Gk. *aiionios*...Jesus used the *same word* to describe both *salvation* and *condemnation*. If believers will be in *heaven* with God *forever*...the lost will be in *hell* with the devil *forever*.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- There is a **day of judgment** coming! We will all face judgment...are you prepared? Judgment for our sin...judgment for our works...judgment for our faith...and judgment for our rejection.
- We are saved by **faith** and not by **works**. But for the saved, our works are evidence of our salvation. *Faith without works is dead* (James 2:17).