

July 18, 2010

**FINAL JUDGMENT: HOW DID YOU TREAT THE HIDDEN KING?**

**MATTHEW 25.31-46**

*The standard of judgment used by the King at the end of the age will involve an evaluation of how the nations received him in the persons of his people.*

**1. THE SHEPHERD-KING DIVIDES THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS (31-33)**

*When does the Son of Man come? (31):* Events up to this point have been dealing with what will happen w/in a generation; the end of the old creation (of which Jerusalem & Temple were the epitome) and the beginning of the new.

This is the final judgment of the old creation. Typifies and foreshadows *the* final judgment at the end of the new creation.

God so directs history so as to give us patterns to see so that we can learn from them. Cf. e.g., 1Cor 10; Heb 3–4. This looks forward to the final and greater judgment to come.

Son of Man coming in his glory with his angels for judgment - cp. Mt 16.27-28: some standing there will see it.

Dan 7 allusion again. End of the old empire structure set up when Judah went into captivity. At the end the Son of Man ascends to the Ancient of Days and receives the kingdom, enthroned over the nations.

*The nations, sheep, and goats (32-33):* Movement of Olivet Discourse: judgment on Jerusalem (24.1-35) to Jesus dealing with his own disciples about faithfulness (24.36–25.30) to a judgment of the nations (25.31-46).

“Nations” not just generic people groups but the empire structure set up in Daniel (i.e., *oikoumene*). This was set up as a “house” for God’s people; for protection. This was the trust given to the nations. Now they are called to give an account.

Shepherd = King (cp. v. 34) - David, the shepherd, is the king. Cf. Ezek 34.23 for prophecy concerning setting up the shepherd, David, as king over his people.

Not just the king of Israel now, but the king of all the nations. The kingdom has been transferred to the Son of Man at this time.

Sheep and goats - Goats not inherently bad symbol. Could be used for Passover as well as other sacrifices. Both are sacrificial animals.

At the end of the day the shepherd would put the sheep and goats into different folds after grazing together all day.

Right and left - again, not necessarily honor and dishonor. Context informs this. Cp. Mt 20.21, 23

On the right here is a place of honor. It is the place of the firstborn, which means that the sheep are “the seed.” Cf. Jacob with Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen 48). Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father as firstborn.

**2. THE SHEPHERD-KING COMMENDS AND REWARDS THE SHEEP (34-40)**

*The blessed ones inherit the kingdom (34):* “Come” = draw near, come into his presence.

“Blessed ones” - cp. Mt 16.17; recognition of Jesus as the Christ (i.e., Messiah, King) and loyal to him.

Being “blessed” coupled with the “right hand,” “Father,” and “inheritance” has resonance of covenant blessing. Granting of covenant privilege, status, and responsibility.

They inherit the kingdom. “Inheritance” is something that Israel always looked for. Promised Land was an inheritance and was a type and shadow of things to come when they would inherit the world as promised to Abraham (Rom 4.13).

Inheritance is not something that is earned. It is granted by grace to the Father’s true sons.

Inheritance = the nations (cf. Ps 2).

Since the foundation of the world - always the Father’s plan to give this kingdom as an inheritance.

The nations are our inheritance. They are like the Promised Land of old. They are the inheritance that must now be conquered. Those are the marching orders that Jesus will give at the end of Mt's Gospel and what we hear every week at the conclusion of the service.

**"You did it to me" (35-40):** they showed loyalty to the King, demonstrated in their deeds of mercy toward him. Showed hospitality to the King.

Hospitality = essentially *receiving the stranger/outsider and meeting his needs*.

Hospitality begins with God himself who creates those who are distinct from him—outsiders—and then welcomes them into his family, meeting their needs. God's image-bearers are to reflect his character.

The righteous ones, those who walked in covenant faithfulness, did not even know when they did this. They were doing what they were supposed to be doing even when they didn't know someone was watching.

Not general philanthropy but helping *his brothers*. These are people identified with Jesus.

Cp. Mt 10.40-42 - receive Jesus' people and you receive him and the Father who sent him.

Receiving them = showing them hospitality, sharing their goods with them and meeting their needs.

Giving that which belongs to you is giving yourself to others. You identify with them and participate in their lives. There is an approval of what they are doing.

Jesus so identifies himself with his people that to reject them is to reject him. (Cp. Ac 9)

"The least of these my brothers" = the most insignificant of his brothers. These are the youngest, the poorest, the most needy.

"Receiving Jesus" is receiving his people.

### **3. THE SHEPHERD-KING CONDEMNS AND PUNISHES THE GOATS (41-46)**

***The cursed ones condemned to everlasting fire (41):*** Fire is for punishment not purification (cf. v. 46).

The devil introduced in 4.1. He is the one who "slanders," puts to the test, and seeks to make God's people stumble.

As Jesus' people will share his fate, so the devil's people will share his b/c they have chosen to identify with him over against the people of God.

**"You did it not to me" (42-46):** They are also unaware of when this happened.

Cp. Mt 7.21-23: they call him Lord but do not do the things he says.

1. *Hospitality among God's people is not simply a good option we can exercise, but a necessity if we are to be judged loyal to the king.*

2. *Receiving Jesus is not so much a mystical experience as much as it is extending hospitality to his people.*