

Matthew 22-08-28a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 28th day of August, 2022. We're in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 25, looking at the judgment of the sheep and the goats, very fascinating section.

And initially one might think that there would be a challenge in terms of figuring out the application since we are neither sheep nor goats. Why do we care exactly who these people are, how they are judged, why they are judged, where they go, when it happens and so on. But there is pertinence, there is application and we will endeavor to see that as we do our best to understand the answers to all of those questions.

The Lord Jesus delivered this for a reason. It takes up a substantial portion of this chapter and all scripture is profitable. So it's important for us to figure out why it is important for us.

Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study and then we'll get started. Father, what a privilege it is to spend this time together, to be united with a common enthusiasm for understanding you and our relationship with you through the Lord Jesus Christ, to appreciate him, his work in the past and his ongoing work in the present and his future return for us, his reign in the millennial kingdom and his final destination as the light of the new heavens and the new earth. We pray that as we study this portion of your word together, your Holy Spirit will help us understand it and see how pertinent it is for us to prepare us for service and function now and in the kingdoms to come.

We ask these things in Jesus' name, amen. Let's begin by reviewing our passage. When the son of man, verse 31, Matthew 25, comes in his glory and all the holy angels with him, holy is really not in the original, it's just all the angels with him.

Then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him and he will separate them from one another as a shepherd divides sheep from the goats. And he will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

You will notice in verse 32, by the way, that that first his is in italics and I would recommend scratching that out. It's not in the original and they are not his because this is a distributive possessive pronoun in the English, his sheep from the goats. I think they're trying to say the sheep belong to him and the goats don't, but that's just not a concept found in the original.

He will set the sheep on his right hand. Why doesn't it say his sheep, if that was the idea? The goats on his left. The king will say to those on his right hand, come you blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

And then the criteria of good treatment for those in need that are his brethren. When did we do this? You did it to the least of these, my brethren. You did it to me, verse 40.

Then in verse 41, we have the opposite criteria. You did not benefit care for, or otherwise concern yourself with my brethren in their time of need. Verse 44, when did we see you in any of these conditions? Assuredly, I say to you, in as much as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.

These will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. These, the immediate antecedent being the goats, those who were disrespectful and uncaring of the Lord's brethren, which is the same as being disrespectful and uncaring toward him. So we have reviewed these details a few times.

And last time we looked at the interpretation of this judgment given by Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost in his book, Things to Come. It is the classic view. It is mirrored and summarized more briefly in another book that is a very useful reference called the Prophecy Knowledge Handbook, which is by John F. Walvoord, former president of Dallas Seminary.

After Dr. Chaffer, he was the next one, and followed by Dr. D.K. Campbell. But this is a very useful compendium of prophetic scriptures. And Dr. Walvoord's understanding of them.

So when you get to page 398 through 402 in my copy of this book, you have what he terms the judgment of the Gentiles at the second coming, Matthew 25, 31 through 46. And I want to summarize his presentation here. I will skim it very quickly.

This judgment relating to the Gentiles. And by the way, as you listen, pay attention to the reason he interprets it the way he does. This is the standard.

The gold standard of prophetic interpretation is Dr. Pentecost and Dr. Walvoord. And I encourage you to give it its full weight. And then I'm gonna tell you something completely different.

This judgment relating to the Gentiles at the time of the second coming is revealed only here in scripture. There is no other parallel passage in the gospels. Pre-millenarians interpret this judgment.

That would be us, by the way, pre-millennial return of Christ. You don't build a kingdom and then he comes. We believe Jesus comes.

He establishes, runs, and rules the world through the millennial kingdom. So pre-millenarians, pre-millennial return of Christ, this is how you understand the scripture, interpret this judgment as determining who among the Gentiles will enter the millennial kingdom. I'm gonna give you this under five points.

I don't often do points, but we kind of need to break this down. So point one, what is the purpose of the sheep and goats judgment? Handy to know, right? Here it is presented by the Lord Jesus. He spends a great deal of time in full parallelism of what was or was not done for his brethren in detail, each component broken out.

So it's important, right? So what's the purpose? Well, Dr. Pentecost, Dr. Walvoord, their understanding is that it determines who among the Gentiles will enter the millennial kingdom. So in terms of its purpose, who among the Gentiles, and we saw last time that they don't believe there is a resurrection associated with this. So the rest of the dead live not until a thousand years are complete, according to Revelation chapter 20.

So these would be the survivors of the tribulation judgments. If you're still walking and talking and in a nation, after those seals are broken, the trumpets are blown, the thunders emit their voices, and the vials are poured out, that would be, if you're still alive, that's their understanding of who these people are. And they are sorted into two categories.

So these are Gentile tribulational survivors. And the judgment is to determine which of them will be allowed into the millennial kingdom, and which of them on the basis of their treatment of my brethren, i.e. tribulational Israel, represented by the 144,000, 12,000 from each tribe, the 144,000 servants of God that are sealed in their foreheads, that's their understanding of what the purpose of it is. That's number one.

Number two, what is the basis of the judgment? Are the books opened? And is your name, is my name written there? There's an old gospel song the statesman used to sing, is my name written there? No books are mentioned here. No indication that belief is in view. Faith, whether or not you took the mark is not even in view.

You would think based on the repeated declarations in the book of Revelation, that if you take the mark of the beast, you are headed for a fiery judgment, right? That's not mentioned here at all. Embracing the program, the person, enjoining to worship the beast that is a part of the whole latter half of the tribulation, nowhere mentioned here. The basis of the judgment is treatment of, quote unquote, my brethren.

You've done it to the least of these my brethren, or if you have not done it to the least of these my brethren, it's all the same as if you had done it to me. That is the basis. Number two.

Number three, this judgment is contrasted. You could just put contrast other judgments. This is not another description of well-known judgments we are aware of, such as the judgment seat of Christ, second Corinthians chapter five, verse 10.

We, according to the apostle Paul, we'll all stand at the judgment. You remember gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble. This is not determining salvation, the

judgment seat of Christ.

Nobody goes into the fiery judgment personally. Your works are burned up. People are not burned up.

In the sheep and ghost judgment, there are people who are sent into fiery judgment. So judgment seat of Christ is a judgment of works for church age believers. None of that fits here.

Church age hasn't happened yet. The apostles are utterly unaware that there will be a church age at this point. It just doesn't fit.

So it is not the judgment seat of Christ. Secondly, there is a judgment of Israel at the beginning of the millennial kingdom. These people are manifestly not Israel because they're being judged on the basis of how they treat Israel.

According to Dr. Walvor and Dr. Pentecost, that that would be two different groups. These my brethren. So this judgment of the rebels, purging the rebels out of Israel, this is passing under the rod into the millennial kingdom or being excluded.

They will be gathered out of the nations, but they will not be allowed to enter the land. You get the idea that there must be some sort of a buffer zone around the millennial kingdom where others of Israel will dwell. It manifestly says in your passages, Ezekiel chapter 20, 33 through 38, to which we will turn just for clarity because this impinges on who are the brethren.

So Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel chapter 20, beginning at verse 33. Now, if you look at the beginning of this chapter, everything up through verse 32, it is a litany of failures. Verse 11, I gave them my statutes and showed them my judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them.

I gave them my Sabbaths to be assigned. Verse 13, the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not walk in my statutes.

They despised my judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them. They greatly defiled my Sabbaths. I said I would pour out my fury on them in the wilderness.

That is emblematic of every part of this first half of the chapter. It is a recapitulation of all that God did for Israel and their apathy and difference as a nation. There are wonderful exceptions as individuals, but as we're going to see, distinguishing corporate group or national judgment from individual judgment is pertinent in our passage.

So when you get to verse 33, my new King James marks off this section with the note that God will restore Israel. Ezekiel 20, 33, as I live, says the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you. I

will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out.

And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead my case with you face to face, just as I pleaded my case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead my case with you, says the Lord God. I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against me, I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel.

Notice when the rebels are purged, they are still extracted from the lands to which they have been scattered, but they do not enter the kingdom. It says nothing about them being destroyed, sent into fire, or otherwise harshly and eternally judged, it just says, I will bring them back, but they're not going to enter the land, they will pass under the rod. I will purge the rebels, then you will know that I am the Lord.

Verse 39, as for you, O house of Israel, thus says the Lord God, go serve every one of you his idols, and hereafter, if you will not obey me, but profane my holy name no more with your gifts and your idols. For on my holy mountain, on the mountain height of Israel, says the Lord God, there, all the house of Israel, all of them in the land shall serve me. There, I will accept them, and there, I will require your offerings and the first fruits of your sacrifices, together with all your holy things.

I will accept you as a sweet aroma when I bring you out from the peoples, gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will be hallowed in you before the Gentiles, before the nations. So, in the millennial kingdom, as we are well aware from numerous passages, Israel will be a nation, it will be the capital city of the world. The Lord Jesus Christ and the sons of David will rule Israel from Jerusalem, and they will rule and administer the entire planet.

There will be nations. Then you shall know, verse 42, that I am the Lord when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for which I raised my hand in an oath to give to your fathers. There, you shall remember your ways and all your doings with which you were defiled, and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight because of all the evils that you have committed.

Then you shall know that I am the Lord when I have dealt with you for my namesake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O house of Israel, says the Lord God." That is the judgment on Israel from other passages. Even here in Ezekiel, we know that the Old Testament saints will be raised. This is the Valley of Dry Bones, prophesied to these bones.

Sin, ooze, and flesh cover them, prophecy again. Spirit enters them, they stand on their feet, a great army. It's a picture of the resurrection of Old Testament Israel.

They will then pass under the rod. These people that Ezekiel addressed, their forefathers and their offspring and descendants will be judged. A fractional number of them will pass the rod judgment and enter the millennial kingdom.

The rest of them will dwell outside. I say again, a fractional number will enter Israel. Most of Israel falls under the condemnation of this chapter, having ignored God's statutes, God's prophets, up to and including God's own son.

And while they will be resuscitated, they will be where? Not in the kingdom, proper. They will be outside. The darkness which is outside, relative to the brightness and the peace and the prosperity and the holiness of the kingdom in general and Jerusalem, Mount Zion in particular.

Everybody clear on that? That is the result of the rod judgment on all Israel. Resuscitated Israel, going all the way back. I think it will include the patriarchs.

It will include Abraham on down. So, and by patriarchs, I mean going all the way back to Adam, the patriarchs up to Abraham. And then from Abraham, you have the children of Abraham, ultimately Israel.

So it is not, this sheep and goats judgment is not that. It doesn't sound like it. It doesn't look like it.

It doesn't describe the same people. The results are not the same at all. So what do we know now under our point three, contrasting other judgments? Sheep and goats judgment is not in any way the judgment seat of Christ, which is believers judgment.

It is not in any way the rod judgment of Ezekiel chapter 20, which is also believers, Israel. And it is not thought to be by Dr. Pentecost and Dr. Wolvard, the great white throne judgment of Revelation chapter 20. And I would concur for two reasons.

Turn to Revelation chapter 20. We've got the sheep and goats details well in mind. Let's just look at the first few verses of Revelation chapter 20.

This just by repeated visitation is probably firmly fixed in your memory. After the results of the battle of Armageddon, and you might just note in verse 20 through 21 of chapter 19, the beast, this is familiarly popularly known as the Antichrist, captured and with him, the false prophet who worked signs in his presence by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two are cast alive into the lake of fire, burning with brimstone.

And the rest were killed. Who are the rest? Everybody participating in the battle of Armageddon, possibly also those who sent them, who supported them. It appears that the rest is pretty much any living Gentile entity, any of those individuals and nations who accepted the beast, took his mark, worshiped him and his image, listened to the voice of

the second beast and all the rest of it.

The rest were killed with the sword, which proceeded from the mouth of him who sat on the horse. And the birds were filled with their flesh. It is my opinion that verse 21 indicates that there are no survivors of the tribulation.

They either die in the preceding judgments or they die at this point because the Lord Jesus Christ declares that surviving doesn't give you the opportunity to live on the planet after the kingdom begins. There is no reason for them to continue. And if they have managed to survive all of these other judgments, they're taken out.

Just as a point of interest, I looked up somebody opining on how many will die in the tribulation. And the current world population, and I looked it up this morning, is 7.97 billion. Roughly 8 billion.

Few more months or maybe a year or two go by, we'll be at 8 billion people. And this is important in understanding those judgments in Revelation that speak of a third of this and a fourth of that, applying those fractions. How many people does this involve? So when you get to Revelation 6, verses 7 and 8, the opening of the fourth seal, the voice of the fourth living creature said, "'Come, I looked and behold a pale horse and its rider's name was Death and Hades followed him.

And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth to kill with the sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.'" So one fourth of 8 billion people is 2 billion dead. 2 billion. It dwarfs any previous catastrophe, any previous war death totals.

2 billion people in the space of something measured in weeks. Can you imagine the state of the surface of the planet just in terms of the unburied dead? It will totally overwhelm any effort to dispose of these. The wind circling the earth is gonna blow the stench of death into every corner, every area, 2 billion people.

I saw a depiction trying to give an idea of what a billion is. And if you took pennies, which are very small, and stack them up into a rectangular pile, the size of a school bus. Imagine a school bus size rectangular pile of pennies.

Five school bus size piles of pennies is a billion pennies. So take 10 school bus size piles of pennies and turn each of those pennies into a person and then into a corpse and distribute them around the world. That's just the first death judgment at the opening of the fourth seal.

One fourth of the population is killed by several different means. Complete overwhelming of any hope of dealing with the corpses. There is also gonna be concomitant animal death.

When people die, their pets die, their livestock dies, their industries die, their food distribution networks die, their transportation networks die, their communication networks die. You take one quarter of all the people on the earth out and it's not just their remains that you have to deal with, but it is everything with which they were associated. If they are parents and they've got children, those children are gonna die.

Skip forward to chapter nine, verse 18. Another third of the remaining population is going to die. Revelation chapter nine, verse 18.

The plagues that are brought by the sixth trumpet, by these three, a third of mankind was killed by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths, their powers in their mouth and in their tails. Their tails are like serpents having heads and with them they do harm. The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk.

And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts. But this is another third. So you've got 6 billion people remaining.

What's a third of six? It's another 2 billion people gone. So now half of the world's population has been destroyed, has been killed, has been slain. Half, one out of every two people all over the planet.

It's just an incomprehensible number. This does not take into account other deaths from suicide, from crime. If you look at these crimes that are detailed here, the murders, sorceries, and sexual immoralities and the spread of diseases and such from that, man's humanity to man is likely to kill, I would estimate probably another billion.

But it is gonna be just horrendous. But you'll notice that those that have not yet been killed are unrepentant. So it is a curiosity to me.

And my point in bringing this all up is, if you want to say under point three, well, actually under point one, that the purpose of this is to judge the surviving Gentiles as to whether they are sheep or whether they are goats, according to the revelation, the whole reason this judgment is falling, if you are a believer or if you come to faith during the tribulation, you are now my brethren. You are not a Gentile any longer because salvation in the age of Israel includes you into God's covenant promises to that nation and to those people. And any proselytes such as the list we always revisit, whether it's Uriah, whether it is Ruth, whether it is Rahab, the general Naaman, the Syrian and others who came to faith, they partake of Old Testament salvation and they are going to now be my brethren.

It doesn't matter what their actual heredity or ethnicity is. It's interesting, the two tribes, I was thinking about this the other day. You remember the sons of Jacob and the last two from Rachel are Joseph and Benjamin.

The apostle Paul is from the tribe of Benjamin. Not everybody remembers that. But the tribe of Joseph splits into two.

And who are they? It's Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. And famously, Jacob crosses his hands and blesses the younger with the blessings of the firstborn, just as he himself was blessed with the blessing of the firstborn, although he was the younger. But stop and think now, Ephraim and Manasseh, what do you know about them? Specifically, who's their mother? They are half Egyptian.

They're half Egyptian from the get-go. David's got a Moabite grandmother up the chain. Right? So you've got the idea that this is based on coming to God through faith and entering into Israel regardless of your actual ancestry or background.

There were many intermarriages and children who were people of faith. And God isn't looking for a blood quantum of original tribe DNA. He's looking for faith, right? But it is indicated to us in the revelation that any remaining Gentiles, they're either getting judged in the tribulation or they survive these judgments that take 4 billion people out.

One out of every two people are taken out. And those who remain are declared to be unrepentant and criminal in nature and still shaking their fist at God. So I'm trying to figure out how Dr. Walvord and Dr. Pentecost arrive at this vast sea of survivors, half of whom seem to be sheep and the other half seem to be... It doesn't say there are six sheep on the right and 100,000 goats on the left.

It seems to be a somewhat fair distribution. And I'm not seeing, A, how this many people are there for a sheep and goats judgment. And B, why would this judgment be given such prominence when it has such a narrow application? What is the purpose of spending this much time? I mean, there's more time spent on this than there is on the rod judgment over in Ezekiel, talking about the people of God.

Now that judgment is mentioned, at least in general in other places, but there's such an intense coverage of this. And Jesus gives it to his disciples two days before his arrest trial crucifixion. We're in Passion Week when he's talking about this.

This is important, important information for him to spend this time at this time on this subject. So that's one of my question marks here. So that is number one, the purpose.

And I personally have a question mark about the purpose. The standard view is it is to determine who of the surviving Gentiles is gonna go into the millennial kingdom. I don't think there are any sheep based on what Revelation says at the end of the fourth trumpet and the fourth seal.

Actually, I'm sorry, it's the sixth trumpet and the fourth seal. And what it says in chapter 19 of Revelation at the end, where the Lord Jesus slays everyone with the breath of his mouth at the inception of the kingdom. So I've got a question mark about that.

The basis, everybody's clear on that. It is the treatment of my brethren. The only question mark there is, there is a knee-jerk assumption that the brethren are Israel, formerly the Jews, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

I have a question about that. We're just about to go to the break, but turn quickly to Romans chapter eight. 828, very famous verse, everybody knows it.

We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose. Why? For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son. Why? That he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Firstborn among many brethren. What is the definition of these brethren? It is given in verse 28. Those who love God, those who are the called according to his purpose.

And we understand this as those, you're not really called unless you respond to the call. Those who hear the call and respond. If you ignore the call, if you deafen yourself to the call, many are called but few are chosen because there are many who don't heed the call.

If you love God, you want to be the called. The called are those who respond. The invitation to the wedding feast is a classic illustration, right? Go into the highways and byways, invite.

At the beginning, oh, I'm too busy. I've got business to attend to. They're called, but they're not chosen.

And they're not really called because they do not respond. The called are those who respond and come in to the celebration. So those who love God and are the called according to purpose.

Notice his is in italics. The purpose, you're called according to purpose. And when you hear the call, you understand the purpose, you agree with the purpose, you enter into the purpose, which is eternal salvation and fellowship with God, rescue you from our lost and fallen condition.

So the many brethren are these who love God and are the called, who enter into God's purpose. There are people who hate God's purpose. They don't like righteousness.

They don't like justice. They don't like being told what they cannot do or what they should not do. They don't like God's definition of what is sin and the concomitant judgment.

There are people who rebel against that purpose. There are people who are apathetic and indifferent toward God or any purpose he might have or that they might have the

opportunity to enter into. They just have no interest.

It'd be like somebody calling me up and saying we're offering free ballet classes. I won't be there. I have no interest in that purpose.

And maybe they want to educate all of Rogers County on how to dance. I won't be there. I have no interest in that purpose.

No sympathy with it. Don't care about it at all. This is how these are.

So firstborn among many brethren. So there is a category called Christ's brethren that has nothing to do with ethnic or national Israel. You see my point here.

So we need to understand who the brethren are before we use it as an absolute criteria of parsing this judgment. So that brings us to the time of the judgment in 25 verse 31. When the son of man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, he will sit on the throne of his glory or his glorious throne.

It's two genitives in a row. It's his throne, his glory. You can attach the glory to him or the throne, either one or both as it is in Greek.

So we need to take a look at that because this is understood to be the inception of the kingdom that isn't actually what verse 31 says. But if we were pausing at this point and we didn't have a chance to continue and we were thinking, well, what do I glean personally in terms of application from looking at this scripture? It is important that we reflect, that we take time to think about scripture, to ascertain what it actually says and what it does not say. The reason we have so many denominations, the reason we have splits and departures within denominations, I am not gonna talk about it, but if you want to recognize the fall of a formerly conservative denomination, do a little bit of reading on what is happening within the Southern Baptist Convention with whom I have a lot of contact and a lot of history.

There are churches departing the Southern Baptist Convention in droves last year and this year, especially after this year's convention. Dozens and dozens and dozens. It has even been predicted that there may be no conservative churches left in the Southern Baptist Convention by the end of this year.

Ken and I were talking about this as a church that he made me aware of that has departed the convention just two weeks ago, week and a half ago. I think the letter is dated August the 16th or around the middle of the month. They published a letter and said, "We are disaffiliating "from the Southern Baptist Convention and here is why.

"And the litany of insults and grievances "having to do with departure from scripture, "departure from sound teaching "and what has long been representative." There are churches that just say, "We cannot in good conscience be associated or affiliated." The

convention is pretty loose. It's not a structured denomination with a hierarchy. It's just a fellowship.

But they are disfellowshipping from that fellowship because of perceived heresy, perceived departure from basic sound scriptural teaching and you can't really blame them when you look into it. What does it mean for us? You have to know what scripture teaches and to know that it's not enough to read a few proof texts. We are diligent to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly stacking up the bricks of the word of truth.

Rightly dividing is actually the opposite. It is laying a straight course of bricks one by one, making sure they line up with the other bricks, that it is plumb, that it is square, that it is level. I loved watching these brick masons laying bricks around here and the care with which they level a long string and then make sure each brick exactly lines up with that standard.

It is level, it is plumb, it is square. They did beautiful work around here. I just love to walk around and look at it sometimes.

Rightly laying a course of bricks in the word of truth. That doesn't happen casually, haphazardly, inconsistently. I'll do a little today and some next Thursday.

Daily reflection on the word of God is important. That's why we all have a personal Bible. What a blessing.

And carefully attending to what scripture says and what it doesn't say is the means of acquiring truth. Whatever that truth may be, I just want to know it. I don't want somebody else telling me what it is.

You shouldn't just take my word for it or some guy on the radio's word for it. You need to be looking and praying, asking, seeking, and knocking, and let God speak through his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, Jesus promised, will lead us into all truth.

But it is when we are seeking, when we are asking, when we have an open heart and we're not confined or fettered by our presuppositions. Even when those presuppositions are from some of the greatest scholars you can look at, it's the word of God that is the final authority. And we have to go there for the truth.

More about this when we come back from the break.