

# The Day of Reckoning

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Seeking the Lord's blessing, let us turn back to the portion of scripture that we read together in the New Testament in the Gospel of Matthew and chapter 25, and we'll read at verse 31.

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 the left, and so on. Although this passage is called a parable, it is not strictly a parable.

Jesus does not use that term for it. So that this passage on the last judgment is more prophetic than it is a parable.

[ 1 : 1 0 ] Only the part about the sheep and the goats is a parable. We notice that up to this point, Jesus in his teaching has been laying emphasis on being ready for the coming of the Lord.

And implying the thought of judgment. In the previous chapter, Jesus emphasizes the suddenness of his coming, and the need to be ready by using the story of Noah.

But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

From this passage we learn that there will be a future day of reckoning for all people. That there is a coming judgment.

I suppose that the second coming of the Lord and a day of judgment is the least anticipated thing in the world.

[ 2 : 3 7 ] But let us for a moment look briefly at God's redemptive plan. When we look at God's redemptive plan and purpose after man's fall into sin, we see God's action in grace and mercy in coming to seek the man, and announcing that although there will be judgments upon man for his sin, nevertheless, that he has purposed in himself to save man through the seed of the woman.

And throughout the Old Testament, we have recorded for us how God advances his redemptive plan through Noah and Abraham, through Isaac and Jacob.

How Jacob's twelve sons are brought down to Egypt where they multiply, and eventually, after 400 years, he brings them out of Egypt by the hands of Moses, and leads them into the wilderness, where he enters into a covenant with them.

And he leads them through the wilderness for 40 years, and brings them into the land of Canaan. And one can ask, well, what is God doing?

Well, he's working out his redemptive purpose of salvation, which he planned before the creation of the world. The whole history of the Old Testament brings before us some facet of the redemptive plan of God.

[ 4 : 12 ] Even when things look so bleak, and the nation is broken up unto two, Israel and Judah, and then because of their sin, they are sent into captivity, but after 70 years, they are brought back.

Their worship is reestablished. Their genealogies are reestablished. And then there are the 400 silent years between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

After which God caused an old man and woman to give birth to a son, who was to be the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then the Lord appears to a woman by the name of Mary, and tells her that she is going to conceive a son by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, and that the child conceived by her will be the Son of God.

This child is born, and at 30 years of age, he begins this public ministry, which climaxes in, is being put to death and buried.

But he rises from the dead and spends 40 days instructing his disciples and commissioning them to go out into all the world and to preach the gospel of salvation.

[ 5 : 35 ] And then he ascends into heaven, to the right hand of the Father, where he sits down, having completed the work that was given him to do.

Then he exercises the first act of his messianic kingship by sending the Holy Spirit upon his gathered people.

That is a very brief summary of God's redemptive plan up to the day of Pentecost. We can sum it all up by saying that the history of redemption is the sovereign activity of the triune God, working out his eternal saving purposes and plan in the theatre of this world.

But what is the next great act of God in redemptive history? What is the next great act of God in redemptive history after Pentecost, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the gathered people?

Well, it is the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why biblical writers can use this phrase, the coming of the Lord is at hand.

[ 7 : 04 ] This is the next great event in redemptive history. Peter writes around 62 or 63 AD, and he says this, But the end of all things is at hand.

The end of all things is at hand. Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. James writes, James reminds us that the judge is standing at the door.

He is behind the door. He is ready to push the door open at any moment. The Apostle John was commanded to write, regarding the book of Revelation and its contents, Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand.

Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. Since Pentecost, and the preaching of the gospel worldwide, this is the next great act in redemptive history.

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Knowing that it is at hand, what kind of people ought we to be?

[ 8 : 57 ] Are you prepared for that moment? What is the Lord's last message to the world? The Bible is the message of God.

How does he conclude his message to the world? Surely I come quickly. He is reminding us that this is the next great step in redemptive history.

He reminds us that this is what we should be waiting for. That this is what we should be anticipating. The second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, he is coming.

Yes, he is coming. And he is coming quickly. He is standing behind the door, ready to push the door open, and to come.

Peter reminds us in his second epistle that there will be those who will say, where is the promise of his coming?

[ 10 : 05 ] For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. But he goes on to say, the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to his word, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

So between Pentecost and his second coming, we find the longsuffering of God is manifested, is displayed towards me and you, towards sinners, because he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

And yet, what do sinners do? What are you doing? Despising the longsuffering of God towards you. And eventually, everything is going to catch up with you.

And what shall it be then for you who have despised the longsuffering of God towards you, giving you the opportunity to repent and to trust in Jesus Christ for your salvation.

Here in chapter 25 of Matthew, then, we find that Jesus spoke about the ten virgins, five were wise and five were foolish.

[ 11 : 45 ] And the conclusion Jesus gives to the parable is simple and to the point. He says, Watch therefore, for ye know not neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.

He obviously is teaching about his own return. He is clearly teaching to be prepared for his return. And why is this important?

Well, those who are unprepared will be excluded forever from entering into the kingdom of heaven. They are the fools who have taken away any thought of the return of Christ.

They don't consider it. They banish it from their thoughts and from their lifestyle. Then we have the parable of the talents, which is the longest parable in the Gospel of Matthew.

The parable teaches that the servants of the Lord must be faithful and that they must efficiently administer what has been entrusted to them until the day of reckoning.

[ 12 : 55 ] Just like the parable of the ten virgins, this parable is set also in the framework of Jesus' teaching about his return. The parable teaches that during the absence of Jesus, his followers are expected to work diligently with the gifts that he has entrusted to them.

Every follower of Jesus have received gifts, each according to his ability. and Jesus knows the capability of every follower and he expects an increase.

Then we come to the passage that we have chosen for this evening. Now, throughout the Gospel of Matthew, the theme of separation and judgment is unfolding.

At the very beginning, we hear the words of John the Baptist to the Pharisees and the Sadducees that had come to his baptism, telling them and us that the wheat is gathered into the barn, but the chaff is burnt up with unquenchable fire.

Later on, we read that the wheat are separated from the wheat and tied into bundles and burnt while the wheat is gathered into the barn. We are told that angels separate the righteous from the wicked at the end of the age and throw the wicked into the fiery furnace.

[ 14 : 14 ] And in our passage tonight, the parable of the sheep and goats, the principle of separation and judgment is clearly applied. 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 divided the sheep from the goats.

The Son of Man comes in his glory. Now, to understand the significance of this phrase, we have to go to the prophecy of Daniel in chapter 7 where we are told, I saw the night visions and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven and came to the ancient of days and they brought him near before him and they were given him dominion and glory and a kingdom that all people, nations and languages should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. When Jesus uses this title Son of Man it means more than simply that he is a man, that he is truly human, more than that he is the ideal man as God intended man to be.

He is indeed all that. He is truly human, he is a man and he is the ideal man as God intended man to be. But the title Son of Man is pointed to one particular and unique person as we read there in the prophecy of Daniel.

The Son of Man, this particular and unique person was given such glory, such dominion, such authority.

[ 16 : 25 ] And there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom that all people, nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

It clearly identifies to us that this speaks of a particular unique person. man. So, when we see or read that phrase Son of Man, Jesus applies that to himself.

He is telling us that he is that particular unique person. when the Son of Man shall come in his glory.

When Jesus comes at the end of the age he will come in majesty and glory along with the holy angels. His second coming will be strikingly different to his first coming.

This is how Paul speaks of his first coming. he made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant and he was made in the likeness of men and been found in a fashion as a man he humbled himself and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross.

[ 17 : 49 ] However, regarding his second coming Paul writes to Titus and he says looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our saviour Jesus Christ.

This is the way that the writer to the Hebrews puts it. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.

That's his first coming and then his second coming and to them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin into salvation.

what the writer to the Hebrews means is this that in his first appearance or in his first coming to earth Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

But in his second coming he comes in all his glory. His second coming he will come as the judge of all humanity.

[ 18 : 58 ] Notice also here that his kingly state is brought before us for he will come and sit upon the throne of his glory.

This is the man who was crucified. This is the man who was crucified on the cross of Golgotha where he hung between heaven and earth.

When men did everything they could to him they spat upon him they pulled at his beard they mocked him they jeered him they cried out crucify him crucify him but he's coming back and he's coming back sitting upon the throne of his glory.

This is the final judgment for all nations are brought before him. The nations will be gathered before the son of man sitting on his throne in heavenly glory and all people will stand before the judge all the good and the bad all the wicked and the righteous appear.

No one is excluded. I'll be there you'll be there everyone will be there Judas Iscariot will be there Pontius Pilate will be there Peter will be there John will be there James will be there and I and you will be there no one is excluded for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad and the judge separates the people one from the other as a shepherd divides his flock of sheep and goats after that day of grazing in the pasture.

[ 21 : 02 ] In this parable Jesus makes a brief reference to the common pastoral scene of his own day the shepherd herds a mixed flock of sheep and goats.

In areas where grazing is spurs because of drought goats tend to browse rather than graze. They mingle with the sheep but neither sheep nor goats seem to have been given a disposition to become intimately acquainted.

When evening comes the shepherd calls his own sheep and the sheep listen to the shepherd's voice while the goats may choose to ignore his call. The shepherd puts the sheep to the right and the goats to the left.

They mingle all day but in the evening the shepherd calls and he divides. sheep from the goats.

Isn't that a picture of what we have? The good, the bad, the wicked, the righteous, the sheep, the goats. We all mingle together in this world but at the end of the age there's going to be a division.

[ 22 : 19 ] The shepherd will call and he will divide the shepherd sheep rather from the goats. The shepherd puts the sheep to the right and the goats to the left.

He does not separate the ewes and the rams but sheep and goats. He sets apart two species. Symbolically he puts the sheep on his right side and the goats on his left.

The right hand was generally seen as the favoured side. For example Jesus after he ascended to heaven sat down on the right hand of the father.

That is symbolic of the favoured side. To be on the right hand of a ruler was seen as being in the place of the highest honour that a ruler could give.

He shall separate the sheep from the goats. The goat has long been associated with evil. The Old Testament portrays the goat as a sin offering and a sin bearing animal.

[ 23 : 26 ] Especially on the day of atonement the goat would be sent out into the desert. In Leviticus 16 we read Torah.

their transgression and in all their sins putting them upon the head of the court and he shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness and the court shall be upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited and he shall let go the court in the wilderness even our own language contains the word scapegoat which recalls this passage in Leviticus all the nations of the world are compared to the sheep and the goats which are separated by the shepherd at the end of the day now interesting without any explanation Matthew shifts from the image of son of man to that of a king the transition from the son of man to king becomes of course meaningful in the light of the prophecy of Daniel that we already quoted before yes Jesus at this time may be despised and rejected of men but the son of man this particular and unique person is undeniable a king and in the judgment he will speak as a sovereign judge the sheep on his right hand to the ones who hear the king say come ye blessed of my father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world they are saved never God because God the father has blessed them and he tells them to take possession of the kingdom which he has prepared for them beforehand salvation for the righteous is rooted not in their good works but rather in the good pleasure of God the father we are saved by grace and by grace alone not by your good works the good works which the righteous perform are not the root but rather the fruit of grace good works are not ended by the father's electing grace they are expected from his blessed children as a natural outflow of obedience and love works are evidence that the Christian loves and trusts Jesus Christ the righteous have shown here human responsibility and genuine concern and all their deeds it proved to be worthy citizens of the kingdom of heaven and in the judgment day they will be giving the privilege of taking possession of that kingdom and their daily activities they showed faithfulness and diligence and the day of judgment day

In the day of judgment they will receive their reward. In the little things of life the righteous demonstrated their love and their loyalty.

And in the last day they will be honoured by God himself. The people who are standing on the right side of Jesus the king and judge.

Here they hear that they fed Jesus when he was hungry. And gave him something to drink when he was thirsty. They were the ones who invited him in.

[ 27 : 23 ] Who clothed him, who looked after him, who visited him. They cared for the people with whom Christ identified himself.

But who were these people who became recipients of the love and kindness of the righteous? Well there is this surprise question put to Jesus.

Lord when saw we thee and hung it 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 Jesus will reply. And he will say verily I say unto you. And as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren. Ye have done it unto me.

Earlier in the gospel here of Matthew we read. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones. A cup of cold water. Only the name of a disciple.

[ 28 : 23 ] Verily I say unto you. He shall in no wise lose his reward. But who are these? Who are these little ones? Who are the brethren of Christ?

Well in the New Testament as we have already noted. Christ identifies himself with his followers. The most striking illustration of the bond between Christ and his followers.

Is Paul's encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road. When Jesus asked Saul of Tarsus. Why do you persecute me?

Paul was in fact persecuting the followers of Jesus. But Jesus is one with his followers. For every believing Christian is a brother or sister of Christ.

Thus by persecuting the believers. Paul or Saul of Tarsus. Was persecuting Jesus. Remember the time when they came to Jesus.

- [ 29 : 36 ] And told him that his mother and his brethren and sisters were waiting for him. He asked who is my mother? Who are my brethren?

Who are my sisters? And here he directs us that it is all those who will do the will of the Father in heaven. In other words they are his followers.

Probably two of the key texts in the passage on the last judgment are verses 40 and 45.

Verse 40. And the king shall answer and say unto them. Verily I say unto you. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren. Ye have done it unto me.

Verse 45. Then shall he answer them saying. Verily I say unto you. Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these. Ye did it not to me.

- [ 30 : 32 ] The first of these texts is stated positively. And is addressed to the righteous. The second is directed to the unrighteous. In a very negative way. But notice here.

Notice that the wicked. Those on the left. The goats. They have not enacted any crime. They did not kill anyone.

They did not commit adultery. They did not steal. Their sins. That the judge brings against them.

Are not deeds of commission. But of omission. What they failed to do.

Is counted and reckoned. In the judgment day. The entire list of needs. Probably responded to by the righteous.

- [ 31 : 35 ] This is repeated. But now the glaring omission. Are highlighted. For I was hungered. And ye gave me no meat. I was thirsty. And ye gave me no drink. I was a stranger.

And ye take me not in. Naked. And ye clothed me not. Seek and in prison. And ye visited me not. Jesus concisely puts it. He that is not with me.

Is against me. And he that gathereth not with me. Scattereth abroad. God. If a person refuses. The claims of the gospel.

And rebuffs the follower of Jesus. He rejects Christ. And chooses the side of the enemy. Because of their refusal. To give any aid to the followers of Christ.

The unrighteous have placed themselves. Outside the sphere of God's blessing. They are under the curse. They hear the awful words. Depart from me.

- [ 32 : 32 ] Get cursed into everlasting fire. Prepare for the devil and his angels. They are condemned. And given a place. With Satan and his followers. The unrighteous are forever. Separated from the Christ.

They are sent to a place. Where they will spend eternity. With Satan and his courts. It is a place. That scripture describes. As hell. And it wasn't.

Because they killed anyone. Or they committed adultery. Or they stole. It is not the sins.

Or the deeds of commission. But of omission. What they failed to do. Is counted and reckoned.

In the judgment day. And dear friend. What you fail to do. Is going to be counted and reckoned. Against you.

- [ 33 : 28 ] In the judgment day. What you fail to do. To trust. In the Lord Jesus Christ. What you fail to do.

In giving heed to the command. And the invitation. Of the gospel. To come to Jesus. To trust in Jesus. To commit your life. To Jesus.

Is going to be counted. And reckoned against you. On the judgment day. As you despise. The witness. Of God's people.

As you despise. The preaching. Of the gospel. And you might say. I don't despise it. You despise it. In your rejection. Of the preaching.

Of the gospel. And the command. Of the gospel. The invitation. Of the gospel. You do despise it. You do reject it. Let's not have any niceties.

[ 34 : 26 ] Around it. That is what you're doing. With the gospel. That is what you're doing. With Jesus Christ. That's what you're doing. With the followers of Christ. You're despising them. Not listening to them.

Not accepting their witness. That's what you're doing. You're despising Christ. Rejecting Christ. And dear friend. Remember this.

It will be counted. And reckoned. In the judgment day. It is not only. Those who are murderers. It is not only adulterers.

It is not only thieves. That go to hell. But those who despise. And reject the gospel. Of Jesus Christ.

Those who are very moral. Upright people. Good to have them as neighbours. Good to have them as work colleagues. Good to have them in a community.

[ 35 : 26 ] And yet on a judgment day. They lack one thing. They have not. Believed and committed themselves. To Jesus Christ.

Christ. In the courtroom. The people who will be on the left. Of the judge. Are surprised.

And the question of verdict. They said. Lord. When saw we thee unhungered. Or a thirst. Or a stranger. Or naked. Or sick. Or in prison. And it doth minister unto thee. And the answer to that question.

Is that. They refuse to see Christ. They refuse. To acknowledge. The witness. Of the followers of Christ.

They closed their eyes. They hardened their hearts. And to the followers of Jesus. Spoke to them. Witnessed to them. When the followers of Jesus. Needed the basic.

[ 36 : 24 ] Necessities of life. And as much. As you did not. To. As much. As you did it not. To one of the least of these. You did it not.

Unto me. You know. Paul goes very bold. In his letter to the Corinthians. And he's speaking about the ministry of the gospel.

And he says. That he is standing. That. The preacher of the gospel. Is standing. In the room of Christ. And pleading.

With you. Be ye. Reconciled. To God. That's the picture. That Paul gives us. Of. The. The. The preacher of the gospel.

As one. Who is the ambassador. The representative. The one who stands. In the place of Christ. Who speaks. In the name of Christ.

[ 37 : 23 ] Friend. Do you ever. Consider that. Do you ever. Consider. When the gospel. Comes to you. It is. Coming to you.

Through Christ. The gospel. Is Christ's. The gospel. Is not mine. I'm only a channel.

Through which Christ. Speaks to you. Be. Reconciled. To God. God. And I. And all I want. Forever. To know. Be known as. Is.

As a channel. As a channel. I stand here. In Christ's dead. Before you. Tonight. And I ask you. To be.



Reconciled. To God. Nothing. Is more plainly. Taught. In scripture. Than that. There will be. A final. And universal.

[ 38 : 22 ] Judgment. Paul. Says. That God. Has set a day. When he will. Judge the world. The final. Judgment. Is not an option. That God. Is considering.

It is. Coming. With all of time. At his disposal. He has singled out. A day. When he will call. All the world.

To account. The man. Who came. To be the saviour. Of sinners. Will be the judge. And his decision. Will be final. And irreversible.

Let us take to heart. The words of Psalm 2. Serve the Lord. With fear. And rejoice. With trembling. Kiss the slum. Lest ye be angry. And ye perish.

From the way. When his wrath is kindled. But a little. Blessed are all they. That put their trust. In him. The day of reckoning.

[ 39 : 17 ] My friend. Is coming. We shall all stand. Before Jesus Christ. The saviour. Of sinners. The one who went. To the cross.

Of Golgotha. So that sinners. Could have life. The one who gave himself. For sinners. Like me and you. He will be there.

He will be the judge. And everyone. Will stand. Before him. Pontius Pilate. Will be there. The one who gave him over.

To be crucified. Judas Iscariot. Will be there. The one who betrayed him. For pieces of silver. The soldiers.

Will be there. That mocked him. I will be there. And you will be there.

[ 40 : 17 ] You who despised. The saviour of sinners. You who despised. The judge. You who rejected. The judge. You who rejected.

Jesus Christ. Will be there. There will be murderers. Who never repented. But there will be a thief. Who did repent.

But remember. There will be another thief. Who did not repent. They will be there. They will be there. And I and you will be there.

Murderers will be there. Adulterers will be there. Thieves will be there. Those who have. Committed. Many kinds of sins.

Will be there. Who continued. Unrepentant. In this world. Who despised. And rejected. The saviour. But blessed.

[ 41 : 16 ] Be the grace of God. There will also be murderers. And thieves. And adulterers. Children. Those who were. Who have committed. All sorts of vices.

In this world. But who did repent. They will be there. But the great question is this. And the great thing.

And the solemnity of it is this. That I will be there. And you will be there. And I will have to give an account. For the way I preached.

For the way that I called you. For the way I gave you the invitation. I am going to be accountable for that. But remember this my friend. You are going to be accountable.

For the way that you listened. For the way that you listened. Oh my friend. Harden not your heart. But today. Tonight.

[ 42 : 12 ] This hour. This minute. Accept Jesus Christ. Into. Your life. May the Lord bless her.