

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DEC 5TH-6TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

## SHEEP & GOATS (MATT. 25:30-46)

If Christ is returning at a time when we least expect, how are we to prepare ourselves?

(Parable of the Virgins, 25:1-13) How should we be investing our lives in the Kingdom that is to come?

(Parable of the Talents, 25:14-30) What is the lifestyle of a true disciple and what's the lifestyle of a false disciple? (25:31-46)

The final section of Jesus' teaching involves evaluation, while the previous 2 parables spoke on judgment coming to the unprepared.

- While this passage does have elements of a parable, it's not really a parable as much as it is a glimpse into the day of judgment- a real event in future history. On this day, before Christ all the nations will be gathered, and He will separate them (vs. 32).

Jesus will separate all people as a "shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (vs. 32)-sheep on the right, goats on the left.

- Goats tend to be strong-minded, hate to be confined, they're often-times stubborn, and don't like to be led. Sheep, on the other hand, follow the shepherd's voice and go where He directs.

Here we see two categories of humanity- those who are redeemed and saved ("sheep"), and those who are condemned and lost ("goats").

- The sheep are praised by the King for the kind of behavior they exhibited in their lives. In taking care of those who were hungry, thirsty, lonely, naked, sick and imprisoned- they actually cared for Jesus Himself (vs. 40). The sheep are "blessed" and given eternal life!

The King then turns to those on the left and addresses them as "cursed" (vs. 41).

- These people, "goats", didn't care for the needs of the King- they lived their lives ignoring the needs of those around them- therefore ignoring the King (vs. 43-45).
- Their sentence for ignoring the King and not caring for Him or His people? "Eternal punishment" At 1st glance, we might come away from this passage believing that the sheep earned their eternal life by being charitable and kind- thus, it's our works that save us.
- However, the actions of both groups simply reveal their true character and identity. Our works are not the cause of our salvation, they're the effect of our salvation.

Our behavior over our lifetime is a window into our true identity (Matt. 7:17).

- Sheep and goats may run together in the same flock- but their actions over time reveal who they truly are. A self-centered existence that displays no compassion or care for anyone other than ourselves is an indication that we're not following the shepherd and we don't know the King.

## CAIAPHAS, MARY, & JUDAS (MATT. 26:1-16)

After Jesus finishes the Olivet discourse, He reminds His disciples one last time of what's about to happen in just two days (vs. 1-2).

- The timing of Jesus' death to the Passover feast is highly symbolic- He is the Passover lamb (Exod. 12) who saves us with His blood. When God's wrath and judgment come, we hide under the blood of a substitute sacrifice, Jesus the Lamb of God, and we are saved.

Caiaphas (vs. 1-5)

- The scene now quickly changes to a meeting of the Jewish leaders in the palace of the high priest, Caiaphas. As high priest, Caiaphas had the highest human authority over all of Israel and reigned as high priest for 18 years. His only other appearance will be when he presides over Jesus' trial (Matt. 26:57-66).
- The priesthood in Israel at that time had become exceptionally corrupt, and someone became (and remained) priest through monetary bribes, political posturing, and pleasing their constituency. As much as Caiaphas and the Jewish leaders wanted Jesus out of the way, they were nervous about arresting Him during the Passover, "lest there be an uproar among the people" (vs. 5).
- So they plotted together to arrest Jesus by stealth. We have in Caiaphas a picture of a man that's on in love with power, control, and the approval of public opinion that He's threatened by Jesus.
- Jesus as Lord means that if we follow Him, He's the one who holds the power in decision making, He's the one in control, and if we follow Him we won't always be liked or approved of by people. Many of us, like Caiaphas, plot to dispose of His presence in our lives.

Mary, or a "woman with an alabaster flask" (vs. 6-13)

- Jesus and the disciples are staying in Bethany every night except the last night of Passover week (which is why they're in Gethsemane on the final night, vs. 36).
- "Simon the Leper" is probably someone whom Jesus has healed, and while they're reclining at table over a meal, a woman approaches the table and anoints Jesus with ointment (vs. 7).
- John lets us know her name is Mary the sister of Martha (Jn. 12:3), and Mark (Mk. 14:5) tells us the perfume was worth a year's wages (300 denarii, \$12,000 USD). The disciples are understandably upset and see this extravagant act as wasteful and foolish (vs. 8-9).
- But Jesus is protective and speaks up for her (vs. 10) telling them that they'll always have the poor with them (Deut. 15:11). What Mary was actually doing was honoring Jesus and preparing Him for burial (vs. 12). In vs. 13 Jesus does something for her that He doesn't do for anyone else- He memorializes what she's done and makes her into a permanent part of the story.
- When we're captivated by the beauty of who Jesus is, we're willing to spend everything we have to honor Him. When we worship Jesus for who He is, it will cost us everything we have- but everything else in our lives gets sorted out.
- When we seek to spend our lives on honoring Jesus simply because we love Him, He will honor us! When we live our lives in a costly manner to honor Jesus alone, we shouldn't be surprised when we're misunderstood or misjudged by other people.

Judas (vs. 14-16)

- Next we see a portrait of Judas Iscariot, who went to the chief priests in order to sell Jesus out (vs. 14-15). Scholars often speculate on Judas' motives, but it appears that at least one of them was greed (John 12:6). His deal with the priest netted him around \$5,000 USD.
- Many scholars believe Judas was a political activist who followed Jesus because he thought Jesus would overthrow the Romans and usher in a new Jewish kingdom with money, power, and position given to Jesus' associates.
- But when Jesus started talking about the cross, suffering, and dying, Judas decided to cut his losses and get out with a profit. Many people will follow Jesus in this life because, like Judas, they want what they think Jesus can give them- health, wealth, happiness, miracles, etc. But as soon as Jesus' program involves suffering, difficulty, and delayed gratification, they're willing to sell Him out and walk away.

"Am I more in love with what Jesus can give me than I actually love Jesus?"

## THE PASSOVER (MATT. 26:17-29)

The Passover feast was an integral part of Jewish life, and it was celebrated every year to remember God's deliverance from Egypt.

- It was necessary for a Jewish household to purchase and prepare the materials needed for a Passover meal (bread, bitter herbs, lamb, wine, etc.), and to find a place in crowded Jerusalem where the feast could be held (vs. 17-19). That evening, they reclined at table to eat the Passover meal together (vs. 20).

Jesus begins the meal with a very dark and shocking prediction that one of them is going to betray Him (vs. 21), to which each of them ask, "Is it I, Lord?" (vs. 22).

- Jesus replies that it's already someone who has, "dipped his hand in the dish with me"- meaning, it could be anyone of them at the table (vs. 23). The fact that Jesus would be betrayed was foretold in the O.T. (Ps. 41:9, Zech. 11:12-13).

Probably between the 3rd and 4th cup of the Passover meal, Jesus begins to redefine the elements in light of His upcoming sacrifice.

- The broken, unleavened Passover bread is His body of which they must eat (Jn. 6:53), and the cup of wine is His blood that they must drink (vs. 26-28).
- Covenants in the OT were often established by blood, and this new covenant is no different. But this time the blood that establishes the new covenant is the blood of Jesus (vs. 28).
- Just like the Passover lamb whose blood marked the doorposts of the houses so the angel of death would "pass over" the Israelites, so now Jesus, the "Lamb of God", will mark them with His blood so they'll never taste death.
- The new covenant meant that it would no longer be the blood of animals that would cover their sins...

It would be the blood of the Messiah King Himself that would seal this new covenant between God and His people (Heb. 7-10).

- Humanity would now have forgiveness of sins and access to God because of the sacrifice of Messiah in our place!
- Our response is to receive this gift God has offered us and to allow His presence inside of us to change and transform us.

"You are what you eat"- we don't become "gods" when we take communion, but the act of eating bread and drinking wine symbolizes an incredible reality.

- To receive Christ is to take in His very spirit and allow it to transform, change, and remake us into a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).
- Many want forgiveness of sins, but not transformation- but that's not how it works.

## WHAT KIND OF A DISCIPLE ARE YOU?

- One that sees Jesus as a "rabbi", but not as "Lord"? (vs. 25)
- One that seeks only forgiveness of sins, but no inward transformation and on-going, covenantal relationship with God? (vs. 26-27)
- A Caiaphas that's so in love with control, power, and the approval of others that you just want to get rid of Jesus' presence in your life (vs. 3-4)?
- A Judas that's willing to sell Jesus out and walk away if He doesn't get you what you want (vs. 14-16)?
- A Mary that's willing to spend EVERYTHING in your life to honor Jesus- even if it means you'll be misunderstood and judged (vs. 6-13)?
- A sheep that's willing to be led by Jesus the Shepherd, or a goat that doesn't want anyone telling you what to do (25:31-34)?
- A disciple that is committed to displaying love for Jesus by truly loving His people, or a false convert that continually reveals your identity by your self-centeredness (25:35-46)?