

Daily Worship Booklet

12th February – 16th February 2024

The Parables of Jesus

The Consummation of God's Kingdom

God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,
day after day and the people of God were filled with joy!

Bible Classes will resume next week.

Psalm of the Week

Psalm 105B - The words are on page 8.

Please pray for:

Mon - Steve & Tiara, Titus, Leo & Pax Marshall

Tues - Rick McIver

Wed - Don Millar

Thur - Luke Mo

Frid - Angela, Asher, Myah, Charlotte, Spencer & Justin Newman

Pray for the Holy Spirit's help as you study God's Word

Rev. Dr. Quigley has written the notes
based on Rev. Gorden Keddie's book on the parables.

I finished last week's notes by saying that we would begin this week by looking at the faithful's blessing and the punishment of the faithless; but since we looked at that a couple of weeks ago, in the parable of the Minas, I have decided to leave it at that.

CONSUMMATION OF THE KINGDOM

Monday – Matthew 25:31-46 - The parable of the sheep and the goats

The simplest truths in life are often the most difficult to talk about. The Bible's teaching about 'the Day of Judgement' is a simple doctrine outlined in Scripture with unmistakable clarity. Yet, it is one of the most challenging subjects to preach, teach, and even think about. Why? One possible reason is that, unlike the everyday issues of life Scripture addresses, the Day of Judgement seems remote and unreal by comparison. Another reason may be the world's mockery at the mention of a 'Judgement Day'. Then there is the frequent misreading and subsequent misinterpretation of so-called 'end-times' prophecy, which has left millions — both Christians and non-Christians — with a wholly unscriptural understanding of these highly significant matters. Probably, though, it's because this doctrine, more than any other, brings us face to face with our Creator, and the fact that we will have to give account to Him generates an understandable fear within us about it. Whatever way you look at it, this will be a day like no other, for only one question will matter on that day — have you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour?

This parable presents four facts, and we shall consider each; they are: the fact of a Final judgement (25:31-33); the fact of eternal punishment for the wicked (25:34-40); the fact of eternal life for the righteous (25:41-45); and the fact that the parting of the ways is for all eternity (25:46).

Final judgement (25:31-33)

It is the straightforward and inescapable teaching of the Bible that there is a final act of divine judgment at the end time. These three verses in Matthew 25 predict the judgement that will occur when Jesus returns. This is sober history in advance. There is a day appointed when Jesus Christ will return, bodily, to this world to judge 'the living and the dead' (2 Timothy 4:1), separating and exalting the righteous from the reprobate, who will be sent to eternal punishment. You can deny this fact, but you cannot change it. You will be there on that Day at the Final Judgement, and Jesus will be your Judge!

- Q1. Why are people afraid to think about the Day of Judgement?
- Q2. Will the Day of Judgment be avoidable?

Tuesday – Matthew 25:31-33 – Christ shall return to judge!

There is a day when Christ will return (25:31)

A day is coming when the Son of Man will return in glory as the once and final Judge (Matthew 28:18; John 5:27; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Philippians 2:9-10). The title 'Son of Man' takes us to Daniel's vision of the glory of Christ: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." (Daniel 7:13-14). On this day, the redeemed of the Lord will all be gathered in; the reprobate will be subdued under his feet, and Christ will establish his Kingdom forever.

There will be a general judgement (25:32)

All the nations will be gathered before him, both the living and the dead, believers and unbelievers; and He will be publicly vindicated in his kingly authority. Then, the general judgement will take place: the sheep and the goats, who have lived together in mixed fields, will now be separated for eternity. The sheep will be penned together in one place, the goats in another. All will see this separation of the righteous from the wicked. God's absolute sovereignty and covenant faithfulness will be fully and finally demonstrated before all. Those who have believed – the sheep – will be confirmed in eternal life, and those who have rejected – the goats – will be sent to eternal punishment.

"And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left." There will be no mystery about who is saved and who is not. The Lord knows His sheep, and His sheep know Him and recognize His voice (John 10:14-18). The goats, those who rejected Christ with impunity throughout their lives, will be paralysed with fear, and they will call on the mountains to hide them from the "wrath of the Lamb" (Revelation 6:16).

While much is unknown about this Day, the pronouncement of eternal blessing upon God's people, the sheep, is known. And knowing that, as God's people, we should be looking forward to this day with a sense of absolute joy anticipating our salvation, our hearts thrilled with the knowledge that one day we will see the Lord "face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12), and experience the wonder of heaven.

Q1. What must happen before the judgement takes place?

Q2. Who will be judged?

Wednesday – Matthew 25:34-40 - Eternal life!

Jesus' first words will be to 'those on his right' — the 'sheep'. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" What a summons! What a day the Day of Judgement will be for the believer. Blessed by the Father, led by the Holy Spirit, and called forward by the Son to inherit their place in the eternal kingdom, in their newly risen glorified bodies.

The first instruction for the believer will be, 'Take your inheritance'. The Greek is an (aorist) imperative. The sense is this: 'What you have previously known in part, now take in its fullness.' Take the right to become children of God, lay hold of the right to be heirs of God the Father and co-heirs with Christ the Son, and live it, not merely for a lifetime but for all eternity. That which has been prepared for you since the creation of the world is now given to you. So, take it – it's yours.

But what use is that truth to us now – much indeed as John Calvin observes, "It is no slight persuasive to patience when men are fully convinced that they do not run in vain; and therefore, lest our minds should be cast down by the pride of the ungodly, in which they give themselves unrestrained indulgence — lest our hope should even be weakened by our own afflictions, let us always remember the inheritance which awaits us in heaven; for it depends on no uncertain event, but was prepared for us by God before we were born — prepared, I say, for each of the elect."

Note, though, the central importance of the Christian life lived. It's not that we earn our salvation, nor does this contradict the fact that we are justified by faith alone; that can never be the case. But faith must manifest itself in more than just thoughts and words; there must be evidence of definite actions. And these actions must be linked directly to Jesus himself. What did the 'sheep' do? They fed Jesus, they gave Jesus a drink, they invited Jesus in when he was a stranger, they clothed Jesus, they took care of him when he was sick and visited him when he was in prison. Of course, these words have been grossly misunderstood and, as a result, misinterpreted to speak of general acts of kindness in the world; that's not what this means. So, what does it mean? Well, we'll come to that tomorrow, God willing.

Q1. Who does Jesus speak to first?

Q2. What does Jesus focus on as of central importance?

Thursday – Matthew 25:34-40 – Good works!

Yesterday, we saw how the Lord commended the sheep for how they had treated him; of course, he didn't mean that they had done these things to him in person, but they were nonetheless confused by what he'd said as the string of 'when did we...' questions show. Jesus' response makes his thinking clear – "And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'" (25:40) So, the evidence of saving faith is a life lived loving our brothers and sisters in Christ, doing good and helping them in their times of need, whatever that requires. It's not that these acts are outstanding in themselves; they are done without fuss and without desire to seek favour. That's why the righteous, the sheep, will say 'but when did I do that...'. It will have been such a part of their day-to-day living for Christ that it won't even have registered with them. One commentator writes, "A good work which is genuinely a good work is done with complete self-forgetfulness." He says, "Those works which are good are only those done to the glory of God. If the child of God does 'works' for himself or his own glory, they cease to be good." The key to understanding what Jesus is saying is determining who these '*brothers*' of his are. They are, of course, those who have been and will be saved. As the writer to the Hebrews says when speaking of Christ as the founder of salvation – "For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers" (Hebrews 2:11). So, just to be clear, we're not talking here about kind acts to everyone, and especially not to those in the world who are poor – that's not saying that we should not love our neighbour as ourselves, we should. The point is what we do to care for those in need. True righteousness is expressed in practical love for Christ, which is seen in our love for those who love him, our *brothers and sisters in Christ*.

Eternal punishment (25:41-45)

When Jesus turns to the other side of the judgement, we have a mirror image of the Lord's transaction with his people. The King sentences them to eternal death, and then, against their protestations of pretended innocence, he tells them why they are being consigned to eternal punishment in hell. "Those on his left" are the unsaved, the unbelieving, the unrepentant, the lost, all who would not receive Christ as their Saviour. The nasty and the nice, the good and the bad, are now all united in their common rejection of Christ and the gospel.

Q1. Why are good works important?

Q2. What are good works?

Friday – Matthew 25:41-46 - The endless end of the lost!

The goats on the left, the lost, will hear three words from the King – “Depart from me” (25:41). They will be separated from God and from all that is good and truly pleasurable. This reiterates the last sentence of the parable of the talents: “And cast the worthless servant into outer darkness. In that place there will weeping and gnashing of teeth” (25:30). While many reject the idea of eternal punishment, including Christians, the fact is Jesus speaks more frequently about the reality of judgement and hell than he does of God’s love. Above all, Hell is a place to avoid (Matthew 5:22, 29, 30). A place of enforced separation from God’s loving presence (Matthew 7:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). As a place of outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12). A place of God’s angry presence and reality, where the terrible punishment will be far worse than anything experienced on earth, including the final sting of death (Matthew 10:28; Matthew 11:22-24). They will be sent there because they are accursed, having flagrantly and without thought rejected the Law of God and His love at every turn. And they will dwell there with the devil and his angels in the eternal fire prepared for them. It is a pain without relief and sorrow, without repentance, all shared in a wicked pseudo-fellowship of enmity against God, devoid of the slightest inkling of love. It is truly unimaginable, yet it is wholly just.

Why? Because of what they did not do. Jesus could have listed all their sins of commission, the “works of the flesh” (Galatians 5:19-21). He could have spoken about their sin of unbelief, their lack of faith in him and repentance toward God (Acts 20:21). But he didn’t. He spoke only about their sins of omission. Why? Because he speaks to the absence of Him in their lives. Their lives had been lived solely for themselves, period! Yes, their response sounds the same as the sheep, but they are excuse-making, unlike the sheep who were expressing their lack of clarity about when they had served the Lord – two totally different things. Jesus’ response is the same as that to the sheep; it is just the mirror image. When you didn’t love, care, or provide for my people, you didn’t love me, care or provide for me.

The last verse (v46) sums up the end of human history with a simple finality: “And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” There will be no ‘second chance’ for anyone after this life is over; Jesus confronts us with the starkest reality. What are you and I to do, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31).

Q1. Who are the goats and why will they be in hell?

Q2. What are we to do?

Psalm 105B

6. God's covenant stays forever secure;
He brings it to mind, so shall it endure.
His word to a thousand descendants shall stand;
Through all generations, so did He command.

7. The covenant He with Abraham made;
His oath He in turn to Isaac relayed;
To Jacob confirmed it, a certain decree;
To Isr'el, a covenant permanently.

8. This promise He made, though they were yet few:
"Behold, Canaan's land I give unto you
To be your inheritance where you may dwell."
Said while they were few and were strangers as well.

9. As they wandered from one realm to the next,
He did not allow that they be oppressed.
He warned kings, "Touch not those anointed by Me;
Do not on my prophets inflict injury."