



Kingdom Preparation

Matthew 25:31-46

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How to Prepare

Begin preparing by reading the full passage a few times. Then answer the questions for yourself. Then think about how your Small Group might answer them. Try re-wording the questions to fit you and your Small Group. Don't feel tied down to the discussion guide, just be sure to discuss the main point of the text in your conversations.

Resources-

<https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/great-separation>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/parable-sheep-goats.html>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/doing-mercy-to-the-brothers-of-jesus-and-the-broken-neighbor>

Discussion Guide Outline:

Matthew 25:31-46

1. Christ Will Return to Judge the World. Vv. 31-33
2. Believers Trust in Christ and Obey Him. Vv. 34-40
3. Non-Believers Deny Christ and Disobey Him. Vv. 41-45
4. Eternal Life is the Unearned Reward for Believers, While Eternal Punishment is the Just Outcome of Denying Christ. Vv. 34 & 46

Matthew 25:31-46

The Judgment

31 "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

32 All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;

33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

34 "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

35 For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in;

36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'

37 Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink?

38 And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You?

39 When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'

40 The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'

41 "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;

42 for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink;

43 I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.'

44 Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or

44 Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?'

45 Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'

46 These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Discussion Questions

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 25:31-46.

INTRODUCTION AND MAIN IDEA

John 3:16 is one of the most famous verses of the Bible, illustrating God's love for humanity by sending his Son so that "whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

But do you know the rest of that passage? Do you know who Jesus was speaking to?

In John 3, a man named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews and one who was viewed as righteous by many people, came to visit Christ. Rather than acknowledge Nicodemus's holiness, Christ commands him to be born again to see the Kingdom of God. John 3:3. After describing what it means to be born again—to be cleansed of sins by placing your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior—Jesus tells Nicodemus that: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3:17.

If we stopped there at Christ's first coming, we may be deceived into believing God will not judge sin. But he will.

One day, Christ will return. And His second coming will result in the condemnation of all who do not believe. As Jesus warned Nicodemus: "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John 3:18-19.

Today's passage further illustrates the dichotomy between those who believe in Christ as savior, and those who do not. Those who are free of condemnation, and those who stand condemned. Those who rest in Christ's perfect obedience to God, and those who have nothing to rely upon but their own evil deeds. The sheep and the goats.

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

These questions should help your Small Group dig deeper into the text and then apply it to your lives today.

I. Christ Will Return to Judge the World. Vv. 31-33

1. Have you ever heard someone argue that a loving God would never condemn someone to hell? How would you respond to them?

2. In John 5:22-23 and Acts 17:31, we read that God the Father has appointed Jesus Christ to judge the world. Would a just judge avoid punishing sin? Do you trust that Jesus Christ will be able to perfectly judge sin?

3. Christ is our shepherd. And like any good shepherd, He knows His sheep. He knows who belongs in the flock (sheep) and who does not belong in the flock (goats). And He will separate them accordingly. Would the new earth be truly paradise if sin were allowed in?

II. Believers Trust in Christ and Obey Him. Vv. 34-40

4. If we are not careful, we may read Matthew 25:34-40 and conclude that we are made righteous and inherit eternal life because of the good things we do for other people. Why do we know that is not true? Consider Romans 3:10 and Ephesians 2:8-9.

5. Consider John 10:27, John 13:35, James 2:17-18, Galatians 5:22-23, Galatians 6:10, and Ephesians 2:10. Does a genuine believer in Jesus Christ change how they live to show love to their fellow believers? How do good works evidence our salvation?

6. What are some practical ways you can show love to one another, especially to the "least of these"?

III. Non-Believers Deny Christ and Disobey Him. Vv. 41-45

7. If someone claimed to love you, but hated your children, would you believe them?

8. How did the failure of the people described as goats in Matthew 25 to care for others in their time of distress reveal that they never knew Christ as Lord and Savior?

9. How can we guard our hearts from disobeying or dishonoring God?

IV. Non-Believers Deny Christ and Disobey Him. Vv. 41-45

10. Does anyone deserve eternal life? How does the fact that eternal life is freely given to us in Jesus Christ, free us from pride and free us to serve one another without expectation of earthly reward and without fear of earthly hardship?

11. What condemns non-believers to eternal punishment? Is God just for eternally punishing non-believers?

12. If you truly believe those who do not know Christ stand condemned already for failing to believe in Him (like Nicodemus), what would you urge them to do? And when would you urge them to do it?

Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

Matt. 25:31–46 Judgment at the End. Jesus' disciples are to wait patiently in anticipation of reward at his return, when the unprepared and unrepentant will receive only judgment.

Matt. 25:31 Son of Man. See note on 8:20. angels with him. See 13:41–42; 2 Thess. 1:7; Rev. 14:17–20. sit on his glorious throne. As both Judge and King.

Matt. 25:32 all the nations. Both Jews and Gentiles, who are the object of the Great Commission throughout this age (see note on 28:19). he will separate people one from another. See 7:21–23; 13:40–43.

Matt. 25:34 King. The Son of Man upon his throne (v. 31) recalls the prophecy of Dan. 7:13–14, in which the Ancient of Days bestows the kingdom upon "one like a son of man." blessed by my Father. The blessing to the "sheep" (Matt. 25:32) consists of their inheritance of the Father's kingdom, given not as a reward for good works but because of their saving relationship with the Father and the Son.

Matt. 25:40 In the context of the parable the least of these refers to those who are most needy among Jesus' brothers—a reference most likely to Jesus' disciples and by extension all believers. The "sheep" are commended for their great compassion for those in need—for the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger; for those who are naked, sick, or in prison. The righteous will inherit the kingdom not because of the compassionate works that they have done but because their righteousness comes from their transformed hearts in response to Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom, as evidenced by their compassion for the "least of these." In caring for those in need, the righteous discover that their acts of compassion for the needy are the same as if done for Jesus himself (you did it to me).

Matt. 25:41–46 Then he will say to those on his left. In contrast to the sheep (who will "inherit the kingdom"; v. 34), the goats are condemned to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. The reason for their condemnation is that they are guilty of sins of omission—that is, they have refused to show compassion to the least of these, which is the same as if they failed to have any care for Jesus himself. Given the evident unrighteousness of their hearts, they are condemned to eternal punishment. Some interpreters hold that this judgment (these will go away) will occur prior to the inauguration of Jesus' earthly millennial kingdom, and that the "sheep" (v. 33) are those blessed to enter and live under Jesus' dominion. Others equate this judgment scene with that which closes the earthly age, just prior to the eternal state (Rev. 20:11–13). The most important point, however, is that judgment will come.