

Matthew 25:31-46

'On Sheep And Goats'

Prayer – Augustine

Look upon us, O Lord, and let all the darkness of our souls vanish before the beams of Your brightness. Fill us with holy love, and open to us the treasures of Your wisdom. All our desire is known unto You, therefore perfect what You have begun, and what Your Holy Spirit has awakened us to ask in prayer. We seek Your face, turn Your face unto us and show us Your Glory. Then shall our longing be satisfied, and our peace shall be perfect. Amen.

Exegesis –

Notice four titles/roles for Jesus He assumes in this passage; i) Son of Man (31), ii) Shepherd (32), iii) King (34, 40), and iv) Lord (37, 44).

- 31 Son of Man – refers to the vision of the prophet Daniel in Dan. 7:13-14. Also the most common name Jesus uses in referencing Himself in the Gospels.
- 32 All 'people' – some debate around the translation of the word 'ἔθνη', but see Rom. 11:13, Gal. 2:12, Eph. 3:1 where Paul uses the term. Most probably refers to all nations, not just the Gentiles in this context.
- 34 the inheritance is prepared at the creation of the world.
- 35-36 indicative of types of aid, not an exhaustive 'list'. See also Acts 9:3-5, Is. 58:6-9, and Mk. 12:41-44).
- 40 who is 'ἀδελφῶν'? See Mt. 10:40-42, 12:50, 18:15, 21, 23:8, 28:10. Options are: i) people in need, ii) Christians, or iii) Christians actively working to proclaim the Gospel. The 'least of these' most likely represents those Christians who are actively working in Gospel proclamation, no matter how 'little'.
- 41 'eternal fire' obviously refers to hell, but note that it is prepared for 'the devil and his angels' not humans. It is a tragedy that humans will be confined there, as it is not our purpose to be there in eternity. Note we are all transformed into our 'eternal selves' upon the return of Jesus, which cannot be destroyed. How much more the torment than where there is unending punishment on an eternal body.
- 45 'whatever you did not do' – a sin of omission is no greater or lesser than a sin of commission.
- 46 note the lack of hierarchy for the eternal destination. Only an 'in' or an 'out'.

This is the end of Jesus' public proclamation of the Gospel in Matthew's account, and the message about the kingdom of heaven he wants to leave us with.

Summation: actions and inactions have eternal consequences. Humans were created for an eternity with God, but the choice on where we go can be brought about by our identification of fellowship with Christ and activities that confirm that bond.

Prayer – Augustine

You, most merciful God, do I now invoke to descend into our souls, which You have prepared for Your reception by the desire which You have breathed into it. Forever we cry to You, most Merciful, has called and sought us, that we might find You, and finding love You. Even so we sought and found You, Lord, and desire to love You. Increase our desire, and grant us what we ask. See, we love You, but too little; strengthen our love. When our spirit aspires to You, and meditates on Your unspeakable goodness, the burden of the flesh becomes less heavy, the tumult of thought is stilled, the weight of mortality is less oppressive. Then would our souls find wings, that we might rise in tireless flight ever upwards to Your glorious throne, and there be filled with the refreshing solace that belongs to the citizens of heaven. Amen.