

What You Need To Know About Sheep, Goats and the Second Coming

One of my favorite passages as a new believer was the parable of the sheep and the goats. I had Keith Green's song about it memorized. But a few years later I realized I had it all wrong. It's not a parable at all—but a real life event!

The traditional meaning of the sheep and the goats is a biblical one, even if it is not the exact intention of the passage—that we mustn't forget the poor—the less fortunate. One Christmas I went to Toys R Us and bought a bunch of toys and passed them out in the projects of Richmond, Virginia. I also went to the county jail to share the gospel with prisoners. This passage motivated me.

So, while wanting to encourage you to continue to love those in need, let's see what this passage is really saying. Let's start at the beginning:

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. Before Him will be gathered all nations, and He will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates his sheep from the goats. He will set the sheep at His right hand, but the goats at the left” (Matt. 25:31-33).

OK, this is the Second Coming of Yeshua—which is why the sheep and the goats cannot be believers. Believers have all ready met Yeshua in the sky—whether that is at the Second Coming or seven years before, is a discussion we can have later—but we all agree that before the Messiah returns we will have been “caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess. 4:17) and it continues that

we “will be with the Lord forever.”

The eternal destiny of the sheep and the goats is decided in this passage, which takes place after Yeshua returns—so they can’t be believers. We have this great promise

That “we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet” (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

So who are these that make up the sheep and the goats? According to Zechariah there will be survivors of the judgment that comes on the nations at the Second Coming.

“Then it will be that all the nations who have come against Jerusalem and survived will go up each year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zech. 14:16).

Not only will there be survivors but they will come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. For those who think that God is done with Israel or the Torah, this passage throws a wrench in their theology.

And the Zechariah passage looks very much like Matt. 25. He is sitting on His throne, obviously in Jerusalem as he has just returned to the Mount of Olives (see Zech. 14:4). All the nations are gathered before Him.

It could be possible that this gathering that takes place just after the Second Coming is the inaugural Feast of Tabernacles in the millennial kingdom.

Now He separates the people—not each nation—but the people of each nation. Meaning there could be folks from Norway or Egypt who end up on the sheep side and others on the goat side.

And then the King Messiah judges the survivors of the Second Coming based on very specific criteria. How did you treat my

brothers?

And the king will answer them, 'I tell you the truth, just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did it for me' (Matt. 24:40, NET).

Another reason why these could not be believers. We are justified by the blood of Yeshua—not works. These folks are being rewarded or judge based on their actions.

When did we see you naked?

He pictures his brothers and sisters as those who have been hungry, thirsty, outcasts, imprisoned and sick.

What group of people has been constantly persecuted since their beginning? What nation could be classified as the brothers and sisters of Yeshua? What people group has been the plague of the nations, hated throughout history?

Obviously Israel. Certainly a naked, homeless or imprisoned Jew sounds like Nazi controlled Europe, the Crusades or the Inquisition. Think of the context.

Every nation has gathered against Jerusalem (see Zech. 12:2-3). The antichrist who has now been defeated, gathered the armies of the world in the valley of Har Megiddo (see Rev. 16:16) in order to march on Jerusalem. Zechariah (14:1-2) speaks of horrifying atrocities committed by these armies against the Jewish people.

And then Yeshua returns to fight for Israel (Zech. 14:3-4). He wins, and sets up his kingdom in Jerusalem. He then calls for the nations to gather during the Feast of Tabernacles and separates the peoples of those nations based on how they treated His brothers and sisters.

We can see in the world today how the nations unjustly and unreasonably judge Israel while turning a blind eye to the

crimes of China, Iran, Syria, Russia, etc. But God warns the nations saying I will bless those who bless Abraham and I will curse those who curse him (Gen 12:2-3). He says whoever touches Israel touches the 'apple of His eye' (Zech. 2:8).

Psalms 2 paints a picture of the nations opposing God and the issue is Zion, Jerusalem. God mocks them and then He "terrifies them in his rage". All this lines up with Matt. 25. Is Israel perfect? By no means, but God's favor on Israel is for His own purposes, not a reward for righteousness.

A good portion of the Bible, Old and New Covenant, is directed towards nations, saying, "be careful how you treat Israel." While all nations will turn against Israel, it doesn't mean that you have to!