

Matthew 25b

Jesus concludes the Olivet Discourse with further revelation about the judgment that will take place when (v. 31)? When Jesus Christ returns to earth at the end of the Tribulation in order to set up His earthly millennial kingdom.

What will be the first thing He does at the beginning of the new earthly kingdom (vv. 32-33)? He will separate humanity into two groups: sheep and goats.

"All the nations" should be translated "the Gentiles." These are all the people, other than Jews, who have lived through the Tribulation period (cf. Joel 3:2, 12). They will be judged individually, not as national groups. They are described as a mingling of sheep and goats, which the Lord will separate.¹

What will be His purpose (vv. 34-36)? Judgment! To determine whom He will admit to the kingdom, and whom He will exclude.

The New Testament teaches that there will be two distinct judgments relative to the earthly kingdom. One of these judgments will occur at the return of Christ, at the beginning of the earthly millennial kingdom, which is the one described in this passage. The other judgment will follow 1000 years later at the end of the millennial kingdom which is the Great White Throne Judgment, when God will send all wicked unbelievers to hell (Revelation 20:11-15).²

Who were the sheep on His right? Faithful believers.

Who were the goats on His left? Unbelievers who rejected Christ.

What was the judgment He rendered to the sheep on His right (v. 34)? He invited the sheep into their inheritance, His glorious kingdom, prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

The "sheep" (believers) will enter the earthly kingdom, which will be the next stage of their ceaseless life with God. Whereas eternal life begins when a person trusts Jesus Christ, the next stage of life in the King's presence for these believers will be the earthly, 1000 year kingdom.³

What is the basis for Jesus' judgment of the sheep (vv. 35-36)? The basis for judgment would be how they treated the King's faithful followers.....those who preached the gospel during the Tribulation (cf. 12:48-49; 28:10; v. 40; Isaiah 58:7).

They fed Him when He was hungry, gave Him drink when thirsty, welcomed Him when a stranger, clothed Him when ill-clad, visited Him in sickness, and went to see Him in prison.

How did the righteous sheep respond (vv. 37-39)? They didn't remember when they had shown such kindnesses to the King; He had not even been on earth in their generation.

The "sheep" and the "goats" will express surprise at their judgment, but not because they anticipated a different fate. They will express surprise because of the evidence upon which Jesus will judge their condition, namely, their treatment of His followers.

How did the king respond (v. 40)? He noted that they performed these services for the *"least of these brothers of Mine,"* and Whatever is done for one of His disciples is rewarded as being done to the King Himself.

NOTE: While salvation is solely on the basis of grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), this passage here is talking about judgment and judgment is always based on works (2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 16:27; Revelation 20:12).

What was the judgment rendered to the goats on his left (vv. 41-43)? They will be told, *"Depart from me.... into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."* The basis of their judgment will be their failure to extend mercy to the disciples of the King during the Tribulation. Their lack of righteous works will evidence their unconcern (vv. 42-44; cf. vv. 35-36).

These unbelievers will immediately enter Hades when they die, the place of departed spirits, until God resurrects them at the end of the millennium and sends them to hell (cf. Rev. 20:11-15).⁴

Note that the standard for evaluation will be the same for both the "sheep" and the "goats" (cf. vv. 35-36): how they treated the King's representatives.

How did the unrighteous goats respond (v. 44)? They made excuses saying they had never seen Him in need.

How did the King answer (v. 45)? He reminds them that their neglect of His followers was the same as neglect of Himself. The sins of omission are seen to be even more damning than the sins of commission.

What were the final destinations of the two groups (v. 46)? The goats will go away into everlasting punishment, but the sheep into eternal life.

With all wickedness removed in the various judgments at the Second Coming, the kingdom will begin on earth with only saved individuals in physical bodies constituting the earthly kingdom as the King's subjects.⁵

Thus ends the Olivet Discourse. Christ, the greatest of the prophets and the master Teacher, described the end of the age as the troubles of earth climax in a great tribulation. This time of unprecedented trouble will be terminated by the second coming of Christ and the establishment of His millennial kingdom.

¹ Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "Matthew," The Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 80.

² Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Matthew, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 643.

³ Ibid., 649.

⁴ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Matthew, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 649.

⁵ Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "Matthew," The Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 81.