

Matthew 25:31-46 Sheep: Be Blessed

These verses come at a significant time in Jesus ministry. This was only two days before his final passover and passion. He was already in the Jerusalem area and had put himself on a deliberate collision course with the religious rulers. Now he has an important message for his disciples - and for us today.

“When the Son of Man comes...”

This first comment is obvious but is worth stating and reflecting on. - What Jesus is talking about here is not a parable or an allegory. He is talking about a real event that is going to happen.

v.31 - 33 - Everyone will be there. Will will be divided into one of two groups; the “sheep” and the “goats”. There will be no other options. Jesus uses his preferred title - the Son of Man and makes it clear that He will be the judge on that day.

v.34 Jesus changes here to describing himself as the king - whilst also making reference to his Father.

“Come, you who are blessed” Who are the blessed here? What are the blessings?

v.40 - Is the key verse around which this passage hangs. Who are the “brothers” (and sisters)?

There are various views on this but “By far the best interpretation is that Jesus “brothers” are his disciples”. - Don Carson. By extension these verses apply to all true believers.

This verse seems to imply that our priority should be serving our brothers in Christ. - Of course there are plenty of other passages that make it clear that we cannot neglect the needs of, and witness to the wider world!

This verse and several others make it clear that serving God’s family is serving Christ himself and that to neglect the needs of the church is neglect Christ himself. See Acts 9:4-5.

The message to the sheep. (Those who are saved) v. 34 - 40

These verses could at first glance suggest salvation through works. Remember that we are saved not by doing good works but so that we can do good works. See James 2:14-26. Jesus is citing the evidence of their salvation.

“As people respond to his disciples, or “brothers,” and align themselves with their distress and afflictions, they align themselves with the Messiah who identifies himself with them. True disciples will love one another and serve the least brother with compassion; in doing so they unconsciously serve Christ. Those who have little sympathy for the gospel of the kingdom will remain indifferent and , in so doing, reject King Messiah.” - Don Carson The Expositors Bible Commentary

The message to the goats. (Those who are not saved) v.41-46

For those who are not saved, the curse of sin is still on them. The punishment for this is eternal.

Note the surprise of the sheep and the goats. Neither are surprised at the place the King has given them but rather at the reason that is given.

V.46 - Eternal life or eternal punishment. The same word for eternal (*aionios*) is used for both. It is very difficult (impossible?) to reconcile this verse with the annihilationist doctrine which teaches that the punishment will not be eternal.

How should we respond to a passage such as this?

Prayerfully consider the joyous and somber implications.