

Bi123 The Gospels 2

Lesson Bi123-12 Parable of Sheep & Goats

People of many different faiths are concerned about a final judgment. Some people compare themselves with others and believe *they* are the only ones who meet the requirements for heaven. Others attempt to do special good deeds to outweigh their evil ones. Some even hope there is no judgment or God to deal with after death. Others hope for another chance here on earth. In this parable Jesus rejects such ideas and describes the judgment of each individual.

Jesus told the disciples, “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left” (Matt 25:31-33).

Jesus was describing what will happen at the judgment. He will sit on a great throne as ruler and judge over those living on earth when he returns. The nations are cultural groups of people, who share a common language and religion, not the political units we speak of today. Each individual from every nation will be there before the true king. At that time he will separate the individuals into just two groups.

Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 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, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison, and go to visit you?”

The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Those on his right were blessed, because as his sheep they had heard and obeyed his voice. They received pardon and an eternal inheritance. Their visible works towards others were the result of a changed inner nature. Their ‘good’ deeds did not save them, but were a response to their faith. These sheep shared the compassion of Jesus; they shared the gospel of life. They fed people, gave their clothes away, loved the foreigners, and visited the sick and those in prison. All this came as a response to the love the Master had shown them. The believers didn’t remember doing these things for Jesus. When they did them for the weakest persons, it was the same as doing them for him.

Then he will say to those on his left, “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to

eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.”

They also will answer, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?”

He will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.”

The wicked dead received their condemnation to eternal punishment based on their lack of those same behaviors in their lives. As individual people, they did not help the believers among them. Because of their unbelief they did their best to rid the earth of every Christian they could. Their individual actions brought condemnation on them as a whole. The eternal fire they received was not what God intended for them. Condemnation was never God’s plan for anyone; this torment was prepared for the devil and his angels. God sent Christians to keep inviting them to faith, but they continued to refuse. Now God refuses them entry into the kingdom of heaven intended for them. Jesus concluded with these penetrating words, “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life” (Matt 25:34-46).

This story is **important** because it shows that faith in Christ is the only way to enter into eternal life. And true faith will be demonstrated by good works, pleasing to God.

The **main truth** of this story is that when Christ comes back to earth, the separation between the righteous and wicked that already exists will be finalized and confirmed by the Messiah himself.

Let's review this lesson—

1. What will Jesus do when all the peoples of the world stand before him for judgment?
A. [Pause] If you said, “He will separate the believers from the unbelievers, putting his sheep on his right and the goats on his left,” you are correct.
2. What blessing will Jesus give to the people whom he called his sheep at the judgment?
A. [Pause] If you answered that Jesus said, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you,” you are right.
3. What did Jesus say was the final place of the wicked after their judgment?
A. [Pause] If you answered that Jesus said, “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, prepared for the devil and his angels,” you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn the story so you can tell it from memory to someone else. After telling the story, ask this question, “What are you doing today to demonstrate that you have a heart changed by Jesus?” You must be careful to emphasize that good works and care for other believers comes from a changed heart, not from a desire to *earn* God’s favor.