

Judgment Day

Matthew 16:24-28

²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Remember those verses because they’re going to come around again someplace else this morning!

²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds. ²⁸ “Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

Compare with the opening of Matthew 25 judgment. Then compare with Revelation 20 and other great white throne statements.

Matthew 25:31

“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

Take a look at the parallels:

Matthew 16:27	Matthew 25:31
Son of Man	Son of Man
Going to come in the glory of His Father	Comes in His glory
With His angels	And all the angels with Him
Will then repay every man	He will sit on His glorious throne
According to his deeds	Matthew 25:32-46

Let’s read through Matthew 25 so you can see that the judgment is according to deeds:

Matthew 25:31-46

³² All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; ³³ and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. ³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ 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; ³⁶ naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? ³⁸ And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹ When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰ The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’

⁴¹ “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴² for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ ⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ ⁴⁶ These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

When we look at Matthew 25, there is a great judgment of two groups of people: the sheep and the goats. But there is a third group in Matthew 25 interacting with the sheep and the goats. That group called, “these brothers of mine.”

Who are they?

Well, a comparison of Matthew 25 and Matthew 10 tells us. Here is what we’re looking for:

- Hungry and thirsty → Food and drink
- A stranger → Invited in
- Naked (in need) → Clothed (provided for)
- Sick or in prison → Came to visit

Matthew 10:1-42

¹ Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. ² Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him. ⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; ⁶ but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.

⁹ Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, ¹⁰ or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; **for the worker is worthy of his support.** *[Provided for]* ¹¹ And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and **stay at his house until you leave that city.** *[Invited in]* ¹² As you enter the house, give it your greeting. ¹³ If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace. ¹⁴ Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. ¹⁵ Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.

¹⁶ “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷ But beware of men, **for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues;** ¹⁸ and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. *[Sick or in prison – came to visit]* ²⁰ For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. ²¹ “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ²² You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.

Scripture testifies that the apostles suffered greatly in the first century after the ascension of Jesus. It wasn't until after the ascension of Jesus, though, that they were handed over to the courts and scourged in their synagogues and put in prison. But it did happen during the first century after the ascension of Jesus. So it is clear that Jesus has the period of time after His ascension in mind here. Now look at what He says in the next verse:

²³ “But whenever they persecute you [apostles] in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes.

This demands that the fulfillment of this passage takes place in the first century. Jesus twelve apostles are not still going through the cities of Israel. Therefore, unless Jesus made a mistake, His coming took place while they were still going through the cities of Israel.

²⁴ “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!

²⁶ “Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. ²⁸ Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

³² “Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. ³³ But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

That sounds like Matthew 25 – Jesus punishes or rewards those who encounter His apostles according to how they treat His apostles because how they treat His apostles is synonymous with how they treat Jesus!

³⁴ “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶ and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household. ³⁷ “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

That’s exactly what Jesus will say in Matthew 16, which we read this morning! That was the context where Jesus said that some of His disciples would see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom! So we’re being consistent here. We’re keeping all of these teachings of Jesus together and seeing He is teaching about the same events throughout all of them.

What we’re seeing is that Jesus told His apostles that they were to travel through the cities of Israel with the Gospel.

During their travels, there will be some people who would visit them in prison, provide for them when they are in need, invite them in for shelter, and give them food and water. These are the sheep. On the other hand, there will be some people who would not visit them in prison, would not provide for them when they are in need, would not invite them in for shelter, and would not give them food and water. These are the goats.

And however the sheep and the goats treat “these brothers of Jesus,” that would be the determining factor for how they would be judged. In the end, the actions of the sheep and the goats demonstrate whether or not they were willing to receive Jesus by faith.

Look at what Jesus says in the very next verse:

⁴⁰ **“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.**

This is exactly what Jesus taught in Matthew 25 – if they do these things for His disciples, they do it for Him.

Now there is one more thing that Jesus taught in Matthew 25 that we haven’t seen yet in Matthew 10 – Food and drink. Let’s keep reading.

⁴¹ He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. ⁴² And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even **a cup of cold water to drink** [*Food and drink*], truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

And there it is. So everything Jesus taught in Matthew 25 he taught first in Matthew 10 so that nobody would be confused as to who "these brothers of mine" are. Yet many people today completely ignore the context and think that the judgement of Matthew 25 is still in our future. But this is IMPOSSIBLE! All of the apostles are dead!

The great judgement of the sheep and the goats is a covenantal judgement upon Israel. That's why Jesus said that He would come before His apostles finished going through the cities of Israel.

Israel is being judged for breaking her covenant with God. That's why the great judgment upon Israel is the fall of Jerusalem. If you destroy Israel's Temple, you destroy Israel's home; you destroy their covenant. Without a Temple, you cannot continue in covenant with God.

This language of "eternal punishment" in Matthew 25 is about covenant judgment. It is about permanent the destruction of a nation that God will no longer enter into covenant with. Take a look at an example of this idea in Jude 7:

Jude 7

just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

Are Sodom and Gomorrah still on fire? Well the answer is no. But this language of eternal fire is covenant judgment.

In case you don't like that example, take a look at another example from Isaiah 34 regarding Edom:

Isaiah 34:5-10

⁵ For My sword is satiated in heaven, Behold it shall descend for judgment upon Edom And upon the people whom I have devoted to destruction. ⁶ The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, It is sated with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats, With the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah And a great slaughter in the land of Edom. ⁷ Wild oxen will also fall with them And young bulls with strong ones; Thus their land will be soaked with blood, And their dust become greasy with fat. ⁸ For the Lord has a day of vengeance, A year of recompense for the cause of Zion. ⁹ Its streams will be turned into pitch, And its loose earth into brimstone, And its land will become burning pitch. ¹⁰ It will not be quenched night or day; Its smoke will go up forever. From generation to generation it will be desolate; None will pass through it forever and ever.

Edom's fire is not still burning today. Smoke is not still going up. The idea behind this language is that their covenant with God is over. They will never have a covenant relationship with God again. But the opposite is true as well. Those who are righteous will have an eternal covenant with God that will never end.

And how does one become righteous? By receiving Jesus, the very thing Jesus taught in Matthew 25 and every else in Scripture was necessary in order to enter into eternal life.

In the first century, that was directly related to how Israel received the apostles because they were still living in a transitional period where the Old Covenant was still in effect. But that judgement is over. Israel, as a geographical nation, will never again have a covenant relationship with God.

But Israel, as a spiritual nation, will forever have a covenant relationship with God. And who is this Spiritual Israel today? It is the church.

Galatians 3:29

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Let me now deal with a question that you might still be asking:

Alan, how is this possible? Matthew 16 said that Christ would judge "every man" according to his deeds. And Matthew 25 said that "all the nations" would be judged.

Before I answer that, let me make this worse first. Paul also makes the following statements:

Romans 14:10-12

¹⁰ But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

¹¹ For it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God.” ¹² So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

Philippians 2:9-11

⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Paul Is quoting from Isaiah 45. Let’s see if Isaiah 45 is talking about every person who will ever live or not. We’ll just start in verse 22:

Isaiah 45:22-25

²² “Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other. ²³ “I have sworn by Myself, The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness And will not turn back, That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance. ²⁴ “They will say of Me, ‘Only in the Lord are righteousness and strength.’ Men will come to Him, And all who were angry at Him will be put to shame. ²⁵ “In the Lord all **the offspring of Israel** Will be justified and will glory.”

The context is talking about Israel. “They will say of Me.” Who is they? “They” is every knee that will be bow and every tongue that will confess. So who is doing to the bowing and the confessing? It is those who believe that “Only in the Lord are righteousness and strength.” Well who are they? It is the offspring of Israel in the Lord that will be justified and will glory.

Let me show you that statements like “every tongue and every knee and every man and all nations” cannot be talking about every person who has ever existed.

Deuteronomy 2:25

This very day I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on all the nations under heaven. They will hear reports of you and will tremble and be in anguish because of you."

Here, He's talking to Israel. The nations today don't presently have the terror of Israel.

Deuteronomy 29:24

All the nations will ask: "Why has the LORD done this to this land? Why this fierce, burning anger?"

Have all the nations today asked this?

1 Chronicles 14:17

So David's fame spread throughout every land, and the LORD made all the nations fear him.

Do Africa and Ethiopia and Zimbabwe fear David today? No, because contextually, "all the nations" means the nations at that time.

Judges 21:10-11

¹⁰ And the congregation sent 12,000 of the valiant warriors there, and commanded them, saying, "Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the little ones. ¹¹ This is the thing that you shall do: you shall utterly destroy every man and every woman who has lain with a man."

Is "every man" here about every person on the planet who will ever exist? Of course not. We know that. And frankly, I'm guessing everyone of you think it's ridiculous that anyone would think otherwise.

My point is that just because a text reads "every man," it does not mean something universal. It always has a context. And the context of Matthew 16 and Matthew 25 is Israel in the first century. This is a covenantal judgment. And yes, every man in covenant Israel would be judged.

Likewise, every knee bowing and every knee confessing is about Old Covenant Israel. Some would bow gladly, some would be forced to bow. But if we simply compare Scripture with Scripture, there is absolutely no reason to take these words out of context and assume that “every knee and every tongue and every man and every nation” means that this judgement must take place in our future. But there is ample evidence to demonstrate that all of this refers to the covenant judgment upon Old Covenant Israel so that we can have eternal life today in the New Covenant as Spiritual Israel.

Will there still be a judgment in our future? Not the way most people think. The great white throne judgment is a covenant judgment that took place in the first century. It is not a global destruction of the planet and there won't be an eternally long line where you wait for God to open a book and publicly declare all of your sins before everyone.

But it appears to me that the Scriptures do teach that if you don't not submit to Jesus and receive Him by faith in this life, then you will follow the judgment of Israel in the sense that you will lose any possible of a covenant relationship with God forever.

I get this from 1 Peter 4:17-18. Peter is writing in the first century regarding the judgment of Israel, the household of God, that was about to take place via the destruction of Jerusalem. This is what Peter said about that:

1 Peter 4:17-18

¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?

The answer is that they will be judged even worse than Israel because there is no excuse for refusing to bow the knee to Jesus. He has proven Himself by destroying Jerusalem. He will not allow sin to go unpunished. So you can either accept His sacrifice for your sin. Or you can suffer for your own sin. The choice is yours.

Acts 17:30-31

³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”