

Are You a Sheep or a Goat?

Matthew 25:32: (NASB) *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.*



Jesus was a master story teller. He knew how to keep people's attention while teaching important and difficult things by using very commonplace subjects like farming, fishing, servants and weddings. Most of the time the majority of his audience did not fully understand his lessons and Jesus actually wanted it that way. Today we will look at the parable of the sheep and the goats and see who Jesus is talking about and what time period he is talking about. Are sheep good and goats bad?

Does this parable apply to everyone right now?

This parable has a *very specific application* for its primary lesson, though we can all certainly learn and apply its principles anytime.



After Jesus' prophecy about his return (in Matthew 24), Matthew 25 begins with a parable:

Matthew 25:1-2: (NASB) ¹*Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ²Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent.*

This story is directed to Jesus' true followers about being prepared for the coming of the bridegroom - the return of Jesus.

Lesson: Watch and wait in a prepared spiritual state.

Jesus then goes directly into another parable:

Matthew 25:14-15: (NASB) ¹⁴*For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. ¹⁵To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.*

This story builds upon the foundation of the last one - not only must true Christians watch and wait in a prepared state, they must work hard at the opportunities in the work of the Gospel that they are given.

Lesson: Use that which you are given as a bondservant of Christ or lose it!

What do these two opening parables of Matthew 25 have in common?

- They are for true Christians only;
- the preparation and the work of the Gospel are at stake;
- Jesus is returning to judge each effort; and
- there is a potential for great loss!

These prepare us for the next parable Jesus teaches: The sheep and the goats!

Matthew 25:31-32: (NASB) 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. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him; and he will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;*

Differences from the first two parables in this chapter:

- *When the Son of Man comes in his glory....*The previous parables were in *preparation* for (before) Jesus' return, but this one is as a *result* of his return. Timing is important.
- His "angels" are the true Church - they are with him. Those followers were being prepared in the previous two parables so that they can do this job in the third parable.
- *All the nations* are involved. The time period is during the Day of Judgment.

So this is a whole different story, applied in a whole different way, applied in a whole different time. To get the main lesson, we have to know how it all fits together.

Why sheep and why goats?

 Why separate sheep and goats, realdiscoveries.org

- *What happens when you put sheep and goats together? Jesus' audience readily understood the need for separating the two. In dry lands like Israel, goats and sheep often graze together during the day because green pasture is sparse. At nightfall, when the shepherd brought the sheep and goats to their place of rest, he separated them into two groups. Goats by temperament are aggressive, domineering, restless and territorial. They butt heads with their horns whenever they think someone is intruding on their space.*

(Source: Forerunner, November 1994 by Mike Ford)
Goats on the Left

What is it about goats that causes God to use them in such a negative light? Goats have many admirable qualities. They are intelligent, sensitive, playful, quick to respond to individual attention and affection. Sounds good, right?...



An early text that puts the two together:

Exodus 12:4-5: (NASB) *⁴Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. ⁵Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats.*

Why could it be from the sheep or the goats? This is more of a thought question, but *perhaps* it gives us a sense that Jesus, represented by the Passover lamb, would ultimately represent ALL. Even though the goats ended up in a bad state, he still represented them.

...But wait, there is much more! Goats are capricious. They are impulsive and unpredictable, devious and contrary. When they are grazing, it is not unusual to see several with their heads through a fence, straining to reach the grass that is always greener on the other side!If they are not poking their heads through fences, they may be standing on their hind legs, stretching for those tender leaves just out of reach. Goats are never content with what they have...



Goats are shown here according to their true nature:

Zechariah 10:1-3: (KJV) *¹Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field. ²For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd. ³Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.*

...They are experts in opening gates and squeezing through small gaps because they hate to be confined. Fences that will handle sheep, cattle, and horses will not hold goats. They will work tirelessly to spring themselves from any situation they deem inhibiting.

By nature, goats have a headstrong nature that is not inclined to follow the shepherd. That characteristic becomes very important in our parable's lesson. This is not a moldable characteristic.

Now, let's talk about sheep:

(Source: gospelcentric.org) For descriptions that accompany these traits see CQ Rewind Bonus Material!

1. Sheep are foolish
2. Sheep are slow to learn
3. Sheep are unattractive
4. Sheep are demanding
5. Sheep are stubborn
6. Sheep are strong
7. Sheep are straying
8. Sheep are unpredictable
9. Sheep are copycats
10. Sheep are restless
11. Sheep are dependent
12. Sheep are the same everywhere



But sheep can be taught and led! Even though they can be stubborn, they can be directed and molded.

The imagery of sheep and goats provides a good picture for us.

Sheep are also defenseless and insecure; it is said a sheep will not lie down to sleep unless it feels safe. It is the shepherd's job to make sure the sheep's environment is such that it makes them feel secure. What a good picture if we are to be a sheep of Christ's. We can rest in him.

For example:

Psalms 23:1-3: (NASB) ¹*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. ³He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.*

What happens to these sheep and goats?

All are judged according to the exact same standards for each class. To understand the standard by which they are judged we have to go back to the parable...

Matthew 25:35-40: (NASB) 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; ³⁶naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me. ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when did we see you hungry, and feed you, or thirsty, and give you something to drink? ³⁸And when did we see you a stranger, and invite you in, or naked, and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick, or in prison, and come to you? ⁴⁰The 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.*

The standard of judgment discussed here is in relation to the observations made and actions taken by the sheep.

Remember...when does this parable take place? Although the principles of righteousness apply *now*, the context is actually at the *end* of the Day of Judgment. It is a judgment in relation to all nations. Generally we think of "sheep" as a metaphor for the followers of Christ. But this is talking about all nations potentially being sheep, also. We will talk about this shortly.

Judgment's standard will be perfect justice:

Romans 2:3-10: (NASB) ³*But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?*

We need to make sure we are not passing judgment on others while we are guilty of the same activity. Often we are harshest on those who remind us of ourselves. We need to look closely at ourselves in the mirror.

God displays a vast tolerance as His plan unfolds. We should not interpret that as weakness. It is a patient approach that allows perfect justice to unfold.

⁵*But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶who will render to each person according to his deeds:*

God's tolerance does NOT overlook accountability. It simply prepares us for it. We do not "get away" with anything as our "true colors" come out. It all catches up with us, for good or for bad.

The sheep class was doing good things as a part of their lives. When Jesus recognized it in the parable, they hadn't even realized they were doing them. That was just their sheep-like nature. They were being themselves and it was a blessing.

If our true colors right now are not so good, we can start working on that right now. Don't wait...we want to mold our characters in a God-honoring way.

⁷to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; ⁸but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. ⁹There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, ¹⁰but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

There is a difference in where they end up. One is going to be blessed because they have already been proven, and the other is going to a situation of judgment and trial so that they can be proven. They will be proven good as the Parable of the Sheep and Goats tells us. All nations have an opportunity for glory, honor and peace. This is the final judgment, everyone is included and there could be a good end. But one will first reap what one sows.

Judgment will be based fully upon one's own actions:

Jeremiah 31:27-30: (NASB) ²⁷Behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and with the seed of beast. ²⁸As I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to overthrow, to destroy and to bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, declares the LORD. ²⁹In those days they will not say again, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. ³⁰But everyone will die for his own iniquity; each man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge.

Everyone will be accountable for what they specifically do. Personal responsibility! These will be judged by the things they do or do not do. This is not about the judgment of the true followers of Jesus, this is about the judgment of "everybody else" after they are resurrected and have had the opportunity to learn righteousness.

The good news is there will be no place to hide!

What personal actions separate the sheep from the goats?

It all comes down to what you do, driven by what your heart and mind dictate!

Back to the Parable:

Matthew 25:41-45: (NASB) ⁴¹Then 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; ⁴²for I was **hungry**, and you gave me nothing to eat; I was **thirsty**, and you gave me nothing to drink; ⁴³I 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. ⁴⁴Then 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? ⁴⁵Then 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.

"True colors" sounds like our natural inherited nature, meaning this is what I was born with and it can't be changed. But we all have to realize we have to change and we *can* change. We have to be patient and put the effort forward so that our true colors become more Christ-like.

The problem is with the colors we paint with today - we are *born in sin and shapen in iniquity*. The palette of paints we are using is defective. In the Day of Judgment, that is erased by the ransom of Jesus. The true colors are the potential in each person, what they can become. Even if you have lived a life that has not produced goodness, those may not necessarily be your true colors. We live in a sinful world but let's not make excuses - we can choose to weed those things out both now and during the final testing period.

Ultimately, the actions that provoke judgment are all tied to the following statement from Jesus:

Mark 12:28-31: (NASB) ²⁸*One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, What commandment is the foremost of all?* ²⁹*Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'* ³¹*The second is this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.*

Matthew 25:41-45 The GOATS Failed These Standards	Mark 12:28-31 The Most Important Commandments	The SHEEP's Attitude...
I was HUNGRY and you gave me nothing to eat; I was THIRSTY and you gave me nothing to drink	Love the Lord your God with all your HEART	HEART opened to the immediate physical needs of those around you
I was a STRANGER and you did not invite me in	Love the Lord your God with all your MIND	MIND opened to the immediate human need for compassion of those who are in unfamiliar circumstances
NAKED and you did not clothe me	Love the Lord your God with all your SOUL	SOUL opened to the tragedies that expose others to the harsh elements
SICK and IN PRISON and you did not visit me	Love the Lord your God with all your STRENGTH	STRENGTH opened to the long-term healing and freedom needs of those who mightily struggle

So the judgment of the final days is what a person *does* as well as what a person *does not* do, in line with what Jesus pronounced were the greatest Commandments in Matthew 12:28-31.

What is the end result of this judgment?

Life or death - THIS IS THE FINAL JUDGMENT!

Let's continue with the parable:

Matthew 25:34: (NASB) *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.*

What a beautiful promise to those that proved themselves worthy to be in the "sheep" class! It is a promise to all nations, so even if a person is not a devout Christian now, there is still hope of life!

But what happened to the "goats," who did not change their ways to conform to God's program of love, even though they were given every opportunity to repent and live?

Matthew 25:45-46: (NASB) 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.*

We believe *eternal punishment* here means destruction without hope of life.

The end result will be the fulfillment of this prophecy:

Isaiah 26:9: *With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.*

Clearly this has not yet come true, but we know that it will in the future. It ties in with the purpose of the Day of Judgment. (We recommend listening to our program called, "What Happens on Judgment Day?" that aired April 21, 2013.)

The purpose of the Day of Judgment is to establish righteousness in the earth. Once established, it will be thoroughly tested to prove those who stand for God for all of eternity (the sheep) and those who don't (the goats).

Revelation 20:7-9: (NASB) ⁷*When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, ⁸and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. ⁹And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.*

This is highly symbolic language, but the key thing it tells us is the timeframe. It is at the end of the thousand years, after resurrection and at the end of the great Day of Judgment. There are those that still choose evil - their true colors stayed the same after being given a choice to follow righteousness. Every human being has that potential because of Jesus' ransom.

Their end result here? They are devoured by fire. They are not tormented, but instead they are destroyed; they exist no more.

This follows a scriptural theme:

Genesis 7:21-23: (NASB) ²¹All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; ²²of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. ²³Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark.

The result of the Flood was that they died. The picture language used is *perished and blotted out*.

2 Peter 3:5-7: (NASB) ⁵For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, ⁶through which **the world at that time was destroyed**, being flooded with water. ⁷But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

The world was destroyed with water! Of course the physical earth still existed, but the whole order of things changed. Peter here is saying that the "heavens and earth" met their end by water and in the same way will meet their end by (likely metaphorical) fire, and what happens to the ungodly (goats) - destruction.

Psalms 37:20: (NASB) *But the wicked will perish; and the enemies of the LORD will be like the glory of the pastures, they vanish—like smoke they vanish away.*

The wicked perish, like smoke they vanish away.

The final judgment is either LIFE or ABSENCE OF LIFE, or death. Life is a miraculous gift, conditional on obedience and love.

So, how do the two true flocks of Jesus' sheep fare in the end?

First there is the Christian Flock, called the Little Flock:

John 10:14-15: (NASB) ¹⁴I am the good shepherd, and I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵even as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

These are the Christians trying to be footstep followers of Jesus now by living a life of sacrifice.

And here is their reward:

Luke 12:32: (NASB) *Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.*

Second, here is the worldly flock who will come into the fold later:

John 10:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear my voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life so that I may take it again.



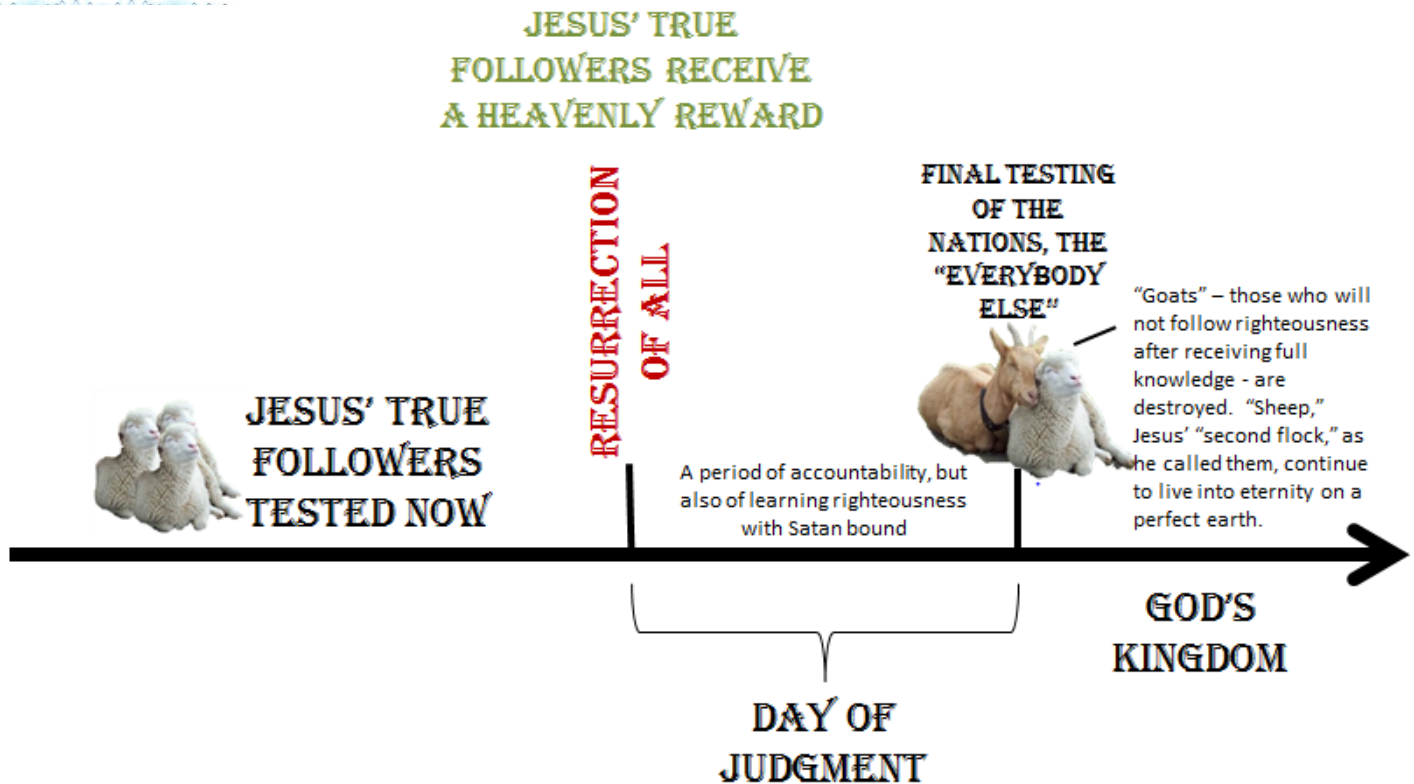
God will do for his earthly creation exactly what He wants them to do for each other. This is brought out in an important prophecy in Ezekiel about the end of this final judgment period. Here David represents Jesus.

Ezekiel 34:23-31: (NASB) ²³Then I will set over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. ²⁴And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken. ²⁵I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. ²⁶I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing. ²⁷Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its increase, and they will be secure on their land. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. ²⁸They will no longer be a prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them; but they will live securely, and no one will make them afraid. ²⁹I will establish for them a renowned planting place, and they will not again be victims of famine in the land, and they will not endure the insults of the nations anymore. ³⁰Then they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people, declares the Lord GOD. ³¹**As for you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God," declares the Lord GOD.**

Matthew 25:41-45 The GOATS Failed These Standards	Ezekiel 34:23-31 What God Does for His Sheep as the Example	The SHEEP's Attitude...what they do to others as God illustrates to them
I was HUNGRY and you gave me nothing to eat; I was THIRSTY and you gave me nothing to drink	The tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its increase; showers of blessings. God feeds the earth.	HEART opened to the immediate physical needs of those around you
I was a STRANGER and you did not invite me in	They will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them. They will no longer be strangers in the land.	MIND opened to the immediate human need for compassion of those who are in unfamiliar circumstances
NAKED and you did not clothe me	God eliminates harmful beasts so that they may live securely	SOUL opened to the tragedies that exposed others to the harsh elements
SICK and IN PRISON and you did not visit me	He has broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them.	STRENGTH opened to the long-term healing and freedom needs of those who mightily struggle



This illustration of the sheep and goats is happening to all nations. The really good news of this is that all nations will have an opportunity to show their true colors. They will have an opportunity to throw away the paints that they used in this world and take up the paints of goodness and righteousness because Jesus paid the ransom for them like he paid for you and me. They get a new set of paints to paint their lives following after God through Jesus. They are the "other flock." So take great heart and start working *right now* on becoming godly in your character and your thoughts.



*Are you a sheep or a goat?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

*And now even more to think about...
only in the **Full Edition** of CQ Rewind!*

First, the sheep and the goats account in its entirety:

Matthew 25:31-46: (NASB) ³¹But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him; and he will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; ³³and he will put the sheep on his right, and the goats on the left. ³⁴Then 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. ³⁵For 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; ³⁶naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me. ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry, and feed you, or thirsty, and give you something to drink?' ³⁸And when did we see you a stranger, and invite you in, or naked, and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick, or in prison, and come to you? ⁴⁰The 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. ⁴¹Then 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; ⁴²for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; ⁴³I 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. ⁴⁴Then 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? ⁴⁵Then 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. ⁴⁶These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Next, articles that we quoted from:

(Source: Goats on the Left by Mike Ford, *Forerunner*, November 1994)

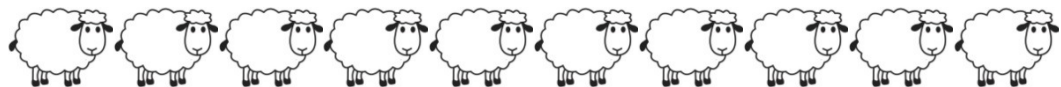
.....God uses the goat to symbolize evil in numerous instances in the Bible. In Zechariah 10:3 (KJV) He says He will punish the goats. In Matthew 25:31-46 Christ's Parable of the Sheep and the Goats tells of his return and of judging the nations. In verse 33 he says, "And he [Christ] will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." The sheep are then given eternal life, but the goats are cast into the Lake of Fire. It should be abundantly clear from this section of Scripture that we want the attributes of sheep and not those of goats!

What is it about goats that causes God to use them in such a negative light? Goats have many admirable qualities. They are intelligent, sensitive, playful, quick to respond to individual attention and affection. Sounds good, right?

But wait, there is much more! Goats are capricious. They are impulsive and unpredictable, devious and contrary. When they are grazing, it is not unusual to see several with their heads through a fence, straining to reach the grass that is always greener on the other side! Folklore says that goats have slit eyes to enable them to see around corners where the grazing is better. If they are not poking their heads through fences, they may be standing on their hind legs, stretching for those tender leaves just out of reach. Goats are never content with what they have.

They are experts in opening gates and squeezing through small gaps because they hate to be confined. Fences that will handle sheep, cattle, and horses will not hold goats. They will work tirelessly to spring themselves from any situation they deem inhibiting.

Consequently, goats are not very good followers. "Gregarious behavior" is a term that refers to the flocking or herding instinct which is found strongly in sheep, cattle, and horses. Again, this quality is rather weak in goats; they prefer leading or going off on their own. Meat packers use this instinct in sheep and goats to their advantage. They will train an old goat, appropriately called a "Judas," to lead sheep to the pens for slaughter. A well-trained Judas will lead group after group of sheep to the slaughter all day long. Consider that!



(Source: www.gospelcentric.org)

1. Sheep are foolish

I don't know what sheep would score in an animal IQ, but I think they would be close to the bottom of the scale. They seem to only know how to do one thing well - eat grass (and produce more grass-eating sheep).

It's possible to know little, yet not be foolish; but not if you are a sheep. They are so irrational. You watch them as they pause in front of a stream. They know they can't jump it or swim it. So what do they do? They jump in anyway!

2. Sheep are slow to learn

Every shepherd will tell you countless stories about how sheep can be taught a very

painful lesson, and yet fail to learn the painful lesson. A sheep may get caught in barbed wire trying to break through a fence. And the next day it will try it again, and again...

3. Sheep are unattractive

Some animals may not be very bright, but make up for it with grace and elegance in their movement and actions. But sheep are so awkward, so lacking in agility and dignity. Although some shepherds may tell you differently, to most outside observers sheep are dirty, smelly, and ugly.

4. Sheep are demanding

Ever watch a lamb suckle its mother? Almost as soon as it is born, it is violently sucking its mother's udders. And that insatiable demand never leaves them. They demand grass, grass, and more grass; day after day, and night after night. (Do they ever sleep?) And when snow is on the ground, they aggressively demand food from the shepherd. Just listen to them bleat if their troughs are empty even for a short time. And watch the life-or-death stampede when the shepherd appears.

5. Sheep are stubborn

Have you ever tried to move a sheep? It's like trying to move an elephant. Ever watch a shepherd try to maneuver a sheep into a fold or a dip-tank? It's like trying to wrestle with a devil. Half a dozen sheep invaded my garden once. I thought it would be easy to hustle them out the wide gate again. But it was as if an electric shield (visible only to sheep) stretched across the gap. I could get them to go anywhere and everywhere, but through that gate.

6. Sheep are strong

I've watched the most macho of men beaten by sheep. You look at their skinny "arms" and "legs" and think "easy." Next thing you are flat on your back or face down in the dirt. I've been flattened by running sheep. It was like getting run over by a tank.

7. Sheep are straying

Perhaps the main reason Scripture chooses sheep to characterize us, more than any other animal, is because of its well-deserved reputation for straying ([Isaiah 53:6](#)) and getting lost ([Luke 15:3](#)). So many times I was out in the middle of nowhere when I would come across a sheep - miles from anyone and anything - and totally unconcerned. I would look up on a cliff and there was a sheep out on a lethal ledge. Other times, when fishing miles from anywhere, I would come across ditches and bogs with the decaying remains of a wandering sheep, and I'd think, "How did that get out here?"

8. Sheep are unpredictable

If you travel along the roads of the Scottish Highlands you will soon learn to expect the unexpected. You look ahead on a quiet piece of long straight road with no cars. You spy sheep in the distance on the side of the road. They watch you driving along towards them. Hundreds of yards pass. You are almost level. Well, they aren't going to cross the road now, are they? Screeeeeeech! Well, what do you know!

9. Sheep are copycats

OK, bit of a mix of metaphors here, but I think you get my point. When one sheep decides to start running, they all decide to start running. If you were able to ask one, "Why did you start running?" it would say, "Well, because he started running." The next would say the same. And the next one. And when you got to the last sheep he would just say, "I dunno."

10. Sheep are restless

It always puzzled me how little sheep slept. I would be in my study at midnight, look out, and there they were still eating grass. And no matter what time I arose in the morning - 3am or 5am - they would still be eating grass. Other times, there would be a beautiful summer evening when everything was still and quiet and you would come across a field full of sprinting sheep (usually due to the Scottish midges - look it up on Google). I once heard that for sheep to lie down they need freedom from fear, freedom from friction with others, freedom from hunger, and freedom from pests and parasites. From what I've seen, that combination is very rare.

11. Sheep are dependent

Some animals can cope and thrive without any close supervision. Not sheep. They are very dependent on their shepherd. They cannot live without him (or her).

12. Sheep are the same everywhere

I've been in a number of different countries in my life and enjoyed the many cultural differences. But sheep are the one constant - in character if not in looks. The American sheep is the same as the African sheep (see 1-11 above), which is the same as the Asian sheep, which is the same as...

Finally, here a few scriptures that reaffirm the justice and clarity of the Judgment Day process:

Jesus is the cornerstone, by which all will be measured:

Isaiah 28:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed. ¹⁷I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the level; Then hail will sweep away the refuge of lies and the waters will overflow the secret place.

The return of Christ brings the long-awaited resurrection and judgment - these are the results of Jesus paying the ransom price, once and for all:

Hebrews 9:24-28: (NASB) ²⁴For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; ²⁵nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. ²⁷And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, ²⁸so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

The Day of Judgment is the most righteous day that the world will have ever seen up to that point:

Acts 17:29-31: (NASB) ²⁹Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. ³⁰Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, ³¹because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising him from the dead.