



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](#): 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](#): 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](#): 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.*

Goats are shown here according to their true nature: [Zechariah 10:1-3](#): 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 Full Edition Bonus Material! **Sheep are foolish, slow to learn, unattractive,**

demanding, stubborn, strong, straying, unpredictable, copycats, restless, dependent, 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

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) 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.

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: 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. 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.

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: 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

"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

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: 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 25:41-45 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

Matthew 25:45-46: We believe *eternal punishment* here means destruction without hope of life.

The end result will be the fulfillment of this prophecy: Isaiah 26:9: 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: 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: The result of the Flood was that they died. The picture language used is *perished and blotted out*. 2 Peter 3:5-7: (NASB) 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: 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: 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 Second, here is the worldly flock who will come into the fold later: John 10:16-17



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

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...!*

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

JESUS' TRUE FOLLOWERS RECEIVE A HEAVENLY REWARD

