

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. 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.”

I want to frame our thoughts this morning with some current events that will work as a comparison to the gravity of the events in Matthew 25 that we'll consider.

The oxford dictionary chooses a word of the year annually. A new word

or one that isn't brand new, but has come into large usage and is fashionable in the media and has meaning for us in modern times.

Their choice this year is one that got bandied around on both sides of the election. The word is post-truth. Post-truth.

And the usage is that we are post post-modern, post modern is over and now we've graduated to an era where truth just doesn't mean anything.

It's as if gravity quit working and we're just floating. Truth no longer matters. Truth is no longer the gold standard that grounds things. We're floating in a sea of relativism and the waves of emotion wash us here and there, but truth has nothing, or at least very little to do with anything now.

Post-truth. No right, no wrong. No boys, no girls. No integrity, no character. Our 24-7 news media is the wind that blows us here and there, but not anywhere based in truth. It's all emotion based. That's where this world is at. By comparison, listen to where God is at, because He never changes.

Daniel 7:13 *“I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.*

14*“And to Him was given dominion,
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and men of every language
Might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;
And His kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed.*

Did you feel gravity just suck you back to a firm grasp on reality. There is truth. And it is grave. And we need to divorce ourselves from this

foolish world and listen to it.

This is now the final section in the discourse with the disciples on the Mount of Olives. He is still answering their questions about the Kingdom of God.

They thought it would happen immediately. But He has told them that Jerusalem is going to be trodden down. The temple is going to be destroyed. Made into a waste place. And worst of all, He's leaving them.

They are distraught. And the questions pour out of the deepest place in their hearts. No Jerusalem. No temple. No King. No kingdom on Davids throne. How is this going to work. What will that look like, and when will it happen?

“Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” Mt. 24:3

And Jesus launches into a detailed eschatological discussion that we have looked at for about 2 months now.

He showed them dioramas, pictures of details that will happen during the season just before He returns. We saw 4 of those, and they were cataclysmic. As the end approaches, the horrors increase until at the end, if Jesus hadn't returned, all flesh would have perished on the earth.

Then He shifts gears and gives 3 parables of warning. I saw those as directly applicable for the church. They all 3 picture within the stated church, or Kingdom if you will, a dichotomy of the saved and unsaved dwelling together in this huge common umbrella of christendom.

The saved are the ready, and the unsaved go into perdition. In each case the warning is the same. Be ready because you do not know the day or the hour at which your Lord will return.

But this is slightly different. Now we've crossed over the line of the seven remaining years of Jewish history, the time of Jacobs trouble, the

tribulation period, and the King has arrived. On earth. Physically present.

Now we stand at the crossroads in the Lord's prayer; Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

The King has arrived. His kingdom has indeed come. And what we see here are the first acts of the King which is answering the request of the prayer we've been praying for 20 centuries. His will shall be done on earth. It all starts right here!

There was an interesting news piece this week. Pew research, in trying to look at things in more meaningful and easier to comprehend ways asks, If the U.S. had 100 people: How would American religious affiliations break out. Here's how it breaks down;

71 Christians. 2 Jews. 1 Muslim. 1 Hindu. 1 Buddhist. 2 'other' faith, and 22 nothing at all.

Wow! Strength in numbers? M-m-maybe not. Breaking down the group they call christians we have; 25 evangelical protestant, 15 mainline protestant, 6 historically black protestant, 21 catholics, 2 mormons, 2 'other christians'.

My question, and my point in sharing this is; How many of the 71 christians are "born again?" Truly born again. Because as we've seen in all of the warnings about being ready, the born again ones will go into the Kingdom, and the other 'christians', won't.

I confess to you some pessimism and I hope I'm wrong. My guess based on evidence of a changed life and fruitfulness brought into the equation by the Holy Spirit for the Glory of God is somewhere between 2 and 4 of the 71 christians, actually leaving in the rapture and enjoying the Kingdom of God.

That's the generous number. I fear it may be smaller than that.

That brings us to this portion of scripture which is different. The time is

different. This judgement is not a picture of the church. The time frame here is well defined.

What is similar is that some will go into the kingdom, and some will not.

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.

This coming is not the rapture. This is the second coming in great glory. This is the day of the Lord spoken of in the old testament. This is Jesus coming to depose Satan and annihilate the beast, the antichrist, and the false prophet.

This world was lost in Genesis 3 by sin and at this time spoken of in our passage this morning, it is regained. *But when the Son of Man comes in His glory,*

This is a glorious entrance. This is the answer to the cry of Isaiah.

*64:1 Oh, that You would rend the heavens and come down,
That the mountains might quake at Your presence—*

*2 As fire kindles the brushwood, as fire causes water to boil—
To make Your name known to Your adversaries,
That the nations may tremble at Your presence!*

*3 When You did awesome things which we did not expect,
You came down, the mountains quaked at Your presence.*

In His glorious second coming, Jesus will rend the heavens and the glory of God will shine in the darkness as He comes with all His angels.

and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

Who are these that are with Him at His coming? Where are we in all of this?

The word used here for angels is the usual one we would always understand as angels. Ministering spirits. So where are we?

The obvious place to go is Revelation 19 and 20 and we've looked at that several times. So I thought I would show you some other places that answer this question. Where is the church when Jesus returns to earth from heaven in glory? Listen first to Enoch, just seven generations from Adam himself.

Jude 14 It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

That passage is also about judgement at the arrival of the King in His kingdom. But it doesn't say angels. It says many thousands of His holy ones. Now listen to Colossians 3 and we'll see who the holy ones are.

Colossians 3: 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

We will be revealed with Christ when He comes in His glory. Paul mentions this again in Romans and the context is that the world itself has been subjected to futility and death because of the fall. Sin affected the very planet. It was cast into the bondage of corruption and death. It is waiting for this day also.

Romans 8 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

The earth waits for this day when we will be revealed in glory with Jesus!

Not to be left out, John the apostle also looks for this day. The day of the Lord.

1 John 3:1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

We will be with Him. And His angels. A great charge out of heaven. And He will sit on His throne in Jerusalem.

We don't have a blow by blow itinerary for all of this. He comes. There is war. There is a blood bath. He conquers. I don't know how long that takes, and it isn't important for what the Lord Jesus is talking about here.

After the conquering when He sets up His Kingdom and His government, then . . . *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.*

He tells us just enough here to raise a million questions, but it isn't His time to give us all of the answers. Never-the-less, you will be amazed at how much is here for us.

All the nations (ethnos - ethnicities) will be gathered before Him;

These are the multitudes, peoples from every language and corner of the earth. These are folks who have survived the tribulation cataclysms. Indeed, 1/2 the worlds population will perish during the tribulation

period. These are the survivors. Do they go into the Kingdom of God? Or not? That's where we're at.

I want to take a few moments and re-affirm to you that everything we're looking at here is interpreted literally. Not the sheep and goats, of course, that is a metaphor, but what is being described is a literal time frame and a literal Kingdom and a literal judgement.

And that's important because we live in a time period where those of us who take a very literal view are probably grossly outnumbered. A large segment of chritendom would say this is all spiritualized speak.

The church is spiritual israel and the kingdom is a quasi mushy idea that somehow through the influence of the church the world just gets better and better and better and all these dream like things are realized in a spiritual plane. But none of this is literal. We call these folk **a-millennials**. "Ah" meaning no, and millennial meaning no literal millennial reign of Christ.

Jeremiah 31:35 Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: 36 "If this fixed order departs From before Me," declares the LORD, "Then the offspring of Israel also will cease From being a nation before Me forever." 37 Thus says the LORD, "If the heavens above can be measured And the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel For all that they have done," declares the LORD....

Could He say it any plainer and with any more force. God is not going to abandon His distinct promises to Israel. And yet these folks want to spiritualize a quarter of their Bibles away and make it mean nothing. Make God a liar who cannot be trusted to mean what He says.

Listen to Revelation 20 talk about this exact time frame that Jesus is speaking of here in Matthew 25.

Rev. 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the

key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, **until the thousand years were completed**; after these things he must be released for a short time.

4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Christ will reign on this earth for 1000 years. Nothing makes sense without that. Paul's reference to the very world itself groaning, waiting for the revealing of the son's of God, why? Because the earth looks forward to this period when sin is vanquished and Satan is locked up.

It's almost like 7 is the number of completion for God, and the world has suffered under Satan's reign of sin and terror for 6,000 years, and now it looks forward to a sabbath rest. A 1000 year reign of righteousness with Jesus on the throne in Jerusalem.

All of the promises, fulfilled. All of the prophecy's, complete.

At that time, the time frame we're looking at this morning in Matthew 25, the church which has been raptured and which has become the very bride of Christ at the wedding feast in heaven, will be at this revealing of the Kingdom. We'll be there, and Paul makes it clear that we'll have a role in judging these nations.

Then in Revelation 20 we just saw another group who's going to be

resurrected and join in. Who are they. The tribulation saints who were martyred for the name and testimony of Jesus will be there. And I believe there's one other obvious group who will be there.

The one's to whom the Kingdom of God was promised in the first place. Righteous Israel. Jews who were God's chosen elect who lived righteous lives, who were in Abraham's bosom, waiting for this day.

Daniel 12 alludes to just such a thing; *1“Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. 2“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. 3“Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. 4“But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.”*

5Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing, one on this bank of the river and the other on that bank of the river. 6And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “How long will it be until the end of these wonders?” 7 I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed. 8As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, “My lord, what will be the outcome of these events?” 9He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time. 10“Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand. 11“From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. 12“How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days! 13“But as for you, go your way to the

end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age.”

The Kingdom is on David's throne. The kingdom and the King were promised to the jews. We just get to come along as the bride. And that brings us full circle back to our passage in Matthew. What happens to those who have survived the tribulation period and are alive on earth when Christ arrives to set up his Kingdom?

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; 33and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

This was a common picture at this time. A shepherd might combine sheep and goats during the day as they feed and water, but at night, they don't do well together. Goats are nervous and rambunctious. Sheep are docile. So the shepherd would divide them up. Sheep over here. Goats over there.

Listen to the prophet Joel, looking at this time; Joel 3:13

Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. 14

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

If you ever heard some Billy Graham style evangelist sing songing about the "valley of decision" that's not what this picture is. This is God, deciding who will enter His kingdom, and who will not. This decision is about ultimate final judgement. God is the one who is deciding, not the sheep and the goats.

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.

Stop just there for a moment. Don't worry, the rest is wordy, but doesn't require too much more interpretation. But just here we need to stop and

consider some words that ring with cause and effect. Cause and effect.

When you first read through this parable of sheep and goats your natural reaction is; this sounds like works salvation. Give someone a cup of water. Go to heaven.

That would be inconsistent with the clear teaching of salvation by faith alone through grace alone. But when we look carefully at these words we see that even here, salvation is the cause, and the good deeds from the heart, done for the Kingdom of God, are the effect.

Come, you who are blessed of My Father, Salvation comes from above. The grace, the blessedness is from the Father.

inherit the kingdom prepared for you; Inherit is a word that denotes a receiving of something you did not generate. It's a family thing. You inherit this Kingdom, you don't earn it by your good works. You are adopted by a very rich Father who is lavishing His wealth on you!

from the foundation of the world. And here we see election. Our salvation wasn't us choosing God, it was Him choosing us before the foundation of the world. Salvation is none of us and all of God.

Cause and effect. God lavishes the wealth of His redemption out of this world on His elect, and the response can only be good works that reflect His glory.

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.' 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.'

Don't forget the context here. We're talking about tribulation saints. The antichrist and false prophet have quite literally been chasing these folks all over the earth trying to wipe them out.

Homeless, fleeing, we see the pathetic situation of refugees fleeing for their lives with nothing even now across the oceans. Read through that list again and it becomes alive with meaning for folks in that situation. Christians during the tribulation period will be fleeing for their very lives, living as refugees, homeless, without country or family to help.

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.' That is a description of refugees of this world, fleeing from city to city to save their very skin.

Consider again the words of Jesus in Matthew 10 and see if they don't apply to these tribulation saints who are refugees, from the entire earth, fleeing for their lives.

Mt. 10:21 Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rise against their parents and have them put to death. 22 You will be hated by everyone on account of My name, but the one who perseveres to the end will be saved. 23 When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next. Truly I tell you, you will not reach all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes....

And while they are fleeing, others who have the light of life breathing inside them will come to them with tiny bits of rescue and help. A bit of food. A cup of water. A warm corner to sleep a few hours in. Here, take my cloak, you'll be cold on your journey. Here, let me clean and bandage that open wound before it gets infected. Tomorrow I'll take a bit of food to the ones who have been captured and are in prison. Pray I don't get seized and have to join them. That's how it will go.

Picture a world gone mad with a one world government and a one world religion. The beast, the antichrist is the head of the one world government and the false prophet directs world wide worship of that

person as god.

Anyone who does not do that must die. And so it goes. The true saints running for their lives. Trying to stay one step ahead of the men with the swords who will chop off your head. Any help rendered will be remembered by Jesus Himself on this day.

And Jesus says, on that day, come, friend, into My Kingdom. For you did these things for my brethren, and thus you did them for 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; partly 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.”

During the tribulation period, a delusion will fall on the people of this world like a cloud. We ask about Hitler's germany, how could so many people have gone along with what was happening, and it's like a microcosm of what the whole world will be like in the tribulation period.

Finally, a strong man, a saviour, who can put the world systems back together and restore peace. He brings all the world together in a common government. A nervous peace, like feet made of clay and iron that do not mix. Never-the-less, a peace happens and the people of this world who do not know the true God will be deluded.

Who is like the beast! Who comes back from the dead. Who is restored to life after a mortal wound and brings the whole world together in a common peace. Who can fight against that!

And anyone who does not bow down to that, must be pursued and persecuted and killed. Those rebels that will not worship the beast must be hunted down and killed. If you won't worship the beast you must go to prison, and when the prisons are full, just chop off their heads. Millions of them. World order depends on it.

It isn't hard to take a very literal view of this. We watch the news and it gets easier all the time.

Christians, real ones, are cast out. Hunted down. Imprisoned. Killed. Paul's words in Romans 8 come to life as never before. *35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written: "- For Your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us....*

It has been true through all the centuries of the church, but during the tribulation, these words will just crackle with electricity. *For Your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered*

This isn't some mythology. This is pre-written history. These things are about to take place.

We enjoy our warm houses. Our tables set for thanksgiving. Our soft beds and our hot showers. Our general health and wellbeing. But how close do we hold all those things.

Even now there are christians in other lands that need us to be generous with all of our current blessing. In the future, even more so. The salvation is not from good works. But cause and effect. True salvation causes us to do good works for those who have less than we do.

In our passage this morning we see finality. Those who go into the Kingdom, are there with Christ, blessed of the Father, forever.

Those who do not go into the Kingdom perish in eternal judgement. Eternal horrors the likes of which we do not wish to even think very long.

Salvation is never of works. It is the gift of God to those who are blessed of the Father. But judgement on the other hand is always related to works.