

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The Son of Man will come. That is what the Lord Himself teaches. Although it seems at times as if it will never happen, the Lord does not say “If the Son of Man comes”, He says “When the Son of Man comes.” He will come. And with Him comes the resurrection of all flesh, and the final judgment. The Son of Man will come.

And when He comes, He will come in glory. All heaven and earth will observe His coming. All men, whether they believed in this lifetime or not, will confess that He is Lord, and they will worship Him. This time He will not come lowly. He will not come in humiliation. He will not come veiled in poverty.

He will not come stealing into a city He does not rule hidden in a virgin’s womb. He will not come to be falsely accused, to suffer or to die. His suffering is complete – it is finished. This time when He comes to His own, they will receive Him. He will be received by all as King and Lord.

He has defeated sin and death. He has descended into hell to proclaim victory of satan. And He has ascended into heaven, to the throne rightly His from before all things, from where He rules heaven and earth. Now His rule is unseen. Now His Church is hidden. Now men reject Him, and reject and ridicule His Word.

These are the marks of this time of grace, this time in which men can be converted, in which men can come to saving faith in the only True God. But this time will end – abruptly, suddenly, when it is least expected, as men carry on in their secular ways.

Then, soon, in an instant He will come again to judge the nations. And St. Matthew records for you the Lord’s testimony, His prophecy, concerning that judgment. All nations will be gathered before Him. Every man will stand before Him. But they will not be gathered as one. Although they seemed to be one on earth, although they looked the same, although many claimed to be Christians, although many said “Lord, Lord”, what is invisible now will be clearly seen then.

All men will be separated. There will be two kinds of men, and nothing in between: those who worked the works of faith on His right, those who lived lives of unbelief on His left. And this is more than a description of what will take place, it is in fact quite personal. For you will stand before God. He will place you either on the left or on the right.

Truth be told, while to men the sheep and goats appear to be one flock, God sees the difference now. And externally, the suffering and tribulation inside the flock, the strife and contention, the false doctrine and outward practice that expresses it, bear witness to the presence of goats among the sheep.

Consider the Apostle’s description of the faithful of Thessalonica: their faith grew exceedingly, their love for one another abounded, they were patient in persecution and faithful in tribulation. So ought every congregation, every member, be. In the True Church there is no division, there are no worship wars, there is no battle for the Bible, there are no sectarian Bible translations, there are no congregational divisions, there are no competing seminaries, there is no district or

synodical or denominational dissension. These are all marks of the Church Militant, signs that the flock is not yet pure, clear evidence that the sheep and goats are still mixed.

But that mixing will come to an end. And the Lord Himself describes that separation, the final judgment, that you hear in His own Words what will soon take place. He will come in glory, with His holy angels, the nations will be gathered, and as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats He will divide the faithful from the unbelievers.

Faith cannot be seen by men. That is why the flock appears to be one now. And in keeping the Eighth Commandment, the visible church puts the best construction on the confession of men. Men who confess themselves to be Christians, we accept as Christians, unless their public doctrine or practice reveals them to be heretics.

But as the Lord knows now, as He sees the hearts of men now, as He sees your heart now, soon all men will know who the sheep are, and who the goats are. So the Lord who taught "...by their fruits you shall know them" identifies those fruits, works of mercy and love, the love of God reflected to neighbor: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing those who have need, visiting the sick and the imprisoned. And yet simply doing these things does not earn salvation. Unbelievers also do such works.

On this the Scriptures are clear. No one is made a sheep by their works. It is faith that saves, faith that makes one a true Christian. And while we are saved by faith alone, that faith is never alone. Faith has fruits, visible fruits, fruits seen by men, fruits known by God.

Those fruit are absent in the goats, in those gathered on the left, in those for whom everlasting punishment is prepared. But just as the believers are not saved by what they have done, so too the eternal condemnation of those on the Lord's left is not simply a consequence of what they failed to do.

That failure is a consequence of the absence of saving faith, the rejection of the Word of God, the rejection of Christ Jesus, the Center and Substance of all Scripture, the Center and Object of saving faith. And where there is no faith, there can be no fruits, even when the outward behavior is indistinguishable from true Christians.

Faith does not count up good works. Faith gives all glory to God. Faith accomplishes the will of God by His power, by the working of His Spirit. So faith answers "When did we do these things?" Unbelief is egocentric. So those on the Lord's left ask "When did we not do these things?" But the final judgment is not a negotiation.

When the Lord comes, there will be no more conversion, no more evangelism, no more changing of men's hearts. It will be too late. He will simply pronounce judgment: "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world", or "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

Soon, as the Prophet Daniel foretells, the Son of Man will soon come with the clouds of heaven. But that same Son comes now in His Mysteries. He comes in Word and Water, in Bread and Wine. He who came through the Virgin's womb, He who endured shame and death, He who

was crucified for your sins, He who was sealed into that dark stone tomb, He comes to you now that you be saved, that you believe in Him. He comes to bring you the forgiveness He won, that you be forgiven now, that you be given faith, faith that bear fruit while the flock is still mixed.

The Lord works through means. He who came hidden in Mary's womb comes hidden in earthly elements. But although you cannot see Him now, still He comes now in power, power to convert, power to save, power to forgive, power to give life, power to give hope and comfort by the work of the Holy Spirit.

He comes to you, that you hear, believe and confess. He comes to you that, as the Apostle writes, you have patience and faith in all the persecutions and tribulations that you endure, that you may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God. And to you, you who believe, you who are the true sheep of the only True Shepherd, to you the God that Daniel saw will give you rest, rest with the Apostles, the Prophets, the Evangelists, and with the whole Church of God, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire.

And when He comes, as it does now, as it has done from the foundation of the world, the judgment He endured for you on the cross will vindicate you. In Him you are declared innocent now, by grace, through faith in Him. And so will it be on the Last Day. When He comes, in that Day, you will be glorified in Him. And He will say to you, you who He places at His right, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

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