

BIBLE SERIES: "EXPLORING OUR AWESOME BIBLE"

by Mario Seiglie

NT-35 1-13-2013

MATTHEW 25 – 26 PARABLE OF THE SHEEP & GOATS; ANOINTING; JUDAS



Jesus now gives the *third* illustration of His coming judgment and how people will be judged in the Parable of the Sheep and Goats. Since most don't have an understanding of God's Plan of Salvation, this is one of the *most* misinterpreted and misapplied parts of Scripture.

Christ said, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to *one of the least of these My brethren*, you did it to Me.' Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

"Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to *one of the least of these*, you did not do it to Me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Mt. 25:31-46).

This parable has been used to say only doing good works toward the poor and those imprisoned is all you need to do to enter the kingdom of God. This interpretation is based on an *erroneous*

assumption that Christ is referring to the poor and the incarcerated in general.

First, this is not the meaning Christ uses in the Gospels for the term "brethren" or *adelphoi* in the Greek. He consistently describes His "brethren" as those who obey Him and His Father's commands. Notice Matthew 12:47-49, "Then one said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers [*adelphoi*] are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.' But He answered and said to the one who told Him, 'Who is My mother and who are My brothers [*adelphoi*]?' And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers [*adelphoi*]! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother [*adelphos*] and sister and mother.'"

Second, Jesus referred to His little ones in Mt. 10:40-42, "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me... And whoever gives one of these *little ones* only a cup of cold *water* in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward." He was not trying to judge or convert the majority of the world, as He said in John 17:9, "For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them...I pray for them. I *do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me*, for they are Yours."

Third, the two previous parables are referring to *His disciples*, and in this context, so is this one. It deals with *how* the world will be judged, when called, according to its treatment of His disciples.

Fourth, several commentaries bring this same point out. *Expositors Commentary* says, "By far the best interpretation is that Jesus' 'brothers' *are his disciples* (Mt. 12:48-49; 28:10; cf. 23:8). The fate of the nations will be determined by *how they respond to Jesus' followers*, who, 'missionaries' or not, are charged with spreading the gospel and do so in the face of hunger, thirst, illness, and imprisonment. Good deeds done to Jesus' followers, even the least of them, are not only works of compassion and morality but reflect where people stand in relation to the kingdom and to Jesus himself. *Jesus identifies himself with the fate of his followers* and makes compassion for them equivalent to compassion for Himself."

The *Evangelical Commentary* adds: "The parable of the sheep and the goats *continues* the theme of judgment displayed in chapters 23-25. A comparison of Jesus' usage of brother (Gk. *adelphos*) elsewhere in Matthew (esp. 12:46-50; 23:8; 28:8-20) indicates that here He is speaking *not of the poor and oppressed generally, but specifically of His disciples*. "The nations are distinguished from the brothers (v. 40) and are judged according to the way they have treated the brothers. A comparison with Mt. 10:40-42 reveals that *they respond to the brothers in their capacity as Jesus' representatives*. The sheep are those who receive the gospel of the kingdom and its bearers and the goats are those who reject them. The brothers experience the deprivations reflected in 25:35-36 because of their allegiance to Jesus (cf. 5:10-12; 10:16-23; 24:9-14).

"Like the two preceding parables, and those of 13:24-50, this one depicts the division of the last judgment (v. 32). Palestinian shepherds commonly herded sheep and goats together but separated them at day's end (sheep, with their heavy wool, needed less shelter than goats). As animals of greater value [and more humble], the sheep represent the redeemed (see also Ez. 20:37-38).

"Those from among the nations who receive Jesus' emissaries will surely be rewarded with salvation (25:34; cf. 10:41-42). That the kingdom is 'prepared...since the creation' underscores the certainty of the reward and offers hope amidst present trials. Those who fail to minister to Jesus' followers, and thereby demonstrate their hostility or indifference toward the message they bear and the Christ they represent, will suffer eternal loss. Jesus' compassion for the materially and physically needy is everywhere evident. Yet his chief concern is man's relationship to God, not his environment; and his singular mission is to save from sins (1:21), not from poverty or hunger. This mission and responses to it are in view as Jesus concludes this final discourse (chaps. 23-25)."

Fifth, we can understand this parable by knowing the world's unconverted are not being spiritually judged just now. They will have an opportunity to be judged by how they treat the Christ's 'brethren.' The judgment of Christ begins

when He returns, but is not over until all the resurrections have taken place (1 Cor. 15:22-28). Only those incorrigibly wicked, (the goats) who rejected Christ and His teachers, will be cast into the lake of fire, along with Satan and His angels. So the end of this judgment scene best fits the final judgment, after all the resurrections are over, and the conclusive separation then takes place.

After these explanations of end time events and the coming judgment, Jesus then warns His disciples about the coming tragic events during the Passover: "Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, that He said to His disciples, 'You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.' Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him. But they said, 'Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people' (Mt. 26:1-5).

In 1990, three bone boxes in a tomb were found with the family name, "Caiaphas," and one had the name "Joseph, son of Caiaphas."

Barclay confirms Caiaphas was the high priest at this time. He notes, "Joseph Caiaphas, to give him his full name, was High Priest. We know very little about him but we do know one most suggestive fact. In the old days the office of High Priest had been hereditary and had been for life; but when the Romans took over in Palestine, High Priests came and went in rapid series, for the Romans erected and deposed High Priests to suit their own purposes. Between 37 B.C. and A.D. 67, when the last was appointed before the destruction of the Temple, there were no fewer than twenty-eight High Priests. The suggestive thing is that Caiaphas was High Priest from A.D. 18 to A.D. 36. This was an extraordinarily long time for a High Priest to last, and Caiaphas must have brought the technique of co-operating with the Romans to a fine art. And therein precisely there lay his problem. The one thing the Romans would not stand was civil disorder. Let there be any rioting and certainly Caiaphas would lose his position. At the Passover time the atmosphere in Jerusalem was always explosive. The city was packed tight with people."

Then Jesus and His disciples go to Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem, and there He is

anointed by a woman. "And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured it on His head as He sat at the table. But when His disciples saw *it*, they were indignant, saying, 'Why this waste? For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor.' But when Jesus was aware of it, He said to them, 'Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always. For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her'" (Mt. 26:6-13).

In the same account, John tells us it was Mary of Bethany that poured the alabaster perfume on Him out of gratefulness. It made sense, of course, for Jesus had resurrected her brother only a few days before (John 11:2; 12:3). John also reveals it was Judas Iscariot who initiated the complaint, but it was because he had been robbing the till and could have then gotten more (John 12:4-6).

For Judas, this was the last straw, and he decided to betray Jesus. We read, "Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?' And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him" (Mt. 26:14-16). Zech. 11:12-13 says He would be sold for this amount.

The Believer's Bible Commentary says, "He was one of the disciples who had lived with the Lord Jesus, traveled with Him, seen His miracles, heard His incomparable teaching, and witnessed the miracle of a sinless life—one whom Jesus could call 'my familiar friend...who ate my bread' (Ps. 41:9)—it was that one who lifted up his heel against the Son of God. The priests paid him on the spot—the contemptible total of about fifteen dollars. It is striking to note the contrast between the woman who anointed Jesus at Simon's home and Judas. She valued the Savior highly. Judas valued Him lightly. And so the one who had received nothing but kindness from Jesus went out to arrange his part of the dreadful bargain."

Why did Judas do this? Certainly, money was one of the reasons, for he coveted money and robbed of the funds that came in.

Barclay notes, "There can be only three real reasons why Judas betrayed Jesus. All other suggestions are variations of these three.

(1.) It may have been because of avarice. According to Matthew and Mark it was immediately after the anointing at Bethany that Judas struck his dreadful bargain; and when John tells his story of that event, he says that Judas made his protest against the anointing because he was a thief and pilfered from the money that was in the box...If avarice was the cause of his act of treachery, it is the most terrible example in history of the depths which love of money can reach.

(2.) It may have been because of bitter hatred, based on complete disillusionment. The Jews always had their dream of power; therefore they had their extreme nationalists who were prepared to go to any lengths of murder and violence to drive the Romans from Palestine. These nationalists were called the Sicarii, the dagger-bearers, because they followed a deliberate policy of assassination. It may be that Judas was such, and that he had looked on Jesus as the divinely sent leader, who, with his miraculous powers, could lead the great rebellion. He may have seen that Jesus had deliberately taken another way, the way that led to a cross. And in his bitter disappointment, Judas' devotion may have turned, first to disillusionment, and then to a hatred which drove him to seek the death of the man from whom he had expected so much. Judas may have hated Jesus because he was not the Christ he wished him to be.

(3.) It may be that Judas never intended Jesus to die...He may have thought that Jesus was proceeding far too slowly; and he may have wished for nothing else than to force his hand.

"However we look at it, the tragedy of Judas is that he refused to accept Jesus as He was and tried to make Him what he wanted Him to be. It is not Jesus who can be changed by us, but we who must be changed by Jesus. We can never use Him for our purposes; we must submit to be used for His. The tragedy of Judas is that of a man who thought he knew better than God."

Next time, we will study Jesus' last Passover.