

“Who are the sheep and the goats?” in Matthew 25:31-46? And who are “my brethren”? Let’s look at the text and then see what others say:

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

32 And before him shall be gathered all **nations**: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his **sheep** from the **goats**:

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: (and so on...you know the passage.)

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these **my brethren**, ye have done it unto me.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

The result is very drastic, and final! Therefore, we really need to know who these sheep and goats are, and if any of us might be included in either one! My primary Bible is my standard Scofield Reference Edition of 1967, KJV, and therefore, my primary commentary with its footnotes. Of course I am aware that the editors base all of their footnotes on their Dispensational Theology, like nearly every other commentary. Also, they do not “Think Jewish or Hebraic.” Here is what it says on

pages 1036 & 7:

“This judgment of individual Gentiles ... is ‘when the Son of man shall come in his glory,’ i.e., at the second coming of Christ after the tribulation. The subjects of this judgment are ‘all nations,’ i.e. all Gentiles (Gk *ethne*) then living on earth. Three classes of individuals are mentioned: (1) sheep, saved Gentiles; (2) goats, unsaved Gentiles; and (3) brethren, the people of Israel. The scene is on earth; no books are opened; it deals with the living rather than with those translated or raised from the dead. The test of this judgment is the treatment by individual Gentiles of those whom

Christ calls ‘my brethren,’ living in the preceding tribulation period when Israel is fearfully persecuted... The good works mentioned are the proof but not the ground of faith and salvation... The sheep are Gentiles saved on earth during the period between the rapture and Christ’s second coming to the earth.”

Believe it or not, the above explanation is the most complete, short and concise, of the dozen or so commentaries I had available! I do not agree with it, however, as you will soon see. Others “waxed eloquent” with many words that said nothing of value, some had a few sentences, like the Jewish New Testament Commentary: (Notice that Stern did not offer his own ideas at all.)

“31-46 Some take this to refer to the judgment of the Gentile nations on the basis of how they treat these brothers of mine (vv. 39, 45), the Jews; compare Genesis 12:3. Others take it to speak of the judgment of those who have not heard the Gospel on the basis of how they treat believers in Yeshua; compare 10:40-42, Ro 8:29.”

Is this passage so simple that a few remarks are sufficient, or is it so difficult that commentators do not want to tackle it seriously but instead “wax eloquent” with devotional thoughts that do nothing to explain the passage?

As mentioned above, this judgment is serious business! The meaning seems hidden to all these commentators for two big reasons: 1) they start with the supposition that the account deals with Christians and the Church, and 2) they explain on the basis of the English text. One source did mention the Greek for two words, but then went ahead with the usual explanation as in Scofield! So lets start

# sheep & Goats

By Roger Walkwitz

our own research.

First of all, we know that there is no "church" in the Bible. See my article, "When Did The Church Begin?" ([www.Walkwitz.com/Roger](http://www.Walkwitz.com/Roger)) There are also no "Christians" in the book of Matthew. That term did not come into being until much later, in Acts 11. So we are learning to "Think Jewish, think Hebraic," to think like they thought when the text was written, not think "church" in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as Replacement Theology has trained nearly every church person to think, thinking Applications only; never mind any valid Interpretation upon which any valid application is made!

Second, notice the two animals, sheep and goats. Do these ever refer to Gentiles, whether righteous or not? When symbols are used in the Bible, such as animals, the meaning must be kept consistent throughout the Scriptures. Sheep and goats are clean animals, which refer to Jewish people. Wild animals, such as lions, bears, leopards are unclean animals, which refer to Gentiles. Any exception is clear in the text, such as the ram and he-goat (Medo-Persia and Greece) in Daniel 8, and Yeshua as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, in Revelation. Therefore, the sheep are righteous Jews; the goats are unrighteous Jews. The First Resurrection has just occurred, so I believe this includes all Jews from time past. Only the sheep Jews enter the Kingdom, a warning to Messianic, Orthodox, Hassidic and other Jews who claim a "connection" with YHVH! Is "Torah living" their walk or is it just talk, and are they genuine Family members? Behavior by some of these in Israel, against Jewish Believers in Yeshua, illustrate their heart as to who they really are.

What is the basis of their judgment? We know from all of Scripture that there is no salvation by works. We also learn that if salvation is genuine, the lifestyle of the saved person will be according to Torah (Eph 2:10). So Scofield is correct on this point, "The good works mentioned are the proof but not the ground of faith and salvation." The sheep and goat Jews are being judged based on the proof of their faith and salvation, proof of their membership in The Family of God, by their adherence to Torah in their relationship to each other, fulfilling in details the command to "love your neighbor as yourself."

The sheep Jews are commended for their Torah living by being a blessing to the least of the Jews, the brethren of the Son of man. They also "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Inheritance indicates a family connection, whether

by birth or adoption, so we conclude that the sheep Jews had been "born from Above," real members of God's Family. We also understand that the Kingdom was prepared for Israel, not for Gentiles who oppose Israel.

The goat Jews are cursed because they gave ample evidence of not being born from Above, by not loving their neighbor Jews, the brethren of the Son of man. They disdained Torah living. They lived for self, did not believe God and did not live for Him. Therefore, they are consigned to "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," into "everlasting punishment" rather than that Kingdom that had been prepared for them, a prominent theme throughout the Tanach (O.T.) that they ignored. What a foolish loss!

What about the nations, the Gentiles? The text clearly says, "And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another...." Surely the standard interpretations above must be valid, as them surely refers back to nations? In English, yes, but not in Greek! Sorry to disappoint anyone. Are these nations, these Gentiles, to be also judged? **No!** They are not at this time in this judgment. So what are they doing? They are sitting in the grandstand, watching how this new King rules, watching how He judges those who had the Truth, the Torah and all the Tanakh. The nations are going to be ruled with a rod of iron by this King, so the King is now, in His kindness, giving these unsaved Gentiles their first illustrated teaching of how the Kingdom is going to function. This passage has nothing to do with Christians or the Church, but everything to do with those Jews who will enter the Kingdom for the next 1,000 years, and those Jews who will be excluded permanently, and the teaching this judgment gives to all the unsaved Gentiles watching, who will also enter the Kingdom.

The second error mentioned above was 2) they explain on the basis of the English text. Is there something in the Greek text that validates our explanation above? Yes, there is. An early lesson in Greek teaches that every pronoun agrees with its antecedent noun in gender and number. A pronoun can have masculine, feminine, or neuter endings so that the author can choose the correct ending to make it very specific as to which noun his pronoun refers back to. The word for nations, *ethne*, is neuter plural. The word for them is *autous*, masculine plural. Therefore, *autous* or them does not and cannot refer back to nations or Gentiles. Them refers to Israel, the Jewish people, therefore, the sheep and the goats.

There is a saying in Judaism that "every Jew has a place in the world to come," the idea being that every born Jew has nothing to be concerned about since he will be in the Kingdom regardless of how he treats Torah, or Yeshua for that matter. Maybe not all will agree with this, but it is common. For instance, I have a local Jewish business friend that was telling me how some of her Christian customers are always trying to convert her. One day she shut them up by telling them, "I do not need your religion. I am a Jew." Sad to say, this passage in Matthew clearly shows that every Jew does NOT have a place in the world to come if the Kingdom is being referred to.

Now it may be true that some day all of us Gentiles, saved and unsaved, might be judged on the basis of our treatment of the Jewish people, based on Genesis 12:3, as Stern mentions, even though this is not the intent of this Matthew passage. In this regard I was reading a paper on "Messianic Judaism," written as an Appendix to the book *Divine Call, Prophetic Destiny*. Regarding the role of Gentile believers in the Messianic congregations, it says:

"I have collected information from the larger Messianic Jewish sources to further clarify the varied visions for Messianic Judaism. One thing you will see in common, however, is this: Messianic Judaism is *of Jews, by Jews, and for Jews*. **Gentile believers play a secondary, supportive role, if they have a place at all.**" (Bold print in original.)

In defining itself, the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA) had this to say about non-Jewish believers: "By joining the MJAA as an Associate Member... you support this Jewish revival with your prayers but you also recognize the need to do your part financially."

So I am sure that most in Messianic Judaism will prefer the traditional "from English only" interpretation of this Matthew passage, that Gentiles will be judged on how they treat and support financially the Jewish people, especially those in Messianic Judaism.

As an Application, each Believer, Jew and non-Jew should be eager to implement both of the 2 great commandments, to **love God** with all one's heart, mind, soul, and strength and to **love one's neighbor** as himself, in Truth, not for fear of any judgment, but because perfect love casts out fear. And if Messianic Jews (not all) do not want to accept us non-Jews as equals, that is their problem, not ours! Asia Pacific Messianic Fellowship makes no distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, because God does not. We are together equally in the Good Olive Tree.