

Matthew 25: 31-46 New International Version (NIV)

The Sheep and the Goats Higher Consciousness vs Lower Consciousness Living

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation 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 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit 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 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

40 "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire 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, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

44 "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'



45 "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

New International Version (NIV)

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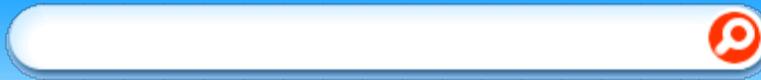
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◀ Matthew 25:32 ▶

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

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EXPOSITORY (ENGLISH BIBLE)

EXEGETICAL (ORIGINAL LANGUAGES)

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

(32) **Before him shall be gathered all nations.**—Better, *all the nations*, or even better, perhaps, *all the Gentiles*. The word is that which, when used, as here, with the article, marks out, with scarcely an exception, the heathen nations of the world as distinguished from God's people Israel (as, *e.g.*, in [Romans 15:11-12](#); [Ephesians 2:11](#)). The word, thus taken, serves as the key to the distinctive teaching that follows. We have had in this chapter, (1) in the Wise and Foolish Virgins, the law of judgment for all members of the Church of Christ; (2) in the Talents, that for all who hold any office or ministry in the Church: now we have (3) the law by which those shall be judged who have lived and died as heathens, not knowing the name of Christ, and knowing God only as revealed in Nature or in the law written in their hearts. Every stage in

Expositor's Greek Testament

[Matthew 25:32](#). πάντα τὰ ἔθνη naturally suggests the heathen peoples as distinct from Jews, though the latter may be included, notwithstanding the fact that in one respect their judgment day had already come ([Matthew 24:15-22](#)).—ἀφοριεῖ: first a process of separation as in the interpretation of the parable of the tares ([Matthew 13:40](#)).—τά πρόβατα ἀπὸ τῶν ἐρίφων, the sheep from the young goats. Sheep and goats, though feeding together under the care of the same shepherd, seem of their own accord to separate into two companies. Tristram and Furrer bear witness to this.

Bengel's Gnomon

[Matthew 25:32](#). Ἀφοριεῖ, *he shall separate*) The separation will not be complete before then.

what follows confirms this interpretation.

As a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.—Elsewhere the shepherd's work is the symbol of protective, self-sacrificing love, and, as such, our Lord had emphatically claimed for Himself the title of the Good Shepherd ([John 10:14](#)). Here we are reminded that even the shepherd has at times to execute the sentence of judgment which involves separation. The "right" hand and the "left" are used, according to the laws of what we might almost call a natural symbolism, as indicating respectively good and evil, acceptance and rejection.

Benson Commentary

Matthew 25:32-33. *Before him shall be gathered all nations* — That is, all the individuals of all nations and ages; not only all that are found alive at the time of his appearing, and are changed in a moment, and rendered immortal, that they may be capable of enjoying eternal happiness, or of suffering everlasting misery, but all that had ever lived from the beginning to the end of time. All of every clime, country, and place, great and small, even from the remotest corners of the world. *And he shall separate them one from another* — According to their different characters, (which he most perfectly knows,) with as much ease *as a shepherd divideth his sheep*, which belong to his flock, *from the goats*, which may be mingled with them, and places them in distinct companies. *And he shall set the sheep* — The righteous, whom he will own as such, and who are termed *sheep* on account of their innocence, meekness, and usefulness; *on his right hand* — In token of his favour to them, and of the further honours he purposes to bestow upon them. *And the goats* — That is, the wicked, called goats because of the exorbitancy of their lusts; *on his left* — To intimate his displeasure against them, and their final removal from among his people; nor shall the haughtiest and mightiest sinner be able to resist that appointment by which he is placed in

Pulpit Commentary

Verse 32. - **Shall be gathered** ([Matthew 24:31](#)). The angels shall gather them, the dead being first raised to life. **All (τὰ, the) nations.** Not the heathen only, but all mankind (see preliminary note). The criteria upon which the judgment proceeds, in the following verses, seem to imply that all men have the opportunity of receiving or rejecting the gospel ([Matthew 24:14](#); [Mark 13:10](#); [Romans 11:32](#)). How this can apply to those who died before the incarnation of Christ and the consequent evangelization of the world, we know not, though we may believe that, ere the end comes, Christ will have been preached in every quarter of the globe. That some process of enlightenment goes on in the unseen world we learn from the mysterious passage, [1 Peter 3:18-20](#); but we have no reason to suppose that probation is extended to the other life, or that souls will there have the offer of accepting or repelling the claims of Jesus (but see [Philippians 2:10](#); [1 Peter 4:6](#)). By describing mankind as "all the nations," Christ shows the minute particularity of the judgment, which will enter into distinctions of country, race, etc., and while it is universal will be strictly impartial. He is the Shepherd of all mankind, whether considered as sheep or goats, and can therefore distinguish and class them perfectly. Those who have never heard of Christ (if such there shall be) can be tried only by the standard of natural religion ([Romans 1:20](#)). **Shall separate them** (αὐτοῦς). Individuals of all the nations. Hitherto good and bad had been mingled together, often indistinguishable by man's eye or judgment; now an eternal distinction is made by an unerring hand ([Matthew 13:49](#)). The ideals already found in [Ezekiel 34:17](#), "Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats." **As a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.** The flocks of sheep and goats generally keep together during the day ([Genesis 30:33](#)), but are separated at night or

this situation. "I cannot imagine," says Dr. Doddridge, "a more magnificent image than this; the assembled world distinguished with such unerring penetration, and distributed into two grand classes, with as much ease as sheep and goats are ranged by a shepherd in different companies." The wicked and the godly in this world dwell together in the same kingdoms, cities, churches, families, and are not with certainty distinguishable always one from another: such are the infirmities of saints, such the hypocrisies of sinners, and one event frequently happening to both; but in that day they will be separated and parted for ever: for the Lord both *knows them that are his*, and them that are not, and he can and will separate them: and the separation will be so exact, that the most inconsiderable saint shall not be lost in the crowd of sinners, nor the most plausible sinner hid in the crowd of saints, [Psalm 1:5](#); but every one shall go to his own place. Dr. Whitby thinks, that there is an allusion here to the received custom of the Jews in capital causes, to place them who are to be acquitted on the right hand, in the sanhedrim, and those who were to receive the sentence of condemnation, on the left.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

25:31-46 This is a description of the last judgment. It is as an explanation of the former parables. There is a judgment to come, in which every man shall be sentenced to a state of everlasting happiness, or misery. Christ shall come, not only in the glory of his Father, but in his own glory, as Mediator. The wicked and godly here dwell together, in the same cities, churches, families, and are not always to be known the one from the other; such are the weaknesses of saints, such the hypocrisies of sinners; and death takes both: but in that day they will be parted for ever. Jesus Christ is the great Shepherd; he will shortly distinguish between those that are his, and those that are

when being driven. The Syrian goat is usually black. The Lord delights in employing simple pastoral illustrations in his teaching.

Vincent's Word Studies

All the nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη)

The whole human race; though the word is generally employed in the New Testament to denote Gentiles as distinguished from Jews.

Separate them (αὐτοῦς)

Masculine, while the word nations is neuter. Nations are regarded as gathered collectively; but in contemplating the act of separation the Lord regards the individuals.

The sheep from the goats (or kids, so Rev. in margin)

"The bald division of men into sheep and goats is, in one sense, so easy as not to be worth performing; and in another sense it is so hard as only to be possible for something with supernatural insight" (John Morley, "Voltaire"). Goats are an appropriate figure, because the goat was regarded as a comparatively worthless animal. Hence the point of the elder son's complaint in the parable of the Prodigal: Not so much as a kid ([Luke 15:29](#)). The diminutive (ἐρίφια) expresses contempt.

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not. All other distinctions will be done away; but the great one between saints and sinners, holy and unholy, will remain for ever. The happiness the saints shall possess is very great. It is a kingdom; the most valuable possession on earth; yet this is but a faint resemblance of the blessed state of the saints in heaven. It is a kingdom prepared. The Father provided it for them in the greatness of his wisdom and power; the Son purchased it for them; and the blessed Spirit, in preparing them for the kingdom, is preparing it for them. It is prepared for them: it is in all points adapted to the new nature of a sanctified soul. It is prepared from the foundation of the world. This happiness was for the saints, and they for it, from all eternity. They shall come and inherit it. What we inherit is not got by ourselves. It is God that makes heirs of heaven. We are not to suppose that acts of bounty will entitle to eternal happiness. Good works done for God's sake, through Jesus Christ, are here noticed as marking the character of believers made holy by the Spirit of Christ, and as the effects of grace bestowed on those who do them. The wicked in this world were often called to come to Christ for life and rest, but they turned from his calls; and justly are those bid to depart from Christ, that would not come to him. Condemned sinners will in vain offer excuses. The punishment of the wicked will be an everlasting punishment; their state cannot be altered. Thus life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, are set before us, that we may choose our way, and as our way so shall our end be.

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Barnes' Notes on the Bible

And before him ... - At his coming to judgment the world will be burned up, [2 Peter 3:10](#), [2 Peter 3:12](#); [Revelation 20:11](#). The dead in Christ that is, all true Christians - will be raised up from their graves, [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#). The living will be changed - i. e., will be made like the glorified bodies of those that are raised

from the dead, [1 Corinthians 15:52-54](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#). All the wicked will rise and come forth to judgment, [John 5:28-29](#); [Daniel 12:2](#); [Matthew 13:41-42](#); [Revelation 20:13](#). Then shall the world be judged, the righteous saved, and the wicked punished.

And he shall separate ... - Shall determine respecting their character, and shall appoint them their doom accordingly.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

32. And before him shall be gathered all nations—or, "all the nations." That this should be understood to mean the heathen nations, or all except believers in Christ, will seem amazing to any simple reader. Yet this is the exposition of Olshausen, Stier, Keil, Alford (though latterly with some diffidence), and of a number, though not all, of those who hold that Christ will come the second time before the millennium, and that the saints will be caught up to meet Him in the air before His appearing. Their chief argument is, the impossibility of any that ever knew the Lord Jesus wondering, at the Judgment Day, that they should be thought to have done—or left undone—anything "unto Christ." To that we shall advert when we come to it. But here we may just say, that if this scene does not describe a personal, public, final judgment on men, according to the treatment they have given to Christ—and consequently men within the Christian pale—we shall have to consider again whether our Lord's teaching on the greatest themes of human interest does indeed possess that incomparable simplicity and transparency of meaning which, by universal consent, has been ascribed to it. If it be said, But how can this be the general judgment, if only those within the Christian pale be embraced by it?—we answer, What is here described, as it certainly does not meet the case of all the family of Adam, is of course so far not general. But we have no right to conclude that the

whole "judgment of the great day" will be limited to the point of view here presented. Other explanations will come up in the course of our exposition.

and he shall separate them—now for the first time; the two classes having been mingled all along up to this awful moment.

as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats—(See Eze 34:17).

Matthew Poole's Commentary

See Poole on "[Matthew 25:33](#)".

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

And before him shall be gathered all nations..... That is, all that have professed the Christian religion in all the nations of the world, whether Jews or Gentiles, high or low, rich or poor, wise and foolish, such as have had greater or lesser talents; though it is also true of every individual of mankind of every nation, tribe and family, of every sex, age, and state, that ever has been, is, or will be. Yet Christian professors seem only here intended, as the following distinction of them, their final state, and the reasons of it show. This collection of them before Christ, the righteous judge, will be made by the holy angels, who will come with him for this purpose; and being mighty, as they are, will be able to accomplish great a work; and especially as being under the direction, influence, and authority of so divine, glorious, and illustrious a person, as the son of man will then to all appear to be,

And he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: they shall be gathered before him, as they were together in their visible church state, as being all under a profession of religion; some wise, some foolish virgins; some sheep, and others goats; some industrious, diligent,

faithful, and laborious servants; others wicked, slothful, and unprofitable ones; many of whom pass undistinguished and undiscovered now: but then the judge, who is of quick understanding, will easily discern the one from the other; such as have the oil of grace in the vessels of their hearts, together with their lamps, from such as have only the outward visible lamp of a profession, but destitute of the grace of God; and good and faithful servants, who have made a right use of their gifts, from such who have been negligent, careless, and remiss; and though these have been folded together, sheep and goats, in the sheepfold of the church, where they have all bore the character of the sheep of Christ; yet now when the chief shepherd appears, who knows his own sheep, and calls them by name, he will as easily separate the one from the other, and more so, than any shepherd, among men, can part a flock consisting of sheep and goats. Hypocrites in Zion shall now be no more, nor sinners stand any longer in the congregation of the righteous, nor both together as one body, and on one side in judgment.

Geneva Study Bible

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: