

“Judgment” (St. Matthew 25:31-46)

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For Your Life in Christ the week of Christ the King, the Last Sunday in the Church Year, November 20th, 2011
Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church of Irvine, CA (LC-MS)
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Introduction: There is oftentimes confusion about **what** judgment is and **when** we are judged by God.

- A. The word in Matthew 25 “separate” (aphorizo) is related to “judgment” (krino). These describe a verdict and a division (as between the sheep and the goats). Furthermore, “judgment” may be treated as a synonym for condemnation.
 1. It is therefore correct to say that all Christians will be judged in the sense that a verdict will be pronounced and that they shall be separated from unbelievers.
 2. It is also therefore correct to say that all Christians will **not** be judged as in they will not be condemned.
- B. You can see both things going on in Matthew 25. The judgment scene is a great separation of all people into two groups. Then, there is result of some going into eternal punishment and others into eternal life.
- C. In addition, “judgment” in God’s Word seems to cover past, present, and future. Here is an example describing **present** condition:

John 3:18: “Whoever believes in [Christ] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

1. Notice that this describes a current judgment.
2. Just remember that as long as a person is a alive, it is not too late to come to saving faith!

D. Nevertheless judgment is also treated as a present reality:

John 5:24: “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”

1. For the believer this is exciting!
2. You already have eternal life...this is not a far-off future gift, but a present reality. Eternal life doesn’t begin in heaven some day; it is something you have now through faith in Christ!
3. In this sense, when you have faith in Christ your condemnation has passed! It is NO MORE!

Romans 8:1: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

E. In addition, judgment is described as yet to come, still in our future. For example:

Hebrews 9:27: “And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.”

In the same way, our Gospel today in Matthew chapter 25 describes a FUTURE judgment. So how are we to harmonize past, present, and future judgment?

Part 1: Our past, present and future is bound up in Jesus Christ!

- A. Future judgments are simply confirmations and declarations of the faith we had or did not have while on earth.
- B. That is, future judgment is a like a public declaration of what was already true and judged while you lived on earth.

Illustration: You are guilty of speeding. The police officer cites you for your speeding. Later, you stand before a judge and the judge pronounces a judgment that you will have to go to traffic school and pay \$200.00. The past judgment just between you and the police officer became a matter of public record in court. Both judgments, however, were based on the *same event*. *The judgments overlapped*.

C. *In the same way, God’s judgment upon those with faith in His Son Jesus Christ, in His life, death and resurrection for them is “FORGIVEN!” and in the future it will be **consistent with this forgiveness you currently possess!***

Matthew 25:34: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

Part 2: So Matthew 25 is simply describing the final declaration!

- A. Why His “right” and why “sheep”?
 1. The right is symbolic for sharing authority, inheritance and riches.
 2. Sheep = among other things, these faithfully follow their Shepherd!

John 10:27: “My sheep here my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”

- B. The signs of following sheep!
 1. They “listened” to Christ’s voice means that Christians receive the Word of Christ.
 2. And this is the key: the Holy Spirit working through the Word of Christ creates faith in us.
 3. This faith is living and active by God’s grace in Christ, so Jesus describes our lives in Him:

- #1 We give food to the hungry (v 35).
- #2 We give drink to the thirsty (v 35).
- #3 We give shelter to the stranger (v 35).
- #4 We give clothes to those needing clothing (v 36).
- #5 We care for the sick (v 36).
- #6 We visit those in prison (v 36).

C. How many of these are a “passing grade?” Don’t go there. Instead, go to Christ!

- #1 Christ feeds you His body.
- #2 Christ gives you the drink of His blood.
- #3 Christ shelters you in His Church.
- #4 Christ gives you the clothing of His righteousness.
- #5 Christ comes for you, the sick and heals you from sin and death.
- #6 Christ came to release you from the prison of hopelessness.

D. When this Gospel soaks in, the Lord has a way of taking care of the rest. ***Through the Gospel we know we are loved by God and as a result, we share His love but in such a way that...***

Conclusion: The Sheep in Matthew 25 have Holy Amnesia!

- A. They are all surprised by Jesus’ words: they say “Lord, when?”
- B. Because they didn’t keep track of their good works.
- C. So what do the sheep keep track of? Answer: Their Savior Jesus Christ! They keep on following their Shepherd!
- D. You are watchful and ready for the end simply because you are kept in the Word of Christ. End times mania is characterized by fear and anxiety, but this is not for you.
- E. Instead, rest in the fact that His judgment over you is complete. You are forgiven, you are not condemned, you are covered by His blood and righteousness; and when He comes again He will pronounce your public verdict: you are in Christ, you are forgiven, you are His and He is yours; you are blessed!