

Matthew 25:31-46 The separating shepherd



Whatever you make of this passage, it is one that arouses profound emotions. For some, the call to “feed the hungry” (etc) becomes all-encompassing ... and, if we're not careful, there can lie “the social Gospel” (which is no real Gospel at all!). For others, Jesus' teaching of “eternal destruction” (46) is just too awful to be believed ... and there can be a profound temptation to just excise, in practice, this difficult teaching from the Bible.

But, despite those distinct errors, there is also wonderful encouragement to be found here ... if we are called to the King's right hand.

➤ The judge and the judged

Notice several titles or descriptions here – claims that Jesus now publicly makes for himself: “the Son of man” (31), glorious (31), accompanied by angels (31), “as a shepherd” (32) – the *good* shepherd? – and king (34).

But who are to be judged (32)?

Do you think this is right and fair ... or necessary?

(What are our instincts for *justice*?)

Do you really believe this (Hebrews 4:13)?

What difference would it make (Romans 12:19)?

➤ The sheep and the goats

What differences do you note between the words that the King speaks to these two groups? Notice that they are *not* just polar opposites.

What challenges for our *actions* do you find here?

What challenges for our *beliefs* do you find here?

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