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Series- Putting Feet to Faith:

Becoming a Matthew 25 Church

Part 5- Going Away to Where?

Matthew 25:31-46

We’re all going to die! There. I said it.

When we die, contrary to the opinion and rhetoric of some, that is *not* the end!!!

Hebrews 9: 27 says, *It is appointed for humans to die once but after this the judgement.*

I have been reminding us, throughout this series, that God is not a universalist, putting all humans in the same category or assuring everyone the same end. Look at our text, in verse 46 of Matthew 25. The sheep and the goats, symbols of two kinds of people, go away. However, they don’t go away to the same destination.

There are two final destinations for humans, according to the Bible. Not everyone embraces the Bible as authoritative. If you do, however, there is no gray area here. Some, at their end, will go to everlasting punishment and some will go into eternal life. Technically, all will experience everlasting life. Some will be eternally with God and some will be eternally separated from God.

Cf. Matthew 13:49-50; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9

*The original word translated here as "punishment" means torment or suffering inflicted for crime. The noun is used but in one other place in the New Testament -* [*1 John 4:18*](https://biblehub.com/1_john/4-18.htm)*; "Fear hath 'torment.'" The verb from which the noun is derived is twice used -* [*Acts 4:21*](https://biblehub.com/acts/4-21.htm)*;* [*2 Peter 2:9*](https://biblehub.com/2_peter/2-9.htm)*. In all these places it denotes anguish, suffering, punishment (Barnes’ Notes on the Bible).*

The Bible speaks of heaven as both a singular physical location (where God dwells) and as a plural description of the created order.

Plural:

Psalm 19:1

*The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.*

 Singular

Deuteronomy 26:15

*Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven and bless Your people Israel and the land which You have given us...*

The place of everlasting punishment, in verse 46, is hell.

Hell is the opposite of heaven. Heaven is the place where God dwells and where God’s will is done.

Matthew 6:10:

 Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Hell is the place where God does not dwell. Both places are prepared.

Both places will be inhabited by those who have chosen to be there.

Verse 46 says that those on the king’s left hand (the goats) will go into everlasting punishment.

* Matthew 8:12- *But the sons of the kingdom will be cast into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*
* Matthew 13:41-42- *The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*
* Luke 16:23-24- “*And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. “Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’*

We who believe the scriptures and proclaim them are accused of being narrow and even ignorant for believing in a literal hell. This passage is clear that everyone does not end up in the same place.

Current political rhetoric is vitriolic, full of conspiracy theories, hatred, and threatening language. There are some who would say that to preach this text is the theological equivalent of that incendiary rhetoric.

However, the Matthew 25 stance is informed by theology, not sociology. It is based on a clear Christology, rather than a changeable anthropology.

**Illus**.

On Amazon Prime I recently watched a documentary called *The Sunshine Hotel.* It is an inside look at a residence for the down and out men on the Bowery, in New Your City’s lower east side. At the beginning of the film, there is a screen containing a quote from Charles M. Pepper:

*Every great city has its human driftwood, its wrecks of men cast up by the tide of misfortune and despair. Hungry of body and starved of soul.*

A Matthew 25 Christian and faith community will hear that and be moved by it. We find that human driftwood, those people in despair and we try to alleviate suffering, reduce poverty, and address inequities.

To summarize, I see in this text:

1. Duration- our being in heaven or hell will be everlasting
2. Isolation- For the hell-bound, there will be isolation from God
3. Association- the sheep will have a different end than the goats because of their association with the King

**Conclusion**

Young Gerald had just graduated from law school. He was sitting in the reception area of a prestigious law firm. As he waited for his interview, an older man started up a chat. “How are you, son?”

“Fine, sir”.

“You looking to get hired here?”

“Yes, sir”

“I hope you get the job. If you do, then what?”

“I’d like to build up my skills as a litigator and then open my own practice.”

“Then what”

“I’d like to marry and have three children.”

“Then what?”

“Then I’d like to write legal textbooks and make a contribution to the literature of the field.”

“Then what?”

“I’d like to one day argue a case before the Supreme Court.”

“Then what?”

“After establishing a strong, large firm and writing a few books and arguing before the Supreme Court, I’ll retire.”

“Then what?”

“Then I’ll build my dream house in Malibu and wake up to the sound of ocean waves every morning.”

“Then what?”

“Then, I guess, I’ll die.”

**SILENCE**

“Then, what?”

Are you a person that has not given much thought to the “then what?” ?

Matthew 25 people have both a duty and a destination!!!

Do you know, with certainty, where you’re headed when this life is over?

I hope so. If not, let’s have a chat.

Amen