

Matthew 25:31

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*The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats: “The Opening Remark.”
Jesus begins His teaching of “the Sheep and the Goats” by saying that when the Son of Man comes in His glory He will sit on His glorious throne.*

This parable has no apparent parallel in the other gospel accounts.

TheBibleSays commentary has subdivided the parable of *the Sheep and the Goats* and its subsequent elaboration (Matthew 25:31—46) according to the outline below. To better facilitate continuity and cohesion, the entire passage of this teaching is included in the Biblical text at the bottom and its words are italicized throughout these portions of commentary even if they do not appear in this specific portion of scripture.

This portion of the commentary focuses on Matthew 25:31—“The Opening Remark”.

Matthew 25:31-46 **The Context of the Parable**

Matthew 25:31 **The Opening Remark**

Matthew 25:32-33 **The First Judgment: Sorting the Sheep from the Goats**

Matthew 25:34 **The Second Judgment: The Reward of the Righteous**

Matthew 25:35-40 **The Life Choices of the Righteous**

Matthew 25:41 **The Third Judgment: The Banishment of the Accursed**

Matthew 25:42-45 **The Life Choices of the Accursed**

Matthew 25:46 **The Closing Remark**

THE OPENING REMARK OF THE SHEEP AND GOATS PARABLE

Having covered the context of the parable of *the Sheep and Goats* in the first part of this section, we will now begin delving in to the text of the parable, beginning with Jesus’s opening remark:

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

The expression *Son of Man* was used in three different ways ([see Tough Topics article on Son of Man](#)). One of those uses was as a Messianic term. Jesus’s reference to the *Son of Man* in the

opening of *His* parable of *the Sheep and Goats* was an explicit allusion to a Messianic prophecy from Daniel:

Importantly, Daniel's prophecy concerns brilliant *glory*, everlasting dominions, and kingdoms with no end. Daniel was speaking of the inaugural moment of the Messianic *kingdom*. Jesus referenced this *everlasting kingdom* when *He* said *the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne*.

The image of *the Son of Man* sitting on the *throne* portrays two powerful symbols.

The first symbol is *His* sitting down. This depicts that *His* work and mission are complete (Hebrews 4:10). A *King* does not *sit on His throne* while *He* is still establishing *His kingdom*. *He* sits on *His throne* after *His kingdom* has been secured. *The Son of Man* already sat down on *His throne* at the right hand of *His Father* after *He* said "It is finished" when *He* defeated sin on the cross (John 19:30) and after *He* had defeated death when *He* rose from the grave (Hebrews 1:3; 12:1-2). *The Son of Man will sit down again on His glorious throne* after *He* has finally defeated *His* enemies.

The second symbol that *the Son of Man* sitting on *His throne* depicts is one of authority. Thrones represent seats of power. Thrones were the seat where orders were officially issued, laws were decreed, and judgments rendered. When a *king* sat on his *throne*, it represented his authority to rule and to reign. There was a weightiness and gravitas to that moment.

The moment *the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne* there will be an exponentially magnified sense of gravitas. It will be so weighty no one will be able to stand. In that moment "at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is *Lord*, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11). Jesus is *the King* of Kings, and *Lord* of Lords, and this speaks of the time when *He* fully assumes this position to reign over the earth (Revelation 19:16).

Jesus commonly identified Himself as *the Son of Man* as a way to indicate that *He* was the Messiah (Matthew 8:17; 9:6; 10:13; 12:8; 12:40; 19:28; 20:18; 20:28). And *His* disciples understood that this was *His* identity (Matthew 16:13-16). As the Messiah, Jesus was *the King*. However, since "son of man" could also refer just to a human person, Jesus allowed those who did not desire to see to remain blind as to *His* identity.

Through this opening remark, Jesus was signaling to *His* disciples that what *He* was about to tell them pertained to what Daniel foresaw for the *Son of Man*.

The phrase *when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne* was also used by Jesus when *He* assured Peter that there would be a great reward for him and his fellow disciples for leaving everything and following *Him* (Matthew 19:27-28). In *His* response, Jesus assured Peter that "you who have followed me shall also sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28). As we will see in the second judgment of this parable, the reward for being faithful to Christ will be to *inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*, a domain that will be within *His* administration (Matthew 25:34).

When the disciples first asked Jesus, “What will be the sign of your coming?” at the beginning of this discourse (Matthew 24:3), they were asking, “What will be the sign of *the Son of Man’s* coming?” Jesus told them that they wouldn’t need a sign to know that *He* had returned because it would be unmistakable, and everyone would know *He* had returned (Matthew 24:7).

Jesus used similar imagery when *He* described what *His* return would be like in the previous chapter, which brought His answer back into focus for *His* disciples:

“And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth *His* angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together *His* elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.”
(Matthew 24:30-31)

Jesus had answered *His* disciples’ question about the sign indicating *His* return. Now, Jesus was about to explain to them what would happen *when He comes*.

And it would be a vast and sweeping judgment of *all the nations*—sorting them into two groups. Each person will either be in the group of believers (*sheep*) or the group made up of non-believers (*goats*). This basic sorting will be followed by two more judgments: one for the *sheep* (a judgment of believers’ works) and another for *the goats*, which will be a judgment of non-believers’ works.

Biblical Text

³¹ **“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; ³³ and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. ³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation 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 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to 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 And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹ When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰ The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’ ⁴¹ “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been 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; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ ⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to**

**the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’⁴⁶
These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”**