

Matthew 25:41

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The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats: “The Third Judgment: The Banishment of the Accursed.”

Jesus says that the King will address the accursed goats who were sorted to His left. This judgment will happen after the King rewarded the sheep. He will call them “accursed ones” and banish them into the eternal fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels. This is the third of three judgments the parable describes.

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 focuses on Matthew 25:41—“The Third Judgment: The Banishment of *the Accursed*.”

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**

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

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THE THIRD JUDGMENT: THE BANISHMENT OF THE ACCURSED

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.

This section begins the third judgment described in this parable.

The first judgment described the *King's* separation of *the sheep from the goats*.

The sheep will be sorted to the King's right, while the goats will be sorted (or remain) on the King's left. The righteous sheep represent believers in Jesus, those who are righteousness are found in Christ. *The sheep will be saved into eternal life* and the *eternal* presence with God as members of His family.

The sheep will not be sheep because of their works of righteousness. The reason they *will be sheep* is because of their belief in Jesus (John 3:16). *The accursed goats* represent unbelievers in Jesus, those who trusted in themselves and rejected Christ. *The goats will go away into eternal punishment. The goats will not be goats* because of their wickedness. The reason *they will be goats* is because they did not believe in *the Son of God*, who died to redeem them from their wickedness (John 3:18). They had a gift freely offered, and refused it.

The second judgment in this passage is the *King's* judgment of *the righteous*.

The King bid and invited *the Sheep* to '*Come*' and *inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world*. They were granted their divine inheritance *to the extent that* they served *the King* by loving and tending to the needs of *His* family. In this second judgment, *the sheep* are judged according to their works and are rewarded for their faithfulness. This judgment represents the Bema of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10).

The third judgment this passage describes, the judgment of *the goats*, is *the King's* judgment of *the accursed*.

As *the King* will judge *the righteous sheep* for their works, *He* will also judge *the accursed goats* for their works.

The Bible teaches that everyone will be judged by God for their works.

"For You recompense a man according to his work."
(Psalm 62:12b)

"God, who will render to each person according to his deeds."
(Romans 2:5b—6)

And Jude describes that God will judge unbelievers for their works.

"Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."
(Jude 1:14b-15)

Peter affirmed the order of judgments described in this parable when he wrote that the judgment of works "will begin with the household of God" with "the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God" determined afterwards (1 Peter 4:17).

“For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?”
(1 Peter 4:17—18)

Peter’s reference to “the household of God” is a reference to God’s *eternal* family who have believed in Jesus and have *eternal life* (John 1:12-13; John 3:16). This term describes *the righteous sheep* who were *separated from the goats to the King’s right* in this parable. Peter’s descriptions—those who do not obey the gospel, the godless man, and the sinner—all represent unbelievers. These are the same people as *the goats* in this parable. It is worth pointing out that the Greek word Peter used which is translated as “do not obey” in this passage is not the usual word for “obey”. It is the word “*apitheō*” which means to “refuse,” “disbelieve,” or “willfully reject.” It is a step further than being apathetic, disinterested, indifferent, or unconcerned.

As the *sheep and goats* parable’s second judgment (the evaluation of the righteous *sheep*) was described in categorically positive terms exclusively focusing on what they would *inherit*, this third judgment of the parable is described in categorically negative terms. But unlike the believers who at the Bema of Christ can receive rewards and losses, the judgment of unbelievers is unequivocally bad. *The extent* of punishment they will receive will range from catastrophically bad to catastrophically worse.

There is no mention at all in this passage of the good things *the goats* have done. And this may not be merely to maintain symmetry with the parallel judgment of *the sheep*. It may not even be because *the goats* did not do good things. Many of them might have done good during their lives but already had their reward in full (Matthew 6:1-2). The heart behind their good deeds were never done for God. These works were not done with faith in *Him*. *These goats did not* come to God because *they did not* believe that *He* is, or that *He* is a Rewarder of those who seek *Him* (Hebrews 11:6).

Consequently, the treasures they sought were limited to the petty kingdoms of earth—kingdoms which at this point will be no more (Matthew 6:19, 21). Sadly, their rewards are gone with them. In any event, *they* have lost. *They* have lost everything, having left it behind on earth. And *they* themselves *will* be tragically lost forever.

Peter pointed out the stark difference between *the King’s* judgment of *the righteous* and *His* judgment of *the accursed goats* when he summarized Psalm 34:15-16,

“For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous...
But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”
(1 Peter 3:12)

The King in the Parable of *the Sheep and the Goats* speaks to *the goats*, pronouncing upon them their doom: *Then the King will say to those on His left...*

The word, *Then* in this passage may be subtle, but it is important. It indicates that the previous judgment (of *the sheep*) is complete and that something new is about to happen (the judgment of *the goats*).

Once the judgment of the believers (*Sheep*) and their works is complete, *the King will judge those on His left*—the unbelievers. There are no believers among *the goats*. The wicked and lazy slaves and foolish bridesmaids of the previous trio of parables are not among *the goats*.

Their judgment was at the Bema of Christ and was described in the second judgment of this parable. They likely did not receive much because *the extent* of their good works amounted to very little. But again, the third judgment of the Parable of *the Sheep and the Goats* entirely concerns *the goats*, who represent unbelievers.

The Banishment of *the Accursed Ones*

The King will order them to: Depart from Me. This is an absolute rejection. The Greek term translated as *Depart* is a form of “poreuō.” It describes going on a long or far off journey. When someone has departed (“poreuō”), there is usually a great distance between their point of origin and their final destination.

It is unlike Matthew 7:23 when Jesus bid unfaithful believers to *Depart from Me* after He confessed that He never was familiar with them. In that verse the Greek term translated as *Depart* is a form of “apochōrehō.” This word simply means to “leave.” The “poreuō”/*depart* that *the King* commands *the goats* is much stronger than the “apochōrehō”/*depart* that Jesus bids His unknown family members. *The King* is banishing the *goats into eternal exile* far, far apart from *His kingdom*.

The King will address the goats on His left as accursed ones.

The term, *accursed ones*, is a translation of the Greek word “katarahomahee.” As a noun it means “enemies,” “those who are viciously against you,” or “someone who is *accursed*.” As a verb it means to “curse” or to “violently reject in words or actions.” When Jesus and Paul taught *His* disciples to love, bless, and pray for your enemies they used this word (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:28; Romans 12:14). Mark used it to describe what Jesus did to the barren fig tree (Mark 11:21). And James used it when he described how it is unfitting to use the tongues God gave us to curse people made in *His* image (James 3:9).

Within the context of this parable, “katarahomahee” (*accursed ones*) depicts those who have vehemently despised *the King* and *His* people. *These accursed ones* have done the opposite of the two great commandments. They have hated God and hated others (Matthew 22:37-40).

The Devil

The King tells *the goats* to *Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels* *The devil* is Lucifer, the rebellious archangel who sought to ascend to God’s throne (Isaiah 14:12-13). *The devil* is Satan—the accuser (Job 1:9-11). He is

God's adversary. He hates God and all of *His* creation. *The devil* was the serpent who twisted God's words and deceived Eve into disobeying God's commandment so that she might be like God (Genesis 3:1-6). *The devil* was the tempter who failed to seduce Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11).

The devil is the "father of lies" (John 8:44). *The devil* is "the thief" who "comes to steal, kill, and destroy" (John 10:10). *The devil* has usurped man's authority over the present creation and is now "the god of this world" who "blinds the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel" (2 Corinthians 4:4). *The devil* is "the prince of the power of the air," and the controlling "spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2).

The devil is the enslaver who ensnares and holds people captive to do his will (2 Timothy 2:26).

The devil is our enemy who prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

The devil has been defeated by Christ. And though he is allowed to roam the earth for now, he will one day be forever destroyed in the lake of *fire* (Ezekiel 28:18b-19; Romans 16:20).

The phrase *his angels* refers to those *angels* who rebelled with Lucifer against God. The bible does not give a specific number as to how many *angels* joined *the devil* in *his* rebellion, but Revelation 12:4 can be taken to mean that one third of the angels did so. These fallen *angels* are sometimes referred to as demons in the scriptures.

The Eternal Fire which has been Prepared for the Devil and his Angels

The place where *the King will* banish the *accursed ones* is *into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels*.

This is most likely the lake of *fire*, which is mentioned and described five times in four verses within the Book of Revelation.

"And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into **the lake of fire** which burns with brimstone."
(Revelation 19:20)

"And the devil who deceived them was thrown into **the lake of fire and brimstone**, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."
(Revelation 20:10)

"Then death and Hades were thrown into **the lake of fire**. This is the second death, **the lake of fire**."
(Revelation 20:14)

“And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

(Revelation 20:15)

The letter of Jude also describes *the eternal fire* that Jesus references in here in Matthew 25.

“Angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.”

(Jude 1:6-7)

When we compare what these passages have to say about *the eternal fire* with how *the King* describes it, we can observe and deduce the following facts.

- *The eternal fire was prepared for the devil and his angels.*

God likely created this *eternal fire* sometime between the rebellion of Lucifer (Ezekiel 28:15-16) and his angels against God and His arrangement of the present universe that we physically inhabit (Genesis 1:3-31).

- *The eternal fire was created as place of judgment for the devil and his angels.*

Throughout scripture, *fire* is often used as a symbol of judgment. Sometimes this judgment *fire* is refining as in the *fire* that tests each man's works mentioned in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. Sometimes this judgment *fire* is punitive as it was at Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24-25). Sometimes this judgment *fire* may even be both refining and punitive as appears to be the case with Gehenna where the fire never dies and the worm never sleeps (Mark 9:47-49). This particular judgment *fire* was a special one designated *for the devil and his angels*.

- *This eternal fire was NOT originally created or prepared for men and woman.*

Men and women were made in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27), and were created a little lower (with less capabilities) than the angels but crowned with majesty (dominion). Men and women were made to be creatures who would silence the avenger and put Satan to shame by doing what he refused to do ([see commentary on Psalm 8](#)). *Men and women were created for kingdoms within the New Heaven and the New Earth that were prepared for them from the foundation of the world.*

The Lord is patient, “not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Sadly, men and woman can choose not to follow *the King's* ways and throw away their inheritance of their predestined *kingdom*. And even worse, if they never believe in Jesus as the

Divine *King*, they will go away to a place never prepared for human beings. This inhospitable place is *the eternal lake of fire prepared for the devil and his fallen angels*.

- *The eternal fire* is “the second death.”

Death means separation.

We typically think of human death in the “first” way, which is the loss of physical life. The first death describes what happens when we physically die. When we die, our immaterial spirit and soul are mysteriously separated from our physical body. They are no longer connected. This separation will prevent us from interacting with the physical world in the way that we experience now. But we ourselves will still exist through our spirit.

The second death is far worse. It is a spiritual death. It is a separation from God. It is a severance from the purpose and meaning for which we were created. It is a disconnection from our true desires. And a disintegration of our heart, mind, soul, and spirit.

God warned Adam and Eve in the garden that the day they ate of the forbidden fruit would be the day they die (Genesis 2:16-17). Adam and Eve did not physically die that day. They did not experience the first death. But they experienced a lesser form of the second death—that is, their spirits died. And they experienced several other types of separation as well:

- They were exiled from the paradise of Eden—exile is a form of capital punishment (Genesis 3:23).
- Their relationship with each other was no longer harmonious (Genesis 3:12; 3:16).
- Their relationship with creation became toilsome (Genesis 3:17-19).
- Inwardly their minds and hearts became fragmented and twisted (Jeremiah 17:9).
- Eventually it would lead to their physical death (Genesis 3:19).

Each of these separations was a type of second death. Sin always leads to death (Romans 3:23).

Those who *depart into the eternal fire* will experience the ultimate separation. *They will be forever cut off from the possibility of having harmony with God and experiencing their divine destiny of serving with the King in His kingdom*. This is why *the eternal fire* is called “The second death.”

The first death is abnormal and an abomination to God’s very good creation. People instinctively seek to avoid their physical death. But because of sin and the fall, the first death is unavoidable (Hebrews 9:27). The death we should most seek to avoid is the second death. The only way we can escape the second death is through believing in Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

- Death and Hades will be thrown into the lake of fire.

Death and corruption *will one day go away* and be no more. And this day will be after the judgment when death itself will be thrown into the lake of *fire*. Hades is a place of the dead

(Luke 16:23). It is possibly where the dead remain now awaiting the day of judgment. This holding place *will also go away* having been cast *into the eternal* lake of fire (Revelation 20:14).

- Everyone whose name is not written in the Book of Life will be thrown *into the eternal fire*. Everyone who does not receive the gift of *eternal life* by grace through faith in Jesus Christ will experience the second death (Revelation 20:15).

To learn more about How *the eternal fire* is contrasted to the Biblical illustrations of “Gehenna” and the “Outer Darkness” please read the second half of: [“What is Hell? The Lake of Fire and the Eternal Punishment ”](#).

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.”