



International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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Matthew 25:31-46 New International Version December 30, 2018

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, December 30, 2018**, is from **Matthew 25:31-46**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

(Matthew 25:31) “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne.

Jesus Christ identified himself as the Son of Man. He said He would come again after His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. When He comes again everyone (sheep and goats) will see Him in His glory as King of kings. He will come and visibly show himself as the Great King upon His throne, as He now truly is in glorious splendor forever. His angels will come with Him to do His will and carry out His promised plans.

(Matthew 25:32) All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

Jesus Christ is now and will visibly show himself to be the Lord and King over all the nations of the earth. Many worldly leaders and people in all nations are goats, and Jesus will deal with these evil leaders and people

when He comes again. He will set the evil goats to one side so they can never afflict or persecute His followers (the sheep) again. The sheep will inherit eternal life and joyous celebrations in heaven forever.

(Matthew 25:33) He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

The right hand of God is sometimes described as the authority and power of God. The loyal and loving followers of Jesus Christ will be placed at the right hand of God to exercise His authority and power as God directs. The evil leaders and people of this world will be replaced. The followers of Jesus will reign with Him. Notice: Jesus did not say that He would kill the goats. Sheep and goats will live forever, but in different places.

(Matthew 25:34) “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

The Father and Jesus prepared a kingdom for the followers of Jesus before they ever created this world. Jesus was, is, and will be the King of His kingdom. His followers will inherit eternal life in His eternal kingdom, because Jesus the King died and rose again for them. They are blessed by God’s many gifts. Jesus told His disciples that He was going to heaven to prepare a place for them: imagine what a place this will be for believers!

(Matthew 25:35) 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,

Those who love God and others as the Scriptures teach will live, love, and act in ways like Jesus and the Good Samaritan in Jesus’ parable. Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit indwell every one of His faithful followers and enable them to live as He directs. When His followers love and help one another, they are showing love and helping Him. Jesus’ followers will meet the needs of one another and others as Jesus leads them.

(Matthew 25:36) I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Food, drink, compassionate companionship, clothing, medicine offered with personal concern and tenderness, are all needed and will be needed by everyone. The New Testament and 2000 years of history show Christians being persecuted, imprisoned, and killed for following Jesus. The goats try to destroy the lives and testimony of God's sheep; therefore, believers seek to help one another especially. When they do so, they are helping Christ, who indwells His followers.

(Matthew 25:37) "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?"

The sheep, the righteous people, are righteous because of their faith in Jesus Christ, who leads them in their daily lives as their Lord and Savior. The supernatural loving power of the Holy Spirit within them leads them to do as Christ without any self-righteous concern or focus on themselves. They do not even remember all the good they are doing or have done, because their focus is on following Christ and not on their achievements or on their rewards from God for doing good deeds.

(Matthew 25:38) When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?"

Some people see the list that Jesus gave as "duties," as something they must be sure to do to earn eternal life, as a check list of duties to complete before they see Jesus. However, as much as it is true that Christians must do their duty and obey God, the list Jesus gives describes the attitude and perspective of one of His true followers. His followers will seek to love and serve others because of their new character as born-again believers and because of their love for their Savior.

(Matthew 25:39) When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

Christians will suffer physical needs and even suffer from neglect, from sickness and persecution. Jesus as our Great King did not say that He would prevent our suffering in this world; rather, He promised to be with us in our suffering and time of need. One of the ways He is with us is by living His life within us. Another way He is with us is when our brothers and sisters in Christ draw near us to bless and help us, to offer us encouragement and support when truly needed. When we as Christians draw near to help others, Jesus himself is reaching out to them through us to meet their needs.

(Matthew 25:40) “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Jesus answered, or will answer someday, that the righteous in Christ did many good deeds for those who are righteous in Christ. That does not mean that Christians only help one another, because Jesus commanded His followers to love their enemies (our enemies are also our neighbors). He did not tell His followers to restrict their service to true Christians only. However, true Christians will love and serve one another, and show special concern for their brothers and sisters in Christ.

(Matthew 25:41) “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Sheep and goats are two different species of animals that act very differently. Sheep and goats are fitting descriptions of different types of people who naturally act according to their nature. We all like sheep have gone astray, but those who trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior are born again. Christians have a new nature, quite unlike the nature of goats. The goats are the accursed. As Jesus once said to some, your father is the devil. There are some (even some powerful leaders in business, church, and government), who act like the devil and oppose Christ and His people. They promote ungodliness and wickedness and specific sins that the Bible especially condemns. God prepared a place for the devil and his angels, and God will send their followers to join them in a place of eternal punishment.

The goats do not die; they are only separated from the sheep forever. Jesus, who died on the cross to save them, will send them away because they refused the salvation and new life that He offered them after He rose from the dead and that He offers today to those who will accept Him and the good news about Him.

(Matthew 25:42) For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink,

Jesus indwells His followers. Goats either ignore those who follow Jesus, disparage them, or do horrible things to them. When goats see one of Jesus' followers in need, they refuse to help them. They especially refuse to help believers because they follow Jesus. The right way of living by the sheep brings feelings of self-condemnation and other feelings to the unrighteous, so they want to destroy or live as far away from the sheep as possible. Rather than destroy the goats, Jesus will give them what they chose: He will send them away as far as possible from the sheep.

(Matthew 25:43) I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

Jesus listed the same opportunities to love and serve others that both the sheep and the goats had and have. The sheep, when presented with the opportunities, helped those in need. The goats, when presented with the same opportunities, did not help others. If they ever helped anyone, it was because they wanted to serve their own or the devil's selfish purposes. They had no real care or love for others.

(Matthew 25:44) "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

The goats will ask Jesus the same question as the sheep, but the reason they did not serve others was because they were so selfish and self-centered they did not see or care about the needs of others. Their sins were sins of omission for lack of love for God and others. They had a supreme love only

for themselves, and they only helped others if they perceived the possibility of some selfish benefit.

(Matthew 25:45) “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

The goats, as children of the devil, will either afflict Christians or refuse to help Christians, especially Christians in need. Jesus expressed deep love and concern for “the least” of His followers, and His followers should do the same. The goats will, or will try to, take advantage of “the least,” and they will often look for “the least” so they can take unjust advantage of them.

(Matthew 25:46) “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

This is the second time in this lesson that Jesus mentioned eternal fire or eternal punishment. He was seriously making an important point. The goats did not find happiness living with the sheep; they hated it. God will not force them to live with the sheep or try to get along with them. God will send them far away from the sheep and himself. They will suffer there because they are going to a place that was originally prepared for the devil and the devil’s angels that rebelled against God. In this life, the goats experience many of God’s good gifts and good gifts from God’s people. They will be going to a place where they will experience no good at all. This should not surprise us, because our loving God did and will do the most loving thing for the goats—He will send them to their desired and deserved place forever, but make no mistake, it will be a place of punishment, but perhaps less of a place of punishment than the goats spending eternity with those they hate in heaven. The righteous, those who have come to love and serve God and others through faith in Jesus Christ, will spend a joyful eternity with the ones they love and the One who loves them.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Jesus has told us some of His plans upon His return to earth as our glorious King. Who are those who will rejoice when he comes?

2. For what group did God prepare the place of eternal fire for eternal punishment?
3. Based upon the way they act and have acted, with which group will the goats be the happiest: the sheep or other goats? Which group forever?
4. What might you say to someone who says they do not believe in hell, and a loving God would never send anyone to hell?
5. When Christians help other Christians in need, how are they helping Jesus? How is Jesus helping those in need?

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