

# Matthew Chapter 25 v 31 - 46

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[ 0 : 00 ] Matthew 25, and we're going to begin reading at verse 31. The title of this passage in the NIV is The Sheep and the Goats.

So Matthew 25, beginning to read at verse 31. When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne.

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. He will put his sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

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.

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.

[ 1 : 09 ] I needed clothes, and you clothed me. I was ill, and you looked after me. I was in prison, and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?

When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you ill, or in prison and go to visit you? 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.

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. For I was hungry, and you gave me nothing to eat.

I was thirsty, and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger, and you did not invite me in. I needed clothes, and you did not clothe me.

I was ill and in prison, and you did not look after me. They also will answer, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger, or needing clothes, or ill or in prison, and did not help you?

[ 2 : 28 ] 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. Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

Amen. Written by James Montgomery, if you look there, from Mirfield. If I have a spiritual wobble, or a doubt, what I do is, focus my mind on the resurrection of Christ.

Because, we all have doubts, and we all have these wobbles, don't we? But if you focus on Jesus, is he really and truly alive?

Then, things fall into place, and yes, he is. He's alive tonight. And if you want proof of that, it's in the Bible, of course, and in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, it says, Because Jesus is alive, we too will be raised.

And that's the future. And that's fantastic. Well, I, I wrote a book, which was never published.

[ 3 : 53 ] It wasn't worth publishing, but my thoughts in this book turned to things in the future. And, Christian things, spiritual things, and that's what I'm, I'm basing my sermon on this evening.

And, yes, Colin, Colin Bullimore, checked my book, and he said to me, if you have that published, John, you'll have a fatwa taken out on you.

I said, oh, well, I'm a bit young for that. Because it's about what other religions believe about the future life. And really and truly, all I did was look at what their own words say about what they believed about the future.

Not making things up. And I wasn't trying to knock them or make fun or mock. No, I wanted to know what other Christians, other religions, and sex, what they believe about the future.

And also, reinforce what I believe about the future. And, if it helps you tonight, I'm very pleased what you believe about the future. Well, if you go along the promenade at Whitby, walk along the promenade from the swing bridge going out towards the sea, after about 100 yards, you'll turn the corner and you'll come to a little hut.

[ 5 : 17 ] And there sat in the hut is Gypsy Rose Esther Lee, who will tell you everything you want to know about your future. It will cost you 10 pounds, but that's what it says.

Well, horoscopes. Horoscopes in the newspapers and all the magazines. When I was working at the Halifax Building Society before it became a bank, every tea break, we used to go upstairs and have a break and all the girls used to get the local, the paper out that morning, what's in the stars for us today?

What sort of a day are you going to have? I think it was a bit of fun, but it can be serious and it can be almost satanic. I got home from work one day and Anne said to me, you've got to ring your mother.

Uh-oh. So, I rang her up. Hello, Mum. She says, hello, John. You've got to ring the BBC. What? The BBC want you to give them a ring.

Why? Well, she said, you were born on the 10th of November 1947 and they're doing a programme about astrology and that's the date that they've picked and everybody that was born on the 10th of November 1947 they've asked to give them a ring.

[ 6 : 49 ] So, I rang the BBC and said, my mum said I've got to give you a ring. And so, I was born on the 10th of November 1947.

I'm not saying it's coming up very soon, of course. I'll be 70. And, they said, yes, what time were you born? I said, I was born at 5.25 in the evening.

They said, wonderful, that's just what we want to hear. We're trying to get those in the whole country born nearest to 5.30. 5.25 you. Will you appear on a television programme about astrology, about whether you've got anything in common with all these other people that were born at the same time?

I thought, well, go on. So, I went down to Birmingham and it was very intense and they asked me lots and lots of questions, not on the TV, this was before, about what my likes and dislikes were, what my character was, et cetera, et cetera.

And then we got on the live programme with 5 million people, it was called Brass Tax. And I stood there, I sat there quivering and they kept, they asked the people, there were about six people and they said, right, Mr. Woolin, and what do you think about it?

[ 8 : 13 ] I said, well, I think it's a load of rubbish. And they cut me off and they never asked me back again. But some people do believe it and they were dead serious, dead serious.

And some people are dead serious about things like horoscopes and the future and Gypsy Rose Lee, et cetera. Yeah. What we believe is so important but if it doesn't affect the way we live, it's of no importance.

We were on the food bank downstairs about a few months ago and a man came in and he said to me, I'm a pagan. That's my religion. I'm a pagan.

And Elizabeth, the lady who works on the food bank, said to him, what difference does your beliefs make to your lifestyle? And he thought, oh, I hadn't thought of that.

What difference does our beliefs make to our lifestyle? lifestyle? Well, the future. It's called, in Christian terms, it's called eschatology.

[ 9 : 21 ] It's the study of the theology of the future. And I started a few weeks ago being re-interested in this because I'm coming up to my 70th birthday.

And if you know, in Psalm 90, verse 10, it says, our years are three score years and 10. So in another month's time, I'll be living on borrowed time.

Like many of you. But, Psalm 31, verse 15, is a precious verse. Think of this verse, Psalm 31, verse 15, and that says, my times are in your hands.

My times are in God's hands. That's really precious. It isn't luck and chance. My times are in his hands.

Where you were born, wherever you were born, whichever country, is in God's hands. When you were born, who were your parents, who were your children, all these things are in God's hands.

[ 10 : 35 ] It's planned. It's not luck and fate. And so, therefore, we can have assurance that our times are in God's hands. There's approximately just over 7 billion people on this planet.

And, about 7 and a half billion. And about the numbers, say, in the Wikipedia, 2 and a half billion are Christians, of whatever shape.

1 and a half billion are Muslims. Then, there's other faiths. And then, about 1 billion are atheist, agnostics, or of no faith.

Now, those 1 billion atheist, agnostics, and those of no faith, they believe that when you're dead, you're done for.

When you're dead, you're done for. That's it. Annihilation, it's called. But some religions also believe that.

[ 11 : 39 ] It's called annihilation. The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that only 144,000 people will go to heaven.

And then, they believe every other Jehovah's Witnesses will earn their salvation and live eternally on a new earth. And, but, they believe that the rest of mankind will be annihilated at the end after death and they will no longer live in any shape or form.

That is a doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Annihilation. Back to eschatology. The Bible, time, or if you like, eternity, is divided into three.

The first two books, the first two chapters of the Bible are in Genesis and that is the first period of time or eternity. From eternity, God existed in eternity, never was made.

people say, who made God? Nobody made God. God is eternal and unchangeable, everlasting. He was there. He created the universe and He created man.

[ 12 : 56 ] And the first two chapters of Genesis tells us how wonderful it was. It was perfect. Everything was happiness and good. God said it was very good.

And then, the fall of man. Man fell. He became a sinner. And that is the condition and the period of time that we're in now.

We're in a sinful age. It is called the gospel age because we are living now in the gospel age. And if you like, it's from Genesis chapter 2 right to the last two chapters of the Bible in the book of Revelation.

The last two chapters, verses 21 and 22, tells us about the future. It hasn't happened yet. It tells us, Revelation chapter 21, Jesus Christ is coming back.

We will see that day. Wow. So, the book of Revelation is a difficult book. But it's also a simple book.

[ 13 : 59 ] It's there. It's simple. Why do I say it's simple? Because the message of Revelation is that Jesus wins and as Christians we're safe in him.

Couldn't be any more simple. Jesus wins and as Christians we're safe in him. But of course, it's a very difficult book and there are passages that's difficult to understand.

People look up and try to interpret the book of Revelation in several different ways. I've written a page down here so I'll keep it very, very quickly. Some people say it's futurist the book of Revelation.

All that's in the book of Revelation will occur right just before Christ returns. Nothing has happened yet. It's going to be at the end. That's futurist. And then there's some books written by Dan Brown.

If you go to Sainsbury's, I was there yesterday, Dan Brown Books is there. There are millions and millions of these books based on this future. The Left Behind series which have sold millions written on that understanding.

[ 15 : 14 ] They take things literally such as water literally turning into blood such as the literal 144,000 Jewish evangelists.

But strangely they don't literally take the four horsemen or a literal dragon. They pick and choose. The second way of understanding Revelation first is futurist the next is exactly the opposite and that's called preterist.

The preterist. Now they believe it all happened within the first apostolic era and in the early days such as the beast in chapter 13 with his famous number 666.

That was really a code for Emperor Nero. A third way of understanding is historicist. Historicist which you may think ah history.

Yeah. They believe you can take the book of Revelation and it's divided up and it goes through history and we're there now. Oh 100 years ago it was there and that's how they understand it.

[ 16 : 31 ] And then finally the other main thought and belief is called idealist and they say others have got it all wrong and it's dealing with principles and ideals and it's not about real events is the book of Revelation.

I disagree with that because I'm sure you agree with me. it is about some real events. Jesus Christ is coming back and there will be a final judgment.

So although many people believe in annihilation when you're dead you're done for many believe in what's called universalism. Universalism. All people when they die go to heaven.

This is common very common. No need to be religious when you die you go to heaven. Everybody's universally saved. I remember reading in the Yorkshire Post newspaper about the famous rugby league commentator Eddie Waring.

Eddie Waring and the vicar I read this in the paper the vicar said he proclaimed at Eddie's funeral Eddie's gone up rather than under.

[ 17 : 42 ] Now if you know anything about rugby league it's up and under. so that's what he thought. I read another book about Reg Harris the famous five times world cycle champion.

I don't know what sort of man he was but the vicar said at his funeral Reg is now on his bike in the countryside in the sunshine going downhill with the wind behind him.

And that's the type of things that people say. Just finally I read about Ronnie Cray the Cray brothers notorious. Ronnie died in 1995 and the twin brothers Ronnie and Reggie were guilty of the most heinous crimes.

Yet when Ronnie died one newspaper I'll quote one newspaper said about Ronnie his sins which were many were forgiven and forgotten the moment he met God.

Oh it makes me mad it makes my blood boil when people declare these things universalism the Bible says some will believe and some won't some will go to heaven some won't just finally my friend Roy Roy Bedford who some of you know you probably don't he worked at the Huddersfield crematorium and he was the man in charge of putting the music on and the number one number chosen at the funerals is I Did It My Way by Frank Sinatra but he says recently he said somebody asked for Gracie Fields Wish Me Luck as You Waved Me Goodbye at the funeral it's it'd be funny if it wasn't sad and I see these poor poor people that have lost a loved one and they say things like there's a new star shining in the heavens tonight or there's a new angel what is the truth about the future well

[ 20 : 01 ] Protestant denominations each have a basis of faith based on our understanding of scripture and what I want to do is to just very briefly study three basis of faith statements from the Baptist confession written in 1689 and these are the three subjects one the state of man after death death secondly the resurrection of the dead and thirdly the final judgment day so the first one says the state of man after death excuse me I'll read this from the 1689 confession of faith the state of man woman after death when we die it's relevant to you and me the bodies of men after death return to dust and suffer decay but their souls which neither die or sink into a state of unconsciousness they are inherently immortal immediately return to

God who gave them the souls of the righteous whose holiness is at death perfected are received into paradise where they are with Christ looking upon the face of God in the light and glory and waiting for the full redemption of their bodies the souls of the wicked are cast into hell where they remain in torment and utter darkness reserved for the judgment of the great day souls separated from their bodies are either in paradise or hell for the scripture speaks of no other abode so this stage that we're in when Christians die believers die it's an intermediary stage our souls depart and go to be with God or into hell and our bodies decay it's a better state it's a better state than we are in now but it's not the final state it's an intermediary state we will get what's called a spiritual or a celestial body we're not going to be sat on fluffy clouds playing harps if you want to it's up to you seriously we're not on clouds playing harps we have we have a new type body we don't understand everything us with our finite creatures we need to swallow our pride and accept that God's ways are beyond our finite understanding nothing but heaven the paradise is a better place it's gain for me to live is Christ and to die is gain and

I was at Manchester Airport on Tuesday waiting there for a friend to come through and I like stations and airports these places are so lovely when you see people coming through and people welcoming them and I think when we pass out of this life into paradise we'll have a welcome party who will be there welcoming you well Jesus and the angels but our loved ones who have gone before that will be wonderful I just read that about the 1689 confession and it says their bodies will either and their souls separated from their bodies will either be in paradise or hell for the scripture speaks of no other abode now

I think you had a sermon last Sunday about something was mentioned about purgatory because the Roman Catholic Church believe in three destinations after death heaven yes hell but purgatory now purgatory for the Roman Catholic people is a place where they will go if they haven't received the last rites that means they've sinned and they've they die but they haven't received the last rites and they go to purgatory this is the Catholic doctrine 1274 was the year that became a doctrine and they believe then their souls go to purgatory how do they get out of purgatory and progress to heaven those that are left on earth have got to give money and pray more money more prayers quicker they move on now that to me casts a shadow over the departed and also puts terrible pressure on those who are remaining but that is the truth of purgatory there's only two destinations the next section from the confession of faith is the resurrection of the dead here it says at the last day saints then alive on the earth will not die but will be changed all the dead will be raised up with their self-same bodies and none other although with different qualities and some shall be united again to their souls forever by the power of

Christ the bodies of the unrighteous will be raised to dishonor by his spirit Christ will raise the bodies of the righteous to honor for they will be refashioned after the pattern of his glorious body so this is the end of time Jesus returns the last two chapters of revelation this is our eternal state we're going to get new bodies eternal bodies no more rheumatism or arthritis or bad eyesight no more illness no more sickness this is the eternal state that we're all going to be in in the book of Peter I'll read this to Peter chapter three says this but the day of the Lord that's the when Jesus returns it it will come like a thief the heavens will disappear with the raw the elements will be destroyed by fire and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare since everything will be destroyed in this way what kind of people ought you to be you ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of

[ 27 : 11 ] God and speed it's coming that day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire and the elements will melt in the heat but in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth the home of righteousness no more clouds fluffy clouds new heaven new earth new bodies the last judgment the last judgment God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ to whom the father has given all authority and power to judge at that day the apostate angels will be judged so too will all persons who have lived upon the earth they will appear before Christ judgment throne to give an account of their thoughts words and deeds and to receive his reward in accordance with what they have done in this earthly life whether good or evil he will judge the world in righteousness by

Jesus Christ on the day of judgment Jesus Christ will judge the Mormons the Latter day saints say the resurrection will begin with a great blast on a horn and then will be directed by Joseph Smith Joseph will hold the keys of the resurrection and will pass this authority on to other Mormon priesthood as they are resurrected well let's move forward one of the chapters in Revelation chapter 20 is the chapter that has divided many Christians and Christians have gone in each different camp the three main views on this chapter premillennialism postmillennialism and amillennialism okay very very quickly premillennialists they hold that

Christ will return before the millennium before the 1000 years if you go to the new tribes mission in North Coats where some of our friends are there went in there and along the wall there's a huge mural painted about the rapture and the things and they're very strong premillennialists there's good Christians in each camp the postmillennium view is that there is no literal 1000 years Christianity will grow throughout the world and history and then Christ will return to take his followers and judge the world and the amillennialists interpret Revelation chapter 20 as much of as much of apocritic scripture non-literally the amillennialists believe that at the resurrection

Jesus gained the victory over Satan and sin and that he is now reigning after the end of this present gospel age Christ will return and immediately usher the church into his eternal state after judging the world I want to round things up by looking at two pictures the first is a picture of hell a picture of hell Dante's Inferno was a book published in April 1482 by Dante Alighieri Italian if I've pronounced his name correctly Dante Dante's Inferno and it's from Dante's imagination and he describes a journey through hell and this also inspired Dan Brown in his latest seller of that name and it's a description of a red devil with a pitchfork and people being roasted on spits that view is not scriptural at all it's in

Dante's mind but there's so much written about that type of thing and people laugh and mock but it's not true and it's so sad but I have written down what I've gleaned from my readings about what I think a picture of heaven could be it is like a rubbish dump it is like a prison it is a place of darkness it is a place where their worm does not die it is a place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth it is likened to fire and then I went on it's an unhappy place it's an unfulfilling place it's a frustrating place it's a sad place it's an unsatisfying place it's a place of regret and there's no love there what does heaven what does it say about heaven a picture of heaven 1 corinthians chapter 2 verse 9 says no eye has seen no ear has heard no mind has conceived what god has prepared for those who love him revelation chapter 21 verses 3 and 4 says now the dwelling of god is with men and he will live with them they will be his people and god himself will be with them and be their god he will wipe away every tear from their eyes there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things have passed away no harps on clouds it's going to be an awesome place it's going to be a place of exploration it's going to be a place of adventure it's going to be a place of learning a place of art and music and literature and fulfilment and satisfaction it's going to be a place of eternal love for believers this earth is as bad as it gets for unbelievers this earth is as good as it gets this earth

[ 34 : 17 ] I read a book and it called this earth an earth with jagged edges jagged edges the sickness and violence and the like it's like one big accident and emergency ward well we don't know when our end is coming 260,000 people on the world today will die today 260,000 we don't know when our end is coming we'll either go to heaven or hell on 9-11 9-11 at the world trade center 845 on that beautiful September morning American airlines flight 11 with 92 people on board tore into the north tower on board that plane was a stewardess and that air stewardess on the day before not 9-11 but 9-10 had been breaking ice on the aircraft with a bottle breaking ice to put into the drinks for the people and she broke the ice and a passenger was concerned that she might hurt herself doing this so he was concerned and he started talking and he said is there another way you can do it to be safe he was concerned about it and the lady was impressed by his attitude and so he said to her would you accept this

Christian tract and she did do and she said this is the sixth tract I've been given in the last few months later on in that flight she said to him she talked to him again she says look what does God want of me he said your life she died the following day whether she believed or not I do not know God wants our lives well are we prepared the Jewish prayer book prescribes three psalms to be read when people are ill on the sickbed psalms psalm 23 psalm 103 and psalm 139 psalm 23 as I'm sure everybody knows says surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the

Lord forever psalm 103 contains as for man his days are like grass he flourishes like a flower of the field the wind blows over it and it is gone its place remembers it no more but from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him and Psalm 139 says search me oh God and know my heart test me and know my anxious thoughts see if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting we don't know when we're going to die it could be sudden it could be protracted let's be like Jesus when he was dying his final prayer was into your hands I commit my spirit shortly after the first

Christian martyr Stephen prayed the same prayer into your hands I commit my spirit if we're able to and we don't know how it's going to happen our day pray your last prayer the prayer of Jesus into your hands I commit my spirit but is there anybody here this evening if I to ask you are you sure you're going to heaven are you sure and you say I hope so I hope I'm going to heaven friend tonight you can be sure you can have saving faith so that we're guaranteed a place in paradise and then on the new earth and new heaven with new bodies how by having our sins forgiven how do you get your sins forgiven it says in 1

John chapter 1 verses 8 and 9 if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us but if we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness we can have the guarantee of everlasting glory heaven new life on her earth if we confess our sins it's not just saying sorry it's repenting and turning away and turning towards God and like that air stewardess he wants your life we've had some great hymns to sing before let's close our meeting as we sing another great hymn about the future 861 861 the sands of time are sinking let's pray this could be someone's 910 we pray

[ 40 : 20 ] Lord God that this might be the day of salvation we pray that you will cause us all to confess our sins we are sorry thank you that Jesus died on the cross as our substitute and therefore if we do confess our sins you are faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and help us by the power of the Holy Spirit living within us to live new lives to your glory oh we thank you Jesus for dying for us and being alive today and one day you will come again and take us into heaven forever thank you God bless Amen