

Loving God by Serving Others

Key Verse: *“The King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”*
—Matthew 25:40

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 25:31-46

DURING HIS EARTHLY MIN-istry, Jesus gave many parables to his disciples concerning the experiences of the church, including their preparation and development. It seems fitting, then, that prior to his death, Jesus would also provide a lesson to illustrate the work of his future earthly kingdom upon its establishment, showing its purpose and its effect upon the world of mankind.

The subject of our lesson, the parable of the sheep and the goats, has its fulfillment not at the present time, but in the coming age of Messiah’s glorious reign. At that time, the selection of the church class, Christ’s bride, will have been completed, and they will reign with him as “joint-heirs” in his kingdom. (Rom. 8:17) The parable’s opening words convey this setting: “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.”—Matt. 25:31

Following this, the parable describes the work of Christ’s thousand-year kingdom on behalf of the world of mankind. “Before him shall be gathered all nations.” (vs. 32) The word “nations” means “people.” All the people

of the world will be raised from the dead, freed from their previous bondage to sin and Satan. After being given an understanding of God's ways and an ample amount of time to willingly conform to his righteous laws, each will be judged as to their worthiness for life. All the obedient ones, identified as "sheep" in the parable, will receive everlasting life on the earth. Those disobedient ones, "goats" in the parable—relatively few in number we believe—will go into destruction after their period of trial ends.—vss. 33,34,41

Although the parable of the sheep and the goats applies in the future age of the world's judgment, many of its principles provide lessons for present Christian development. Our Key Verse, for example, points out the importance during the coming kingdom arrangement of mankind's love for God and for his Son to be shown by acts of kindness and service rendered to each other, their fellow-man. We now, as Christians, must already be doing this, demonstrating love for others and especially for our brethren in Christ. Paul says, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."—Gal. 6:10

This is a requirement for our development of the "mind ... that was also in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 2:5) Whoever serves any whom the Lord chooses as his brethren is really serving him, reiterating the thought of our Key Verse. Thus, all through the period of the sufferings, trials and experiences of the church during the present age, they are comforted with the knowledge and assurance that others of their brethren have been with them, providing help and encouragement.—John 13:14,15; Gal. 6:2

Jesus, our greatest example, demonstrated complete unselfishness in his service to others. His ultimate service was the laying down of his life for his fellow-man. We, too, should be ready to lay down our lives for the brethren, realizing that all mankind will likewise learn to love and serve one another in the coming age. ■