

The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats

Key Verses: *“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: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.”*
—Matthew 25:31,32

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 25:31-46

THIS PARABLE ILLUSTRATES both when and how the work during the earthly phase of the Messianic kingdom will occur. The parable begins: “When the Son of man shall come in his glory.” The “Son of man” is our Lord Jesus. (Matt. 16:13; John 5:26,27) Along with the Son of man, “all the holy angels” will be “with him.” This is the completed bride of Christ.—Rev. 14:1-4

The timeframe of the parable is identified by this statement: “Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.” One of the promises given to faithful Christians by the risen Lord is: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set

down with my Father in his throne.” (Rev. 3:21) Two important statements are given in this verse. First, the reward promised to all the faithful overcomers of the present Gospel Age will be the privilege of working together with him as “kings and priests,” to reign with

him for the purpose of instructing and uplifting mankind during the kingdom. (Rev. 1:5,6; 20:4-6) Second, when this message was given to John, Jesus was “set down” on his Father’s throne, but not yet upon his own throne.

Therefore, the parable is pointing to a future time, when Christ will “sit upon the throne of his glory.” This will occur when “all the holy angels” will be with Christ—that is, once the entire bride of Christ has been completed. On an earlier occasion, Jesus said to his disciples concerning this time: “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones.”—Luke 22:29,30

In the parable the word “glory” is translated from a Greek word meaning “glory, as very apparent.” The Apostle Paul gives an additional proof that when Christ will be in “very apparent” glory, it will be together with all of the Lord’s followers who were faithful unto death. He writes: “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear [Greek: be rendered apparent], then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” (Col. 3:4) The word “glory” in this verse is from the same Greek word translated “glory” in Matthew 25:31.

During Christ’s kingdom reign, “before him shall be gathered all nations.” All will be made aware of his authority. Then, at the end of the kingdom, the parable continues, “he shall separate them ... as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.” (Matt. 25:32) This dividing represents a final test and evaluation of each individual “according to their works” which they will have demonstrated during the kingdom judgment period.—Acts 17:31

Individuals in the sheep-like class will inherit the kingdom because they had developed and voluntarily manifested God’s character of love, helping and encouraging others during that time. Individuals in the goat-like class will demonstrate none of these qualities during the kingdom and only enjoy its blessings for themselves. They will not be permitted to live everlastingly.—Rev. 20:12-15 ■