

The Judgment of the Nations, Part 1

Scripture: Matthew 25:31-32a

Code: 2378

It is our joy now to open the Word of God to the twenty- fifth chapter of Matthew. We are committed in our fellowship week in and week out, every Lord's day when we gather, to the ongoing study of the Word of God. We have little interest in human opinion. We're not here to share our own ideas, but only to break open this glorious divinely revealed statement of truth which God Himself authored through certain very choice human instruments. One of them was a man named Matthew and he recorded by the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit this gospel which presents to us the life, ministry and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have been studying Matthew now for many years. I think over five years. I don't know if it seems that long, maybe it seems longer. And we find ourselves now in the twenty-fifth chapter and particularly for our study today, looking at verses 31 and 32 of that twenty-fifth chapter.

Let me read them to you. "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 the peoples and He shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats."

Now the rest of the chapter goes on to describe what happens at this judgment. We'll look at the introductory verses today and then go into the judgment itself in our study next time.

To begin with, may we be reminded of the words of Numbers 32:23 in which Scripture says, "Be sure your sins will find you out." And what the Bible is saying by that is there is no way to escape sin. Sin must be punished, all sin must be punished and God is aware of all sin. God therefore stands in the place of a judge who must execute punishment. In Psalm 90 verse 8, the Scripture says, "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy face." In other words, what may appear to be secret to us is well lit in full view of the gaze of God. Nothing escapes Him.

In Proverbs 13:21 there is a very fascinating statement. It says, "Evil pursues sinners." They never escape it. The consequence of sin is like the shadow that cannot be shaken. And so says Isaiah 3:11, "Woe to the wicked, it shall be will with him for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Judgment is inevitable for sin. There is no question about that.

In fact, in Romans 1 we have a very familiar statement in verse 18 which sums it up, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Not some, but all.

The wrath of God is revealed against all of it.

In Romans 2:9, it says "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first and also of the Gentile." No one escapes judgment on sin.

You say, "What about Christians?" Well, Christians have the marvelous privilege of having their judgment placed upon the substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ. Their sin is judged. Your sin is judged even if you're a believer. By God's marvelous grace and your act of faith in Jesus Christ, you become one of those whose sin is judged in Christ. For those who wonder why Jesus died on a cross, that's it. He died there bearing the sins of the world. He carried guilt and sin which was not His own but had to be paid for and therefore when a person puts his faith in Christ by God's design his debt is thereby paid in that very act of Christ. On the other hand, for the world of people who do not receive Jesus Christ, who do not accept His Lordship and His atonement for their sin, they themselves will bear the punishment for their own sin. So the worldwide people make choice. They make a choice between receiving Christ as the one who paid the penalty or paying the penalty themselves. That is the simple decision that faces every soul.

And the warnings of Scripture come again and again and again and again to those who do not come to God, who do not come for forgiveness, who do not trust in the work of Christ. The warning is over and over given to them that they will die in their own sin, having to pay the penalty for it. God has warned not only in word but He has warned in very judgment. When Adam sinned, there was a judgment of massive proportions that should once and for all settle the issue of how God looks at sin. One sin committed by one couple devastated the entire human race. There is the judgment of the flood. God looked at the earth and men and women were so utterly sinful, the earth was so extremely corrupt, creation had become so totally polluted that He drowned the entire world with the exception of eight righteous souls.

Throughout the history of the world, there have been devastating judgments on nations and cities and individuals which are recorded in Scripture. And all of these stand as signposts warning people that God judges sin, that there is no escape from that. The writer of Hebrews says, "It is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment." It is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment. There is no way to escape the inevitability of the judgment on sin. And anyone who believes that by some good works, some righteous deed or some benevolence on the part of God he will apart from Christ overlook their sin is wrong...is wrong. That will not happen. Scripture warns regarding this over and over again.

Now the judgment that is referred to in this particular passage is that final judgment on the earth that occurs at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ...the judgment of all judgments, a severe and irreversible judgment, a severe and irreversible judgment. The judgment when the Son of Man comes in His glory to sit on His glory throne, to establish His Kingdom, will be a judgment on all the peoples, it says in verse 32. And at that point there will be a separation of the righteous from the unrighteous,

irreversibly and eternally. For verse 46 says, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, the righteous into everlasting life."

And so, we're looking at judgment. Now keep in mind, if you've been with us at all in the study of Matthew 24 and 25, these two chapters form one single sermon preached by our Lord. It is our Lord's own sermon on His Second Coming, as I've said many times. The disciples asked Him in chapter 24 verse 3 to describe His coming and establishing His Kingdom. They wanted to know about it. When is it going to be? What are going to be the signs? And so He's telling them all that they need to know about His Second Coming. And here He has taken us all the way to the point of His Second Coming. He's given us the leading signs, spoken about the time period in which it will happen, told us that no one can know the exact day or the exact hour. He has described the sign in heaven, the final sign of His coming as He appears in heaven. And now He tells us about the coming itself and the attendant judgment.

Notice the passage again, "When the Son of Man comes He will then sit on the throne of His glory, He will then gather all the people, He will then separate them and the ones on His right hand," verse 34, "will go into the Kingdom, the ones on His left hand," verse 41, "will go out of His Kingdom forever." That's the picture. So we're now all the way in the chronology of the Lord's sermon to the establishment of the millennial Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Revelation it tells us that the Lord Jesus will come to establish an earthly Kingdom of a thousand years duration. In chapter 20, it says Satan will be bound for a thousand years, verse 3. And verse 4, the saints will reign with Christ a thousand years.

The Lord Jesus is going to come back. He came the first time in humiliation. He comes the second time in glory. Many of you are familiar with that. The second time He comes, He comes to set up His Kingdom. But before the Kingdom can begin, it must be determined who can go into the Kingdom and who must be kept out. So all the people are then gathered together and the Lord puts those in the Kingdom who belong and out of the Kingdom who do not belong. That is the judgment we see here. So we're looking to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ at a time of judgment, commonly known because of the analogy that's used as the judgment of the sheep and the goats.

Now keep in mind that in our previous studies we have noted that Jesus wouldn't tell them the exact day or the hour. Go back to chapter 24 verse 36 and I'll remind you of that. "But of that day and hour knows no man, not even the angels nor the Son but My Father only." And then verse 42, "Watch therefore for you not what hour your Lord comes." Verse 44, "Be ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes." Verse 50 the same thing, "In an hour that you're not aware of..." Chapter 25 verse 13, "You don't know the day or the hour in which the Son of Man comes." So five times He has said no one knows the day or the hour...five times. We cannot know the specific moment. The implication of that is to be ready at all times...to be ready at all times. But the point we're

seeing here is that the Lord has announced again and again that nobody knows the day and nobody knows the hour, nobody knows the specific moment. And the intent of that is that means that everybody at all times has to be what? Ready. The Lord says I'll give you some general signs, I'll give you some general events and even a few specific events that are going to take place in the time of Tribulation just before the Second Coming. But the exact day and the exact hour, no one knows. Therefore it is incumbent on all generations and all people to be ready at all times.

Further, let me add this, that the death of anyone is the final moment for them. That is the equivalent of the Second Coming. When a man or a woman dies, immediately the decision of their eternity is sealed and disposition is made. It is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment. So, judgment as seen here at the Second Coming of Christ will be just for those people who are still alive when He returns. Those who have already died have already faced the inevitability of irreversible judgment. Whenever a person dies, their eternity is fixed either in heaven or in hell. Those who are still alive who have survived all the rest of the events of the Tribulation at the coming of Christ must then be judged, some to be taken into the Kingdom, some to be shut out. And that is the judgment that we see here, the final judgment. And all people at all times need to be ready should that hour come in their generation.

Now let me just mention that this particular judgment of the sheep and goats, though it's given a tremendous amount of space in Matthew, appears in no other gospel. Mark, Luke and John don't deal with it. It isn't because it's not significant, it is highly significant. And the repetition of a given passage in the gospels doesn't necessarily comment on its importance. It does tell us, however, something about the purpose of the author. Mark's purpose was not to present Christ as King. Luke's purpose was not particularly to emphasize Christ's Kingship either and neither was John's. The gospel which is intended to present Christ as King is Matthew. And that is why the great emphasis of the Second Coming comes in the gospel of Matthew because Matthew is wanting to present to us the triumph of the regal King, the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is why Matthew is the one chosen to give this passage.

Let me just remind you of Matthew's emphasis. Matthew has focused primarily on Jesus as the King, King of Israel, King of glory, the one with the right to rule, the majestic one, the regal one. That has been his emphasis. And it falls into three basic categories. First of all, Matthew treats the King revealed...the King revealed. In other words, as the person of Christ unfolds in Matthew, He unfolds as a regal person. Whereas Mark treats Him as human. Mark emphasizes His humanity. And Luke talks about His servanthood. And John emphasizes His deity. Matthew's emphasis is on His royal character, His Kingship.

And first of all, he emphasizes that the King is being revealed. For example, it is Matthew that has His ancestry traced from a royal line. It is Matthew who has His birth being dreaded by a rival king who is threatened by another king coming on the scene. It is Matthew who makes great emphasis on the

wise men who are oriental king makers who come and offer Jesus homage and present Him royal gifts. It is Matthew who emphasizes that He has a herald to announce His coming as kings always did. It is Matthew who tells us that in His temptation as it reached its climax, Satan offered Him all the kingdoms of the world knowing that indeed He was entitled to them all. It is Matthew who emphasizes that Jesus proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount the standards of His Kingdom. It is Matthew who uses the miracles of Jesus as His royal credentials, who emphasizes that His teaching was the royal law, that His parables are the mysteries of the Kingdom of which He was the King. He is hailed by Matthew as the Son of David, a royal name. He claimed royal rights as the Son of God. He made a royal entry into Jerusalem and claimed absolute sovereignty. He told a story about a king's son and He told it about Himself and it's recorded in Matthew. And while facing the cross, Matthew records that He looked beyond the cross to the reigning and the glory that would follow. It is Matthew who emphasizes His commanding power over legions of angels. It is Matthew who records for us His last words, "All power has been given unto Me in heaven and in earth, go ye therefore." In other words, He is commanding as a monarch who has all authority for such a command.

So, Matthew makes a great emphasis on the Kingship of Christ being revealed. Secondly, on the Kingship of Christ being rejected. Matthew all the way through not only presents the regal character of Christ, but also shows how He was rejected as King. Before He was born, His mother was in danger of being divorced. Worse than that, she was in danger of being stoned as an adulteress. And so, it could have been that His life would have been snuffed out before ever He could have reached the throne. At His birth, all Jerusalem was troubled and Herod who was threatened by the thought of another king on the scene sought to kill Him. And in the plains of Bethlehem, not longer after the angelic choir was absent and silent, those little hills began to ring again but it wasn't with the songs of angels, it was with the weeping and mourning of mothers who were crying as their babies were being slaughtered as Herod attempted to stamp out the would-be king by obliterating every child under the age of two.

And it is Matthew who tells us that Jesus had to escape for his life to Egypt. And then when He came back to His own homeland, He hurried away to live thirty years in obscurity in a non-descript off-the-road village called Nazareth where He was without honor and where on one occasion the people of the city itself tried to throw Him off a cliff and kill Him. Matthew makes a point of telling us that even His herald was imprisoned and eventually his head was chopped off. And it is Matthew who reminds us that Jesus had no place to lay His head. He was accused of being a drunkard. He was accused in Matthew of being gluttonous. He is accused of being from hell, from Satan, having a demon. And as he records His own parables, they mark out the rejection that was thrust against Him, how it was desired by people to take His life, to kill Him as they had killed the prophets who spoke about Him. And even in His death it is Matthew who has Him say, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

In one of the other gospels, then, is the regal presentation as complete or is the rejection as complete as it is in Matthew. But finally, Matthew presents Him not only as the revealed King and the rejected King but as the returning King. And in chapter 24 and 25, there is this great sweeping sermon of our Lord about His Second Coming. And it is not the first time it is mentioned in the gospel of Matthew. It is mentioned previous to this on several occasions in our Lord's conversations with His disciples. It was of major importance to the Lord and of major importance to Matthew as well. In Matthew 16:28, "Verily I say unto you there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom." Verse 27, "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels and reward every man according to His works." Matthew 19:28 similarly says that He will come in the regeneration and the Son of Man will sit on the throne of His glory and that the disciples will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel and so forth.

So, He has spoken about it before to the disciples, but now in a great sermon embracing two chapters, the Lord speaks of His Second Coming and Matthew records it as the completion of His presentation of the royal character of Jesus Christ. He is coming as regal reigning sovereign King, that's the message.

Now when He comes, and I mean when He comes, in the moment of His coming there will be an instantaneous judgment. I don't believe that when He comes there's going to be a gap of time for people to decide what they want to do. It's verse 31, "When the Son of Man comes..." Verse 34, "Then shall the King say..." and so forth. It's when He comes, then He judges. There's no reason to assume an interval.

Now in Daniel, we know in the last chapter of Daniel, Daniel seems to see a period of days. The Tribulation is to be 1260 days, three and a half years, but Daniel says before the establishment of the Kingdom there will be 1335 days. There are 75 days from the end of the Tribulation to the establishment of the Kingdom in Daniel's prophecy. In those 75 days often we ask the question: what happens? Well, it may be that Jesus comes a few days after the end of the Tribulation if we're going to be technical, or a few weeks after it. Or maybe He comes and His coming and all that happens in that event takes a period of time. The point here is once He comes whatever that period of time involves it does not involve an opportunity for people to make a decision about Christ. That will have already have been made. So whatever fits into that time frame, whatever judgment may come could well come if Christ came at the end of the Tribulation, instantly brought about judgment, it could be that that period of time of 75 days is a period of cleaning up after judgment. Maybe it's the time of Ezekiel's speaking where he talks about having to take much time to bury bodies. Maybe that begins at that time because there will be a devastating war at Armageddon and a devastating and vengeful judgment of God when Christ returns. And maybe there's a mop up operation before the Kingdom begins. We don't know what fits in that time but it doesn't mean that when Christ comes at the beginning, people still have 75 days to get their act together. When He comes, then He judges. It will be no different than when an individual faces death. There is no way to change what happens then. Death crystalizes into eternity, the decision made regarding Christ in time. And so will the Second

Coming of Christ. There will be no further opportunity for unregenerate people to make a choice. And we'll see more about that as we move ahead, when we see who goes into the Kingdom and who is shut out. That will become very clear to us.

Now let's look at the introductory aspect in verses 31 and 32, all right? First of all, the judge. Who is the judge? Who is the one who comes to be in charge of this judgment? Well, in order to understand what is said here, perhaps we can be assisted a bit if we remember John chapter 5. And I will just read you a couple of verses to jog your memory in case you have forgotten that very important passage. In John 5, verse 22, "The Father judges no man but has committed all judgment unto the Son." All judgment is committed unto the Son, a very important statement. That is essentially what our Lord said in Matthew 28:18 when He said all authority is given unto Me in heaven and earth. The Father delegated judgment authority to the Son. He delegated authority over the church to the Son so that the Son can command the church to go into all the world and do this, the Son also is responsible for judgment. And so, it is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ who is the judge. And that we find confirmed in the verse, "When the Son of Man shall come....when the Son of Man shall come, then He will sit on His glory throne, then He will gather the people, then He will separate."

So it is the Son of Man who is none other than Jesus Christ. I don't think we need to take a lot of time, but only to remind you that the most familiar, the most common, the most used title by Jesus of Himself is "Son of Man." He called Himself that all the time. That was His choice title for Himself. And I believe there were several reasons for that.

Reason number one was that it confirmed His humiliation. It affirmed that it was an incarnation, that God had come all the way to being man. It was an affirmation of incarnation, of submissiveness, of the servant heart, the servant spirit of coming not to be ministered unto to minister and give His life. He became one of us. And Son of Man emphasized His condescension, His humiliation, His identification, His understanding, His sympathy with men. He became what we are. That was one reason He used it.

The second reason that I believe this was a good choice and common to our Lord's use was that it tended to be less offensive than if He were to call Himself "Son of God" all the time. If He were to call Himself "Son of God" constantly, He would have created more hostility than He did, at least initially. Calling Himself Son of God continually in front of the Jewish leaders would have fomented problems beyond the problems He had. And, of course, as you well know, after three years of ministry they finally took His life with great hostility. It's very likely that had He continually called Himself "Son of God," the whole plan could have been brought to a halt a lot earlier and things that God had intended to accomplish would not have been accomplished. And of course that kind of conjecture is only conjecture since He didn't call Himself "Son of God" but may explain to us some reason why He didn't.

Thirdly, if He had called Himself continually "Son of God," not only would His rejectors have been more angry, but His friends might have been more pushy. Had He called Himself "Son of God," or had He even called Himself "King," had He called Himself all the time "Messiah," there would have been even a greater pressure put upon Him by the people to take over the kingdom, to take over and rule, to dominate, to overthrow the Romans. So I believe "Son of Man" was the lowest title, the lowest profile that Jesus could take. It is a denial of any significant title. It is simply saying "I'm one of you, I'm a son of man." That's all. It is true He was also Son of God, it is true He was also King of Kings, but had He paraded those things outwardly, it would have changed the whole series of events. And so, He communicates Himself as Son of Man to emphasize His humiliation and identification, to deflect hostility and to deflect those who would force Him to become a King, as obviously many wished to do and even tried to do in Galilee.

There's another reason. I think He chose to use "Son of Man" because it provides such a profound contrast to the titles that He will have when He comes in His glory. And it helps us to understand the distinction between the first and second coming of Christ. It provides a marvelous contrast, which contrast is pointed up to us here in Matthew chapter 25. Notice verse 31, He calls Himself "Son of Man", then in verse 34, "Then shall the King..." In verse 30...verse 40, rather, "And the King shall answer." It isn't long now in this particular message before He turns from "Son of Man" to "King." But He starts out with Son of Man so that they might know who the King is, right? If He just said, "When the King shall come..." somebody might say, "Well, it's other than Him." So, He says, "When the Son of Man comes, then will the King say..." And He affirms that He is both Son of Man and King. Son of Man, humble, condescending, humiliated; King, glorious, sovereign, reigning, judging, establishing His Kingdom. And so here He turns a corner. Beloved, this is very, very significant. He does not call Himself "King" up to this point. He tells a parable about a King's son. He tells a parable about a King who is God the Father. But now He calls Himself King. It's time to talk about His return. It's time to talk about His return. It's time to talk about His reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. It's time to look beyond humiliation and beyond condescension and see the one who will come in blazing glory. So, the emphasis is on the Kingship.

And may I remind you, too, that He's talking as 24:3 tells us privately to His disciples? Privately to His disciples. He maintained the privacy of His message about Kingship. Even when Pilate later on said to Him, "Are You a king? Are You a king?" He was reluctant to respond and simply said, "You said it...you said it." Now that is not to say that the people didn't get the message, because when He was crucified they put a sign over Him that said what? "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." They knew He claimed that. But He did not antagonize them and He did not strike a constant chord in the hearts of the political zealots by referring to Himself as king. He downplayed it and called Himself Son of Man. That is not to say He was not King but that He was judicious in calling Himself by that title.

Here with the privacy of His disciples, having been found on the Mount of Olives as He has left the

temple ground and now talks with them in the privacy of the evening, Wednesday before His Friday crucifixion, He shares with them that He indeed is the Son of Man who is also the King who will come and judge to establish His Kingdom. When He comes in His glory to set up His earthly millennial Kingdom, He will have to make a judgment about who goes into it and who is shut out of it. And since the Kingdom is the only thing that will exist on the earth, did you get that?, the Kingdom is the only thing that will exist on the earth, anybody not in the Kingdom won't be on the earth. And we'll see that next time. That's why it tells us they will go into everlasting punishment.

So, we as a church, we as Christians--and this is no new message, this is no message concocted by anybody contemporary or anybody isolated to our congregation--this is the message of Christianity since the gospels were written. The church waits for the coming of Jesus Christ. The world, while not necessarily being ready for it, is waiting for it also. Like a descending jet with a dead pilot, they may have a party going on on board but there's a tremendous crash coming. And the world may not realize how fast they are accelerating toward their own doom, but that is exactly what the Scripture says.

And it is not isolated only to Matthew. Jude tells us in verse 14 that Enoch also, way back in early parts of Genesis record, the seventh man from Adam prophesied and said, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousand of His saints to execute judgment on all and to convict all that are ungodly," and so forth. That goes way back to Enoch, the seventh man from Adam, who could see ahead in the wisdom of God revealed to him that there would come a time when the Lord would come in final judgment on all men on the face of the earth. And indeed that will happen. That is the promise of the prophets.

So, we wait the Second Coming. Now let me say something that maybe you've never thought of in these terms. The remarkable thing about Christ is not His Second Coming. The amazing thing about Christ is not His return. The wonder of wonders is not that Jesus will come in glory and judge the world. The amazing marvelous incredible indescribable mysterious truth is not that He will come the second time, but that He came the first time to do what He did. It is amazing that a holy God came to forgive sinners, not that a holy God comes to judge sinners. You understand that? The wonder is not the Second Coming, the wonder is the first coming, that He condescended to redeem us, to love us when we were unlovely, to provide a salvation into which any man can enter, any woman can enter by a choice. The wonder of wonders is that He stooped to be what we are, that He stooped to die our death, to bear our sin, to be separated from God. That is the wonder of wonders.

The fact that He comes back to judge sin is not remarkable at all. That is only utterly consistent with His nature. And if you go back to the Old Testament, you find that God has always been a God who judges sin. And so we are not surprised at all that He is going to come and ultimately do that and finally do that and deal with sin in a final way, what is remarkable is that He came to redeem sinners who were worthy only of His judgment. And so, He will come and we should not be so surprised that He will since He is an infinitely holy God. And when He comes to judge, it is going to be a scene that

language is strained to attempt to communicate.

In 2 Thessalonians 1 verse 7, it says, "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire," that tells us something about the scene, "when He comes, He'll come with all of His angels, all of His mighty angels, and He will come in flaming fire." Do you remember that chapter 24 of Matthew, verses 29 and 30 said that the sky will grow dark, the moon won't give its light, the sun will go out, the stars will fall and then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, a blazing glory? And it says He will come with power and great glory. As we learned when we were there, the Lord turns out all the lights in the universe, absolute blackness, and then appears the sign of the Son of Man in blazing glory coming out of heaven and as He comes the light is so blinding, it tells us in Revelation 6:15 to 17 that men and women cry for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them, to hide them from the face of the wrath of the one who comes. They cannot withstand this unveiled unmitigated, unrestrained, unhindered, unveiled glory. And so, Christ will come and not alone but with His mighty angels in flaming fire. And He will take vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And they will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power.

And then He will be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe. So there will become a dividing then, there will be vengeance and punishment to those who do not obey and there will be glory and honor and reward and respect toward Him for those who do know Him through Christ the Savior. So that is the judgment that occurs at His coming.

It's indescribable, but He comes with all of His holy angels. Further, I would like to suggest that He comes with His saints as well. In Colossians, and you're familiar with this, chapter 3 verse 4, "When Christ who is our life shall appear, when He is manifest, then shall you also appear with Him in glory." And I believe that tells us that when He comes back, the saints who have already gone to be with Him, they've gone from out of the Tribulation, they've gone in the Rapture of the church before the Tribulation, the saints already with Him, the spirits of Old Testament redeemed saints, all are coming in the glory of His Second Coming to establish His Kingdom.

Now Revelation 19 needs to be considered for a moment because this describes the scene itself in detail. In Revelation 19:11, "I saw heaven opened," the doors of heaven all of a sudden swing open in the vision of John, and what is revealed is a white horse and one sitting on it called "Faithful and true." By the way, this is the second time heaven opened in the book of Revelation...the second time. The first time heaven opened was in chapter 4 verse 1, "After this I look and behold a door was opened in heaven." I believe that door was opened so that the raptured church could go in. Now the door is open so that the already raptured church can come back in glory, as we read in Colossians 3:4. So the door is opened again, the one coming on a white horse simply symbolizing triumphal procession, the Roman general returning from victory would ride up the Via Sacra(?) from the Forum

to the Temple Jupiter on a white steed demonstrating his victory.

So Christ comes as a conquering King with white garments because of the fact...the white horse, I should say, because of the fact that He is holy and pure, He is faithful and true, that is He is just and true to His word in executing judgment. His eyes are penetrating like a flame of fire, nothing escapes His judgment. His head has many crowns, He is sovereign over all sovereigns, completely sovereign. He had a name written that no man knew, but He Himself...and I will not comment on that and prove myself to be a fool, no one knows but Him so how could anyone comment on it? He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, it is the blood of many battles, it has been stained by many enemies defeated before. He has come in bloody vengeance long before, many times before throughout history. He comes in blood stains that have been gathered in other judgments and certainly gathered at the cross. His name is the Word of God, Jesus Christ, and the armies that were in heaven. And who are the armies that were in heaven? Angelic armies and the armies of saints and they are all coming, following on white horses. And the word "white" is Aleukon, dazzling, brilliant, not just white in the sense that we think of flat white, but dazzling brilliant shining white light.

And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword and with it He will smite the peoples. He's coming for judgment. He rules them with a rod of iron. He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God and written on His vesture, on His chest and on His thigh, a name King of Kings and Lord of Lords. So there the judge is identified. He is the faithful and true, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. And He comes with a host of heavenly beings in blazing unveiled glory and the world sees this in the midst of the blackness that has come about by the judgment of God. That is the coming of Jesus Christ.

Now when He comes, it is then that judgment takes place. It is too late then for any decisions to be made. And that's why the call goes out in the parable of the virgins, you better have oil before the bridegroom comes because when the bridegroom comes, if you don't have oil you can't run out and get it or the door will be what? Shut and you won't get in. There's no second chance anymore than there is after death. The Judge...

Now I want to make a comment or two about the time of judgment in verse 31. And we've already said that. "When the Son of Man shall come.." It is at the time of the Second Coming. And we have made that point, I think, relatively clear. Since we do not know when that is exactly, we have to be ready at all times. When He comes in His glory, that's the Second Coming, when He comes with all the holy angels with Him, not some but all of them. Ten thousand times ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, an innumerable number, when He comes with all of them and all of His glory and all of His saints and when He sits on His glory throne, when He sits on His glory throne, that's the time this judgment takes place. No one never needs to ask when is the judgment of the sheep and goats. It's obvious when it is. It couldn't be anymore obvious. It is when He comes in

His glory with His angels and takes His glory throne, overthrows all the armies of the world, all the sovereigns of the world and establishes His own Kingdom.

We don't know the exact moment. We know the period of time just following the Tribulation. The Great Tribulation will be triggered by the abomination of desolations. And then will break loose all the events described in Matthew 24 and in Revelation 6 to 18. As all of those things break loose in that period of time, you get closer and closer to the coming of Christ. Then the sky goes black and the sign appears. And some day and some hour around that time, the Son of Man will come. The exact day, the exact hour we don't know. But it will be at the Second Coming that the judgment takes place.

So, men will either be judged at the moment of their death, or if they live till the coming of Christ, be judged at the moment that He comes.

Now what is the place of judgment? Just very briefly, when the Son of Man will come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him and He shall sit on His glory throne. Where is His glory throne? Where is the throne promised to Jesus Christ? We need only to look at Isaiah and remind ourselves of a familiar passage, Isaiah 9:7. And it tells us there as the prophecy is given of the coming of the Messiah that a child will be born called "Wonderful Counselor, mighty God, Father of eternity, Prince of peace," then this in verse 7, Isaiah 9:7, "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end." In other words, He will reign in a thousand-year Kingdom but when the thousand-year Kingdom is over, He will continue to reign throughout all of eternity in the new heaven and the new earth. There will be a thousand-year Kingdom on this earth, and then an eternal kingdom in a new heaven and a new earth.

But as He reigns, He will reign--it says in Isaiah 9:7--upon the throne of David and upon His kingdom to order it and to establish it with justice and righteousness from henceforth, even forever. It is the throne of David. Where is the throne of David? It's on Zion. Where is Zion? In the city of Jerusalem. In Luke, when the child was to be born and the angel made the announcement, the angel said He will be great and He will be called the Son of the Highest and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of His kingdom there will be no end. He will have the throne of Jacob, He will reign in the city of Jerusalem. That will be a real historical event and an actual geographical location.

In fact, in Zechariah 14:4 it says when He comes His feet will stand in that day on the Mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives will split in the middle toward the great...toward the east, rather, and toward the west and there will be a very great valley and half of the mountain goes to the north and half of it goes to the south and a valley is created. So when Christ comes His feet touch the Mount of Olives, right across the hill from Zion, right across from the capital, from Jerusalem, from the temple mount, from the holy place and the Holy of Holies. The place then

will be Jerusalem.

And you say, "Well, what is this about touching the mountain and splitting that Zechariah talks about?" He creates a great valley, a massive valley is created in the Second Coming that stretches all the way from the north parts of the south, as the mountains are divided, and all the way from the west to the east, this huge valley is created right there. Which means that Jerusalem is going to be devastated as it exists now and restructured for millennial glory.

What is that for? Why is that for? Why is that valley created? Listen to the prophecy of Joel chapter 3 verse 13, "Put in the sickle for the harvest is ripe, come get down for the press is full, the vats overflow, the wickedness is great." Harvest always speaks of judgment. And so, here is a time for judgment. Here is the time for the nations to be judged. Verse 11, "Assemble yourselves and come, all ye peoples, and gather yourselves together." And then verse 14, Joel 3:14, "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision." Now listen, it is not a valley where they make a decision, it is a valley where God makes a decision. There will be no time for decisions then by men. The decision is whether you go into the Kingdom or you're shut out, and that's God's decision, not men. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision, for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision, it isn't man's day, it's the Lord's day.

"The sun, the moon are darkened, the stars withdraw their shining," see, He's describing the same event. "The Lord roars out of Zion," there He is in Zion again. "His voice comes from Jerusalem, the heavens, the earth shake, the Lord will be the hope of His people and the strength of the children of Israel and you will know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion My holy mountain, and then shall Jerusalem be holy and there shall no strangers pass through her anymore." In other words, there will be the instant sanctification of the land, the instant sanctification of the city, that holy mountain which God has designed for Himself.

So the Judge is the Lord Jesus Christ. The time is at His Second Coming and the place is Jerusalem. And there will be an actual throne and an actual ruling by a Christ who will come in like manner as you have seen Him go, that is physically, bodily, to reign on this earth.

And then finally, who are the subjects of the judgment? Verse 32, "Before Him shall He gather all the nations," it says in the Authorized. The word is Aethna, it means peoples, all the people. "And He will separate them one from another as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." All people. All what people? All the people that are still alive. All the people that are still alive.

You say, "Well, who are these people?" Well, they didn't go in the Rapture of the church because they were unredeemed, so they were left in the Tribulation. But during the Tribulation, Revelation 7 says a hundred and forty-four thousand Jews will preach the gospel all over. During the Tribulation, Revelation 11 says two witnesses will proclaim the message. And then it tells us there will be an angel who will preach the everlasting gospel all over the globe so they'll hear it from men and angels

as well. During that period, people will respond to the gospel, an innumerable number of Gentiles will be saved, it says in Revelation 7. All Israel will be saved, it says in Romans 11.

So during that period there will be saved Jews and saved Gentiles. Those people will be persecuted by the Antichrist. Many of them will survive his persecution. So they will be alive at the end. There will also be the ungodly. The ungodly will be devastated by the judgments of God during that period.

Some of them will survive. So at the end of the Tribulation time you have saved and unsaved people, from all over the globe, who have survived the judgment of God and the holocaust of Antichrist. They have lived through the plagues. They have lived through the disasters, the diseases, the wars, the wrath of Christ and the wrath of Antichrist. They have lived through the judgment on the armies at Armageddon and there are still multitudes, multitudes left.

But all of those who are left who haven't faced God in death to be judged will now face Him in His Second Coming. All the people. The word Aethna means peoples. So either a person faces God in death for judgment or at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And if you're counting on waiting till then, remember this. It's too late then. When the bridegroom comes if you don't have oil in your lamp, the door will be shut and you'll never get in. There's no second chance. And what happens here is irreversible, as verse 46 says, "Some go into everlasting punishment, others into everlasting life." So what happens here is irreversible.

Now the actual judgment itself we'll look at next time. One of the most insightful fascinating provocative and helpful passages we'll ever study. I trust you'll be prepared for that next Lord's day. Let's pray.

Our Father, again we come to You because we realize the seriousness with which we have treated Your Word today. You have spoken, not us. And we have endeavored in love to speak the truth that men might be warned. We thank You, O God, for Your graciousness, for Your generosity in providing for us a sacrifice so that men need not fall into judgment. Indeed, it is not Your will that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. It is God our Savior who will have all men come to the knowledge of the truth. And so we thank You, O God, that by grace You have reached down in the midst of our fallenness as a doomed race rushes to eternal tragedy and provided a salvation by which we may escape, and not only escape but enter into eternal blessedness. We thank You for that. We bless Your name, Amen

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