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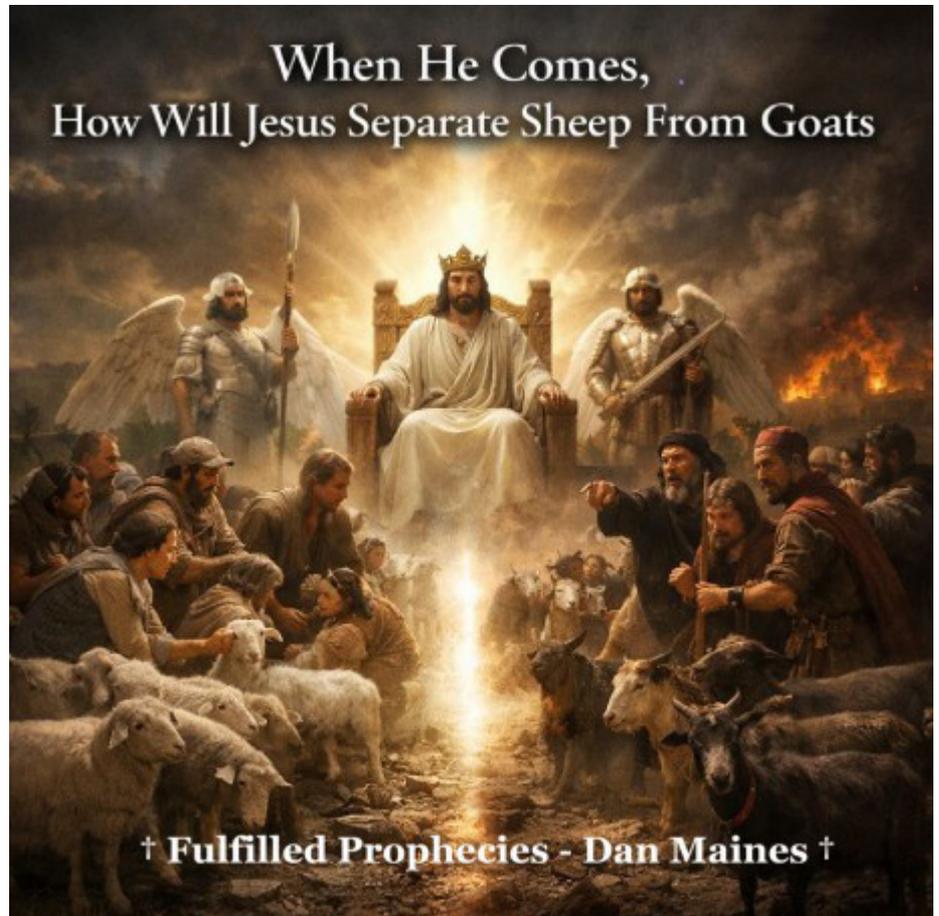
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When He Comes, How Will Jesus Separate Sheep From Goats



By Dan Maines

When He Comes, How Will Jesus Separate Sheep From Goats

Introduction

† When He comes, how will Jesus separate sheeps from goats, saints from sinners?

† Many assume this refers to a future end of time sorting of bodies.

† Jesus, however, located this separation within His own generation and tied it to covenant judgment.

† Scripture consistently shows this separation already took place through judgment, not through a future physical division of humanity.

Matthew 25:31-33

"But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, just as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left.

† Jesus is describing a coming in judgment, not a physical descent to earth. (Isaiah 19:1; Matthew 24:30)

† All the nations refers to covenantally accountable peoples, not every human who ever lived. (Matthew 10:5-6; Matthew 23:34-36)

† The separation is functional and covenantal, not biological. (John 3:18; John 3:36)

† Matthew 25 is a continuation of the same discourse that began in Matthew 24, spoken to the same audience, about the same coming, within the same time frame. (Matthew 24:1-3; Matthew 24:30-34)

† Since Matthew 24 explicitly limits fulfillment to that generation, the separation in Matthew 25 cannot be pushed beyond it. (Matthew 24:34; Matthew 16:27-28)

Matthew 25:34-40

"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation 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; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to 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? And when did we

see You as a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of Mine, you did it for Me.'

† Sheep are identified by their response to Christ as revealed in their treatment of His brethren. (Matthew 10:40-42; Matthew 12:49-50)

† This is covenant faithfulness, not works based salvation. (Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:5)

† These actions reflect allegiance to Jesus during His earthly ministry and the apostolic era. (Acts 9:4-5; 1 John 4:20-21)

Matthew 25:41-46

"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, you accursed people, into the eternal fire which has been 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; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or as a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it for one of the least of these, you did not do it for Me, either.' These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

† Goats represent those who rejected Christ and His messengers. (Matthew 23:37-38; John 15:18-20)

† Eternal punishment describes covenant removal, not endless conscious torment. (Daniel 9:26-27; Hebrews 8:13)

† Eternal life describes covenant inheritance in the established kingdom. (John 5:24; Colossians 1:13)

John 5:28-29

Do not be amazed at this; for a time is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come out: those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the bad deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

† John 5 speaks of two outcomes, life and judgment. (John 5:24; John 3:18)

† Jesus said this hour was coming and already present. (John 5:25; 1 John 2:18)

† Resurrection language describes covenant transition, not physical resurrection of corpses. (Ephesians 2:1-6; Colossians 2:12-13)

John 5:24-25

"Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

Truly, truly, I say to you, a time is coming and even now has arrived, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

† John 5 speaks of two outcomes, life and judgment. (John 3:36; John 12:48)

† Jesus said this hour was coming and already present. (Luke 17:20-21; Matthew 12:28)

† Resurrection language describes covenant transition, not physical resurrection of corpses. (Romans 6:4; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

Revelation 21:7-8

The one who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and sexually immoral persons, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone,

which is the second death."

† Revelation presents the same covenant separation.
(Revelation 2:7; Revelation 3:5)

† Overcomers inherit life, rejecters remain outside. (Revelation 3:12; Hebrews 10:38-39)

† This is covenant status, not geography. (Hebrews 12:22-24; Ephesians 2:19-22)

Revelation 22:14-15

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life, and may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral persons, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

† Revelation presents the same covenant separation.
(Revelation 7:14; Revelation 19:8)

† Overcomers inherit life, rejecters remain outside. (John 10:27-28; 1 John 5:4-5)

† This is covenant status, not geography. (Isaiah 35:8-10; Galatians 4:26)

Historical References

† Josephus documented the covenant judgment on Jerusalem in AD 70. (Matthew 23:36-38; Luke 21:20-24)

† Eusebius connected Jesus' judgment parables to first century fulfillment. (Matthew 24:1-3; Matthew 24:34)

† Clement of Alexandria taught life and death as relational to Christ. (John 17:3; 1 John 5:11-12)

† Irenaeus spoke of judgment and inheritance as realities tied to Christ's reign, not postponed to the end of world history. (Daniel 7:13-14; Psalm 110:1)

† Lactantius described the destruction of Jerusalem as divine judgment validating Christ's words and authority. (Matthew 24:2;

Luke 19:43-44)

How It Applies To Us Today

† We aren't waiting for a future separation. (John 5:24; Colossians 1:13)

† In Christ, we've already passed from death into life. (John 5:24; Ephesians 2:4-6)

† Our confidence is rooted in fulfilled judgment and established kingdom. (Hebrews 12:28; Matthew 16:27-28)

† Because the separation is fulfilled, we live free from fear driven religion and rest in the completed work of Christ. (Romans 8:1; Hebrews 10:14)

† Our calling isn't to await judgment, but to walk faithfully as those already counted among the righteous. (Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 4:17-18)

Q And A Appendix

Q Was the sheep and goat separation future?

A No, it was fulfilled through covenant judgment in the first century, Matthew 25; John 5:24-25.

Q What defines eternal life?

A Faith in Christ and covenant inclusion, John 5:24.

Q Is Revelation about physical locations?

A No, it describes covenant access and exclusion, Revelation 21:7-8; Revelation 22:14-15.

Q How do we know Matthew 25 shares the same timing as Matthew 24?

A Because Jesus never changed the subject, the audience, or the time indicators, and Matthew 24 ends with this generation while Matthew 25 continues the same teaching, Matthew 24:34; Matthew 25:1.

Q Did Jesus say this separation would happen in His lifetime?

A Yes. Jesus repeatedly tied judgment and coming language to that generation, Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 24:34; John 5:25.

Q If this was fulfilled, why do people still talk about a future separation?

A Because later traditions disconnected Jesus' words from their first century audience and timing, despite clear statements of nearness and imminence, Matthew 10:23; James 5:8-9.

Q Does fulfilled separation mean there is no accountability today?

A No. Accountability remains, but not through covenant judgment. Believers live under grace and discipline, not condemnation, Romans 8:1; Hebrews 12:6.

Q How does this view honor the authority of Jesus?

A It takes His time statements seriously and affirms that everything He said would happen did happen, Matthew 24:35; John 19:30.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:24-25, 28-29; Revelation 21:7-8; Revelation 22:14-15

† Josephus; Eusebius; Clement of Alexandria; Irenaeus; Lactantius

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