

SHEEP/GOATS [6/18/2017]

³¹ 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:

³² 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:

³³ And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

³⁴ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: * * *



⁴¹ Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: (Matthew 25:31-34, 41).



Any sincere, honest reading of that scripture belies the “God loves everybody” lie. There are obviously two groups or sets of people described here; they come from around the world; and, they are specifically and carefully separated into their separate camps (labeled “sheep” and “goats”). Good things await the sheep; bad things await the goats. The sheep are blessed and loved. The goats are cursed and left to everlasting fire.

Today, we will look a bit closer at these two distinct groups and some of their characteristics as reflected in Scripture. But before doing that, let’s take just a brief moment to note some natural attributes of these animals:

- Sheep: Good hearing; excellent sense of smell; flock-prone (become stressed and agitated when separated from other flock members); naturally inclined to be led; superb vision with a visual field ranging from 298-325 degrees; gentle; meek; obedient; quiet; sure-footed; social; gregarious.
- While goats have admirable qualities (intelligent, sensitive, playful), there is more. Goats are capricious, unpredictable, devious

and contrary. It is not unusual to see a goat with his head through a fence, straining to reach the grass that is always greener on the other side. Goats are never content with what they have. They are experts in opening gates and squeezing through small gaps because they hate to be confined. Fences that will handle sheep, cattle, and horses will not hold goats. They will work tirelessly to spring themselves from any situation they deem inhibiting. Consequently, goats are not good followers. Excellent night vision; they love the dark.

Now, back to Scripture: Isaiah 43:1-3 announces:

But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

²When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

³For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.



Apparent from the words themselves are these truisms:

- These sentiments are directed exclusively to the Lord's people (e.g., "I have redeemed thee"; "thou art mine"; etc.);
- Those people will have many challenges of divers types in this life (floods, fires and so on);
- By His protections, God's people will not be scarred or harmed by those difficulties to any fatal extent (no drowning, no deadly burns).

4

Now, in addition to these promises having satisfying application to the individual sheep of the Lord's flock, given the context and the historical application, Isaiah is also likely addressing the Jewish people as a group. Consider Barnes:

"But now" - This expression shows that this chapter is connected with the preceding. The sense is, "Though God has punished the nation, and showed them his displeasure, yet now he will have mercy, and will deliver them."

"That created thee" - The word 'thee' is used here evidently in a collective sense as denoting the Jewish people. It is used because the names 'Jacob' and 'Israel' in the singular number are applied to the people. The word 'created' is used here to denote the idea that, as the special people of God, they owed their origin to him, as the universe owed its origin to his creative power. It means that, as a people, their institutions, laws, customs, and privileges, and whatever they had that was valuable, were

all to be traced to him. The same word occurs in [Isaiah 43:7](#), and again in [Isaiah 43:15](#), 'I am Yahweh - the Creator of Israel, your king.'

“Fear not” - This is to be understood as addressed to them when suffering the evils of the captivity of Babylon. Though they were captives, and had suffered long, yet they had nothing to fear in regard to their final extinction as a people. They should be redeemed from captivity, and restored again to the land of their fathers. The argument here is, that they were the chosen people of God; that he had organized them as his people for great and important purposes, and that those purposes must be accomplished. It would follow from that, that they must be redeemed from their captivity, and be restored again to their land.

Like so many Old Testament passages, this too seems to have a dual application; individual and group. The commentators concur, so (by way of example) we find Jamieson-Fausset-Brown considers this text, at least in part, to be telling us these are “(p)romises to protect and enlarge the church.”

In either event, we see here God’s promise to be an ever-present help in trouble to his people in all times and places. Brooks has these comforting thoughts on this passage, courtesy of his most-unique style:

The people of the Lord should be very thankful for His presence with them in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses. . . . [T]his divine presence is a great mercy. It is a special mercy, it is a distinguishing mercy, it is a big-bellied mercy – which has many mercies in its womb. It is a mercy-greatening mercy; it greatens all the mercies we enjoy. It is a mercy-sweetening mercy; it sweetens health, strength, riches, honors, trade, relations, etc. It is a soul-mercy, a mercy which reaches the soul, which cheers the soul, which lifts up the soul, which quiets the soul, which satisfies the soul, and which will go to heaven with the soul.

Attest these confirming and like-minded verses of scripture:

There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. (Joshua 1:5)

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1)

The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. (Psalm 46:7)



Now, jumping over a little stream here, let's look at one result the elect of God experience from these salvation-related promises contrasted with the non-believers.

Unto you therefore which believe he is precious. (1 Peter 2:7)

Another version renders this verse: **Unto you therefore who believe, He is precious.** Christ is only precious to those who believe, but he is in fact precious to those favored people. As Christ is God the Father's chief jewel, so He is the choicest jewel to each member of his flock. Every member of the throng that worships the Lamb prizes Christ above all duties, privileges, mercies, graces, contentments and enjoyments. Each

citizen of the **holy nation** (1 Peter 2:9) loves Christ for His person, His personal excellency, His personal beauty and His personal glory.

But what about the folks described in the following passage?

And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither?

Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. (John 6:25-26)



These are those who reside outside the gate. They are Christians in word only, with self-interest serving as their motivation. Matthew Poole lays the axe to the root of this tree with these stinging words:

*They asked him, **When camest thou hither?** A curious and impertinent question, to which he doth not think fit to give an apposite answer, but at first letteth them know, that he knew their hearts, and what designs they had in following him; which was not to see the miraculous effects of the Divine power, the credentials of his commission from heaven, and to receive him as the true Messiah, and believe his doctrine; but they came upon so low an account as to be fed by him.*

Barnes has some similar thoughts that are worthy of our consideration:

The miracles which Jesus performed were proofs that he came from God. To seek him because they had seen them, and were convinced by them that he was the Messiah, would have been proper; but to follow him simply because their wants were supplied was mere selfishness of a gross kind. Yet, alas! many seek religion from no better motive than this. They suppose that it will add to their earthly happiness, or they seek only to escape from suffering or from the convictions of conscience, or they seek for heaven only as a place of enjoyment, and regard religion as valuable only for this. All this is mere selfishness. Religion does not forbid our regarding our own happiness, or seeking it in any proper way; but when this is the only or the prevailing motive, it is evident that we have never yet sought God aright. We are aiming at the loaves and fishes, and not at the honor of God and the good of his kingdom; and if this is the only or the main motive of our entering the church, we cannot be Christians.

When the power and majesty of God is seen aright, all pride and perceived inherent self-worth dissolves. Gone is the need to “discover” one’s self. The mental health industry – that flourishes in current America – is seen for what it is: a money-grubbing business that profits on human misery. The children of God instead wisely adhere to the sample given by Abraham, the spiritual father of the faithful:

**And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, which am but dust and ashes:
(Genesis 18:27)**

Here you have this man who abandoned Ur for the kingdom of heaven, perhaps the greatest believer in the ancient world, accounting himself but dust and ashes. I tell you solemnly “that’s a good way to think of yourself” and be glad if you can!



Brooks crafted these words from that small but powerful verse:

Dust notes the baseness of his original; and ashes notes his deserving to be burnt to ashes, if God should deal with him in justice rather than in mercy. The nearer any soul draws to God, the more humble will that soul lie before God. None so near God as the angels, nor any so humble before God as the angels.

But all of this is only so much gibberish to those amongst whom we live in these closing days. That word “gibberish” is a great word here. It means “meaningless or unintelligible talk or writing.” In other words, to the overwhelming majority of our fellow earthlings, what I have said today is of no substantive spiritual meaning or value whatsoever, and makes virtually no sense.

In contrast to Abraham’s wise words, the goats go on in their pride and look to their own works, which end in ruins.



The old writers spoke of a “curse of unsatisfiability” which lies upon the creature.

I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity.

² I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?

³ I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.

⁴ I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:

⁵ I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:

⁶ I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:

⁷ I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:

⁸ I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

⁹ So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.

¹⁰ And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.

¹¹ Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 2:1-11)

We often speak of America's imminent ruin. There is no fear of God before her eyes, and no respect for the great God. The passage from Ecclesiastes I just read well describes our surroundings. This once-great nation has made an idol of material things and entertainments of all sorts. Consequently this church is pursuing what we call our "God hates your Idols" on-going tour.

I recently ran across a ditty that fits the USA to a "T" –

Pleasure is a beautiful harlot sitting in her chariot;

The four wheels are pride, gluttony, lust and foolishness;

The two horses are prosperity and abundance;

The two drivers are idleness and security;

*Her attendants and followers are guilt, grief, shame and often
death and damnation!*

As Jesus preached to his contemporaries, by God's strength and so long as He will, we do likewise, and we say this to all who will listen that you people out there have a **whore's forehead** and you refuse **to be ashamed**. (Jeremiah 3:3).

**Were they ashamed when they had committed
abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could
they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the
time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.
(Jeremiah 6:15)**



Note the verse presupposes the commission of abominations; that's no longer open to debate or discussion. And is that not true for this adulterous and sinful generation in which we live? The issue discussed is, are these people at all ashamed, or even able to blush, by their filthy behavior? Thomas Brooks had some insightful things to say about this passage:

*They had sinned away shame, instead of being ashamed of sin. Continuance in sin had quite banished all sense of sin and all shame for sin; so that they would not allow nature to draw her veil of blushing before their great abominations. How applicable these scriptures are to the present time, I will leave the prudent reader to judge. * * **

Ah, England, England! What pride, luxury, lasciviousness, licentiousness, wantonness, drunkenness, cruelties, injustice, oppressions, fornications, adulteries, falsehoods, hyprocrisies, atheisms, horrid blasphemies and hellish impieties are now to be found rampant in the midst of you!

If only he knew! Surely Brooks and others of scenes gone by would be stunned at today's societies. And stepping back for the 30,000 foot view, please observe how far the modern mindset is from Abraham's prudent sentiments.

To close, let's consider the power that safely draws and removes the sheep of God's fold from this "goat-scape" that surrounds us. It is no less than the power presented here:

⁵⁰ Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

⁵¹ And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

⁵² And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

⁵³ And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. (Matthew 27:50-53)

It is fair to say some Bible commentators freak out on this text, especially verses 52 and 53. Most note there is no collateral testimony elsewhere in the Bible supporting this story. Others say it only means the bodies of the dead were exposed because of the mentioned earthquake. But this simple, direct narrative is clear and undeniable. Some of the Lord's elect who had recently died were resurrected, came up out of their graves, and walked into Jerusalem. I say they had recently died because they were recognized or known by those to whom they appeared upon this arising. So, for example, we have this from Barnes:

And many bodies of the saints arose - Of course, it is not known who these were, nor what became of them. It is probable that they were persons who had recently died, and they appear to have been known in Jerusalem; at least, had the ancient saints risen, they would not have been known, and would not so soon have been credited as those who had recently died.

And please see there were “many bodies” that arose. It looks like there was a great company involved here. This was a sample of God’s great power, and a spectacular sample it was. It certainly gets the attention of anybody who honestly reads it. Imagine the attention it garnered with those who eye-witnessed it.

Yet it’s the same power that calls forth God’s children from the wicked, decayed and putrid surroundings of this world. It took that type of power to separate the sheep from the goats.



Left hand; right hand.

