

I mentioned last week, that within Matthew 25:31-46 we have the fullest and clearest description of end-time events, in the whole of Scripture. In vv31-33 we have the Judge and the Judged; in vv34-45 the standard of judgment (the works of both the sheep and goats); and in v46 we have a summary of the sentences.

Thus, in coming to our theme, the Judgment of Works, I want to suggest three things about works; the need for works, the nature of works, and the reward of works.

- I. The Need for Works
- II. The Nature of Works
- III. The Reward of Works

I. The Need for Works

1. By this I intend to prove, because judgment will be based on works, nobody will be saved without them.
2. Good works are necessary and not merely optional—put another way, nobody goes to heaven without them (thus, I want to briefly examine 5 passages that teach the necessity of good works, and then make some clarifications).
3. (1) Matt.25—vv34-35—"Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in."
4. Verses 41-42—"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink.'"
5. In both of these passages I want you to notice the little word "for"—v35—"for I was hungry and you gave Me food" v42—"for I was hungry and you gave Me no food."
6. In other words, our Savior is providing evidence as to why some people are blessed and others are cursed.
7. Verse 34—"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you...for I was hungry and you gave Me food" v41—"Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food."
8. (2) Ecc.12:13-14—"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil."
9. Notice, King Solomon anticipated a future day, wherein every person will stand before God in judgment.
10. Some of these people will be good (and have done good), whereas others will be bad (and have done bad).
11. (3) Jn.5:28-29—"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."
12. Notice again, our Savior speaks of a future day of judgment, wherein all men (good and bad) will be judged.
13. Those who've done good go the heaven, and those who've done evil go to hell—two types of people and two destinies.

14. (4) Rom.2:5-11—"But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds; eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God."
15. I don't think Paul could have put it any clearer—there's a day of judgment, wherein all men will be judged.
16. God will render to each one according to his deeds—those who did evil will be punished and those who did good will be rewarded.
17. (5) 2Cor.5:9-11—"Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences."
18. Notice, the single judgement that Paul anticipated included all men—those who've done good and those who've done bad.
19. In other words—there will be good people and bad people—good people do good and bad people do bad.
20. Thus, having proved that judgment will be based on works, here I want to answer the question, why?
21. (a) Judgment will be based on works because good works are a goal of salvation—thus, those who lack works lack salvation.
22. Eph.2:8-10—"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."
23. God predestined the whole of our salvation—this includes our justification, sanctification, and glorification.
24. By the grace of God, we've been recreated in Christ Jesus for good works which have been predestined.
25. Thus, because every part of our salvation has been predestined, every elect person will experience every part of this salvation (including sanctification which includes good works).
26. You see, it's not wrong to place works within the equation of salvation, it simply depends on where you place them.
27. Rome put's it like this—faith in Christ plus works equals salvation—this of course is salvation by works.
28. Some supposed protestants put it like this—faith in Christ equals salvation that may or may not work (this too is wrong).
29. The Bible (and classic Reformed theology) put's it like this—faith in Christ equals salvation that works.
30. (b) Judgment will be based on works because good works are the pathway to life—thus, those who lack works are on the wrong path.
31. Matt.7:13-14—"Enter by the narrow gate...because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."
32. The "narrow gate" is either Christ Himself or conversion to Christ, but either way, it leads to "a narrow way that leads to life."

33. That is, a narrow way that leads to heaven—the way to heaven is narrow and difficult (filled with opposition and temptation).
34. But the reason it's narrow is because it's marked by true holiness (which entails a life of good works).
35. John Colquhoun—"Good works are necessary as they are our walking in the way which leads to heaven. Jesus Christ is the way. Faith and holiness are our walking in Him as the way. This way, accordingly, is called 'the way of holiness,' or 'the holy way,' inasmuch as none can walk in Christ other than by faith, and by that holiness of heart and life which is the obedience of faith.' As no man can arrive at heaven but by Christ, so 'without holiness,' or walking in Him, 'no man shall see the Lord.'"
36. (c) Judgment will be based on works because good works are the evidence of faith—thus, those who lack works, lack faith.
37. Because faith is something that's invisible—you can't see faith—we can argue its presence by its effects.
38. Jas.2:14-18—"What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."
39. Notice: first, the nature of works (vv15-16); second, the necessity of works (v14, vv15-18)—works are certain evidence of true and saving faith.
40. John Colquhoun—"Obedience is a necessary evidence of justifying and saving faith. Good works are works of faith, works performed in faith, and proceeding from it as the living principle of them. Whatever seeming evidences of true faith, then, a man may have, they are all to be regarded as counterfeit and deceptive if he does not, at the same time, love and practice good works."

II. The Nature of Works

1. Let me address the works of the sheep, by answering three questions: what did they do, who did they do it to, and why did they do it?
2. (1) What did they do? The sheep feed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, housing to the stranger, clothing to the naked, and visited the sick and imprisoned (vv35-36).
3. They practically showed love to others—they were charitable, benevolent, and compassionate to others.
4. (2) Who did they do it to? Within verses the righteous ask when did we do these acts of kindness or charity?
5. V40—"And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'"
6. That is, our Savior is specifically describing their acts of kindness and charity toward the brethren (other Christians).
7. They showed them love when they were hungry and thirsty—they showed them hospitality when they visited—they showed the compassion when they were sick and imprisoned (for their faith in Christ).
8. That is, because Christ identifies with His beloved and needy people, to do these things to them is to do them to Christ himself.
9. Thus, these words of our Savior do not justify the mindset that the essence of Christianity is social justice.

10. The purpose of the church isn't to fix all the financial and social needs of the world (as if it were a bank).
11. But what our Savior is specifically referring to is, the sacrificial, selfless, and sincere love of the brethren.
12. Now this doesn't mean, we should never show such love for those in the world (who are not Christians).
13. But it simply means, we are to foremostly be concerned with the needs of our brethren—first, in our own local church, then the church universal.
14. Gal.6:10—"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."
15. (3) Why did they do it? They ultimately did these things because they love Christ—to show love to His people is to show love to Him.
16. Mk.9:41—"For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."
17. This of course doesn't deny that we actually love the brethren, but the ultimate reason we love the brethren, is because we love Christ.
18. Thus, all of these things (feeding, helping, housing, and visiting), are all expressions of love for Christ.
19. Verse 40—"Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me."
20. In other words, Christ so identifies with His people, that to do these things to them is to do them to Him.
21. Question 1—With respect to the righteous, why focus on acts of charity? That is, why does Christ focus on our actions toward our brethren, as evidence of our faith?
22. Why not describe our prayers or Bible reading—Why not describe our preaching or our evangelism?
23. Well, simply put, our Savior puts our acts of charity as an example of all our works both to God and man.
24. George Swinnock—"These works of charity are by a synecdoche put for new obedience, and all the good works of a Christian's life. Though Christ mention those as the test of men at that day, yet He does not hereby exclude others. The Scripture abundantly proves that other graces and duties shall be rewarded at that day."
25. Thus, our Savior focuses upon acts of charity because they are acts or works that all Christians can do.
26. Not all Christians will become missionaries to China or Africa—not all Christians will become pastors—but all Christians can, and do, love the brethren.
27. Jn.13:35—"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"—in that you've feed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick and imprisoned.
28. Question 2—With respect to the wicked, why focus on sins of omission? That is, why does our Savior focus on what they failed to do?
29. Well, let me say at the outset, Scripture everywhere affirms the wicked will also give account for what they did.
30. But our Savior underscores what they refused to do, as evidence they lacked faith and love (for Him and others).
31. The law not only forbids things but it also commands things—there are sins of commission as well as omission.
32. And thus, the wicked will not only be condemned because they acted contrary to God's law, but because they failed to comply with that law.

33. Nothing they did was done out of true love for Christ—they didn't love God's people because they didn't love Him.
34. In fact, in most cases they despised and even hated God's people—they mocked them and ridiculed them.
35. Here's the point—sinners will not only give account for the sins of commission but also sins of omission.
36. This can be illustrated by the parable of the unfaithful steward—remember, he was punished for what he did not do (he failed to improve upon his master's money).
37. He didn't still his money or misspend it—he merely failed to improve it—he was guilty of a sin of omission.

III. The Reward of Works

1. As we will see more fully next week, God rewards the works of His people (and in closing, I want to suggest three things about this reward).
2. (1) It's a just reward—by this I mean, as God has promised to reward our works, it's just that He do so.
3. Heb.6:10—"For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister."
4. First, the nature of works—"you have ministered to the saints"; second, the reason for works—"you have shown toward His name"; third, the reward of works—"God is not unjust to forget your works and labor of love."
5. (2) It's a public reward—the righteous are rewarded publically, as an open vindication of their character.
6. While they lived on earth they may have been despised and mocked, but on this day, they shall be openly praised.
7. (3) It's a gracious reward—by this I mean, the works of the righteous do not earn or merit a single thing.
8. In fact, this is precisely what our Savior says, v34—"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."
9. The blessing of eternal life is given to us as an inheritance—an inheritance purposed from eternity past.
10. A child doesn't do anything to receive an inheritance—they are merely born into a family as a son or daughter.
11. This inheritance isn't earned by our works—it was "prepared for us from the foundation of the world."
12. From eternity the Father chose a people as a love-gift for His Son, who came as His only obedient Son.
13. Thus, because of this obedience, we've become children of God, who are now given a gracious inheritance.
14. All of this was prepared for us from eternity—faith, repentance, justification, and yes, even our sanctification.
15. This means, our faith, justification, reconciliation, and adoption, are all evidenced by our sanctification.
16. When we stand before Christ's throne in the final day, our works of love will prove we've been loved before the foundation of the world.
17. And thus, these good works won't be a cause of pride, for they're simply the evidence of God's gracious salvation.

18. From eternity past God purposed our good works—in time He enables us to perform them—and then in the day of judgment, He'll reward them.
19. But He won't reward them merely as our works, but as they actually are, the evidence of His grace in our lives—He highlights our works, because they are but the tip of the iceberg with reference to His amazing grace.