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After the Resurrection, there is the Return of Christ; Matt 25:31-46

GPBC

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Introduction – After the resurrection of Christ, the next big history shaping event on the divine calendar is the return of Christ. At Christ's return, many things will happen, and today's text describes one of the events that accompany His return. One of the great lessons of life is that all things come to an end. Seasons of life, events and occasions, even life here in this world comes to an end. But we tend to lose sight that this world will come to an end. History will conclude at its God-designated point. Life and the world as we know them are not infinite. There are far fewer generations to come after us than have gone before us. Today's text is a glaring reminder to us today that we are headed to a great ending that will unfold into a great beginning and a new eternal destination for every one of us. This existence has an expiration date, and that date is marked by the return of Christ.

- I. Christ Returns in His Glory (vv31-33)
  - a. Jesus says, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory." This coming event is just as certain as every other event the Bible promises.
    - i. The Bible promised the coming of the Messiah, being born of a virgin – and Jesus came just as God promised in His Word.
    - ii. The Bible promised the Suffering Servant would be slain to save God's people from their sins – and Jesus died on the cross freeing us from sin just as God promised in His Word.
    - iii. The Bible promised that Christ would rise in victory over death three days after His death – and Jesus rose just as God promised in His Word.
    - iv. If everything else God promised concerning our redemption has occurred just as He promised, we should have every ounce of confidence that can be held in our hearts that His return is just as sure and certain. Redemption remains incomplete until Christ returns and carries all of His people to heaven.
  - b. And when He returns, He returns in His rightful glory. No longer will His flesh veil His deity. His radiant and beautiful glory will be on full display. No eye that beholds Him, believer or unbeliever, will have any doubt as to His sovereign power and majesty. He came once to serve and to save; He is coming again to judge and to reign.

- c. And when He returns, He will be surrounded by the mighty host of heaven. When Christ first came, those lowly shepherds were given a glimpse at the armies of heaven when the sky lit up with the heavenly host. When He returns, the whole earth will witness as heaven's warriors accompany the King into earth's realm.
  - d. And when He returns, He will occupy His glorious throne. In that very instant, every nation and leader and dictator and warlord will have no doubt whatsoever who is in charge.
  - e. And when He returns, there will be a great gathering followed by a great separation.
    - i. Christ will gather all the nations before Him. Every people group and every person in every people group will stand before the Lord of heaven and earth. That's a gathering for which you will be present whether you want to be there or not, whether you're ready to be there or not.
    - ii. And then the great separation will occur that will from that point throughout eternity never be undone. To use an imagery His listeners would recognize, Jesus said it will be like when a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.
    - iii. Jesus will organize humanity into two vast multitudes, and I believe it will happen in an instant. Everyone of us in this room and everyone whose gone before us will be placed in one of two distinct categories. And where you find yourself in that great separation will have absolutely nothing to do with the color of your skin, the level of your education, the diversity of your portfolio, or the number of your followers.
    - iv. The sheep, the people of God, will be placed on His right. And the goats, those who rejected God and Christ, will be placed on His left. And no act of man or power in this world can stop what comes next. We would do well to let that sink in.
- II. What the Sheep and the Goats Have in Common
- a. We've already observed a few similarities with the sheep and the goats, the believers and the unbelievers. All are gathered and all are separated. Christ's sovereignty over us will be clearly displayed. Notice we're not asked for our opinion or preference of grouping. He separates us according to our relationship with Him.

- b. And the standard whereby our relationship with Christ is measured is the same, and take careful notice, the standard of measure has nothing to do with what we say we believe or what we claim to have done or the certificate of any decision we have made. The standard is the presence or absence of the evidence of faith in our lives. That's why James would write later in his epistle faith without works is dead. If our lives do not testify that we are followers of Christ it's because we are not followers of Christ. Our standing with Christ will be measured by how we lived, not by what we said we believed.
    - i. Jesus doesn't ask did you walk the aisle? Did you pray the prayer? Did you make a decision? Did you join the church? In fact, Jesus doesn't any questions. He places us where we belong according to the witness of our lives.
    - ii. Parents I can't impress this on our hearts enough! We pray and pray for our kids to make a profession of faith in Christ, but once they do we breathe a sigh of relief as if they just crossed the finish line, when in fact, if it is true faith, they just started the race! Now we disciple them to grow and make their faith their priority! Our kids and grandkids are not on their way to heaven if they live like hell, totally absorbed in self and the world – and neither are we.
  - c. Notice also the sheep and the goats both have an astonished response to Christ's assessment. They both answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and thirsty and naked and sick and in prison."
  - d. The difference is the sheep are surprised to learn that their everyday normal living life for Christ was so very eternally meaningful. They were just doing what believers do and Christ took those selfless deeds of love as deeds not just done FOR Him but as TO Him.
    - i. The goats are surprised for a far different reason because they were so self-assured and self-confident that they had God figured out. When their selfish pride and arrogance are unveiled, it's shocking – but it's too late.
- III. What Separates the Sheep from the Goats
- a. It's how they lived their lives. But let's see two further points.
  - b. First, notice with me that the Son of Man welcomes the righteous into the kingdom on the basis of normal Christian living. This should

be extremely encouraging to us today. It's not the spotlight activities or the big personalities that evidence faith. It's rather the often overlooked, underappreciated, under-applauded deeds of love and kindness that display genuine faith. It's not the upfront but the behind the scenes. It's not the pastor! It's the nursery volunteer and the audio and video volunteers.

- i. You see the goats have no time for the things that don't draw attention to themselves, but the sheep just love to serve.
- c. Second, there are various ways our lives evidence true faith, but here Jesus draws attention to how we treat other believers. "as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."
  - i. You see from the sheep's perspective, if you truly love Jesus, you will love His people.
  - ii. That's not the way of the goats. They harbor ill will toward believers. They look down on other believers. They only associate with believers when it somehow benefits them.
  - iii. We better take note how we view and talk about and refuse to forgive and neglect God's children for whom Jesus died.

#### IV. The Finality of the Final Judgment

- a. To the sheep Jesus says, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." But to the goats Jesus says, "Depart from me, you cursed, into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."
  - i. You see there is the great separation of unbelievers from believers in v32, but there is the greater separation of unbelievers from God in v41.
- b. Notice two things in v46. There is eternal punishment and there is eternal life. Both are forever. III. Annihilationism.
- c. Secondly, note that everything present in hell is absent in heaven, and everything present in heaven is absent in hell. Make a list. Isa. 51:11 But the main point is this: God is joyfully present in heaven but His absence is painfully felt in hell.

Conclusion – Cling to Christ today. Give Him your life right now and then live out your salvation with courageous faith and love for God's people. And when He returns you will be gathered with the sheep.