

The Sheep and the Goats

By Jim Golden

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ 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, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ ³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ ⁴⁰ “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’ ⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ ⁴⁴ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ ⁴⁵ “He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ ⁴⁶ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.” (NIV)

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he above Scripture is from Matthew chapter 25. It is one of the most sobering portions of Scripture that I know because of the time period in which it is set and the finality of its declaration. The story speaks for itself, but there are some interesting things in the natural about sheep and goats that may help us understand why things turn out like they do for both.

Sheep and goats, though similar cannot inner-breed because goats have 60 chromosomes and sheep have 54. Goats cannot become sheep simply by mimicking their lifestyles. To become a sheep you must be born a sheep. That is why Jesus told Nicodemus that you must be born-again. Only a super-natural event, initiated by God Himself, in our lives can turn us from goats into sheep. Sheep are truly blessed by the Father.

Another major difference between sheep and goats is, sheep are grazers and goats are rangers. Goats will eat almost anything and quite frequently can be seen standing on their hind legs eating leaves and twigs from trees. Sheep however are always seen with their heads bowed down to the ground and eating almost exclusively grass close to the ground, a symbol of humility. Goats can often be seen with their tails pointed up and apart from the rest of the flock, a symbol of pride. They are an inquisitive lot and will walk right up to a

stranger, but a sheep's tail, that is not bobbed, can be seen hanging down, will run from a stranger or their voice and has a great deal of anxiety at being separated from the rest of the flock. This is a much better defense against wolves or other predators than a loner wandering around. When we apply the dietary habits of sheep and goats to our spiritual dietary intake it is easy to see that God's flock can be seen eating almost exclusively the Word of God.

A few additional differences are interesting. Goats always give birth in the spring, but sheep usually lamb in the dead of winter. Most of the fruit that is truly pleasing to God is birthed in our lives during the hard times and not when the going is good. Goats give approximately four times more milk than sheep. Sheep mainly provide wool for clothing and meat for eating. Unlike a goat, when a sheep is led to the slaughter they do not resist and hardly make a sound, putting their fate in the hands of their shepherd. Many spiritual truths can be drawn from these comparisons. First, the fruit spoken of spiritually is the fruit of the Spirit and not the fruit of our efforts. Secondly, while goats may appear to provide much needed sustenance it is sheep that supply the necessary material needed to clothe us and feed us. Scripture tells us to put on Christ or be clothed with Christ. Thirdly, sheep are supremely committed to their Shepherd's will over their own.

In closing out my thoughts I would like to say that the "Time of the Sheep and the Goats" is coming soon. Being a sheep isn't as much a question of doing as it is of being. Everything Jesus did was the direct result of what or who He was. He reveals this difference in another section of Scripture:

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never **knew** you. Away from me, you evildoers!' Matthew 7: 21-23 (NIV)

The key word is knew, *li* is the same word used for the knowledge that exists between a man and a woman in the covenant of marriage. A deep and personal relationship of intimacy with Jesus is all He truly desires from us. It is the better portion He told Martha that Mary chose, and it alone will not be taken from her or us. The devil isn't all knowing, but he has had eons to perfect his method of attack. To the youth, no matter how old you are I say, please do not be in such a hurry to do something great for God. He will tell you when He wants any activity from you other than your love and devotion.

When we first come to Christ we have a tendency to try and fill our need for healing from past abandonment, rejection, abuse and low self-esteem or self-worth with the acceptance and praise of those around us. We begin to realize that God has given us certain Spiritual gifts and a calling which we all too often try to use to fill this valid need in our lives—a need that only God can truly meet. As a father the one thing that I want to do for my children is to make sure that they first find the healing they need in these areas through our personal relationship. I have absolutely no ulterior motives except their well being.

Jesus is no different. He must be and is the only one who can establish you in His love. Love, out of a pure heart and a sincere faith are the end of our instruction. Let your heavenly Daddy nurture you—don't get caught up too quickly trying to exercise your gifts. It is out of your intimacy with God that all the works that He has prepared for you ahead of time to do must flow. Faith works by love and as a man of God once said, "Only love can make a miracle." When those around you see your gifts they often want to use you for the

sake of the ministry. We often want to please those who are “more” experienced, but be careful and make sure that the one that you want to please the most is the one who gave you His life. Pleasing Jesus must be our first and foremost aim. Guard yourself against seeking the approval of man instead of the approval of God. Put your trust in God, have faith in His perfect timing. Remember, the Scriptures declare that Christ was crucified before the foundations of the world, but appeared at just the right time. All of your days are already recorded in His book before you ever lived one of them. May they truly be steps that are ordered by God.

Are you a sheep or a goat? I hope this writing will give some clarity in your discernment.
AMEN!