

Matthew 25:31-46

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[0 : 00] Matthew chapter 25 verses 31 through 46 is our text this morning. Matthew chapter 25 verses 31 through 46. If you are physically able and desire to do so, I'm asking if you would join with me as we stand together and we read the Word of God found in Matthew chapter 25 starting in verse 31.

Admittedly, this is a portion of Scripture in which it is better to read it slower than what I normally read. So I try to slow down even in my own reading of it because there's a lot here and we don't want to miss any of this.

And it is of utmost importance. The text says, 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 as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

And He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on the left. 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.

[1 : 17] 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 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?

The King will answer and say to them, Truly I say to you, To the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of mine, Even the least of them, You did it to me.

Then He will say to those on His left, Depart from me, accursed ones, 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.

[2 : 14] Then they themselves also will answer, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or 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 to one of the least of these. You did not do it to me. These will go away into eternal punishment, But the righteous into eternal life.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank You for this day. We thank You for the great privilege we have of gathering together on the first day of a new year to read and to hear the Word of God together.

Lord, we pray that as Your Word has been read, that now it would speak to our hearts and minds. We pray that the truth of it would captivate us and draw us in, that it would be the very thing that would cause us to walk closer with You when we leave here than when we came in.

We pray that Your Word would have its power and its authority over each and every one of us. Lord, may it break through every hindrance, may it break through every prejudice, Lord, may it show us the truth of who You are and who we are before You.

[3 : 28] We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. As we have been making our way through the Gospel of Matthew, you know that Matthew is writing of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

It is always important to remember and to remind ourselves of where we are at, why it was written, and who it was written to. Matthew is writing to the Jewish people.

Matthew was rejected by his own people by his occupation. That is, he was a Roman tax collector. And being a tax collector, also known as Levi, he encountered the Lord sitting at his tax booth and radically changed his life forever.

He is the one that God chose to write a letter back to his own people, and that letter we have recorded for us as the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew was an individual who sat at a table collecting tax money that he would send off to a ruling emperor known as Caesar, and he would send it to the head of the Roman Empire.

Now, he profited from that money. That's what made him so unpopular with his own countrymen. But yet, he was serving the purpose of another kingdom. He was not serving the purpose of the Jewish people.

[4 : 41] He was serving the purpose of the Roman Empire. But it is Matthew who is used to speak of even a greater kingdom. He writes to the Jewish people and speaks of a king of kings and lord of lords.

He speaks about a king who has come and manifested himself of the right genealogy. This morning, I started again that reading plan that I have followed so many years, and I know I continue to plug it because I think it is of utmost importance.

And I was reminded this morning in reading Genesis 1, Ezra 1, Matthew 1, and Acts 1, reading all of them at one time that God is always in control.

He spoke it into existence. He moved King Cyrus to issue a decree. He brought Jesus by the right family, and he is still at work today. That's what it tells us in all four of those chapters if you haven't read it.

He's of the right lineage, and Matthew records that for us because this man alone that we encounter in the Gospel of Matthew is the only individual in all of history who can claim the right pedigree to sit up on the throne of David.

[5 : 45] But yet when we encounter him throughout the Gospel of Matthew, we don't meet an individual who looks like a king. We meet one who is rejected, who is often neglected, who is denied, who is mocked, who is ridiculed, yet he does the supernatural and even the miraculous.

It is the one who shows himself not to be of only the right bloodlines, but also of the right workings. Because when God created the heavens and the earth, he spoke it into existence.

And when Jesus decided to calm a storm, he spoke it into peacefulness. See, he has the same power that he's always had. We've seen it for a moment on the Mount of Transfiguration.

When the glory of Jesus radiated from within him, but yet when he came back down, he was still clothed into flesh. When we get to the end of the Gospel of Matthew, I know this is a long introduction, but it's a good one, and we need to pay attention to it.

And I don't mean it's good because I'm saying it. I mean it's good because it's the Word of God. When we get to the end of Matthew, and he leaves Jerusalem for the final time, you remember Matthew chapter 23, the end of 23.

[6 : 53] I know you remember it, going into chapter 24. And the disciples are enamored by the buildings that surround them. They have just left temple mounts.

And Herod's temple is there in all of its splendor, in all of its glory, in all of its majesty. And it looks wonderful. And they begin to point out the works of man.

And Jesus reminds them that the works of man are but temporary, and begins to speak of the work of God. He says all of these things will crumble and fall down. He says these things will not last.

So as they're going across Mount Olivet, he sits down, and he sits down there in chapter 24. And the disciples have a question. When will these things happen?

So what we have been studying, we took a pause of about four weeks, and I'm trying to bring you back up to speed. What we have been studying in Matthew 24 and 25 is a long discourse at the end of Christ's life.

[7 : 53] It is not his final discourse, but it is a long discourse. It is what he decides to share with the disciples on his way to the Garden of Gethsemane. Now you know what happens at the Garden of Gethsemane, right?

Judas Iscariot leads a mob there. Jesus gives them permission to arrest him. And Jesus, in all of his power, when he declares his name, everybody falls down.

When he says, I am, they all hit the ground. And then Jesus says, I told you I was him. Get up and arrest me. He gave them permission. Because no one took him, he gave himself. Don't ever lose that, right?

No one arrested him. He turned himself in. They didn't have to lead him away. He led them to the high priests. We need to remember that. Put everybody in their right position.

But as they're on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus starts speaking about end times. And he has told us in the 24th chapter that what we can expect for days ahead, we can expect times of turmoil and chaos.

[8 : 54] We can expect times of discord and people bickering and fighting and wars and rumors of wars and even the earth being affected of what's going on, various earthquakes and fires and all these places.

In all of these things, we are not told so that we can have a set date of when they will happen. And we caution ourself. And we have to even caution ourself when we get to this passage. Because whatever our eschatology is, now eschatology means your interpretation of the end times. Whatever we think is going to happen at the end, we tend to read that into the verses we have before us.

So we would like to read into these verses what we think will happen. I caution you with that. Don't ever make the Bible say something it doesn't say because we are amazed enough at what it does say.

And what we find is that we don't know the exact timetable of when these things are going to happen, but Jesus says they are going to happen, so we need to live with an expectancy. This is where we get the ten virgins with the olive oil.

[9 : 57] Remember that, the oil for their lamps, how half were prudent and half were not. We need to live with an anticipation and an expectancy. And now we come here to the end of the 25th chapter, which is the close of this discourse.

Because when we get into the 26th chapter, you have him in the Garden of Gethsemane praying, you have his betrayal, you have his arrest, you have his trials. But the last thing Jesus tells us about the end times, about days ahead, is now all of a sudden what Matthew's been saying all of a long comes about.

We see a king. We see a king coming. And I want you to see in Matthew 25, verses 31 through 46, a coming day of judgment.

A coming day of judgment. He has been speaking their question, their first question, the initial question is, Lord, when will these things happen?

And what will be the sign of the end days? And he begins to speak of everything that's going to transpire and everything that's going to take place and all the way. And then he begins to encourage them to be ready and to be prepared and to live with an expectancy.

[11 : 12] He does not set a date. He sets a standard and an expectation. And then he shows us why that is set. Because at the end of these days is a coming day of judgments.

We would love to be able to put this together with what we find in the book of Revelations. And we would love to make it, and it does. It says one thing. But we also understand that here Jesus is not setting definitive dates for us.

He is declaring definitive facts. That there is a coming day of judgments. And these things happen at the end of this day and age, at the end of this epic, if you will, in history.

This day we call the day of grace or the church age. It is a coming day of judgment. The first thing we notice about this coming day is the authority of the king.

The authority of the king. Look at what the word of God says. But when the son of man, now why is it important that he be the son of man? It is important that he be the son of man because he is of the right family tree.

[12 : 19] Go to Matthew chapter 1. You'll see that. He is the son, supposedly, of David, who was married to Mary, who gave birth to Jesus. He is the right family tree.

But look at what it says. But when the son of man comes, now this is why we have to read it slow. When the son of man comes in his glory, his glory.

When the son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him. Now, all of a sudden, we should be reminded of the season we just celebrated.

We are coming out of Christmas celebrations. We looked last week at the advent of Christ. You remember? The advent of Christ.

When Jesus came the first time. When he manifested himself in the flesh the first time. And dwelt among us. And we looked at the advent of Christ with the understanding that it is just one advent, there is another advent.

[13 : 20] That when he comes again. And it amazed us at the birth of Christ, where it says, we have to pay attention to it in Luke. There were some shepherds staying out in the field, and some angels appeared to them, right?

And they brought them good news that a Savior has been born. Who is Christ? What was that word they said? Christ the Lord, right? And they were the Lord's angels.

And remember how amazing it was that the angels of the individual who had chosen to become a baby, wrapped in swaddling cloth, lying in a manger, were sent by the baby in the manger to go declare to the shepherds in the field.

They're his angels. And when he came the first time, he came over here, and he sent his angels over there. Because he has the power to do it. But look at the coming again.

But when he comes the second time, he comes not in his humility, but in his glory. And when he comes in his glory, his angels are with him.

[14 : 21] The ones who declared, hey, there has been one born for you, will just be riding behind him saying, I told you he was coming, right? They will remind them again because his angels come with him.

His angels went before him before. They're coming with him later. But he does not come in humility. He comes in glory. And when he comes in his glory, not another person's glory, not another man's glory, not the glory of the Father.

That's his glory. Don't ever lose that, right? It is his glory. That is, he owns it. See, on the Mount of Transfiguration, this is good stuff. Man, this is just about to get me excited. I'm about to start sweating.

And you ain't getting as excited as I am, but that's okay. I'll take care of it for you. When he was on the Mount of Transfiguration, it wasn't that he was reflecting glory. It wasn't the glory of God shining off of him.

He was radiating glory. That's a big difference there. See, on the Mount of Transfiguration, he wasn't like the moon shining forth the glory of a greater object. On the Mount of Transfiguration, it's when the moon got out of the way and we could see the sun shining its own glory.

[15 : 23] See, he wasn't reflecting the Father's glory. He was radiating his own glory. Sometimes we forget the fact that the King of kings and Lord of lords, who we call our Savior, Jesus Emmanuel, also has his own glory.

It is his glory. Sure, we can run to him because he's on the cross. We can fall before him because he's a suffering servant. We can go to him because the Bible tells us in Mark chapter 10, verse 45, for the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.

And we love that. But we forget about the fact that he who was serving us also has his own glory. And when he comes in his glory with his angels, he's gonna sit, look at this, sit on his glorious throne.

He's not sitting on the throne of someone else. That's his throne. And he is going to reside. See, all I want you to see is the authority of the King. Because what the Bible tells us, when the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne, no longer coming to serve, but coming to judge and to rule.

Big difference. Big difference. The day of serving is over. The day of judging has come. And he sits on the throne.

[16 : 48] And now notice this. And all the nations will be gathered before him. Hold on to that, because we'll look at that in our second point too. But all the nations will be gathered before him.

This is a greater reflection of his glory. When you're reading in the book of Ezra, some of you have already read it. Some of you will read it today. And I'm not trying to spoil it.

When you read 2 Chronicles last year, you know, yesterday, and when you finished it up, 2 Chronicles ended with a decree of King Cyrus that whosoever will of God's people go back and rebuild the temple.

When you open up the new year, this year, today, and you read in the book of Ezra, you'll see that the Lord moved Cyrus, according to the word of Jeremiah, to issue a decree that whosoever will of God's people would go rebuild Jerusalem.

And you say, well, praise God for Cyrus. He's a believer. But be careful there, okay? Because God can use a rooster and a donkey, and he can use an unfaithful king too. But you'll notice when Cyrus issues this decree, Cyrus makes this statement, and you need to pay attention to it.

[17:57] It's in the book of Ezra. Cyrus says, for he is the God of Jerusalem. That they need to go back and rebuild the temple because the Lord has shown me he is the God of Jerusalem.

Now, problems happen when men begin to localize God's authority. What Cyrus was saying is, he's the God over there, so y'all go build the temple over there because I got my own God over here. And he was recognizing different deities of different locations. That's not true at all. He is the God of Jerusalem. He's also the God of Babylon. He's the God of Washington.

He's the God of everywhere else. Because look at what it says. The authority of the king, all the nations were gathered before him. All. His authority supersedes locations.

When there was this man who was covered in leprosy, who was not of Jewish descent. You remember he had a slave girl. He said, oh, I wish my master would go see Elijah.

[19:02] Elijah could cure you of your leprosy. Remember when he went? And he went off, and Elijah said, go dip seven times in the Jordan River, and you'll come out and you'll be clean. You remember the story, right? And he got mad first, and his servant said, why don't you do it?

So Naaman went and did it. You remember what he wanted to do? He went back, and he took sackfuls of the dirt so that he could take it back with him. And the reason he took sackfuls of the dirt is because he thought God was confined to that location, so if he could take a little bit of that land back, he was going to pour that dirt out.

That way he could stand on God's property and worship him. Problem is, I don't care where you stand. You're standing on God's property. You don't need sackfuls of dirt from any location. He spoke it all into existence because all the nations notice the authority of the king.

This is fundamental. This is why I spend so much time. If we don't give him his rightful authority, the rest of the passage makes no sense. The authority of the king.

Number two, the accountability of man. The accountability of man. This king has come, and Jesus has very clearly told us he is that king.

[20:16] The son of man will come in his glory with all of the angels and set up on his glorious throne. And then the Bible tells us and all the nations were gathered before him.

So the first thing we notice is that it's not just a select people that will be accountable, but all people will be accountable. Accountability extends to all. All means all.

That's really pretty basic and pretty simple. Everyone means everyone. All the nations will be gathered before him. Some, very trusted by myself, Bible scholars, say that when it says all nations, it simply is referring to the Gentiles.

I don't necessarily agree with that because it says that their thought is that the Jewish people had already come before him. I'm not seeing that in the passage. I try to, in all of my study, Adrian Rogers used to say you study the passage, you learn the passage, and you study the passage, and you know all the nuances of the passage.

He said, and then you dumb it down, and then you dumb it down, and then you dumb it down. And Adrian Rogers said, you simplify it to the point that you're almost ashamed to preach it, and then you preach it. That is the simplest explanation for the text is usually the most accurate.

[21:29] All means all. Everybody is before him. All of the nations, which tells us that all of the nations of all people, of all mankind, of every tongue, of every race, and both genders, will stand before him and give an account.

There will be a day of reckoning. All people will be accountable but to one. But to one. It doesn't say all of the nations were gathered before a bunch of thrones.

All of the nations were gathered to one throne. And then it says, and he will separate them.

Remember his authority. He will separate them as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Very common practice. Jesus was using a common occurrence of his day to illustrate a divine happening in the future. There would be a mixed multitude in the flock but when it came time to graze, sheep and goats didn't eat too good together so they would separate them and the shepherd would tap the goats as they went by on one side and they'd go one way and the sheep would go and he'd tap them and they'd go the other way.

It's a very clear appearance of something that they saw all the time. But notice, he separates them. Men, all men, of all places, of all times, will be accountable to one.

[22:53] To one. Jesus doesn't ask anybody else's opinion as to who should go which side. There is no council. There is no vote. There is no appeal.

On that day, stay with me my friend, on that day, the time is up for men to plead their case. It's either to the rights or to the left.

And the judgment is reserved for one alone. He who sits on the throne, that is king, is also judge. And he will separate. All men will give an account.

And then he will declare to them, for I was and you blank. I was hungry and you fed me. Or I was hungry and you didn't feed me. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.

Or I was thirsty and you didn't give me something to drink. He will begin to rehash the actions of who? All people. All people. Now I know we would love to pull ourselves out of this.

[23 : 57] But according to this passage, we do not have the right to. All people means all people which means we will be there. And we see here the rehashing of the accounts.

Again, go all the way back to last year. You were closing the book of Revelation the last couple of days of last year. There were two books. Remember the two books? Two books that were opened. One was the book of deeds and works that had been done and the other was the book of life. One was the book of deeds, works, and one was the book of life. Here we have the opening of the book of deeds and all of this declaration of everything that has been done.

Paul tells us believers that on that day all of our works will be tested by fire as believers and that much of what we have done will be consumed.

All the wood, hay, straw, and stubble will be burned up as if with fire. Only will the stone remain and that which remain we will carry with us into eternity.

[25 : 03] I am so afraid, not afraid, I am so mindful of the reality that much of what is presented before me on that day of my accounting will be burned up.

That which I thought would last for all of eternity is but temporary and that is not to say that I should not be encouraged by the temporary things he gives me to do but also should be mindful of the greater work which I have been and you have been called to do.

Here we see that the works of men are presented before them. All men of all places of all time are accountable but to one and that is the king.

Third, we see his identification with his people. I know, I stepped away from the A's and it's okay. His identification with his people.

Jesus declares, Jesus declares, for I was hungry and you fed me. 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.

[26 : 08] I was in prison and you came to me and then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when did we see you doing these things? We don't even recall seeing you and the king will say to them, truly I say to you to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of mine, even the least of them, you did it to me.

Again, there are Bible scholars and some of them I trust that will say the reference here is in particular to the Jewish nation that Jesus is identifying the brothers with the Jewish nation.

I don't see that in the text and I don't see that in the entirety of scripture. While they are his kinsmen by birth, he always refers to the church as his brothers and his bride.

No longer do I call you friends, but no longer do I call you strangers because you are my friends, you are my brothers. He refers to this over and over and over again. But what we are amazed, even when he tells the wicked and the accursed ones, you did not do these, they say, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or naked and in prison or sick?

We never saw you. And they said, to the extent that you did not do it to the least of these. Pay attention to this. Here we have even judgment for the sins of omission. You know, James says, for he who knows what is right and does not do what is right, he is guilty of sin.

[27 : 24] There is the sin of omission. Sometimes the bad things we do are not just the things we do. Sometimes the worst things that we do are the things we don't do. The sins of omission.

We are amazed at the reality of what Jesus says here. When you did it to one of these brothers of mine, even the least, you did it to me. Friend, find courage in this.

The glorious king sitting on the throne identifies with his people. He is with them in their joy and he's with them in their struggle.

He's with them in the mountaintop and he's with them in the valley. He's with the greatest of them and even the least of them. Pay attention to that. That when you serve the bride, you serve the Savior.

When you minister to the saints, you're touching the Savior's hands because he identifies with his people. Sometimes we think we understand it but we don't really grasp it.

[28 : 32] And I know I've explained it and it's an application that I use quite often but it's something that we find resonating throughout Scripture. You cannot tell me you love the Savior and hate his bride.

There's no such thing. You cannot tell me. If you came to me and said, Billy Joe, I like you but I'm not sure about your wife. There are people who tell me the opposite. Well, Billy Joe, we love your wife but we're not so sure about you.

I can get that one, right? But if you were to tell me that, I have a hard time because the Bible says the two have become one. So you cannot separate them.

What God has put together to let no man separate. Paul says, these things are a mystery but I speak as in reference to Christ and his church. You say, oh, I just want to see Jesus.

I just want to serve the Lord. Well, I've got good news for you. There's a great opportunity because he identifies with his people. We see it here.

[29 : 38] His identification with his people. Fourth and finally and we'll be done. We notice the eternal destiny of all. This is the whole point of the passage, by the way.

The eternal destiny of all. There are some things that we need to back up and catch. There are some matters that we need to settle before we move forward.

The first matter we need to settle is what we have before us is not a text that is teaching works-based salvation. You say, well, I thought I would be held accountable for all that I did. You're absolutely right. But nowhere in the text do we see that they have eternal life because of the good work they did. All the works that are examined are brought forth as evidence of an already existing relationship.

The works are evidences of a pre-existing relationship. We are not saved by works.

[30 : 45] We are not redeemed by works. We do not inherit eternity by works. But our works do display where we will be at in eternity.

They are the evidences to a pre-existing reality. Notice, the righteous never knew they were doing such things and therefore since they did not know they were doing them we cannot claim that they were doing them to earn something in return.

Because they say, Lord, when did we see you? We did not know. And I can almost guarantee that if the wicked knew that it was Jesus they were turning their back on and that he would be coming for a day of judgment that they would have intended to fulfill everything they could for him because they would have tried to have been working their way to heaven.

this is not works-based salvation. This is works-evidence relationship. He had already separated them before he began to display to them their works.

He says, now, you're on the right and the left and I'll show you how I know this is where you belong and how all may know because your works are a testimony to your hearts.

[31 : 58] James says that if you have faith and you do not have works it's dead that faith without works is useless. You cannot show me your faith without displaying for me your works.

You can talk to me about it all day long. You can proclaim it all day long. Hey, but people say a lot. People say a lot. Here we see the evidence that is presented for a pre-existing relationship.

The second thing we notice is when it comes to the righteous look at what it says. Come you who are blessed of my father. Verse 34. That wording there is you are standing in the position of blessedness.

That you have been blessed by the father and therefore you don't earn an inheritance you receive an inheritance. Pay attention to that.

You earn a wage you receive an inheritance. You who have been blessed of my father since you are in the position of blessedness receive your inheritance.

[33 : 09] Look at what it says. Inherit the kingdom. Now pay attention to this. This is good news that ought to make you shout hallelujah. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Do you know that on that day of judgment not because of what I've done but because of who he is because I've trusted in the king who is sitting on his throne that the inheritance that I will receive is an inheritance that has been prepared from the foundation of the world.

That is amazing to me. That is something that has just been sitting and waiting until the day where he would draw me to himself that I would fall on my face and proclaim that he is Lord not just of the day in the future but he is Lord of my life today.

And here we see you are finally receiving the inheritance of the kingdom prepared for you. I mean that blows my mind. That there's a part of the inheritance of the kingdom that was prepared for me from the foundation of the world.

Now there's no way you can tell me that God doesn't know who's going to be saved. because then how else then could he prepare it before the world's foundations were laid? You're going to have to do a lot of arguing with me on that.

[34 : 23] It was prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Now, quick question. Who was the kingdom prepared for?

For those who would inherit it. Right? This is important. This is important. Because you're going to answer some questions someday and I want you to be fully equipped for that. The kingdom of the inheritance was prepared for those who would receive that inheritance on that day.

Now let's go down. We move on down. Verse 41. Then he will say to those on his left, depart from me accursed ones, those living not in a state of blessedness, but those living in a state of accursedness or cursing.

And the curse comes because of a lack of relationship. Or cursed ones to inherit. They're going to get it also not into. They're not inheriting. Theirs is just a reward, right?

So theirs is not inheritance. Theirs is the reward of their efforts and their works. Into the eternal fire, and I pay attention to this, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels. Now, the kingdom was prepared for those who would inherit it.

[35 : 32] Eternal fire, which we refer to his hell, was prepared for the devil and his angels. Now, when someone asks you, how can God be loving?

If God has prepared hell for men to spend all of eternity there, then you tell them God did not prepare hell for man, God prepared hell for devil and his angels. When devil and his angels rebelled, God prepared a place that they would spend all of eternity.

Man chose it by his works. Man said, I don't want his inheritance, I'd rather get what my works will earn me. Well, what our works earn us is what has been prepared for the devil and his angels.

Now, that's important. We need to understand those things. God did not prepare hell for man. He prepared the kingdom for man to inherit, but he prepared the lake of fire, the eternal lake of fire, which we refer to as Gehenna or hell for the devil and his angels.

Will man go there? Absolutely. And they will go there because they refused the inheritance and rather work for their own reward. We see this on this day of accounting.

[36 : 40] Now, pay attention. I'm closing. I know this is a hard message on the first day of the year, right? But it's okay. It's scriptural. It's biblical. The very last verse has some intentionality in it.

That is, and I think the New American Center, which is what I read from, there are other translations translations that seem to do as well. I don't mean to berate any translations.

Some translations soften it intentionally because of those they were translating it for. But the original language is very clear in this, and the New American Standard has it correct. These will go away, verse 46, these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

The intentionality is the word eternal. Some translations say everlasting as if it is ongoing. It kind of softens it a little bit. In the original language, in the original Greek, the word is the same, eternal and eternal.

You say, well, isn't everlasting eternal? For splitting hairs, maybe, but not in some of the original languages when that was translated because they tried to soften it a little bit.

[37 : 51] Everlasting always implied that there would be an end. I know this is kind of a dark and dreary scene, but I want you to understand this. The end of all man is an eternal state.

The end of all man is an eternal state. These to eternal punishment, and these to eternal life. many believing Christians throughout the ages have tried to soften that. That there would be a day where either the punishment would cease and people would be annihilated and they would just cease to exist, or there would be a day that in the midst of that punishment there would be a second opportunity that they could come out of it that once they go into it once.

A friend, listen to me. According to scripture, you cannot speak of an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of heaven and separate it from the eternal destiny of suffering.

The same wording is used here and the same wording is used in the book of revelations. Man lives eternally somewhere. On that day of judgment, it will be finally decreed and eternally set.

[39 : 15] there will be no coming back, there will be no changing course, there will be no second opportunity, there will be no, well let's do it all over again and call a mulligan.

On that day, when everyone is separated, people are assigned to one of two places eternally without end.

There is eternal punishment and there is eternal life. That's the only options we're given. If there was no other motivator for the sake of being intentional in our faith, of boldly and openly proclaiming to those that we come around, of seeking all that we could do as a church to be sure that we were spreading the gospel to the utmost of our abilities and even beyond, of living a life of righteousness so that whosoever looks at us would not see us but would so see our father by the good works which we show.

If there was ever a motivator for the fact that we are a city set on a hill and we need to let our light so shine before men, if there was ever a motivator that we should live differently than the world in 2023, if there was ever a motivator that we should stand out in a world that so wants to fit in, that maybe we can be in the world but not get along with the world, that maybe we can take risk that the world says that's crazy but we would know that by faith God was leading us, that maybe we would have the boldness for once to take our faith serious and to live as if all of eternity rests on it. because the reality is every person we meet lives eternally somewhere. And as of now, we are the billboard that God has put in the world to proclaim the love of Christ because friend, listen, this day is coming.

[41 : 32] It has not come yet but it is coming. It is. And we need to be prepared for that day because there is the eternal nature of all hanging in the balance.

Let's pray. Lord, we come before you realizing that the word is heavy. God, it is true.

Lord, you've given us a new year. and a new opportunity. Lord, so many times we try to make commitments and resolutions and we don't fulfill them.

They're often grounded in worldly pleasures and desires. Lord, now in this day that you've put us, may our hearts and minds be transparent before you.

May we know finally and faithfully where we stand before you in all of your glory and all of your splendor. Lord, after settling that in our own hearts and minds, may we as your people live as your people in this world that you've put us in.

[42 : 51] May we be the instruments that are used by you to draw men and women, boys and girls, to yourself. Lord, may it be not for our glory or recognition, but for yours alone.

Lord, we thank you that we have the opportunity to live at this time in history that you've given us.

Lord, we pray that you have entrusted us with great responsibility that we would be those who fulfill it.

Be glorified, be magnified in our actions. Lord, may our lives be a reflection of who you are. We ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. We stand together. I invite you to take out your hymn books and turn with me to hymn number 308.

Hymn number 308, Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior. Amen.

[44 : 32] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.