

Session 7

# Israel as God's Litmus Test for Nations at the End of the Age

– Matt. 25:31-46 –

---

## A. Introduction

1. God has sovereignly chosen Israel as the vehicle of His salvation and redemption plans.
2. He has made a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12 that those who bless him will be blessed, and those who curse him will be cursed. Furthermore, Romans 9 – 11 reveal God's requirement for Gentile believers to stand with His heart and plans regarding Israel.
3. He has chosen Israel as a litmus test through which Gentiles express our love for Jesus by obeying Him in His sovereign plan to bless Israel. It is critical for believers to understand and align with Him in this issue, especially as we approach the End of the Age.

## B. The Setting and Context of Matthew 25:31–46

1. The setting of this particular judgement is that Jesus has returned to the earth after the Great Tribulation. He is sitting on His throne of glory in Jerusalem and judging the nations.
2. The events that precede this judgement set the context for why and how Jesus judges the sheep and goats.
  - a. The context of Matthew 25 is the Great Tribulation in Matthew 24:15–22, where the Jewish people will be under persecution from the Antichrist. Some will be deported as captives, some will flee to the surrounding nations, while some will stay in Jerusalem and be supernaturally protected.
  - b. In the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures, one of the most prominent features in the Second Coming passages is that Jewish people will be in prison camps during the End Times and that Israel will be “desolate”.
  - c. However, Scripture also reveals that Jesus will bring great deliverance and restoration for Israel (Isa. 42:6–7, 16, 22; 49:9–12, 19–21, 24–25; Jer. 31:1–23; Ezek. 39:25–29; Amos 9:8–15; Zeph. 3:17–20).
    - i. He will arise to fight for her and destroy her enemies.

- ii. As part of His Second Coming Procession, He will gather a large number of Jewish prisoners together from surrounding nations as He marches with them back to Israel (Mic. 2:12–13).
  - d. It is then that this Judgement of the Sheep and Goats will take place when He is on His throne in Jerusalem.
3. This judgement is for the people living on earth as survivors of the Great Tribulation based on how they had related to the Jewish people during her time of greatest need.
4. This will be a defining issue in the generation that the Lord returns. To neglect to stand with the Jewish people would mean that one has already made many other decisions against God before that.
5. The Lord is also raising up voices to proclaim and make this reality known such that nations will not be ignorant of God's requirement to stand with Israel at the End of the Age.

### **C. Judgement of the Sheep and Goats (Matt. 25:31–46)**

1. In Matthew 25:31–46, Jesus reveals His heart and zeal concerning how He will judge Gentile nations according to how they treat the Jewish people, especially during the Great Tribulation.
2. Jesus will divide the nations into two groups — the “sheep” on one side and the “goats” on the other.
  - a. The sheep are defined as those who see His brethren hungry, thirsty, sick, in prison, in need of clothing and shelter, and take them in and provide for them.
  - b. The goats are defined as those who did not take His brethren in, feed or clothe them.
  - c. There are different consequences for both groups. The sheep will inherit the Kingdom, while the goats will be thrown into the Lake of Fire (Matt. 25:34,41).
3. While some interpret this passage to mean doing good works and works of justice, this interpretation is not coherent with the rest of the counsel of Scripture.
  - a. Scripture is clear that salvation is by grace through faith alone, and not through good works.
  - b. If Jesus were to send people to the Lake of Fire for lack of good works and allow people into the Kingdom based on good works, salvation would no longer be by grace, but by works and merit.

4. Thus, the key to interpreting this passage is in the phrase "My brethren".
  - a. In verse 40, Jesus said, "...*inasmuch as you did to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.*"
  - b. In Romans 9:3, Paul used the same phrase: "*I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh.*"
  - c. The phrase "My brethren" in both cases is the same and refers to the Jewish people — the people of the race that Jesus was born into, according to the lineage of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
5. This is not a comprehensive criterion by which Jesus will judge every action, but it is one of the primary criteria by which Jesus will judge Gentile nations after He returns.

#### **D. Israel as God's Litmus Test for the Nations**

1. The origin of Israel as God's litmus test for nations is found in Genesis 12, where God made a covenant with Abraham. God promised Abraham and said, "*I will bless those who bless you. I will curse those who curse you.*" (Gen. 12:3).
2. This is God's Biblical principle with regard to standing with Israel — God is calling believers and nations to honour His sovereignty by blessing Israel. Throughout Scripture, we see this repeated and emphasised (Gen. 27:29; Ps. 122:6; Num. 24:9).
3. A "litmus test" is a crucial test which reveals something based on one single decisive factor or indicator.
  - a. In this case, God has determined that Israel is that single decisive factor and indicator that He has sovereignly chosen to reveal what is within the hearts of people.
  - b. Israel will be God's litmus test through which Gentiles (both believers and unbelievers) express their love or agreement with Jesus by obeying Him in His sovereign plan to bless His people.
4. The expression of how we relate to Jesus' Jewish brethren — whether we care for the hungry, thirsty, sick, those in prison or requiring shelter or clothing — is an expression of our faith and obedience to Jesus.
5. With the intensities at the End of the Age, both Israel and those who stand with her will be persecuted, and thus Jesus will prepare His Gentile Church to arise and stand with her in her time of greatest need.
6. However, we also need to have clarity that standing with Israel does not mean that we agree with everything that she does. As a nation, she is still "in rebellion" towards God, yet we agree with God's heart concerning her and pray for her in accordance to God's prophetic destiny for her.

## **E. The Necessity of Standing with Israel**

There are three reasons why Jesus is so zealous and strong with regard to the issue of standing with Israel, that not doing so will result in eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire:

### 1. Jesus cares deeply for Israel

- a. God has made a covenant with Abraham and Israel, and is zealously committed to fulfilling His covenant and the fullness of His plans for Israel (Zech. 1:14; 8:2).
- b. God knows the intensity and devastation of what Israel will go through in the Great Tribulation
  - i. Zechariah 13:8 tells us that two-thirds of Israel will be cut off and die. This means that there is coming a greater Holocaust at the End of the Age.
  - ii. This is why standing with Israel in prayer, sheltering and protecting them are crucial at the End of the Age.

### 2. God's sovereign election of Israel

- a. God has the right to choose how He would redeem mankind and has elected Israel as the vehicle of His salvation and redemption for the nations.
  - i. In the First Coming, Jesus, the Saviour of the world, was born into the Jewish race.
  - ii. At the Second Coming, Israel will play the central role in bringing about the fullness of God's salvation and redemption plan. She will play the leadership and key discipleship role during the Millennial Kingdom.
- b. In Romans 11:17–26, Paul very strongly exhorts Gentile believers not to be haughty, but to consider the goodness and severity of God, and to stand with Israel. The root of our faith is Jewish. Thus, if we reject Israel, we are actually rejecting God's salvation plan for us.

### 3. God's choice of Israel as a litmus test

- a. God is raising Israel up as a banner and test to allow nations to choose whether to align, fear and revere Him.
- b. When we bless Israel, we are honouring God's sovereignty and His right to choose.

## **F. Conclusion**

1. Israel will be God's litmus test at the End of the Age that reveals the heart of people — both believers and Gentile nations.
2. It is crucial to begin cultivating love for Jesus, alignment with Him, and courage to stand with Jesus in the issue of Israel even in the midst of the greatest End-Time persecution.

3. It is also important to pray and speak forth God's heart to nations regarding the issue of Israel.