

The Great Divide

by Chuck Smith

The sermon explores the eternal consequences of one's relationship with God, emphasizing the separation of the righteous from the wicked at judgment.

Duration: 37:12

Scripture: Psalm 37:16

Topics: "Judgment Day", "Faithful Service"

Description

This sermon focuses on the great divide between those who serve God faithfully and those who have forsaken Him, as depicted in Matthew 25. It emphasizes the importance of worshiping the true God, heeding His call, and delighting in His ways to avoid eternal consequences. The message urges listeners to examine their commitment to God and choose to be His faithful servants, as the day of judgment and separation is imminent.

Transcript

Let's turn in our Bibles now to Matthew chapter 25. We will begin our scripture reading this morning in verse 31. I'll read the 31st and the unnumbered verses, and Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in the reading of the even-numbered verses through the end of the chapter.

Shall we stand as we read the Word of God? When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all of the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left.

Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come ye, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me meat. I was thirsty, and you gave me drink.

I was a stranger, and you took me in. Naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you visited me.

I was in prison, and you came unto me. And then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave you drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of

the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. And then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

For I was hungry, and you gave me no meat. I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink. I was a stranger, and you took me not in.

Naked, and you clothed me not. Sick, and in prison, and you visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or a thirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? And then shall he answer them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it not unto one of the least of these, ye have done it not unto me.

And ye shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. Let's pray. Lord, we see here the great divide as you divide the sheep from the goats.

Lord, we see the ultimate consequence of that divide as the sheep enter into the glories of your kingdom that you've prepared before the world ever existed. We see the agony of the goats as they are cast into everlasting shame and darkness away from your presence forever. Lord, as we read these passages, we realize how serious is the subject of our relationship with you because we realize, Lord, that our eternal destiny will be determined as to our relationship with you.

So may we this day determine within our hearts that we will bow our knee and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, that we might, Lord, become your servants doing your will, that we might receive the rewards that await those who will serve you. We ask these things, Father, in the name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

You may be seated. Well, tonight we finish the book of Isaiah. Been an interesting journey through the book of Isaiah.

Tonight, Pastor Skip will be taking chapters 65 and 66 as he takes us into the glorious heavenly kingdom of God, the new heaven, the new earth, that God is going to prepare for those that love and serve him. So we encourage you to read these chapters over and then join with us this evening at seven o'clock as Pastor Skip will finish the book of Isaiah. And next week we start into the book of Jeremiah.

Do join with us as we read through the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Find out what God has to say about himself, what God has to say about you, what God has to say about our future together with him, who have chosen to believe and to follow him. As we have read in Matthew this morning, we realize that there is coming a great divide.

The first order of business for Jesus when he comes back to the earth with his church is to gather the people of the nations together for judgment. It will there be determined, as he separates them, as a shepherd separates sheep from goats, it will then be determined as to their destiny. Whether or not they will be able, as he said, to enter into the kingdom that was prepared for you from the foundations of the earth or whether they will be cast into the abyss, that destruction that was determined for Satan and his followers.

The great divide. But we realize how serious the matter is because this is eternal. This is forever.

Your eternal destiny, your eternal future will be determined by the Lord who is the righteous judge. Here in our text in Isaiah we find that the Lord pronounces a sharp division between his servants and those who have not been serving him. Isaiah 65, beginning with verse 11.

But ye are they that forsake the Lord. You forget my holy mountain. You prepare a table for the troop that is a false god.

And you furnish the drink offerings unto that number and that in the Hebrew again is a false god. Therefore I will number you to the sword. And you shall all bow down to the slaughter, because when I called you did not answer.

When I spoke you did not hear. But you did evil before my eyes, and you did choose that which did not delight me. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but you will be hungry.

My servants shall drink, but you will be thirsty. Behold, my servants shall rejoice, but you shall be ashamed. Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but you will cry for sorrow of heart, and you shall howl for vexation of spirit.

And you shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen, for the Lord God shall slay thee and call his servant by another name. The sharp division between the servants of the Lord and those who have chosen not to follow Him. The Lord said, My servants shall eat.

It's interesting that in the book of Revelation it speaks of two great feasts. The first is the Feast of the Lamb. It is called the Marriage Supper of the Lamb where we will be joined to Christ as the Bride of Christ and the great Marriage Supper feasting together there in His kingdom.

My servants shall eat. Interesting that at the same time that we are there in heaven at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, here on earth, as the judgments of God are being poured out, that those here on earth will suffer tremendous hunger. And the book of Revelation tells us in chapter 6 verse 5, When He had opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, Come and see.

And I beheld, and there was a black horse of famine, and he that sat upon it had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the living creature say, A quart of wheat for eighty dollars, three quarts of barley for eighty dollars. And I looked, and I saw a pale horse.

The name of him that sat on him was Death. And hell followed with him, and power was given unto them to kill with the sword and hunger a fourth of the world's population. While we are feasting in heaven, My servants shall eat.

The Lord said, You will be hungry. If you are not taken up in the rapture, the great divide, when Jesus takes His church to be with Him, if you are left here on the earth, the earth is going to have a tremendous famine in which one-fourth of the earth's population will die from hunger and from the sword. The Lord said, My servants shall drink.

In John 4.14 Jesus said, Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water that springs up to everlasting life. In Revelation 22.7 the invitation is given, The Spirit and the bride say, Come.

And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.

The Bible speaks of a day, again, when the church is taken into the heavenly scene, that here on earth God will smite the fresh water supplies of the earth, and they will be turned to blood, much like the plague

that happened in Egypt when God turned their fresh water supplies into blood. In Revelation 16.4, when the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and springs of water, they became blood. I heard the angel of the water say, You are righteous, O Lord, which is, and was, and is to come, because you have judged like this.

For they shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thus you have given them blood to drink. They deserve it. And I heard another voice from out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are your judgments.

The Lord said, My servants shall rejoice. In 1 Peter 1.8, Peter said, Whom, having not seen, yet you love. And though you do not see Him now, yet you rejoice with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.

Revelation 12.12 said, Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. But woe to the inhabitants of the earth, for the devil has come down unto you. He has great wrath, because he knows he has but a short time.

Revelation 19.7, Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and the wife, the church, has made herself ready. But Jesus said, You that are not His servants, you will be ashamed. David said, O my God, I trust in Thee.

Let me not be ashamed. Let not my enemies triumph over me. Yea, let none that wait upon Thee be ashamed, but let them be ashamed which transgress against You without cause.

In Psalm 37, David said, A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholds the righteous. The Lord knows the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever.

They shall not be ashamed even in the evil time, and in the days of famine they will be satisfied. Isaiah 42.17 said, They shall be turned back and greatly ashamed, who have put their trust in idols, that say to the idol, You are my God. In Jeremiah 8 verse 9, The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and found in their folly, for they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them.

Paul tells us in Romans chapter 1 that when they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God. They became vain in their imaginations. Their foolish hearts were darkened, and professing themselves to be wise, they actually became fools, because they worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forevermore.

Those men today who have espoused the folly of the evolutionary theory, one of these days they will be greatly ashamed, for it is a theory that no longer is credible. And many of the great scientists are already moving away because they have realized the complexity of life, the DNA molecule, that it could not possibly have come from just random selection. Impossible the creation of life from inert matter.

Those that are holding on to the evolutionary theory today only hold on to it because it has become a religion to them. They embrace it rather than embracing God, and it is because they don't want to embrace God. They would like to explain their existence apart from the divine Creator so that they would not feel a responsibility to God.

They hold on to this bankrupt system of thought. Those that be wise, or looked upon as wise, will be considered fools. Ashamed.

John wrote about being ashamed at his coming. We are told that when people stand before God to be judged, that the books will be opened and they will be judged out of the things that are written in the books. God has chronicled your life history.

Now I have done many things in my life for which I am deeply ashamed. I would not want you to know some of the things that I have done. I am ashamed of them.

I would be ashamed if today suddenly my whole past would be revealed to you. I am thankful that when I stand before God that when the books are opened, when they come to my name, there will be absolutely no charges filed against me. Not because I'm pure and innocent, but because Jesus Christ took all of the charges against me on Himself and He died in my place, and so there is no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus.

But if you are not His servant, you will be ashamed. The Lord says that His servants will rejoice, but you will be ashamed. Let me tell you, when that day comes when all of the dead, small and great, stand before the great white throne, judgment of God, and the books are opened, when they get to my name, you better know that I'll be rejoicing because the slate is clean.

Jesus paid it all. He died in my place. And I will be rejoicing in my heart for the fact that I have been forgiven, pardoned by God, and there are absolutely no charges against me.

However, there will be many, many people there who will be greatly ashamed in that day when it is revealed the thoughts of their heart, the actions of their life that they thought were hid from everyone else but now are revealed and opened because the Bible said everything is naked and open before Him with whom we have to deal. Servants of God rejoicing while others will be greatly ashamed in that day. The Lord said, My servants shall sing for joy of heart.

In our Scripture reading this morning there in Matthew, when the Lord says, Enter in to the joy of the Lord, you can be sure we'll be singing for joy of heart. We read that in His presence there is fullness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures forevermore. We read that the kingdom of heaven is righteousness and peace and joy, and as Peter said, a joy that's indescribable and full of glory.

But while we are rejoicing as servants of our Lord, others will be crying for sorrow of heart and vexation of spirit. Jesus described hell as a place where the worm dieth not, neither is the fire quenched. He describes it as a place of outer darkness where there will be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

My servants singing for joy of heart, whereas those who are not His servant crying for sorrow of heart and howling because of the vexation of spirit. What a great divide. Eternal divide.

As when the rich man in Luke 16 was in hell and he saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus being comforted. And he called to Abraham and he said, Father Abraham have mercy upon me. Send Lazarus that he might take some water and touch my tongue.

I'm tormented in this heat. Abraham said, Son, remember you in your lifetime had the good things, Lazarus the evil. Now he is comforted while you are tormented.

And beside this there is this gulf and you cannot come from there over here, nor can we go from here over there. Eternal destiny. One side or the other.

The great divide. That great gulf. And you will find yourself one place or the other.

A servant of God or in rebellion against God's ruling over your life. Now Isaiah tells us here those things that alienated the people from God and brought God's wrath and destruction on them. Isaiah tells us in our text that they had forsaken the Lord.

Other things became more important to them than serving the Lord. Other interests captivated their hearts. And they forsook the Lord to follow after other things.

Jesus said, The greatest commandment is thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart with all thy soul and with all thy mind. But they have allowed other loves to supersede their love for God. And he was no longer first place in their lives.

We read that they ceased worshiping the Lord. On the day of worship they were seeking their own pleasure and pursuing their own pleasure. Thus pleasure had become their primary God.

If it so happened that the World Series was on a Sunday and the choice was either going to worship the Lord or stay home and watch the World Series, they would have been home watching the World Series. They had forsaken the Lord and they had ceased from worshiping the Lord. If on a Sunday surf was up, glassy waves, you would have found them out surfing rather than worshiping God.

You see if you don't worship the Lord you are worshiping something. It's innate within us. We can't help ourselves.

We've got to worship some idol. If the Lord is not our God, if we are not worshiping Him, you can be sure, look at your life, you are worshiping something. There is something that is taking the place of God in your life that is drawing your worship and your commitment to it.

Actually our text tells us that they were worshiping false gods. Because if you deny the true and the living God then you will find yourself worshiping a false god. Worshiping the gods of power, money, possessions.

Worshiping the god or goddess of sex. Worshipping the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forevermore. The Lord said, when I called they did not answer.

Turning a deaf ear to God. Now the Spirit of God is speaking to us and calling us to surrender our lives. To confess our sins.

To believe in Jesus Christ and to receive Him as Lord of our lives that we might indeed be His servants. But there are people that won't listen to the call of God. When I called He said, they did not answer.

God had called them so many times by the voice of the prophets. How many times God warned them that they were taking the wrong path that would destroy them. Even as God has spoken to you and warned you of the path that you are on and how it will lead to destruction.

But many people don't listen and they are not really serving the Lord. He said, when I spoke they would not hear. They refused to hear God's word as He spoke to them.

And as the Spirit speaks to your heart. Not hearing. Not listening to what the Spirit is saying.

The Lord said, they chose to do things that I did not delight in. Now God tells us in the Ten Commandments many of the things that He does not delight in. And yet these are the things that these people were doing.

Things that did not delight God. Things that were an offense to God. And these were the things that they were doing.

Doing things God said that I did not delight in. David said, How happy is the man who doesn't walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law does he meditate day and night. God's servants delighting in the law of the Lord.

Those that are opposed to God. They are choosing to do things that the Lord does not delight in. And hence when that day comes and He separates the sheep from the goats.

He speaks of the sheep as His servants. The goats as those who would not obey, those who would not listen, those who were worshiping false gods, those that have forsaken the Lord. The Lord said in Hebrews 10.38, Now the just shall live by faith.

And if any man draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. When Jesus was addressing the churches, to the church of Ephesus, He said, I have this against you. You have left your first love.

As we move into the book of Jeremiah we are going to find God's lamentation over the people. God is going to be saying to the people, I can remember when we were first going together. I remember the love that you had for me.

How that you were doing graffiti actually. You were writing holiness to the Lord and, you know, that commitment that you had. God says, What did I do wrong? Where did I fail you that you should turn from Me? I see that as very pathetic.

God is saying, What did I do wrong? Why don't you love Me as you once did? Where did I go wrong in this relationship? Where did I fail you? Jesus said to the church of Ephesus, You've left your first love. Remember what it used to be and repent and do your first works over. But when He gets to the church of Laodicea it's even stronger.

Jesus said, You are neither hot nor cold, but you're lukewarm. And I cannot tolerate a lukewarm condition. I will spew you out of My mouth.

I can't take it. I won't take it. If you would take your spiritual temperature today, where would it be? Fervent for the things of God? Or just sort of lukewarm? Take it or leave it.

Sort of in the middle. No, I'm not really fervent for God, but I'm not cold. Where does that leave you? Lukewarm.

Lord said, That's not good enough. I'll spew you out of My mouth. The great divide.

It's coming. It's coming very soon. The Lord is coming soon for His church.

The conditions of the world are screaming out to us that we don't have much time left. God is speaking and telling us it's time to get serious about God and the things of God. We don't have time to just play

around with the things of God.

It's time that we get diligent and serious about our commitment that I know, that I know, that I know that I am a servant of God today. I've surrendered my life to serve Him. Time is short.

The day of the great divide is coming soon. The big issue is on what side will you be placed when He separates the sheep from the goats? Father, help us to realize how serious is the matter of serving You, of being a servant of God. Lord, to look upon the tragedy of those who have forsaken You, those that have forsaken the worship of You, those that are doing things, Lord, that You don't delight in.

Thank You, Lord, for speaking to us. May we hear Your voice and may we respond and answer, Lord, rather than turning a deaf ear to You. May we heed what You say to Your church today that we might be classified as servants of God, serving Him from our hearts.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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