



STORY TIME

Discovering the Parables of Jesus

Parables use rich imagery of language to catch the listener unaware. At first it all seems so familiar, and then a shift develops in the plot of the story. The ordinariness of the parable is transformed by a surprising twist. A consciousness of God and His way of viewing the world enters the commonplace scene to communicate the divine message. The familiar setting of the parable allows each person to understand God's will. The physical reality of the parable reveals the natural affinity between the world in which we live and the spiritual dimension. The drama comes alive in meaning because of the theological significance of the parables.

- Brad H. Young

Hebrew noun mashal מִשָּׁל

- Definition: a parable, proverb, riddle, anecdote, allegory
- It defines the unknown by using what is known.
- The mashal begins where the listener is, but then pushes beyond into a new realm of discovery.

Greek noun parabole παραβάλλω

Definition: a comparing, comparison of one thing with another, likeness, similitude, juxtaposition

Parables in the Bible

- The first use of the word for parable (mashal מָשָׁל) in the Bible is when “Balaam spoke his mashal.” (Numbers 23:7)
- The parables of Yeshua are metaphorical stories. A story, at minimum, contains a main character (king, owner, shepherd) who has a problem (with a son, field, sheep) that gets resolved.
- In that resolution process we find deeper purpose and meaning of how God wants us to live in this world.
- God tells us He is the author of many parables: “I spoke to the prophets; it was I who multiplied visions, and through the prophets gave parables [literally, likenesses and representations].” (Hosea 12:10)

Studying our 20th of 41 Parables of Jesus

PARABLES	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
Salt of the Earth ✓	Matthew 5:13	Mark 9:50	
Lamp Under a Bowl ✓	Matthew 5:14-16	Mark 4:21-22	Luke 8:16, 11:33
Wise and Foolish Builders	Matthew 7:24-27		Luke 6:47-49
New Cloth on an Old Coat	Matthew 9:16	Mark 2:21	Luke 5:36
New Wine in Old Wineskins	Matthew 9:17	Mark 2:22	Luke 5:37-39
The Two Debtors			Luke 7:40-43
The Sower ✓	Matthew 13:1-23	Mark 4:1-20	Luke 8:4-15
The Good Samaritan ✓			Luke 10:25-37
The Friend at Midnight			Luke 11:5-13
Growing Seed		Mark 4:26-29	
The Rich Fool ✓			Luke 12:13-21
The Watchful Servants		Mark 13:35-37	Luke 12:35-40
Unfruitful Fig Tree			Luke 13:6-9
The Weeds ✓	Matthew 13:24-30, 36-4		
The Seed ✓	Matthew 13:31-32	Mark 4:26-30	Luke 13:18-19
Yeast ✓	Matthew 13:33		Luke 13:20-21
The Concealed Treasure	Matthew 13:44		
The Pearl	Matthew 13:45-46		
The Casting of the Net into the Sea	Matthew 13:47-50		
Owner of a House	Matthew 13:52		
The Lost Sheep ✓	Matthew 18:12-14		Luke 15:3-7
The Unforgiving Servant ✓	Matthew 18:23-35		
The Vineyard Workers ✓	Matthew 20:1-16		

PARABLES	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
Lowest Seat at the Feast ✓			Luke 14:7-14
The Great Feast ✓			Luke 14:16-24
Cost of Discipleship			Luke 14:28-33
The Lost Coin			Luke 15:8-10
The Prodigal Son ✓			Luke 15:11-32
The Shrewd Manager			Luke 16:1-13
The Rich Man and Lazarus ✓			Luke 16:19-31
Master and His Servant			Luke 17:7-10
Persistent Widow ✓			Luke 18:1-8
The Two Sons	Matthew 21:28-32		
The Vineyard Owner	Matthew 21:33-44	Mark 12:1-11	Luke 20:9-18
The Marriage Feast	Matthew 22:1-14		
Fig Tree	Matthew 24:32-35	Mark 13:28-31	Luke 21:29-33
Faithful and Wise Servant	Matthew 24:45-51		Luke 12:42-48
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector ✓			Luke 18:9-14
Ten Virgins ✓	Matthew 25:1-13		
The Talent ✓	Matthew 25:14-30		Luke 19:11-27
The Sheep and the Goats	Matthew 25:31-46		

One-third of the recorded sayings of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels are in parables.

Matthew 24-25

- As He [Jesus] was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your **coming**, and of the end of the age?”
Matthew 24:3
- Jesus said, “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is **coming**.” Matthew 24:42
- Jesus said, “For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is **coming** [Second Coming] at an hour when you do not think He will.” Matthew 24:44

Jesus said, “But when the **Son of Man** comes [Second Coming] in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.” Matthew 25:31

- The whole passage calmly attributes to Jesus the authority and kingship which in the Old Testament belong to God alone.
- By using the title Son of Man, Yeshua knew that His Jewish listeners would identify it as a reference to the coming Messiah.

- New Bible Commentary

- Yaakov Brown <https://www.bethmelekh.com/yaakovs-commentary/the-sheep-the-goats>

Who is the Son of Man?

Daniel said, “I kept looking in the night visions [dreams], and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a **Son of Man was coming**, and He came up to the Ancient of Days [God the Father] and was presented before Him. And to Him [Son of Man] was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.”

Daniel 7:13-14

- Yeshua uses this title multiple times in the gospels and is clearly referencing His second coming (Mark 8:31; Mark 14:62; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Revelation 19:11-16).

Jesus said, “But when the **Son of Man** comes [Second Coming] in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.” Matthew 25:31



Jesus said, “All the **nations** [non-Jews] will be gathered before Him [Heavenly King]; 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.” Matthew 25:32-33

- The right hand is the hand of strength, progeny, righteousness and power; the left hand is a symbol of weakness, subjugation and loss.
- Yaakov Brown <https://www.bethmelekh.com/yaakovs-commentary/the-sheep-the-goats>
- Every sheep is a believer in Jesus and a member of God’s eternal household. Every goat is an unbeliever and has never been a member of God’s eternal household. - <https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-25/matthew-2532-33/>

In Israel you generally see sheep and goats grazing together. The group of animals in a neat circle nearest the shepherd are sheep; the rest scattered on the hillside are goats.

While sheep are good followers, goats often have a mind of their own. Goats have an independent streak which causes them to stray.

Sheep as Believers

In Jewish culture, sheep are symbols of purity and innocence.

They were largely ignorant and helpless. They did not know how to protect themselves. This sense of haplessness is what Isaiah was getting at when he wrote, “All of us like sheep have gone astray” (Isaiah 53:6). Jesus looked upon the multitudes and “felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36).

Sheep were trusting and compliant—especially when compared to goats, which are more independent, self-sufficient, and stubborn. Sheep and children share this type of trust that displays itself in simple and humble faith: “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

The third reason sheep were considered symbols of purity and innocence was their inclusion in the Jewish sacrificial system. Sacrifices often called for these animals to be without spot or blemish (Exodus 12:5), “According to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22).

Jesus is our spotless sacrifice, who died to save us from our sins. He is “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!” (John 1:29). His gift of righteousness and innocence are graciously and unconditionally bestowed upon everyone who believes in His name (John 3:16; Romans 3:22).

The sheep in this parable do not gain or earn their righteousness from their own works. Their righteousness is gifted to them by God’s grace through faith. The sheep are new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). And again, the sheep would include the unfaithful figures in all three of the Lord’s previous trio of parables.

Goats as Unbelievers

In Jewish culture, goats are portrayed as symbols of sin and guilt. In Leviticus, Aaron the high priest was commanded to take two goats and cast lots. One was to be offered as a sacrifice for the LORD. The other was to be the “scapegoat.” The scapegoat was not killed but was to be presented alive before the LORD and released into the wilderness. This scapegoat was the personification of all the nation’s sins, and its release into the wild depicted the banishment of sin from Israel’s midst. It was a physical reminder that symbolized the removal of the nation’s stain of guilt (Leviticus 16:7-10).

Jesus was our real “scapegoat.” He was the One who assumed all of our sin and guilt and unrighteousness.

Isaiah identified the Messiah as the One who bore our sins and would become Israel’s scapegoat (Isaiah 53:4). It was with Jesus’s transfer of His innocence to us and our guilt to Him in mind, Paul wrote that, God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

“And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.” (1 John 2:2)

As sheep, we received the Messiah’s perfect righteousness by faith, He willingly assumed all our guilt and received the penalty for our sins on the cross. But the goats did not believe in Jesus as the Son of God and therefore they have not received His righteousness. The goats remain unrighteous. They were not made new creations (2 Corinthians 5:21). They were not made alive with Christ and remained dead in their sins (Ephesians 2:5).

In this parable, the sheep represented the righteous and are sorted to the King’s right. The goats represented the accursed scoffers who rejected the King and are sorted to the King’s left. It is difficult to overstate the importance or the enormous difference of this distinction. One is extremely good (the sheep), because they have been granted the righteousness of Christ through faith. The other is extremely bad (the goats) because they have rejected this gift, which was freely offered.

Jesus said, “Then the King will say to those on His right [sheep], ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’” Matthew 25:34

- Yeshua is not changing the rules of salvation here. These parables do not teach that righteous acts bring about salvation, on the contrary, they show that righteous acts are the natural outworking of an already transformed person.

Jesus said, “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; I was **sick**, and you visited Me; I was in **prison**, and you came to Me.” Matthew 25:35-36

- Today’s societal challenges are not new:
Nutrition, Immigration, Welfare, Healthcare, Crime

Jesus said, “Then the righteous [sheep... believers] 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? **When did we** see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’” Matthew 25:37-39

Notice that the sheep are unaware of their many acts of righteousness. Why? Because as believers in Yeshua we act from His life in us rather than from our nature. We don't act righteously in order to win His approval, on the contrary, we act righteously because we have His approval. All that we do for Him is sin because it is initiated from our desire to save ourselves through our own actions, however, all that we do from Him is righteousness, that is, Messiah in us works *mitzvot* (good deeds). Thus we act in Him as lovers of His brothers and sisters.

We should take great comfort in the fact that this parable doesn't threaten our eternal security, rather it shows us that we need not keep an account of righteous deeds or manufacture deeds of our own, rather, we should simply live according to the Spirit of Messiah in us and in doing so we will act righteously of Him rather than of our sin nature.

“The King [Messiah Jesus] will answer and say to them [sheep... believers], ‘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.’”
Matthew 25:40

Then the King will say, ‘I’m telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.’

Matthew 25:40 (The Message)

Categories of the “Least of These”

- Hungry
- Thirsty
- Strangers (in need of hospitality)
- In need of clothing
- Sick (in need of medical care and/or a caregiver)
- In prison

How is **this church** helping the “least of these”?

National

- Metro Relief Homeless Ministry (DFW Metroplex)
- Disaster Relief (across America)
- Christmas Angel Ministry (our local cities)
- Chapel of Hope Prison Ministry (Texas)

International

- Andy and Tresha McKnight - Romania
- Scott and Michal Sullivan - France
- Vitor and Amanda Freitas - Brazil
- Juan and Melissa Santafe – Colombia
- Renee Flannery - Kyrgyzstan

A portion of every dollar of tithes and offerings given to First Melissa goes to support these efforts

How can I help the “least of these”?

- Pray
- Give generously
- Volunteer in our ministries
- Invite others to church every day
- Pay attention to your neighbors and co-workers
- Be a friendly and welcoming church



Our Normal Responses

- **“But I am so busy”**

True... so is every helper involved

- **“I can’t help everyone”**

True... but we can help someone

- **“I can’t meet all the needs”**

True... but we can meet some of the needs

- **“I can’t afford to pay for all the aid needed”**

True.. but we can give faithfully out of what the Lord has given us

- **“I don’t even know where to start”**

True... but our church family has already started helping those in need

- **“Sometimes I help people and they are not even thankful”**

True... but we are not responsible for their words or actions

“The King [Messiah Jesus] will answer and say to them [sheep... believers], ‘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.’” Matthew 25:40

- The expression “these brothers” must refer to a third group that is neither sheep nor goats. - Bible Knowledge Commentary

“The King [Messiah Jesus] will answer and say to them [sheep... believers], ‘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.’”

Matthew 25:40

- The term “My brethren” refers to the Jewish people. Every man and nation will be judged on how they have treated the Jewish people and the nation of Israel.
– Christians United for Israel
- The Lord said to Abram, “And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and **I will bless those who bless you**, and **the one who curses you I will curse**. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” Genesis 12:2-3

Who are the “least of these”?

“For thus says the Lord of hosts, “After glory He has sent Me against the nations which plunder you [Zion... Jerusalem], for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye.” Zechariah 2:8

Yeshua: “I take it personally how you treat my family. Treat them well or you’re going to have to deal with Me.”

Our commitment to God’s people will be severely tested in the Last Days. As we get closer to Jesus’ return, we will witness an increasing onslaught of anti-Semitism. The sincerity of our commitment to God’s chosen people, the apple of His eye, will be severely tested.

“Then He [Heavenly King] will also say to those on His left [goats... unbelievers], ‘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.’” Matthew 25:41-43

“Then they [goats... unbelievers] 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** [my Jewish brothers and sisters], you did not do it to Me.’”

Matthew 25:44-45

- “If I had known it was Jesus in need, I would have helped.”
- God does not need our help, His people do.

Yeshua's answer is plain...

“When you didn't stand up for my people Israel (empirical, ethnic) while the nations verbally abused her, when you didn't help the Jewish poor and sick, when you rallied against them in the streets and helped to send them to labor camps and prisons where you murdered them and mistreated them, when you supported so-called social justice groups that opposed my people's safety and her right to the land, when you hid beneath the guise of open minded liberalism while my people were being bombed and persecuted from every side, when you spat on the very idea of the Jewish people and the Jewish state and raged against them, that's when you rejected Me and failed to recognize Me!”

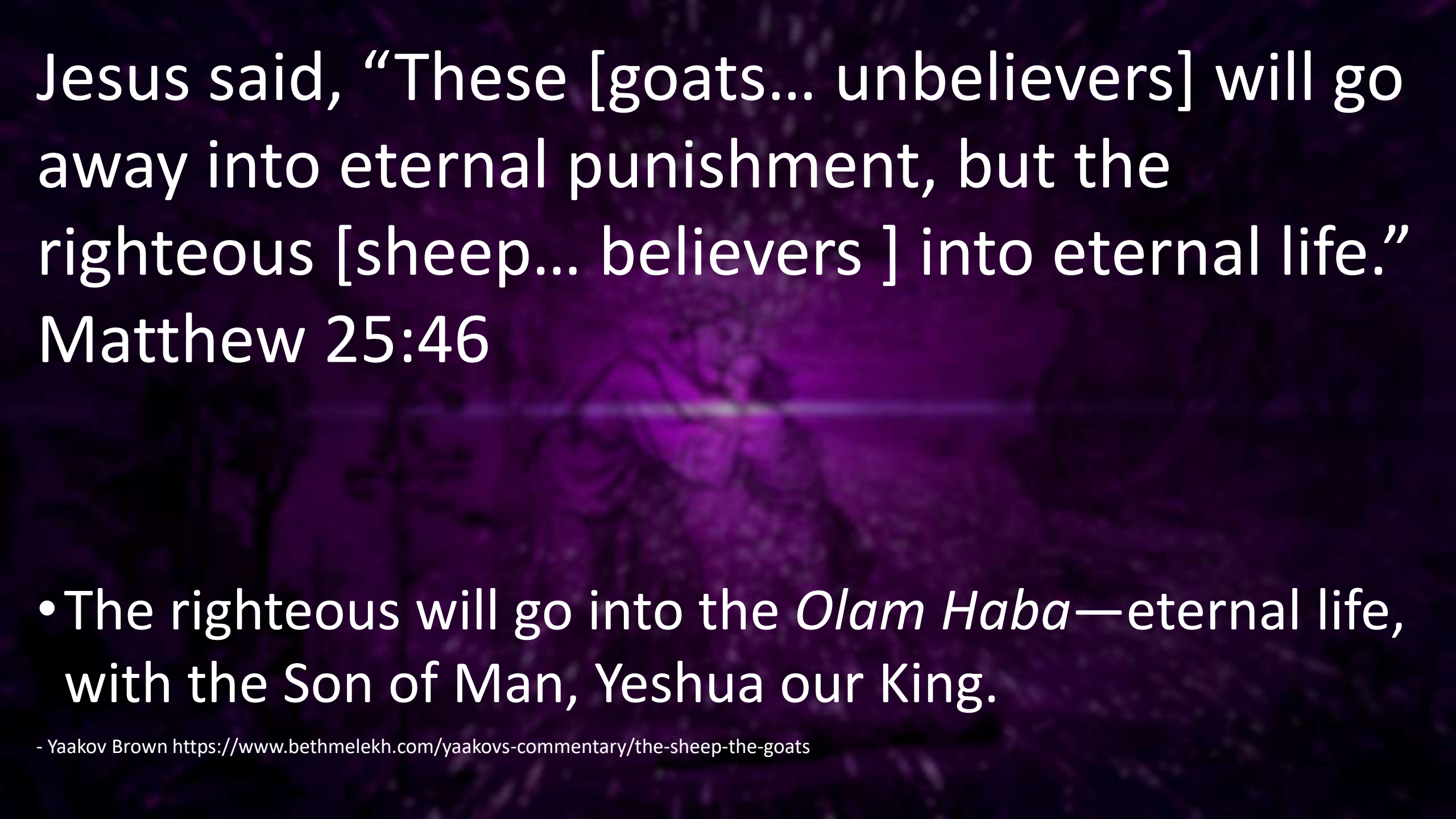
How is **this church** helping the Jewish “least of these”?

- King of Kings Community Church (Jerusalem)
- King of Kings Network (across Israel)
- Pastor Chad and Rebecca Holland
- Christian Friends of Israeli Communities
- Root Source
- Land of Israel Network
- Friends of the Israel Football League

A portion of every dollar of tithes and offerings given to First Melissa goes to support these efforts

How can I help the Jewish “least of these”?

- Pray
 - “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem” Psalm 122:6
- Give generously
- Reject the heresy of Replacement Theology
- Pay attention to the news, understand current events
- Call on American leaders to stand with and support Israel
- Study the Bible (Torah Tuesday)
- Visit Israel with us on a study tour (February 2024)



Jesus said, “These [goats... unbelievers] will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous [sheep... believers] into eternal life.”
Matthew 25:46

- The righteous will go into the *Olam Haba*—eternal life, with the Son of Man, Yeshua our King.

A casual reading seems to suggest that salvation is the result of good works. The “sheep” acted charitably, giving food, drink, and clothing to the needy. The “goats” showed no charity. This seems to result in salvation for the sheep and eternal punishment for the goats.

Scripture does not contradict itself, and the Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches that salvation is by faith through the grace of God and not by our good works (see John 1:12; Acts 15:11; Romans 3:22-24; Romans 4:4-8; Romans 7:24-25; Romans 8:12-13; Galatians 3:6-9; Ephesians 2:8-10).

Jesus Himself makes it clear in the parable that the salvation of the “sheep” is not based on their works—their inheritance was theirs “since the creation of the world” (Matthew 25:34), long before they could ever do any good works!

The good works mentioned in the parable are not the **cause** of salvation but the **effect** of salvation.

As Christians we become like Jesus (see Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; and Colossians 2:6-7).

Galatians 5:22 tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. Good works in a Christian's life are the direct overflow of these traits, and are only acceptable to God because of the relationship that exists between servant and Master, the saved and their Savior, the sheep and their Shepherd (see Ephesians 2:10).

Have our lives been changed by Messiah Jesus?

Are we living as His sheep?

- Am I becoming more loving?
 - Am I becoming more helpful?
 - Am I becoming more Christ-like?
 - Am I becoming more sheep-like?
-
- Progress and spiritual growth are our calling

How much should I love the “least of these”?

Jesus said to His disciples...

“A new [recent, fresh] commandment I give to you, that you love [ἀγάπη agape] one another, even **as I have loved** [ἀγάπη agape] **you**, that you also love [ἀγάπη agape] one another.” John 13:34