

Matthew 25:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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:

Analysis

Before him shall be gathered all nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, panta ta ethnē)—the universal scope of final judgment encompasses every people group, not just Israel. The Greek ethne emphasizes Gentile inclusion in Christ's eschatological tribunal.

As a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats (ώσπερ ὁ ποιμὴν ἀφορίζει, hōsper ho poimēn aphorizei)—The verb aphorizei means to mark off boundaries, to separate decisively. In Palestinian shepherding, sheep and goats often grazed together but were separated at night; sheep (more valuable, docile) received shelter, while goats (hardier) stayed outside. This agricultural image depicts irreversible eternal division.

Historical Context

Jesus delivered this Olivet Discourse teaching (Matthew 24-25) during Passion Week, days before His crucifixion. First-century Palestinian shepherds commonly managed mixed flocks, making this imagery immediately recognizable. The judgment scene echoes Daniel 7:13-14 (Son of Man receiving dominion) and Joel 3:2 (nations gathered for judgment).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does the universality of judgment ('all nations') challenge nationalistic or tribal understandings of salvation?
2. What does the shepherd's decisive separation reveal about the finality of God's judgment?
3. In what ways does genuine faith manifest itself in actions that align with Christ's kingdom values?

Interlinear Text

καὶ συναχθήσεται ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοὺς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη
And shall be gathered before him all nations
G2532 G4863 G1715 G846 G3956 G3588 G1484

καὶ ἀφορίζει αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ ἀλλήλων ὥσπερ ὁ ποιμὴν
And divideth him from another as a shepherd
G2532 G873 G846 G575 G240 G5618 G3588 G4166

ἀφορίζει τὰ πρόβατα ἀπὸ τῶν ἐρίφων
divideth his sheep from the goats
G873 G3588 G4263 G575 G3588 G2056

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 13:49 (Parallel theme): So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,

Malachi 3:18 (Parallel theme): Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

2 Corinthians 5:10 (Parallel theme): For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Psalms 98:9 (Parallel theme): Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

Psalms 96:13 (Parallel theme): Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

Matthew 3:12 (Parallel theme): Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Psalms 1:5 (Parallel theme): Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

John 10:14 (Parallel theme): I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

Romans 2:12 (Parallel theme): For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;

Romans 2:16 (Parallel theme): In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.