

The Judgment of the Nations†

31* "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne,† 32*† and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 34 Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35* For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' 37† Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did

we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' 40* And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.' 41*† Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42* For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, 43 a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' 44† Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and

"You Did for Me"

"If the poor would only get out and find work, they would not be poor!" This common misconception pacifies the conscience of many people. Instead, Jesus says that we shouldn't let people suffer; we must reach out to them. He is neither suggesting that we respond nor encouraging us to; he is demanding that we do. He also states quite clearly that we will be judged by God as to how well we care for those who are disadvantaged.

How does your local community respond to Jesus' call? Can hungry people get a free meal somewhere? Does your school or parish have food or clothing drives? How are shut-ins and terminally ill people cared for? Who visits or writes to the prisoners in the county jail? How does your community, school, or parish respond to refugees or immigrants? Who are the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, the naked, the sick, or the imprisoned in your neighborhood or community? What can you do to help minister to them?

Many opportunities exist for young people to do such ministry. For example, every spring break, young people from all over the country help build homes for poor people. Every weekend, teenagers in major cities serve food in soup kitchens. Many teenagers staff day-care centers for children of people who live in homeless shelters. Many young people are responding! Are you?

► Mt 25, 31-46

25, 31-46: The conclusion of the discourse, which is peculiar to Matthew, portrays the final judgment that will accompany the parousia. Although often called a "parable," it is not really such, for the only parabolic elements are the depiction of the Son of Man as a shepherd and of the righteous and the wicked as sheep and goats respectively (32-33). The criterion of judgment will be the deeds of mercy that have been done for the least of Jesus' brothers (40). A difficult and important question is the identification of these least brothers. Are they all people who have suffered hunger, thirst, etc. (35, 36) or a particular group of such sufferers? Scholars are divided in their response and arguments can be made for either side. But leaving aside the problem of what the traditional material that Matthew edited may have meant, it seems that a stronger case can be made for the view that in the evangelist's sense the sufferers are Christians, probably Christian missionaries whose sufferings were brought upon them by their preaching of the gospel. The criterion of judgment for all the nations is their treatment of those who have borne to the world the message of Jesus, and this means ultimately their acceptance or rejection of Jesus himself; cf 10, 40, "Whoever receives you, receives me."

25, 31: See the note on 16, 27.

25, 32: All the nations: before the end the gospel will have been preached throughout the world (24, 14); thus the Gentiles will be judged on their response to it. But the phrase all the nations includes the Jews also, for at the judgment "the Son of Man . . . will repay everyone according to his conduct" (16, 27).

25, 37-40: The righteous will be astonished that in caring for the needs of the sufferers they were ministering to the Lord himself. One of these least brothers of mine: cf 10, 42.

25, 41: Fire prepared . . . his angels: cf 1 Enoch 10, 13 where it is said of the evil angels and Semyaza, their leader, "In those days they will lead them into the bottom of the fire—and in torment—in the prison (where) they will be locked up forever."

25, 44-45: The accursed (41) will be likewise astonished that their neglect of the sufferers was neglect of the Lord and will receive from him a similar answer.

25, 31: Mt 16, 27; Dt 33, 2 LXX.
25, 32: Ez 34, 17.
25, 35-36: Is 58, 7; Lk 18, 7.

25, 40: Mt 10, 40-42.
25, 41: Mt 7, 23; Lk 13, 27.
25, 42-43: Jb 22, 7; Jan 2, 15-16.

not minister to your needs? 45 He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' 46* And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

VII: The Passion and Resurrection

The Conspiracy against Jesus

26† When Jesus finished all these words,† he said to his disciples, 2* "You know that in two days' time it will be Passover, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified." 3† Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, 4* and they consulted together to arrest Jesus by treachery and put him to death. 5† But they said, "Not during the festival, that there may not be a riot among the people."

The Anointing at Bethany

6*† Now when Jesus was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, 7 a woman came up to him with an alabaster jar of costly perfumed oil, and poured it on his head while he was reclining at table. 8 When the disciples saw this, they were indignant and said, "Why this waste? 9 It could have been sold for much, and the money given to the poor." 10 Since Jesus knew this, he said to them, "Why do you make trouble for the woman? She has done a good thing for me. 11* The poor you will always have with you; but you will not always have me. 12† In pouring this perfumed oil upon my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. 13 Amen, I say to

26, 1-28, 20: The five books with alternating narrative and discourse (3, 1-25, 46) that give this gospel its distinctive structure lead up to the climactic events that are the center of Christian belief and the origin of the Christian church, the passion and resurrection of Jesus. In his passion narrative (chs 26-27) Matthew follows his Marcan source closely but with omissions (e.g., Mk 14, 51-52) and additions (e.g., 27, 3-10, 19). Some of the additions indicate that he utilized traditions that he had received from elsewhere; others are due to his own theological insight (e.g., 26, 28, "... for the forgiveness of sins", 27, 52). In his editing Matthew also altered Mark in some minor details. But there is no need to suppose that he knew any passion narrative other than Mark's.

26, 1-2: When Jesus finished all these words: see the note on 7, 28-29. "You know . . . crucified": Matthew turns Mark's statement of the time (14, 1) into Jesus' final prediction of his passion. Passover: see the note on Mk 14, 1.

26, 3: Caiaphas was high priest from A.D. 18 to 36.

26, 5: Not during the festival: the plan to delay Jesus' arrest and execution until after the festival was not carried out, for according to the synoptics he was arrested on the night of Nisan 14 and put to death the following day. No reason is given why the plan was changed.

26, 6-13: See the notes on Mk 14, 3-9 and Jn 12, 1-8.

26, 12: To prepare me for burial: cf Mk 14, 8. In accordance with the interpretation of this act as Jesus' burial anointing, Matthew, more consistent than Mark, changes the purpose of the visit of the women to Jesus' tomb, they do not go to anoint him (Mk 16, 1) but to see the tomb (28, 1).

26, 14: Iscariot: see the note on Lk 6, 16.

26, 15: The motive of avarice is introduced by Judas's question about the price for betrayal, which is absent in the Marcan source

you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be spoken of, in memory of her."

The Betrayal by Judas

14*† Then one of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15*† and said, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver, 16 and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over.

Preparations for the Passover

17*† On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples approached Jesus and said, "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?" 18† He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The teacher says, "My appointed time draws near; in your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples."'" 19 The disciples then did as Jesus had ordered, and prepared the Passover.

The Betrayer

20 When it was evening, he reclined at table with the Twelve. 21† And while they were eating, he said, "Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me." 22 Deeply distressed at this, they began to say to him one after another, "Surely it is not I, Lord?" 23 He said in reply, "He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will betray me. 24*† The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had

(14, 10-11). Hand him over: the same Greek verb is used to express the saving purpose of God by which Jesus is handed over to death (cf 17, 22; 20, 18; 26, 2) and the human malice that hands him over. Thirty pieces of silver: the price of the betrayal is found only in Matthew. It is derived from Zec 11, 12 where it is the wages paid to the rejected shepherd, a cheap price (Zec 11, 13). That amount is also the compensation paid to one whose slave has been gored by an ox (Ex 21, 32).

26, 17: The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread: see the note on Mk 14, 1. Matthew omits Mark's "when they sacrificed the Passover lamb."

26, 18: By omitting much of Mk 14, 13-15, adding My appointed time draws near, and turning the question into a statement, in your house I shall celebrate the Passover, Matthew has given this passage a solemnity and majesty greater than that of his source.

26, 21: Given Matthew's interest in the fulfillment of the Old Testament, it is curious that he omits the Marcan designation of Jesus' betrayer as "one who is eating with me" (14, 18), since that is probably an allusion to Ps 41, 10. However, the shocking fact that the betrayer is one who shares table fellowship with Jesus is emphasized in v 23.

26, 24: It would be better . . . born: the enormity of the deed is such that it would be better not to exist than to do it.

25, 46: Dn 12, 2.
26, 2-5: Mk 14, 1-2; Lk 22, 1-2.
26, 4: Jn 11, 47-53.
26, 6-13: Mk 14, 3-9; Jn 12, 1-8.
26, 11: Dt 15, 11.
26, 14-16: Mk 14, 10-11; Lk 22, 3-5.
26, 15: Zec 11, 12.
26, 17-25: Mk 14, 12-21; Lk 22, 7-23.
26, 17: Ex 12, 14-20.
26, 24: Is 53, 8-10.