

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

February 21, 2021

“Final Judgment Part 1”

Sunday school at 8:30, Service at 9:15, Service at 10:45 with King’s Kids.

NEWS

Wednesday Night Activities at 6:30 PM

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

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MATTHEW 25:31-33 ~

In your Bible there’s probably a heading for this last section of chapter 25...

The Return that Jesus has been talking about since the beginning of the last chapter is His “Second Coming in Glory” at the “End of the Age,” that will terminate the “Great Tribulation” and “Gather the Elect.”

“Gathering the Elect,” by its very nature, is an act of _____.

There is a sense that His throne itself is made up of _____.

Jesus used a simile of a shepherd judging his flock as an _____ to make His point. He was not giving a detailed teaching on the Judgment along with a precise sequence of end-time events.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Realize that Following Him means actually Following Him... Going where He went and doing what He did. It means we...

- 1) Put the Father and His agenda ahead of all earthly entanglements.
- 2) Suffer being despised, ridiculed, and dismissed because of our testimony concerning Him... And perhaps far worse.
- 3) Love as He loved manifested in tangible ways.
- 4) Allow His Spirit to conform us, so that we walk just like He did.

When we get too focused on the peripheral elements, we miss His point, and create inconsistencies in our _____ and division in the _____.

He will put the πρόβατον (přö-bä-tõn) on His right and the ἐρίφιον (ěřē-fē-õn) on His left. Be careful about repeating "Facts" that may not really be facts.

"All the nations," narrowly defined for Jesus' primary point here, is those who have affiliated with Christianity because of hearing the Gospel.

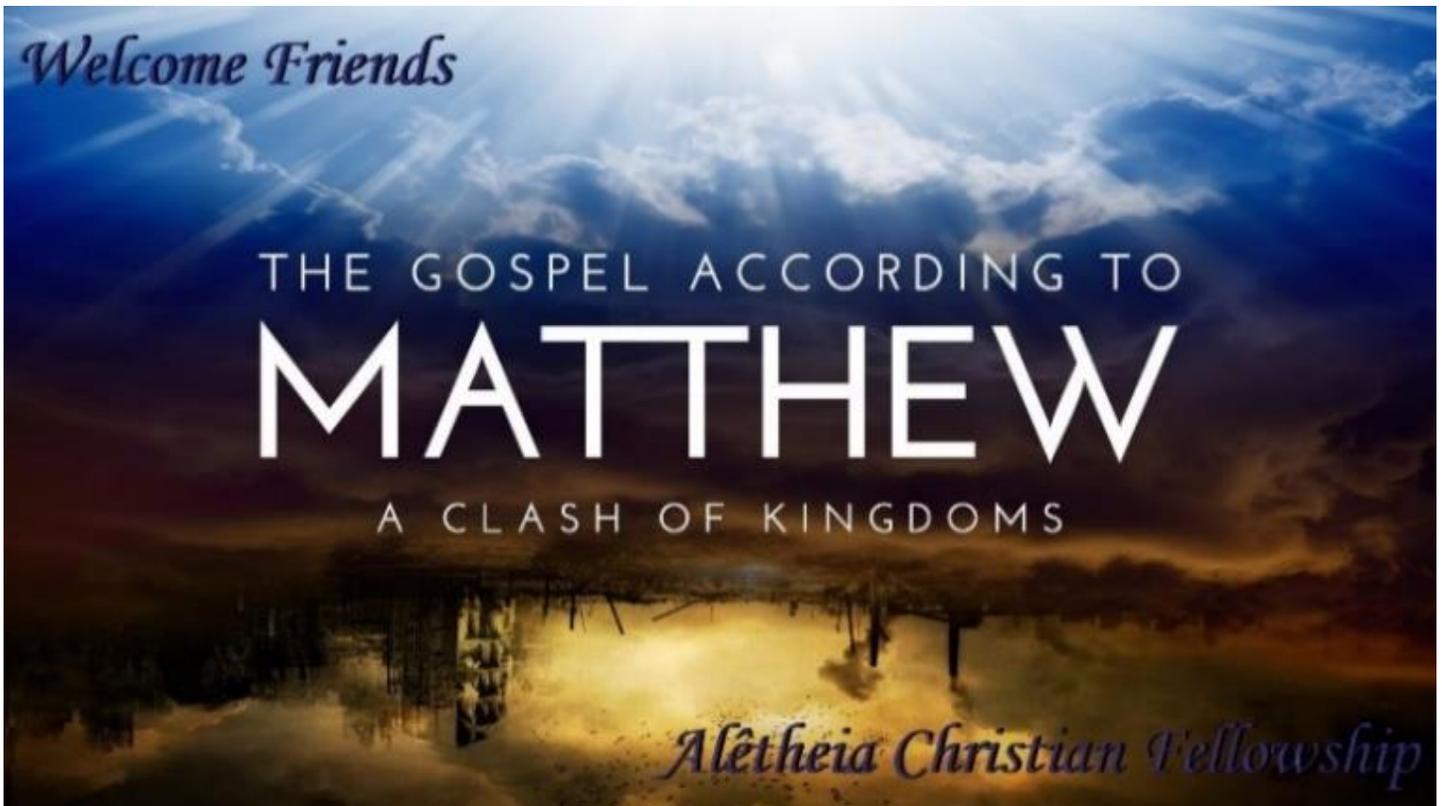
Some accept, some only think that they do.

"Preaching," is always κηρύσσω (kā-řüs-sõ), which means to publicly proclaim. (Romans 10:13&14, Matthew 3:1, 4:23, 10:40&42, Luke 9:2).

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____

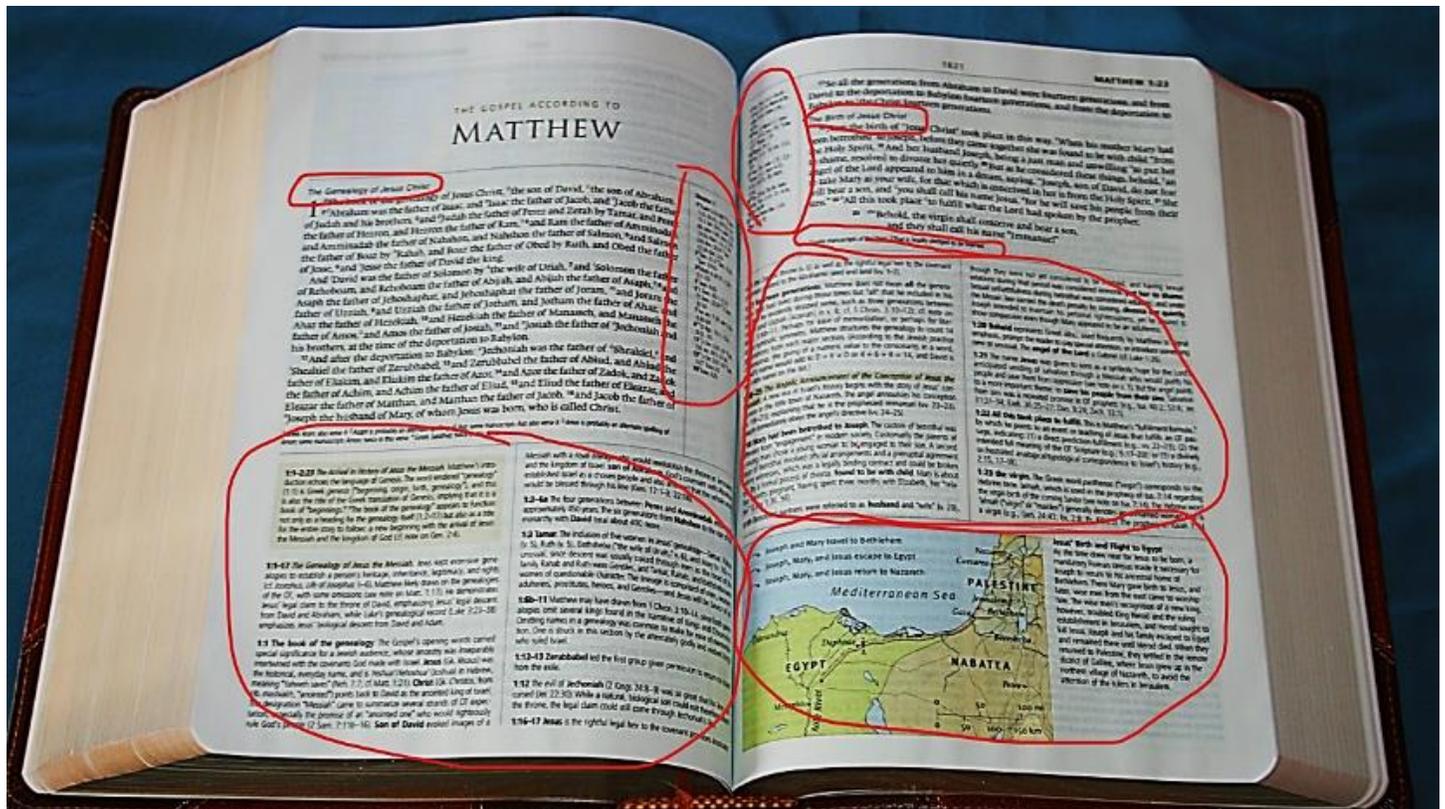
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Last week we finished the third of three parables Jesus told concerning His looming, or impending, or imminent - coming at any moment, Return and therefore, the necessity of being fully ready for Him all the time. As we've repeatedly discussed, many Christians have a belief that they can tell when the end is at hand... That they will know from the signs... That belief contradicts Jesus. He can Return at any instant according to Him. That's not a doctrine, that's a Biblical Truth. Since it is, be ready. After all the time we've spent on this, if that's all you get, it will be enough. It will have been completely worth it.



Now, in this final section of Matthew chapter 25, starting in verse 31, we will see Him wrap it up with a glimpse of the “End of the Age.” That’s what His disciples asked about way back at the beginning of chapter 24. These chapters dealing with the “End,” is about to end.



I. In your Bible, depending on the translation and the type, there's probably a heading for this last section of chapter 25. It will either be something like, "The Final Judgment," or it will be something like "The Sheep and the Goats." Remember that all the extra stuff in your Bible, the footnotes, commentary, maps, chapter titles, and section headings, are not Sacred Scripture.

The heading to do with sheep and goats, leads people to think in terms of a parable using sheep and goats. This is not a parable. Even if it were, a better title would be the "Shepherd Splitting the Flock." Because judgment is the focus and there's good evidence that

the example isn't really sheep and goats anyway. We'll get there.

It's not a big deal, except to say, be cautious about the manmade extras in your Bible. In one case, it is absolutely wrong and misleading. The NKJV heading for this passage is "Judgment of the Gentiles." That's an interpretation, not a description, and it's a bad interpretation at that.



Let's take it in two parts... For today, Matthew 25:31-33, 31"But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32"All the nations will be gathered

before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

From verse 31, we can, once again, very clearly see that the Return that Jesus has been talking about since the beginning of the last chapter is, in fact, His “Second Coming in Glory” at the “End of the Age,” that will terminate the “Great Tribulation” and “Gather the Elect.”

“Gathering the Elect,” by its very nature, is an act of Judgment. There is, by definition, a separation of the elect from the non-elect. A distinction is made. As always in the Bible. There are two, and only two, possibilities. There are those with the Mark of the Beast and those with the Seal of God and no others - no overlap, no fence-sitting, no Purgatory, no alternate path. There is eternal life and eternal death. “That’s all folks!”

Jesus will arrive and seat Himself on His glorious throne. There is a sense that His throne itself is made up of His Own glory as is made clear in the Holman

Bible, the KJV, and others, where they say, “Then He will sit on the throne of His glory.”

Glory gives us a picture of majesty, honor, and power, while the accompanying angels add to the effect. The throne motif gives us an image of His sovereign rule, authority and, again, His role as Judge. When we combine all of that with the “Son of Man” title, it is not only about Judgment, and His authority to judge, it’s also about the physically earned right of Jesus to be the Judge. He lived as a man. He overcame all sin. He paid for all sin and He defeated all sin. Who could ever question His right to judge?

That seems so right and reasonable to us Christians today, but please, for a moment, think about how radical it really is - how shocking it would have been to 1st century Jews.

Only God Judges - only God. Even in Daniel chapter 7, where the prophet sees the “Son of Man coming” on the “Clouds of heaven,” He is “Presented before the Ancient of Days,” who can be none other than Almighty God, who Himself is “Seated” on His throne to Judge. Here, Jesus clearly taught that He would Judge by separating out “All the nations” placing some on His

right and some on His left. Well, my friends, in the instant that Jesus Returns, it's time to settle accounts. Which means that the time to get ready for His unavoidable Judgment is past.

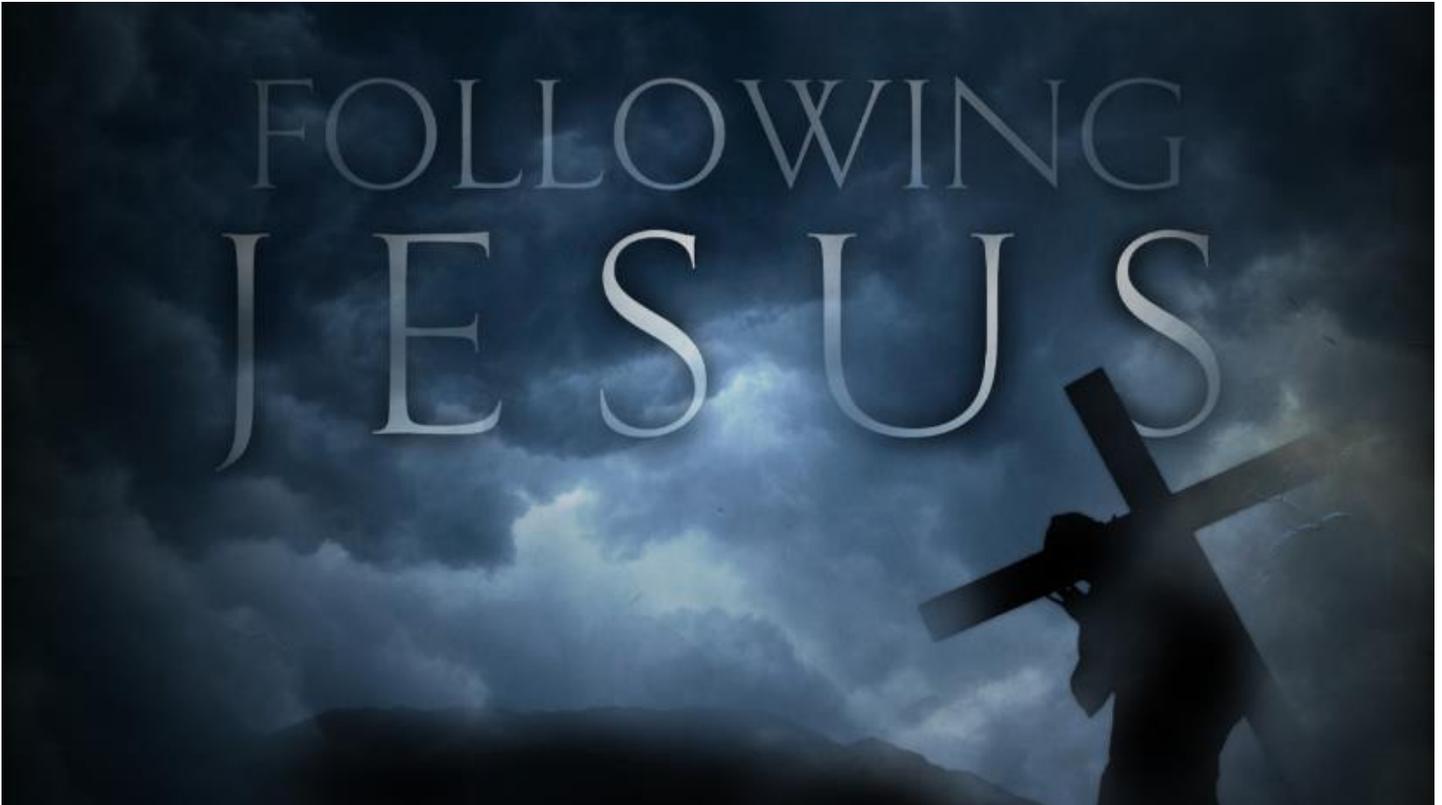


Jesus used a simile of a shepherd judging his flock as an example. Not a parable, a simile. Even so, practically speaking, it's much the same, just shorter, and more to the point. And that is the point. We don't need to know anything about shepherds in the ancient near east to get the point. We don't need to know why a shepherd would separate his animals to understand what Jesus wanted us to understand. It might be nice, but it is unnecessary to comprehend that the shepherd

can and does make judgments about those in their care.

Along those lines, let's understand a particularly important Biblical reality... Jesus was not giving a detailed teaching on the Judgment as in a speech at a doctrinal symposium, or a lecture for a seminary class, or a TED Talk for the internet. Jesus had a very specific goal in mind, and it wasn't to give us a precise sequence of end-time events.

What was He trying to do? He was talking to His Own Followers and He was trying to get them to realize that Following Him meant actually Following Him... Going where He went, and doing what He did.



1) That includes putting the Father and His agenda ahead of all earthly entanglements no questions asked. God first, all the time, without fail. No matter how desperate, how worthy, how important a person, or a thing is, it cannot ever compete with God for your devotion.

2) Following Jesus includes being despised, ridiculed, and dismissed because of your testimony concerning Him and it may include far worse... All the way up to and including imprisonment, torture, and brutal execution.

3) Following Jesus includes loving as He loved. Not some theoretical love, not some emotional love, not some moralistic love, but Agapê driven by the Holy Spirit manifested in tangible ways in the here and now.

4) Following Jesus includes allowing His Spirit to invade and permeate your spirit to the point that you walk just like He did, ever obeying the Father, ever pleasing the Father, ever building the Father's Kingdom, and ever bringing glory to Him.

That's difficult enough with Jesus physically, literally, actively, leading you in person, but Jesus already knew what chapter 26&27 were going to say. He'd been telling them all along that He was going to be betrayed and killed.

Jesus went on to say that Israel would be destroyed, and the Temple wiped off of the Temple Mount, thus putting an end to Biblical Judaism.

Jesus was trying to get them to understand why they would continue in the face of these realities.

Through two chapters He used every method at His disposal to convince them and us and every Follower

in-between and every Follower to come, that there would be Tribulation, but to never fear, because He was going to Return. That His Return could come at any moment and that when it was that moment, it would be too late to change what been done and too late to try to do more. At that moment He would reward those who kept the faith and lived accordingly and at that moment He would cast out all those who did not.



Jesus was trying to paint a picture for us of how things would ultimately turn out so that we, His true Followers, would know that we are never abandoned, that it will all be far more than worth it one day. Jesus is telling you right now, “Do not lose hope.” “Trust in Me, keep the

faith, fight the good fight, run the race set out before you, stay alert and be fully ready for My Return.”

He is Coming. His Return is imminent and He's carrying His reward with Him. If a reward for some, something quite different for others and that is called Judgment.

II. So that's the picture Jesus was trying to paint. When we get too focused on the peripheral elements of His parables, examples, and discourse, all of His Words that He intentionally crafted to make a particular point, we miss His point, and create inconsistencies, contradictions, and confusion in our Bible and division in the church.

People spend so much energy on trying to define all the terms. What does the phrase “All the nations” mean? Who are the “Sheep”? Are the “Goats” fallen sheep, never sheep, sheep having a bad hair day? Did Jesus really say “Naked”? This is not an allegory. Jesus' point is simple and well made.

III. In addition to all of that, we must also be incredibly careful about bringing a bias to this Passage. Either a personal, cultural, or doctrinal bias, but just as

importantly a Biblical bias. Just because the Bible teaches a doctrine in one place, it doesn't mean that it's teaching it in every place. We correctly use the Bible to interpret the Bible, but that does not mean that what it is talking about in a passage is the same thing, with the same focus, it's talking about in another.



Remember in the last chapter, Matthew 24:39-41? Verse 40 had one man taken away and the other left behind. Verse 41 had one woman taken away and the other left behind. Remember that most of you assumed the ones taken away were Raptured and it was the ones left behind who were condemned? It was a shock for most of you to see that the context just given in the

previous verse... Verse 39, was “The flood came and took them all away.” That is bringing a Biblical bias to the text. The Bible tells us elsewhere that Christians will be caught up, or taken away. Just because that’s true, it doesn’t mean that Jesus had that in mind here.

Let me give you another related example. Just a few verses before those, verse 31 Jesus said, “And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.” Where will the “Elect” be gathered? Well, it will be “In the air” as Jesus comes “On the clouds of the sky” right? Does it say that here? Not at all, it’s our Biblical bias that automatically fills in the details... Be cautious when you interpret Jesus, the Word of God.



Okay, enough of that... Jesus will Return in Glory and “All the nations will be gathered before Him.” We could argue from Scripture that this means all non-Jewish people, all people in general, all non-Christian people, all people who were not raptured before the Tribulation, etc.

Based upon the context we get a narrower focus. Over the previous two weeks we went through three lengthy parables that told the same basic story. In the first and third, the slaves belonged to the household of the Master. In the middle one, all of the girls were invited to the wedding.

Contextually, Jesus is talking to the church, not the lost. We know what happens to the lost. In a sense, especially with a Biblical bias they are included with those condemned, but that's not Jesus' focus. This is about people who think that they are in His household.

When we understand it that way, we would immediately bring another Biblical bias to bear and say that this then is the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ. No, this is a picture to drive home the point that not everyone who says "Lord, Lord," is His.

His example... Just like a shepherd of 1st century Palestine purposely separated the animals under his care into two different groups with two different futures, so would Jesus separate all of humanity, but specifically "All of those under His care." His flock, so to speak.



He will put the πρόβατον (přö-bä-tön) on His right and the ἐρίφιον (ěřē-fē-ön) on His left. Everyone in the ancient world knew that the right was good, and the left was bad. They also knew what type of separation Jesus was referring to with His simile. We don't.

Like I said earlier, it's not necessary to know about shepherds, but that's unsatisfying. It is nice to know a bit. Our guide in Israel would talk about the shepherding people and he would say that "They were no-made-ing all over this area. They would no-made here, and then they would no-made there, always no-made-ing."

Words always have a range of meaning, and these two words are no different. It may be that Jesus intended it to be sheep and goats, but there is evidence to suggest that, at that time, the first term meant both sheep and goats when they were herded together, πρόβατον (přö-bä-tön), indicating small livestock. It's like the word "Cows." Technically, cows are mommy cattle, but even ranchers will often refer to their entire herd of heifers, cows, steers, and bulls, as cows.

The second term, ἐρίφιον (ěřē-fē-ön), definitely meant only kids, as in young goats, not grown-up goats. It is very possible that Jesus was talking about the practice of separating out the young goats to be taken to slaughter. In this example, those to be slaughtered were placed on the left.

IV. The only reason I even mention it is to demonstrate another Christian issue with Bible interpretation. Often, people get creative coming up with ideas to explain the details of a passage of Scripture. Their ideas seem plausible and are repeated, not as a possibility, but as a probability and then eventually, as a fact. These "Facts" are then taught as though they are part of the Bible. As an example, in our present passage, people say that the reason that shepherds separated the

sheep from the goats, was because it got very cold at night. Goats cannot tolerate the cold nearly as well as the sheep with their wool coats. The goats would be put in the center of the combined flock with the sheep all around to help them stay warm.

All of that is wrong. None of it is true. Beyond that, it makes no sense for Jesus' point. He has the separated ones being condemned, not protected, they're on his left, not in the center. Honestly, we just don't know for sure what Jesus had in mind as to why the animals were separated. Perhaps one group for pasture and the other for slaughter. If it really was sheep and goats perhaps the point has to do with the similarity of the two animals in a flock. In the filthy conditions they mostly lived in back then, it was difficult for an untrained eye to tell the difference between sheep and goats, while the shepherd knew instantly.

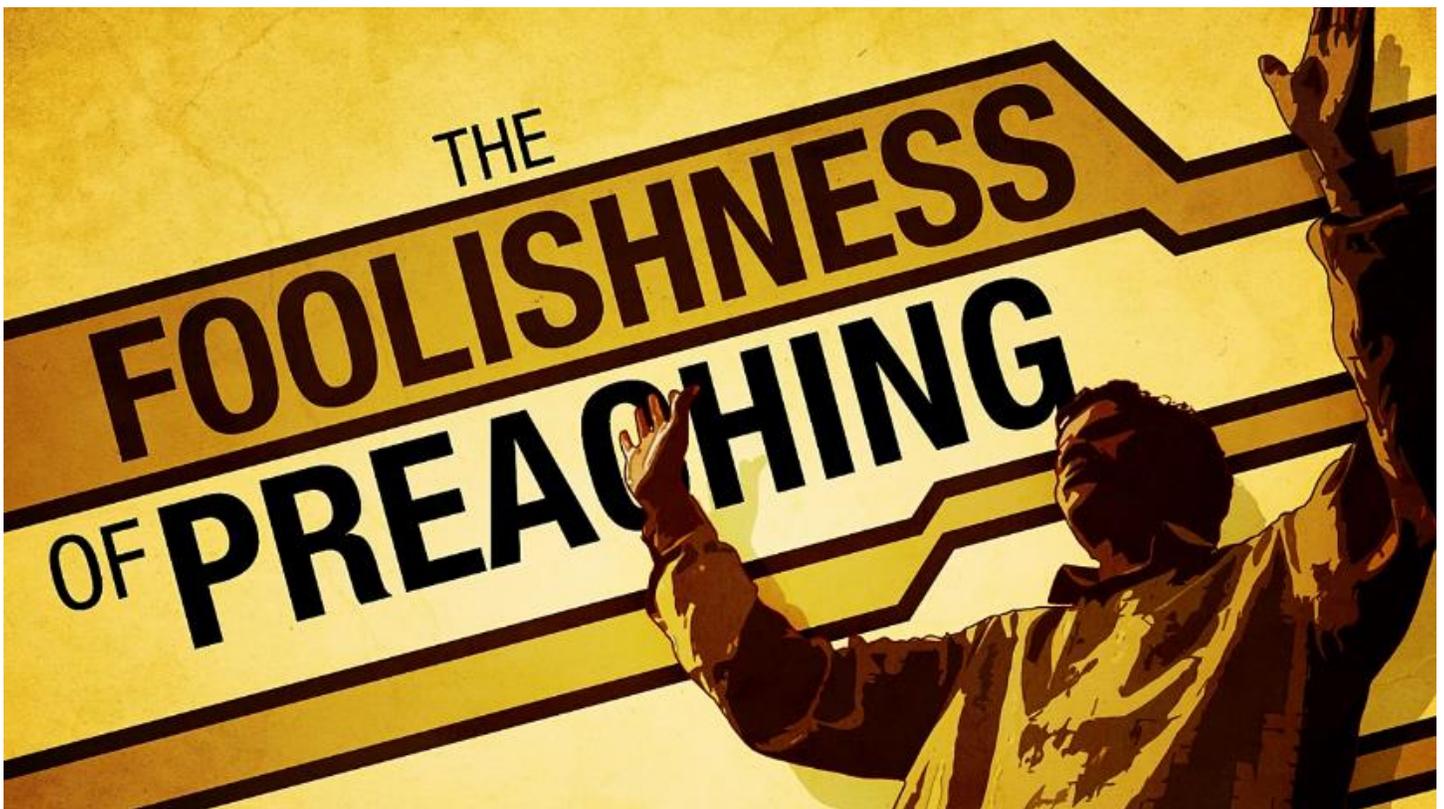
Just be careful about repeating "Facts" that may not really be facts. There are hundreds of these things being taught all across the land this morning.



So “All the nations,” really is, in the grand sense, everyone, but in the specific sense, the whole Christian flock, both sheep and goats, or animals to keep and those to send to slaughter. As we’ve seen repeatedly, Jesus and the Apostles taught that the church would have both weeds and grain, both sheep and wolves to the very end.

If you’re still not sure, the key to help us goes back again to the previous chapter. Matthew 24:14, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

“All the nations,” there, is identical to “All the nations,” in our verse 32 today. So, “All the nations” would be, all those to whom the Gospel has been preached... Who are those people? The entire earth’s population in the representative sense, all those who have actually heard the Gospel in a literal sense, but again, narrowly defined for Jesus’ primary point here, it is focused on those who have affiliated with Christianity because of hearing the Gospel. Notice that a trial is unnecessary - this judge already knows which ones belong to Him. The Mark, or the Seal, will now be evident to all.



Note an interesting concept. “Preaching,” is always κηρύσσω (kā-rūs-sō), which means to publicly herald,

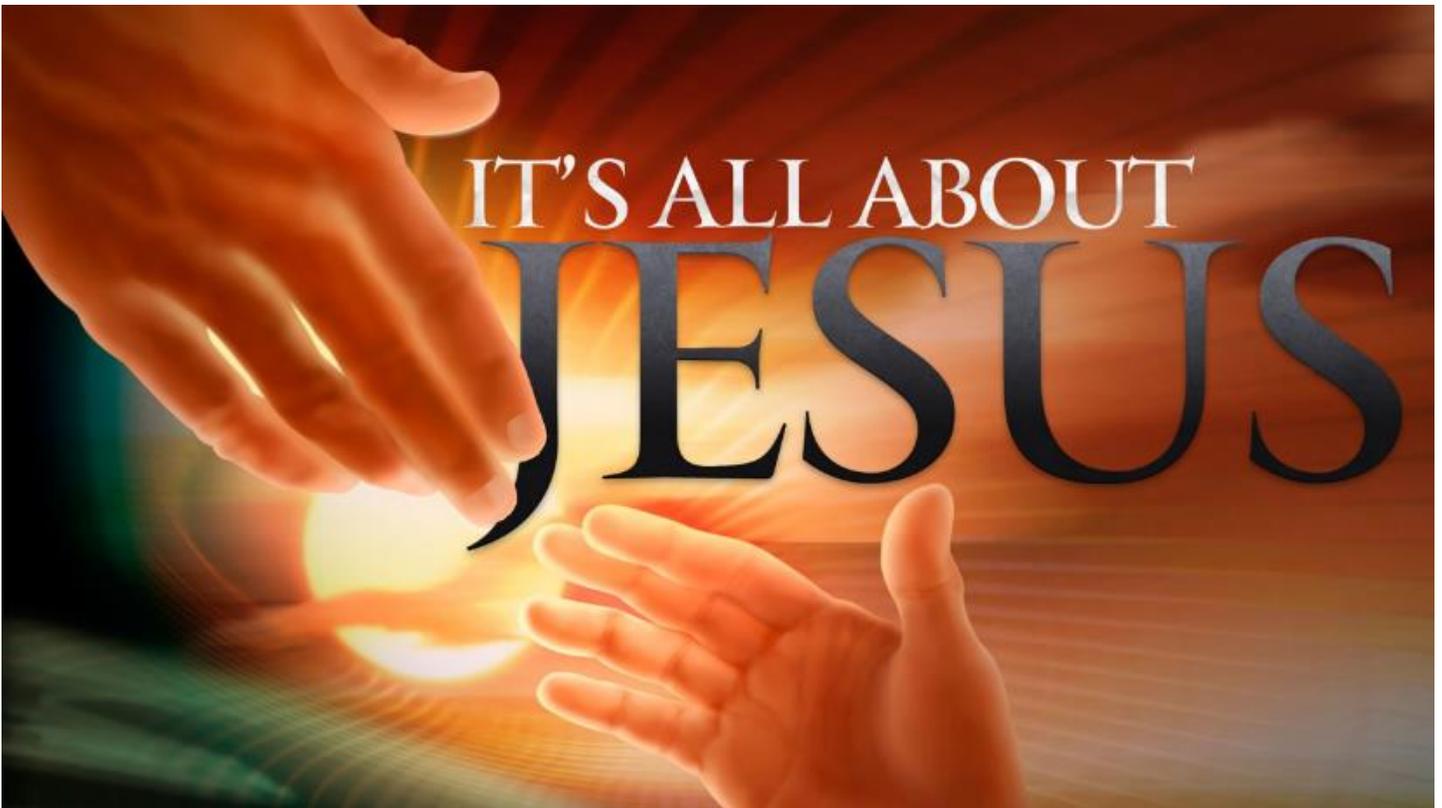
announce, proclaim, or publish. It is to make the message publicly available. It has absolutely nothing to do with the reaction of the public to the message. The preacher's job is to preach, not to convince.

The Bible declares in Romans 10:13&14, 13“Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Then the Holy Spirit interjected a question... 14How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

What was the ministry of Jesus about? Matthew 4:23, Jesus was... proclaiming, or preaching the gospel of the kingdom... John, the guy who baptized Jesus to start His ministry, came to do what? “Make His paths straight,” sure. Came to baptize, of course, but what was John's ministry? Matthew 3:1, Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching... Jesus sent out His 12 Apostles, and He sent out the 70 Disciples. To do what? Luke 9:2, He sent them out to proclaim, or again, to preach the kingdom of God...

In that discourse, where Jesus sent out His anointed preachers, He told them, “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him

who sent Me” (Matthew 10:40). Then He said, “And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.” (Matthew 10:42 ESV). The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Galatians, said “You received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.” Angel means Messenger.



This concept will become important as we go forward next week. For now, in an interpretation vein...

I. All the extra stuff in your Bible, the footnotes, commentary, maps, chapter titles, and section headings, are not Sacred Scripture.

II. When we get too focused on the peripheral elements of parables, examples, and discourse, we miss the point, and create inconsistencies in our Bible and division in the church.

III. Be careful about bringing a bias to this Passage, even a Biblical bias. Just because the Bible teaches a doctrine in one place, it doesn't mean that it's teaching it in this place.

IV. Be careful about repeating "Facts" related to Bible examples that may not really be facts.

In a spiritual vein... Being ready means being a Follower of Jesus...

1) Putting the Father and His agenda ahead of all earthly entanglements no questions asked.

2) Being despised, ridiculed, and dismissed because of your testimony concerning Him and perhaps far worse... Is the gig.

3) Love as He loved with an Agapê driven by the Holy Spirit manifested in tangible ways in the here and now.

4) Allowing His Spirit to conform you so that you walk just like He did, ever obeying, ever pleasing, ever building His Kingdom.