

Matthew 25:31-46 | Suriyan Paramathas

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Preacher: Suriyan Paramathas

[0 : 0 0] All right. Oh, here we go. We're on. So, well, good morning, everyone. It is certainly good to be with you guys.

I was thinking last night, I got 10 hours of sleep, but it was kind of an interesting 10 hours. I went to bed at 9 and then woke up at 2 a.m. and so that was five hours, and then I was up for an hour, and then I went to bed at 3 and woke up at 8.

So, like, it was 10 hours, and it was awesome, but it was, yeah, it was interesting. But during that hour, I had a lot of time to think about my message and just pray, and I was just reminded of, like, I didn't always say, like, it's good to be here at Bethel. Like, when I was younger, Lila and Abby and Julia would all try to get me to, like, come to youth group consistently, and, like, I had no good excuse, but I, like, genuinely, like, did not want to be around the people of God for, like, the longest time, and, like, I was just so, like, mired in deep sin, and I just, like, could not stand being with the people of God. But, like, the Lord is good, and he's changed my heart, and I'm, like, so thankful that I have this opportunity to speak today. So, I feel like I know a lot of you, but if you don't know me, I'm Surian, Paramathas. I come from, I come to Bethel from time to time when I'm home from college, and I'm also serving at the head, serving as the head counselor of Dayspring this summer, which is super cool, which is a really cool opportunity that I've been blessed to be given, and I'm excited to do.

We're actually leaving after this, so hopefully I don't speak too long. Yeah, we'll see how it goes. Huge thanks to Brad and Teddy for thinking of me and giving me this opportunity.

I kind of was thinking about it this way. You know how in baseball, sometimes, like, it's a blowout game, and they don't want to waste the other pitcher's arms, and so, like, they're like, yeah, we've been in Matthew for a long time. We're running out of pitchers, and let's just put in a position player. So, that's, I'm the position player, but, no, I'm grateful to be here. This isn't something that I'm super comfortable doing, but I'm willing to do it, and so, yeah, I'm excited. Let's pray and ask the Lord for help before we get into the passage. Dear Lord, thank you for this day, God. Thank you just for giving me this opportunity to speak, Lord. Thank you for just working in my mind, and as I've prepared for this message for the past few weeks, Lord, I know that it's all from you, Lord. I know that without you, I can't do anything. Without you, Lord, I am weak and helpless, Lord, and so I just ask you for strength and wisdom and peace and comfort, Lord, and I trust that you will provide all of those things, God, because you are a good God who loves me, God, and I'm just so thankful to be here today, Lord, and so I just lift up this message to you. I pray that the hearers would be encouraged and, yeah, that we would just be built up to love you more, Lord. You are so worthy of all the praise, and so we just lift up all these things to you and ask them in Jesus' name. Amen.

[3 : 0 1] All right, so, yeah, I've already mentioned, not super comfortable speaking. Brad asked me around Memorial Day if I would speak, and I was like, I was hesitant, but I was like, I've done this before, like, how hard could it be? And also, I knew that he was at the Memorial Day retreat, and, like, all of you guys were there, and you know how word, like, gets around pretty quickly, and so I was like, I, man, what do all the Bethelites think of me if I say no? And so my pride sort of kicked in, and, um, and I texted Brad back confidently, yes, yes, I'd love to, of course. Um, and I hadn't, I hadn't read the, I hadn't read the passage yet, um, and so that was kind of a mistake on my part, and, um, after I texted him, I read the passage, and I don't know if you peeked ahead to Matthew 25, 31 through 46, um, but, man, I kid you not, I almost texted him back, like, I, I was this close, um, but you know how I am, um, with commitments, and, um, and once I make a commitment, I can't go back on it. Right, Lula?

Uh, yeah, so, um, no, all kidding aside, I've, I've enjoyed studying this passage, um, a lot, and so I'm excited to, to share what I have with you. Um, so it's already been stated, um, but for the past

few weeks, we've been going through the Olivet Discourse, um, and in these passages, Jesus has been warning his disciples about the end time events, and he's been telling them, um, of some of the signs to look out for, um, and he's been giving them parables, um, and I think the main reason he tells his disciples all of these things is because he wants them to be ready. The Lord is very clear in these passages that you cannot know the day or the hour, and yet still he exhorts believers to be ready, and, um, and of course, last week, we looked at the parable of the talents, um, and then the application for that passage would have been, right, are you living your life in such a way that if the Lord were to return, you would be excited, or would you be like, man, I wish I would have lived my life more fully for Christ, and so, right, are you ready? Um, and so that's what we looked at last week, and today, we're going to look at what is called the judgment of the living nations, um, and I'll be honest, when I, when I first started studying it, I was pretty ignorant towards end times events, um, I always felt like it wasn't the most profitable doctrine for me to understand, um, I'm not old yet, and so, I was, I don't know, not, not really my thing, sorry, that's just the way I feel about it, no, but, um, and it was always just super confusing, um, because you have, like, on-millennialism, where's Hudson? Oh, he's not here, he's an on-millennialist, which is kind of interesting, um, but, and then you have pre-mill, and post-mill, and, like, pre-trib, pre-mill, and so there's all these different viewpoints, and they're all, like, kind of confusing to me, um, and I was joking with Teddy a few weeks ago, and I was like, I have no idea what, like, what my viewpoint is, I'm, I think I'm just going to pick whichever is easier to make a sermon out of and go with that one, um, but no, I actually did study it a lot, and, um, I ended up, I think I'm, I'm pre-trib, pre-mill, which is the dispensational, um, view of the millennia, uh, the millennium. Um, Dave Baumgartner did a good job explaining what that means, and so, um, there's a message up on the, the Bethel YouTube page, and so if you're more curious and looking into what that, like, means, like, in detail, I would point you to that, um, but if I had to give, like, a short summary, a summary of what it means to be pre-trib, pre-mill, I would, essentially, that means that I believe that the Lord will return, um, and rapture the church before the seven-year tribulation, um, and then he will come again after the tribulation and rescue the Jewish remnant, remnant, and establish his earthly kingdom and reign for a thousand years, um, and then at the end of the thousand years, Satan will be released for one last hurrah, and then he will be, um, defeated, um, and cast into the lake of fire for eternity, um, and there are a lot of finer details that we could get into, um, but they don't necessarily pertain to our passage today, and so we won't, um, but back to our passage of the judgment of the living nations, um, where am I?

Oh, yeah. Um, in my Bible, it's titled The Final Judgment, um, which was always kind of confusing for me, because for a long time, I thought there was only one judgment, and it was the Great White Throne Judgment, and, um, and so I thought that every time judgment was mentioned in the Bible, it referred to that, but I found out that that is just not true. Um, there are actually three judgments, um, mentioned in the Bible, um, and TJ's dad, Mr. Tim McNeil, gave me a handy-dandy chart. This, this, there is a, what, like, 15 by 30 poster of this along the back wall of our chapel, so, yeah, it's, uh, it's a cool backdrop to speak to. Um, anyways, so there are three judgments, the first one being the judgment seat of Christ, and I'll try to point it out to you. That's right here. It comes after the rapture, before the tribulation, um, and that's, and that judgment is for believers, and we will be judged according to what we've done for the Lord, and our faithfulness, and serving Him. Um, and according to the chart, oh wait, I already said that, um, it says in verse 10 of 2 Corinthians, um, 5, you don't have to turn there, um, but it says, for we all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil, and it also says in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, that we're building on the foundation, um, and the foundation is referring to Christ, we're building on Christ, and we're either building with gold and silver and precious stones, or we're building with wood and hay and stubble, um, and, and it says that on, on that day, on the day of judgment, each one's work will be revealed with fire, and our true desires will be exposed, and so the way that we lived our lives for Christ, um, will be, um, made known. Um, and so, right, the question for us is, what are you building with? You have, hopefully you have 70 years here on earth, are you using that wisely, are you using that to the best of your ability, or are you building with wood and hay and straw, and so that's not the, that's not the judgment that we're, that we're looking at, that would have been a fun one to look at, um, but, um, we're looking at the final judgment, um, and that happens, or not the final judgment, the judgment of the living nations, and that happens right here, you can't really see it, yeah, this is not a very good PDF, but that's where that happens, and that's after the tribulation, um, and we'll look at that in a

second, and then the third one is the great white throne judgment, and that one happens at the end, at the end of the millennium, um, and that's for unbelievers, and the devil, and his angels, um, and so that's just a little bit of introductory stuff,

I thought that that was helpful for me to, to kind of understand, um, and obviously, I'm sure, like, all of you guys have different opinions about all of these things, and so, um, this is just the way I understand it, but I would be happy to have a conversation with you after about why I'm wrong, or why you're wrong, I don't know, um, either way, um, no, but, uh, my heart, every time I speak, um, is that, right, the hearers would be encouraged, and built up, and spurred on in our love for, um, our savior, um, and so, as we look at the passage, um, my desire, and sort of my main point, if you're taking notes, um, the main focus of my message is that we would see the character of God in this passage, and that our love for him would abound, um, right, that we would observe and understand his character in such a way that we would fall in love with Christ in the same way as when we first believed, um, and that we would, and that we would see his character, and then desire to be conformed to his character, to the point where we hate the things that he hates, and love the things that he loves, um, that we would grow so close to him to the point where the things of this world start to grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace, and so, um, man, it would be so awesome for us all to leave the building knowing God in a more fuller way, that we would leave here in love with who God is, and then as we dwell on who he is, that we would be moved to love and serve those whom he desires us to love and serve, and so I would urge you to just, like, dwell on the character of God, how you perceive it to be, and then be open to, to reading the word of God, and then letting that perception of who's God, who, what God's character is be, um, changed by the word of God, um, and what the word of God says

[11:23] God's character is, and so hopefully I'll be able to portray that in, um, in a way that's easy to understand. Um, so with that in mind, still in introductory stuff for some reason, some important things to know about this judgment is it takes place at the end of the tribulation, I already mentioned that, um, the church has already been raptured, and so all who are left are the unbelieving Gentiles and the, the remnant of Jewish believers, and so what's happening during this tribulation is the people of Israel are being punished and judged for their unbelief, um, and just their, their continual hardness of heart towards God, um, and so they're being just punished and persecuted, and, and we'll, we'll, we'll read that they're, they're just being, like, truly ravaged by the nations.

Um, it's really, like, it's a tough read when you, when you look at, like, the prophecies of what's gonna happen to the people of Israel. It's, it's really a, um, man. But, so we'll, we'll look at that, and it says in, uh, in Zechariah chapter 14, it describes what some of the Israelites will endure, uh, some of what the Israelites will endure, and it says in verse 1, I got it here for you.

Oh, that's not, oh, did I miss what I was, oh, I meant to read the text. That's cool. Interesting.

Okay. Yeah, let me read the text. That'll be good to do. It says, when the Son of Man comes in His glory and all His angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

Before Him will be gathered all the nations, and He will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and He will place the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left. 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.

[13:11] For I was hungry, and you gave me food. I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. I was a stranger, and you welcomed me. I was naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you visited me. I was in prison. Oh, what am I being? Oh, yeah.

I was sick, and you visited me. I was in prison, and you came to me. Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you or naked and clothe you?

And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the King will answer them, Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me. Then He will say to those on His left, Depart from Me, you who are cursed into the eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

For I was hungry, and you gave Me no food. I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink. I was a stranger, and you did not welcome Me. Naked, and you did not clothe Me. Sick and in prison, and you did not visit Me. Then they will also answer, saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to you?

Then He will answer them, saying, Truly I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did not do it to Me. These will go away into eternal punishment by the righteous into eternal life. Back to where I was thinking about how the Jewish people have been just continually disobedient to God, and now He is going to punish them and judge them for their wickedness.

[14:36] In Zechariah chapter 14, it sort of prophesies this. In verses 1 and 2, it says, Behold, a day is coming for the Lord when the spoil will be taken from you and you will be divided in your midst, for I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the woman ravished.

Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. It will be a time of great suffering and pain and heartache for the people of Israel.

And the reason I bring all of this up is because I want us to notice the heart of God and the character of God even as He's punishing His people. Right?

We read over and over and over again in Scripture how the people are constantly disobeying God and constantly rebelling and following idols, and I'm reminded of how in Matthew chapter 23 Jesus says, O Jerusalem, O Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing.

And so I want us to notice the Lord does not take pleasure in punishing His people and seeing them suffer. We see the Lord weeping over His people. He's called out to them over and over and over again. He has shown them so much compassion and mercy, but it says that they were not willing.

[16:00] And so as much as God is a gracious God abounding in steadfast love and mercy, He is also a just God, a holy God, a God who desperately hates sin and wickedness.

And so He allows this great tribulation to come upon His people. Tough stuff. But I also want to point out the intentionality of God in His judgments.

He has not given up on His people. It says in Scripture that this judgment, it's meant to lead the people to repentance. It's meant to bring His people back to Him. And so we looked at the heart of God towards sin and wickedness, but now I want to point out the heart of God towards repentance and brokenheartedness.

In the book of Joel, the prophet is prophesying about end times and specifically the period of great tribulation leading up to the judgment of the living nations. And it says in verse 12 of chapter 2, Yet even now, declares the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, with mourning, and rend your hearts and not your garments.

Return to the Lord for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and He relents over disaster. Who knows whether He will not turn and relent and leave a blessing behind Him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord, your God.

[17:24] Man, the heart of the Lord towards repentance and brokenheartedness. And even though our passage is written to the Jews and this judgment does not apply to us because hopefully, Lord willing, all of us will be raptured before this, the heart of God remains the same towards us today.

As much as oftentimes we can look at the people of Israel with disdain and judgment and be like, man, how could you do this again and again? Like, God has been so good to you. Why do you keep rebelling? Man, we are the exact same way.

Right? We are so prone to wander. All we like sheep have gone astray. There is none righteous.

No, not one. No one seeks for God. No one understands. Together they become worthless.

No one understands. No one does good. Not even one. And so the reality is, our hearts are still just evil and wicked and sinful and as someone who has had to like face so much self-inflicted suffering because of my sin, like I am so thankful that we serve a God whose heart towards brokenness and repentance is not, he doesn't desire that we come to him and make, like, reparations and, like, try to work our way back to him and such, and, like, as if we could do that. No, he just wants us to come to him with a broken and contrite heart, with repentant hearts, and just come to him and ask him for forgiveness. That's all he ever desired from us.

He wants our hearts. And, like, a great example of this, we see this play out after David sins with Bathsheba, and I won't go through the whole story because I'm sure a lot of us know it already, but, man, like, the sins that he committed, like, murder, adultery, lie, lying, like, he, like, this is a, like, he did something quite grievous, and, and he didn't even realize the depths of the, like, depravity of his sin for a long time until the prophet Nathan finally revealed his sin to him.

[19:27] But, like, I want to, like, notice his character after he, after he realizes his sin, and I'm not going to read all of Psalm 51, but, like, this is one of my favorite Psalms in the Bible, and it's one that I've had to go back to a lot and, like, pray it to the Lord, like, and I just want to look at the way that he humbly brought himself before the Lord in Psalm 51. He says, create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. And so, right, he came to the Lord with a broken heart, and he asked for forgiveness and restoration, and the Lord granted that to him, right? The character of God is unchanging, and when he says that he will deliver us from our sins, when he says that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, when he says that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins, like, God means that, and we can take that to the bank and, like, praise God that he is, he is a forgiving and gracious God. Oh, that is not what I meant to do. That's not good. Anyways, okay, okay, and so we see this, this character, characteristic, characteristic of God playing out at the end of the tribulation, skipping down to verse 18 of Joel chapter 2. Again, we see the character of God highlighted. It says, then the Lord became jealous for his people and had pity on his people. The Lord answered and said to his people, behold, I'm sending you grain and wine and oil, and you will be satisfied, and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations. God has seen the affliction of his people. He knows what they're enduring. He knows their pain and their hardships. He understands the extent of their suffering, and the Lord, he feels for the people, and you get the sense that his anger is incited against the nations whom he has allowed to ravage his people, right? But make no mistake, it was always God's intention to rescue his people and deliver them from the nations, and so, and I want to look at Zechariah again. These were, like, the two, like, Joel and Zechariah were the two prophecies that I really studied the most, and I brought it up earlier, Zechariah chapter 14, and I read verses 1 and 2 earlier to highlight what the Israelites were enduring and their sin, and, but I intentionally stopped at verse 3, and in verse 3, it speaks to the Lord's deliverance. It says, right, behold, the day is coming when the spoil will be taken from you, and you'll be divided in your midst, for I will gather the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken, and the house is plundered, and the woman ravished. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off in the city, and it says, then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. Man, as we look out into the world and just observe what's happening with, like, Russia and Ukraine and Israel and Palestine, and we can start to see that the things that are mentioned in scripture are materializing, right? The tribulation is coming, the judgment is coming, the nations are already gathering against Israel, and it's clear to see that what's described in Joel and Zechariah and Matthew will come to pass. Thankfully for us, like, if you're in Christ, these things don't apply to us, and we can be so grateful for that, but again, my goal with this message is to magnify the character of God, and so in this case, I want to magnify, highlight God's character as the God who is the mighty deliverer, who is fighting with his people and for his people, and who is coming to redeem and rescue his people out of the intense persecution that they're facing and bring justice and peace and ultimately reign and righteousness.

And so going back to verse 31 of Matthew, I don't know if I have it on here. Oh, I do. Oh, no, that's Matthew 24, but if you want to turn your Bibles to Matthew 25, that's fine, but I'll...

In Matthew 25, verse 31, we see that when Christ comes a second time, he's coming back in glory and great power and might, and in chapter 24, which is what we're about to look at in a second, we see it talks about, like, the scene of his coming, and I'll just read it briefly, starting in verse 29 of Matthew 24.

Immediately after the tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with great power and with power and great glory, and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. And so when we read in Matthew 31, I'm just, like, I'm reminded of, like, how he who came with, like, great power and might and created the sun and moon and stars and caused them to shine. He's going to return to the earth, and, like, maybe I'm reading into this a little bit, but, like, think about, I was thinking about this earlier, you know, and I don't know if, like, in baseball games and Ryan Helsley is closing, Mr.

Kevin, do you, like, and, and, like, at Bush Stadium, seven, or it's over, like, nine o'clock, and, like, the lights go out, and it's, like, super cool, and then, like, his intro theme comes on.

[24 : 53] And I'm thinking, like, the heavens, like, the lights go out, and then Jesus returns, and, like, I just want to, like, think about the, the brightness of the glory of God, and, like, even if the sun and the moon and the stars were to shine, like, their brightness would pale in comparison to the glory of our God, and, like, that's such a cool thing to think about. And so he's, he's great and majestic and mighty, and so that's, that's part of what I want to highlight, uh, in this, in this part, um, but I also want to, like, contrast it with Christ's first coming, and, right, and so the son of man who has the power to turn on and off the lights of heaven, instead of coming in great power, um, he came in great humility. Um, a very familiar passage, Philippians 2, it says in verse 5, have this mind among yourselves, where is, oh, um, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not account equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, um, why did I lose my place?

Uh, how did I lose my place? Being born in the likeness of men, um, where am I? Oh, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Um, and so I was just thinking about how the Lord emptied himself, and how instead of coming in great glory and power and might, he veiled his glory, and he set aside his glory and veiled his might, and instead of coming in pomp and, like, loud trumpet call, he came humbly and quietly, um, and instead of coming as a king, or as a judge and a king to rule the nations, he took on the form of a frail human, um, and came as an obedient servant, not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Um, and it's just, it's such a wonderful thing, like, each Sunday where we get to just dwell on our Savior, and it's so cool to, in this case, to think about how we serve a, a humble Savior who is willing to die on the cross for our sins, who, although he could have called down legions of angels from heaven, he, he chose to stay on the cross on our behalf, and, um, yeah, just so sweet to think about. Um, all right, so that's verse one. Um, I, I'm not gonna go, go through verse by verse the whole passage. We don't have time for that. Um, yeah, I feel like I broke the one, like, main rule with expositional, like, teaching, which is, um, to stay in the main passage. Um, I feel like I've been all over the place except Matthew 25, um, but my intention in bringing up all of these prophecies leading up to this judgment is because I want, because I think it helps us understand what is going on with this judgment. Um, from the prophecies mentioned, we've, we've observed the helpless state of Israel, and just how they're being just truly torn apart. Um, we've seen the, uh, the wickedness of the nations, um, and then we've looked at, most importantly, the unchanging character of God, um, throughout the whole thing. And I think all of that will help as I try to, try to paint the picture and help us understand what I think is happening with this judgment. Um, and I know I said I wanted to stay in the passage, but I'm gonna go leave the passage for, like, one more, one more verse that I wanted to look at in Joel chapter three, and then I'm gonna come right back to the passage, and hopefully we'll stay in there for longer. Um, it says in Joel chapter three, and again, this is, like, specifically about the judgment that we're looking at in verses one and two. Uh, yeah.

For behold, in those times, or in those days, and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations, um, and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and I will enter into the judgment with, I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people, and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations, and I've divided up my land, and I've cast lots for my people, and I've traded a boy for a prostitute, and I've sold a girl for wine, and have drunk it. Um, and then also, skipping down to verse 11 of Joel chapter three, um, it says, hasten and come, all you surrounding nations, and gather yourselves there. Bring down your warriors, O Lord. Let the nations stir themselves up, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. And so, from what, from what I understand from reading this passage, right, the nations are going to gather in the valley of Jehoshaphat, um, which I'm not mistaken is located in Jerusalem at the base of the Mount of Olives. I saw a video about it yesterday, it was pretty cool. Um, and this valley, it's also, it's called the Valley of Jehoshaphat, but it's also known as the Valley of Kidron. Um, and something interesting about the word Kidron is, the word Kidron in Hebrew means to be black, or like, darkened.

And so, I was just reminded of how, like, the heavens will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the sun will not shine, and, um, and so that's interesting and really cool. And then I

looked up what the word Jehoshaphat means, and even more cool, um, the word Jehoshaphat actually means in Hebrew, Yahweh has judged, which I thought was really, like, because that's what's happening in Matthew 25.

Yahweh is judging the nations on behalf of his people. Christ has returned and rescued his people from affliction, and now he's bringing justice. And, um, and our, and our passage seems to indicate that the nations are being judged based on how they treated the people of Israel. Um, and I'm not going to read the whole passage again, um, because it's kind of like a tongue twister, and it's kind of frustrating to read sometimes. But, um, I, I want to point out, um, yeah, I think it's important to clarify that in Scripture, uh, it's very clear that we cannot, oh, not what I meant to do. Oh, okay.

[30 : 43] Um, yeah, in Scripture, very clear, we cannot be saved, um, by works. We cannot be justified by works. Um, salvation is by grace through faith. Um, and so the way I understand what Christ is saying in these verses is obviously God knows those who are his. It says in verse 34, come, you are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Um, right, he has known who are, who are his from the foundation of the world. Um, and so obviously he knows who are his, um, but I also think he's, um, in Scripture it says that believers are known by their fruits. And so I think that applies in this passage. He's saying this is how I expect those who are mine to deal with those whom I love, um, those whom I care about. I think that the righteousness of the Lord is magnified in us and how we live our lives and serve Christ.

Um, and so the way that we treat the least of these reflects the work that Christ has done within us. And so I'm reminded of how earlier in the book of Matthew, the Pharisees asked Jesus, which commandment is the greatest in the law? Um, and Christ answered, um, in Matthew chapter 22. Do I have it right there? Um, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.

And in John 15, Jesus tells his disciples, if you love me, you will obey my commandments. And so, right, the character of God is unchanging, right? In the garden, the character of God towards Adam and Eve was, if you love me, you will keep my commandments. Um, in the Old Testament to the Jewish people, the character of God is still the same. If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And so, um, right, the character of God remains the same towards us. If we love God, we'll keep his commandments. If we love God, we'll care for the least of these, um, as he, as he desires that we should do. Um, I'm reminded of a passage in John 15, um, or not John 15. I don't know where it is in John, but, um, Jesus actually, Mr. Mark mentioned it earlier and I was like, oh, that's kind of cool. Um, but Jesus is talking to Peter and he asked him three times. He goes, Peter, do you love me? And Peter says, yes, Lord, I know you love me. And then he says, then feed my sheep. And again, he asked him, Peter, do you love me? And Peter's like, yes, Lord, you know, I love you. And he says again, then feed and tend to my flock. Um, and I laugh sometimes because, um, my sister and I, Cynthia, when I'm, when we were younger and still now today, um, whenever I'll like hang up on the phone or be like, she'll be like, all right, sir, and love you. Bye. And I'll be like, okay, bye. And then she, and then she won't hang up and she'll go, love you. Bye. And then she'll like, if she's in person with me, she'll point at me with finger guns and be like, you better say it back. Like, love you. And I'm like, hey, love you. Bye. Um, and like, I guess I get, I get how John is feeling or yeah, how Peter is feeling. And Peter, it says the third time he's grieved when the Lord asked him, he says, Peter, or the Lord asked me again, Jesus or Peter, do you love me? And Peter says to him, yes, Lord, you know, all things, you know, that I love you. And so the reason I bring that up is, is although this judgment does not pertain to us, like I've already said, the heart of God and the character of God is revealed to us in this judgment. And he calls out to us and he says, do you love me? Right. Then, then feed my sheep. Um, if you love me, then welcome those whom I love. Do you love me? Then care for those whom I love. Do you love me? Then care for the least of these, my brothers. Oh, yeah. I meant to have that up. Okay. Um, and so, yeah, I don't know what time, how long did I go? Yeah, I'm pretty much done. So, um, if the musicians want to come up, uh, that'd be great. Um, but before we close, I would ask you this morning, is your heart aligned with the heart of Christ? Does your love abound with, what does your heart abound with love for the character of God? And then along with that, is your character being conformed to the character of Christ? We must not remain stagnant in our relationship with God, um, with our time here on earth. God has clearly revealed to us his desire that we love those whom he loves. Um, and so, I would

just urge you, dwell on the character of God. It's so good to dwell on the character of God, and then think about how you can, um, become more like him. Um, I'll end with the verse, Romans 12, 1 and 2. I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that by testing you may be able to discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. All right, let's pray. Lord God, thank you for this, thank you for just strengthening me, strengthening me, God, and just getting me through this, Lord. And, um, God, thank you just, um, for your character that we were able to observe in this passage, Lord. And, um, Lord, you are so awesome. You are so worthy to be praised. And, um,

[35 : 42] Lord, I pray that, um, as we leave here, that we would, um, that we would not be stagnant in our relationship with you, but that we would just be, um, abiding with you. And then from that, striving to, to walk closer with you. Oh, that we would ever have a closer walk with you, Lord, because knowing you is the greatest thing. And, um, Lord, we just thank you for this time. And, um, yeah, amen.