

## Salvation: Jesus vs Paul

Matthew 25:31-33:

**“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.**

Who were the sheep and who were the goats? It wasn't a simple matter of Jews vs Gentiles. We can see that because Jesus healed Gentiles who demonstrated great faith, as in the case of the Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30). And he frequently rebuked Jewish leaders for their ostentatious displays of piety while their hearts were not in tune with the spirit of Jewish law.

Once again, all we need to do is listen to Jesus himself. He provides the answer.

Matthew 25:34-46:

**Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me 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 nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in**

**prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw 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 tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”**

Notice that the judgment is all about behavior. Jesus did not teach Paul’s doctrine of salvation by faith. Jesus taught salvation by good works. Throughout the synoptics, Jesus instructs people about how they should behave. The Jewish Law was all about how people should behave.

Paul never met Jesus\*, and he deliberately avoided contact with the other apostles. So, Paul’s teachings came from Paul. They did not come from Jesus. Paul and Jesus were at odds on many points, including circumcision. Jesus was circumcised, as demanded by Jewish Law. Jesus didn’t tell Jews they no longer needed to be circumcised or follow Jewish law. Paul said that, but it wasn’t based on Jesus’ teaching. It was strictly Paul’s idea.

The beatitudes are all about behavior. The parables are all about behavior. It was personal conduct that separated the sheep from the goats. It is behavior, not faith, that is the key to the Kingdom.

\* Yes, Paul had that experience on the road to Damascus. But Paul never interacted with Jesus on a daily basis as the disciples did. Paul never heard personally from Jesus his teachings or received instructions from him on matters of faith and doctrine. Nor did Paul seek out the disciples to learn from them. He avoided the disciples. In fact, Paul went to great lengths to convince his converts that his teachings were **his**; they did not come from Jesus or the disciples.

That’s why Paul was at odds with the disciples on several important matters of doctrine and practice. And, more importantly, Paul strongly disagreed with Jesus himself on several key matters of doctrine and practice.

For example, Paul eagerly embraced slavery. Jesus did not. Jesus didn’t focus on the issue of slavery, but if he had, he probably would not have embraced the practice as Paul did.