

The Great Sort

This phrase, first coined by author Bill Bishop in his book by that title, describes how people naturally group themselves with others who share similar values, beliefs, lifestyles, and priorities. Neighborhoods, schools, churches, and even friendships are often formed by this kind of sorting. Conservatives gather with conservatives, liberals with liberals, the wealthy with the wealthy, and those of similar interests with one another. While society may use this phrase to describe human behavior, the Bible reveals a far greater and far more serious “Great Sort” that is yet to come.

One day, every person who has ever lived will stand before the righteous Judge of all the earth. On that day, there will be no political parties, no social classes, no racial divisions, and no earthly distinctions that matter. There will only be two groups: the saved and the lost, the righteous and the wicked, the faithful and the unfaithful. This is God’s Great Sort.

Jesus described this “great sort” with striking clarity. *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory...All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.”* Matthew 25:31-33. This “sort” will be personal, deliberate, and final. The sheep represent those who obeyed the Lord, served faithfully, and lived in submission to His will. The goats represent those who rejected His authority, neglected His commands, and lived for themselves. There is no appeal after the verdict.

Jesus went on to say, *“and these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”* Matthew 25:46. God’s great sort ends in only two eternal destinations: heaven or hell.

Jesus described this sort in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. *“Therefore, as the tares, i.e. weeds RJ, are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age...those who practice lawlessness...will be cast...into the furnace of fire.”* Matthew 13:40-42. John the Baptist spoke of Jesus, *“His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”* Matthew 3:12. For now, the wheat and the tares, the righteous and the wicked live side by side. Good and evil exist together in the same world. But the day of separation, the “great sort” is coming.

Every person will stand before Christ in judgement. *“For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”* 2 Corinthians 5:10. No one will be absent. *“So, then each of us shall give account of himself to God.”* Romans 14:12.

The Great Sort of God is not about where we live, what social class we belong to, or which earthly group we identify with. It is about whether we belong to Christ. Have we heard the gospel, believed in Him, repented of sin? Have we confessed His name and obeyed Him in baptism for the remission of sins? Are we living faithfully unto death? Jesus said, *“Not*

everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” Matthew 7:21. Religious appearance will not save us. Sincerity alone will not save us. Being a “good person” will not save us. Only faithful obedience to the gospel of Christ prepares us for that final day.

The good news? God desires all men to be saved. *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise...but is longsuffering...not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”* 2 Peter 3:9. God’s Great Sort will be perfectly just, perfectly righteous, and perfectly final. The question is not whether that day will come. It will. The question is: Where will you stand when it does?

~Ron Josselet (Assisted by ChatGPT)