

# Are You a Sheep or a Goat?

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The Bible is full of vivid descriptions of human traits and characteristics by the reference of different animals such as the industriousness of the ant, the wisdom of a serpent, the gentleness of a dove, and a mother hen protecting her chicks.

Also in the Bible, we read of many examples of animals which are used to personify or represent people or things. We have examples of the dove representing God's Holy Spirit. We have examples of Jesus the Anointed One being the Lamb of God. We can read of the many examples of our adversary, the devil, being a dragon or a serpent or a lion looking for whom he can devour. We also read of false believers being wolves in sheep's clothing.

But Jesus used two animals in particular to describe the "called-out" ones of our Heavenly Father and the followers of His way of life. These two animals are sheep and goats.

These verses in Matthew 25 are some of my favorite scriptures, and they form the basis of the words of the song "Come, Ye Blessed", a mainstay of choir music in the Churches of God in past decades. In these verses, Jesus presented a very great difference between sheep and goats.

**Matthew 25:31** *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:*

*32) And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats:*

*33) And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.*

*34) Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:*

*35) For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:*

*36) Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*

*37) Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we you hungry, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?*

*38) When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?*

*39) Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?*

*40) And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

*41) Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:*

*42) For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:*

43) *I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.*

44) *Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we you hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?*

45) *Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*

46) *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. (KJV)*

From these verses, we can ascertain very quickly that there is a significant difference between the sheep on the right side of Jesus and the goats on the left side of Jesus. And this difference can mean the difference between being in our Heavenly Father's Kingdom and not being in His Kingdom. My sermon today is entitled:

### Are You a Sheep or a Goat?

In it I would like to explore the subject of sheep and goats, their characteristics, and the implications of these characteristics for us in our spiritual lives. More importantly, how does our Heavenly Father see each one of us? Does He see us as sheep or as goats. And in the end, our Heavenly Father's point of view of us is the only one that truly matters.

I would like to explore this subject by contrasting five characteristics of sheep and goats and by determining which animal best represents our personal attitudes, our personal behavior, and our personal commitment to our Heavenly Father's way of life.

The first characteristic to be compared between sheep and goats is:

#### 1) **Gregarious Behavior**

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines the word 'gregarious' as "habitually living or moving in flocks or herds; tending to flock or herd together." Gregarious behavior is a term given to reflect the herding or flocking instinct of animals.

Many animals are gregarious. The majority of birds will flock together. During the autumn and spring of the year here in Houston, we find thousands and thousands of birds flying in the air or walking on the ground in different places in the city. The parking lot of a nearby Wal-Mart store is literally covered in thousands and thousands of birds. These birds are everywhere. They are on the parked cars, or on the parking lot itself, or circling in the sky above and when a huge group of the birds take flight at the same time, the sky just grows dark. When the birds fly, they fly in a perfect pattern and in a perfect motion which moves up and down and right and left, just as if their flight were being orchestrated.

Gregarious behavior applies to other animals such as bees, ants, termites, cows and horses. This gregarious behavior also applies to sheep.

There is a big difference between sheep and goats in this characteristic of gregarious behavior. Sheep are intelligent and are smart at things that are good, noble and just. They remember the faces of up to fifty other sheep and certain humans for two years. Sheep have a strong tendency to follow, and they usually follow a shepherd. In his article *A Special Lamb*, John Elliot writes:

*Being gregarious social animals, sheep love the company of their kind and become easily stressed if separated or alone. Consequently, sheep tend to congregate closely together and move as a group. In Their creation, our Heavenly Father and Jesus made the sheep's only defensive strength to be an intimidation they give when bunched tightly together. By nature, sheep have a strong "follow" tendency. A "leader" among them is often just the first one to move. There are no "prima donnas" among the flock, none trying to gain a following, take from another, and no one is insisting that he or she is better than others.*

Goats on the other hand are not generally good followers. This behavioral quality is rather weak in goats. Instead of flocking together and following, goats prefer to lead and to go wherever they want. Because the gregarious instinct is weaker in goats, they tend to go it alone.

In Hebrews 10, we read an exhortation concerning the importance of congregating and fellowshiping together as the called-out ones of our Heavenly Father.

**Hebrews 10:23** *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)*

24) *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:*

25) *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (KJV)*

Our Father's Holy Spirit is what binds us together. We in the Churches of God have come from different origins, whether they be social, economic, linguistic, national, racial, ethnic, or religious. Without the calling of our Heavenly Father and without His intervention in our lives, most of us would not know one another and most of us would not be friends. But here we are. A very diverse group united and joined together by His Holy Spirit.

Do we look forward to being with our Father's spiritual children? Are we excited to come together and be together each Sabbath, even if it by phone call or by long distance communication? Is the Sabbath and the interaction with the "called-out" ones something that we look forward to? Is being together with our Heavenly Father's "called-out" ones important to us?

This reminds me of an age-old saying, which is: "If it is important to you, you will find a way. If it is not, you will find an excuse."

When it comes to opportunities to fellowship with God's people, do we find a way or do we find an excuse? Being spread out around the country and the world like we are, many of us are by ourselves. Most of us worship our Heavenly Father at home on the Sabbath by ourselves or in very small groups. Most of us are separated by distance from one another. Most of us do not have congregations in our area. For many of us, the Feast of Tabernacles is the only time during the year when we can actually come together to fellowship and worship together in person with one another. Because of finances, health, age and other issues, many of us cannot attend the Feast of Tabernacles in person this year at our Feast site. Even for those who have gathered here in Washington State for the Feast, the group fellowshiping here in person is very small in number.

But, regardless of the physical barriers that we may have, do we still desire to come together as a group, as friends, as family, as spiritual brothers and sisters on the Sabbath or during the week, by phone calling one another, by video conferencing one another, by text messaging one another, by e-mailing one another, or by writing one another?

Are we yearning for fellowship or are we desiring "to go it alone?"

In the characteristic of gregarious behavior, are we sheep or are we goats?

The second characteristic to be compared between sheep and goats is:

## 2) Loyalty

Sheep need and desire a shepherd. Sheep are loyal to the shepherd who guards them, protects them, and cares for them. Sheep recognize the voice of their shepherd. Other voices that are unfamiliar to them can frighten them.

In his book Animals of the Bible, John Worcester writes:

*The shepherds of the East give a name to each member of their flocks, which the sheep soon learn, and to which they instantly respond. In the dry season many shepherds with their flocks meet at regular times around the wells. The flocks mingle at the troughs, drinking. But when all are satisfied, the shepherds move off in different directions, calling their sheep, which immediately follow, every one its own shepherd, with scarcely the possibility of a mistake.*

John Worcester further writes:

*It is not uncommon in our country for single lambs to receive names and be petted, when they become models of trustful obedience toward their master but remain timid towards a stranger. Our sheep, however, rarely have a shepherd's care, being confined by walls and fences. Instead of a shepherd, they attach themselves to one of their own number, who acts as their leader, and whom they follow as trustfully as they would their master. With neither shepherd nor leader, they are distracted, and scatter in every direction. It is a peculiarity of sheep that*

*while they are so easily “led” by one whom they know, they are “driven” with difficulty. They huddle together as if frightened, and the more they are pressed, the more frightened they seem; but if the leaders start forward, the flock follows.”*

Just as sheep need and desire a shepherd, we as called-out ones of our Heavenly Father need and desire a shepherd to lead us, to guide us and to protect us.

**John 10:1** *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.  
2) But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.  
3) To him the porter opens; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out.  
4) And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.  
5) And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. (KJV)*

And Jesus the Anointed One is our Good Shepherd. Let's continue to read in John 10.

**John 10:11** *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.  
12) But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep.  
13) The hireling flees, because he is an hireling, and cares not for the sheep.  
14) I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.,  
15) As the Father knows me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.” (KJV)*

Jesus the Anointed One is our Shepherd. He is the Good Shepherd, and He was willing to die for His sheep. Jesus was not a hireling who did not care for His sheep. Let's continue in John 10.

**John 10:25** *Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.  
26) But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.  
27) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: (KJV)*

So, we as His sheep, hear Jesus' voice and we loyally follow Him.

Goats, on the other hand, are not loyal. In his article [Goats on the Left](#), Mike Ford writes:

*A goat follows only its own lead, creating disunity when he comes in contact with others in the flock. Because of his independent nature, he often finds himself in contention with the Shepherd for leadership of the flock, leading some astray.*

Goats are not loyal to their flocks, and neither are they loyal to other animals. Ranchers will place an old goat, appropriately named a “Judas Goat” among the sheep in order to lead and control them. Ranchers and meatpackers, using the gregarious instinct of sheep to their benefit, will use a “Judas Goat” to lead the sheep into trailers in order to be transported to the slaughterhouse.

In the document [The Judas Goat Phenomenon](#) by Histerio.com, we read that:

*Sheep ranchers sometimes use a “Judas goat” to manage their sheep. The goat is trained to go out a gate, through a chute, up a ramp, and into the bed of a cattle truck. Sheep, being sheep, are inclined to follow anything that looks like it knows where it’s going, so they follow the Judas goat into the truck. After the truck is full, the ranchers take the Judas goat out and place it back into the pen, ready to lead another group of sheep into another truck.*

*Of course, the Judas goat gets its name from Judas, the betrayer of Jesus. The connection is that the Judas goat betrays the sheep by appearing to be a friend, the same way Judas betrayed Jesus.*

With that in mind, we’ll turn to Proverbs 20, where we will read about loyalty.

**Proverbs 20:6** *Many will say they are loyal friends, but who can find one who is truly reliable? (NLT)*

Are we loyal? Are we loyal to one another? Are we loyal to our families? Are we loyal to our friends? Are we loyal to our brethren in the Church? More importantly, are we loyal to God Our Father? During the week, do we waver and fail in our loyalty to our Heavenly Father as the result of our actions, our thoughts, our emotions or our attitudes? Do we ever pray that He would give us a loyal attitude in our lives? King David did just that. He prayed to Yehovah that he would have a loyal heart for our Heavenly Father.

In Psalms 51 King David was at the low point of his life, after having had an adulterous affair with Bathsheba. After having orchestrated the death of Uriah the Hittite, the husband of Bathsheba, and after having suffered the death of his son, David cried out and prayed that Yehovah would renew a loyal spirit in him.

**Psalms 51:10** *Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. (NLT)*

Do we ask our Heavenly Father in our prayers that He renews a loyal and steadfast spirit and mind in us?

In Matthew 16, Jesus was talking to His disciples, instructing them on many aspects of life.

**Matthew 16:24** *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. (KJV)*

Taking up our cross means that we decide to be loyal to Jesus the Anointed One and to God Our Father no matter what the difficulty may be, no matter what the sacrifice may be, no matter what the price may be. Our loyalty must be firm and resolute.

In Mark 10, we read a discussion between Jesus and a rich young man on the subject of loyalty.

**Mark 10:17** *And when he [Jesus] was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?*

*18) And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.*

*19) Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother.*

*20) And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.*

*21) Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing you lack: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.*

*22) And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. (KJV)*

Unfortunately, the young rich man had limits on his loyalty to Jesus. When what Jesus demanded of him exceeded that threshold, the rich young man turned away and did not follow Jesus and His way of life.

Are we loyal to our Heavenly Father and to Jesus, His Son, in all aspects of our lives? Is anything in our lives more important to us than our Heavenly Father and our relationship with Him? In the life of the rich young man, riches were more important to him than his relationship with God Our Father was. In our lives, what are the things that will prevent our total loyalty to our Heavenly Father? In the characteristic of loyalty, are we sheep or are we goats?

The third characteristic to be compared between sheep and goats is:

### **3) Contentment**

Sheep are satisfied and content animals. They are content to graze together all day in a pasture. They are content with having a shepherd who leads and protects them. Sheep do not normally fight among each other or push at one another. However, goats are not like this.

In his article Goats on the Left, Mike Ford writes:

*If goats are not poking their heads through fences, they may be standing on their hind legs, stretching for those tender leaves just out of reach. Goats are never content with what they have.*

In his book, The Animals of the Bible, John Worchester writes:

*Goats differ from sheep in being capricious, often mischievous, curious, and meddlesome; they are loud and peremptory in their cries.*

Goats are always looking for something better, something juicier, something greener. Goats are never truly satisfied with what they have.

Are we satisfied? In this aspect of our lives, are we more like sheep or like goats? The Apostle Paul wrote about this aspect in Philippians 4.

**Philippians 4:11** *Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

*12) I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*

*13) I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. (KJV)*

Paul had the spiritual, emotional and mental maturity to be content in whatever circumstance he found himself. Paul endured many trials and afflictions in his life. In 2 Corinthians 11, we read about the afflictions of the Apostle Paul.

**2 Corinthians 11:23** *Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.*

*24) Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.*

*25) Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;*

*26) In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;*

*27) In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.*

*28) Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. (KJV)*

In spite of all these sufferings, deprivations and afflictions, the Apostle Paul was still content. However, Paul apparently had a severe trial of a "thorn in the flesh". We do not know what it was. The Bible does not tell us. But Paul really desired to be alleviated of this affliction.

**2 Corinthians 12:7** *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.*

*8) For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*

*9) And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (KJV)*



God Our Father did not take away the “thorn in the flesh” of Paul. Instead, Paul was told that he should be content and that the grace of his Heavenly Father was enough.

Sometimes we have prayed for an extended period of time that our Heavenly Father would take away a severe trial or a severe problem in our lives. What would we do if God Our Father’s answer to our prayer was the answer that He gave to Paul? Would we remain content?

**Hebrews 13:5** *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. (KJV)*

What do we need to be content? Contentment is a state of mind which comes from our Heavenly Father. Contentment cannot be dependent on what we have, or on what we receive, or on what we achieve, or on what we are striving for. We can be content with having very little physically, or having health problems, or financial problems. And we can be unhappy and not content with having incredible riches and wealth and health. In the characteristic of contentment, are we sheep or are we goats?

The fourth characteristic to be compared between sheep and goats is:

#### **4) Stubbornness**

Again, sheep are very docile. Sheep are not obstinate animals. They follow when led by a shepherd or a leader in the flock. Sheep are compatible animals.

However, goats are not like sheep in this characteristic. In his article [Goats on the Left](#), Mike Ford writes:

*Goats also possess a stubborn streak. A friend once tried to move a goat in a certain direction. He grabbed it by the horns and pushed and pulled and tugged. No matter how, or in what direction he tried to move the goat, it resisted. He could not budge it one inch. Then, when he let go, it just trotted off—in the direction the goat wanted to go in!*

The majority of unconverted people are like goats in this characteristic. People generally just want to do their own thing. Most people desire everything to be done like they want, when they want and where they want. Led by the influence of our adversary, the devil, they are willful and obstinate. The unconverted mind is totally against our Heavenly Father and battles against Him.

**Romans 8:7** *Because the carnal mind is enmity [hostility] against God [ho theos – the God]: for it is not subject to the law of God [ho theos – the God], neither indeed can be. (KJV)*

In 1 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul described this animosity between the unconverted mind and the mind of our Heavenly Father.

**1 Corinthians 2:14** *But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (KJV)*

So, to the unconverted mind in the world, the truth and the things of our Heavenly Father and of Jesus are just foolishness.

In Psalms 78 Asaph wrote about an obstinate and rebellious generation.

**Psalms 78:5** *For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children:*

*6) That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children:*

*7) That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments:*

*8) And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God. (KJV)*

That obstinate and rebellious generation was Ancient Israel during the 40 years that they wandered in the wilderness.

During the time that Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments and other instructions from Yehovah on Mount Sinai, the Israelites were fabricating and worshipping a golden calf. What did our Heavenly Father say to Moses?

**Exodus 32:7** *And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which you brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:*

*8) They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*

*9) And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: (KJV)*

God Our Father was ready to destroy all of Israel because of their stubbornness and rebellion, but Moses intervened and pleaded for mercy for Israel. Yehovah then spared the Israelites from a certain death. Forty years later, the Israelites were ready to cross the Jordan River and to enter the Promised Land. Yehovah spoke once again concerning the stubbornness of the Israelites.

**Deuteronomy 9:1** *Hear, O Israel: Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven, (KJV)*

*Continuing in verse 6)*

6) *Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff necked people.*

7) *Remember, and forget not, how thou provoked the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the LORD. (KJV)*

Brethren, like the Israelites, are we obstinate towards our Heavenly Father? With our actions and our attitudes and our thoughts and our minds, are we rebellious against Him? Or are we docile in the hands of our Heavenly Father, our Great Creator? Are we just like His Son Jesus was at the end of His life?

Again, when Jesus was in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing what awaited Him in a few short hours, that He would be mocked cruelly, that He would have to endure the unbearable pain of being whipped and scourged just short of death, and that He would have to be crucified, He still prayed that His Father's will would be done.

**Luke 22:41** *And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,*

42) *Saying, Father, if you be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but yours, be done. (KJV)*

Jesus humbly submitted to the will of His Father, even when He, as a human, did not desire the outcome. Brethren, do we have that type of relationship with our Heavenly Father, to trust Him that much, to have that much faith in Him, and to walk humbly with Him? Showing humility and seeking our Heavenly Father's will (not our own will) in our lives is the opposite of stubbornness. In the characteristic of stubbornness, are we sheep or are we goats?

The fifth characteristic to be compared between sheep and goats is:

## 5) **Testing boundaries**

Whenever a flock of sheep enters into a new pasture, the sheep tend to move together to a location in the pasture where the leader of the flock stops. That is not the case with goats. Goats generally will run along fences or boundaries. A good friend of mine who works on a ranch told me that whenever a goat is put in a field or pasture, the first action that the goat does is to run toward the boundaries. The goat will run along the fence, testing and probing to determine if there are any openings in the fence.

Once again in his article, Goats on the Left, Mike Ford states:

*Goats are experts in opening gates and squeezing through small gaps because they hate to be confined. Fences that will handle sheep, cattle, and horses will not hold goats. They will work tirelessly to spring themselves from any situation they deem inhibiting. ... Goats are capricious. They are impulsive and unpredictable, devious and contrary. When they are grazing, it is not unusual to see several with their heads through a fence, straining to reach the grass that is always greener on the other side!*

God Our Father gives us boundaries. These boundaries are defined by our Heavenly Father in His Ten Commandments listed in Exodus 20.

- (1) Do not have any foreign God [Elohim – Mighty One] before me!
- (2) Do not worship idols!
- (3) Do not use Yehovah's name in vain!
- (4) Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy!
- (5) Honor your father and mother!
- (6) Do not murder!
- (7) Do not commit adultery!
- (8) Do not steal!
- (9) Do not lie!
- (10) Do not covet!

Those are the boundaries. But these boundaries are not black and white. There are many colors of gray. Jesus explained in Matthew 5 that He had come to magnify the law in order to include the intent of the heart, not just the physical act and actions.

**Matthew 5:19** *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

20) *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

21) *Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:*

22) *But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. (KJV)*

If we have hatred in our heart toward someone, we are breaking the sixth commandment even though we have not physically killed someone.

*Continued in verse 27) ...*

27) *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:*

*28) But I say unto you, That whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. (KJV)*

So then, if we have lust in our heart toward someone, we are breaking the seventh commandment even though we have not had physical relations with the person.

All of us want to know where the boundaries are. However, many in the Churches of God in the past wanted to know where the boundaries were, and after knowing the location of these boundaries, exactly like goats, they approached as close as possible to that boundary, to that fence so to speak. Is this a Christian attitude? Is this what our Heavenly Father desires from us?

Goats approach a boundary, and they cross it with a defiant attitude, but sheep are satisfied staying together in the middle of the field or pasture, never getting close to the fence or the boundary, never craving what was on the other side of the fence.

Sheep view boundaries as protection. Goats, however, view boundaries as constraints that they try to cross time and time again. Again, to repeat, sheep view boundaries as protection. Goats, however, view boundaries as constraints that they try to cross time and again.

In the characteristic of testing boundaries, are we sheep or are we goats?

We have explored five characteristics of sheep and goats. They are:

- 1) Gregarious Behavior – Do we like to come together in Christian fellowship like sheep or do we desire to go our own way and do our own thing like goats?
- 2) Loyalty – Are we loyal to our Shepherd, Jesus the Anointed One, like sheep, or do we lead the “called-out” ones of our Heavenly Father away from the flock like goats?
- 3) Contentment – Are we satisfied with what we have like sheep or are we never satisfied, always reaching and positioning ourselves for something else or something more like goats?
- 4) Stubbornness – Are we following the will of our Heavenly Father like sheep, or are we following our own will like goats?
- 5) Testing Boundaries – Are we content to stay within the fences and the boundaries of our Heavenly Father like sheep, or are we continually testing and probing those fences and the boundaries, and in fact, are we crossing those fences and boundaries, like goats?

There are tremendous differences between the characteristics of sheep and goats. There is a reason why God Our Father chose the lamb to represent Jesus the Anointed

One. The qualities of a sheep are the qualities that our Heavenly Father desires for us to inculcate in ourselves.

In 2 Corinthians 13, the Apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthian brethren to examine themselves.

**2 Corinthians 13:5** *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.* (KJV)

We are here today celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles, a Feast that we look forward to each year in great anticipation. During the remainder of the Feast, let's examine ourselves where we are in the faith, where we are in our Heavenly Father's high calling, and where we are on our own personal path toward salvation. Let's examine ourselves in these five characteristics of sheep and goats to help to determine where we are in our relationship with our Heavenly Father and where we are on our path toward spiritual salvation and entry into His Kingdom.

I end my sermon with the following question:

By the way that you are living your life today, by the way that you are setting an example for others, by the way that you are treating others, by the way that you are showing kindness, generosity, and forgiveness to others, by the way that you are showing respect, awe and obedience to our Heavenly Father, and by the way that you are deepening your relationship with our Heavenly Father, are you a sheep or are you a goat?

More importantly, how does our Heavenly Father see you?

Does our Heavenly Father see you as a "sheep" or as a "goat"? Our very spiritual lives and our spiritual future and our entry into our Heavenly Father's Kingdom are dependent on the answer to this question.