

I return now to my thread dealing with the teachings about the afterlife in the New Testament. One question that can naturally be asked is whether what is said about the afterlife in this, that, or the other passage is meant to be taken literally. For example, I have discussed the famous passage of the “Sheep and the Goats” in Matthew 25, where the Son of Man at the end of history sits on his throne and divides the nations (or gentiles?) into two groups as a shepherd would separate his sheep and goats. The sheep are given eternal life and the goats are forced to go to eternal punishment.

But isn't this all symbolic? After all, people are said to be farm animals, when in fact people are human. So isn't the whole thing symbolic? Isn't it, for example, a kind of parable?

I may change my mind on the matter, but my sense at this stage of my thinking is that the passage is not a parable. Here I'll give several reasons.

First ...

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