

A Wake Up Call for Every Christian

Matthew 7 contains the conclusion to Jesus' sermon on the mount. After teaching us how to work together in our relationships with others (7:1-12) Jesus now urges a positive response to His sermon. We must enter through the narrow gate with a commitment to go down the narrow road (7:13-14). We must be aware of false teachers who are bent on leading us away from Christ. We will know them by their fruits. (7:15-20) In 7:21 Jesus warns: *Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord; will enter the kingdom of heaven... Some will live their life feeling secure and religious. They will feel close to God—but in all reality will be a stranger to Him! This "false peace" will lead us to think ourselves saved when we are not!*

Jesus' words here are among the scariest in God's word. They should serve as a wake up call to every Christian. Jesus describes those who felt assured of their salvation in 7:21b-22: *he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. "Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" What was the problem? Why were they rejected? What is the lesson for us?*

Religious fervor and zeal are not always a sign of salvation! It is evident from 7:22 that those in the text had an emotional attachment to Jesus. They were "fired up." There is little doubt they were excited about their work. There was little room for laziness in their work for God. This is also true with some in our time and unfortunately they base their religious life upon their *feelings*. Eldred Stevens writes, "some think they feel more than others—therefore, are more "spiritual" than others." (The Sermon on the Mount, p.253) Our feelings and zeal must be based upon knowledge! (Rom. 10:2) The life of Paul bears this out. If salvation were based solely upon zeal—he would have had no worries while a Jew. He writes: *as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But, of course, he said: whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (Phil. 3:6-7) Our religious fervor and zeal must come from our relationship with Christ! In the kingdom of God, nothing will be received as a substitute for obedience! (Paul Earnhart, Invitation to a Spiritual Revolution, p. 142)*

Religious works are not always a sign of salvation. Jesus mentions "prophesying" here. Most commentators agree that this refers to public teaching. "It is possible for one to preach—and to preach a correct message—and not be in the kingdom himself." Balaam (Num. 22); Saul (1 Sam. 10:10-11; 18:10; 19:23-24); and others prove this point clearly. Paul guarded against this danger. He said: *I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified. (1 Cor. 9:27)*

The ability to cast out demons and to work "wonderful" works does not guarantee salvation. In new testament times many had the ability to work miracles; and do amazing things. In Mt. 24:24 Jesus warns about false prophets who would "show great signs and wonders..." Obviously miracles, signs, and wonders have ceased. Today, some are tremendous workers for the Lord—sacrificing great amounts of time; money; and effort. This is wonderful! We need more workers! But one must not assume that just because he works hard that God is in him and he is in His kingdom! Our great and wonderful works must result from our relationship with Christ!

Having a correct belief is not always a sign of salvation. Doctrine is important! It is essential! But, that is not all there is to it! There are many Christians who can spout off scripture after scripture on the necessity of baptism; the one true church; the error of premillennialism; how the impossibility of apostasy is wrong; why we should refrain from using instruments in worship; and why we partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. While we often do a great job in learning & teaching these important doctrinal precepts—it will mean nothing if we fail to be transformed into *God's kind of Christian*.

For example, some have it right doctrinally, but exercise no control over their tongue. (Js. 1:22-26) There is great danger in one believing the right doctrine—but never putting God’s word into practice where it counts—in his life! “There is a great danger in trusting our “faith” rather than our Lord; trusting our doctrinal orthodoxy rather than our becoming new creatures.” (Stevens, p. 252)

We can avoid being one of the “surprised” ones on judgment if we will change our heart through the application of God’s word. It will come through our seeking holiness! Paul writes of this in Eph. 4:24: *put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.* Jesus wants to *establish (our) hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.* (1 Thess. 3:13) Putting on holiness means that we must possess the inward righteousness that Jesus preached about during the first half of the sermon on the mount. We must ask: “Am I conforming to the kind of person described in the beatitudes?” “Do I have real holiness and righteousness within?” Jesus said, *“You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.* (Lk. 16:15) Beware of the danger of relying upon “false evidences” of salvation. Beware of the danger of self deception. Approach your spiritual life with a diligence resulting from your love for Christ!

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Vol. 5, No. 13 - 01/27/02