

Absolute Certainty or Mere Sincerity? # 25

Matthew 7: 21-23

As we continue to study the Sermon on the Mount, we come to the portion of the message where Jesus addresses the grave disappointment some will encounter as they stand before Him, seeking to gain entrance into His kingdom. As we will discover, these were certainly sincere in their efforts, but they were not found worthy to gain access to the kingdom. It appears that they were professors of Christ, but had never accepted Him as the Messiah, Savior of the world. They were engaged in much activity associated with His name, but they did not know the Lord.

This raises an interesting and troubling fact that remains today. If you were to poll the majority of Americans, or any other group for that matter, you would soon discover that the opinions associated with acceptance of the Lord and entrance to heaven are quite varied. Barna Group released a study dated October 21, 2003 concerning the matter of heaven. Of those questioned, 81% believe in an “afterlife” of some sort. The same study found that 79% of those polled believe that every person has a soul that will live forever, either in God’s presence or absence. 76% believe in a literal heaven; while 64% believe they will go to heaven when they die. Here is where it gets interesting. Of the 64% who believe they will go to heaven when they die, only 43% of those believe they will go to heaven because they have confessed their sins and accepted Christ as their Savior. 15% believe that keeping the 10 Commandments would guarantee access; while another 15% believe they will go to heaven because “they are basically a good person.” A smaller group, 6% believe that God loves all people and will not let them perish.

In the same survey, of those who identify as “born again believers,” 50% contend that salvation can be earned based on good works. ¹ Isn’t that alarming? Clearly we see that there is much confusion, and very differing opinions on what is necessary to enter heaven. It is within our human nature to want to believe that all people will go to heaven when they die, but the truth is everyone will not. Many in Jesus’ day were very sincere in their endeavors, but they were basing their eternal destiny on false security. Many continue to do so today. I want to consider the [finalities](#) revealed in the text as we think on: [Absolute Certainty or Mere Sincerity?](#)

I. The Divine Proclamation (21) – **Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.** Consider:

A. The Limitation – Jesus reveals that **not everyone will enter the kingdom of heaven.** (Now, I am aware that the **kingdom of heaven** is dealing with the Millennial Kingdom of Christ upon the earth, but those who are denied access to the earthly kingdom will also be denied access to the eternal heaven. The end result will be the same for all eternity.)

- This is a startling proclamation. In that day many will stand before the Lord, seeking entrance to the kingdom, but all will not be allowed to enter in. Some will be denied. This reveals the truth that all will not be granted access into heaven; not everyone is going to heaven when they die. **Mat.18:3 – And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.**

B. The Assumption (21a) – **Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;** He speaks of those who have spoken in His name; those who have even addressed Him as Lord. There is a profound truth here. There is nothing wrong in addressing Jesus as Lord; in fact we should. It is essential to our salvation. **Rom.10:9 – That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.** The problem with these and many others is a problem of the heart. They had the head knowledge that Jesus is Lord, but they never came to a place of submission within the heart.

- Belief in the person of Christ isn't enough. **Jam.2:19 – Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.** There must be a realization of all He is and an acceptance of His finished work on the cross of Calvary for the redemption of sin. Everyone must come to the place in their personal life that they see the need for Christ as their Savior and Lord. He is Lord whether we recognize it or not, but the question remains: is He your Lord?

C. The Obligation (21b) – **but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.** Here Jesus reveals the requirement, the obligation for entrance to heaven. There is no other way! We live in an ecumenical age that teaches many ways of salvation and eternal life, but we must do the will of the Father if we are to gain entrance into heaven.

- So, you might ask, what is the will of the Father? **John 6:40 – And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.** The will of the Father is for us to believe in the Son. **John 3:5 – Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.** We must be born again in Christ if we are to experience eternal life. **Ephes.6:6 – Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;** God commands that we surrender ourselves to the lordship of Christ, serving Him genuinely and sincerely from the heart.

I. The Divine Proclamation (21)

II. The Deliberate Opposition (22) – Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? Jesus reveals that many will oppose His righteous judgment in that day, seeking to argue their way into the kingdom. They will reveal their dependence upon:

A. Their Wisdom – Have we not prophesied in thy name? These are those who knew the Scriptures. They had even shared the message of God with others. Those who knew the Scriptures in Jesus' day thought they were doing God a service by denying Christ as the Messiah. They had read and memorized the Word, but they didn't know the living Word.

- We see that danger remaining today. Many assume that simply reading or being familiar with the Bible and its precepts are all that matter. A lot of lost people know what the Bible says. Just knowing what the Bible says or sharing that with others isn't enough. There must be a personal relationship with Christ through salvation in Him!
- I also fear there will be many who pastored churches, preaching the Word, who were never saved. Just knowing Scripture or publicly proclaiming the Bible will not secure salvation.

B. Their Works – Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? These will seek acceptance based on their works. There can be no doubt that many will have accomplished many good works in this life. Some will even have been noted as powerful or significant deeds, maybe making a genuine difference in the lives of others.

- We ought to seek to do all we can for the Lord and in service to others, but works cannot save. Ephes.2:8-9 – For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: [9] Not of works, lest any man should boast. Our works should point to the Savior who saved us and the faith we have in Him alone. Jam.2:18 – Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

C. Their Witness – As they stand before the Lord, they will profess that they have done all these things in His name. It appears that they were very strict in their teaching, their doctrine, and in their motives, but there was no relationship with Christ. On the surface their words and works sought to portray a right relationship, but their hearts were far from Christ.

- Consider all that is done in the name of Jesus today. I fear that His blessed name has been hijacked by many who have selfish motives. Many seek to distort the context of Scripture to

benefit their cause, appearing to be concerned for the spiritual well being of others, and yet they only desire to satisfy their fleshly lusts or keep others bound in legalism. All who profess Christ do not know Him as Lord and Savior! Much that is done today in His name has nothing to do with His will or His Word.

I. The Divine Proclamation (21)

II. The Deliberate Opposition (22)

III. The Dreadful Separation (23) – *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.* Here we find the conclusion to the search of the false professor. Notice:

A. The Denial – *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you:* These have come seeking acceptance of Christ and entrance to the kingdom, and yet they are unknown of the Lord. That is not to say that He did not know of their existence, but that He did not know them as one of His own. There was never a time when they received the gracious gift of salvation.

- Can you imagine the sorrow and fear that will grip their hearts in that day? What a tragedy. These have lived lives that could have counted for the Lord. They had been busy in labor that could have received eternal reward, but their motives were wrong. They had lived life under the pretense of religion and service to Christ, but they never knew Him. They were very sincere in their efforts, but their efforts were all in vain.

B. The Declaration – *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me.* These are the saddest words any human being will ever hear. No doubt we have all experienced the pain of rejection at some point in our lives, but nothing will compare to hearing Jesus command them to depart from His presence. They had come in hopes of gaining entrance to the kingdom and yet they will face an eternity of separation from the Lord and His presence. [2 Thes.1:9 – Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.](#)

C. The Discernment – *depart from me, ye that work iniquity.* Take a moment to consider all that these will say unto the Lord, all of the arguments they will make. Jesus will not be unwise to the condition of their heart. He will know where they stand in regard to a relationship with Him. All of

the works in the world will not hide the iniquity of their hearts. Jesus will not be deceived by false professions or empty works of vanity.

- As we considered in the introduction, many are depending on various things to be accepted of the Lord and gain entrance to heaven. Many are deceived by the false doctrines of this world. Jesus will not be fooled however. He knows all of our hearts. He knows whether we have accepted Him as our Savior, receiving His gracious salvation.

In closing I would like to say that this is far too important a matter to leave to chance. It isn't something that sincerity will secure. Just knowing what the Bible says or doing good works will not be enough. All of the saved and only the saved will be allowed into heaven. There is coming a day when we will all stand before the Lord. What will eternity reveal for you? Do you know for certain that Jesus will allow you to dwell with Him in heaven? Please don't find yourself hearing those dreadful words: **depart from me, ye that work iniquity.**

¹ <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/128-americans-describe-their-views-about-life-after-death>