
DOING THE FATHER'S WILL

George Battey | 3/11/14

QUESTIONS:

- 1) In Mt 7:15-20 Jesus spoke of deceivers. What does He begin speaking about in v21?
- 2) Will everyone who enters heaven say, "*Lord, Lord*"?
- 3) Is it "*safe*" to do the Father's will? (Why am I asking this question?)
- 4) How does Jesus equate His own will with the Father's will in Mt 7?
- 5) Are the men in Mt 7:21-23 "*ordinary*" men or are they leaders?
- 6) (Important) – In Mt 7:22 these lost men were claiming to have done certain works, but they were not doing the Father's will. What type of works were they doing?
- 7) In Mt 7:23 Jesus said, "*I never knew you.*" Does this indicate that a true Christian cannot fall away and become lost in hell?
- 8) Mt 7:23 says, "*you who practice lawlessness.*" What kind of action is being stressed?

INTRODUCTION

Matthew 7:21-23

²¹ "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.

²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

These are very sober and solemn words – the very words of Jesus Himself and therefore demand our most careful attention.

You will remember Jesus finished the main body of His "sermon" in v12. Beginning in vv13-14 He warned that only a few would enter the narrow gate and be saved. Why will few be saved?

- The narrow way **must be found** – "*few there be that find it*"
- It must be **entered alone**
- It must be **entered naked**
- It must be entered **with difficulty** – "*strive to enter in*" (Lk 13)

Besides the gate itself, Jesus said there are false prophets standing in front of the gate seeking to turn us away.

Now Jesus begins to **warn us about ourselves**. He moves from:

- **Deceivers** to the **self-deceived**
- False **prophets** to false **professors**
- Unsound **teachers** to unsound **hearers**

TWO CLASSES OF **"SELF-DECEPTION"**

There are two basic classes of self-deceived people mentioned by Jesus in this chapter:

- Those who **say**, but do not do (vv21-23)
- Those who **hear**, but do not do (vv24-27)

Notice carefully that Jesus is not speaking to, or about irreligious people:

- **Atheists**
- **Agnostics**

He is speaking specifically about people who are devoutly religious. He is speaking to men who think they are on the road to heaven, but in reality are on the broad way to hell.

(Various polls indicate most Americans consider themselves as "*born again Christians.*")

But Jesus, in this text, is saying that very few of those claiming Jesus as their Lord are actually saved.

TEXT (1)

Matthew 7:21

²¹ "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.

Lord – "*master, owner, possessor.*" A "*lord*" is someone who has the right to rule over others without their consent.

NOTE: These people did not just say, "*Lord,*" but rather "*Lord, Lord.*" This repetition shows their sincerity, their fervency, their zeal.

Jesus does not criticize these people for saying, "*Lord, Lord.*" That was acceptable. It shows that a person recognizes who Jesus really is.

- They are **saying** the right things about Him
- They are **believing** the right things about Him

NOTE: Jesus could have said, "*No one saying, Lord, Lord, can enter the kingdom of heaven,*" but instead He said, "*Not everyone.*" In other words:

- **Everyone entering must say, "Lord, Lord."** That is, they must acknowledge Jesus as their Master and Owner.
- **BUT,** not everyone claiming Jesus as their Lord will enter.

Q: Since everyone is claiming Jesus as their Lord, what distinguishes between (a) those who actually enter the kingdom and (b) those who don't?

A: "He who does the will of my Father."

DOING GOD'S WILL

"he who does" (ὁ ποιῶν) – pres., act., part. stressing linear action.

The one who habitually "keeps on doing God's will" will be granted entrance into His kingdom.

Notice the four great implications of what Jesus is saying:

1) Jesus implies men CAN do the Father's will.

It's not impossible to keep God's will *in the way He intended*.

Matthew 12:49-50

⁴⁹ And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers!

⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."

Jesus is here demonstrating that men can keep God's will to such a degree so as to enter the kingdom!

2) It is SAFE to do the Father's will.

To hear some people talk it may be hazardous to follow God's will exactly. To some people:

- If you do exactly what God said,
- And you insist that others do exactly what God says
- Then you are supposedly relying on works to save you and your soul is in great jeopardy.

Yet, Jesus is saying that doing God's will is safe! He is teaching that it will lead one into the kingdom of heaven!

3) **It is ESSENTIAL that we do the Father's will.**

The narrow way to heaven is a way of obedience.

Hebrews 5:9

⁹ And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,

Anything and everything short of doing God's will is disobedience.

Luke 6:46

⁴⁶ "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"

It is absurd to call Jesus, "*Master*," or "*Owner*" and yet refuse to obey Him.

4) **The love of God is revealed in the Father's will.**

Implied is God's love and concern for us that He would even reveal a will to make possible a relationship with Him in heaven.

To Israel God said:

Deuteronomy 6:24

²⁴ And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, **for our good always**, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day.

Deuteronomy 4:8

⁸ And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?

To Christians the apostle John wrote:

1 John 5:3

³ For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

God wants to be our King and He has gone to tremendous expense to make it possible.

JESUS' DEITY

Next, notice carefully the overtones of Jesus' deity in this verse.

1) For the first time in Matthew's gospel Jesus calls God, "My Father."

It is not "*Your Father*" (6:8) or "*Our Father*" (6:9), but rather "*My Father*" – implying a special relationship with God that no one else had.

2) Jesus equates His own will with the Father's will.

- v21 – men must do the Father's will
- v24 – men must keep the sayings of Jesus

Thus, Jesus is equating His own will with the Father's will; He's implying His equality with the Father! This is why Matthew records:

Matthew 7:28-29

²⁸ ... the people were astonished at His teaching,

²⁹ for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

TEXT (2)

Matthew 7:22

²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

This is the earliest indication in the NT that Jesus will be the Judge of men in the Final Day.

Jesus uses the Judgment Day scene to illustrate the extent to which men can deceive themselves. He wants to emphasize and reinforce the need of self-examination.

LEADERS Vs. ORDINARY MEN

Now, to drive home His point, Jesus uses an illustration involving leaders within the church and not "*ordinary*" men.

It is not some "*ordinary*" church member walking up to Jesus and saying:

- "*I attended church services.*"
- "*I gave tithes to the church.*"
- "*I participated in many activities in the church.*"

Instead, we see leaders, men with tremendous talents and abilities:

- "*We **prophesied** in your name.*"
- "*We cast out **demons** in your name.*"
- "*We performed wondrous **miracles** in your name.*"

B. W. Johnson:

"The Lord chooses out the greatest of the class of non-doers to show that all such will fail entrance."

Furthermore, Jesus is not pointing to an insignificant problem. "**Many will say to me in that day ...**" He is warning us that the disease of self-deception is widespread and rampant.

INJUSTICE?

Look at the way these "*leaders*" are talking and you'll see tone of confusion and injustice in their voices.

1) They are bewildered.

They cannot understand why they, of all people, are being shut out of heaven after all they have done!

They have already spent centuries in Hades being tormented and they can't believe their eyes. They are pleading with Jesus. They are:

- **Sincere** in their claims
- **Honest** in their claims

They are the ultimate example of how extensively a man can become self-deceived.

2) They feel they are being treated unjustly.

They feel as though they **deserve** and **merit** heaven. They begin to appeal to the "*good works*" they have done which makes them feel deserving of heaven:

- "*We prophesied.*"
- "*We cast out devils.*"
- "*We performed miracles.*"

NOTE: Not one man appealed to the Father's will. No one said, "*Jesus, why can't we enter? After all, we've been doing the Father's will!*"

The fact is, **works of obedience** do not make a true disciple feel as though he justly deserves heaven.

Luke 17:10

¹⁰ So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'

WORKS OF MERIT

The men described in verse 22 were truly seeking to be saved by "*works of merit.*"

- They felt they deserved heaven.
- They felt unjustly treated.

They felt that if justice were dealt out then they must enter heaven. Notice what they're implying: ***Jesus is being unjust!*** He's an unjust Judge!!

NOTE: When the Scriptures teach we are "*not saved by works*" (Eph 2:8-9) this is not referring to works of obedience to the Father's will!

(Jesus says you have to have works of obedience to enter heaven.)

On the other hand, the Bible condemns those "*works of merit*" that men do thinking they deserve to go to heaven.

Terry Pillow:

*"Dear Lord, I'm unworthy to be in Thy presence,
I feel too unworthy to mention Thy name;
When records are opened, on that great final day,
Show mercy to me, O Lord, not justice I pray."*

These men before Jesus are absolutely ignorant of what justice demands. They are lacking the qualities of heart which Jesus said a man must have to enter the kingdom:

- Poor in spirit
- Mourn
- Meek
- Hunger and thirst after righteousness

These men are strangers to these qualities of heart.

Now let us look more closely at these "**works of merit**" which made these men feel deserving of heaven.

PROPHESYING

Matthew 7:22

²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, **have we not prophesied** in Your name, ...

These men are expecting Jesus to agree with them. They are appealing to Jesus Himself as the authority for their prophesying, but Jesus denies any connection with them:

Matthew 7:23

²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

What went wrong? Three possibilities:

- They may have been **self-deceived** – thinking they had been prophesying when really they had not.
- They may have actually prophesied, but **by the power of Satan** (cf. Dt 13:1-5).
- They may have actually prophesied **by the power of God!**

ARGUMENT: Wait a minute! If it was by the power of God, then they would have been saved.

A: That is the very point Jesus wants us to learn. He wants us to see that even if a man actually prophesies by the power of God, it is no guarantee that he himself is saved.

- Balaam prophesied by God's power, but was still lost (Num 23-24)
- King Saul (1 Sam 19)
- Caiaphas, the high priest (Jn 11)

1 Corinthians 13:2

² And though I have the **gift of prophecy**, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

Jesus is showing that prophesying does not merit salvation! It's no guarantee of salvation.

EXORCISM

Matthew 7:22

²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, **cast out demons in Your name**, ...

Again, Jesus does not deny that these men actually cast out demons. They may have; they may not have. Whether they did, or not is not the issue. The real issue is: ***They did not do the will of the Father!***

Once Jesus sent out seventy disciples on a limited commission. He gave to them the power to cast out demons.

Luke 10:17

¹⁷ Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."

What was Jesus' response to this "joy"?

Luke 10:20

²⁰ Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

Why did Jesus tell them not to rejoice in the fact that demons were subject to them? Because He knew that was not the criteria for entering heaven. That's no proof of salvation.

MIRACLE WORKING

Matthew 7:22

²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and **done many wonders** in Your name?'

"wonders" – "*miraculous power*" (see NIV)

Notice the preoccupation of these people with miraculous gifts. They are obsessed with miracles and they feel these miraculous powers merit salvation!

(Do you know any religious groups that are obsessed with miracles? Who think that miraculous powers are a sure sign of their salvation even though they are violating some commands?)

Even in the OT God admitted the possibility that some men could perform "*signs and wonders*" and yet still be lost:

Deuteronomy 13:1-3

¹ "If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder,

² and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods' — which you have not known — 'and let us serve them,'

³ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Matthew Henry:

"Grace may bring a man to heaven without miracles, but miracles will never bring a man to heaven without grace."

LUKE'S ACCOUNT

In Luke's account Jesus mentions another argument these lost people will use on the Final Day:

Luke 13:26-27

²⁶ then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.'

²⁷ But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'

"We ate and drank in Your presence" – *"We had a close fellowship with You. We knew each other on a very personal basis."*

Q: What was wrong? Why can't they enter?

A: They weren't doing the Father's will!

No amount of *"sacrifice"* and *"good intentions"* can substitute for obedience to God's will in every area of our lives.

1 Samuel 15:22

²² ... "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.

TEXT (3)

Matthew 7:23

²³ And then I will **declare** (ὁμολογέω) to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

"I will declare" (ὁμολογέω) – *"I will confess"*

This is the same word used in Matthew 10:

Matthew 10:32

³² "Therefore whoever **confesses** (ὁμολογέω) Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.

Now these people in Matthew 7:22 had been confessing Jesus with their mouths! They had been saying, "Lord, Lord." Why then does Jesus deny them? Didn't He say if we confess Him He would also confess us?

Titus 1:16

¹⁶ They **profess** (ὁμολογέω) to know God, but in works they deny Him, ...

It doesn't matter what we confess with our mouths, if we are disobedient to the Father's will we are denying Him!

- Mt 10:32 is not just talking about **a one time verbal confession** we make with our mouth before baptism. (It includes that, but it is more than that.)
- Mt 10:32 is speaking of a confession we make with our voice and with our lives **every day we live!**

Jesus is denying these men who have confessed with their mouth because they have denied Him by their disobedient actions!

Matthew 10:33

³³ But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Jesus is saying: "You folks have been going around confessing my name, but now I have a confession to make: I never knew you!"

"I NEVER KNEW YOU"

Now ... when Jesus says, "I never knew you," what did He mean?

"know" – "to approve of"

Psalms 1:6

⁶ For the LORD **knows** [approves of] the way of the righteous,
But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

So Jesus did not "approve of" these men in v22.

Q: Does Jesus imply that only people He **never** approved of will go to hell? Is He saying, "A true Christian cannot fall away and go to hell, because only people I **never** knew will be in hell"?

A: This verse is not describing every person that goes to hell. According to v22 Jesus is describing **many** people that will go to hell, but not all.

Not all people in hell will have:

- Said, "Lord, Lord"
- Claimed to prophesy
- Claimed to cast out demons
- Claimed to work miracles

AND

- Been completely unknown by Jesus

Many will have been like this, but not all.

Furthermore, *Jesus is discussing a class of people*, not individual men. Notice the class of people He's discussing:

- They did not do the Father's will.
- They substituted their own will for the Father's will.
- They relied on their own achievements (their own invented wills) to save them.
- They constantly worked iniquity.

Jesus is saying, *"I never approved of people like that. I never have and I never will."*

LAWLESSNESS

Matthew 7:23

²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, **you who practice lawlessness!**'

Here these people were not keeping *God's law*, but in v21 they were not keeping *God's will*. Therefore:

God's law = God's will

Contrary to what some teach, God has a law for men to keep if they ever hope to enter the kingdom of heaven.

"you who practice lawlessness" (οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν) – pres., mid., part. stressing continuous action.

Literally: **"You who continue to work lawlessness."**

Jesus knew that His Own disciples would sin on occasions. That's why He taught them to pray:

Matthew 6:12

¹² And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.

But in Mt 7:23 Jesus is speaking of men who habitually sin and make no effort to seek forgiveness.

CONCLUSION

Jesus is not teaching it is impossible to go to heaven. The Scriptures are full of men who will one day walk in that heavenly Jerusalem.

Rather, ***He is teaching the difficulty involved in going to heaven.*** He is warning us ahead of time about the difficulties so we will be prepared when we meet them.

To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

And so it was that Jesus warned men not only of false prophets that will lead them away from the narrow gate, but also of ***our own self-deception.***

An engraving on a church building in Lubeck, Germany reads:

*"Thus speaketh Christ our Lord to us,
You call Me master and obey Me not,
you call Me light and see Me not,
you call Me the way and walk Me not,
you call Me life and live Me not,
you call Me wise and follow Me not,
you call Me fair and love Me not,
you call Me rich and ask Me not,
you call Me eternal and seek Me not,
if I condemn thee, blame Me not."*