

The Christians Who Will Go To Hell

Matthew 7:21-23

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. 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? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

I believe these words are possibly the most frightening words in all the Bible. I try to imagine the fear. Here are not a few people, not a small group, but according to Jesus—many. A large group, perhaps millions who, upon hearing these words, are in a panic state before the Lord. They are in the worst horror of their lives. Nothing they ever experienced on earth compares with this terror that has just struck into their hearts. Here they are, before the Great White Throne Judgement, which is where unbelievers stand at the end of the age. There are no believers at this judgement, believers stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ. And as these millions of people look around, they realize that all the people standing before this Great White Throne are unsaved, and condemned. They realize that everyone here is condemned and cast into hell.

The reason for their horror is that they thought they were Christians. They fully expected to stand before God as His children, and live in heaven forever. They even had assurance of salvation. That is – they assured themselves that they were saved. There is a difference between biblical assurance of salvation, and made up assurance of salvation. Never in a million years did they think they would stand before God condemned, but that's what's happening, and they cannot believe it.

It's hard to come across South African church-goers who do not consider themselves saved. When you raise the question of the day of their repentant faith in Christ, they look at you bewildered. People today say you should never question someone's salvation – you must instead give people assurance of salvation. I don't find that in the Bible. Instead, I find the apostles repeatedly telling people to not be deceived – certain kinds of people will not enter the kingdom of heaven. I find Paul saying in 2 Co 13:5 – 'examine yourself to see if you are in the faith – test yourself'. I find Peter saying 'make your calling and election sure'. I find James writing that faith without works is dead. He says the devils believe in God the way some people do. I find John writing a whole epistle to say – this is what it looks like if you are saved. Above all, we find Christ Himself warning us, through this prophecy, that **will come true**, that thinking that you're saved is not enough. I believe that once you're saved, you cannot lose your salvation, but who am I to tell you that you cannot lose something you don't yet have? How can I come to you and say – you'll never lose your salvation – if I am not sure you have it in the first place? It is not up to us to give people assurance of salvation – that is the Holy Spirit's job. I would rather cause a whole bunch of people to lose sleep, so that they would get saved in reality for the first time, than to tickle the ears of those who don't want to hear that maybe they aren't saved.

Notice some things about these people in Matthew 7:

Their Knowledge of His Person

They say, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied, and cast out demons and performed miracles in your name. They had lived on earth, and done things for *Jesus*. They had been in church. They had heard about Jesus, and believed even some of the right things about Jesus. They knew who He was. These were not pagans. They were not worshipping false gods or part of a cult or atheists. They had an understanding and a knowledge of who Jesus was. Perhaps even more than that – they called Him Lord. They thought of Jesus as the Lord. Why wasn't this enough?

To know about God - to know even the truth about Him is not enough to save you. Mere information doesn't save a person. James tells us in 2:19: "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe--and shudder!" The demons believe in God. And they have even more correct information about God than you or I have. They know things about God that we don't because they have been in His presence. But the information itself is not enough.

Some people believe in the wrong Jesus. Paul speaks of people accepting another Jesus, another spirit, another Gospel. Believing in the wrong Jesus will damn your soul. But merely believing in the head about Jesus is not enough. Some people will miss Heaven by 30 centimetres – head belief vs heart belief.

Even saying 'Lord' was not enough to save these people. Why not? Jesus said, "*Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?*" It would be like me calling someone I know Master, Master – but I always do the opposite of what they tell me to do. Using the title can be meaningless. Calling Jesus Lord doesn't save if you have not in fact bowed to Him as Lord and sought to follow Him.

But there's more to these people – which makes it even scarier.

Their Labor For His Name

They say, "*Have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*"

These people were not people sitting on the fence. They were not people who breezed in to church once every three months and breezed out. They were not fence sitters, who came to church and did nothing. They were not people sitting by. These people were busy with religion. They had a supernatural ability to give out hidden knowledge. This they did. Sometimes, prophesy is used to speak of preaching with power. Some of them were preachers, teachers, even pastors.. They could prophesy in his name.

They cast out demons in his name. Personally, I believe the best way to cast out a demon is by preaching the Gospel, and letting that person accept Christ. Well, however these people did it – they preached, or laid hands, and cast out demons. You hear a lot about that today - casting out of demons. It looks very impressive. These people cast out

demons in Jesus' name. They did many wonderful works. Literally did many powerful things. This could be anything from miracles – healing the sick, to witnessing to other people and leading them to Christ. It could be leading the singing, teaching Sunday school, counseling others, discipling them. It could be any of thousands of possibly good, powerful works.

Please notice – Jesus does not deny that these things took place. He does not deny that they prophesied, that they cast out demons, that they did miracles. He does not deny that these things happened. He denies involvement. He denies that He was the power behind it. And that ought to tell you and I something – not all the things you see and here going around in the name of Jesus are actually coming from Jesus. Jesus does not deny that there was power in what they were doing. He simply denies that it was His power.

They did these things and they said they did it in His name. What does that mean – in His name? It means firstly that they did it for Him. They claimed they were doing it for His sake. They were doing these actions for Jesus. It also means they thought they were doing it in His power. They would cast out the demon and say loudly, “In the name of Jesus”. They would teach, and say, “I am depending on Jesus to help me”. They would do wonderful works and say – “I depend on Him”. But Jesus clearly shows He wasn't the power behind it because they weren't right. He wasn't ultimately the one they were doing it for either.

Why did Jesus say these things about them? Simply because of

Their Lack of Relationship With Christ

Notice what He says about them in verse 23. Does He say, “Depart from me, I once knew you!”. No, He says, “I never knew you”. All along, they had never truly been in a relationship with Him. They had known all about Him. They had done all sorts of things for Him. But they had never been correctly related to Him. They had a form of godliness, but they lacked the power thereof. They had an outward appearance, but there was no inward reality. They had never come into a personal relationship with Christ.

You know who this reminds me of - Judas. Judas walked with Jesus. He named the name of Jesus. He handled the financial aspect of Jesus' ministry. He was part of those who cast out demons and healed the sick. But all along, Judas never came to a place where He himself asked Jesus to be His Saviour. The night before Jesus died, He said that the disciples were spiritually clean, but not all of them – meaning Judas. Judas was still unsaved. When Peter prayed in Acts 1 he mentions that Judas had gone to hell. Judas was never saved. How close can you get, and yet be so far? He knew all the words, all the talk, all the right phrases. But in His heart, He never repented of His sin, asked God for salvation in Jesus. He remained unsaved, an unbeliever

The Answer

Jesus tells us what saves. He says having all this talk, and all these activities will not save you. Instead, He says in verse 21; *'He that does the will of my Father in heaven'* will enter into heaven. What does that mean? Does that mean I must do good works? It sounds like Jesus wants me to earn my salvation with some works. Well, if it were good works that save you, then surely these people would be saved. They have done all these wonderful works, and they have done them not for false gods– but for Jesus. And yet they still are not saved. The Bible tells us *'Not by works of righteousness which we have done – but according to His mercy he saved us'*. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast"*.

So I do not get saved by works, by doing things to impress God. Trying to do good things for God is like owing someone one million rand, and then saying, "I promise to pay you R10 a month for as long as I live". Our good works are like filthy rags to God, and they can never make up for what we have already done wrong.

Jesus says if we will do the will of the Father – we will have eternal life. So, here is the most important question of all – what is His will?

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."*

There it is in black and white – God's will is that we see His Son and believe on Him. But wait, the people that Jesus said, 'I never knew you' to believed in Jesus, didn't they? They believed in Him, but yet Jesus will send them to eternal hell. So what now? Well, there is a kind of belief that saves, and a kind of belief that does not. The kind of belief that does not save is the kind that knows some facts about Jesus, and sort of applies them, halfheartedly to oneself. It is like the parable of the sower. You take the Word of God in, and you believe some of it. But you never truly surrender to Christ, you never with all your heart, say, "God with all of me I come to you". In this chapter of John, Jesus explains what it really means to believe.

Jesus links belief to eating and drinking. What's the connection? When we eat or drink, we imbibe something into ourselves in order to survive, and gain satisfaction. So, in the same way, belief is to imbibe, take in, consume, as it were, the Person and work of Jesus to be the thing by which we survive, and are satisfied. Belief is personal and practical. You cannot merely look at bread and be filled. You cannot merely agree that water is thirst-quenching. You must personally take it in. You must eat and drink, casting all your dependence upon this food and drink to satisfy you, to nourish you. Therefore to believe on the Lord Jesus is not to merely agree He is God. It is not to merely agree He is the God-man. It is not to merely agree He is the Saviour. It is to personally drink Him in as He is.

If I am believing in Jesus, I am coming to a point in my life where I realize I have been eating and drinking and doing many other things for satisfaction and spiritual life – money, popularity, materialism, philosophy, education, appearance, pleasure, but they are not the living Bread and living water. So I abandon all that. I turn away from it. I repent. I

cannot eat and drink of the Lord Jesus and sin at the same time. So there is a turning away from the old, and a turn to Jesus Christ.

So I see more than that He is the Saviour; I see that I need a Saviour, and ask Him to be mine. I drink and eat Him in as my salvation. I see more than He is God. I see He is to be my God, I drink Him in as my Lord, as the one I will follow and obey. This is saving faith. This is what John means when he says 'believe'.

Salvation is far more than getting a ticket to heaven. It is coming to a place where you supernaturally value and treasure Jesus Christ above all things. You embrace Him as your all, as your new life; when not just the will has changed, but the desires, the affections, the very love of our lives. When this now focuses on Jesus – the supernatural work of regeneration has taken place. People who have been regenerated, born again into the family of God, such people can say, "God knows me, and I know Him". Our churches are filled with unbelievers who 'believe'. They 'believe' things about Jesus, but they are not believers. The question is – when did you eat and drink of the Lord Jesus in this way?

Jesus goes on to illustrate with the two houses – one built on the sand, one built on the rock. The point of the illustration is to say that it doesn't matter how nice a house looks on the outside, if the foundation is wrong. It doesn't matter how nice you look to others at church, how spiritual others think you are. If you are not truly saved – at some point the house is going to fall down. The storms of life, the temptations of sin, the attractiveness of the world, the love of money, the fear of man, the trials of life, will show that Christ was never truly inside you.

What could be worse than to stand before Christ, and have Him say, "I never knew you?" These people begin pleading, perhaps they think they can change Christ's mind, "We did things for you, we honoured your name". It will be too late. He will not be impressed. Only a personal relationship with Him can ever be enough to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Examine yourself. Don't just say, "I made a decision back in 19..., and I was baptized, and you can't tell me I'm not saved!" That kind of thinking is deadly and dangerous. To depend on a supposed decision you made, when there is no fruit of your salvation is not what the Bible says. It says, "Make your calling and election sure." How? By checking that conformity to Christ is in your life. It is like someone saying, "I have a nice plant in that pot." You look and all there is, is the pot and the soil.

You say, "I don't see anything."

They say, "Well, I planted a seed in there back in 1985."

"Yes", you say, "but there is nothing to show for it now. The seed apparently never germinated. Life never sprouted. There is no plant, no life, no fruit. You need to plant another seed."

"No", they say, "I planted a seed back in 1985. What a lovely plant it is. I water it often, and give it much sunlight."

That is like many people. They claim to have professed Christ at some point. But there is no fruit whatsoever. They do not care. They even give their profession water and sunlight

by attending church and doing some marginally Christian things. But they refuse to admit what is clear to everyone else – regeneration never took place. There is no eternal life abiding within them. Their life has never begun to reflect Christ. They have continued as before, with a smattering of moralizing and following some rules – but no change.

Some tell you that you must work to keep your salvation. That is not biblical. A tree does not have to produce fruit in order to stay alive. But as long as it is alive, it produces fruit. In the same way, if eternal life is inside us, there will be the outward sign of behaviour.

Furthermore, don't say, "Well, I was raised in a Christian home, where we read the Bible, prayed and went to church every Sunday. I must be saved". A Christian environment does mean you are saved. A Christian home does not mean you are saved. Having grown up in a culture that respected Jesus Christ does not mean you are saved. You, yourself must have come to a point in your life where you understood the Gospel, realised you were guilty before God, and asked Him to save you through His Son Jesus Christ. This does not automatically happen to someone because they are the child of Christian parents. Everyone must individually come to repentant faith in Christ. A faith that has not changed your life has not saved your soul.

So we began by talking about the Christians who will go to hell. But in truth, they are Christians only in name, not in nature. They name Christ, they speak about Christ, they do things for Christ, but they have never eaten and drunk Him personally to be their salvation. They have the title Christian, but not the reality.

May you and I make sure that we are not wearing the mask of ministry, the disguise of respectable religion. For the sake of our own souls, may we make sure of our own calling and election, so that we are not part of that awful number who will hear those chilling words, "*I never knew you*".