

Check Your Pathway

Matthew Chapter 7

“Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven 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?’ “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’” These words, spoken by Jesus, are among the most frightening verses in all scripture.

As we examine verses 21-22, Jesus is very clear, those who enter the kingdom of heaven are righteous not religious. We enter God’s kingdom, God’ domain, on God’s terms, through God’s provision – faith in the sacrificial atonement of Jesus Christ through His death, burial and resurrection. Jesus said, “For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life and few are those who find it.” It is the gate He tells us to enter. As we examine the text, we soon realize there are just two paths available, with no alternatives. We enter either by the narrow gate into the kingdom of heaven or we enter by the wide gate that leads to destruction.

Sadly, many are those who enter by the wide gate. Throughout history many have the desire to be called Christian, to be accounted among the household of faith but in reality, have no love or faith in Christ. I wonder, how many people pursue Christianity with the purpose of taking away their reproach. They know they have sinned, even if they would call it by another name, and are seeking to cover themselves but have no real affection for the Lord. This situation is not relegated to those who attend church but includes many who claim to preach His Gospel. Even though they appear to be promoting His kingdom, His interest, His glory, His atonement, and His mercy, their chief interest is to please men, to lift themselves up and set up the power of human nature and achievement in opposition to the grace of God. Jesus warns his listeners to, “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.” How can they be recognized? By their fruit. Good trees yield good fruit and rotten trees yield rotten fruit. They will lead you away from Jesus. They will indulge every form of deception in order to bolster their influence even compromising the Scripture to accommodate their ends. Many will follow them wanting to have their ears tickled and feel good about themselves instead of examining their lives, recognizing their sin, repenting and surrendering to the only One who is able to save their souls. Scripture contains many warnings about this type of deception and false teachers. Their confidence is reflected by what is said, “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?’” (Mat 24:24, Mark 1:22, Deut 13:1-5 just to mention a few). It is hard to imagine their surprise when Jesus tells them, “depart from Me”. Only then will they realize the standard by which they have been measured, magnitude of the deception and its devastating consequences.

Who are those who will, “enter the kingdom of heaven”? “he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven”. Why is this a measure of who will enter the kingdom of heaven? True conversion, sanctification and salvation involves a fundamental change in the person. The process by which God reveals His holiness in contrast to our sin, our desperate need in contrast to His provision, our inability in contrast to His mercy and grace, resulting in regeneration and conversion are acts of God’s sovereign activity to take those who are spiritually dead in sin and make them alive in Christ. This profound event causes a fundamental change in the life of a believer. It changes our mind, changes the bases for our beliefs, changes the basis for our thinking, it changes our affections, it changes our feelings. It involves a volitional and intentional changing of our will to turn away from sin to God through Jesus Christ because we now belong to Him. In the words of Steve Lawson, “..with a true conversion sin is abhorred, the world renounced, pride crushed, self surrendered, faith exercised, Christ seen as precious, and the cross embraced as one’s only saving hope.” The result, doing the will of Our Father who is in heaven.

Where there is no death to self, no interest or pursuit of scripture, no obedience to God’s word, no fruit of repentance, no interest in holy living there is no relationship with Christ. One may go to church, be involved in activities, actively participating in ministry but be destined to hear, “depart from Me” because they are on broad path. A pathway marked “this way to heaven” but leading to a place where there will be weeping, wailing and nashing of teeth forever (Luke 13:28). Only then to realize the deception that governed their life.

We need to strive to enter by the narrow gate and exhort others toward that goal before it is too late.

1. What is the warning contained in verses 1 & 2? What does the word “judge” mean? What kind of judging is Jesus addressing in these verses? Why does Jesus say we should not judge? Is there a time when judging is permitted or required? When?

2. How does Jesus describe those who judge in verses 3-5? How do we keep ourselves from being among them? How would you describe or explain the spec and the log analogy? What do we need to do before correcting someone else’s faults?

3. Explain in your own words verse 6. Who or what are “dogs” and “swine”? What is “holy”? How can you tell if someone is in this category? What should we do when we are faced with this dilemma?

4. What do we learn about prayer in verses 7-12. Jesus gives three commands with corresponding promises, what are they and how would you explain each? Verse 12 is commonly referred to as “the Golden Rule”, is it difficult to apply? Why or why not?

5. What is the narrow and the broad gate and how do we “enter through” each? Where does each lead and why do you think there are “few” who find it? What guidance is given concerning false prophets in verses 15-20? How can we identify false prophets and false teaching? Explain in your own words verses 21-23. What do you learn from these verses?

6. Describe the attributes of the “wise man” and the “foolish man”. Why is one man wise and the other foolish? How can we determine if we are building our house on “the rock” or “the sand”?