

EMPTY WORDS AND DEEDS

Matthew 7:21-23

I. INTRODUCTION

II. THE TEXT

KJV—21 *Not everyone 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. 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? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

NASB—21 *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 will enter. 22 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?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.’*

NIV—21 *Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ 23 Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’*

ESV—21 *Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’*

The Message—*Knowing the correct password—saying ‘Master, Master,’ for instance—isn’t going to get you anywhere with me. What is required is serious obedience—doing what my Father wills. I can see it now—at the Final Judgment thousands strutting up to me and saying, ‘Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the demons, our God-sponsored projects had everyone talking.’ And do you know what I am going to say? ‘You missed the boat. All you did was use me to make yourselves important. You don’t impress me one bit. You’re out of here.’*

III. OTHER BIBLICAL PASSAGES

A. PASSAGE QUOTED FROM OLD TESTAMENT

1. Verse 23 quotes part of **Psalm 6:8**
 - **Ps 6:8**—*Away from me, all you who do evil, for the Lord has heard my weeping.*
2. Similar to condemnation found in **Matthew 25:**
 - Against the ‘goats’ on the ‘left’

- **Mt 25:41, 45**—*Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat . . . to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did do it to Me.*

B. PARALLEL PASSAGES

1. **Verse 21**—**Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord, will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.**

Luke 6:46

KJV—*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*

NASB/NIV—*Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?*

ESV—*Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?*

The Message—*Why are you so polite with me, always saying ‘Yes, sir,’ and ‘That’s right, sir,’ but never doing a thing I tell you?*

2. **Verse 23**—**Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me you evildoers.’**

Luke 13:24-27

NASB—[He said to them] **24** *Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. 25* *Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’ But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’ 26* *Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’ 27* *But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evil doers!’”*

IV. CONTEXT AND STRUCTURE

A. CONTEXT

1. Continues explaining importance/consequences of putting Sermon into practice
2. Third of four contrasts—either/or—of eternal consequence
 - Small gate and narrow way—vs—wide gate and broad way
 - False prophets and bad fruit—vs—good fruit
 - **False disciples—vs—true disciples**
 - Wise builders/doers—vs—foolish and idle builders
3. Extension of previous passage
 - a. It is not good enough just to *appear* good
 - o One might look like a sheep—but be a wolf

- o One might look like a good tree—but be a bad one
- b. Proof in the **Product**—**vv 15-20**—requires **productivity**—and its **quality**
- c. Now—Proof of True Discipleship—shifts to **consistency**
 - 1. What one **says**—must match the Father’s will
 - 2. How one **performs**—must match Father’s will

B. STRUCTURE

1. BASIS FOR ENTRY INTO KINGDOM—**v21**—‘either/or’ situation
 - a. **Not** just what one *says* or *knows*—“Lord, Lord”
 - b. **But** what one *does* with that knowledge—the will of the Father
2. ASSUMPTION—*between* **vv21-22**
 - Some ‘disciples’ have been turned away from the Kingdom
 - Now they petition for entry—in **verse 22**
3. PETITION OF REJECTED ONES—[not true disciples]—**v 22**
 - a. Addressing the Petition—“Lord, Lord”
 - b. Content of appeal
 - We **prophesied** in Your name
 - In your name we **exorcised** demons *and*
 - [In your name we] performed many **miracles**
4. REJECTION OF PETITIONERS—**v 23**
 - a. **Dis-acknowledgement** of relationship—I never knew you
 - b. **Judgment**—Away from me
 - c. **Reason** for rejection—You are evildoers

V. EXPLANATION

A. BASIS FOR ENTRY INTO KINGDOM

21 *Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*

1. “**Lord, Lord**”

- a. So far—Matthew had referred to Jesus as ‘Lord’ only once:
 - o **Mt 3:3**—quoted prophecy from **Is 40:3**—about mission of John the Baptist
 - o *The voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight*
- b. **7:21**—introduces four references in **chapter 8**—where people called Jesus ‘Lord’:
 - o **8:2—Leper**—“Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”
 - o **8:6,8—Centurion**—“Lord, my servant lies at home paralyzed . . . Lord I do not deserve to have you come under my roof . . .”
 - o **8:21—A disciple asked**—“Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”
 - o **8:25—Disciples in storm-tossed boat**—“Lord, save us! We’re going to drown.”
- c. Elsewhere in Matthew—Jesus uses of Himself only once
 - o Entering Bethphage—Jesus told two disciples to get the donkey and colt
 - o If questioned by anyone—they were to respond:
 - o **21:3**—“tell them the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

2. MAIN PRINCIPLE

- a. Fine-sounding words are not enough
 - o It is not enough just to **sound** right—just to **say** the right thing
 - o It is not enough just to *affirm* the Lordship of Christ
- b. Instead—we must *do* the Father’s will—put actions to our words
- c. Importance of the Father’s will to Jesus
 - 1. A keystone in Sermon on Mount
 - o Lord’s Prayer—“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done”—**Mt 6:6**
 - 2. Jesus’ purpose for coming to earth
 - o **Jn 4:34**—“My food” said Jesus, “ is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work”

- o **Jn 6:38**—*For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*

3. “My Father in Heaven”

- a. Shows intimate, personal relationship between Father and Son
- b. Here—first time used in Matthew
- c. Repeated five more times in Matthew—each time identified with ‘heavenly home’
 - o **10:32-33**—*Whoever acknowledges Me before men, I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever denies me before men, I will deny before My Father in Heaven.*
 - o **12:50**—*Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.*
 - o **16:17**—*Blessed are you , Simon bar Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven*
 - o **18:10**—*Do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in Heaven.*
 - o **18:19**—*Again, I tell you that if two of you o earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven*

4. SECONDARY PRINCIPLES

- a. It is still necessary to affirm the Lordship of Christ
 - 1. Not an absolutely exclusionary statement—“Nobody who says, Lord, Lord . . .”
 - 2. Rather—*everyone* who will enter heaven *must* affirm Him as Lord
 - 3. But many who simply say it—without evidence of living it—will not enter
- b. Jesus is not advocating works earning a place in heaven
 - 1. Grace is still the basis of salvation
 - 2. He emphasizes commitment and follow through—vs—mere ‘profession’ of faith
 - 3. Jesus condemned those who just ‘professed’—who played games with the Law

Mk 7:6-7—*Isaiah [29:13] was right when he said of you hypocrites, ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; they worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught my men . . .’*

B. PETITION OF REJECTED ONES

22 *Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’*

1. “**That day**”

- Judgment day—eschatological emphasis
- Accountability required of everyone
- Jesus will be the judge
- **II Cor 5:10**—*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

2. PRINCIPLE

- a. It is not enough just to *claim* do mighty and powerful things in Christ’s name
- b. Legitimate works are done
 - o Not just ‘in His name’—but with His genuine authority
 - o Not for our own motives—but to accomplish God’s will

3. HOW THE PETITIONERS’ CLAIM FAILED

- a. The three works they claimed to do—were typically signs of a being prophet
 - Prophesied
 - Cast out demons
 - Performed many miracles
- b. These *were* signs of being genuine disciples
 1. Jesus sent them with His authority—implied “in His name”

Mt 10:1—*Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness*
 2. True disciples did these three things
 - o **Mt 10:8**—[miracles of] healing, raising the dead, cleansing of leprosy
 - o **Mt 10:8**—cast out demons
 - o **Mt 10:40-41**—were to be received as prophets [like Jesus]
- c. But Scripture warns against false deeds

1. Jesus warned of those coming falsely in ‘His name’

Mk 13:5-6—*Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, “I am he” and will deceive many.*

2. Jesus warned of those performing false miracles

Mk 13: 22—*For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect if that were possible.*

3. Paul warned the church

II Thess 2:9-10—*The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in very sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing.*

- d. Done **‘in your name’**

1. This phrase does not have a preposition (“in”)

2. So—it can be read **“with you name”**

- Like using the name of Christ as a tool
- Like wielding Christ’s name as a weapon
- Not doing these things *for* Christ—but using *Christ* for selfish purposes

C. REJECTION OF PETITIONERS

23 *Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’*

1. BASIS OF JUDGMENT—JESUS KNOWING HIS OWN

- a. Jesus is the Good Shepherd—who **knows** His sheep

Jn 10:14-15—*I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

- b. Jesus will separate His ‘sheep’ from the ‘goats’—**Matthew 25**

1. To the **sheep** He will say

Mt 25:34—*Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared or you since the creation of the world.*

2. To the **goats** He will say

Mt 25:41, 46—*Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.*

2. TWO DESCRIPTIONS OF FALSE DISCIPLES

a. Matthew's account

1. Description = **you evil-doers** = **οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν**
2. Meaning
 - a. Literally
 - o Ones who are working against the law
 - o Workers of lawlessness or wickedness
 - o Present participle—is habitual (not occasional)—personal—activity
 - b. **lawbreakers**—who have not kept the law and the prophets
3. Referring back to **7:12**—not keeping the ‘Golden Rule’—and second great commandment
4. Matthew's use of ‘lawlessness’
 - **13:41**—Son of Man's angels will gather those doing **lawlessness** from his kingdom
 - **23:28**—scribes and Pharisees are said to be full of **lawlessness**
 - **24:12**—increase of **lawlessness** will lead to the love of many growing cold
 1. End times—when false prophets will deceive many—**v 11**
 2. People will hate and betray each other—**v10**
 3. **Mark 13:12-13**—says brother will betray brother, and a father his child; children will rebel and have their parents put to death; all men will hate you because of me
 4. Similar to the coming of the ‘lawless one’—in **II Thess 2:9** (above)

b. Luke's account

1. **Luke 13:27**—adds—**“I don't know where you are from”**
 - a. Place of origin identified people with families—and their relationships
 - b. So—Luke puts even more emphasis on **relationship**
2. Luke uses different term for **“evildoers”**
 - a. Different than Matthew's usage— **οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν**—**against the law**
 - b. Luke's phrase = **οἱ ἐργάται τῆς ἀδικίας**

- o Meaning—“**the workers of the unrighteousness**”
3. Again even more emphasis on relationship [than Matthew]
 - a. Matthew’s focus is on breaking the law—**ανομία**
 - b. Luke’s focus is on breaking the relationship with God—unrighteousness—**αδικία**
 4. More direct link back to **Mt 5:20**
 - o *Unless your **righteousness** exceeds that of scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven*

c. LXX Version

1. Quoted from—**Ps 6:8**—*Away from me, all you who do evil*
2. LXX—mirrors Matthew—“ones working lawlessness”-- **οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν**

3. THE PUNISHMENT

a. “Away from me”

1. Quoted from—**Ps 6:8**—*Away from me, all you who do evil*
2. “Away” = **αποχωρῶ**
 - [Literally]—away from this land—coast—region—country—field
 - Go far away—out of this geographical region
3. **Luke 13:27**—is closer to **Ps 6:8** at this point
 - Luke uses **ἀφίστημι** = stand away from—depart
 - Mirrors LXX—which uses same verb

b. The Consequences

1. Those expecting to be in Kingdom are cast out—and shocked—at the turning of the tables
2. Seen in extension of parallel passage—**Luke 13**

Lk 13:28-30—*In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out. And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last.*

3. Matthew later says this in **Matthew 8**

Mt 8:11-12—*I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*