

Empty Words

Scripture: Matthew 7:21–23

Code: 2255

INTRODUCTION

A. Entrance into Heaven Through Christ's Righteousness

1. The Conditions Stipulated

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7, the Lord explains the divine standards of His Kingdom. As the anointed Messiah, He has certain principles that He demands of those who want to enter His Kingdom. Those principles are the thrust of the sermon, but they can all be summed up in one word: righteousness. Therefore, the whole sermon is summed up in Matthew 5:20: "... I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." The Kingdom of heaven is God's dominion. Entrance into that Kingdom is dependent upon righteousness. How righteous do you need to be? Jesus said in Matthew 5:20 that you need to be more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees. How righteous were they? They were as righteous as a man could get on his own terms. The scribes and Pharisees reached the epitome of human achievement in religion. They were obsessed with religious functions. The people around them thought they were exceedingly righteous. The scribes and Pharisees prayed, gave alms, and fasted. Their standards did not allow for murder or adultery. They maintained every minute element of the law. From man's perspective, they were very righteous, but Christ demands a righteousness that exceeded theirs. In fact, our Lord requires a righteousness that is beyond man's capacity to attain. It can only come from God.

2. The Choices Stated

That leaves men with two options: Either they invent their own religion, or they live God's way. They must decide whether to try to get to heaven on their own terms, or to come on God's terms. The Sermon on the Mount climaxes at Matthew 7:13-14 when Jesus presents the two options: "Enter in at the narrow gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in that way; because narrow is the gate, and hard is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Christ said that the broad gate leads to the broad way and destruction. It is the way of easy religion and human righteousness. The scribes, Pharisees, and other people who think they are good enough to get to heaven travel that road. On the other hand, the narrow gate that precedes the narrow way leads to life. That is where the people with broken hearts and contrite spirits go. They know they can't keep God's standards and be perfect like Him. They cast themselves on the mercy of Christ, who gives them His own righteousness.

3. The Complications Specified

In the Lord's great invitation to enter the narrow gate, He showed that it is difficult to go through. Don't believe anyone who says that it is easy to become a Christian. It cost God everything including His own Son and it will cost you everything including yourself. Those who offer cheap grace do people no favor; they delude them. It is difficult to come to God on His terms. You must recognize your inability to be righteous, which means getting rid of your pride. That's difficult to do, because people say that self is more important than anything else.

Let's look at the reasons it is difficult to enter the narrow gate:

a. **You Must Find It** The Lord said in Matthew 7:14, "... few there be that find it." The word "find" is important: it tells us that we have to search for the narrow gate. It requires effort. Jeremiah 29:13

says, "... ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." No one stumbles into the Kingdom of God inadvertently. You have to search for it. b. You Must Leave the Crowd Many people are going the broad way. Few people go the narrow way. James said, "... Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (4:4). John said, "... If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 Jn. 2:15). You have to leave the world's system to enter the narrow gate. That's difficult, because the crowd is going the other way. You have to enter alone. You can't come through with a group or a family. c. You Must Enter Unencumbered To enter the narrow gate, you must be stripped of self, sin, and self-righteousness. The narrow way is constricted. Christianity is a narrow life, and you must count the cost. d. You Must Enter Repentantly You must agonize to enter the narrow gate. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus said, "Strive to enter in at the narrow gate ..." (13:24). In other words, there must be penitence, confession, and a searching of one's soul. e. You Must Beware of False Prophets In Matthew 7:15-20, Jesus said that false prophets add to the difficulty of entering the narrow gate. They stand at the crossroads, trying to push people onto the broad road. They try to divert people for Satan's purposes. False prophets tell people that they can go to heaven with all their sin and selfishness, and only pay a small price. So, the Lord offered men an invitation. He said that the right decision is to enter the narrow gate, but it won't be easy. He said, "... few there be that find it" (Mt. 7:14).

B. Exclusion from Heaven by Self-Deception

There is one other reason that only a few will walk the narrow way to life. Not only do false prophets deceive people, but people also deceive themselves. Self-deception keeps people from entering the narrow gate. J. C. Ryle, a nineteenth-century English pastor, wrote, "The Lord Jesus winds up the Sermon on the Mount by a passage of heart-piercing application. He turns from false prophets to false professors, from unsound teachers to unsound hearers" (Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: St. Matthew [Ipswich: William Hunt, 1856]). Bible commentator R. V. G. Tasker said, "It is not only false teachers who make the narrow way difficult to find and still harder to tread. A man may also be grievously self-deceived" (The Gospel According to St. Matthew [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1977]). After Jesus presented the principles for entering the Kingdom and warned about false prophets, it is fitting that He should end the sermon by saying, "Let Me warn you about one more thing: Don't deceive yourself. Are you really a true member of the Kingdom of heaven?"

1. The Categories of Self-Deception

The Lord warns us about two categories of self-deception: mere verbal profession, and mere intellectual knowledge. Matthew 7:21-23 discusses verbal profession: "Not everyone that saith ..." (v. 21), and "Many will say to Me ..." (v. 22). Jesus refers there to people who say they are Christians. Verses 24-27 discuss those who have only an intellectual knowledge: "Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings ..." (v. 24), and "... every one that heareth these sayings of Mine ..." (v. 26). So, in verses 21-23 we see people who say they are Christians but don't do the Father's will, and in verses 24-27 there are people who hear God's commands but don't do them. All of those people are deceived. I call them people with empty words and empty hearts. John Stott said that mere verbal profession and intellectual knowledge are "a camouflage for disobedience." There is a key word at the end of verse 21: "Not every one ... shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that **doeth** the will of My Father, who is in heaven." Those who say they are Christians or hear what God says won't necessarily go to heaven. It is those who live a righteous life in Christ that will make it. The word "doeth" in verse 21 is a very strong word. The closing sections of the sermon (vv. 21-23, 24-27) contrast a right response to a wrong response to Christ's invitation. They show that our eternal destiny is determined by the choice we make. The next to the last section deals with what you say as opposed to what you do. The last section deals with what you hear as opposed to what you do. Keep in mind that the Lord was not speaking to irreligious people. He was speaking to people who were obsessed with religious activity. They weren't apostates, heretics, or atheists. They weren't anti-God.

The people Christ spoke to were religious, but they were damned because they were self-deluded and on the wrong road. Their delusion could have been caused by a false prophet, or they may have deluded themselves. Using Paul's words, they were people that had "a form of godliness, but [were] denying the power of it ..." (2 Tim. 3:5).

2. The Caution About Self-Deception

a. Emphasized I believe that we need to warn about self-delusion today, because the church of Jesus Christ is full of people who aren't Christians and don't know it. When I hear that two billion people in the world are Christians and two billion are not, I wonder what criteria are being used to determine who is a Christian. The Gallup Poll once said that 52 percent of Americans profess to be born-again believers, but the Scripture says there will be few that believe. Some of the people who were polled may have deluded themselves into thinking they were really born again just because they said they were. Jesus says that many will think they are Christians when they aren't. That is the ultimate delusion. You could be deluded about many things, but to be deceived that you are a Christian when you aren't affects your eternal destiny. Christ says that you had better check yourself carefully. I'm sure there are people at Grace Community Church who are devoid of the righteousness of God through Christ. There are many deceived people in the church who think that everything is well. For them, judgment is going to be a big surprise. There is no better way to remove people's self-delusion than by teaching what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. I think that some of the deceived people in Matthew 7:21-27 are false prophets. Some of them know that they are phony, but others are probably self-deceived. However, those verses are also talking about many people who are self-deluded about whether or not they are really redeemed. The Bible is filled with warnings to people who are deceived. The reason there are so many warnings is because so many people are deceived: "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord ... ? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you ..." (vv. 22, 23). It's not just a few people who will be deceived.

b. Exemplified Let's look at a warning that is similar to the warning in Matthew 7. In Matthew 25, we read, "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom [The virgins are symbolic of people attached to Christianity, and the bridegroom represents Christ.]. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them [i.e., they had a form of godliness but weren't really saved]; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not" (vv. 1-12). There is coming a day when people will expect the door to heaven to be open, but it will be shut forever in their faces. Jesus will say, "I don't know you." What a fearful thing! Many people think they are saved, but will be shocked at judgment time.

3. The Causes of Self-Deception

What causes people to become deceived into thinking they are saved? There are several ways that can happen. First, some people are deceived by ...

a. A False Doctrine of Assurance Sometimes people are told that if they say a special prayer and sign a card, they will be saved. They are told not to question their salvation. That happens often; it gives people false assurance. However, when you lead a person to Christ, you should never say, "I know you are saved; don't ever let anyone cause you to doubt that." Some people say, "If you ask Jesus into your life a second time, you are denying the permanence of the salvation God gave you. You are questioning God's integrity." That's not true. If you feel in your heart that you want to invite Jesus Christ to become the Lord and Savior of your life again, go ahead. Don't let someone else's false assurance take the place of conviction by the

Spirit of God.1) The Inadequacy of Human Assurance Frequently, people are told that because they said the right prayer and signed a card, they don't have to worry about whether or not they are saved. They are fooled into thinking they are saved when in reality, the Spirit of God never was involved and their lives never changed. Don't tell a person, "I know you are saved because you did the right thing. Don't ever doubt your salvation." There is no way you can know if a person really came to know Christ. Don't risk giving him psychological assurance.2) The Importance of Divine Assurance In the parable of the sower, when the seed of God's Word was cast on four kinds of soil, only one kind of soil manifested the fruit of true salvation (Mt. 13:18). Don't certify other people's salvation, or you might give them false assurance. Let God assure them through His Spirit. He witnesses with their spirits that they are the children of God (Rom. 8:16), whereby they'll cry, "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). God will give them assurance when they "add to [their] faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, selfcontrol; and to self control, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love" (2 Pet. 1:57). When people manifest those things, then their election will be sure (2 Pet. 1:10) they will know they have been forgiven of their sin. Let God give people assurance of their salvation not human certification. Many people believe they are saved because they were told that they were. You can deceive yourself by ...b. A Failure to Examine Yourself Some people are deceived because they never examine their lives. They think about God's grace and forgiveness so much that they never bother to face their sin. That can happen when people tell them, "You don't have to confess your sin; it's already been forgiven. Just keep living your life." That causes people to border on what is called antinomianism an attitude that disregards the law of God. That's not right. Why do you think the Lord asks us to celebrate Communion repeatedly (1 Cor. 11:26)? In order that we may examine our lives. Second Corinthians 13:5 says, "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith" If you don't do that, then you are in danger of selfdeception. You need to look at your sin and examine your motives. If you are genuinely saved, God will confirm that by His Spirit witnessing with your spirit (Rom. 8:16). If that confirmation isn't there, don't think that you are saved simply because someone told you so. The third thing that causes people to be under the delusion that they are saved is ...c. A Fixation on Religious Activity Some people think they are saved because they go to church, hear sermons, sing songs, read the Bible, and go to a Bible study or class. They are completely involved in religious activity. But that's a great illusion. There are many people like that in the church who are not saved. They are tares among the wheat (Mt. 13:24-30). The fourth thing that lulls people into thinking they are saved is ...d. A Fair Exchange Approach This form of selfdelusion occurs when a person sees something wrong in his life and doesn't do anything about it. Rather, he finds something right in his life, and makes an "exchange." Such a person will say, "I can't be that bad. Look at the good deed I recently did. That means I'm okay." That kind of person always trades off the bad and good deeds in his life. He never evaluates himself honestly to see if he is really a believer. He says, "I know I sinned, but I just did a good deed that will compensate for it." He whitewashes himself, never dealing with his sin. You can deceive yourself by a false assurance, a failure to examine yourself, a fixation on religious activity, or a fair exchange approach. It's amazing to me how many people are deceived. For example, I can't believe how many times I've encountered homosexuals who say to me, "We're Christians. We believe in Jesus." But the bottom line is this: Do you live in total obedience to the Word of God? Do you sense conviction when you disobey it, and confess your sin to God? If you don't experience remorse over your sinfulness, it's fair to question whether you are even a Christian.

Deceived People: The Superficial and the Involved There are two categories of deceived people in the church. These categories do not include hypocrites who know they are phony and try to appear religious. The first group of deceived people are the superficial, and the second group are the involved. The superficial people call themselves Christians because when they were little, they went to church or Sunday school. Perhaps they got confirmed or "made a decision to accept Christ." Sometimes you hear people say at baptisms, "I received Christ when I was twelve years old, but my

life was a mess after that. I want to go back to Christ." People who say that probably never received Christ when they were young. Some of them may think they are Christians because they still go to church on Christmas and Easter, and go to weddings and funerals. The involved people are a much more subtle and serious group. They are very involved in church and know the gospel, but they don't obey the Bible. Their lives are in a constant state of sinfulness.

4. The Characteristics of Self-Deception

How can a person know if he is deceiving himself? How can we spot a self-deceived person? Let me give you a list of things to look for. However, just because a person fits the description of one item on the list doesn't necessarily mean he is deceived. However, the things mentioned here are good indicators to go by.

- a. Is the person seeking feelings, blessings, experiences, healings, and miracles? This person is probably more interested in the byproducts of the faith than the faith itself. He seeks what he can get, not what he can glorify God for. He is more interested in pampering himself than in exalting Christ.
- b. Is the person more committed to a denomination, church, or organization than he is to the Word of God? That person's Christianity may be purely social. He's the kind who says, "I've been a Lutheran all my life," or "I'm a Presbyterian," or "I belong to that church." He's more committed to the organization than the Word of God.
- c. Is the person involved in theology merely out of academic interest? You'll find this kind of person in colleges and seminaries. He studies theology, and writes books about it. Theology for him is an intellectual activity. His life is void of the righteousness of Christ.
- d. Does the person seem stuck over one particular point of theology? This is the person who bangs the proverbial drum for his favorite topic. Sometimes the area he emphasizes isn't that profound. He thinks he is close to God and has great divine insight that no one else has. All of his activity is devoted to seeking attention to feed his ego. Watch out for a person that has a lack of balance in his theology.
- e. Is the person overindulgent in the name of grace? A person who lacks penitence and a contrite heart is self-deceived. All of those people are self-deceived. They think they are going to heaven, but they are on the broad road to destruction.

In Matthew 7:21-27, our Lord warns those who are deceived. He speaks to those who think they are on the right road when they aren't. Verses 21-23 deal with The Folly of Empty Words, and verses 24-27 deal with The Folly of Empty Hearts. Let's look first at ...

I. THE FOLLY OF EMPTY WORDS (vv. 21-23)

Notice what is said in verses 21-22: "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, who 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 demons? And in Thy name done many wonderful works?" The claims are amazing and beautiful. But those people didn't do those things.

Dr. Elton Trueblood, a Protestant philosopher of religion, said, "Our main mission field today, as far as America is concerned, is within the church membership itself." Theologian Karl Barth, who wasn't evangelical but said some true things, said, "The true function of the church consists first of all in its own regeneration." The church is full of people who say empty words. They say they are Christians, but don't do God's will. Romans 10:9 says, "... 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." Confession is necessary, but confession without obedience is a sham.

A. The Conversation

1. The Remarks of the Self-Deceived

a. "... Lord, Lord ..." The phrase "Lord, Lord" appears in verses 21 and 22. (The virgins in Matthew 25:11-12 used the same phrase in verse 11.) That's an interesting phrase. The first time it is said, it's probably used as a term of respect or recognition. It means "Master, Teacher, or Sir." In a sense, the

people are saying, "We respect You." The second time "Lord, Lord" is said may emphasize the orthodoxy of their claim. The word Lord (Gk. kurios) is used for the name Jehovah in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament). There, the people are saying, "We know You are God. We accept all that Your deity involves: Your virgin birth, miraculous life, substitutionary death, powerful resurrection, intercession, and Second Coming." The people use the right terms and appear to have the right attitudes. The fact that the people use the phrase "Lord, Lord" twice indicates their fervency. If the judgment spoken of here in Matthew 7 refers to the Great White Throne Judgment, then those people will have already spent centuries in a place of punishment. That will add to their fervency. They will say, "Lord, why are we being punished?" They will address Christ with intensity and respect. b. **"... In Thy Name ..."** In verse 22, the phrase in Thy name" is said three times. In other words, people will say to Jesus, "We preached for You. We cast out demons and did miracles for You. We did everything for You!" They will make amazing, orthodox claims. They will sound like Christians who were fervent in their private devotion and public ministry. There will be people who will truly be able to make that claim to Christ. The Lord will say, "You respected Me. You were fervent. You preached and worked for Me. Come into the Kingdom" (Mt. 25:34-36). But not everyone who says that he did the will of the Father will enter heaven.

2. The Response from the Lord

a. The Confession To those who did not do God's will, Jesus will say, "I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity" (v. 23). What a shock! That was quoted from Psalm 6:8. Christ will say, "I want to confess to you that I never knew you." That's what was said to the virgins banging on the door in Matthew 25:11-12. You say, "You mean God won't know who those people are?" No, God knows everything. We're not talking about an awareness of who someone is. In the Bible, the word know is often used to speak of an intimate relationship. For example, in Amos 3:2 God said to Israel, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth" He didn't mean that the Jewish people were the only people He knew; He was saying that He had an intimate relationship with them. In John 10, Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them." The best example would be in Genesis 4:17: "And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived" The term "Cain knew his wife" doesn't mean he knew who she was or what her name was. It refers to his knowing her in the absolute, intimate act of marriage. When Mary became pregnant with the Lord by the Spirit of God, Joseph was shocked because he had never known her (Mt. 1:25). The word know embodies an intimate relationship. So, Jesus is saying in Matthew 7:23, "I never had an intimate relationship with you. Depart from Me." b. The Condemnation You say, "Why does He ask them to depart from Him?" According to the end of verse 23, they were those "that work iniquity." In other words, instead of doing the will of the Father, those people continually acted lawlessly. It isn't what you say that gets you into the Kingdom; it's what you do. A profession of Christ is worthless if it isn't backed up by your life. In a sense, Peter said that if you can't add virtue to your faith, then you aren't really redeemed (2 Pet. 1:5-10). James said, "... faith, if it hath not works, is dead ..." (2:17). Profession is valueless. In fact, I believe that to make an invalid profession of Christ is to take the Lord's name in vain. Using the Lord's name as street language is bad, but the epitome of violating God's name is to claim Christ when He isn't yours. Commentator G. Campbell Morgan said, "The blasphemy of the sanctuary is more awful than the blasphemy of the slum" (The Gospel According to Matthew [Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1927]). To say, "Lord, Lord" and then disobey Him is like giving Him a Judas kiss. c. The Condition We must be consumed with doing the will of God. That's why the Disciples' Prayer says, "... Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Mt. 6:10). We are responsible to let God's will be done through us. You say, "What if I fail?" The prayer goes on to say, "... forgive us our debts [trespasses], as we forgive our debtors" (v. 12). We know we are going to fail, and that's when we come to God for forgiveness. The righteous standard Jesus spoke of assumes that we will fail. But when we fail, we will confess it. First John 1:9 indicates that if we continually confess our sins, we give evidence that we are being forgiven. Only people who confess their sins are forgiven. When

Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount, He wasn't saying, "Here's the perfect standard. If you fail, you are out." He was saying, "Here's the perfect standard. When you fail, you deal with it." That's God's standard. If the Sermon on the Mount is not the direction of your life, you are not a Christian. It doesn't matter if you say that you made some kind of confession or got baptized. In John 6:28, some people asked Jesus, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" He answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (v. 29). Where do you start with the will of God? By believing in Christ. God wants all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:34). The only thing acceptable to God is a righteousness that is the product of repentant faith in Jesus Christ. That produces good works. If that is not in your life, then you are not a Christian.

So, we can paraphrase the Lord's words in Matthew 7:23 to say, "I have never acknowledged you as My own or known you intimately. You are forever expelled from My presence because you continue to act lawlessly."

B. The Claims

Jesus' words are shocking because of the amazing claims made by the people He condemns. In verse 22, they say, "... Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And in Thy name have cast out demons? And in Thy name done many wonderful works?" Those claims are made in the Charismatic movement today. Now, there will be some people who will be able to make those claims legitimately. There have been true prophets. People have cast out demons in the name of Christ, and have been empowered by God to do marvelous things. But there will be many who will make those claims untruthfully. Their claims will not get them into heaven.

Some people say, "Did the people that will make those claims really preach, cast out demons, or do mighty works?" There are three possible alternatives: One, it's possible that they did by God's power. Two, they may have done those things by Satan's power. Three, they may have faked what they did.

1. Enablement by God

You say, "Even if those people were unbelievers, could they have done those things?" Yes. Did you know that God sometimes works through unbelievers? For example, Numbers 23:5 says, "... the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth" Peter said that "Balaam ... loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Pet. 2:15). He was an evil prophet for hire, but God used his mouth. God worked through unregenerate people at the crucifixion of Christ. First Samuel 10:10 says of Saul, the apostate king of Israel, "... the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied" In John 11:51-52, the Lord put a prophecy in the mouth Caiaphas, a vile high priest. He prophesied that Christ would die for all men. So, it's possible that some of the self-deluded people in Matthew 7:22 were actually used by God.

2. Empowerment by Satan

It is also possible that self-deluded people did their preaching, exorcism, and wonderful works under the power of Satan. The devil can express his power. Do you remember what he did to Job? He brought death, destruction, and disease. God allowed the witch of Endor to conjure an evil spirit impersonating Samuel (1 Sam. 28:7-12). According to Acts 19:13-14, the sons of Sceva cast out demons. Jesus even acknowledged that some Jewish people had probably cast out demons when He said, "... if I, by Beelzebub, cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? ..." (Mt. 12:27). It's possible that some righteous Jewish people had cast out demons by the power of God, and some unrighteous Jewish people had done that through the power of Satan. You say, "Why would Satan cast out himself?" He is confused; his whole system is a mess. Deuteronomy 13 talks about false prophets that would prophesy signs and wonders that would happen. Those signs and wonders were probably energized by Satan. Matthew 24:24 says that false Christs and prophets will do signs and wonders, and 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10 says that the Antichrist will do them. Satan can do amazing things. Some self-deceived people do their works by the ...

3. Employment of Tricks

Some of what appears to be wonderful works is just fakery. In Exodus 7 and 8, the magicians of Egypt who tried to copy Moses' miracles were doing tricks. The point is, the self-deluded people in Matthew 7:22 are going to say, "We preached, cast out demons, and did mighty works." Some of them may have been used by God to do what they did. (If God used Balaam's ass, He can use anything [Num. 22:21-31]!) They may have done their works by the devil's power, which masquerades as God's power. Or, they may have simply used fake magic, like most healers do today. It doesn't matter how they did it; what matters is that they were deceived. There are many people today who are preaching, casting out devils, and doing healings. They think God is working through them. Other people who see them think the same thing. However, their work is either energized by Satan or done by trickery. No matter what claims self-deceived people make, Jesus will say, "You are not qualified to be in My Kingdom." Those people never came through the narrow gate. How shocking! Making a mere verbal profession is not enough.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What kind of righteousness does the Lord expect from those who want to enter heaven? Can men attain that righteousness? Explain.
2. What two options does man have for trying to get to heaven?
3. Explain why it is so difficult to enter the narrow gate.
4. Not only do _____ deceive people, but _____ also deceive _____.
5. Name the two categories of self-deception. Explain what kind of people those categories speak of.
6. What do the closing sections of the Sermon on the Mount speak of? Be specific.
7. What kind of people is the Lord speaking to in Matthew 7:21-27?
8. What is the ultimate delusion? What is the best way to remove a person's self-delusion?
9. What is wrong with telling someone that he is saved? How should a person receive assurance that he is saved?
10. Why does the Lord ask us to celebrate Communion repeatedly? What might happen to you if you don't do that?
11. Explain the third thing that causes people to be under the delusion that they are saved.
12. What is the fair exchange approach?
13. What is the bottom line in determining whether or not you are a Christian?
14. What reasons do superficial deceived people give for calling themselves Christians? What are involved deceived people like?
15. What did Dr. Elton Trueblood say was our main mission field today? What is the first true function of the church, according to Karl Barth?
16. What might the phrase "Lord, Lord" emphasize the first time it is said? What might it emphasize the second time? What does the fact that "Lord, Lord" is said twice indicate? (Mt. 7:21-22)
17. In Matthew 7:23, Jesus says, "I never knew you" Does that mean He was never aware of them? Explain.
18. Why will Jesus ask the people in Matthew 7:21-23 to depart from Him?
19. What makes a profession of Christ worthless? What do you do when you make an invalid profession of Christ?
20. What are we to be consumed with? What are we to do if we fail in doing that? What do we give evidence of if we respond properly when we fail?
21. What is the only kind of righteousness that is acceptable to God?
22. The people in Matthew 7:22 make some amazing claims. Specify those claims. What are three possible alternatives that explain how those self-deceived people did what they did?
23. Give some examples of how God has worked through unbelievers. Support your answers with Scripture.

24. Can Satan help people do miraculous things? Explain, using Scripture to support your answer.
25. Why will Jesus tell the self-deceived people in Matthew 7:22, "You are not qualified to be in My Kingdom"?

Pondering the Principles

1. Read Paul's words in Philippians 3:49. In verse 4, Paul said that if a man could get to heaven by his own righteousness, he was well qualified. Before Paul became saved, what did he think gave him the right to go to heaven (vv. 56)? How did Paul feel about those things after he became saved (vv. 89)? What was Paul's desire, according to verse 9? What attitude do you have about your works of righteousness? Are you guilty of using the fair exchange approach mentioned on pages xxxx? Do you think your righteous deeds earn you God's blessing? Examine yourself, and make sure that you have the right perspective about the righteous works in your life. True righteousness is a product of repentant faith in Jesus Christ. Give God the credit for what He produces in your life.

2. Read James 2:14-17. What point do verses 14 and 17 make? Read the example James gives in verses 15-16 to support his statement in verse 14. Have you ever noticed a Christian brother or sister in need, and not provided help? Why? Do the things you do truly manifest a saving faith in Christ? If you are a Christian, ask God to give you opportunities to back up your professed faith in Christ with good works.

3. Read the list of characteristics found in self-deceived people. Remember that just because one trait is present in a person, it doesn't necessarily mean that he is self-deceived. However, it could be an indication of self-deception. Taking each item on the list, answer the following question: If you met a person with that trait, what would you say to help correct him? Going over that list again, do you find any of those traits in you? Make sure that in your Christian walk you don't stress feelings and miracles, advocate denominationalism, let yourself be obsessed with academics or a favorite theological topic, or indulge in God's grace without penitence.

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