

# *Who Do You Say That I Am?*

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository  
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

61- The Kingdom of Heaven and Its Citizens- Part 41  
Jesus Warns about False Teachers- Part 4

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Church July 16, 2023

## **Matthew 7:15-23**

**15 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.**

**16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?**

**17 "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.**

**18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.**

**19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.**

**20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits.**

**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.'**

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;  
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Now as far as I am concerned- Verses 21-23 are three of the most frightening verses in the entire Bible. These verses say that we can be so deceived about ourselves and our Relationship with Jesus that we can die genuinely believing that Jesus is pleased with our Efforts and yet, when we stand before the Lord- we will hear these frightening words:

**... I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE**

## LAWLESSNESS.'

... as we are cast headlong into the Flames of eternal Damnation.

So, I want to examine this part of the Passage about false Prophets very closely over the next two Lord's Days because of two Issues that we need to keep in mind:

1. Deception about Salvation is common
2. Christianity is the ONLY religion that offers the "*Assurance of Salvation*"

... so, let's examine both of these closely.

### 1. Deception about Salvation is Common

The modern Church, *especially* here in America- is divided into two major Categories:

- A. Those who believe and teach that Salvation is Eternal
- B. Those who believe and teach that Salvation can be lost and forfeited

... while some even teach that a person can go so far into Sin (after he is supposedly saved) that he can't ever be saved again!

But even though those are the two "Camps" that people migrate into these Days- I suggest to you that the frightening words that Jesus spoke here causes us to expand our minds to understand that, ultimately, these words of Jesus have to do with a profound MISUNDERSTANDING about what it means to be saved; and why we all can have the rock-solid Assurance that we are truly saved.

But, first of all- we have to realize that it is human Nature to believe and teach that we have to "*do something*" in order to become *attractive* to God; or to *gain* God's Favor; or to *earn* Salvation. And that is why so many people and so many religious Groups believe and teach that. And that is also why we are told over and over again, in the Scriptures to,

**Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? (2Corinthians 13:5)**

... and it is why the entire Epistle of **1John** is in the Bible.

Because believing that lost sinners have to "*do Something*" to gain God's Favor; or to become attractive to God so He will heal us or bless us; or to earn Salvation-

is called, a “*Works-based religious System*”<sup>1</sup>. And even though most of the people who live on this Road- are very, very Sincere- a “*Works-based religious System*” is the very *antithesis* of what the Bible teaches. Because it fights against the Grace and Mercy of God- that is distributed to unworthy rebels at God’s Discretion- alone- without any Consideration at all- as to what we may have done (or NOT done).

So, *whatever* Subject we are talking about like physical Healing; or material Blessings; or even Salvation itself; people, who are deceived- teach that these things are achieved by and through our own Works. And what deceives people the most- is that those Works are almost always good, noble, and *religious* Works- that almost everybody admires.

Yet this false “*System*” fights *against* God! It is at war with God as to WHY He saves and forgives and heals and blesses! And it robs God of the Glory that ONLY He is entitled to. And yet every single Religion throughout History teaches a variation of this “*Works-based System*”- except one: “Biblical Christianity”. And Christianity teaches that EVERYTHING we receive from God- *including* physical Healing; material and financial Blessings; as well as Salvation- comes to the unworthy Sinner- by the sovereign Grace and Mercy of God- that is distributed *unequally* to us- based on God’s Own, holy, Prerogative. And all of those things are *appropriated* to each individual person- by the Agency of Faith- alone.

So, we need to see a “*Works-based religious System*” as being opposed to a “*Grace and Faith-based religious System*”. for example, in the case of physical Healing- those people teach that we have to “*do*” several things in order to “*earn*”; or in order to be “*qualified*” for that Healing. So, for example, some Groups teach that to be *physically* healed- we have to:

- Believe that Healing is available
- Trust that Healing is for us- right now!
- Ask God for that Healing
- Don’t do anything to “get in the Way” and *disqualify* yourself from receiving the Healing

Now in order to “get out of the Way” so that physical Healing can “flow into us”- *some* Groups *require* that the individual, who wants the Healing, MUST NOT “confess” or “speak” anything “*contrary*” to that Healing<sup>2</sup>- because they teach, our words *literally* do two things:

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<sup>1</sup> It is called a “*System*” because it contains many Tenets, Rules, and Regulations as to how it operates that has to do with every Area of a human being’s Life.

<sup>2</sup> In some quarters, this is called, “*Speaking the Creative Word*” and is based on a faulty understanding of several verses- most notably, **Proverbs 18:21** and **Romans 10:8**.

1. Create Reality
2. Allow “Faith” to become “Substance”

... which is Blasphemy!

Yet there is little or no thought of what God’s Will might be for that person at that time. It is simply *assumed* that God ALWAYS desires to physically heal EVERYONE who is sick- all the Time. And, of course, in order to explain WHY the overwhelming majority of sick people are NOT healed (because they aren’t)- the Leaders of this false Teaching say it is almost always due to a “Lack of Faith” on the part of the individual.

Now even though this “*Works- based Healing Teaching*” is taught and practiced by many Pentecostal; Charismatic; Full-Gospel; and Non-Denominational Groups all around the Mississippi Gulf Coast- they didn’t invent it. This false Teaching was developed by a single man, E.W. Kenyon (1867-1948), whose writings about “*Positive Confession*” and the “*New Thought Controversy*”- influenced Kenneth E. Hagin (1917-2003)- the so-called, “Father” of the modern “*Word of Faith Movement*”.

But E.W. Kenyon was greatly influenced himself with the *unbiblical* but *foundational* Teaching about physical Healing from the “*Christian Science Cult*”<sup>3</sup>- which is neither “*Christian*” nor “*Science*”.

Now in addition to this wayward Teaching- there is also a “*Works- based Blessing Teaching*” which is about “*what we can do for ourselves*” to get ourselves in a Position for God to *financially* and *materially* bless us<sup>4</sup>.

But the *worst* of the *worst* “*Works-based Teachings*” has to do with Salvation itself. And it is with great Sadness that I inform you that the *unbiblical* Concept that spiritually dead people have to “*do something*” in order to experience the Miracle of the New Birth- has actually become the *dominant* Teaching in the American Church as to how God saves lost Sinners.

Now generally speaking, the Roman religious “System” as well as those Groups that came out from Rome (i.e. Methodists, Pentecostals, etc.)- believe and

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<sup>3</sup> “*Christian Science*” was the Deception created by Mary Baker, Glover, Patterson, Eddy (1821-1910) and was based on her writings in “*Science and Health with Keys to the Scriptures*” published in 1875. Several periods of Protestant Christian revival nurtured a proliferation of new religious Movements in the United States. In the latter half of the 19th Century these included what came to be known as the “*Metaphysical Family*”: Groups such as “*Christian Science*”, “*Divine Science*”, the “*Unity School of Christianity*”, and (later) the “*United Church of Religious Science*”. From the 1890s the liberal section of the Movement became known as “*New Thought*”, in part to distinguish it from the more authoritarian “*Christian Science*”. The term, “*Metaphysical*” referred to the Movement’s philosophical Idealism, a Belief in the “Primacy of the Mental World”. Adherents believed that “Material Phenomena” were the result of “Mental States”, a view expressed as “*Life is Consciousness*” and “*God is Mind*.” The “*Supreme Cause*” was referred to as “*Divine Mind*”, “*Truth*”, “*God*”, “*Love*”, “*Life*”, “*Spirit*”, “*Principle*” or “*Father–Mother*”, reflecting elements of Plato, Hinduism, Berkley, Hegel, Swedenborg, and Transcendentalism. The metaphysical Groups became known as the “*Mind-Cure Movement*” because of their strong focus on physical Healing.

<sup>4</sup> The “*Works-based Blessings Teaching*” also has little or no concern about whether it is God’s Will at that Time to financially or materially bless the individual. It is simply assumed that God ALWAYS desires to bless His people and it is merely a “lack of Faith” that prohibits it.

teach that Salvation can be lost. And the Groups that lay claim to be “Protestant” or “Reformed” or that came out from the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century (i.e. Baptist, Presbyterian, etc.)- believe and teach that Salvation is Eternal.

But in addition to there being great Confusion in the modern Church about HOW lost people are saved- there is also great Confusion as to WHY we are saved. And among those who believe that Salvation CANNOT be forfeited- there is Confusion as to just WHY Salvation is Eternal. In my travels- the Reason behind WHY people believe that Salvation is Eternal- is usually the *wrong* Reason- even a *terrible* Reason- that has MORE in Common with the “Works-based” Groups than it does with the Bible. So, even though they *correctly* believe that Salvation is Eternal- they are wrong about Why.

Now there are many in our Day, who correctly see that our entire Culture is ripping apart. You and I live in the Time when we are witnessing the systematic Dismantling of Western Civilization. And many of these people are saddened and upset that there is scant little visible godly Fruit in the Lives of the people, who say they have been saved. And they talk about this “Curse of Fruitlessness” a lot. And so, do I. And so does the Bible.

But here in this Example are people who are actually doing things. I mean Jesus just got through saying in verse 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.**

... and the half-brother of Jesus said this in **James 1:22-24**

**22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.**

**23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;**

**24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.**

... and then in **Matthew 7:22**- Jesus talks about people who are actually doing things that pertain to the Kingdom of Heaven. They've gone way beyond just Hearing the Words of God and are actually out there- doing things.

And yet, Jesus also said this in verse 23:

**And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.**

... so, this is NOT an easy Passage to deal with.

Now the people in Jesus' Example here in **Matthew 7** obviously thought they were saved. They also genuinely believed that they were in "Right standing with God; and that He was pleased with them. And in response to believing they were saved- these people went about doing several things that we would all find very Good like:

- They Prophesied
- They cast out Demons
- They performed many Miracles

... which are ALL biblical; godly; and righteous things to do.

And these people did ALL of those things- the CORRECT WAY:

### **IN THE NAME OF JESUS**

... or to the Glory of Jesus; to the praise of Jesus; and based on WHO Jesus is!

Now I'm not sure if when these people "prophesied" Jesus was referring to the "*foretelling of future Events*"; or if it had to do with the more common "*heralding of God's Word*"- which is also called, "*prophesying*". And I also don't know if these people performing Miracles in Jesus' Name had to do with physical Healing; or financial and material Blessings; or raining down fire and brimstone on a wicked city like was done in Sodom and Gomorrah; or some other supernatural "Act of God". But they were performing MANY Miracles. And yet, they were Lost and Jesus NEVER knew them!

Now there are some in our immediate Area that teach that in this Passage- Jesus was simply condemning any Group that holds to a "*Continuationist Position*" about Miracles; the Casting out of Demons; and Prophecy". But I don't buy that at all- precisely because simply believing that the "*Supernatural Gifts*" of the Spirit of God that helped to *establish* Christianity back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century by giving it "*Divine Credibility*" does NOT qualify as a Heresy.

Now "*Continuationism*" is incorrect- it is a Mistake; and is based on a *faulty* Understanding of the Role of a completed Canon- but it ISN'T a Heresy. And many of those who espouse that Position are truly born again and love Jesus with every fiber of their Being.

Individuals, who genuinely believe that those "*Credibility Gifts*" or those "*Sign Gifts*" are in full operation in our Day- can be and, many times, are fully Blood-bought; and are our Brothers and Sisters in Christ. So, instead of just talking about them; or looking down our noses at them- we need to walk with them; and love them; and teach them; and help them come out of that wayward Position. But as

we do that- we also need to humble *ourselves*; and realize that these people can teach us many wonderful things too- as we embrace them as “Family”.

Now, like I taught earlier- this Passage- in Context- has to do with the four Jewish religious Groups that were thriving in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century of Pharisees; Sadducees; Essenes; and Zealots- and the Scribes that gave all four of these unsaved Groups the Research behind their Positions. That is who Jesus was talking about IMMEDIATELY and warning the saved Jews about.

But as I also taught- we *can*; and we *should* APPLY what Jesus was teaching about here- to our Day as well. And one of the Ways we need to understand this Passage- is that the Group; or the People Jesus was talking about here were deceived about their own Salvation. They truly thought they were saved. And as Proof that they were saved- God was honoring the Works they were doing in Jesus’ Name. Yet Jesus said,  
**... I never knew you ...**

So, Jesus NEVER knew these people! And that means that these were NOT those who had been saved at one Point- but who had *somehow* lost their Salvation. No, these people were NEVER saved! They had NEVER experienced the Miracle of the New Birth; they had NEVER repented of Sin; and they had NEVER put their Trust and Hope in Jesus; They had NEVER been adopted; and they had NEVER become part of God’s Family!

Now this has all sorts of Implications for us today. Like the Fact that, evidently, Lost people can perform Miracles; cast out demons; and prophesy- because Jesus NEVER challenged their Assertion that they had done all these things. And yet, He NEVER knew them.

Now I have no idea why God would allow unsaved people to have the Power and Ability to carry out all these supernatural Acts. It seems to me that this just adds to the Confusion. But I also have to say that these guys were NOT the only people doing this. Because Judas Iscariot also had that same Power. And Judas was NOT a Mistake.

**Luke 6:12** says that Jesus stayed up all night praying about who to pick as His Apostles. So, in Judas’ case- Jesus prayed all night about a Man, who could literally spend 3-1/2 years with the incarnate God- watching Him do things that ONLY God could do; listening to perfect Teaching from the ONLY perfect Man- and yet would be able to resist the Grace of God and remain Lost.

But Judas was also with eleven other men 24/7 for that same Time-period and yet, nobody seemed to know that he was unsaved. And that tells me that Judas was doing everything that they were doing- or he would have stood out like a sore thumb.

Now like I said- I don't understand that- but that is what the Scriptures teach and so, I have to come to my first Point in this Sermon:

### **Lost people can perform supernatural Acts**

... which means:

### **Performing supernatural Acts (in and of itself) is NOT a Sign of Salvation**

... and because that is true- we could also say that:

### **Knowing what the Bible says and believing that what the Bible says about deep and profound Issues is true- are NOT Signs of Salvation**

#### **James 2:19**

**You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.**

The inspired; inerrant; and infallible Word of the living God says that satan and the demons of Hell believe the Bible is the Word of God. They also believe that what the Bible teaches about the Nature and Character of God ("**God is One**")- is also true. But then the Bible goes further and tells us that these fallen Angels believe what the Bible says so strongly and so much- that they shudder!

Now the word, "**shudder**" comes from a Greek word (*frisson*; Strong's #5425) that means: *to bristle; to be struck with extreme fear; and to be horrified*. So, satan and his demon horde believe the Bible so much that they are struck with extreme fear and are horrified! Why? Because while they know what their final End will be- God has not given satan the Ability to repent!

So, satan and the fallen Angels can *know* the Truth; *understand* the Truth; and *believe* the Truth and yet NEVER *love* the Truth! And so, this is what the Apostle Paul said about that from **2Thessalonians 2:10-12:**

**10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.**

**11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,**

**12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.**



So, NOBODY can be forgiven and made Righteous unless they can repent. And that means that satan and the other demons CANNOT be saved. Why? Because they CAN'T repent! The Bible teaches that Repentance is a gracious Gift from God that He must "give" or "grant" to people or else NOBODY would repent! So, when a person truly repents- it is because God has graciously *granted* that person with the "*Gift of Repentance*" and NOT simply because he chose to do so. **The Acts 5:27-32** says,

**27 When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them,**  
**28 saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."**  
**29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.**  
**30 "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross.**  
**31 "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.**  
**32 "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."**

... which brings us to our next Conclusion:

**Doing amazing Things "IN JESUS' NAME" is NOT a Sign of Salvation.**

Everything these people did- they did in Jesus' Name. So, they were NOT robbing God of His Glory. They were assigning ALL Glory to Jesus while taking NONE of that Glory for themselves! And yet Jesus said,

**... I never knew you ...**

**Luke 10:17-20**

**17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."**  
**18 And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.**  
**19 "Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.**  
**20 "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."**

The next Conclusion about these people is this:

**They called Jesus, “Lord”.**

... in fact, they really *emphasized* their supposed Devotion to Him by saying, “*Lord, Lord!*” Yet Jesus said,

**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.'**

... and what we get from that is:

**Calling Jesus, “Lord”- even calling Him, “Lord, Lord” with great Emphasis and Devotion is NOT a Sign of Salvation.**

... and that is amazing since the Apostle Paul said this in **Romans 10:9b**

**... if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;**

So, WHY is Jesus talking like this? It seems that He is telling us, on the one hand- to DO Good Works; and yet, on the other hand- He is condemning the people who are actually doing those Good Works! So, what gives? Is Jesus contradicting Paul? Or is Paul contradicting Jesus?

No! What this means is that simply repeating a Phrase or a word; or saying a Prayer is NOT what Paul nor Jesus meant. And it is also NOT about the level or the degree we are sincere, either.

Look, being sincere is great; and is much better than being *insincere*. But Salvation is NOT based on the level of *our* Sincerity- but on the Certainty of the Promises of God!

But as we examine this Passage- we MUST keep in mind that, in Context, Jesus was talking about the Leaders of the four religious Groups that dominated the daily Life of a Jew in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. And it was common to hear the Pharisees go around Jerusalem- crying out, “*Adonai, Adonai!*” or “*Elohim, Elohim!*”. And people from the other three Groups used that phrase as well.

Now there are only four places in the entire Bible where the Phrase, “**Lord, Lord**” is used:

- Once in the Parable of the Ten Virgins in **Matthew 25:1-13 (verse 11)**
- Once in the Teaching of Fruit and Foundation in **Luke 6:43-49 (verse 46)**
- Twice in **Matthew 7:21-23 (verses 21&22)**

And in each of these cases, the word that they quoted Jesus as saying, (Lord) came from the Greek word, “*Kurios*” or “*Kyrios*”. Now this word *originally* meant, “*Power*” or “*Might*”- but over time- this word became *synonymous* with “*the supreme and ultimate Authority in the Universe*” or “*God*”.

And when the Bible was translated from Hebrew into Greek and then into English, “*Kurios*” or “*Kyrios*” (Lord) was used to replace “YHWH”; “Adonai”; and “Elohim”. And the Fact that the word was used twice in these four References signified great earnestness and devotion.

So, when Jesus used that phrase, “**Lord, Lord!**” EVERYBODY knew who He was referring to the hypocritical religious Leaders of those four Groups.

But what was NOT so obvious to the people is that these Jewish Leaders were NOT saved- at all! They were NOT genuine, spiritual Jews; they were NOT children of Abraham; and they were NOT children of God. Please keep in mind that Jesus had already said that the Pharisees were “**Lovers of Money**” (**Luke 16:13&14**). And in **Matthew 23:27**- when Jesus said,

**Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.**

... He used the word, “**uncleanness**” that came from a word (*akatharsia*; Strong’s #167) which has to do with: *sexual Impurity*. Then Jesus also said this in **Matthew 23:28**:

**So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.**

... which is the SAME word Jesus used to describe those He “NEVER knew” in **Matthew 7:23**:

**And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'**

So, Jesus was saying that these outwardly religious men were operating completely OUTSIDE the Law of God! But wait! Here in verse 23- Jesus is NOT merely *rebuking* the sinful religious Hypocrites. He is actually quoting from **Psalm 6:8-10** that David wrote as God the Holy Spirit “moved” on him 1,000 years *before* Jesus was born and said,

**8 Depart from me, all you who do iniquity, For the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping.**

**9 The Lord has heard my supplication, The Lord receives my prayer.**

**10 All my enemies will be ashamed and greatly dismayed; They shall turn back, they will suddenly be ashamed.**

So, we MUST agree that “Legalists” and “Lovers of Money” are NOT different Groups. Jesus said that these supposed pharisaic, lovers of Law-keeping- who may even take “*Vows of Poverty and Chastity*”- are, deep down, beneath their whitewashed moral Appearances- “Lovers of Money” (**Luke 16:14**); “Greedy” and “Self-indulgent” (**Matthew 23:26**); “sexually Unclean” (**Matthew 23:27**); and those who operate their entire Lives- as “Transgressors of the Law of God” (**Matthew 23:28**)!

In other words, those who are, outwardly, the MOST *rigorously* devoted to “Law-keeping” are using their façade of Law-keeping to cloak a Heart that is completely “Lawless”. Meaning:

**God and His Word are NOT their Authority (their Law) nor their Joy. Their Belly; their sexual Organs; and their sinful Appetites- are their “god”!**

... which is what “*Self-indulgence*” and “*Uncleanness*” means.

And that means that these people- who seemingly are the MOST religious people in all of Israel- are, in fact, the very WORST false Prophets! And we dare not just take that for granted.

Because we must remember that the Jews of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century looked up to these people. They admired them; envied them; and feared them. They went out of their Way to show these religious Leaders great Respect and Honor. And now Jesus said that He NEVER knew them.

And this had the Effect of not only *ruining* the Reputation of these Leaders- but it also *devastated* the people! It *crushed* their Allegiance. It *wounded* their Hearts and made them throw their hands up and say,

*“Well, then who is saved! If these men, who represent the very BEST of religious Effort are nothing but lawless Frauds- what chance to I have? If these men, who*

*have devoted their entire Lives to the Service of God are Lost- who then can be saved?"*

Those of us, who live in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century learn about the abject Hypocrisy of these Leaders as we read the Bible and we nod our heads because it seems that there are so many Hypocrites that we have met and known.

But we need to remember that the Pharisees and the others was ALL that the believing Jews had back then. The hypocritical Sadducees and Essenes and the violent and dangerous Zealots was ALL that the Jews had. There wasn't another Group of pure and real Believers. Now there were pockets of individuals scattered all over the Nation of Israel- but there really weren't that many.

And so, for the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jew to find out that the people he looked up to the MOST were all Frauds- did NOT encourage him. It was truly a "punch in the gut". All of this was a kind of "*depressing Knowledge*"; a Knowledge that cast them down and discouraged them.

So, why was Jesus telling them all this? How were they supposed to handle all this Information about the Leaders they had been taught their entire lives to respect and follow and obey? What Good did Jesus think would come from His Revelation that the Leaders were all Hypocrites?

This was similar to what happened to the average Jew when Jesus said this in **Matthew 19:23&24:**

**23 ... Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.**

**24 Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.**

Now when we hear these words today, we say, "*Amen*" because we remember what God spoke through the Apostle Paul in **1Timothy 6:10a**

**For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil...**

... and what the unknown writer said in **Hebrews 13:5:**

**Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"**

... and we pray that we won't love Money; and we then go forth to live out our Faith- *without* looking to Money for our Hope.

But when the Jew of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century heard Jesus say that rich people would hardly enter into Heaven- they were very hurt and dismayed. And the next verse in Matthew's Gospel Record says,

**Matthew 19:25**

**When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?"**

... and the word that was translated here as "**astonished**" comes from a word (*ekpleessoo*; Strong's #1605), which has to do with *striking out; to drive out; or to expel by a blow*. In other words, this "astonishment" at hearing that rich people might not be saved- *dismayed* the Disciples. It *wounded* and *confused* them and *hurt* them and *bewildered* them. This Information did NOT initially *encourage* them- it *defeated* and *discouraged* them. And that is why they blurted out,

**"Then who can be saved?"**

... because in their minds- if wealthy people were NOT in God's Favor- then they had NO chance at all! Because all their Lives- they had been taught that material and financial Wealth was a sure Sign of God's Favor. So, if Wealth was actually a Hinderance to Salvation and NOT a ticket to ride- then what Hope did they have? And that is why Jesus said this in **Matthew 19:26**:

**With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.**

So, when Jesus told them that Wealth was normally a Bad thing as it pertained to Salvation- He was actually risking *losing* these men. Because His Statement was designed to take the Crutch of Money away from the men He had chosen. But in taking away that Crutch- Jesus was actually *decimating* the men He was trying to help! Because their *initial* Reaction to what Jesus said was to give up; to stop trying; and to walk away. They simply could not understand how Wealth would *hurt* their Opportunity to be saved- because EVERYBODY *wanted* to be wealthy! Wealth was *universally* seen as the BEST thing that could ever happen to people! Because having Money solved a whole lot MORE Problems than NOT having it! And so, the *first* Reaction to these words by Jesus was for these men to go into total despair!

And the SAME Reaction was happening again as Jesus is now telling these men that the MOST religious people they knew- were all Lost! In fact, the MOST

devoted; the MOST observant; the MOST rigidly Obedient people they ever knew about- were nothing but religious Frauds and Hypocrites!

And this Knowledge did NOT help them- *initially*. It actually *hurt* them! It *devastated* them! It *destroyed* whatever Hope they had to ever become religious like the Leaders they looked up to! So, their *initial* Reaction to the Revelation that the Pharisees and Sadducees and the Essenes and the Zealots were completely Lost; and were actually much WORSE sinners than the average Jew- pulled the rug out from under the average Jew *worse* than anything else! Think what Jesus had just told them:

- Performing supernatural Acts (in and of itself) is NOT a Sign of Salvation
- Knowing what the Bible says and believing that what the Bible says about deep and profound Issues is true- are NOT Signs of Salvation
- Doing great Things “IN JESUS’ NAME” is NOT a Sign of Salvation.
- Calling Jesus, “Lord”- even calling Him, “Lord” with great Emphasis and Devotion is NOT a Sign of Salvation.

... well then WHAT IS A SIGN OF TRUE SALVATION?

*“If all of this doesn’t count- then why try? If the Pharisees are Lost- what chance do I have? If people who study the Scriptures twelve hours every day are Hypocrites- then what am I?”*

The initial Reaction by the average Jew, who was following behind Jesus, as they heard Him literally destroy the MOST religious people they ever knew- was NOT Happiness. This Information did NOT encourage them. It did NOT make them joyful. It hurt them. It pulled the rug out from under them. It dismayed them- and it astonished

them. So, WHY was Jesus telling them this? What did Jesus hope to gain by tearing down everything these people believed; and had been taught their entire Lives? The very SAME thing He gave them in **Matthew 19:26**:

**With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.**

I told you at the Beginning of this Sermon that MOST people in the modern Church *grossly* misunderstand Salvation. And that isn’t simply a blanket Condemnation. It is based on fifty-two years of asking people what Salvation is and how to acquire it. You would think that after the Church being on the earth now for 2,000 years- we would have this down pat by now.

But we don’t. And so, even today- MOST people still believe that we have to “*do something*” to get God’s Attention; to gain His Favor; or to earn what He

gives us. And it is because we really don't understand how to "get" saved- as to why there is so much Confusion about the Assurance of Salvation.

So, if it is true that performing supernatural Acts is NOT a Sign of Salvation- then what is? If it is true, that knowing the Bible and believing what the Bible teaches about deep and profound Issues is NOT a Sign of Salvation- then what is? If it is true, that doing great Things in Jesus' Name is NOT a Sign of Salvation is NOT a Sign of Salvation- then what is? And if it is true, that calling Jesus, "Lord" energetically and devotedly is NOT a Sign of Salvation- then what is?

*"And why are you telling us all this, Brother Blair? Are you just trying to discourage us? Are you trying to pull the rug out from under our feet? Are you trying to discourage us and dismay us and hurt us? Are you saying that it is better for us to not do ANY of this- than it is to do these things? Why are you throwing cold water on everything we have believed our whole Lives?"* There is ONLY one Answer:

**With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.**

The sure Sign of Salvation is very, very Simple- yet very Profound: LOVE! NOT Signs and Wonders- Love! NOT Formulas; NOT special Prayers; NOT Certain Acts; and NOT Special Secrets. Just Love! A genuine, real, ever-growing, and utterly invincible Love for God and His Word- as well as an ever-growing Love for People.

And that has ALWAYS been the Issue. You see, the MOST devastating thing that happened to Adam after he ate that fruit was that His Love for God was gone. And so, he tried to cover it up; he tried to play the game; he tried to go through the motions- but Adam didn't love God anymore. And because he didn't love God- everything else failed. And you and I were born without ANY Love for God. At all. None! And that is what Salvation restores to us: A real, genuine, precious, ever-growing and unconquerable Love for God and for People.

And so, underneath all of the Words of ALL of the Commandments; and ALL the Prohibitions; and ALL the Rules; and ALL the Statutes; and ALL what we do for God- is the one thing; the ONLY thing that holds it all up:

**Luke 10:27b**

**... YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."**



... and that is the sure Sign of Salvation. And that is what will stop God from ever saying to us:

**... I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.**

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

