



Bible Study, March 08, 2023

The Discipleship Training of Jesus Christ | A Study of Matthew 5-7

Lesson 9 – Salvation and More

Pastor Reginald Rogers, Facilitator

Introduction

In this final lesson of this series, we will observe the Lord addressing three different topics with His disciples. The first topic He addressed was the way to salvation. The second topic was distinguishing the evil intentions of false prophets. The third topic was recognizing false disciples. Once more, Jesus is strengthening His disciples to complete the work of the heavenly kingdom and continue to walk in righteousness. Let us read the Scripture text to see what He said.

The Scripture Reading | Matthew 7:13-23

¹³ "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.

¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

¹⁵ "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?

¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

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

²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

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!'

Examining the Text

As we look at these teaching moments, think about what each topic means to you. Ask yourself questions about your walk in each of these areas. Let us see what we can learn.



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The Way to Salvation

This first topic that Jesus taught His disciples concerned the way to salvation. Jesus told the disciples that the way into the kingdom of heaven is not easily accessible. The listening audience included the large crowd that followed Him too. He is telling everybody present to make a choice. Those who would make a choice included the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law. Nobody present was naturally born into the kingdom of heaven. Also, nobody can ride into the kingdom of heaven on the faith of Mama "Nem." Jesus wanted them to know that confession of sins and belief in Him is the way to salvation (CF: Romans 10:9-10). It is GOD'S gift by grace through faith and not any works that a person could boast about (CF: *Ephesians 2:8-9*).

He began by saying to enter through the narrow gate. Why? Because wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction. Jesus finished this figurative statement by saying that many enter through it. In this illustration, Jesus was saying that this wide gate and the broad road are where everybody lives right now. This fallen world is the natural fit and choice of being born into it. All things in the world appear to be vast and easily obtained. People deceive themselves into thinking that this world has plenty to offer them. The world seems popular, but life in it leads to destruction (CF: *Matthew 8:12*).

Jesus continued by telling them that small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, only a few find it. He let them know that following Him would not be easy or popular. It would be a hard-pressing walk for the disciples where there is only one choice to make and that is repentance. But it is well worth that kind of walk and it is still this way today. Some more things to remember about the narrow gate are the development of Christ-like character, the development of a selfless prayer life, the development of a holy lifestyle, and the development of a heavenly mindset that is fulfilled in eternal life. Unfortunately, people choose the easy, popular, and broad way of the world and all that it offers. Usually, they do not consider the outcome of choosing this way of life.

What is the spiritual meaning of the two gates? The two different gates represent two understandings about being in eternity. There is a gate that leads to eternal life and a gate that leads to eternal separation.



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Jesus explained these when He spoke about the two resurrections in the following verses: *And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out--those who have done what is good will rise to live (Eternal Life), and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned (Eternal Separation). [John 5:27-29]* I believe that this is very clear about the eternal future that a person chooses.

We all know this familiar passage of Scripture concerning the way in the following verses: *You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. [John 14:4-6]* While teaching the disciples, Jesus used gates and roads as illustrations, but the truth is He is the gate and road to the Father in heaven.

1. Why is it so hard for a person to make the lifestyle change from the wide gate to the narrow gate? What are some reasons for resisting the change?

¹⁵ "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.



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Distinguishing the Evil Intentions of False Prophets

The second topic that Jesus addressed with His disciples was distinguishing the evil intentions of false prophets. He told all who were listening to watch out for false prophets. Why? Because they will deceive them by wearing sheep's clothing, but in their hearts, they are ferocious wolves. When you think of sheep, you reflect on their gentle nature and way. They are easily approachable and like any gentle animal, they can be petted. According to the Lord's warning, false prophets disguise themselves like sheep so they can fit right in with GOD'S sheep. However, being like ferocious wolves, they destroy the sheep to satisfy their appetites. Unlike John the Baptist who was a prophet and lived in the way of righteousness; false prophets do not follow the way of righteousness (CF: Matthew 5:20).

The Pharisees and Teachers of the Law fit this description since they were present and often misled the people of Israel with their errant teaching. So, as Jesus continued His teaching on this topic, He told them that false prophets are recognized by their fruit. What did He mean by fruit? Fruit means a manner of life and what a person does. Jesus cautioned His disciples of the teaching by the Pharisees and Sadducees in the following verses: *"Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." ...How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.* [Matthew 16:6, 11-12]

Knowing them by their fruit or manner of life was Jesus' point to His disciples. The disciples were not only to recognize false prophets by their fruit, but they were to realize that a good tree could only bear good fruit and vice versa about a bad tree. Jesus said that nothing good comes from a bad source. So, they were to watch out for them because they were present. Believers today must be on guard too because false prophets, false teachers, and false Christs are in this world (CF: Matthew 24:23-27). As believers, we must test the teaching of false prophets by searching what they say against the Scriptures (CF: Acts 17:11). As believers, we must know the difference in the flow that comes from the hearts of false prophets and do not cast judgment upon them (CF: Matthew 12:33-36, 7:1). As believers, we must grow and guard against false prophets by studying the Scriptures and knowing the truth (CF: 2 Timothy 2:15).



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2. What can the Holy Spirit give to the believer that would help to discern or distinguish a false prophet's intentions?

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!'

Recognizing False Disciples

The third topic that Jesus addressed with His disciples was how to recognize false disciples. You are probably thinking what is the difference between a false prophet and a false disciple? A false prophet is not a follower of the teaching or way of Jesus Christ.

This person usually condemns and resists anything that pertains to the name of Jesus Christ (CF: Acts 4:18). A false disciple follows Jesus Christ with his mouth and not with his heart. This person pretends to be a follower by pretending to be saved. This person will pray, but not by faith according to GOD'S will (CF: Hebrews 11:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18). This person will prophesy in the Lord's name, but not as the Holy Spirit wills (1 Corinthians 12:10-11). This person will attend church regularly. This person will read and quote the Scriptures. This person will listen to sermons being preached.

As we continue our study, Jesus warned His disciples that everyone who says Lord, Lord will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Meaning only those doing the will of the Father by living a life of righteousness will enter heaven (CF: Matthew 5:20) (My emphasis). He established with them that there will be false followers in the faith. These are people who do not confirm their calling and election as sure. Therefore, they will not be welcome into the kingdom of heaven (CF: 2 Peter 1:10-11). Paul in writing the Church at Corinth expressed a similar thought in the



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following verse: *Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test?* [2 Corinthians 13:5] It appears that the early church maintained a heightened awareness about false discipleship.

Jesus continued by telling His disciples that many will say to Him on the day of judgment Lord, Lord did we not prophesy in Your name? Did we not drive out demons in Your name? Did we not perform miracles in Your name? If these were real spiritual powers being exhibited by these false disciples, then what separates them from true disciples? When Jesus appointed His twelve disciples, He gave them authority according to the following verses: *Jesus called his twelve disciples to Him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. ...Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.* [Matthew 10:1, 4]

According to this passage, Judas Iscariot was given the same authority to cast out demons, and perform healings and miracles just like the other disciples with him. The big difference is Judas was not truly saved and, in the end, he betrayed Jesus. I would think the answer to the previous question above is while these false disciples can perform divine powers, these powers are not proof of a genuine salvation experience having occurred within them. I confess that I am being careful and cautious not to become judgmental here, but being prayerful to Him who knows how to judge right and fair (CF: Matthew 7:1, John 5:30).

It was Jesus who called Judas out in the following verse: *Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him.* [John 6:64] Once more, Jesus knew from the beginning when he appointed His disciples who were true to Him and who were not. Yet, He can use these false disciples to accomplish His work. In the end, Jesus will judge and declare to them that He never knew them, Therefore, He said to depart from Me "you evildoers."

3. As believers today, how does it make you feel knowing that false disciples walk among us? Have you personally had any close encounters with them?



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Endnotes

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