

Is Being “Religious” All God Asks Of Us?

In Matthew chapters 5-7 we have what is known as the "Sermon on the Mount." This is considered by many to be one of if not the most encompassing single sermon on Christian living. In it we find the 10 "beatitudes," lessons on such vital areas as anger, worship, prayer, devotion, treatment of enemies, and many more. In the midst of this great sermon we are given the magnitude of the choices before each of us. We each can choose either the "broad" way or the "strait" way. What is at stake is our eternal destiny (7:13-14). After illustrating these choices the Lord lets us know of a serious danger – *there are those who will seek to deceive many into thinking the broad way is in fact the correct way* (7:15-20). Jesus then gives a solemn admonition -- *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ..."* (7:21-23).

Did you notice what Jesus said?... “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord...” *Jesus clearly taught that being "religious" is not enough!* Tragically there will even be those who have done many "wonderful" things who are rejected (22). The question naturally comes then, “Why will these be rejected?” after all, it is clear they were religious. The problem is clear if we examine the text – *though they are religious and have done some "good things" (Jesus does not deny such), they have not done the will of the Father* (21b).

This is not the only text that warns us of this problem. In Acts 17 we read of Paul as he preached to people whom he said were "too superstitious" (22) [very religious - ASV]. But God commanded that they *repent* (30-31). Another instance is found in John 12:42-43 where we read of the "chief rulers" of the synagogue (you can't get much more "religious" than that!). They even believed in Jesus, but they were not convicted enough to do all they knew was right! (What kind of obedience is it really if it is conditional on my wishes and well being?).

Many today are often referred to as "good religious people" but the real question is, are they doing the will of the Father in heaven? There are multitudes who cry "Lord, Lord" but are unwilling to "pay the price" of **complete** obedience. Jesus words will ring true throughout the ages –

"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 which is in heaven."

What of us? Are we deceiving ourselves by our “good works” and yet failing to submit to what the Lord asks us to do? *Jesus asks us to not only be religious, but religious and right!*

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