

BARRIERS TO THE KINGDOM

Intro: The Sermon on the Mount promises wonderful blessings to those who would be disciples of Christ and enter His kingdom! It begins with the beatitudes that beautifully picture the joy and hope of serving Christ! By kingdom living we may possess the kingdom, be comforted in forgiveness, be satisfied with righteousness, inherit the best blessings of earth, obtain the mercy of God, see His face in eternity, receive great reward from the Father. In a word, we will enjoy the wonders of heaven for all eternity.

How could it be then that so many seem to have missed the way? How is it that so few are on the road that leads to life? Jesus answers those questions in the concluding appeal of this sermon. Satan will try with all the skill and might he possesses to keep you out of heaven. There are significant barriers to overcome if we are to make it to heaven. We need to know them and we need to overcome them if we are to avoid being a casualty on the highway of life!

Let's read the closing words of this sermon today: Mt. 7:15-27. We see three barriers to heaven:

I. FALSE PROPHETS

A. Beware of false prophets! A false prophet is someone who professes to give a message from God but who actually speaks for the devil! The devil knows that Christians would not easily fall prey to open advocates of raw hedonism, anarchy, or infidelity! He uses a more subtle approach: Cf. 2 Cor. 11:13-15

1. A false prophet may then appear externally at first to be pious, using all the standard clichés.

2. He may appear among disciples as a disciple. Cf. Ac. 20:29-31.

B. How do we know them? There are two answers:

1. First in the context of this concluding appeal, it would be clear that a false prophet is one that fails to teach and emphasize the two ways of which Jesus speaks. He may say many high sounding things, but his teaching is not demanding but compromising. Cf. Jer. 6:13-15 Carson's comment is appropriate: To know the whole truth but to soft-petal it, or to leave sin unrebuked for the sake of popularity is to be false.

2. We know them by their fruits. No person can live in disrespect of the authority of Christ and not eventually manifest it in his life! A heart devoted to Christ will yield the fruits of the Spirit. A heart devoted to error will eventually bear the fruits of error! Cf. v. 16ff Peter gives a similar warning with specific examples of the kinds of things a false prophet will manifest: 2 Pet. 1:1-4 (Note greed, sensuality) These become the tags of identification for the false prophet.

II. APPLICATION

A. Not every preacher is of God! Some deliberately distort the truth for their own advantage.

B. Insist that your preacher preach the whole counsel of God. Does he step on toes or tip-toe through the tulips? Does he also preach the positive truth of the gospel?

C. An imperfect man is not a false prophet! All Christians sin; preachers sin. Please do not write off as a false prophet every preacher that demonstrates a fault!

D. A socially useful pagan is not necessarily a true teacher of the word!

E. The standard of conduct for preachers is the same as for everybody else. He needs to demonstrate the fruit of the spirit! Watch out for greed and lasciviousness in life and teaching!

F. Jesus does not here encourage a heresy-hunting mentality! Some seem to think that the proof of their faithfulness is in sifting through a good teacher's words until they find something with which to disagree!

Conclusion: The devil will do everything in his power to turn us away from truth. He has filled the world with false messengers turning men away from the truth. We must not let him succeed.

As disciples, we must not let anything keep us out of heaven. Are these things hindering you!? Listen to Jesus words, one last time. Enter in at the strait gate! Beware of false prophets. Not everyone that says, Lord, Lord. Whoever hears these sayings and doeth them is like a wise man! Be concerned! Be cautious! Be sincere! Be wise! And be saved!