"RELIGIOUS DECEPTION"

Matthew 7:13-23
8/6/2017

INTRODUCTION:

Do we have a religion, or righteousness? Which way is right?

The Lord Jesus warns us to: ***Beware of religious deception!**

I. Let us not be deceived by <u>RELIGIOUS POPULARITY</u> (v. 13-14)
(The right way is <u>straight</u> and <u>narrow</u>)

--Jesus contrasts <u>2 roads</u>

II. Let us not be deceived by <u>RELIGIOUS PRETENSE</u> (v. 15-20)
(The right way bears <u>good fruit</u>)

--Jesus contrasts <u>2 fruits</u>

III. Let us not be deceived by <u>RELIGIOUS PERFORMANCE</u> (v. 21-23)
(The right way does <u>God's will</u>)

--Jesus contrasts <u>2 professions</u>

CONCLUSION:

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INTRODUCTION

There is a big difference between having a religion and having a relationship with Jesus Christ!

Examples of modern deception & deceivers

Verses 13-27 unfold perhaps some of the most sobering, serious, important warnings in the Bible.

V. 13-14 - Jesus gives warning by contrasting two roads (wide & narrow)

V. 15-20 - Jesus gives a warning by contrasting two fruits (good and bad)

V. 21-23 - Jesus gives a warning by contrasting two professions (those who do God's will and those who don't know God)

V. 24-27 - Jesus concludes his warnings by contrasting two builders (wise and foolish) and two foundations (rock and sand)

Do you have a religion, or righteousness? Which way is right?

The Lord Jesus warns us to: ***Beware of religious deception!**

I. Let us not be deceived by RELIGIOUS POPULARITY (v. 13-14)
(The right way is straight and narrow)

--Jesus contrasts 2 roads

"Strait" = narrow

The *"wide"* gate is the most inviting. Because people are prone to measure goodness by bigness, the "wide" gate has a strong appeal; it appears to be the right choice, the easy choice, the obvious choice.

The *"broad"* road from a human standpoint is the best road. There is much room for travel; it is made for many travellers; therefore, appears to be the most direct, fastest, and smoothest road (after all, if you wanted to drive to Florida, would you opt for Highway 95 or back roads heading south?)

"There is a way that seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov.)

"Many therefre which go in thereat" = The "many" is contrasted with the "few" (v. 14) who find the narrow way.

The word "*destruction"* (v. 13) is contrasted with "*life"* in v. 14; since the "life" in v. 14 refers to eternal life, the *"destruction"* in v. 13 refers to eternal destruction.

"Destruction" = refers ultimately to the doom that awaits the unconverted after death.

This destruction will both be "sudden" (I Thes. 5:3), and "eternal" - (*"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;"* II Thes. 1:8-9)

Contrary to "universalism" (which teaches that all men will be saved); contrary to the idea that hell is reserved for the ministry of people; Jesus teaches that most people; the majority of people, multitudes of people will end up in everlasting destruction.

"Many" will go to Hell! Don't assume that hell fills up after so many enter. "*Hell and destruction are never full"* (Prov. 27:20)

Hell is described as "*wide"* (Is. 5:14) and *"deep"* (Rev. 9:1). Into this bottomless pit, the majority of humanity will inevitably end up.

Like a vast herd, the majority of mankind are presently stampeding toward eternal slaughter.

Like an uncontrollable mob, multitudes of lost, confused, misdirected souls are walking to the end of the cliff--to the brink of eternal ruin; like a flood, billions of people have flowed and are flowing through a wide valley down, down into the Lake of fire.

"Few there be that find it" - Salvation has always involved a "remnant" -

--*"a remnant shall be saved"* (Rom. 9:27)
--*"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace"* (Rom. 11:5)

The obvious applications:

1) ***Not all roads lead to Heaven!**

Contrary to the popular view that since "God is one" therefore all roads lead to the same place -- all roads do not lead to the same place.

Only one road leads to eternal life!

Jesus taught a restricted message! An exclusive message!

"I am the way (not a way). . ."

Jesus said, *"I am the door* (not a door) *by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved"* (Jn. 10).

Acts 4:12 - *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."*

2) ***There are basically only 2 religions in the world**

1- Those who teach you must **"do"** (works religion)

2- Those who teach it is **"done"** (Biblical Christianity)

3) ***You are on either 1 of 2 roads**

You are either on the broad (wide) road or on the narrow road (there are no other choices)

There are only 2 groups of people in the world (those who have the Son and those who do not; those who have eternal life and those who do not - I Jn. 5:11-12)

Other applications:

1. The popular road is not necessarily the best (right) road!

   Just because the crowd is doing it doesn't make it right.

   Just because your peers think its okay does not mean it is.

   Just because "everyone's doing it," does not mean that you should!

   One day most everyone will receive the Mark of the Beast and worship his image (Rev. 13), but a remnant --like Shadrach, Meshach, & Nebednego-- will remain standing strong because they would rather burn than bow!

   Just because something has fame, notoriety, or recognition by public opinion does not mean that it passes God's opinion!

2. Sometimes you will be considered "odd ball" or "back sheep" by the world

   God's people, by virtue of their limited number and unique lifestyles, are a "peculiar people"

3. Many of God's people often have to say "goodbye" to friends and even family (EX: Pilgrim in Pilgrim's Progress) in the sense that they can no longer do what they used to do, go where they used to go, say what they used to say. . . all because they no longer believe what they used to believe

4. The size of something is not the measuring stick of divine acceptance.

   EX: Just because the RCC is the largest denomination does not meat it is true or from God!

II. Let us not be deceived by <u>RELIGIOUS PRETENSE</u> (v. 15-20)
(The right way bears <u>good fruit</u>)

--Jesus contrasts <u>2 fruits</u>

A false prophet is someone who claims to be a teacher, preacher, "healer," or spokesman for God, but is not.

"In sheep's clothing" - Just as Satan himself can transform himself into an angel of light, so his messengers can appear to be very religious, spiritual, and righteous (SEE: II Cor. 11:13-15)

"Sheep's clothing" - These deceivers wear the wool (garb) of a sheep, they have the "Baaa" (voice) of a sheep, they may even appear to follow the right shepherd of the sheep (they profess to follow Jesus Christ), but like Judas of old, they are <u>not</u> true sheep.

Remember, just because someone has the "right" appearance (clean-cut, smooth shaven), the "right" speaking ability or charisma; and professes to believe in Jesus Christ, it does not mean that they are bonified, real, genuine sheep!

"But inwardly" - what is <u>inward</u> is what is most important! *"The Lord looketh on the <u>heart</u>"* - I Sam. 16:7) (Lk. 16:15 - *"And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."*)

"Ravening wolves" - hungry, greedy, selfish, vicious wolves

NOTE: That which is on the <u>inside</u> (v. 15) will evidence (manifest) itself by the <u>fruit</u> that grows on the <u>outside</u> (v. 16-20)

The word *"fruit(s)"* occurs 7 times in vv. 16-20.

"Ye shall <u>know</u> them" - i.e. you will <u>recognize</u> them; you will "<u>see right through</u>" the facade.

Fruit does not grow from thorn bushes or thistles.

"<u>Every</u> good tree" - Each and every Christian will produce good fruit (not everyone will produce the same amount, but all will produce - *"Some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty"* (Mt. 13:23)

"Evil <u>fruit</u>" - <u>morally</u> evil fruit (wicked works)

This does not mean that Christians never sin (I Jn. 1:8); but that their new good nature cannot sin (I Jn. 3:9). This also does not mean that an unsaved person cannot do anything good (by human standards), but by God's measurement, unregenerate man's righteous works are as *"filthy rags".*

The nature of one's fruit (works) reveals the condition of one's heart. People's unbelief is manifested by their works. And their works will one day stand up like a grand jury and will condemn them to the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

V. 20

While we are not to wrongly judge a person (7:1), we are to have the discernment to see a person's fruit and thereby know the false prophets from the true.

One day the "false prophet" (Rev. 16:13; 19:20) will look like a Lamb, but his mouth will speak like a dragon (13:11) and will reveal him to be of Satan.)

III. Let us not be deceived by RELIGIOUS PERFORMANCE (v. 21-23)
(The right way does God's will)

--Jesus contrasts 2 professions

V. 21

Even demons believe that Jesus is Lord.

Judas no doubt referred to Jesus as "Lord."

One day in the Judgment, everyone will bow and "*confess that Jesus Christ is Lord"* yet such a confession by itself does not make one a candidate for Heaven.

Jesus asked the question: *"And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* Lk. 6:46

What is the will of the Father?

1) Repentance (II Pet. 3:9) (Faith in Christ - Jn. 6:29)

2) Faith that evidences itself by obedience [cp. *"doeth"* (v. 21) with *"doeth"* (v. 24, 26)]

Those who are Christ's disciples do God's will (Mt. 12:46-50).

v. 22

To merely do something "*in the name*" of Jesus is not necessarily the same as doing something for Jesus' glory or through Jesus' power.

EX: Acts 19:13-17 - the sons of Seeva who attempted an exorcism in Jesus' name.

It's difficult to believe that people could do such things and yet not belong to Jesus!

--They preach messages in Jesus' name ("prophesied")

--They perform miracles in Jesus' name ("cast out devils" -- NOTE: Just because some priest does an exorcism does not mean he is of God!)

--They practice mighty works in Jesus' name - (EX: "faith healers"; tongues, those who build large churches)

V. 23

"I never knew you" - the most horrifying words to ever be heard

SEE: Luke 13:23-28

Mt. 25:41 - *"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"*

(cp. Ps. 6:8)

SEE: Job 8:13-18

"Iniquity" - Lawlessness. When someone does not do exactly what Jesus says in the way Jesus commands it to be done, they are practicing lawlessness. The Law is fulfilled by the one word **Love** (cp. Mt. 7:12; Mt. 22:40; Gal. 5:14; Rom. 13:8-10)

This word was not the motive of such people; therefore, they are lawless!

CONCLUSION: