

The Make-Believer

Matthew 7:21-23

Introduction

We approach the end of Jesus' Sermon On The Mount. Jesus has spoken of two treasures; two roads; one broad the other narrow; two animals; one a pretender and the other a ravenous wolf; and now two disciples; each separated from the other on Judgment Day. In the last few verses of this chapter Jesus will speak of two builders and the two houses built on two different foundations. In each case there are two categories or groups; one that hears the words of Jesus and obeys—and the other that hears and fails to obey. Now Jesus speaks of two “doers”; the one who does the will of the Father in heaven; and the one who doesn't. One is a true believer; the other a make-believer. “The two ways illustrate the *start* of the life of faith; the two trees illustrate the *growth* and results of the life of faith here and now; and the two houses illustrate the *end* of the life of faith, when God shall call everything to judgment” (Warren Wiersbe p. 31). He goes on to say; “The final test is not what we think of ourselves, or what others may think. The final test is: *What will God say?*” (ibid p. 31).

Jesus calls the listener to a decision; turn from false righteousness, false religion, false prophets; to true righteousness, true relationships to God and each other; and walk as citizens in the true Kingdom of God. What would keep someone from the narrow gate? One possible answer is the false prophet brings a false message that causes a person to remain on the broad path. Another possible answer is self-deception. False prophets are not the only deceivers; sometimes we lie to ourselves about our selves. There are real believers; and there are unbelievers; and there are make-believers. The make-believer is either self-deceived or self-deluded. The make-believer falls into two broad categories; those who make a verbal profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—who say they are saved; who speak words like a saved person; but who live like an unsaved person. The second type of make-believer makes a profession of faith intellectually; they believe the basics of the gospel; but do nothing with Jesus. The first kind of make-believer is described in verses 21-23. They **say** the right things; but refuse to do the right things. The second described in verses 24-27— they **hear** the right things but refuse to do the right things. Sometimes make-believers are obvious! Sometimes—not so obvious.

Profile Of A Make-Believer (v.21a)

Matthew 7:21–23 (NKJV) 21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

This is a warning! Jesus gives a warning against mere profession—and no possession! Why does Jesus refer to Himself as Lord? In the next chapter (8:2) we read “And behold a leper came and worshipped Him, saying Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”

Jesus has told us “beware of false prophets” and then gave us a brief profile (vv.15-20). False prophets present a false Lord and a false gospel and expect true salvation. You mean it is not

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enough to simply avoid a false Jesus and a false gospel and believe the true gospel? We cannot simply own Jesus with our lips—we must own Him with our heart!

The make-believer may acknowledge correct doctrine but have a false sense of assurance. Jesus begins “not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven. Simply acknowledging that Jesus is Lord apparently does not guarantee entrance in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus includes “. . .but he who does the will of My Father in heaven”.

Does that mean you are saved by grace through faith in Jesus plus works? Paul makes it clear that it cannot mean that. The make-believer can apparently believe the correct facts about the gospel but never experience the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. The make-believer never experiences true repentance from sin—evidenced by a changed life—and a willingness to be obedient to God’s Word. I cannot bring assurance to a person; but God’s Word and the Holy Spirit can provide that assurance. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God” (Rom.8:14).

In chapter six of John’s gospel we read about Jesus feeding a great multitude with a few loaves and fish. The people wanted to make Jesus king. But he refused. Jesus told them; “you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled” (v.26). He told them “do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him”. (v. 28) Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” (29) Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” The people knew Jesus spoke of Himself. (v.30) Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will you perform then, that we may see it and believe You? Jesus explains that He is the Bread that came down from Heaven. Then Jesus says; (v.39) “This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. (v.40) “And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who see the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Jesus makes the case for genuine obedience to God’s Word.

Not in order to be saved! But rather as evidence that you are saved! The most convincing evidence is not simply a change in what we say—but in what we do! W. H. Griffith Thomas wrote; “Nothing is sadder, or more disastrous than orthodoxy of lip without orthodoxy of life; it is not only what we say, but also what we are and do that constitutes true disciple-ship, for every truth is to be transmitted into living” (see p.101; *Outline Studies in Matthew*).

The make-believer believes in Heaven and wants to go there.
Will the desire to go to heaven be enough to get you there?

The make-believer makes a false profession.
The make-believer fails to examine himself or herself.

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The make-believer appeals to good works as a source of salvation.

The make-believer will continue in sin with no repentance.

“The person who professes to be a Christian but who habitually and unrepentantly continues in known sin makes out God to be a liar, because His Word expressly denies that such a person belongs to Him (1 John 3:6-10).” (see John MacArthur p. 476).

1 John 3:23; “And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment”.

The person who does God’s will is the person who truly believes, obeys and loves God’s Son.

The Make-Believer’s False Profession (v.21b)

‘Lord, Lord’

The Lord Jesus is the first to admit that it is possible to lay claim to Jesus; to call Him Lord; and be set aside by the Lord unless their teaching and work reflect His Father’s will. We use the word profession in a number of different ways. Sometimes it means our vocation; or career. But here I use the word profession in the sense “to pretend” “to lay claim” “to purport” or to make a claim under false pretenses.

The speaker is protesting.

Profession is the idea of saying something—with no intention of doing something. Clearly the person calls Jesus Lord but refrains from doing His Lord’s will. Profession is “a form of godliness but denies the power”. This is the person who embraces the form of religion, ritual, formula’s but has no power to change the inward sinful circumstances of their lives.

The make-believer is not really saved!

Several years ago (1996) *George* magazine asked 800 Americans nationwide what they believed. 86% believed in God or a Supreme Being; 48% attended some religious service once a week. 86% believed in heaven; 77% believed in hell; 30% believed in reincarnation. Surprisingly 60% believed the world was created in six days, and 38% believed in evolution. Concerning one of the hot topics, 70% believed that life began at conception, yet the number of pro-lifers was only 49%! 67% believed that each religion is legitimate and valid. Depending on which poll you read, up to 50% of people claim to be born again Christians. The evidence seems overwhelming, there is a huge number of people who think they are Christians, who go to Christian Churches and who pray and read their Bible, who are in fact not Christians at all, and who are headed down the broad way that leads to destruction! **How can so many people be wrong about their spiritual condition?**

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The Make-Believer's False Performance (v.22)

22Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

Can the make-believer preach with success and promote spiritual war-fare and produce spectacular displays of power and be totally disconnected from the Lord Jesus Christ?

The make-believer appeals to his or her works as the basis of entrance into the Kingdom. The make-believer has confidence in religion or church in order to feel acceptable or comfortable!

The make-believer prophesies; casts out demons; serves in the name of the Lord.

Note what Jesus says; “Many will say to Me in that day”; what day? Judgment Day. Lord, Lord. Think about what Jesus implies—He is there—as Lord on Judgment Day. Your eternal destiny lies in His hands. Think about Jesus says—concerning those who are rejected! **They appeal to what they have done for Jesus rather than what Jesus has done for them!** The genuine believer is not going to count prayers; sermons; classes; confessions; rituals; activities; church or synagogue attendance; candles or contributions; we will worship Christ. We will praise His goodness and His grace and His mercy. The believer will appeal to grace and Christ's finished work. The make-believer will appeal to mercy and their own works. **The Believer will appeal to Christ's ability and Christ's goodness. The make-believer will appeal to their ability and their goodness.**

Note the “we”—have we not prophesied. Beware of people who exalt their own ministries—they love to name their ministries after themselves—rather than giving the glory to Jesus.

The make-believer appeals to their impressive works or seeming “good works”. The make-believer says—great preaching—effective healing—many miracles (Bruner p.286). Jesus does not seem to dispute their claims—how is this possible? Can the unbeliever or the make-believer generate supernatural signs, healing and miracles? It would appear so! Make-believers with power ministries? Jesus remains unimpressed with power ministries—but counts on a heart characterized by humility; a deep recognition of personal sin, and a willingness to turn to God for help!

How then do we account for the make-believers performing powerful signs and wonders? **We must be prepared to acknowledge that supernatural sources exist—some divine—some demonic.**

There are three possible explanations:

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1. Judas performed certain supernatural signs and wonders by the genuine power of God. Can God use the unbeliever or the make-believer to accomplish genuine God-ordained healings, signs and wonders? God used Balaam—wicked and compromised in the Old Testament (Numbers 23:5). King Saul—after his disobedience and relentless pursuit of David had the Spirit of God come upon him and he prophesied (1 Sam. 10:10). Even Caiaphas, the High Priest of Israel, unbelieving, wicked prophesied unknowingly and unwittingly concerning the death of Jesus, that he would die for the nation (see John 11:51).

2. Perhaps some signs were done by the power of Satan. Jesus predicted; “false Christ’s and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible even the elect (Matt. 24:24). I have reports of Indian Gurus making sacred ash appear and Tal Brooke reported seeing Sai Baba turn water into gasoline to make a vehicle drive. In the Old Testament we see magicians and sorcerers in Pharaoh’s Court duplicate certain circles but not others (see Exodus 7-8). The unbelieving sons of Sceva were said to cast out demons (Acts 19:13-14). Paul spoke of false signs in the last days, lying wonders of Satan (2 Thess. 2:8-10). Simon Magus, the so called sorcerer, was said to have believed, been baptized and performed miracles (Acts 8:11). Does it shock or surprise you there are people who perform miracles, exorcize demons, claim healing, but are in fact make-believers?

3. The false professors might be lying. Even though Jesus says; “many will say to Me in that day” their claims are false! Christians should never fake, or exaggerate the supernatural workings of God. They may have thought they were doing something supernatural—making legs grow longer—gold fillings in the teeth—is it possible genuine believers can make false claims? Do real healing events take place? I think so. Peter and John meet a man in the book of Acts and Peter says; “rise in the name of Jesus and walk”. Does a real God have real power? Yes. Does a lying Satan have real power? Yes. Do you human beings fake and falsify? Yes.

The Make-Believer’s Future Punishment (v.23)

23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

The Lord Jesus makes it clear that it is possible to have a false profession and not have true possession.

The statement of Jesus is revolutionary. He not only claims to fulfill the Law but claims to be the person who renders judgment on the last day! **Jesus alone decides who gains entry into heaven and who is kept from heaven.**

The Lord Jesus will declare to many; “I never knew you.” The make-believer has fooled himself; the make-believer may have even fooled you and me! But the make-believer will not be able to fool Jesus.

How is it possible to pretend to be a successful Christian and in the end utterly fail?

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The statement “I never knew you” cannot mean that Jesus has no idea who they are! The Lord Jesus is referring to an intimate—personal—friendship and fellowship—relationship. **Jesus believes in a saving relationship. The make-believer does not have a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ!**

The make-believer shares some of the same characteristics of the true believer! They make look the same and talk the same—but act very differently! “Yet Jesus disowns them. . . They own Jesus and Jesus disowns them; they honor him and he dishonors them; they work for him and he separates from them. . . is it possible to work for Jesus and yet not work under him?” (Bruner p. 287).

Many people call themselves Christians—but do not know Jesus or love Jesus—they are in love with power—the power that comes from understanding who Jesus is. They are intoxicated with power, but indifferent to the commands of Jesus. It is possible to be powerful for Jesus and yet not submit to Jesus or be humbled by Jesus Himself. Jesus says; “depart from me you workers of lawlessness”. How much clearer can it be? They hate God’s laws. They teach Jesus’ commandments—but refuse to submit to them.

Some may think isn’t it a little legalistic to expect people to refrain from practicing lawlessness?

The words of Jesus are sobering; “Depart from Me you who practice lawlessness”. Anomia (iniquity)—wickedness. It is the opposite of the law of God—it is the substitution of the human will over the Divine Will. It is the belief that I can trust myself—or this world—more than I can trust God. What does Jesus mean by “depart”? Where will they go? What will they do? The word “depart” (apochoreo)—to depart from—to be cut off—to leave—to go away—the idea is an enormous distance—a great gulf—between the professor—the make—believer—and the one who judges. “But the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8:12); “then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 22:13); “And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 24:51).

Conclusion

The make believer is willing to substitute a charismatic ministry (prophecy club—deliverance ministry—signs and wonders!) for simple obedience to Christ’s commands. No amount of spectacular—miracle crusades can substitute for obedience. Obedience may not get you on Television or the Radio or a book deal—obedience may not be glamorous—prophecy is glamorous, exorcism and miracles are glamorous—but they can never substitute for poverty of spirit; personal humility; biblical integrity; personal purity; mourning over sin and complete trust in Jesus Christ.

Are you a believer or a make-believer? What words will Jesus have for you?

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The make-believer loves power—sees angels—fights demons—hates sickness and disease—but has no interest in confessing and forsaking sin. The make believer has no interest in Christ’s commands; God’s standards or God’s glory. The make-believer is more interested in the gift—than the giver. The make-believer is more committed to the denomination or Christian organization than the Word of God. The make believer may be interested in theology—even orthodox theology—but has no interest in obedience to God’s Word. The make-believer believes it is our moral duty and ethical responsibility to embrace and empower those trapped in immoral sexual behavior rather than call them to repentance of sin and the forsaking of sin!

There is a comment engraved in stone in front of a grand Cathedral in Germany; it reads; “Thus speaketh Christ our Lord to us; You call me Master and obey Me not, you call Me the way and walk Me not, you call Me life and live Me not, you call me wise and follow Me not, you call Me fair and love Me not, you call Me rich and ask Me not, you call Me eternal and seek Me not, if I condemn thee, blame Me not” (illustration taken from John MacArthur p. 480).