

## DOES JESUS KNOW YOU?

### INTRODUCTION

Have you noticed how many Christians there are out there? In 2015 75% of Americans claimed to be Christians. With current population numbers, that makes 156 million adult Christians. Researchers place them in five groups.

28% are **cultural Christians**, who claim to be Christians because they are American. 32% are **private Christians**; they have their own definition of 'Christian.' 21% are **liturgical Christians**; they are Christians because they belong to the right church. 20% are **professing Christians**; their beliefs have little to do with the church, the Bible, or Jesus Himself. 25% – 39 million – are **active Christians**, who believe salvation is through Jesus Christ alone, attend church regularly, are consistent Bible readers, are concerned with growing in their faith, will accept positions of leadership, and want to share the faith with others.

I don't really know what we can make of those numbers. The Bible is clear about what it means to be a Christian:

A Christian is:

- a sinner who has been regenerated by grace alone,
- justified by faith alone,

- forgiven by Jesus' blood alone,
- granted faith and repentance as a gift from God,
- and made obedient by the Holy Spirit.

Based on Scripture I have to think that the number of true Christians is less – perhaps far less – than the 39 million who claim to have an active faith in Christ.

Then again, it's not my opinion that matters, is it? Only Jesus Christ's opinion matters, and He has something to say to the 75% of Americans – 156 million adults – who claim to be Christians.

Let's turn to [Matthew 7:21-23](#) and read what He says.

**Matthew 7:21-23 (2016 ESV) — 21** “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. **22** On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ **23** And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

LORD, LORD IS NOT A PASSWORD

**Matthew 7:21** (2016 ESV) — 21 “**Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’** will enter the kingdom of heaven ...”

Jesus immediately relieves us of a bad assumption: that everyone who claims to be a Christian IS a Christian. There are false converts in the church. Jesus even told a parable about false converts, the parable of the wheat and the tares. He makes it clear in that parable that human beings are not going to be able to tell the difference between true and false Christians, as long as the false confession is being made. Other Scriptures tell us that false converts often apostatize – they abandon their pretense of faith. But as long as someone claims to be a Christian, it's not our job to say whether they are or aren't.

But Jesus knows, doesn't He; of course He does.

**John 10:14 2016 ESV**

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,

Jesus knows His own. [Revelation 13:8](#) speaks of the Lamb's Book of Life, where the names of the elect have been written since before creation.

**TRANSITION:** Just saying "Lord, Lord" is not going to get anyone into the Kingdom of heaven. That confession must be matched by a life of faith in Jesus and obedience to the Father.

## DOING THE WILL OF JESUS' FATHER

**[Matthew 7:21](#) (2016 ESV) – 21** "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, **but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.**

The Kingdom of heaven is for those whose righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees ([Matthew 5:20](#)). “Therefore you must be perfect, and your Heavenly Father is perfect” ([Matthew 5:48](#)).

But no sinner can meet that standard, can they?

**Ecclesiastes 7:20 2016 ESV**

Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.

**Romans 3:23 2016 ESV**

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

God requires perfect righteousness for eternal life; no sinner is capable of that kind of righteousness. The only way for sinners to enter the Kingdom of God and have eternal life is for them to be justified: to be declared righteous by God. When we are born again by the grace of God, we are given faith in Jesus and His work on the cross. Through that faith we are justified – credited with Jesus’ own righteousness.

**TRANSITION:** So, those who claim to be Christians but whose lives show them to be unregenerate will face judgment on the last day.

## MANY WILL SAY

[Matthew 7:22](#) (2016 ESV) – **22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’**

The righteous have always been a small number, always a remnant of the majority, a kind of spiritual tithe on humanity. While we don't like the idea of anyone being condemned to hell, we can at least understand that idolators and rebels will face eternal judgment. But the truth is that there are many millions alive right now in the United States alone who think they are Christians because of some personal, unbiblical definition, yet are dead in their sins. At the moment of their death they will find themselves in the place of torment, awaiting judgment.

**TRANSITION:** Still, in spite of their torment and agony, they will be convinced that it's all a big mistake. They will offer up a bewildered defense to Jesus on the day of judgment.

## A BEWILDERED DEFENSE

[Matthew 7:22](#) (2016 ESV) — 22 Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?

When these words are spoken, Jesus has already pronounced judgment, and these people are bewildered and confused, and try to defend themselves. “Wait, Lord, what? You're sending us WHERE? No, something's wrong! Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and do many mighty works in Your name?” Do you need evidence that they are still dead in their sins, even at that moment? Here it is: they are trying to convince Jesus Christ, God in human flesh, given authority to judge all things, that His judgment is mistaken and in error.

**TRANSITION:** Listen to what Jesus says to that bewildered, “Lord, there has to be a mistake” defense.

## WHO DOES JESUS KNOW?

**[Matthew 7:23](#) (2016 ESV) — 23** And then will I declare to them, ‘**I never knew you**; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

The question evangelists should ask is not “Do you know the Lord?”, but “Does the Lord know you?” Are you His sheep? Have you been adopted into the family of God? Have you been born again by grace, justified by faith, forgiven by Jesus blood alone, given faith and repentance by the Father, and made obedient by the Holy Spirit? Does your faith and life match up to what the Scriptures describe as true of His children? If you have, then you can be sure that Jesus knows you.

But Jesus doesn’t know false prophets, and false exorcists, and false miracle workers, who claim to be His but are not. He doesn’t know those whose faith is nothing more than words they recite without thinking.

**TRANSITION:** At the very moment they are convinced that a terrible mistake has been made by Jesus Himself, He will speak the truth: “I never knew you.” If Jesus never knew them, their names were never written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, and they have no place in His Kingdom.

## THE LAWLESS ARE BANISHED

**[Matthew 7:23](#) (2016 ESV) — 23** And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; **depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.**’

Their good works? Lawlessness. Their best works, like prophecy, exorcisms, and miracles? Lawlessness. Even if they did those things – and they may be lying about them – they were done by unregenerate people who had no faith in Jesus, and whose lives were lived in disobedience to the Father. Jesus doesn't know them, and so He banishes them from His presence: "Depart from me."

You and I can't see into someone's heart, and so we don't know if their faith is real, or just words that they say. We can't see into someone's heart, and so we don't know if their good works are the result of true salvation, or lawless works done in a state of rebellion. But Jesus knows whether faith is genuine, because the Holy Spirit gives genuine faith. Jesus knows whether works are done in righteousness, because the Holy Spirit empowers them.

You and I may not be able to tell the difference in people's works, but Jesus can tell the difference. If He knows us as His sheep, His people, then our good works are good. If He doesn't know us as His own, then even our best works are just filthy rags, works of lawlessness.

## BRINGING IT HOME

Jesus' words here are sobering, and perhaps frightening. They are meant to be. The stakes could not be any higher; eternity is on the line. Jesus tells us that OUR righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees or we will not enter the Kingdom of heaven ([Matthew 5:20](#)). The Sermon on the Mount is a lengthy teaching on what it means to have that kind of righteousness. It's not a righteousness of words; it's a righteousness of action. Because of that, it's a righteousness we can never achieve on our own. The standards of heaven are far beyond the reach of even the best possible human being. Even if you prophecy, or cast out demons, or do many mighty works, you cannot meet God's standard for righteousness. If you believe that you CAN meet His standard, and so ignore His grace and mercy, then you run the risk of telling Jesus that He is wrong when He condemns you on the day of judgment.

Well, if we can't achieve the righteousness God demands, what is our hope? Jesus Christ is our hope; the Gospel is our hope. We look to our God to cause us to be born again by His grace. We look to Him to justify us because we believe in Jesus and what He did on the cross for us. We look to our Father to forgive our sins through Jesus' blood. We humbly accept the faith and repentance that the Father gives, so that we actually believe in Jesus, and actually turn away from our sins. And we call on our Father to make us obedient through His Spirit.

True Christians have one foot on earth and one foot in heaven. The Father doesn't save us, and then leave us on our own to figure out the rest. Those who have been saved by grace through faith (the Bible calls this justification) are also being saved, moment by moment, day by day (the Bible calls this sanctification). Those who are being saved day by day are also going to have their salvation finalized (the Bible calls this glorification). And those who are glorified will never be condemned, never be lost, never be cast away. The Lord will never send us away.

Is this foreign to you? is your religion all about YOUR works? Repent of that sin! Look to Jesus! Believe the Gospel! Give up your self-sufficiency and your pride, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and in due time He will raise you up!

Have you been saved? Are you being saved? Then give God the glory, and give Him thanks, and cooperate with Him as He works in and through you.

Let's pray!



