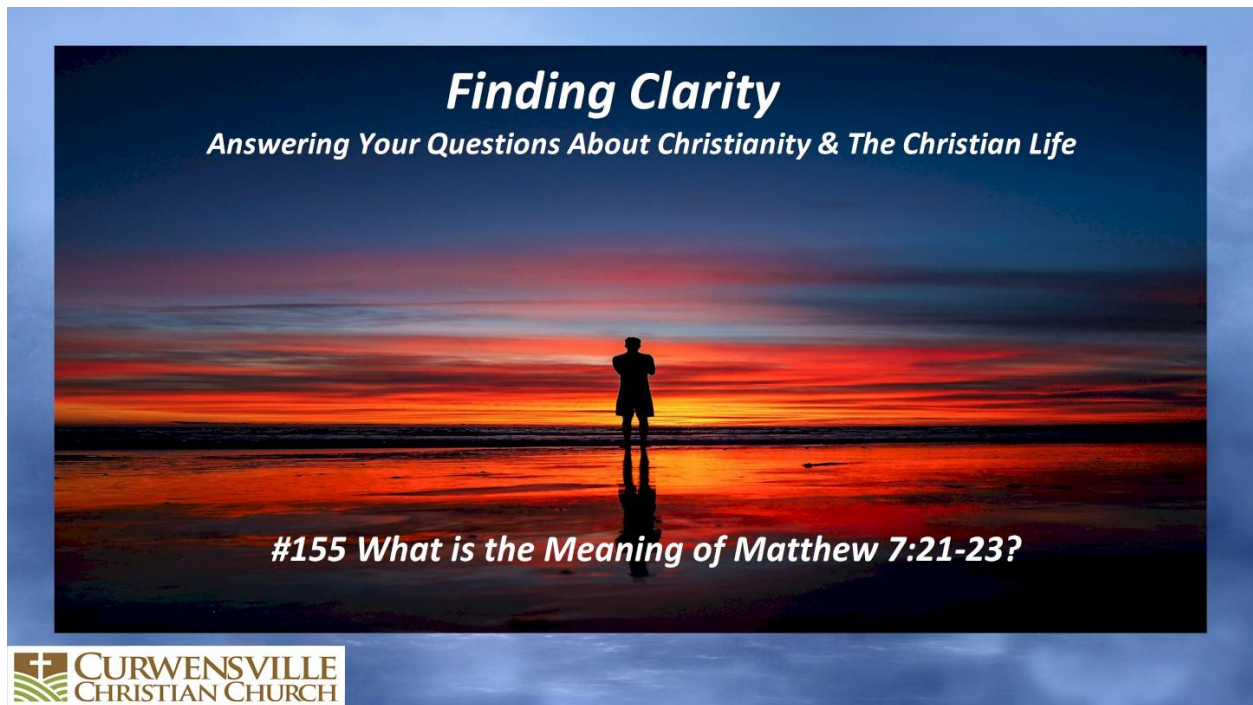




What is the Meaning of Matthew 7:21-23?

Episode #155

Introduction

I. Today's Question

What is the Meaning of Matthew 7:21-23?

Scripture **Matthew 7:21-23 (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.’

There is a harshness to the words of Jesus concerning those who were doing great things for the Lord. Even in spite of all that they did, Jesus abruptly declares that he never knew them and called them workers of lawlessness. What does this passage mean and what are the implications for those who call themselves “Christians?”

II. The Greater Context of Matthew 7

a. The first step to understanding the meaning of any passage is to look at the context of the passage.

b. The context of this passage is found in Matthew 7:15-27.

Scripture Matthew 7:15-27 (ESV)

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

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.’

²⁴ “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

c. In Matthew 7:15-20, Jesus tells us how to know who people are by looking at the fruit of their lives.

d. In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus tells us how obedience to his words show the reality of who we are.

III. Religious Works are Not Enough

- a. Jesus is pointing out that there are people who think they are saved and do religious actions.
- b. The problem is they really aren't saved; they just think that they are.
- c. In the time of the Final Judgment, Jesus will reject them.

IV. How is This Possible?

- a. These people had a misunderstanding about what it means to be saved.
- b. Salvation is more than just praying a prayer or being baptized.
- c. Salvation is recognizing who Jesus really is, what he has done for us on the cross, and committing your life to follow him.
- d. Sadly, there are many who falsely think they are okay with God because of their religious activities.

V. Implications

- a. The abruptness of Jesus' words should cause us to reflect on what we are trusting in for our salvation (a prayer, baptism, experiences or faith).
- b. Jesus' words stress the importance of the intimate relationship that believers have with him.

Conclusion