

## All Good People Go to Heaven

Big Idea: Only people who know Jesus go to heaven.

Read the Bible:  
Matthew 7: 21-23

### **STUDY**

\*\*\* Before interacting with this guide, all leaders should study the referenced texts using the HEAR Method. It's also important to encourage your group members to read the text using the HEAR Method. \*\*\*

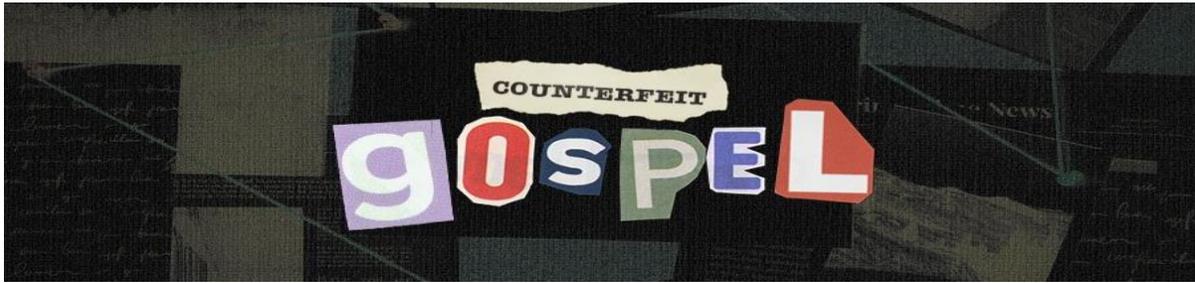
H: Highlight, or take note of, things in the passage that stick out to you as you read.

E: Explain what the passage means by asking simple questions of the text:

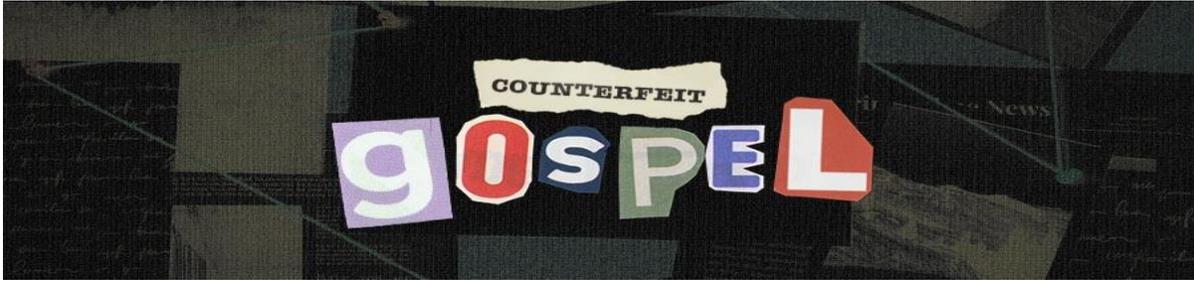
- **Why was this written?**
- **To whom was it originally written?**
- **How does it fit with the verses before and after it?**
- **Why did the Holy Spirit include this passage in the book?**
- **What is He intending to communicate through this text?**

A: Apply the text to your life. What does God want you to learn from this text?

R: Respond to God in prayer.



<sup>21</sup> "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.<sup>22</sup> 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?' <sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'



## Summary

It's probably unspoken, but the truth is many of us, most of us, even those of us who know better live with a faulty assumption about who goes to heaven. We know that Jesus came to die on a cross to give us eternal life. No doubt we think that is necessary, but, if we are honest, we believe that all that's necessary for us to make it to heaven, for us to be allowed into the pearly gates, is our efforts to be a good person.

Jesus died for us. We need to be a good person for Jesus. Boom We'll make it in.

The equation goes something like this: good deeds + Jesus' death = heaven.

The problem with this logic is that it goes directly against the gospel. The gospel is not your works + Jesus = heaven. The gospel is your sin + Jesus' blood = heaven.

I think we all know this, but the truth is we just don't believe it. We believe that so much depends on us.

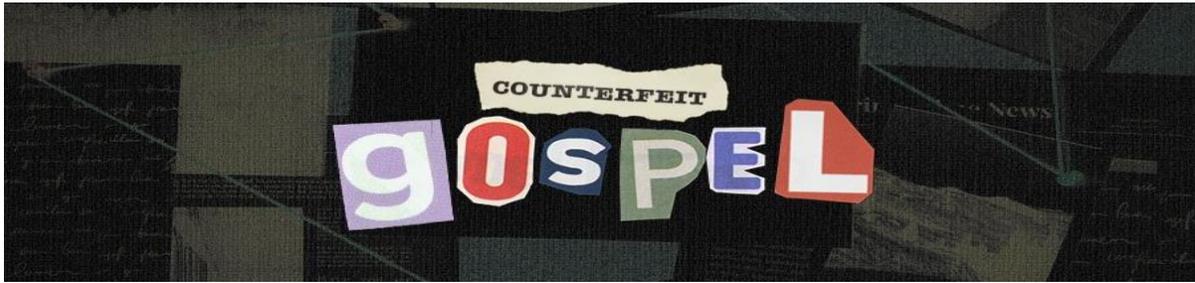
Jesus is out to destroy that idea in this text. It's not about what you do. It's about who you know.

The people before Christ in this text were the best of best. They were people who were the best Christians possible. The works they did for the Lord were totally over the top! You ever driven out a demon? They have! However, despite all their good works, despite how good of people they were, they still wound up in hell.

Why?

Life's not about what you do. It's about who you know.

Work all you want, but it won't save you. Only a relationship with Jesus Christ gets us into heaven.



## **Leading Your Group**

### **Community Time**

Start group by asking for Prayer requests and checking in on everyone.

### **Bible Study**

\*\*\*Have everyone in your group read assigned scripture before meeting. \*\*\*

Start Group by Reading Matthew 7:22-23

### **Major Points**

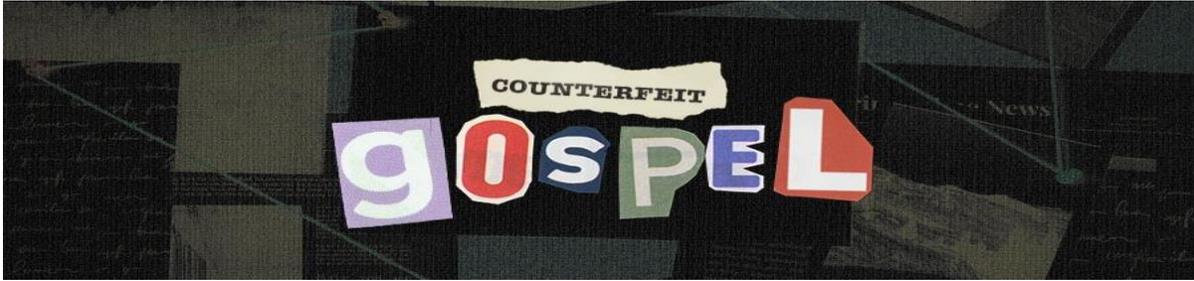
#### **Point No. 1 You Can Profess Christ As Lord Without Knowing Christ as Lord.**

The people in question call Christ Lord! That's not an unimportant claim. Romans says that if we "believe in our heart and confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord, we will be saved." So, addressing Jesus as Lord is not a bad thing.

However, lip service is of no use. Proclaiming Christ as Lord without submitting to Christ as Lord is useless.

Jesus seems to be getting at just this when he says the, "one who does the will of my father," will get into heaven. In other words, it's not about saying it with your mouth and following up with empty actions. It's about submitting your heart to Jesus and doing what he says.

Spurgeon says it well: An orthodox creed will not save if it stands alone. Without personal holiness, the caster-out of devils will be cast out himself.



Nothing will prove us to be true Christians but a sincere doing of the Father's will!

Discuss:

How can we be sure that we are known by Christ and have submitted to him as Lord?

What does it mean to do the will of the Father in our lives?

Are there times when you just pay lip service to Christ?

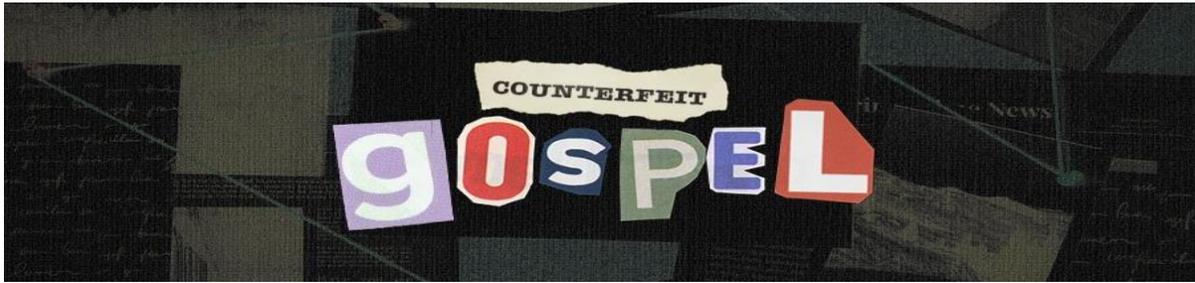
**Point No. 2: Continued Disobedience Proves People Don't Know Jesus.**

Notice what Christ says about the people who are cast out: they are law breakers.

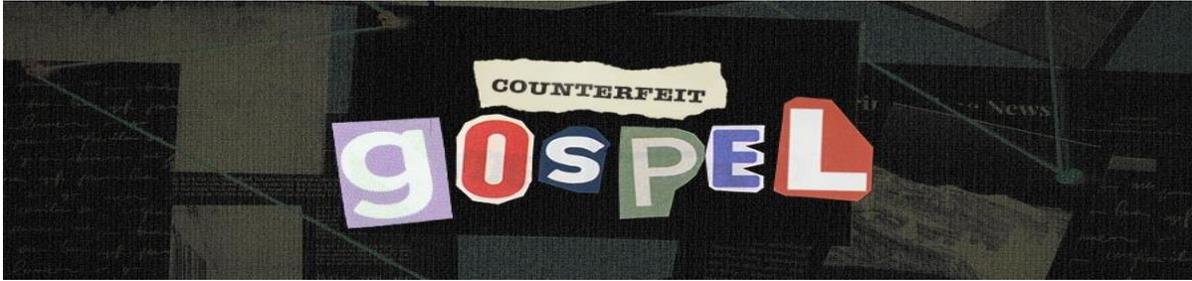
Now this is a weird thing to say about people who were so faithful. Look at all the stuff they did. Evidently, all these actions were just them attempting to be a good person. Jesus is not fooled by appearances. He calls them "lawbreakers." In other words, they pretended to be faithful but in actuality they never tried to truly follow Jesus in obedience. We have a word for these kinds of people. Hypocrites.

Discuss:

How do we fight hypocrisy in our lives?



Are there times when you are tempted to simply pay lip service to Christ and just make a good appearance to the world? How do you fight against that?

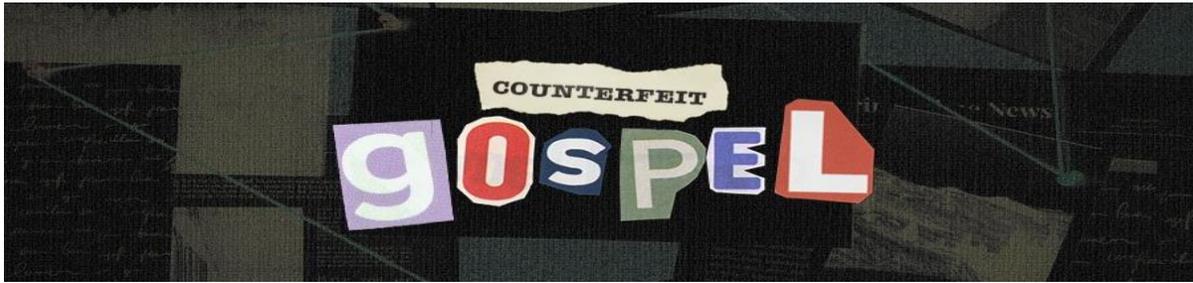


## Resources

### Pillar New Testament Commentary

21. From the broad and narrow ways and from the bearing of good or bad fruit Jesus moves on to the consummation. Just as there are only two ways, so in the end there are only two destinations. This means also that he moves from the way his people can recognize false prophets to his condemnation of such people. When *the kingdom of heaven* (see on 3:2) comes in all its fulness, it will not be people's profession that counts, but their profession as shown in the way they live. **NotError! Hyperlink reference not valid.** *every one* does not mean that none who use the expression will enter the kingdom: Jesus is not saying that it is a bad thing to say to him "*Lord, Lord,*" but that it is insufficient. He has just made emphatically the point that a person's deeds show what the person is, and he is now saying that words are not the significant thing. It is easy for anyone to profess loyalty, but to practice it is quite another thing. *Says* stands in contrast to *does*; words are not enough. The word *Lord* was used in a variety of ways. Originally it meant the owner of anything (cf. 20:8), but it could be used of important people generally. It thus became a conventional form of address in polite society, very much like our "Sir" (cf. 21:30). The Romans used it of their emperor (Acts 25:26), and the term was in common use of the gods people worshipped (1 Cor. 8:5). When the Old Testament was translated into Greek, *Lord* was employed consistently as the translation for the divine name Yahweh. It was the word the Christians found used of God in their Bible, and accordingly it was very significant when they came to call Jesus by this title. It is a title of majesty. In this Gospel it is used to refer to Jesus only once (21:3), apart from its use as a form of address (which shows that Matthew is not indiscriminately reading back into Jesus' lifetime the title that was so common in the church of his day).

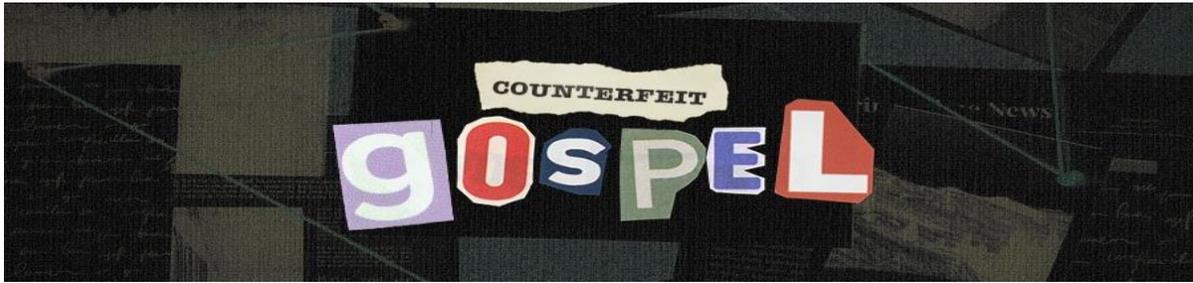
Here, of course, *Lord* could be simply the polite form of address, but since it refers to what will happen on Judgment Day it more likely has overtones of divinity. On Judgment Day Jesus will be seen for what he really is, and the greeting here implies that the people in question will be claiming to belong to him. But their claim will be of no avail, Jesus says, unless their lives back it up. It is doing the will of the Father that matters, not the words we profess. This is not salvation by works: the contrast is not between merit and grace, but between profession and way of life. If people really trust Christ for salvation, their lives will no longer be self-centered; that they belong to the good tree will be made manifest by the fruit they bear. The history of the church is replete with examples of ecclesiastics who made free use of expressions like "*Lord, Lord,*" but whose arrogant and self-centered lives made a mockery of their words. Jesus is not saying that those saved will have earned their salvation, but that the reality of their faith will be made clear by their fruitful lives. We should notice his use of *my Father*, the first use of this expression in this Gospel;



Jesus often refers to the Father in such a way as to imply a close personal relationship (10:32–33; 12:50; 16:17; 18:10, 19). His relationship to the Father is not the same as that of others.

22. For the *many* who will rise up cf. 24:11. *That day* is not described further, but clearly what is meant is Judgment Day, the day at the end of this world's life when all will give account of themselves to God. That the people will make their plea to Jesus shows that he will be their Judge at the critical time (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10). The doubled *Lord* is apparently a way of emphasizing lordship; the speakers insist that they regard Jesus as their Lord. They go on to speak of things done in the name of Jesus that they regard as significant. The question "*did we not prophesy?*" looks for an affirmative answer: there is not a doubt that they did this. The *name* (see on 6:9) stands for the whole person, and actions done *in* the name (which here clearly means something like "with the authority of the name") are listed accordingly as evidence of submission to the lordship of Jesus. **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** Since there is no preposition, the meaning may be "with" the name rather than "in" the name, in which case the claim is that they had the name as the weapon they could wield. These people had been active in the service of God; **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** says, "they had done everything but the Lord's will," and this is the critical thing. To be active in religious affairs is no substitute for obeying God.

They claimed to have done a number of things. First they asked, "*did we not prophesy?*" The word signifies speaking in the name of God, which may be meant in the sense that they revealed what is hidden or that they foretold the future (their claim would be that they could not do this in the name of Jesus unless Jesus approved). Second, they said that they had *cast out demons*. In secular Greek the word for "demon" could mean a deity. Or it might refer to an aspect of human personality, for example when Plato speaks of the "genius" of Socrates (*Euthyphro* 7.b). But in the New Testament demons were beings who occupied a position somewhere between people and God and were especially linked with Satan. In the Gospels their deeds are evil, and they sometimes bring striking physical limitations to people in whom they make their dwelling. Jesus expelled demons from sufferers on a number of occasions, and exorcisms are here regarded as meritorious works, done in the name and the spirit of Jesus. *Mighty works* are miracles (the term is often used of Jesus' healing miracles), though there is no indication of precisely what form the miracles of the false teachers took. But to do any kind of miracle in Jesus' name is surely something that might be pleaded on Judgment Day? Certainly these teachers thought so. That there were *many* shows that such miracles were done in abundance. The group of three outstanding achievements is pleaded as clear evidence that those who performed them were in good standing with Jesus (*name* is in an emphatic position in each clause). But those who so plead have overlooked the fact that there can be "lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9).

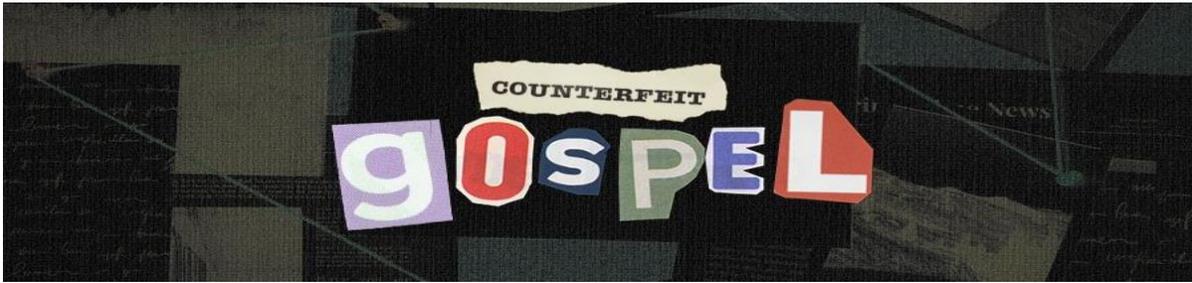


23. *Then* (see on 2:7; this is the unclassical use “to introduce that which follows in time,” **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**, 2) leads us into Jesus’ rejoinder. He will *say ... plainly*, **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** which leads into his verdict of total rejection. “*I never knew you*” (cf. [25:12](#)) does not, of course, mean that he was ignorant of their existence, but rather that he never acknowledged them; he never recognized them as what they claimed to be (**Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**, “You were never friends of mine”). *You* is in contrast to the threefold “your” of the previous verse. The rest of his rebuke is given in the words of [Psalm 6:8](#). “*Go away from me*” (cf. [25:41](#)) means total rejection (“away from me,”; “out of my sight, you and your wicked ways,” , is more paraphrase than translation, but it brings out the force of the original). *You who work* renders a participle that conveys the meaning of habitual practice; they are not condemned for an occasional error but for consistent wrongdoing. *Lawlessness* is basically the rejection of the law of God. The word is often translated in terms of wrongdoing (“evildoers”), which is, of course, involved. But the term points to a refusal to submit to the law of God; **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** all the wrongdoing follows inevitably from this refusal. The words of these people may be good words, but their lives are lawless. On this passage **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** comments, “Verses [21–23](#) are a dreadful warning: the most orthodox avowals of faith have no value in the eyes of God if they are not translated into concrete obedience to his will. One may with his lips loudly profess his faith in God, and even invoke Jesus as Lord, yet deny him by thoughts, words, and acts.”

### c. *Two claims* ([7:21–23](#))

**21–23** If vv. [15–20](#) deal with false prophets, vv. [21–23](#) deal with false followers. Perhaps some became false because of the false prophets. Their cry of “Lord, Lord” (v. [21](#)) reflects fervency. In Jesus’ day it is doubtful whether “Lord” when used to address him meant more than “teacher” or “sir.” But in the postresurrection period, it becomes an appellation of worship and a confession of Jesus’ deity. Therefore some suspect an anachronism here. Two factors support authenticity: (1) the parallel in [Luke 6:46](#) (cf. also [John 13:12–16](#)); (2) the fact that throughout Jesus’ ministry he referred to himself in relatively veiled categories whose full significance could only be grasped after the Resurrection. The latter point is central to understanding the “Son of Man” title (see on [8:20](#)), recurs in various forms throughout all the Gospels, and is especially focal in John (cf. Carson, “Christological Ambiguities”; **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**, “Understanding Misunderstandings in the Fourth Gospel,” *Tyndale Bulletin* [1982]: 59–91).

On the background of *kyrios* (“Lord”) as a christological title, see Fitzmyer, *Wandering Aramaen*, pp. 115–32. Here Jesus’ point is made during his ministry, if at that time his disciples understood “Lord” to mean “teacher.” But implicitly Jesus is claiming more, since his “name” becomes the focus of kingdom activity; and he alone decrees who does or does not enter the



kingdom (vv. 22–23). Thus the warning and rebuke would take on added force when early Christians read the passage from their postresurrection perspective.

Indeed, the tables may be turned. Far from providing evidence that virtually every use of *kyrios* (“Lord”) in this Gospel is anachronistic because it presupposes a high christology (e.g., Kingsbury, *Matthew*), these verses suggest that Matthew is painfully aware that the title may mean nothing. This explains, for instance, the deep irony of Peter’s “Never, Lord” (16:22). Jesus himself is preparing his followers to put the deepest content in the title. For finally obedience, not titles, is decisive.

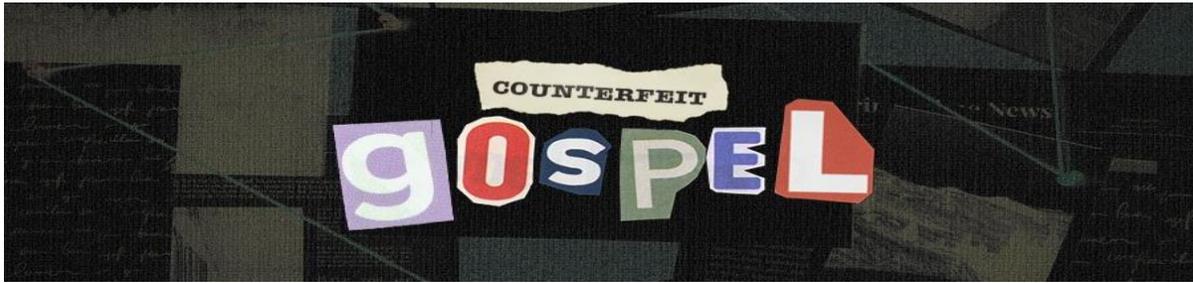
The determinative factor regarding who enters the kingdom is obedience to the Father’s will (v. 19; cf. 12:50). This is the first use of “my Father” in Matthew (cf. Luke 2:49; John 2:16); as such it may support the truth, taught throughout the sermon, that Jesus alone claims to be the authoritative Revealer of his Father’s will (Mt 7:21). It quite misses the point to say that the Father’s will is simply the OT law mildly touched up by Jesus, and that therefore the Matthean church “seems to have been unaware of or uninfluenced by Pauline Christianity” (Hill, *Matthew*), for:

1. If the preceding exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount is correct, Matthew is not saying that Jesus is simply taking over the law but that Jesus *fulfills* the law and thus determines the nature of its continuity.

2. Within this framework Matthew presents Jesus as standing at a different (i.e., earlier) point in salvation-history than any church in Matthew’s day, for Jesus is the one who brings about the new dispensation.

3. Paul’s alleged antinomian tendencies are implicitly exaggerated by Hill’s reconstruction, for it is difficult to think of one thing in the sermon Paul does not say in other words. The differences between Matthew and Paul—and there are major ones—have more to do with differences in interest and in their relative place in the stream of redemptive history. Moreover, Matthew, as we shall see, strongly stresses grace; therefore it is legitimate to wonder whether he is presenting obedience to the will of the Father as the ground or as the requirement for entrance to the kingdom. Paul would deny only the former and insist on the latter no less than Matthew would.

“That day” is the Day of Judgment (cf. Mal 3:17–18; 1 Enoch 45:3; cf. Matt 25:31–46; Luke 10:12; 2 Thess 1:7–10; 2 Tim 1:12; 4:8; Rev 16:14). The false claimants have prophesied in Jesus’ name and by that name exorcised demons and performed miracles. There is no reason to judge their claims false; their claims are not false but insufficient. Significantly the miracles Jesus



specifies were all done by his disciples during his ministry (cf. Mt 10:1–4): he does not mention a later gift, such as tongues.

Verse 23 presupposes an implicit christology of the highest order. Jesus himself not only decides who enters the kingdom on the last day but also who will be banished from his presence. That he never knew these false claimants strikes a common biblical note, , how close to spiritual reality one may come while knowing nothing of its fundamental reality (e.g., Balaam; Judas Iscariot; Mark 9:38–39; 1 Cor 13:2; Heb 3:14; 1 John 2:19). “But not everyone who speaks in a spirit is a prophet, except he have the behavior of the Lord” (*Didache* 11.8).

Two final observations can be made. First, although “I have nothing to do with you” is the mildest of rabbinic bans, 4:293), the words used here are clearly final and eschatological in a solemn context of “that day” and entrance into the kingdom. Second, “Away from me, you evildoers” is quoted from Psalms 6:8 (cf. Luke 13:27). In the psalm the sufferer, vindicated by Yahweh, tells the evildoers to depart. Again it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Jesus himself links the authority of the messianic King with the righteous Sufferer, however veiled the allusion may be (see on 3:17).