

Matthew 12:33 Knowing the Tree by Its Fruit

Introduction: The Pharisees had judged Jesus by their prejudice and accused Him of casting out a demon spirit by the power of Satan. Jesus gave them a principle whereby they might accurately judge Him.

I. The principle as set forth in the text.

- A. The principle is “a tree is known by its fruit.”
- B. A tree either bears a good, edible fruit or else it bears a poisonous or foul tasting non-edible fruit, not useful (edible or non-edible.)
 - 1. It does not make sense to say “this is a good tree” if its fruit is bad.
 - 2. Nor does it make sense to say “this tree is no good” if the tree bears good fruit.
(Not that every piece of fruit on the tree is good, but its kind is good.)
- C. A tree may be known by its size, leaves, form, etc., but a fruit tree is judged only by the goodness of its fruit.

II. The principle as applied to Jesus.

- A. The mistake that the Pharisees made in judging Jesus is that He produced only good fruit and yet they judged the tree to be bad.
- B. They could easily see that casting the demon out was a good thing.
(Restoring the sight and making him able to see was a good thing.)
- C. All of His other miracles were good things.
(Healing lepers, the lame, the blind, the deformed; restoring life to the dead.)
- D. Every single deed of His life was good.
 - 1. He had no sin whatsoever.
 - 2. His is the only life with all good fruit.

III. The principle as applied to the Pharisees.

- A. Theirs was a life of hypocrisy and self-righteousness.
 - 1. Wherein they made a big pretense of keeping the Law, they had just recently met and plotted to murder Jesus (contrary to the Law), verse 14.
 - 2. They made a big show of giving to the poor, but they never hesitated to steal from poor helpless widows, Matthew 23:14.
- B. They were proven by their works to be blind leaders of the blind.

IV. The principle as applied to any particular religion.

- A. A religion is not Christian just because it wears the name of Christian.
- B. If its gospel message produces only reformation but not a new birth, it is not from Jesus Christ.
- C. If its doctrines are not the doctrines of the New Testament it is not a Christian religion.
- D. If its moral standards endorse gambling, drunkenness, homosexuality and murder of the unborn it is not a Christian religion.
- E. On the other hand if it preaches the true gospel, teaches New Testament doctrines and holds to Biblical moral standards it is of Christ.
- F. One of the real marks of true Christianity is that it makes honest men out of thieves, sober men out of drunks, and models of morality out of adulterers and adulteresses.

V. The principle by which the gospel itself may be judged.

- A. Some men preach a gospel of good works. (They make it sound so convincing that many are persuaded to believe it.)
- B. But according to the principle set forth in the text it would be impossible for this to be the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- C. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good works.
 - 1. Therefore it would be impossible for any member of Adam's fallen race to produce the kind of fruits that it would take to get him into heaven.
 - 2. The nature of the tree must first be changed.
 - 3. That requires the new birth to change the nature.
 - 4. This comes by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

VI. This principle will be a basis for judgment.

- A. The fruitage of a man's life will be tested.
 - 1. Not to find out if he is saved or unsaved.
 - 2. Not to find out if he goes to heaven or to hell.
- B. But to determine the rewards for the saved and the degree of punishment for the unsaved.

Conclusion:

- 1. Has your nature been changed in the new birth? If not then trust Jesus and be saved now.
- 2. Even if you are a good tree producing good fruit, are you producing as Jesus would have you to do?

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