

“The Highway to Hell” (Matthew 7:13–23)

In the early 90s, I played basketball at Multnomah Bible College. My basketball career is now a blur of mediocrity. However, one particular game stands out to me: Multnomah Bible College vs. Reed College. Reed is a well-known bastion of tolerance that is the antithesis of Multnomah. What I vividly recall from this game was the warm-ups. The moment our team took the floor for our layup drills, Reed starting playing AC/DC’s infamous songs “Highway to Hell” and “Hell’s Bells” over and over. The Reed players and fans laughed and mocked while we just went about our business. This desperate but rather clever attempt to “get into our heads” failed. We beat them by a whopping fifty points! (I had to share this.) What I remember, however, was my grief that many (if not all) of these young people were headed to a Christless eternity. What these players and fans thought was one big joke was actually dead serious. This led me to ask the question, “What is the difference between these Reed students and me?” I quickly thought through total depravity and unconditional election, but then recognized that certain passages emphasize the necessity to believe in Christ.¹ In other words, from humankind’s vantage point what distinguishes us from one another are the choices we make. We make decisions and then those decisions turn around and make us.² To say it another way: *“Your decision about Christ affects your destination.”* In Matthew 7:13–23,³ Jesus gives two charges that will help you to make correct choices.

1. Choose narrow over broad (7:13–14).⁴ In these two familiar verses Jesus warns, “Don’t worry about being PC—Politically Correct; instead, be SC—Spiritually Correct. He begins with a command and then follows it up with two reasons: **“Enter through the narrow⁵ gate for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow⁶ that leads to life, and there are few who find it”** (7:13–14). Jesus sets before the crowd an either/or choice regarding eternal life.⁷ There are two gates, two ways, and two destinies. The key to understanding this section is that one enters through the gate and then begins traveling the road of discipleship. Jesus is the narrow gate. His narrow gate leads to a kingdom. The way of discipleship then stretches throughout one’s years on earth, ultimately leading to life eternal.⁸ Unfortunately, many people will choose the more appealing wide and broad gate not realizing that it leads to eternal destruction. Obviously, Jesus didn’t say these words with a smile on His face. It doesn’t make Him happy that only a few find the way; He’s simply stating a sad fact of life. Even in America, only 34% of people consider themselves born-again Christians. Yet, more reasonable observations place the percentage at about 23%. That means 77% of Americans are headed to destruction...and America is one of the greatest Christian nations in the world. No matter how you slice it, Christians are a minority in any population sample.⁹ But Jesus predicted this 2,000 years ago.

Interestingly, Jesus uses the term “narrow” in both 7:13 and 14.¹⁰ This description has never been welcome, but it is particularly offensive to 21st century ears. “Call me vain, call me proud, call me mean—but don’t call me narrow!”¹¹ People are all about tolerance, pluralism, and inclusivism. Yet, Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6). Peter declared, “And there is salvation in no one else [than Jesus]; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). This message isn’t too popular in our pluralistic culture. But this is not my idea; it was Jesus’ idea...and it is His message! In the end, therefore, life’s biggest decision is what you do with Jesus. There are two gospels in this world: the polluted gospel: Christ + something = nothing, or the pure gospel which is Christ + nothing = everything. You cannot find God’s will or way by appealing to the majority.¹² Instead, you must look to Christ. The word that is translated “find” (*heurisko*) is never used to describe an intense yet futile search for something that is hard to find; it’s used to describe something that is found simply by making the effort to look for it.¹³ Seeking and finding are closely related. The implication is not that many people look for the way yet never find it; the implication is that not many bother to look. If you look to Christ you will find Him. *Your decision about Christ affects your destination.*

[Jesus says, “Choose narrow over broad” because the narrow way leads to life. The second charge that Jesus shares is...]

2. Choose accuracy over appearance (7:15–23).¹⁴ When Satan wants to steer people in the direction of the broad gate, he uses special human messengers called “false prophets” (7:15). In the verses that follow, Jesus warns us to differentiate between true and false prophets.¹⁵ Why is it so important to be able to recognize a false prophet? Because a prophet speaks for God! He stands at the crossroads, where the two gates are, pointing people either to the narrow gate or the wide one. If what the prophet says is wrong, then all who believe his message are in danger of being lost forever. In 7:15, Jesus speaks a principle that clarifies this section: **“Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”** The word translated “beware” (*prosecho*) is both a warning and a command, which means you should constantly be alert.¹⁶ The reason for concern is that false prophets are deceptive—always have been, always will be. This is why 24 out of 27 New Testament books warn believers against false teachers. If they were easy to detect, there would be no need for continual warnings. Furthermore, one of the primary responsibilities of elders is to protect the church (i.e., sheep) from false teachers. In the fourth century, Augustine said, “There are many sheep without, many wolves within.”¹⁷ Augustine unknowingly prophesied about the church of America in the 21st century! Think about it: If you were Satan, how would you seek to deceive people? You would most likely use religion and religious teachers. The church of Satan is too extreme and in-your-face, but cults and world religions are Satan’s “bread-and-butter!” The backdoor or incognito approach is always more effective. Remember, “Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:14).

Appearances can be deceiving. Every year *People* magazine publishes an issue dedicated to the 50 most beautiful people in the world. (I guess I’m #51, because I’ve never been included in their list.) This is one of their most popular issues, because these are, in fact, beautiful people. But when you look beyond the perfect smiles, perfect hair, perfect bodies and examine the content of these people’s lives, you will see that they are just as messed up as anyone—if not more so. Their lives are characterized by divorce and rehab and career conflict and on and on. They may be the 50 most beautiful people, but they’re not the 50 most “together” people; they’re not the 50 most “emotionally well-adjusted” people; they’re not the 50 most godly people.¹⁸ But, of course, an entire issue dedicated to any of these topics probably wouldn’t sell very well because we are appearance oriented. Similarly, believers can be duped by appearances when it comes to preachers we prefer. If a preacher is boring or unimpressive in stature or appearance, we disregard him. If a preacher is captivating, good looking, and speaks positive thoughts we adore him. We can be very gullible! This is why Jesus says we must beware of false prophets.

In 7:16–20, Jesus explains how to identify false prophets: **“You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits.”** These verses are bracketed by the phrase “you will know them by their fruits” (7:16, 20). This section of Scripture has been used by believers to support judging whether someone is saved. I have heard countless “fruit inspectors” exclaim, “Bill/Jane is not living like a believer so he/she can’t be a Christian! After all, you will know them by their fruits.” While this may sound biblical, it is not! The Bible does not condone “fruit inspecting” as it pertains to someone else’s salvation. It is God’s responsibility to judge, not yours or mine! There is an old maxim: “A text out of context is a pretext.” Matt 7:16, 20 may be the best case in point. It is widely assumed that the “fruits” in this passage refers to “the fruit (note singular) of the Spirit” of Gal 5:22–23. However, every believer struggles with the fruit of the Spirit. If salvation is dependent upon the fruit of the Spirit, any godly person would assume he or she is lost. Others believe that the fruits refer to “works” that give evidence of one’s salvation. Yet, by whose measure of works should we judge someone’s salvation? The amount of fruit necessary to please one Christian “fruit inspector” may not please the next “fruit inspector.”¹⁹

What is false about false prophets is not their outward works.²⁰ Jesus has just declared that they look like sheep! If false prophets did not perform good works no one would believe them. Today false prophets often live and act like Christians.²¹ How many times have you heard someone say of a cultist, “But he lives such a good life, I can’t believe he’s not a Christian.” Thus, their falsity is not found in their actions.²² Obviously, there has to be another more reliable solution to these verses. And there is! What makes a prophet a prophet? What makes a false prophet dangerous? The answer to both of these questions is *words*; specifically, prophetic words or prophecies. By “fruits” Jesus is referring to what comes from the *lips* of a false prophet, not the *life* of a false prophet. This is confirmed in Matt 12:33–37 where Jesus uses nearly identical language.²³ Therefore, Jesus admonishes disciples to be “fruit inspectors” of those passing themselves off as prophets.

The Jewish audience Matthew addresses would naturally think of two Old Testament passages. One refers to a false prophet whose prophecy actually came to pass (Deut 13:1–5);²⁴ the other to a false prophet whose prophecy was not fulfilled (Deut 18:20–22). In both situations, the emphasis is not on how the prophet lived, but on what he said.²⁵ The people of Israel were told to observe what a prophet *says* and see if it aligns with what *God* says, regardless of any signs the prophet might perform with his prophesying. It may surprise you to know that it *makes no difference* whether signs or wonders accompany a prophet’s message. If his message does not agree with what God has said, that prophet is to be recognized as a false prophet.²⁶ The true test for discovering a false prophet or teacher is to compare his or her message with God’s Word. This has always been the test for discovering who speaks for God and who does not. Since God cannot possibly contradict Himself (Num 23:19) and His Word stands forever (Isa 40:8), we must judge those who claim to speak for God by the Word.

Fortunately, the Scriptures provide several criteria for identifying false prophets. Deut 18:20 says false prophets speak in the name of other gods; Micah 3:11 says false prophets prophesy for money. In 1 Cor 12:3 false prophets do not confess Jesus as Lord. In 1 John 4:2 false prophets do not confess Jesus having, and remaining in the flesh. In Matt 24:24–27 false prophets do not view Jesus’ return as a cosmic event. In 2 Pet 2 false prophets have libertine ethics.²⁷ We can discern whether a prophet’s message is false by knowing the *truth*! The FBI trains their agents to detect counterfeit bills by studying authentic bills. If they can master the genuine article they can easily pick out what is counterfeit. This is also true with false teaching. If you immerse yourself in the Scriptures and biblical teaching, you will be able to ferret out what is false. You don’t have to be a “cult expert,” you just need to be a diligent Bible student.

In 7:21–23, Jesus utters some of the most frightening verses in the entire Bible. Jesus says, “**Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’²⁸ will enter the kingdom of heaven,²⁹ but he who does the will of My Father³⁰ who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will³¹ declare to them, ‘I never knew³² you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’”** Many have looked at these verses and although they have lived godly lives have wondered, “Have I been good enough?” Some have even used that phrase, “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you’” to warn Christians that if their lives and service for the Lord is inadequate they may not get to heaven—an idea nowhere taught in Scripture. If Jesus’ point in 7:21 were that faith is not enough, that good works or obedience is also necessary in order to be saved, then Jesus should have said something like this in 7:22: “Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, we trusted in you alone, we had faith in you alone, we believed the Bible and your words.’” But of course Jesus says nothing of the sort. The key to understanding these verses is found in the context. It is critical to see that these verses directly tie into the previous discussion on false prophets (7:15–20). Matt 7:15–23 clearly distinguishes between “you” and “them.” In 7:23, the pronoun “them” links back to the “them” in 7:20.³³ The “them” in 7:20 refers to the false prophets of 7:15. So Jesus isn’t talking about believers in general, but false prophets in particular. In these three verses, He shares three ways that we can’t identify false prophets.³⁴

- ***We cannot identify false prophets by the vocabulary they use.*** They will acknowledge the lordship of Jesus Christ, addressing him as “Lord.” Not only will they say it once, they will repeat it: “Lord, Lord.” Recognizing the gravity of the situation, they will plead for their lives. This repetition of “Lord” may also suggest that they think they are on familiar terms with Jesus. Next, they will ask Jesus a series of questions, calling Christ as a witness in their defense. Notice that they will not directly assert that they have done good works. They will speak in interrogative, not declarative, sentences. Because of this, their defense will actually be much stronger than their own mere declarations would have been: They will call Christ Jesus Himself as their defense witness. They will ask Him to testify to the facts of their lives: their prophesying, exorcising, and wonderworking.³⁵ Yet, these false prophets have not truly trusted in Jesus Christ as their Savior.
- ***We cannot identify false prophets by the miracles they perform.*** What could be more notable than prophesying, casting out demons, and doing many wonderful works? I don’t know about you, but I haven’t performed any of these works recently. These are astounding works! But is it really possible for an unbeliever to be used by God? Yes it is. Judas is an example. The disciples all went out two by two and they all came back saying, “The demons are subject to us” (Luke 10:17). There is no hint that Judas stood out as any different from the others. It is possible to drive out demons and yet not have faith in Jesus (Acts 19:13). In Matt 24:24, Jesus states that false prophets may be able to perform such marvelous signs and wonders that even the very elect are almost deceived. The Antichrist himself will have miraculous powers (2 Thess 2:9). Even Balaam’s donkey demonstrates that the devil can produce imitations.³⁶ Jesus, however, states that many people at the judgment will argue that they deserve heaven, that they have a right to heaven because they have done many wonderful works in the name of Jesus. These individuals do not believe that the only way to heaven is through Jesus Christ. In short, they do not believe the gospel, and that is why they are damned. Jesus’ point here is that no one can expect kingdom entrance on the basis of his or her works—no matter how impressive they may seem. Jesus never emphasizes the external as being the highest sign of authenticity.³⁷ He is always more concerned with a person’s heart—motives, thoughts, and attitudes. Moreover, Jesus will not partner with anyone (except God) in salvation. This means that to become a Christian one must forsake all works of righteousness and trust in the finished work of Christ. It is not a matter of doing something, but trusting Someone. Salvation cannot be achieved; it can only be received.
- ***We cannot identify false prophets by their sincerity.*** Although these false prophets were sincere, they were sincerely wrong. In this context, Christ’s warning was to the Pharisees whose message was that one was accepted by God based on his religious efforts and good works. Jesus explains that they failed to do “the will of His Father.” Jesus uses the phrase “the will of My Father” in John 6:40 where He says: “This is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day” (cf. 6:28–29). Matt 7:21–23 therefore becomes a strong warning to religious people. What are you depending on to get you to heaven: Someone who died for you or something you’ve done? The implication of Christ’s warning is: If the people who seem the most likely to make it will be shut out of heaven, then plenty of ordinary people will have the same frightful experience. Many sincere people who are devoted to their faith, many who never brag about their relationship with God, and many who just quietly believe and have good works to prove it—these too, just might miss the heavenly kingdom.³⁸ Jesus Christ is not addressing wrong actions, but instead wrong doctrine. He reports that many people will appear before Him at the judgment and will talk about their works, not their faith. Jesus was quoting Ps 6:8. As King David had spoken of vanquishing his enemies so Christ will purge from His presence those who trust their works (“lawlessness”) to give them a right standing with God.

This past month, the American Humanist Association unveiled a provocative \$40,000 holiday ad campaign proclaiming, “Why believe in a god? Just be good for goodness’ sake.” These ads will appear on Washington, D.C. buses starting next week and running through December.³⁹ Yet, how do we define “good” if we don’t believe in God?⁴⁰ If we reject God’s Word, by what standard can we measure goodness?

I have a terrible sense of direction. I’m not being humble; honestly, I embarrass myself with how I can get lost while I am driving. Fortunately, a saint in our church bought me a GPS for my car. Since I don’t like to read maps, I use the voice activated feature. What she didn’t know is that I’m technologically impaired as well. Instead of finding the narrow gate through Northwest Baptist Seminary, I found the Narrows Bridge. I was sincere, but I was sincerely wrong. I had the right equipment, but I used it incorrectly.

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Scripture References

Matthew 7:13–23

Luke 13:22–30

Matthew 24:11, 23–25

Matthew 12:33–37

James 3:1–12

Luke 6:43–46

Matthew 25:1–13

Study Questions

1. How do I know that I have eternal life (7:13–14)? What or who am I trusting in? C.S. Lewis said, “The safest road to hell is the gradual one; the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without sign posts.” How can I explain the concepts resident in this quote to unbelievers that I come in contact with? As a believer, how am I seeking to walk through the small and narrow gate in my Christian life?
2. From my vantage point, who are contemporary examples of false prophets (7:15-20)? How can I discern that these individuals are indeed false prophets? When others ask me about these individuals, how can I humbly and graciously share a biblical perspective?
3. When have I been guilty of illegitimately judging other believers according to their fruit (7:16)? How would I feel if others judged me according to the same standard (see 7:1)? How would I fare? If I would be found lacking, why do I continue to inspect fruit in others?
4. Why are good works so deceptive (7:22)? How have I seen this to be the case in my own life? Since works are so deceptive, where should Christians look for assurance? How should Christians interact with those who claim to be believers but are not living obedient lives?
5. Augustine said, “He who believes that God is holy will despair trying to appease Him.” When have I observed my utter inability to please God? How has this changed my view of myself in relation to God? Why is it still so easy to struggle with my own pride and self-will? What can I do this week to humble myself before God and others?

Notes

¹ E.g., John 3:16–18, 36; 8:24.

² Haddon W. Robinson, *What Jesus Said About Successful Living* (Grand Rapids: RBC, 1991), 270.

³ The body of the Sermon on the Mount concluded in Matt 7:12.

⁴ See Jer 21:8 and Deut 30:19.

⁵ The Greek word translated “narrow” here is *stenos*. A stenographer is someone who takes large words and narrows them down to a small symbol for efficiency’s sake.

⁶ The Greek word translated “narrow” is *thlibo*, which means “to press in from all sides.” This term can carry the idea of restricted (i.e., the gate to eternal life is narrow and restricted).

⁷ Charles H. Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount: Character Formation and Ethical Decision Making in Matthew 5-7* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 140.

⁸ Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*. NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 321–22.

⁹ Doug McIntosh, “The Confusion Factor” (Matt 7:13-23):

<http://www.cornerstonebible.org/html/Sermons/Matthew/Matt26.pdf>, 1.

¹⁰ The NASB translates two different Greek words as “narrow”: *stenos* (7:13) and *thlibo* (7:14). The latter term means “pressed together” (cf. Acts 14:22). Morris writes, “The verb...conveys the basic idea of pressing (which can lead to the thought of affliction); here it is that of compression and thus narrowness. The perfect points to a continuing state. It is not the obvious opposite to ‘broad,’ and perhaps we should detect an allusion to the persecutions that are part and parcel of the Christian life.” Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*. Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), Hagner says, “Given the context of the preceding ethical teaching of the sermon, the radical character of discipleship is in view.” Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*. Word Biblical Commentary series (Dallas: Word, 1993), 179.

¹¹ R. Kent Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom*. Preaching the Word Series (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), Electronic ed.

¹² Eaton makes an extensive case for 7:13–14 referring to believers. Michael Eaton, *The Way that Leads to Life* (Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1999), 176–85.

¹³ E.g., finding food and lodging (Luke 9:12), or finding workers for the vineyard (Matt 20:6).

¹⁴ Cf. Luke 6:43-46. Wilkins, *Matthew*, 322 writes, “Warnings of false prophets form an important theme in Matthew’s Gospel (e.g., 7:21–23; 24:11–12, 24), similar to how the Old Testament gave analogous warnings (e.g., Jer. 6:13–15; 8:10–12; Ezek. 13:1–23; 22:27–29; Zeph. 3:1–4).”

¹⁵ We are told to recognize that false brethren exist, but it is not our job to pick them out. However, we are to attempt to discern false prophets because they pose a real, critical, and immediate threat to the church.

¹⁶ BDAG s.v. *posecho* 1: “To be in a state of alert, be concerned about, care for, take care.” In this context, it means “beware of” something.

¹⁷ Preaching Today citation: Augustine of Hippo, Tractates on the Gospel of John (Tractate 45).

¹⁸ Steve May, “Form Vs. Content” (Matt 7:13–23):

<http://www.preachingtoday.com/sermons/series/religionvs.spiritualitysermonsseries/formvscontent.html>.

¹⁹ Bing writes, “As Christians, we are created in Jesus Christ to do good works (Eph. 2:10) and expected to do good works (1 Tim. 6:18; Titus 2:7, 14; Heb. 10:24), but good works are never attached to the condition for salvation, which is faith alone in Christ alone (Rom. 4:4-5). While good works can be corroborating evidence for one’s faith in Christ, they are not sufficient to prove or disprove it. Only faith in God’s promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ guarantees and proves our salvation.” Charlie Bing, “Can Good Works Prove Salvation?” *GraceNotes* no. 28: <http://www.gracelife.org/resources/gracenotes.asp?id=28>.

²⁰ Long writes, “Discerning whether or not a leader is authentic is not easy. It takes time, insight, and wisdom, for false leaders look genuine...” Thomas Long, *Matthew*. Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1997), 84.

²¹ Carson writes, “Living according to kingdom norms can be feigned for a time; but what one is will eventually reveal itself in what one does. However guarded one’s words, they will finally betray him (cf. 12:33-37; Luke 6:45). Ultimately false prophets tear down faith (2Tim 2:18) and promote divisiveness, bitterness (e.g., 1Tim 6:4-5; 2Tim 2:23), and various kinds of ungodliness (2Tim 2:16).” Donald A. Carson, “Matthew.” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. Edited by Frank E. Gaebel and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), Electronic ed.

²² If fruit is works, then 7:18 become self-contradictory: “A false prophet *cannot* produce good works.” If this statement is true, in other words, a false prophet is a complete and utter degenerate. All he does is vile and evil. Nothing he does is righteous. So here’s the problem: what happened to his sheep’s clothing?

²³ Matt 12:33–37: “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

²⁴ The careful Bible student might see a problem in this passage and Matt 7:18. It’s that reference to a false prophet producing good prophecies. Can’t false prophets get it right once in a while? Not really. They can utter accurate predictions on occasion, but even when they do, the prophecy is not *good*.

²⁵ R. Larry Moyer, *Free and Clear* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 105.

²⁶ Isa 8:19-20 gives this same test concerning spiritists and mediums.

²⁷ Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount*, 141.

²⁸ This is the first use in Matthew of “Lord” (*kurie*) as an address to Jesus.

²⁹ See Matt 5:20 for a reference to “enter the kingdom of heaven.”

³⁰ For “doing the will of God” see Matt 6:10 and 12:50.

³¹ Jesus in His mercy has told us one thing that will happen on the Day of Judgment. This is not a parable; this is not a metaphor. This is prophecy. It is exactly what many scholars deny prophecy is: future history. When Jesus here uses the verb “will,” when he speaks in the future tense, he speaks literally, and these events must happen.

³² The word *ginosko* (“knew”) has a number of nuances of meaning. It can mean “to know” at a basic level. It can also mean “to understand, comprehend,” and even be a euphemism for sexual relations. A rarer but important meaning is “to indicate that one does know, ‘acknowledge, recognize’ as that which one is or claims to be.” Thus in our passage it can mean, “I never recognized you (as being my disciple).” See similar uses in John 1:10; 1 Cor 8:3; and Gal 4:9.

³³ R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*. New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 289.

³⁴ Robinson, *What Jesus Said About Successful Living*, 281–82.

³⁵ Some commentators have tried to dismiss the claims of these defendants by suggesting that they will lie or exaggerate, that they really will not have done what they will claim to have done. There is nothing in the text that supports such an accusation. That misinterpretation is a desperate device to evade what Jesus is telling us in this passage.

³⁶ Eaton, *The Way that Leads to Life*, 192–93.

³⁷ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 325.

³⁸ Lutzer, *Spend Eternity with God*, 16.

³⁹ SermonNews, “Holiday Ads Ask, ‘Why Believe in a God?’”: Taken from Associated Press, November 12, 2008, Eric Gorski.

⁴⁰ David wrote, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good” (Ps 14:1).