

Can You Pass the Test?

Is everyone a Christian who claims to be?

In 2004 an ABC news poll showed that 82% of all Americans claim to be Christian. Over 40% of Americans claim to have received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. According to Jesus there will be many people on judgment day who think they are going to heaven but who will be turned away.

In Matthew 7:21-23 Jesus describes a group of people who think they are going to heaven but are not.

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father

who is in heaven will enter.

22 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?'

23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me you who practice lawlessness.'"

In this passage Jesus describes people who will be turned away from heaven. This is what they look like.

- ❑ **There are many of them** (v.22). It isn't just a few people on judgment day who will be turned away but many.
- ❑ **They think they know Christ** (v.21-22). One of the descriptions that the Bible gives for some of those who don't know Christ is that they claim to know Him "They profess to know God but by their deeds they deny Him" Titus 3:16 (James 2:14-20, 1 John 2: 3-4).
- ❑ **They have religious experiences in Jesus' name** (v.22-23). These people claim that they have had religious experiences that prove they should be in heaven. What are some of the religious experiences that people hold onto today that they believe validate their faith? For me, I walked an aisle and said a prayer of salvation. I was baptized twice—once as a Catholic and once as a Baptist. But after all these experiences I still didn't know Christ. Praying a prayer can be a way to express genuine faith in Christ but it is also very possible that a person can have these experiences but not genuinely receive Christ. These people who are turned away from heaven cling to an experience which isn't a salvation experience.
- ❑ **They never knew Christ.** It isn't as if they at one time knew Christ and had salvation but then lost it. These people never had it.
- ❑ **They practice lawlessness** (v.23). They give lip service but they weren't under God's law but chose their own way (lawlessness).

What this means is that today walking around on planet earth are **many people who are confident that they are going to heaven** because they have had religious experiences in Jesus' name but who never knew or followed Jesus Christ **will be sent to hell on judgment day.**

The Bible says that God desires to have a relationship with us but the reason we can't know God is because our sin has caused a separation between God and us. Ultimately this separation will be eternal separation in hell. But God loves us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to die on the cross for our sins and He rose from the dead to conquer death. All we have to do to receive forgiveness and eternal life is to decide to turn from our sin and trust Christ to save us from our sin and trust Him to come into our lives and take control. **Not everyone who thinks they have made this life changing decision truly has.** Because a lot of people mistakenly believe they are Christians and going to heaven. The Bible commands us to examine our lives to see if we are truly Christians.

“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you unless indeed you fail the test?” 2 Corinthians 13:5

Ways we can test ourselves – Fruit Test

This article provides a good tool by which we can test ourselves because it describes what the Bible says should be true of someone who has truly come to know Christ. Jesus really had only one test he told us to conduct to see if someone belonged to Him -the **Fruit Test**. You will know them by their fruit (Matthew 7:20, Luke 6:43-45). Fruit is what one's life produces; words, actions, and attitudes.

If a man who was healthy and well groomed told you that he had just been run over by a Mack truck, you would not believe him. The reason you would not believe him would be because his life and body did not reflect his claims. Jesus says that if someone is indwelt by the living God there will most definitely be life change. Life change proves one's claim to know Christ.

An apple tree is an apple tree because it grew from an apple seed and its fruit simply confirms what was already true about it. In the same way Jesus says, “You will know them by their fruit.” (Matthew 7:15-20). Someone can say all day long that they have faith in Christ but does their life indicate that they have indeed had a spiritual birth (John 3:3). When someone is born spiritually, new things will come into their life (2 Corinthians 5:17).

We will look at what the Bible says should be the fruit of someone who truly trusts Christ. It is important to remember that salvation is in no way earned because of one's fruit or good works (Galatians 2:16, 21 and Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation is a free gift that Christ purchased for us through His death and resurrection. When one receives this free gift through accepting Christ their life will change and produce fruit.

The following verses show the fruit that will be in a Christian's life:

*“Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **he who does the will of My Father** who is in heaven will enter.” Matthew 7:21*

*“We know that we have come to know him if we **obey his commands**”. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” I John 2:3-4*

*“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but **has no deeds? Can such faith save him?” James 2:14***

It is clear that the test of whether one has Christ or not is based on the fruit of obedience. Why is fruit the test? 700 years before Christ, God described the new relationship He would have with people through Christ. He promised that He would, “put His Spirit within us and cause us to walk in His statutes and ordinances” (Ezekiel 36:26-27). God’s Spirit indwells the true Christian and gives him or her desire and power for obedience. God says that the person who has a relationship with Him will be marked by obedience to His Word. God promises to invade a person’s life and ‘cause them to walk in His ways’. This is why Jesus says so plainly that you will know them by their fruits. If someone will have marks after being run over by a Mack truck to authenticate their claims how much more obvious should it be that someone has been invaded and taken over by the living God.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore if any man is in Christ he is a new creature the old things have passed away behold new things have come.” This bent toward God and His Word is one of the new things that will come to those who truly receive Christ. Does the fruit in your life match your claims?

Which of the following is most characteristic of your life?

1. The acts of the sinful nature: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.
2. The fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:19-23).

A person does not come to know God and get to heaven by trying to keep the second list of characteristics. The person who does know Christ and who will therefore go to heaven will have these characteristics as a natural by-product (fruit). Salvation is only through God’s grace not man’s works but when a person is saved, works will be produced.

*“For it is by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God **not as a result of works** that no may boast. For we are His workmanship **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” Ephesians 2:8-10.*

Do you believe that there is one God? **Even the demons believe that and shudder** (James 2:19). Do you believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead? The demons are convinced of these facts and yet they aren’t saved. Many so-called Christians have a demon-like faith. The demons believe in Jesus Christ and are convinced about His resurrection but they have never turned from their sins and transferred their trust and allegiance from self to Jesus Christ. Maybe you have believed “forever” that Jesus died for your sins but have you ever turned and trusted?

Just believing the facts about Jesus is obviously not the believing the Bible has in mind regarding salvation. I can believe a chair will hold me when I sit in it but I don’t put faith in the

chair until I actually sit down and trust the chair to hold me up. In the same way each person must turn from sin and trust Christ. The gospel is the good news about Jesus' death and resurrection to pay our sin debt. Jesus told us how to respond to the gospel.

*“The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand **repent** and **believe** in the gospel” Mark 1:15.*

Repent means to change your mind about sin and decide to go in a different direction. You don't have the strength apart from God to follow through on turning from sin but repentance is deciding that you are willing to turn. This turning goes hand in hand with trusting Christ to forgive your sins through His death and also involves trusting Christ to take control of your life.

Repentance is a vital part of biblical belief. If one's faith does not have repentance then it is not a biblical faith but a demon-like faith that simply believes the facts but does not transfer trust and allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Is it possible that you are one of those “Christians” who is convinced of the facts about Jesus and you have had significant spiritual experiences in Jesus' name but you have never truly repented and transferred your trust and allegiance from yourself to Jesus Christ.

Would you like to make the decision to turn from your sins and trust Christ today?

You can turn from your sins and trust Christ by faith through prayer. God knows your heart so the words of the prayer are not magical but if they reflect the decision you would like to make you can use it to express your faith to God.

“Lord, I confess to you that I am a sinner and that I am separated from you. Thank you for sending Jesus to die on the cross for my sins. I want to turn from my sin and trust Jesus Christ to come into my life and take control. Amen.”

If you prayed to receive Christ do not expect to feel different immediately, but count on the fact that Christ has come into your life and changes will come. You should take steps to grow in your new relationship with God.

The following are some simple steps to help you get started in your walk with Christ:

1. Start reading the Bible daily. The Gospel of John is a good place to start.
2. Spend time with others who are growing in their relationship with Christ (fellowship).
Get involved in a Bible study and start attending a Bible teaching church.
3. Get baptized as public declaration of your faith.