
Mental Ascension Adequate for Salvation?

Book notes - *"Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart, How to Know for Sure You are Saved"*

"...if you really believe in heaven and hell, how can you not be desperate to know which one you are headed to?"

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According to Matthew 7:21 – 23, **MANY** people who think they know Jesus will awaken on that final day to the reality that He never really knew them. Though they had prayed a prayer to receive Jesus, they had never really been born again and never taken the Lordship of Jesus seriously. They would, my teacher explained, be turned away from heaven into everlasting punishment with the disastrous words, "I never knew you, depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!"I was terrified. Would I be one of those ones turned away?

**This book is written to answer one simple question:
how can anyone know, beyond all doubt, that they are saved?**

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Jesus warned that there are a vast number of people who seem assured of a salvation they don't actually possess. According to Matthew 7, Jesus will turn away **"MANY"** on that last day who thought they belong to him. There's no doubt that many of those will have prayed a sinner's prayer.

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It's very possible for people to come to faith very early in life. Jesus, in fact, told adults to become like children if they want to be saved! Furthermore, this guy showed immediate fruit after his conversion, getting excited about Jesus and being busy for him. And the Bible does indeed teach eternal security – once saved, always saved. So, was he right? Can he, because he made a decision at some point in the past, live with the assurance that he is saved forever, regardless of how he lives now?

Here's the short answer, one I'll spend the rest of the book unpacking: he cannot. Salvation does indeed happen in a moment, and once you are saved you are always saved. The mark, however, of someone who is saved is that they maintain their confession of faith until the end of their lives. Salvation is not a prayer you prayed in a one-time ceremony and then move on from.

Salvation is a posture of repentance and faith that you begin in a moment and maintain for the rest of your life.

In his parable about the different types of soil, Jesus spoke of a group who heard His word and made an initial, encouraging response of belief, only to fade away over time. These are those, Jesus explained, who hear the gospel and respond positively to it, i.e. pray the prayer, walk the aisle, get baptized, or do whatever new converts in your church do. They remain in the church for a period of time. But they do not endure when the sun of persecution comes out and will not in the end be saved. (Luke 8:13)

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The apostle John described a large group of people who "believed in his name" but to whom Jesus would not commit himself because "he knew all men" (John 2:23 – 25) He knew their belief was a temporary fad that would not endure the test of time and trial.

These sobering stories teach us that **MANY** are headed into eternal judgment under the delusion of going to heaven. They were told that if they prayed the prayer, Jesus would save them, seal them, and never leave nor

forsake them. They prayed that prayer and lived under the delusion they will go to heaven when they die. My blood runs cold just thinking about them.

A 2011 Barna study shows that nearly half of all adults in America have prayed such a prayer, and subsequently believe they are going to heaven, though many of them rarely, if ever, attend a church, read the Bible personally, or have lifestyles that differ in any significant way from those outside the church. If the groups described in Matthew 7 and Luke 8 are not referring to them, I don't know to whom they could be referring.

The enemy, one of whose names in Scripture is “the deceiver” - loves to keep truly saved believers unsure of their salvation because he knows that if he does they’ll never experience the freedom, joy, and confidence that God wants them to have. But he also loves to keep those on their way to hell deluded into thinking they are on their way to heaven, their consciences immunized from Jesus’ pleas to repent.

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“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

There are only two postures we can take toward Jesus Christ. We either “believe” or we do not. More literal translations of John 3:36 render the two categories of that verse “he who believes” and “he who does not obey.” The interchange of “believe” and “obey” is helpful – it shows us that belief and obedience are, in a way, synonyms. We are commanded to believe that Jesus did what he said he did: paid the full penalty of our sin and settled it forever, and then rearrange our life according to that belief.

If we believe, we will obey. If we do not obey, we don't believe.

If John 3:36 is true, you are either, right now, in believing submission to Jesus Christ, or unbelieving rebellion. For all my time and energy, the answer was astoundingly simple: we either believe the Son, or we do not.

At the end of his first epistle, John says that whether or not we have eternal life is conditioned on whether we believe the “testimony” God has given about the work of Jesus. Again, there are only two options; believe it, or declare God a liar. (1 John 5:10)

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“Sirs,” the Roman soldier said, recalling the sermons and songs he had heard from Paul, “what must I do to be saved?” Paul’s response: “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.” (Acts 16:28 – 31)

Paul’s words are perhaps the simplest, most straightforward explanation in the Bible of what someone must “do” to be saved: *Believe*. Sounds simple enough. Just believe. But is that it? Mentally acknowledge that Jesus was God’s Son and died on a cross for our sin? Nearly 80% of Americans say they believe that, though for many, it makes little difference in their lives. They “believe” Jesus rose from the dead like they believe Napoleon lost the battle of Waterloo. Is this all that Paul meant?

Clearly not. Jesus’ half-brother, James, claims that even the demons “believe” in this way, and tremble – but we’re not going to be hanging out with them in heaven (James 2:19)

Biblical belief, or “faith”, includes a volitional aspect as well. When Jesus called the crowds in Mark 1 to “repent and believe” (Mark 1:15), he was not adding a second component to belief, but clarifying what real belief entails.

Repentance is belief in action.

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The great chapter of faith, Hebrews 11, is all about actions. Faith is belief in action. In fact, there is no noun for faith in Hebrew, because faith does not exist apart from its action.

Faith starts with mental ascent, but if this mental ascent does not lead to obedience, it is not yet “faith.”

Salvation is a posture of repentance and faith toward the finished work of Christ in which you transfer the weight of your hopes of heaven off of your own righteousness and onto the finished work of Jesus Christ. The way to know you made the decision is by the fact you are resting in Christ now.

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The Bible gives both assurances and warnings, and so should we. The Holy Spirit tells us, “Examine yourselves as to whether you are really in the faith.” (2 Corinthians 13:5). But he also assures us that we belong to Jesus, we are safe in his hand, and that when we are faithless, He'll remain faithful.

I have sympathy for people on both sides of the issue. For a while I was a falsely assured imposter, and I'm glad a Sunday school teacher helped me see that my superficial confession of faith would not save me on the day of judgment. God used his warning to rouse me out of my slumber. But I also know the struggle of being unable to find assurance after my salvation. Doubting made my life miserable.

God warns us about the dangers of falling away because He wants to rouse the falsely assured out of their slumber before it is eternally too late.

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Did Jesus mean that Christians who fail to forgive lose their salvation? No. He meant that if we are not a generous spirit we likely have never been saved, or so lost touch with it we can hardly be said to understand it any longer. Like the Hebrews writer explained, they have “tasted” of the heavenly gift but never really swallowed it.

Those people who have experienced the gospel show it by becoming like the gospel.

On the final day, if we have given to others only what they deserved, God likely will be giving to us what we deserve. Though we sat through a lot of sermons and memorized a lot of verses, we never encountered the grace of the gospel.

The sign that you have experienced grace is that you have become gracious. Patience, forgiveness, generosity, delight in and compassion towards others are inevitable fruits of the gospel root. So,

- If you are selfish with your possessions, how could you really have experienced the generosity of the gospel?
- If you are unmoved by the plight of the outcast, how could you have experienced the reconciliation of the gospel?
- If your only ambition in life is to grow rich, famous, and obtain all of your dreams, is there any possible way you have understood what it cost Jesus to obtain your salvation?

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When the storms of doubt swell up around me, I keep my eyes on him and his finished work. He is the rock that holds me above even the waves of my own doubts. There is one who remains faithful even when we doubt; one who is a firm foundation when our steps falter; one who holds on even when we let go. Keep your eyes on him. He is faithful. He said, “it is finished.”

Scripture References:

"I Never Knew You" and "The Narrow Way"

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. **MANY** will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, '**I NEVER KNEW YOU**'; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness! (Mathew 7:21 – 23)

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are **MANY** who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are **FEW** who find it. (Mathew 7: 13-14)

And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for **MANY**, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, "**I DO NOT KNOW YOU**, where you are from'" then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' But He will say, 'I tell you **I DO NOT KNOW YOU**, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.' There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. (Luke 13:24-28)