

A GENUINE RESPONSE

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” —MATTHEW 7:21

Jesus is never outwitted by the illusion of success that great numbers of His following give. Neither is He impressed with a consumer oriented Gospel that finds out what people want and then cloaks it in Christian doctrine and jargon. Jesus was never driven by His audience or their intentions. The sole agenda of Jesus was spiritual reality.

Only a few among the vast crowds surrounding Jesus were in tune with Him. That is why He said to His disciples, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom has been given to you, but not to them” (Matthew 13:11). What did the disciples have the others did not have? I suggest what they had was an intimacy with Jesus. And because they had this intimacy, they understood what Jesus called, “the secrets of the kingdom”.

The word of God is designed to create in us a greater appetite for Jesus and godliness, which, in turn, produces fruit in our hearts. One of the biggest problems in the church today is that there is a popular “fire insurance” definition of saving faith, which says, “Invite Jesus into your heart and you will be forgiven of your sin and assured of eternal life in heaven.” As a result, many folks think that once they

have said the right words, they can live as they please, and when the final curtain falls, they will be okay.

Nowhere in the New Testament does it say, “Ask Jesus into your heart,” but it does tell us He will come in on the basis of repentance and faith. That involves more than simple words of prayer. Prayer is an expression of a change of heart, and if that change is not there, our prayers will be fruitless. The doctrine of assurance the New Testament gives involves the Holy Spirit bearing witness with our spirits that we are children of God. This takes place internally, and is something only the Spirit can give. It then becomes evident because suddenly we will love Jesus, and develop a hunger for His righteousness.

The Bible warns about false securities. It is long-term growth, not the short-term response that gives evidence of a genuine work of the Spirit of God. A decision is the beginning of the response, but Jesus is not looking for short term decisions. He is looking for disciples. If we are serious about God, we cannot settle for the minimum, but we need to allow the word of God and Spirit of God to penetrate our lives, and begin to produce in us the character of Jesus.

PRAYER: I pray, Lord, for everyone to genuinely receive the Holy Spirit and to experience the wonder of your work in their lives. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: How has receiving the Holy Spirit made the greatest change in my life?