

# The King's Highway.

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

And an Highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness.—Isa. 35-8

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## "Except Your Righteousness Exceed--"

By Joseph H. Smith

Our text is from Matthew, the fifth chapter and the 20th verse, "But I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Please mark that "in no case," for there is a subtle insinuation that enters into our minds, or seeks to sometimes, that somehow or other we are an exception. There is no respect of persons with God, and without respect of persons He judgeth according to every man's works. "In no case enter the kingdom of heaven." And then I recall the numerous instances Jesus cites of preachers, of evangelists, of praying people, and many that will be lost at that last day. When I recall that fact, I feel impressed, and feel to impress you with these words, "in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

I heard a man of my name somewhat slandered this morning from a pulpit. I do not mean my name "Smith," but I mean my name "Joseph." I have always been a little jealous or somewhat appreciative of the fact that all three of the Josephs in the Bible turned out well. That has given me some encouragement. But I heard a preacher to a very considerable congregation preaching this morning on Joseph of Arimathaea, of whom the Scripture says, not only that he was a disciple of Jesus secretly because of the Jews, but also that he protested against their mistreatment of Jesus in his own circle. It says of him he was waiting for the Kingdom of Heaven. And this dear brother made out that waiting was procrastination. It was not so much a blot on the name Joseph, but blindness as to what the Kingdom of Heaven is. He would make out that we were to get out and reform the civilizations of the world—that that was the Kingdom of Heaven. No, No, No! The Kingdom of Heaven is to come.

And so, friends, I want to call your attention to this fact, that the Saviour was always holding before us the hereafter. The objective of Jesus' preaching was not the making of this world a fit place to live in, but to make men fit to live in any world, and particularly in fitting them for the world to come. And so, beloved, keep in mind that hope was ever the beaming, bright star in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ to those who believe in Him. He is promising a new earth; He is promising to come the next time without a sin offering unto the final salvation of them that believe in Him. All His incentives and all His motives have to do with our credentials for and our qualifications for

the Kingdom of Heaven which is yet to come.

He lays down a standard, unequivocal, ir-retrievable, without exception. "In no case" shall any one of us get there except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. Have you noticed how little Jesus bears upon the sins and wickedness of the Roman Empire? How little he has to say about paganism? Of course He does not talk about their heathenish praying; He tells us that their general drift is to mammon and things material; but have you noticed that almost all of Christ's contrasts instead of being with the pagan customs and the habits and sins of wickedness of the other nations, are with the religious people of His day? He knew that the tendency of humanity, even in connection with Christianity, would be to compare ourselves with ourselves, and particularly with our religious selves; and to justify ourselves, if it could be seen that we were living as well as the church people generally.

Will you let me project just now what I deeply believe and have again and again asserted? The church life of our day—the average church life—will not take people to heaven. That is exactly what the Saviour was saying,—the church life of His day would not take people to heaven; for, mark you, He is not speaking here about their wickedness, He is speaking about their righteousness, about their religion.

I think one of the worst charges, when He is speaking about their wickedness, against the church-anity of His times was, "You take the key to the kingdom away from the people and then do neither enter in yourselves nor let them enter." Is that obsolete? One of the alarming features of the church life of our day is the way that the doors of the churches are being closed to evangelism, closed to revivals, closed to the actual work of the saving of souls. The message of "the wrath to come" was silenced in their day, and so it is silenced in our day. Alas, history repeats itself! Doors are shut against actual entrance into the kingdom, the keys taken. They are not entering in themselves. The declaration of the necessity of the new birth is less and less these days.

Christ wants to get us all to heaven. His admonitions are as merciful as His invitations. And so, friends, will you, following the admonition of the Saviour here, will you take your eye off how other people are living and how other people are doing, and their fashions and their amusements and their laxity in social law? Take your eye off them. Do not take your

standards from the customs of many of the scribes and Pharisees.

Jesus is never preaching simply for His time. Beloved, the principles of Christ's ministry are as applicable to the United States of America in this year of 1930, as they were then to the people He was preaching to. So, friends, I exhort that we stir ourselves from any complacency. "Except your righteousness shall exceed theirs ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven."

Did you know that the Saviour is leading up in this chapter to the command to Christian perfection? The term righteousness has the equivalent of holiness. Nobody is ready for the marriage of the Lamb unless his righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. No one is ready for the coming of the Lord unless he is free from malicious anger, unless he is freed from loathsome lust, unless he is freed from laxity concerning the marriage vow, unless he is freed from resentment and retaliation and the like. This is righteousness of being, not simply of doing; and the righteousness is internal, it is in the nature, it is in our being.

Now the Lord presents it positively and lays down a command to Christian perfection. He says, "Ye have heard that it hath been said . . . but I say." It is what He says that determines our entrance into heaven. "Not every one that said unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. . . . Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock." Then again, "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you." Beloved, you and I have to do that to get to heaven.

The same Voice, the same Person who commanded that there be light and there was light, speaks, "Be ye holy." Everything that has to be out of you and me in order to our getting into heaven, has to be out of us now. "In no case"—not the case of the evangelist who is speaking to you. "In no case"—our professions, our pretensions, our services, will not atone for our iniquity. We must be cleansed from lust, from anger, from pride, from unforgiveness and jealousy; and we must be cleansed from our lethargy and our procrastination in things we know God is calling us to do and be. "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—*Heart and Life*.

We conquer not by haughtiness and pride, but by humility and self-sacrifice.—*Heart and Life*.