



Matthew: The King and His Kingdom

Series: The Manifesto of the King, Part 28: Two Foundations, Two Destinies

Matthew 7:24-29

August 28, 2011

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Introduction

We are closing out the Sermon on the Mount this morning; the longest and most detailed sermon that we have from our Lord Jesus Christ. Through we know this intellectually, what we have seen fleshed out before us in this sermon is the clear fact that the words of Christ carry with them an absolute and flawless authority. His words shape and define reality. They are transcendent truth, which cannot be thwarted, which cannot be altered, which cannot be reversed and which cannot be ignored. They demand a response. That has been the heart of what we have seen highlighted for us in these closing words of Christ. Jesus' sermon is not to be simply admired as some great moral treatise, or to be lauded as visionary and glorious. No, Jesus is much more practical than that. Jesus commands us to submit to His teaching, to enter the Kingdom, to come through Him – the narrow gate – onto the hard way that leads life. He commands us to give our ears only to the faithful and true prophet and to discern and reject the false so that we would not be deceived by false teachers and prophets who care nothing for Christ or for the Kingdom of God. He demands that we not be self-deluded, but that we rightly discern our spiritual condition and that we be those who do not merely call him "Lord, Lord" but that we know Him and do the will of His Father in heaven.

These are serious and weighty words that we have heard from Jesus over these last several sermons and he brings these words to a close by emphasizing their binding nature with a parable of two men. A parable that illustrates for us the danger of hearing the word of God and not doing it, of hearing the word of God and minimizing it, of hearing the word of God and receiving it as the words of a mere man and not the words of the Living God, of hearing the word of God and receiving them as suggestions and not as the binding words of the King of the universe. He tells us the story of

Two Men, Two Houses, Two Foundations, and Two Destinies (v. 24-27) The first thing that we notice is that there are really only slight differences in the description of these two men in Jesus' parable and that is intentional. The men that Jesus has in mind are both religious men, both men who would have heard his words – that's the key. He is speaking directly to the people on the hillside who were interested enough in what he had to say to have stopped what they were doing and listened to Him preach. In our context today, Jesus would be speaking to religious people, to church going people. I want to make sure that we understand something here. Jesus is not drawing a distinction between hardcore pagans who reject Christ and reject religion altogether and who despise Christ words and those who are church goers who claim to follow Christ. That is not what He is doing here. He is not contrasting those who go to church with those who don't. The parallel passage in Luke 6:47ff makes this clear. As we would understand the application of this text, He is speaking of two men – men who go to church, who hear the words of Christ preached or taught, who would sing the songs, and give their offering.

They are men who are building a house – that is building a life. They are both constructing lives and the only real observable difference between the two is the foundation. To the undiscerning eye, they look very similar. They are both religious men. They both have the appearance of godliness. They engage in very similar activities and have pretty much the same kinds of lives from the outside looking in. They go to church and give to the church and serve in some kind of ministry. They speak the same language and sing the same songs. Both of these men hear the truth. Both of these men know the truth. But the difference between the wise builder and the foolish builder is that the wise builder hears the words of Christ and embraces them and does them and the foolish builder doesn't. The wise man esteems Christ supremely and desires to bring his life into obedience to Him regardless of the cost. Christ is his life. But the foolish man is content to have the appearance of obedience to Christ without the reality. He wants the blessing but resists the obedience. The differences between the two, on the surface, are subtle, but they are destiny defining. Let me explain what I mean.

The foolish man may desire to be a good guy. But the wise man desires, even more than that, to be like Christ. He knows that he falls mournfully short of the character of Christ, but he longs for it and His greatest desire is that Christ and His character would be formed in Him. More than just being a good guy, he desires that the fruit of the Spirit define Him -- (Galatians 5:22–24, ESV)

The foolish man wants chiefly to be well regarded and well thought of by other people. He wants the people in his church to think well of him – that’s the goal. But the wise man wants to be well thought of by the people of God but only as the result of being pleasing to God. He wants to “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” (Colossians 1:10, ESV)

The foolish man has as his priority to make smart and profitable decisions with His family, his friends, his money and his business. He wants to do that which beneficial. But the wise man, while wanting to make wise decisions regarding all of those things as well, has a more prevailing desire. He desires in all things to be obedient to the Lord and to bring all of those decisions into alignment, onto agreement, into submission to the Word of God.

The foolish man is satisfied with friendship with the people in his church and wants to be known as a peacekeeper. The wise man, though he loves deeply the people in his church and wants to have strong and deep fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ longs for full fellowship with Christ and desires that for His friends as well.

The foolish man, perhaps, desires to be moral. The wise man, however, longs for holiness – holiness without which no one will see the Lord, truth in the inward parts, to be holy as God in Heaven is holy and He knows that holiness is to be found only in union to Christ.

The foolish man may enjoy hearing Bible teaching and preaching. He may enjoy debating the Word and may not object to hour-long sermons. But the wise man feasts on and delights in the Word, and desires to understand and apply the Scripture to his life. The life of the wise man is undergirded and supported and strengthened and established upon the rock, which is Christ, and obedience to His authoritative word. The wise man hears and receives and believes and acts upon and builds upon and submits his mind and emotions and desires to the living word of Christ. He is anchored to Christ and to His Word and he will have it no other way. (James 1:22–25, ESV)

You see, here’s the truth. The life of the foolish man, though he may give lip-service to the words of God is really founded upon his own wisdom, his own will, his own philosophy, his own

authority, what seems right to him. He desires godly results, godly blessing, godly approval but he desires this all minus obedience to God. He desires what can never be. He is building on sand and the fault is his own. No-one else can be blamed.

Look, each of us builds the house of our lives through our actions, our decisions, our words. With each choice we build our lives. Now listen, this is not a denial of God's sovereignty but a realization of human responsibility. It is distortion of God's sovereignty that eliminates human responsibility. How we build is vitally important because Jesus says that the storms will expose what is the foundation of our lives.

What is Jesus talking about here? He is talking, first of all, about the storm of the final judgment of God. But as well, He is talking about the storms of living life in this fallen world.

Your ability to weather the storms of this life and of the judgment that is to come is directly related to the foundation of your life. The only house – the only life – that will stand is the one that is founded on obedience to the Rock Himself, who is Christ. The house that stands, the foundation that holds is actually doing the truth – acting upon the words of Christ, putting his truth into practice. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. Building your life on Christ and on His words is what Jesus calls the foundation of rock. That is the foundation that holds.

By contrast, the foolish man builds his house on sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it. There are many people who are vocal about their faith in Christ who when temptation comes hard and demands we stand firm in Christ, or when sin is revealed and demands we humble ourselves and repent, when the pain of loss demands trust in Christ, or when persecution demands that we stay faithful to our Lord, or when sorrow or any other number of calamities strike – fall to pieces and fail to obey and make a shipwreck of their lives because what they had was an outward appearance and not the inward reality of a life founded on the rock of submission and obedience and trust in the chief cornerstone who is Christ. They did not really anchor their lives in Christ and what appeared to be solid was reduced to rubble.

But even more than the storms of this life reveal now, they give a glimpse now of what the ultimate storm of God's judgment will do. (Nahum 1:2–8, ESV) That is fearful picture but hear

these words of hope amidst the storms one more time: The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. The only thing that will weather the storms of this life and ultimately of the coming judgment of God is a life founded upon submission and obedience to Christ and His word. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. Those who take refuge in Him are those who hear His words and obey Him.

This is the very essence of Lordship, isn't it? Everyone then who hears these words of mine – my words, this is emphatic by Jesus -- and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. We cannot and must not separate Jesus Christ from His words. His commands and His declarations are not suggestions for those just want a better life. To build your life upon Jesus Christ is to have a foundation of obedient submission and delight in His teachings.

The ultimate issue is one of authority. Who has ultimate authority in my life? Who commands me? Here is the bottom line truth. Only those who hear the words of the Lord and who embrace His word and respond to His word and act on His word in obedient faith are truly His disciples. They do not simply hear Christ's words; they do them. It is not enough to hear Christ's words and admire them, to hear Christ's words and memorize them, to hear Christ's words and repeat them, to hear Christ's words and have them on a T-shirt, to hear Christ's words and fight for them, to hear Christ's words and talk about them or post them on Facebook or tweet them or blog them – we must hear them and do them.

The truly Christian man or woman, the wise man or woman, is the one who having seen the depth of their sinfulness and the greatness of the Savior who is Christ pursues obedience to gospel of Christ from the heart, out of a very real sense of love and gratitude for all that Christ has done. He desires to walk in obedience to Christ because he loves Christ who loved Him first and though he fails to walk in perfect holiness -- sometimes profoundly -- he hates it and he strives, by God's grace, to repent of his sin and follow after Christ, thanking God for Christ's perfect obedience and death on the cross by which he has received salvation. He seeks to have his mind and his emotions and his desires renewed by the Word of God. He makes the decisions of His life rooted in submission to Christ and His Lordship. He's not perfect and he is not satisfied with his level of sanctification, but looking to Christ as the author and the finisher of his faith, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead he presses on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (cf. Philippians 3:13–14, ESV) And the very promise of God is that that man or woman will not be and cannot be shaken.

But the foolish man hears the words of Christ, and though he may acknowledge them as the truth does not think through what it really means to be obedient to Jesus. He can affirm all of the truths of Christianity perhaps, but in reality believes that he knows best. He thinks that he can live however he desires, selectively applying the truth of Christ's word – picking and choosing what he likes, settling for the appearance of godliness without its reality, pursuing his own course according to his own purpose, giving himself a pass on certain things, and that it will all work out in the end and that is what makes him a fool.

There is nothing more foolish in the world – nothing – than to hear the truth of God, which defines reality, and to reject or ignore it or to sit in judgment upon it. We must embrace God's words with the whole of our lives, with all of our heart and soul and strength, and receive them as they are – as the all-encompassing, comprehensive, commanding, convincing, authoritative Word of God. Even the crowds that day recognized the authority of Christ. There are two responses but only one authority.

One Authority (v.28-29) When Jesus finished preaching, everyone who had heard him was astonished, amazed at the power and the authority with which He spoke. It was unlike anything they had ever heard. He spoke with a depth and scope, with a directness and certainty, with a might and an insight unlike anyone. He did not quote other people as the source of His authority, but spoke from himself, from His own authority, about the most crucial things in life – heaven and hell, righteousness and sin, truth and error. They were right to be amazed. When they heard Jesus speak, they heard him speak as THE teacher sent from God. He openly and powerfully corrected the misinterpretation of the Law by the Scribes and Pharisees. They heard Him speak with the authority of the Christ. He called Himself the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. They heard Him speak with the authority of the Lord. It was before Him that he said people would call say "Lord, Lord." They heard Him speak with the authority of the Savior. He offered Himself as the gateway to eternal life.

They heard Him speak with the authority of the Judge. He put Himself forward as the judge of all, as the one by whose words all things would be evaluated, all truth revealed, all reality declared. They heard Him speak with the authority of the Son of God. He spoke of "my Father in Heaven" and in so doing declared Himself to be the Son of God. He put Himself forward as a King declaring the nature of His Kingdom. No –one ever heard words like they heard this day from Christ's lips.

Despite His authority, what is most astonishing is that Matthew does not tell us that anyone believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. No doubt the scribes and Pharisees were moved to hatred. The common people were astonished and amazed by His teaching and but being amazed does not do anything. You must be more than amazed at the authority of Christ. Christ is the

Authority To Which We Must Submit

After hearing this sermon, we must come to see that Christ is to be feared and fled to for refuge. We must bow to Christ's absolute authority with reverence and godly fear. We must embrace His authority and His truth and submit to Him and trust in Him, worshipping Him as Messiah, Savior, Judge and King. Christ is the only Rock. Obedience to Him is the only foundation that will stand. He, alone, is unshakable and His foundation is sure. No one is like Christ.

After hearing Jesus' sermon we must respond with obedience born of saving faith. We cannot make the mistake of thinking that simply desire is enough. Everyone desires to go to heaven. The measure is not simply desire. Jesus does not say here that just desiring obedience is enough. Rather it is a desire to submit to Christ as Lord that results in obedience that is in view here. It is desire that proceeds from faith and leads to true and real and specific obedience to Christ.

Jesus is commanding us to examine the foundation of our lives, to ask ourselves – what is my life built upon? Is it built on my own ambitions, on my own agenda? Who holds ultimate authority in my life – me or Christ? My thoughts or His words? What is my life truly constructed upon? This is a heart-searching and a soul-searching message from Christ. We cannot just skip over it. We need to ask the Spirit of God to reveal the reality of our lives behind the appearance.

My biggest concern in studying and preaching these words is that there will be many people in hell who made professions of faith, who came to church, who invested in ministries, who sang the songs, who gave their money, who outwardly and verbally conformed to an appearance of

godliness, but who never knew Christ by faith and as a result of true saving faith knew the reality of an inward and growing obedience to Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord. How I pray that would not be any of us.

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