
THE WISE AND FOOLISH BUILDERS

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QUESTIONS:

- 1) What is as bad as violating the will of God?
- 2) If someone picks and chooses which commands to obey and which ones to skip, is he really obeying at all?
- 3) Why do some people think the "*sermon on the mount*" is simply an explanation of the OT Law of Moses?
- 4) What philosophy teaches that man is so depraved it is impossible to truly obey God's will?
- 5) What does the house represent in Jesus' parable?
- 6) When buying a house, what should buyers consider first about a house?
- 7) What does the storm represent?
- 8) Who sold the foolish man his sandy property?

INTRODUCTION

Matthew 7:24-27

²⁴ "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, **and does them**, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:

²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

²⁶ "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, **and does not do them**, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:

²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

In Mt 5:3 Jesus began this "*sermon on the mount*" by pronouncing blessings on certain people. Now in ch 7 He ends the sermon with words of caution.

He points out there is only one way to heaven, but:

- It is a narrow way
- It is difficult to pass through (v14)
- There are false prophets trying to turn us away (v15)

In v21 Jesus warns us about ourselves. We can deceive ourselves into thinking we're on the narrow way to heaven when really we are not. He continues this thought:

There are two groups of self-deceived people mentioned in this chapter and there is a basic difference between the two:

FIRST:

- vv21-23 – those who **say**, but do not do
- vv24-27 – those who **hear**, but do not do

SECOND:

- vv21-23 – describes people who "**work iniquity.**" They are guilty of the sin of commission.
- vv24-27 – describes people who **neglect** God's will. They are guilty of the **sin of omission**.

Jesus is showing that *neglecting the will of God is as bad as violating the will of God*. The same destruction awaits both classes of men.

TEXT (1)

Matthew 7:24

²⁴ "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:

"These sayings" – notice the number is plural. To fulfill what Jesus taught here requires keeping all the sayings of Jesus, not just the ones we like, or that seem easy.

To decide not to keep one of Jesus' sayings is to *"not keep these sayings."*

ILL: The rich young ruler (Mt 19).

Matthew 19:16-22

¹⁶ Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

¹⁷ So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

¹⁸ He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,'

¹⁹ 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

²⁰ The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?"

²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

²² But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Look at:

James 2:10-11

¹⁰ For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

¹¹ For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

ARGUMENT: James is referring to the OT Law. This principle does not apply to the NT.

REPLY: Look at the next verse:

James 2:12

¹² So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

James is showing that if we pick and choose which commands we want to keep, and which ones we don't, then really we're not doing God's will in anything. We are actually doing our own will in everything.

"OF MINE"

Jesus identifies these sayings within the "*sermon on the mount*" as His own teachings: "***These sayings of mine.***"

Clearly, Jesus has not been interpreting what Moses' law meant. Had He been expounding on Moses' law we would have expected something like:

- "Whosoever heareth these sayings **of Moses** and does them ..."
- Instead, Jesus identified the material within this sermon as His own.

John 12:48

⁴⁸ He who rejects Me, and does not receive **My words**, has that which judges him — **the word that I have spoken** will judge him in the last day.

Jesus was speaking about men who rejected Him and His words, not the OT Law.

Jesus taught the Law of Moses would pass away when everything was fulfilled (Mt 5:18), but what about the "*words of Jesus*"?

Matthew 24:35

³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but **My words** will by no means pass away.

The expression "*My words*" does not refer to Moses' Law.

Hebrews 2:3

³ how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first **began to be spoken by the Lord**, ...

2 John 9

⁹ Whoever transgresses and does not abide in **the doctrine of Christ** does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

Colossians 3:16

¹⁶ Let **the word of Christ** dwell in you richly in all wisdom, ...

1 Timothy 6:3-4

³ If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even **the words of our Lord Jesus Christ**, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness,

⁴ he is proud, knowing nothing, ...

On and on we could go. Jesus was teaching the gospel of the kingdom in the "*sermon on the mount*" and to reject these sayings of Christ is to build on sand!

NOTE: I say all of this because there are some today who reject what Jesus taught in these chapters. They don't like what Jesus taught about divorce and other items and they reject it all as OT Law that was fulfilled and done away!

Jesus said that kind of thinking is building on sand! It will lead to a collapse of our house – the destruction of your soul.

SUMMARY

In summary, Jesus is saying in the first half of this verse:

- He is the owner and originator of these teachings in the "sermon on the mount"
- These sayings did not originate with Moses, or any other man
- Everyone of these sayings must be respected and kept if one hopes to enter heaven

CAN A MAN "KEEP THESE SAYINGS"?

Q: Can a man actually "*keep these sayings*" of Jesus?

Calvinism teaches that mortal man is so depraved and so sinful and so worthless that it is impossible for him to keep "*these sayings*" of Jesus. They always like to tack on the word "*perfectly*."

The Bible teaches men are able to keep "*these sayings*" to a degree that will please God:

John 17:6

⁶ "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and **they have kept Your word**."

1 John 3:22

²² And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because **we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight**.

The Scriptures are filled with men and women who kept God's Law to a degree that they were called "*blameless*":

- Joseph and Mary were "justified" before God (Mt 1:19)
- Simeon was "just" and "devout" (Lk 2:25)

Listen to the description given of Zacharias and Elizabeth:

Luke 1:6

⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord **blameless**.

If men could keep the commandments and ordinances of Moses' Law and be considered "*blameless*" in the eyes of God, then men can keep "*these sayings*" of Jesus!

The fact that one man is called "*foolish*" indicates ***an act of the will***. He had a free will to choose obedience, but he did not and it's his own fault – that's why he is called foolish.

The problem was not his inability, but his choice.

THE HOUSE AND ROCK

Jesus begins now to tell a parable to describe the obedient hearer: He is like a wise man who built his house on a rock.

house – this indicates the man's life. He is building and founding his life upon the rock.

rock – represents the sayings of Jesus.

Jesus is going to teach the most important lesson you can ever learn about real estate: ***It doesn't matter how beautiful a house looks on the outside, the most important thing to check is the foundation.***

- If the foundation is good – you can fix anything.
- If the foundation is no good – you're wasting your time.

ILL: In 1996, when the Olympic Games came to Atlanta, the city of Atlanta built "**The Olympic Village**" – a set of impressive apartment buildings to house the athletes. After spending millions of dollars, they began to notice the buildings were sinking into the ground. Bad foundation. One day those buildings will be worthless.

What Jesus says about building on a solid foundation applies to individuals and groups of individuals.

- If a church (group of individuals) is built on the wrong foundation – it will not stand.
- Doesn't matter how impressive the organization looks.

The foundation is the teachings of Jesus and His apostles.

Ephesians 2:19-20

¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

²⁰ having been built on the **foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,**

- If our individual lives are not founded on the teachings of Christ and the apostles ... we have erected our lives on sand.
- If a congregation is not founded on the teachings of Christ and the apostles ...

This wise man is building his life upon obedience to the words of Jesus. He is not trusting to:

- His own ideas
- His own reasonings

He believes what Jesus said. He believes if he hears the words of Jesus and obeys them God will grant him the necessary mercy and grace to enter heaven.

- This wise man knows **Jesus was a carpenter** and carpenters know about foundations.
- He also knows **Jesus was the Son of God** and He knows about going to heaven.

He will therefore trust in Jesus and His "*sayings*" to get him to heaven.

TEXT (2)

Matthew 7:25

²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

Notice carefully, Jesus did not say:

- "The rain **may** descend"

- "The flood **may** come"
- "The winds **may** blow"

The coming storm is inevitable. They will come without a doubt.

See how comprehensive the storm is:

- Rain – attacking the **roof** of the house
- Flood – attacking the **bottom**
- Wind – attacking the **sides**

There is nothing on the house that is untried by the storm. This wise man's house (life) is tried from every angle.

WHAT IS THE "STORM"?

Q: What does the storm represent?

A: It is not likely to be trials and testing which we experience on this earth.

You will notice when the foolish man's house collapses it was a final destruction from which he could not recover.

Men can recover from hardships in this life, but the foolish man's house (life) was beyond recovery.

It seems most likely that ***the storm symbolizes the judgment of God***. On the Final Day, our buildings (lives) which we spent a lifetime erecting will be tested from top to bottom.

The Judgment Day will be a day that reveals:

- Who is **wheat** and who is **chaff**
- Who is a **sheep** and who is a **goat**
- Who chose the **narrow way** and who chose the **broad**
- Who built on **rock** and who built on **sand**

Jesus is saying if we are wise enough to erect our lives on the rock of His teachings, we will survive the judgment and wrath of God.

NOTE: The rock ("sayings of Jesus") got all the credit for the house being saved! The wise man was wise because he saw from the beginning what the rock would do for his house (life).

TEXT (3)

Matthew 7:26

²⁶ "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:

Jesus is now presenting a contrast to the wise man. But notice what He is not contrasting:

FIRST: *Jesus is not contrasting two men who deliberately go out and choose two different foundations.*

The wise man was deliberate in choosing a rock, but the foolish man was not deliberate; he was haphazard.

He built his house thinking it would stand. He never dreamed it would collapse when the first storm came along.

SECOND: *Jesus is not contrasting a beautiful mansion with an ugly mud hut.*

Both houses seem to be equally appealing to the eye.

In other words, the second house did not collapse because it was inferior in looks. Outwardly it had an equality with the first house.

The problem was the foundation, not the appearance.

There are many people who do very many lovely and beautiful things with their lives. They:

- Help the needy

- Visit the sick
- Take in foster children
- Contribute to every charity
- Set an excellent moral example

All of these things are good; there is no fault in appearance. But, the problem is they are not doing what Jesus said.

A man "obeys" only when it suits him is building on a sandy foundation. No amount of sacrifices can substitute for obedience:

1 Samuel 15:22

²² ... to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.

THE SAND

This brings up the next question: *What does the sand represent?*

The sand is contrasted with the rock. If the rock is the "sayings of Jesus," then ***the sand is any and all teachings that are not the "sayings" of Jesus*** and/or His authorized apostles. The sand is:

- Human wisdom
- Human reasonings
- Human arguments

Q: Where did this sand come from? Who sold the foolish man this sandy property?

A: A real estate agent. A false real estate agent called a "false prophet" mentioned in v15.

THE SIMILARITIES

Notice the similarities between the wise man and the foolish man.

- 1) **Both men hear the words of Jesus.**
- 2) **Both men begin to build a house (live their lives).**
- 3) **Both build in the same general location** (both houses suffer the same storm).

In other words, the outward circumstances of their lives are basically the same. One had no advantage over the other.

- 4) **Both men built the same kind of house** (as far as we can tell).

Outwardly we detect no difference between these men. Outwardly we would say both were believing and living alike.

- Both live in the same town
- Both go to the same congregation
- Both listen to the same sermon
- Both fellowshiped the same friends

Jesus is emphasizing the subtlety of it all. The thing that really matters (the foundation) is hidden out of sight and most people won't bother to notice that.

The casual observer cannot detect a difference between the ***obedient hearer*** and the ***negligent hearer***.

SIDE NOTE: Neither does the casual observer detect any difference between manmade denominations and the Lord's church. To them: *"All churches are the same."*

They have not bothered to check out the foundations of these denominations and the foundation of the *"church of Christ."*

The *"church of Christ"* is founded upon the teachings of Jesus and His apostles and prophets, but modern denominations depend upon the teachings and philosophies of men to survive.

But getting back, Jesus is saying it does not matter what a man's life looks like on the outside:

- How many "big meetings" he goes to
- How many Scriptures he can quote
- How many debates he's had
- How many sermons he's preached

What really matters is if a man obeys what Jesus taught.

THE DIFFERENCES

Having noticed the similarities of these two men, let us now notice the differences.

There is one major difference between the two men: **one built on a rock, the other on sand.** But the question we need to ask is: Why did one build on a rock and the other on sand?

TWO REASONS:

- 1) **The wise man put out the effort of digging to the rock, the foolish man did not.**

Luke 6:47-48

⁴⁷ Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like:

⁴⁸ He is like a man building a house, who **dug deep** and laid the foundation on the rock. ...

This wise man went to quite a bit of effort. It was not very convenient – in fact, it was very inconvenient. This fits the description of the "*narrow way*" (v14).

Luke 13:24

²⁴ "**Strive** to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

On the other hand, the foolish man built on sand. No digging, no hard work, no effort. It was quick and easy, and that's how Jesus described the "*broad way*" (v13).

2) The wise man looked to the future, but the foolish man could see only the present.

Psalms 73:3

³ For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

He was jealous over the life of ease enjoyed by the wicked man:

Psalms 73:16-17

¹⁶ When I thought how to understand this,
It was too painful for me —
¹⁷ Until I went into the sanctuary of God;
Then I understood their end.

The wise man looks to the end of life, but the foolish man sees only the present.

Hebrews 11:24-26

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,
²⁵ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,

²⁶ esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

The wise man looked ahead and saw the judgment of God coming and he wisely built his life on the "*sayings of Jesus.*"

The foolish man never gave a serious thought about the future. No doubt he had heard of the judgment of God, but he obviously did not believe it would be as bad as everyone was saying.

ILL: When hurricane comes everyone is warned to evacuate. Everyone knows it's coming, but some refuse to believe the storm is as fierce as the weather service warns.

Likewise, the foolish man of Jesus' parable perhaps knows the Judgment Day is coming, but he does not believe it will be as fierce as the Scriptures record.

TEXT (4)

Matthew 7:27

²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

As this storm begins the foolish man realizes his error. If he had it to do over again he would have done things differently. He would have:

- Believed the reports about the fierceness of the storm
- Put out the needed effort to dig deep and build on rock

Jesus is showing us that the time to examine our lives is now before the storm of God's judgment arrives.

THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE

Jesus describes the most tragic difference between the two builders: ***their final destination***. The bottom line for those who refuse to obey these "sayings" within the "sermon on the mount" is:

- Not just that they miss out on some blessings
- BUT, they receive eternal punishment

The falling of the house is the destruction at the end of the broad way (v13).

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9

⁷ and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,

⁸ in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

CONCLUSION

This was the last word of the sermon. Jesus just stopped.

Perhaps some were expecting Jesus to end the sermon on a positive note; perhaps by pronouncing a "*blessing*" on someone like He did in the beginning.

Instead, He ended with this sober warning about those who hear His words but do not obey them. Truly Matthew was correct when he concluded:

Matthew 7:28-29

²⁸ And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching,

²⁹ for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

What kind of person are you today?

- Wise?
- Foolish?

Remember, there's a storm coming, and it's going to be worse than you think. If you haven't obeyed these words of Jesus you cannot hope to survive.