

THE MESSAGE OF THE MESSIAH KING

Sermon on the Mount Matthew 7

Rediscovering Jesus in the Jewish Gospels Lesson 17

Jesus discourse of the spiritual principles of the imminent literal Messianic Kingdom have the momentum and force of a Beethoven symphony. The third chapter, third section and conclusion of this discourse is like the crescendo. Jesus astounds the listeners both with His doctrines and by His authority. In the first movement of chapter 5, He begins from the airy blessedness of the beatitudes, sprinkled with a dash of salt and a flash of light, then slows the tempo to the deeper pensive tones of Mosaic law into the rich chords of the Spirit of God's Law. Chapter 6 lifts our spirits into the hallowed throne room of our Father in Heaven, adjacent to the readily available resources from His heavenly treasure vaults. Our anxious spirit is calmed by the simple dependence of the birds on His bountiful hand. The aroma of God's lilies reassure us of His provision. When our priority is His reign and His righteousness in our lives, then we are assured that all these things will be added unto our lives. In chapter 7 He takes us from the low road of judgmental preoccupation and the broad way of self-deception through the narrow gate that leads to eternal life. Lest we miss the narrow way, He warns of the deceiving pseudo spirituality of false prophets and of the fatality of false hopes in a nominally professed faith. The listeners are left with the staggering question and a thirst to know God. But they are left with the decision, are you just performing to please God or does He know you personally as Savior and is your life practice building upon His solid foundation? His promised blessedness in the Kingdom are only vanishing dreams for those trusting in their righteousness or riches. But those who believe in Him will know His beatitudes formed in their hearts and lives.

Judge Not 7:1-6

This happens to be the one get-out-of-condemnation-free card that most people know about in the Bible. Jesus in fact, also taught that we must judge but with "righteous judgment" (John 7:24). There is no contradiction. We are not to pass final verdict based on limited understanding, or prejudiced opinion nor on outward appearances. Justice is the balance to Judgement. Judging someone justly or righteously is emphasized. Also there is the warning that if you dish it out, you better be able to take it. We are measured by the same rule by which we measure others. Jesus was teaching self-examination before judging, so that we are not guilty of worse. The log in our eye disqualifies us to do surgery on their eye. The end goal of righteous judgment is to help the other remove that which they cannot remedy by themselves and which is harmful to their life. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). However, we are not to continually cast the pearls of our love and assistance before those who don't want our help and would trample us like a rabid swine.

Ask Him 7:7-11

These three imperatives are in the present tense in the Greek indicating they are simultaneous in fervency. It is no coincidence that this need for fervency follows the wrong focus on a brother who has a blinding vision problem to the sin in their life in the previous passage. How many parents or siblings have pounded on the doors of Heaven for God's deliverance of their loved one? It is not in vain. Show up at the Throne of Grace and Mercy until you see Him work in their lives. To that point Jesus told the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8 "And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Not only are we commanded, we are invited "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). This is the third time in the sermon that the listener is urged to approach God in prayer. First in the model prayer, then at the close of chapter 6 and now once more here. Our lack of faith in our heavenly Father and reluctance to come to Him for our needs is rebuked by the comparison that even a sinful human father will grant at his son's request.

I spent considerable time in this series and preceding the study of these three chapters expounding the Kingdom prerequisite of John and Jesus, "Repent for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." How does this grand discourse of high spiritual virtues fit in to that warning? It may seem as if it were a complete change of tone. But actually it is the other side of the coin of repent. Paul puts the repentance and the blessing together seamlessly in Romans chapter two. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:1-4). Whereas the people were hearing John lay the axe to the root of the tree, in the spirit and power of Elijah. Jesus showed the result of that repentance in the potential spiritual fruits of the tree of one redeemed and ready for the kingdom. Moses delivered the Holy Law written in stone, but Jesus' words were pure grace and truth while His practice was in obedience to the Law.

The Golden Rule 7:12

In one sentence, Jesus summarizes our responsibility to our fellow man, in both the Law and Prophets. It has become known as the golden rule. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12). "The Golden Rule" can be found in Jewish writings as early as the Apocryphal book Tobit (third century B.C.)ⁱ When asked what is the greatest commandment, in Mark 12:28-31, Jesus quoted the original Jewish source, Leviticus 19:18, as the second greatest commandment.

In closing, Jesus gives a severe warning lest his listeners are asleep in the self-assurance of good standing with God. "The closing section of the Sermon on the Mount presents two choices to the listener. These are presented in a series of contrasts: two ways (vv. 13, 14); two trees (vv. 15-20); two professions (vv. 21-23); and two foundations (vv. 24-29).ⁱⁱ

The Straight Gate 7:13,14

"The word translated as "strait" in the King James Version is στενός - stenos." Barnes Notes interprets it well, "The words "straight" and "strait" have very different meanings. The former means "not crooked;" the latter, "pent up, narrow, difficult to be entered." This is the word used here, and it means that the way to heaven is "pent up, narrow, close," and not obviously entered."ⁱⁱⁱ The strait gate precedes and therefore must be first entered to be on the narrow way to eternal life. The old maxim of "walking the strait and narrow" applies to the narrow way of sanctification in the Christian life, not the requirements to enter the strait gate of salvation. It is no coincidence that the false prophets section to follow is a refutation of those who will corrupt the gospel of grace to a system promising salvation to those who stay on their narrow "path." False religions and cults always reverse the gate and the way so that only with their prescribed walk does one enter the gate at the end. There are two ways: broad or narrow. Following the majority does not end well.

False Prophets 7:15-20

There is no more common idiom of deception than "wolves in sheep's clothing." The False prophet is likened to an inwardly ravaging wolf posing as a sheep. Their intentions are hidden until the prey is comfortably vulnerable. The contrast of two ways is compared to two types: trees or plants, the thistle and the grape vine. Likewise false prophets can be known by their corrupt fruits. Jewish Galileans could have been familiar with the Torah command of Deuteronomy 13:1-5, which told of workers of signs or wonders who lead people astray. Their goal was to "thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in." John the revelator has a similar description of the Great False Prophet, "And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of*

those miracles which he had power to do" (Revelation 13:11). The Mosaic penalty was physical death or fire as seen in verse 19. Jesus healed a man afflicted with *tzara'at* – demons^{iv} as a Messianic proof (Matthew 8:1-3; 12:22-23).

So what is the corrupt fruit of false prophets? Jude says they are "ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Immorality and authoritarianism are their hallmarks "defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities," "speak evil of those things which they know not," Their greed for your money is unquenchable, "ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core." They use charity as a cloak to feast with your money, "These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you." "These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 4,8,11,12,16). Peter warns of the same "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not" (2 Peter 2:3). Don't fall for smooth words or even miracles, wait and watch for evidence of carnal fruit. They hide those like the fangs of the wolf until the end. The telltale sign is their twisting of scripture with smooth philosophy that uplifts them and emphasizes your materialistic desires rather than uplifting Jesus. The prosperity Gospel is a classic pseudo Ponzi scheme that only enriches them. Remember who appears to be an angel of Light, the same one who talked Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden and 1/3 of God's angels out of Heaven.

False Hopes 7:21-23

Now we come to the contrast of two professions, one false and one genuine. Both say "Lord, Lord." The false professors may be genuinely sincere but emphasize what they have done for God. These are called workers of iniquity." The Greek *ἀνομία anomia*, translated as iniquity, indicates absence of law or workers of lawlessness. The genuine professor is not described by their accomplishments but are simply reliant on their relationship with Jesus. They are said to "do the will of my Father which is in Heaven." As we saw in lesson 16, repentance and faith are necessary for salvation. Jesus had been preaching that repentance, and in this sermon, used the good of God to lead them to repentance. Later in Matthew 12:50 Jesus calls those his family, the ones "who do the will of my Father." Peter asks, "what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17). Jesus commanded Nicodemus "Ye must be born again." Belief is imperative and intentional. The key is in the phrase, "On that day" *Yom-haDin* – Judgment Day

" And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:11-15).

Firm Foundation 7:24-29

It all boils down to two foundations. Therefore, based on all He had taught, The two houses had the same materials and amount of labor and the same flood. The laborer of the house on the sand was dependent on his accomplishments like the false prophets. Sadly, many times, members of false cults or religions, which are based on good works for salvation, actually out-do us who have genuine professions of salvation by faith and are recipients of Grace. They are not just sincere, they are desperate to earn God's favor by attempting to erase their sin. Both have very different foundations: sand or of rock. The difference is as old as the offerings of Cain and Abel. Cain offered the fruits of his labor and God had no respect unto his offering. Abel offered a lamb as Adam and Eve no doubt had relayed how that God had slain an animal to give them sufficient coats of skins. No matter how great the false prophet and how impressive the wonders and good

works, or how great are the multitudes of their followers, in the end “great was the fall of it.” Only Jesus’ doctrine, His sayings, His righteousness, His strait gate, His fruits, His narrow way give eternal access to God and His Kingdom.

As amazing as His words were, they paled in comparison to His works that He performed as recorded in the next two chapters, 8 and 9. They have heard his Kingdom message and are about to see His Kingdom power. This is the year of His Popularity. The momentum of His ministry and the size multitudes soon becomes exponential. In chapter 10 he chooses the 12 Apostles and sends them out as “sheep among wolves.” In chapter 11 John the Baptist from prison begins to doubt whether Jesus is the one. In chapter 12 we begin to see the tides turn into His year of Persecution as the leadership from Jerusalem inspects and formally rejects Him as Messiah King. Finally the third year will arrive, the year of His passion. But for now, his fame was spreading abroad like wild fire. “And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land” (9:26). “when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country” (9:31).

ⁱ The Complete Jewish Study Bible, P 1396

ⁱⁱ The King James Study Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers, The Liberty Annotated Study Bible, Liberty University, 1988, p 1426

ⁱⁱⁱ Matthew 7:14 Commentaries: "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. (biblehub.com)

^{iv} Ibid P1396