

## Two Ways, Two Trees, Two Houses (Matt 7:13-28)



### A. Warning 1: Two Ways - Beware how you choose your path (7:13-14)

1. Jesus' audience was Jews the chosen people, who followed Jesus up the mountain to hear Him. Jesus confronts these people to make a choice that leads to totally different outcomes in life. **Everyone must choose and choose wisely.**

The wide gate has a bright sign promising an easy carefree passageway to heaven. The other gate is very narrow - you can only squeeze through if you leave behind your sins, your ideas, your convenience, and your pride. The wide gate leads to a wide road that is easy and pleasant and lots of people are on it. The narrow gate leads to a difficult and demanding road that only a few people are on it. Jesus says one leads to life and the other leads to destruction. [No universalism!]

Which road will you choose? C.f. Psalm 1; Jer 6:16, 'Ask for the ancient paths...and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.'

2. Jesus said that the broad road is popular. It always will be. Why? It does not require anything. There is no need for you to change, no need for repentance, no need to deny yourself, only a promise of blessing and the heaven afterwards. It is the road that offers 'cross-less Christianity' which Jesus never offered to anyone. Such Christianity will always be popular with people walking in the spirit of this age. There is only one problem. This road does not lead to life but to destruction. But many will go on this road because it appeals to their fleshly desires.

Jesus said that few will choose the narrow road that leads to life. *If anyone offers cross-less Christianity that leads to life, don't believe it no matter how many followings they have.* Don't trust in the numbers. It can be deceiving. The road that leads to life is never going to be attractive to the unregenerate flesh, therefore it will not be popular with many. *'It is possible to sell everything and buy a field in which there is no treasure.'* (Bob Mumford). We must be discerning and not spiritually naïve.

The road that leads to life is free to get on, but the annual subscription to stay on it will cost everything you have. 'What is your goal?' If your goal is easy way and popular way, you will choose foolishly. If your goal is eternal life no matter what the cost, you will choose wisely.

### B. Warning 2: Two trees - Beware of the wrong guides (7:15-23)

1. **'Beware of false prophets.'** *'But inwardly they are ravenous wolves.'* (7:15) 'Ravenous' – hungry and greedy, looking for the next meal, driven by the appetite of this world. It is difficult to spot them quickly by what they teach. They may not tell you a whole lie, but mix the lie into some truth to make it popular. E.g. promise of heaven without hell; salvation without repentance; discipleship without the cross, etc.
  - a) You cannot tell them apart by their appearance. 'They come in sheep's clothing,' a wolf with a sheep skin on. Even Satan comes to us as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). The false prophet has the appearance of a lamb (Rev 13:11).
  - b) You cannot tell by the languages that they use, 'Lord, Lord...' (7:21)
  - c) You cannot tell apart by their gift - prophecy, deliverance, and healing (7:22). This scandal of gifted leaders falling will increase in the future.
2. **How then do we tell apart between the true prophets from the false?** By accuracy of their prophecy? Jesus tells us to examine the fruit of their lives. *'Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.'* (7:23) Gifts you receive, but fruits you bear which require process and time. Keyword: Their fruit will be characterised by 'lawlessness' (ἀνομία) – i.e. they are law unto themselves. This is Isaiah's warning for the last days. The shepherds are 'dumb dogs' & 'greedy dogs' (Is 56:9-12 c.f. Matt 24:45-51).
  - a) It seems that these have marketed their gifts as 'tools' for commercial interest;
  - b) These are not interested in doing the will of God in their lives;
  - c) They have no conscious knowledge of the judgment of God that will follow, hence, no fear of God.

3. **Jesus gives us a glimpse of the judgment of God at His coming.** Two shocking words from Jesus :

a) 'Many will say to Me in that day...' (7:22)

b) 'And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'' (7:23)

Those who prophesied, cast out demons, and healed many - never had any personal relationship with Jesus at any time. They are completely rejected by the Lord, and it comes to them as a total shock. Jesus makes it clear that these people had no desire to do the will of the Father. They were motivated by a voracious appetite like a wolf – hunting instinct.

### **C. Warning 3: Two Houses (7:24-28) – Beware how you build**

1. **It is about depth rather than location.** Jesus had been a carpenter in Nazareth for many years. Nazareth is nestled like a bowl on the Galilean hill. The erosion of the hill filled up the bottom of the hill with sediment and sand. If you are going to build a house in Nazareth, you must go through the sand until you hit the rock. If your foundation does not go deep enough and hit the rock, rain will scoop out the sand and it will begin to eat away at the foundation until eventually the whole house crumbles. The real issue is not about the location of the building, but the depth of the foundation. Jesus is saying, 'If you listen to the teaching like this and go away saying, what a nice sermon...' that response is not deep enough as a foundation for faith. You are in danger of suffering loss.

2. **We are all building for eternity whether we are aware of it or not.** Some people's life's work will stand the test of time and into eternity, and some people's work will collapse and will not survive into eternity. How then do we build for eternity? We must put Jesus' teaching into practice. '*Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine...*' (7:24) – i.e. the whole Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5-7. *Particularly, pursuing the Eight Beatitudes in a focused way.* The Word of God must shape my thinking and my value system. The foundation is the part of the building that is not seen. It is the hidden part of our lives – what we truly value, pursue and invest in that only the Lord can see. Each day is a brick in the building.

3. **One day every house will be tested, and its foundation will be revealed for what it is.** This is a promise of Jesus. **The test will come in two waves.**

a) **The trials and crises we face in this life.** Sometimes the crisis I face in life tests the foundation of my faith. Some people's faith can get 'shipwrecked.' Often my 'troubled heart' unveils the deficiencies of my heart and exposes 'wrong goals'. These events are the mercies of God so that we do not waste our entire lives building on the wrong foundation.

b) **The judgment seat of Christ.** We will stand before the judgment seat of Christ one day. Apostle Paul said in 1 Cor 3:11-16, many will be saved, but they will suffer loss and be saved as though escaping through a fire. The fire will test the quality of our lives – what we have pursued and what we have gathered in this life. Are they gold, silver, or precious stones that will be purified by the fire? Or wood, hay and straw that will be burnt up? When Jesus evaluates our lives, it won't be a sugar-coated 'well done.' It will be an absolutely truthful assessment. '*Whoever hears these sayings of Mine and does them...*' (Matt 7:24) The fact that I am breathing today means I still have time to build rightly toward eternity.

### **D. Questions**

1. What is the difference between the narrow road that leads to life VS the wide road that leads to destruction? Why is the road that leads to destruction more popular than the road that leads to life?
2. Why is it so difficult to discern between true prophets from the false? How do we discern rightly?
3. What is the difference between 'building on the sand' VS 'building on the rock'? According to Jesus' teaching, how do we build for eternity?
4. What are the three final warnings Jesus gave to His followers? Which of these warnings spoke to you the most? Why?