

The Life of Christ

Lesson 5: The Great Teacher: Authority Like No Other -- Matthew 7:24-29

For most of three chapters, the crowd on the hillside has been listening to the most astonishing sermon ever preached. Jesus has turned the world upside down, blessing the poor in spirit and the mourners, calling His followers salt and light, reaching past murder to anger and past adultery to lust, teaching them to love their enemies and to seek first the kingdom of God. And now, as the sermon draws to its close, He gathers it all into a single story so simple a child could picture it: two men, two houses, two foundations, one storm.

Both men build. Both houses look fine on a clear day. From the road you could not tell them apart. The difference is hidden underground, in the foundation, and it stays hidden until the weather turns. Then the rain falls, the rivers rise, the winds beat against both houses, and the difference becomes the only thing that matters. One house stands. The other falls, and great is its fall. The storm did not create the difference; it merely revealed what was there all along.

Jesus tells us plainly what the foundations are. The wise builder is the one who hears these words of Mine and does them. The foolish builder is the one who hears these words of Mine and does not do them. Notice that both men heard. The dividing line does not run between those who listen to Jesus and those who ignore Him. It runs between those who hear and obey and those who hear and admire. It is entirely possible to sit in the crowd, nod at every word, be moved, even take notes, and build a house that will not stand.

And then Matthew tells us how the crowd responded. They were astonished, because He taught as one who had authority, and not as their scribes. The scribes quoted other teachers; Jesus spoke as though the words were His own to give. He did not say, "Thus says the Lord"; He said, "But I say to you." Here is the Great Teacher whose authority is unlike any other, because He is unlike any other. This lesson asks the question His sermon was always driving toward: not merely whether we have heard Him, but whether we will build our lives on what He says.

Group Discussion: Jesus says that the difference between the wise and the foolish builder is not whether they heard His words, but whether they did them. Why do you think it is so easy to admire the teachings of Jesus, and even be moved by them, without actually putting them into practice?

Personal Reflection: Think of one teaching of Jesus that you genuinely admire but have not fully obeyed. What has kept you in the place of a hearer rather than a doer, and what might it look like to begin building on that word this week?

Read Matthew 7:24-29

Study Questions

1. In Matthew 7:24–27, Jesus contrasts two builders, and the difference between them is that one “hears these words of mine and does them” while the other hears them but does not. What is Jesus teaching about the foundation of a life that will stand, and why does He place the dividing line at obedience rather than mere hearing?
2. Both builders heard the same words, but only one acted. Where in your own life are you mostly a hearer of Jesus’ words rather than a doer? What teaching have you admired or agreed with, yet not actually put into practice?
3. Jesus says the storm came against both houses, the wise and the foolish alike. What does this teach us about the trials that come to every life, and why does only the house built on obedience to Christ’s words remain standing?
4. Storms have a way of revealing what we have built on. What past storm in your life exposed the true foundation you were trusting, and where do you sense the need to build deeper on Christ now, before the next storm comes?
5. Matthew tells us the crowds were astonished “for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes” (7:28–29). The scribes appealed to other teachers, but Jesus said, “But I say to you.” What does this unique authority reveal about who Jesus is?
6. Jesus’ authority means His words are not suggestions to be weighed against our preferences but commands to be obeyed. Where are you tempted to treat the teachings of Jesus as optional, picking and choosing the parts that suit you while quietly setting aside the rest?
7. Jesus calls His own words the rock on which a wise person builds, and the completed New Testament is now the authority by which we know His mind (2 Timothy 3:16–17). What does this teach us about the sufficiency and finality of Christ’s word for the building of our lives?
8. Consider how you actually take in the word of Christ, in worship, in study, in private reading. Are you listening as someone who intends to obey, or more casually, as one who merely wants to be informed or comforted? What practices would help you become a doer of the word?
9. The wise builder is defined not merely by hearing Christ but by doing what He says, which teaches us that genuine, saving faith is a living, obedient faith and not mere agreement or “faith only.” How does this passage, along with James 1:22–25 and Luke 6:46, help us understand that true faith in Christ always expresses itself in obedience, without turning that obedience into a way of earning God’s favor?
10. Looking back over the two builders and the authority of the Great Teacher, name one specific teaching of Jesus that you will move from hearing to doing this week, and describe the first concrete step you will take to begin building your life on that word.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Luke 6:46–49, Luke’s account of the two builders, opening with the searching question, “Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I tell you?”; James 1:22–

25, the call to be doers of the word and not hearers only who deceive themselves; John 14:23–24, where Jesus says that those who love Him will keep His word; Matthew 5:21–22, an example of Jesus' authority as He says, "but I say to you"; 2 Timothy 3:16–17, the all-sufficiency of Scripture to equip us for every good work.