



Lesson 6 October 8th, 2016

Builder of the House

Study Scripture – Hebrews 3:1-6; Matthew 7:24-29

Background Scripture – Hebrews 3

Key Verse:

For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.

Hebrews 3:3

INTRODUCTION

Hebrews was written to a group of Jewish Christians at an unknown location somewhere outside of Palestine or even maybe in Palestine itself, and the Book compares and contrasts Jesus to all that was iconic, revered, venerated and celebrated in Judaism.

In making the comparisons, the writer presents the surpassing excellence of the person and work of Jesus Christ, against a backdrop of the Old Covenant and its enduring symbols: angels, Moses, the Levitical Priesthood, the sacrificial system instituted from Mount Sinai, the Promised inheritance and the Temple. His objective was to have his readers persevere and *draw near* to God through trust in Jesus Christ, in the face of sustained persecution.

The majority of the people whom he addressed directly had come to genuine faith in Christ but had begun to cast a longing eye back to Judaism. This behavior was on account of intense persecution, victimization and ostracism for their faith, within their own community. To this point their faith was commendable but now there appears to be wavering in their commitment to Christ.

Note therefore that this Epistle was directed to believers, people in the faith, who had begun to drift from what they had been taught and what they believed. As such therefore this Epistle has direct relevance to the stance of present day believers for they too face similar problems and an environment with amazingly similar features to those in the present day.

Some in the very early days of the church had begun to doubt the excellence and superiority of Christianity and naturally its central figure Jesus Christ and had begun to take a second look at Judaism given as one commentator notes its:

...imposing rites, community sentiment in its favor; the fact of its history and antiquity and its undisputed Divine origin...

Judaism held an undeniable pull on those Jewish Christians. In addition to their natural prejudices, the persecution sapped their commitment, induced discouragement and presented

a serious temptation to abandon Christianity. Seemingly some of the believers had relapsed into that difficult and precarious position of slipping deeper and deeper back into Judaism. Arrested spiritual growth and discouragement (5:12-13) compounded the community's problem and herein is another warning for all Christians. Failure to apply and act on the truth that has been revealed often means the with-holding of further truth from such individuals, (Rom.1: 18-32).

The writer exhorted his readers to return and commit themselves to Christ, in the light of who He is and what He represented for them. He issues some stirring warnings against apostasy and back-sliding to which all Christians must take heed (3:12). He was interested to show how great the Son is but he was also interested in trying to help the Hebrew professing believers continue in their profession, thus avoiding apostasy.

The House built by Christ, the Apostles, the prophets and teachers and the many evangelists seemingly had begun to totter, and the task to the writer of Hebrews was to rebuild the church, the House of God, and restore it to its former glory.

The problem believers had in the past and have at present is the attitude which leads them to asking whether or not the faith they hold can do anything for them right now to deal with the present problems of frustration, anxiety, worry, and the fears, neuroses and psychoses which is so familiar.

It is not that believers do not know they are to do the things and follow the path that is a delight, but they are affected by the human tendency or pressure to avoid at all costs doing the things that are necessary

They desperately want to enter in to the rest of God that the writer of this Epistle describes so eloquently, but they seem naturally inclined to run away from it.

So we know we should talk to God every day, frequently, and we know we should be studying the word of God and meditating on it often, so that we will grow and become increasingly strong, but somehow the pressures and the attitudes of the world around us pull us sideways.

There is of course another issue of unbelief about things that our eyes have not seen or our hands have not handled. We as human beings which battle against the flesh have the doubting Thomas syndrome.

This group in the early church unlike some of the early Jerusalem or Galilean Jews, had never met Jesus. They received the gospel message and teachings directly from the apostles and prophets. So the recipients of Hebrews were second-generation Christians as a result of apostolic missionaries.

Even so they were not new believers and had in fact brought glory to the name of God after they were saved. The writer informs us he confronted them:



But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven, (10:32-34).

On top of the persecution, they faced certain dullness. A declining awareness of their Savior had set in.

The intent of Hebrews is not just to inform people of the exalted, pre-eminent, glorious and unique position of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as vitally important as that may be. The writer seeks to elicit the proper response of faith, trust, love and loyalty to Jesus in all his readers. It is important that believers understand that knowledge of Jesus and his work of redemption must manifest itself in a changed life of obedience to the commandments of God.

The writer is careful to thoughtfully engage his readers with a reasoned argument for the superiority of Jesus Christ over any and all of the bastions of Judaism. He already showed Jesus superior to prophets and angels and today's text is a comparison with Moses the revered, mediator, intercessor and esteemed 'law giver'; the man the Jews boasted "*And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face*", (Deut. 5:25-27; 34:10-12; Num.12:3-8; 14:11-20; Matt. 23:1-2; John 5:45; 9:28-29).

The writer will do nothing to belittle Moses, nor does he criticize him. He accepts Moses' greatness but shows that as great as he was, Jesus is greater by far.

It was important to convince the Jewish readers that Jesus Christ is greater than Moses because the entire Jewish religion came through Moses. Moses serves well the purpose of the author of Hebrews because for the Jews, he was arguably the "high water mark" for men in the Old Testament.

We should remember that when Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Law, Israel under the tutelage of Aaron who buckled under the demands of the people and built a molten calf, the fledgling nation descended in quick time into idolatry and pagan sexual festivities. God told Moses what was happening among the people that he Moses had led out from Egypt and told Moses He would destroy Israel then and there and make a new nation out of Moses.

But Moses stood up to God and responded that it was not he but God himself that had freed the nation and had led them out of Egypt by His own mighty hand, and He could not afford to destroy Israel and have the pagan nations say that Israel's God was weak and could lead them out of slavery but was unable to fulfill His promise to lead them into the Promised Land, but instead had to destroy the people He called his flock God's people and God's own instead of saying they belonged to him. Moses talked to God face to face, and was a mighty intercessor



for the nation in their frequent sinning episodes. He even stood up and begged God to forgive his sister and brother when they challenged Moses' leadership and God struck Miriam with leprosy, thus dramatically removing her from leadership and a place among the nation. God did forgive her at Moses' intercession and healed her after a short while.

No wonder then that Israel's scholars record that the nation considered Moses as greater than the angels and on par with Abraham or even superior to him. For Israel, Moses was the builder of the House of Israel par excellence.

Do not believe that while the Old Testament regarded Moses as "great", the New Testament did not very highly regard Moses. In fact, the New Testament Scriptures refer to Moses with approval approximately seventy times.

If our author can prove Jesus to be vastly superior to Moses, then Jesus must truly be great. The author does this by showing Jesus' superiority to Moses in His office, His work and His person.

The other section of the Study text comes from the end of Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-7:29) where after describing the citizens of the 'kingdom' The builder Moses was indeed great but he was simply a trustworthy and faithful servant in the House of God. But the builder Jesus was not a servant but the owner of the House who was responsible for its existence and everything about the House.

To drive the point about builders and the importance of faith and trust in the one responsible for everything that happened concerning the "House" Jesus told a parable that compared and contrasted two builders: one wise and one foolish.

Jesus use of the metaphor of building a house was very telling, as often when houses are described the foundation is hardly ever mentioned. We all know of course that without a strong foundation, whatever else might appear above ground, that house will not endure if the foundation is weak!

Jesus' parable emphasized how critical it is to have a strong foundation and according to Him, a carpenter no less, the only way to build a strong foundation is by obeying His words.

At the end of the sermon Jesus invited His hearers to *enter through the narrow gate* of obedience to His word (vs.13-14). In light of the sermon they had to make a choice; either to continue in their familiar, external, works religion or examine their hearts, recognize their spiritual paucity and accept that the condition of one's heart was the critical issue with God.

At the time of our text Jesus was on His first general tour of Galilee (Matt. 4:23-11:30) as He taught what it meant to be subjects of God's kingdom. He spoke with an authority that could only belong to God. To listen to Jesus and obey meant blessing; to ignore Him meant ruin.

Hebrews explains how Jesus, the divine, authoritative Son of God, fulfilled God's promises. Matthew shows how Jesus' one-of-a-kind greatness was revealed in what He said and did.



Together they declare that to follow Jesus is the only route to reconciliation with God and eternal life. Only thus could they be regarded as worthy “builders” of God’s House and be appropriately rewarded.

Let all, followers of Jesus and others, heed the writer’s invitation to ‘consider’ Jesus; He is the way, the truth and the life!

THE TEXT

Verse 1. *Wherefore...* in Hebrews 1:10-2:18, the author used six Old Testament passages to establish certain facts regarding the nature and work of Jesus. “*Wherefore*” indicates that conclusions and implications are about to be drawn from the preceding two chapters and the proof given that Jesus was superior to the prophets as well as superior to the angels

Note carefully that the description of the believers were great incentives for them to focus and “consider” Jesus.

... *holy brethren*... ‘partners in a heavenly call’, ‘those who confess Jesus as Apostle and High Priest’;

by these designations we are informed that the author is addressing fellow believers. They are ‘holy’ (set apart for a special purpose esp. religious = sanctified) because they are set apart for the service and worship of God and ‘brethren’ not necessarily because they are Jews but because they belonged to Jesus.

The force of this word “holy” is powerful, significant, and meaningful, for it stresses our position, the position of all true believers. One writer advises us of the use of the term in the surrounding pagan culture:

“Holy, may not, necessarily, be set apart for something moral. In fact, this root in the Old Testament was used, that is, the parallel root was used of prostitutes. They, were called holy. That is, they were called sanctified, set apart. They were attached to the temples, and the temples were the places where the fertility cults were observed. And so the prostitutes were there for the people to have intercourse with them because that would be a worshipful experience and remind them that if they did things like this, god would bless them in their crops, and they would have very prosperous years. And they were called “saints” or “set apart” people. So the term “holy does not of itself connote moral holiness, unless we think of this as “set apart for the Lord”. Then of course it’s altogether different.

We are called “saints” Now we are called “saints” in the sense that we are set apart for the service and the worship of the Lord god. And so our author, when he says, *Holy brethren*” that’s very strongly a moral expression because of the one to whom they are set apart. He calls them brethren.

Notice verse 11, “*For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified*” ...That’s a reference to the saints, that’s why he calls them “*holy brethren*”.

Please do not avoid the point that you believers are set apart for the worship of God now that you belong to the family of God.



... *partakers of the heavenly calling* ... a call to share in the heavenly kingdom that is to come; a call to share in the salvation that is available to us and the blessings that belong to those who are in the covenantal family; that is, the believing saints of God. The 'calling' that is the solemn, authoritative invitation that comes from the most authoritative source of all: God himself.

... *consider*... the exhortation is straightforward, "take note of Jesus." ("consider Jesus, NASB; "fix your thoughts on Jesus" NIV). (See Hebrews 12:2).

Particularly, readers were exhorted to take note of Jesus as the "*Apostle and High Priest*" whom they confessed as such. One writer notes

" In other words, we are to give considerable thought to the Jesus in whom we have put our trust, concerning Him in whom we profess to believe. We are not just to "practice what we preach;" we are to "ponder what we proclaim."

One writer gives us some practical ways to "strongly consider" Jesus:

"-Purposefully read the Gospels with the intent to investigate Jesus

-Simply think about Jesus

-Walk and think about Jesus. Sometimes walking stimulates the thinking

-Write down thoughts about Jesus. Writing, as opposed to just thinking, can help with focus

-Talk to yourself. We are always doing this, anyway. In the background of our lives is a constant inner dialogue. Interject thoughts about Jesus in that inner dialogue. Talk to yourself about Jesus.

-Ask God to reveal to you truth about Jesus. He wants to do this (John 16:14; 2 Corinthians 4:6)

... *the Apostle*... Jesus Christ is the "Apostle" (delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders) in that He is the One God sent to reveal the Father to humankind (1:1-2; John 1:14; 3:17, 34; 5:36, 38; et al.).

The word indicates one who carries an authoritative message from an authoritative figure.

The word Apostle also has the root meaning of "an ambassador", and an ambassador carries all the weight and power of the One he represents. Applied to Jesus, it describes Him as God's most authoritative messenger (Heb. 1:1-4). His message is God's climactic message, the fulfillment of every message that God has delivered in the past. One interesting story illustrates the power of an ambassador which has some prophetic inferences, for this man was so enraged he went back when threatened and thwarted in his aims and profaned the Temple in Jerusalem:

"There's an old story of Antiochus Euphron, who lived a bit before the time of the Lord, and he was a Roman, in fact, he was a king, really, a king of Syria. He determined at one time that it would be desirable for him to attack Egypt. And so he took his army and he went down to the border of Egypt, and he was met there by a Roman representative of the king, an ambassador of the Roman Emperor, a kind of apostle, and they had a little conversation. And the conversation went something like this, "What are you doing?" And Antiochus responded that he was going to attack Egypt, and Popilius, who was the name of



the man, at that point, drew a little circle around Antiochus Epihanes in the ground in the dirt. And he said, “I think you better make a decision before you move out of that circle to go back” And so he turned around and he went back because all the authority of the Roman Empire was behind Popilius”.

Jesus therefore was sent, and when He came He had all the authority and power of heaven behind Him. He was an apostle, sent, and He was also an ambassador.

... and High Priest... the writer used this designation often (Hebrews 2:17; 4:14; 5:5, 10; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11). Israel’s High Priest offered the once yearly sacrifice in the tabernacle or temple on the Day of Atonement. He carried the blood of a sacrificial animal into the Most Holy Place and sprinkled it on the “mercy seat,” which is the top of the Ark of the Covenant. This act was payment for the sins of all Israel (Lev.16; Heb. 9:7). What God promised in that office and rite, Jesus fulfilled by His death, resurrection, and ascension to the most holy place of Heaven. Jesus both proclaimed the fulfillment of God’s promise as Apostle and accomplished it as High Priest.

Jesus offered the acceptable sacrifice for the sins of His people to God, that is, His own life! We confess therefore that Jesus is the sacrifice who bore our sins and redeemed us to Himself, and guaranteed our acceptance to the Father.

Verse 2. The author is about to compare (and then contrast) Jesus with the much revered Moses. These two areas, Apostle and High Priest, are those areas which our author has chosen to demonstrate the superiority of the Lord Jesus to Moses.

Who... Jesus is still the subject.

... was faithful... the writer notes both Jesus and Moses were faithful to their divine calling. Moses and Jesus shared much in common. In a sense, both had roles which involved priestly duties and a kind of apostleship. We know that Aaron, Moses’ brother, was the High Priest, but it was Moses who sprinkled the blood of the covenant on the altar and on the people in Exodus 24:1-8. Later, Moses consecrated Aaron and his sons by offering sacrifices and applying the blood to (or around) the altar and to Aaron and his sons. He then anointed them with oil (Leviticus 8:18-36). There is no question Moses was faithful:

And he said, hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? (Num. 12:6-8)

But note, Moses had a limited tenure as High priest’ if at all, while Jesus is *... a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.* (Heb.5:6; see verse 10). Jesus is superior in His office!

Moses was a kind of Apostle as well. If an Apostle is a “sent one,” then Moses was clearly sent by God to Egypt, where he would speak to men for God. Jesus was also an Apostle in the sense that He was sent to earth by the Father to free men from captivity to sin. As Moses was the one



through whom the Law was given, Jesus was the One through whom God finally and fully spoke, (Hebrews 1:1-3).

As the original readers considered Jesus and as we ‘consider’ Jesus, they were to remember and we are to remember afresh that His faithfulness should be reflected in our own faithfulness.

Verses 3-4. Now after briefly noting some similarities, the author moves to their differences which will demonstrate that Jesus is vastly superior to Moses.

The author has already made the point that Jesus is “*higher than the angels*” (1:1 - 2:18). He is also greater than Moses in His office. Here Jesus will be shown to be greater than Moses in His work!

The question can be asked about what “this House” is. It is the redeemed people of both the Old and the New Testament that form this house. The “saints” or “set apart” ones are the ones that live in this House of God. There is a remnant of Israel who always held on to faith in Yahweh and a remnant of the Gentiles who were grafted into the original olive tree. In 1 Timothy 3:15 the Apostle Paul stated this.

... hath more honor... the writer uses the comparison of the builder of a building with the building to set out the difference between Jesus Christ's superiority and Moses'. No matter how grand a building may be, its author and architect, its creator, always gets more glory than the building itself. Whereas Moses served faithfully in the system of worship the tabernacle represented and among the Israelites generally, Jesus Christ designed that system of worship and made Israel God's people.

... built all things... Note, these verses are a powerful testimony to the deity of Jesus Christ. If God built everything, and Jesus Christ built God's house, Jesus Christ is God.

Verses 5-6. *But Christ as a son over his own house;*... More elements of contrast are introduced in these verses. First, we see that Moses was faithful “*as a servant,*” while “Christ” was faithful “*as a son.*”

Second, this contrast between “servant” and “son” is underscored by the fact that Moses was a servant “in” all God's house (verse 5), while Christ is the Son “over” God's house. Moses is in fact part of the ‘house’; he belongs in the House while Jesus rules over the ‘house! The Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the builder. Moses is a servant.

... things which were to be spoken after... One writer notes: “**Moses was in the house and the things that he talked about were things that would ultimately be fulfilled later on. In other words, Moses was a typical figure. And he talked about things that would take place in the future. As a matter of fact, what he did was largely typical. The Old Testament dispensation was largely typical. The sacrifices, the sacrificial system, the priesthood, all of those things, and then Israel's experiences in the Exodus, all of those things pointed forward to the things**



that would be spoken about afterwards Moses ministry in fact served to typify Jesus' ministry".

Moses is a figure, a type, a shadow; Jesus is the reality!

... *his house* ... the house was the company of the redeemed of the Old and New Covenants or is that in historical progression. *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God;* (Heb.10: 19-21).

"But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Tim.3:15).

So Israel and the company of the redeemed that belong to that body and the church of Jesus Christ, the redeemed that belong to that body, they are the House of God, the people who belong to Christ.

... *if we hold fast the confidence*... He is saying that continuance in the faith is the proof of reality of our faith. Those who have an understanding of the grace of God will know that one cannot of himself continue. We do it by God's wonderful, marvelous, sovereign grace for saints. The Bible is full of what he will do for us!

"I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish." (John 10:28).
and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. (John 10:29).

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom.8:38-39

*Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,
Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever.* (Heb. 13:20-21).

... *if*... Moses was part of God's "house," and he was faithful and here we read that we also are of God's house, "*if we hold firmly to our confidence ...*" How do we deal with this "if"
We must note that there are many such statements in the New Testament.

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (Rom. 8:9)

And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not



moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; (Col. 1:21-23) And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. (1 John 2:3)

The author assumes the best about his readers that they are fellow believers in Jesus Christ. His readers are holy brethren, partners in the heavenly calling, and those who confess Jesus as apostle and high priest. The author's statements in the rest of the book only confirm the conclusion that he assumes most of his readers are saved. Note the present tense, ... *whose house we are* and 'not whose house we become'.

Most commentators agree that this letter was written to a church and whenever a church is addressed, the assumption is that most of the recipients have a genuine faith in Jesus Christ. But it also means there is a real possibility that one or more members of the church may not be saved. Thus the qualifications and the "ifs" that we find in the epistles.

The possibility then is that a person can be self-deceived. One can profess to receive Christ, do all the religious observances but with no manifest signs of new life. There is no sign of growth but that person goes back to the old ways over and over again. Because they say the right things, and hold the right creeds, they are confident in their Christianity but they are under a delusion:

"for as they are unable to manifest what God has come into human hearts to produce, they reveal that there never was faith in the beginning. So in Hebrews, continuance is the ultimate proof of reality".

The following verses illustrate this idea using the experience God had with Israel and this is clearly shown in verses 7 through 13.'

Hebrews 3:16-19 also deals with this issue.

These persons are different from those who are merely hypocrites, who know that they are pretending and passing themselves off as Christians when they know they are not.

Importantly, the "if" texts are not intended to teach or imply that salvation is by works. The author is simply telling us that those who are truly saved are those who will also persevere to the end. Their faith and trust in Jesus will not fail under pressure. Thus we are encouraged to draw near because we are saved, not to work harder in order to be saved.

It is Christ who saves us, (Ephesians 2:1-10; Titus 3:5-7).

It is Christ through His Spirit who sanctifies us, (Rom. 8:28-30; 1 Cor. 6:11; Gal. 3:1-7; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2).

It is Christ who keeps us. (John 10:27-28). See (Matthew 7:21-23).

Matthew 7:24-29



Jesus in this portion of Scripture makes it abundantly clear that there are two houses, two ways, and two sets of persons.

Some as one writer wisely states are sons and daughters of the new birth, while others are sons and daughters of one birth. There are believers and there are unbelievers. All are born in sin. The decision of faith must be made. Doing good works alone and thinking that will get one into the Kingdom of God is a false idea. There must be wisdom and this begins with the fear of the Lord.

As we come to our text, Jesus is wrapping up the Sermon on the Mount, that great dissertation on the kingdom. Authoritatively, He has presented the precepts and standards of the Kingdom, characterized those who belong, dismantled the current teaching that external works was the way and taught that He Himself as the Messiah and ultimate Judge of all men.

He issues an invitation to enter through the *narrow gate* onto the narrow way that leads to life, while warning of the difficulty due to false prophets and false profession. People will be deceived by others and will be deceived by themselves (vs. 13-14).

There are stern warnings to ‘hearers’, those who say but do not do and those who know but do not do.

They had a head knowledge without a heart knowledge. The first group had empty words; the second group had empty hearts and people can be deceived either way.

Now, in our Study text the Lord reminded His hearers and us of the standard of righteousness required for entering the Kingdom of God. He warned that unless one’s life was built on that standard, when the ‘flood’ came people would be washed away if all they had was head knowledge.

The standard for entry into the kingdom has not changed, it is the same today!

Jesus closed with a graphic parable about two builders to illustrate the consequences of reactions to the Sermon. As always with Him there are only two choices, the broad way/gate or the narrow way/gate, the good tree or the bad tree and here the wise builder and the foolish builder.

Jesus’ point in the wider section (vs. 13-27) was that entrance into the kingdom and discipleship as a follower of the King are unpopular, and they involve persecution. Many more people will profess to be disciples than are really disciples. The acid test is obedience to the revealed will of God.

Verse 24. ... *therefore whosoever* ... links what Jesus is about to say with what He has just said in Matthew 7:21-23. Those verses set forth a radical choice to make, and so will the verses that follow.

Jesus’ story begins with the picture of a certain *wise man* that chooses *a rock* as the location for building his house. Such a place would be a relatively difficult one on which to establish the foundation of a *house*, but it would be one that offers security from seasonal flooding. In



connecting the wisdom of such a plan with hearing Jesus' *sayings* and doing them, Jesus echoes Psalm 111:10: "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*" (See Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; 15:33.)

... *rock*... is obedience to the Word of God in this context. God is said to be a rock in other texts and Jesus Himself is called a rock (Psalm 18:2, 31; Matt. 16:17; John 8:30-31; 1 cor. 10:4). The wise man who hears the Word of God and builds his life on God's Word, has a rock foundation and that means a life of obedience.

We may note Jesus spoke to 'hearers' and those who hear the word of God and do not obey are self- deceived, (Tit. 1:16; Jam. 1:22).

Verse 25. ...*the rain descended, and the floods came* ... The land of Israel has many seasonal rivers that flow from hills and mountains. Between rains, the riverbeds can be completely dry. But when rains fall in the higher elevations of Palestine, water rushes down those riverbeds in torrents. Thus Jesus' illustration draws on what was familiar to the people of His time and place.

A house built on a secure foundation can endure crises of *floods* and accompanying *winds*. The storm in this story suggests not merely the hardships of life but the final judgment of God (Isaiah 28:16-17). In the previous story, Jesus spoke of those who would stand and speak to Him "*in that day*," the Day of Judgment (Matthew 7:22). The wise, Jesus now implies, will be secure on the Day of Judgment because they have heard and done what He teaches. Importantly He, the divine Son, is the one who will judge.

26. ... *a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand* ... Jesus now draws the contrast between the wise man and the fool. A sandy area is an easier place to build a house, since such a surface yields easily to the shovel. But everyone in Jesus' audience knows that no *house* built on *sand* will last long. A person who builds on sand is an obvious fool. It is no less obviously foolish to ignore Jesus' invitation (vs. 13-14)!

Jesus' words again echo the Psalms, which twice say, "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*" (Psalms 14:1; 53:1). This is the position of the person who hears Jesus' *sayings* but does not put them into practice. No one who is listening to Jesus can miss the implication: Jesus is asserting himself to be God.

the sands... represent human will, human opinion, human attitudes, the shifting sands of human philosophy.

27. *And the rain descended, and the floods came*... the same situation confronted the foolish man as confronted the wise: *rain, floods, and winds* threatened the house. Lacking a secure foundation, the house of the fool collapsed (Ezekiel 13:10-13). Jesus emphasized the magnitude of the loss: *great was the fall of it*. To have lived life and not heeded the word of one's Creator means the greatest possible loss.

Note that each house in Jesus' illustration looked secure. Severe testing revealed however the true quality of the builders' work (13:21; Prov. 10:25; 12:7; 14:11; Isa. 28:16-17). Torrential



downpours were and are common in Israel. Wise men build to withstand anything. The wise person is one who puts Jesus' words into practice. Thus the final reckoning will expose the true convictions of the pseudo-disciple.

Jesus presented the kind of life built on a rock in the Sermon on the Mount. That life has a biblical attitude toward morality, not trying to get away with everything we can; not external but internal. It has a biblical attitude toward words, what you say; toward deeds, what you do; toward motives, the reason you do what you do, a biblical attitude toward money, toward things, a biblical attitude toward people, everything He mentioned in The Sermon. He is saying if your life is committed to obedience to these things, you are on the rock.

Verses 28 - 29. Matthew occasionally notes people's *astonished* reactions to Jesus' words and actions (Matthew 9:33; 13:54; 22:33). *His doctrine*, which here refers both to what He taught and how He taught, surprised and amazed the hearers. We can infer that they were unsure whether to heed or reject the sayings.

Sadly, the crowd did not accept Jesus as Savior; they were merely impressed with His teaching. Do not stop at being impressed with Jesus' words. Amazement is not enough! Belief in Christ is necessary for salvation. Obedience to Christ's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount is necessary for Christian health and growth.

... *as one having authority* ... In some respects, Jesus taught ideas that were common among Jewish religious teachers of His time. For instance, His saying about treating others as we would like to be treated (Matthew 7:12) was very similar to the sayings of other rabbis. What made Jesus different and astonishingly so, was the *authority* of His teaching. *The scribes*, the ones who were experts in Israel's Scriptures, often cited the authority of earlier teachers for their views. Jesus, on the other hand, asserts everything on His own authority. He did so by beginning His correction of common views with "*But I say unto you*" (Matthew 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44). He did not need to justify His interpretations or teachings by referring to a higher source because He *was* the highest source. His words resulted in condemnation of self-serving and hypocritical teaching (Matt. 23; Mark 7:1-13)

Jesus' "teaching" included both His content and His delivery. Jesus' authority was essentially different in that He claimed to be the Messiah. He not only claimed to interpret the Word of God, as other contemporary teachers did, but He claimed to have done perfectly what the Law required and so fulfilled it as well (5:17).

He would be the One who would determine entrance into the kingdom (v. 21), and He would judge humankind eventually (v. 23).

He also claimed that His teaching amounted to God's Word (vv. 24, 26). Consequently, the authoritative note in His teaching was not primarily His sincerity, or His oratorical style, or His lack of reference to earlier authorities. It was who He was. He claimed to be the authoritative interpreter of the Word of God.



CONCLUSION

Remember you are set apart. You belong to Jesus. You have been given a task. You are to let Him lead you to build His House. You must be a faithful servant as Moses was.

If you do things destructive to the House, and remember the House is His people, not the physical structure where the “saints”, the “set apart” ones meet, you are on the wrong side, and your fate will not be pleasant.

Look at yourself in a different way now that you are “accepted”. Behave in the way in alignment with the dignity, worth, and beauty, that God has bestowed on you. Consider your holiness, behave accordingly, and keep on thanking God for His mercy.

Remember you are a brother and sister to Jesus (Hebrews 2:11) and Jesus is not ashamed to call you His brother and His sister.

The obvious question to all readers after this lesson is what ‘gate’ have you chosen? You must choose one and your choices are limited to the narrow gate of salvation through faith in Christ or the wide gate which leads to destruction by trusting in whatever you choose.

Our Lord did not leave us this Sermon to satisfy our curiosities. What He taught demands decision. His word points out the narrow gate as the way of salvation. It also exposes false guides who would lead us astray.

Finally, it provides us with a sure foundation on which to build our lives.

Have you passed through that narrow gate? Have you trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as the door of salvation? Do you believe in Him as the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6)? Is the Word of God your foundation and your guide?

Someday we must all stand before the One Who uttered these words and give account to Him as the God and Judge of the universe. Please do not be like the large group of joyous, frolicking, animated crowd on the path of death and destruction.

Remember that Jesus told us that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. So do not be like the self-deluded or the plain hypocrites and pretenders.

May it be that He shall say to you,
“Well done, good and faithful slave;...enter into the joy of your Master” (Matthew 25:21).



