

## Pentecost II: Matthew 7:21-29: The Conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount

1. Earlier in this series, Epiphany IV-VII, we had four texts from the beginning of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The false teachers of Jesus' day were teaching a mechanical, external moralism. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount Jesus stresses the true righteousness of life which proceeds from a penitent, believing heart which knows that it is accounted righteous for Jesus' sake. Mt. 7:15-20, the vss. previous to the text for today, is a warning about false prophets. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. They are dead trees which produce worthless fruits. In vs. 20 Jesus says: "Therefore, from their fruits you will recognize them." Their fruits are their false doctrines. They teach the commandments of men instead of the doctrines of God. Christians have the God-given ability to distinguish between true and false teachers. Our text for today should be understood with this in mind.
2. Vs. 21: Many, in this life, say κύριε, κύριε: "Lord, Lord!" But that, in itself, is no assurance that they are on the way to everlasting life. οὐ πᾶς implies that some are on the true way. But Paul says in I Cor. 12:3: "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit." Jesus is saying: "Do not be deceived by the mere and frequent use of my name." Even the deceiver is constant (λέγων is a present participle) in saying "Lord, Lord." The papacy is a prime example. Charismatics speak so glowingly about the Lord. Remember Jesus' warning at Mt. 24:5. Deceivers even claim to be the Christ. Test them by their teachings. ἄλλῶ, following a negative, means "quite to the contrary". Then follows "He who is constantly doing the will of My Father Who is in heaven." Note the variant reading which adds: "he will enter into the kingdom of heaven." Though an inferior reading, these words are implicit in vs. 21. Read I Cor. 9:27. Even the Apostle did not delude himself. Read I Cor. 13:1,2, a warning to all of us. Note that Jesus calls the Father MY Father, thus clearly showing His divinity. τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς is adjectival, telling us what kind of Father He is, not adverbial, telling us where He is. What is the will of Jesus' Father? Read Jn. 6:29,30,40. God works faith in Jesus in me. He wills that the person whom He has given to Jesus will never be lost. God wills that man repent of his sins and believe in Christ, Mt. 3:12, and that such believers let their light shine before men, Mt. 5:16. All this is involved in doing the will of Jesus' Father. It is not optional.
3. Vs. 22: This vs. tells us what will happen on Judgment Day. Note πολλοί. Many deceivers will speak to Christ. Even before His throne they will keep on saying κύριε, κύριε. Now follow three οὐ questions which expect an affirmative answer. Note that τῷ σὺ ὀνόματι is mentioned three times. ὄνομα means God's revelation about Himself to man. τῷ σὺ ὀνόματι is stronger than τῷ ὀνόματι σου. They make three claims: prophecy, exorcism and many miracles. Whether προφητεύω here means "foretell" or "forthtell" makes little difference. The point is that they make it something out of the ordinary and their sole boast. At this point read Lk. 10:20, and Gal. 6:14. False prophets may, with Satan's help, teach remarkably, cast out demons and perform miracles. But that is no safe criterion. Read Deut. 13:1-3. When a false prophet performs signs which come true, don't follow him but test his words. Fahling remarks: "They and their followers may display the greatest piety and religious fervor. Are deeds of charity, even prophecy, the casting out of devils, healing, or some other wonderful works the fruits by which they are to be known? All these are no safe criteria. Fruits of this kind may be the deceptive sheep's clothing of which the Lord has spoken (vss. 15-20)." From Mt. 25:37-39 we learn that true believers, humble, unassuming Christians, will be surprised when Jesus commends them on Judgment Day for their works done for Him. From Mt. 7:22 we learn that many false people, who deluded themselves during their lifetime, will still be boasting about their works. Lk. 10:20 warns us now so that we might repent of our boasting in works, though they be God-pleasing. Ylvisaker observes: "It is significant that those who are rejected invoke their deeds. They who are saved know nothing of works; they have done good deeds, to be sure, for their faith has ever been active in love, but they are not cognizant of the fact (Mt. 25:35-40)." Stoeckhardt quotes Luther:

"Many on the final day will appeal to their own prophesying in the name of Jesus, that they drove out devils, did mighty deeds, but the Lord will discard them as evil doers, not acknowledging them as His own. These are false Christians only in name, who disgracefully misuse the Name of Jesus and apparently in Jesus' Name, but actually prophesy and do wonders with the power of the devil. Jesus here warns His disciples against all hypocrites and all hypocrisy. All who call Jesus their Lord must show it by their living, that they with their hearts cling to Jesus their Lord and Savior."

4. Vs. 23: τότε: Bengel remarks: "Although they had not thought so before." This will come as a shock to them. ὁμολογήσω is variously translated: "declare, tell them plainly, tell them to their faces, tell them frankly" in our modern translations. It does not mean "confess". ὅτι is recitative, like our quotation marks. It's a direct quote. οὐδέποτε "never" is placed prominently forward. ἔγνω, from γινώσκω, is here used as at Jn. 10:27 and I Cor. 13:12, the saving and intimate knowledge of Savior toward believer. It is not mere omniscience. (By the way, at Rom. 8:29, the word προέγνω means an eternal, saving, gracious knowledge, not mere knowledge that the elect would believe. This one word was the primary point in controversy between the Missouri and Ohio Synods in the Predestinarian Controversy. Missouri said: "God foreknew by a gracious, saving salvation in Christ." Ohio said: "God foreknew that they would believe [intuitu fidei] and therefore elected them because they would believe.") Now Jesus quotes Ps. 6:8. ἀποχωρεῖτε is a strong imperative. It reminds one of II Thess. 1:9. For such the mercy and grace of God are forever ended. οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι "you who are still working". Bengel: "Not even then will their iniquity have been changed." Lenski: "The present participle indicates constant character." The word ἄνομία in the NT makes an interesting study. We note a few of the passages. At I Jn. 3:4 we read: "Sin is lawlessness." (Read it in Greek. Subject and predicate both have articles and therefore are interchangeable.) All men are guilty of sin and lawlessness. At Hebr. 10:17 we read: "Their sin and their lawlessness I will no longer remember." According to vs. 18 this means what Christ did for all men. But, if men persist in impenitence, refuse the Gospel, then they are accountable for their ἄνομία. Look at II Thess. 2:3.7. The Antichrist is called "the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction." He deliberately perverts God's message and leads people to destruction." Here in Mt. 7:23 the deluded hypocrites are called "workers of lawlessness." Jesus sees nothing but sin in them.
5. Vs. 24: Vss. 24-27 are parabolic. οὖν is inferential "in view of what I've said in vss. 15-23." However, some think it goes way back to 5:1, the beginning of the sermon, covering the entire sermon. On this vs. cf. Lk. 8:15 and 21 and also James 1:25. Hearing and doing stand or fall together. "Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it." Lk. 11:28. Dogmatically stated this means: contrition caused by the second use of the Law, faith in Christ caused by the Gospel, and the resultant Christian living in keeping with the third use of the Law. By saying μου τοὺς λόγους Jesus clearly implies that He is true God. No mere man could say this. ὁμοιωθήσεται is future because the likeness will become apparent on Judgment Day. Men may not see it now but they will on that day. Cf. Mt. 25:31-40. If you are unsung now, worry not. God knows and notes and will not forget. Cf. Lk. 14:14. Just be faithful unto death. He will give the crown, though not earned. φρονιμῶν is variously translated "wise, sensible, had the sense to." To build a house on a foundation of rock is just plain, common sense. When you buy a house, not only are you concerned about its beauty but also about its foundation. A faulty foundation destroys construction.
6. Vs. 25: Bengel aptly says: "Pluvia in tecto; flumina in imo; venti ad latera" which means "Rains on the roof, rivers at the foundation, winds against the sides." A fierce testing of the house. Lutheran commentators are agreed that this denotes the final great test, death itself. καὶ is adversative "but". Lenski suggests that οὐκ ἔπεσεν is a litotes "it stood firmly." γὰρ is explanatory. τεθεμελιώτο is pluperfect, rare in NT. In Greek the pluperfect is to the past what the perfect is to the present. Here

it means "it had constantly been foundationed."

7. Vs. 26: The first καὶ means "likewise" and the second means "but". Note that both in vs. 24 and 26 the word πᾶς is used. Those who hear the Word of God are in one of two classes, none in between. They either do them or do them not. Read James 1:22. Much of James is devoted to deluded Christians, those who hear but do not do. Luther remarks on these vss.: "All who call Jesus their Lord must show it by their living, that they with their hearts cling to Jesus their Lord and Savior. . . . It is not his acts and obedience that make him firm and steadfast, but with such doing he proves that he is grounded in faith, that his faith has taken root, and by his faith is conquering all opposition. . . . He who hears Jesus' words only with the ears, but does not do them, and neglects Christian works, he thereby shows that he has no Christian faith. Faith dies, when the indwelling strength of it is denied." μωροῦ is the opposite of φρονιμοῦ. Who would be so stupid as to build a house on sand? The foundation is simply everything. The house, of course, represents the life which a man leads. The life of a Christian and of a non-Christian may look very similar. But all depends on the foundation. What is the foundation here? We cannot improve on Lenski: "In λόγοι the substance forms the rock. Hence we may say that the rock is God Himself in His Word and his grace, Deut. 32:15,18; Ps. 18:2; Is. 17:10; or Christ Himself, Is. 28:16; Rom. 9:33; I Pet. 2:6; I Cor. 3:11." Unless grounded in the Word of God and Christ Himself, a man's life is nothing but sin. But if grounded in that Word and in Christ, not even death can destroy what is God-pleasing. Jesus, of course, is not saying that works save or that works make the foundation secure. Good works are "the fruit of the Spirit." Gal. 5:22,23. In that sense they are necessary.
8. Vs. 27: Disaster! Here, in illustration, Jesus is saying the same thing as He said in vs. 23. The fall and collapse is total and final, everlasting destruction. Starkest Law.
9. Vs. 28: The first part of this vs. clearly states that Matthew had recorded an actual sermon. He did not "compile" a bunch of Jesus' sayings to make it look like a sermon. ἐξεπλήσσοντο is a very strong verb (they were dumbfounded), is passive voice, and note that it is imperfect tense. It continued for some time. What Jesus said is called διδασχῆ. He taught the crowds. Why were they dumbfounded? That is answered in the next vs.
10. Vs. 29: γὰρ explains why they were so amazed, so astonished, so dumbfounded. Note the periphrastic verb which means that He was constantly teaching. ὡς does not mean "as if" but "because". ἔχων is very likely an elliptical periphrastic: "because He was having authority." Stoeckhardt aptly remarks: "He preached God's Word as His very own, and His very own as God's Word." Exactly. Lenski: "The deity of Jesus revealed itself in all that he said." Ylvisaker: "The populace was astounded that this Jesus, who was no scholar in the ordinary sense, could speak in this way; but the hearers were also stricken in their conscience by the mighty and solemn discourse which flowed from His lips. He taught with divine power and authority." The preaching of the Apostles had the same effect because they spoke divine words. Every faithful, evangelical preacher's words ought have the same effect on hearers: "He is truly God's spokesman." Then follows: "And not as their scribes (were teaching)." γραμματεῖς in our versions is variously translated "their teachers of the Law, their own teachers, their Bible scholars." The text, of course, is not saying that this was so because they were mere humans but that their teaching was like that described in vss. 15-20. The prophets and Apostles truly taught God's Word. The teachers in Jesus' day very often taught men's doctrines instead of God's Word. Ylvisaker says: "They were traditionalists and had no shepherd-love, therefore their testimony became insipid moral vapoing without sap and without strength." Fahling writes: "Here was a teacher with a message of eternal truth. While the professional teachers droned out their traditions and the injunctions of a Law which was in effect dead in their own lives, never as much as by a hair's breadth passing beyond

the carefully watched boundary lines of commentary and precedent, here was authoritative preaching; it was the voice of Him who was both God and man in one person." And, Lenski: "To this day it is hard to understand the arid dreariness of the old teaching of the scribes." And then he adds this somber note: "The 'talks' given in some of the pulpits of today, based on other subjects than the διδασχῆ and λόγοι of Jesus, with little meat for the soul, are the continuation of the deliverances of the Jewish scribes." May that never be said of the person who is reading these notes!