

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount - Conclusion

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." 28 And so it was, when Jesus had ended these words that the people were astonished at His teaching, 29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Mt. 7:24-25

Jesus concluded His sermon with this final warning. The message Jesus wanted to give were then complete and had been heard by the original audience. Through Matthew's writings they are still being heard today by multitudes. Regardless of who hears and how they hear, Jesus demanded a response from every hearer. "Everyone" is defined by Thayer as "all or any of the class indicated... 3956." Since the "class indicated" here are those who have heard "these words of Mine" (the Sermon on the Mount) the choices and categories continue into His final conclusion:

<u>Truth and Eternal Life</u>	<u>Error and Destruction</u>
1. A Narrow Gate	A Wide Gate <u>7:13-14</u>
2. A Straitened Path	A Broad Path <u>7:13-14</u>
3. Prophets from God	False Prophets <u>7:15</u>
4. Good Fruit	Evil Fruit <u>7:16-20</u>
5. Disciples who do God's will	Disciples Jesus never knew <u>7:21-23</u>
6. Miracles that confirm the Word	Miracles that deceive <u>7:22-23</u>
Disciples who hear My words and Do	Disciples who hear but don't do <u>7:24-27</u>

The close tie between the previous choices and His final conclusion create a question. Is Jesus only summing up the final section outlined above, or did He expect us to understand he meant the entire sermon? "Therefore whoever hears these words of Mine" clearly followed and summed up the final section as seen in the box above. But since it also perfectly sums up the entire sermon, we have to carefully consider which way to understand His words.

By using *therefore*, Jesus was "indicating that something follows from another necessarily." He explained through these "exhortations to show what ought now to be done by reason of what has been said." (Thayer 3956). Since Jesus had already used this term many other times in the sermon, it is possible Jesus was only summing up this final section.

1 <i>Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, ... shall be called least <u>5:19</u></i>
2 <i>Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and remember your brother has something against you, <u>5:23</u></i>
3 <i>Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. <u>5:48</u></i>
4 <i>Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do <u>6:2</u></i>
5 <i>Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need <u>6:8</u></i>
6 <i>In this manner, therefore, pray: <u>6:9</u></i>
7 <i>The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. <u>6:22</u></i>
8 <i>If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! <u>6:23</u></i>
9 <i>Therefore do not worry, saying, What shall we eat? What shall we drink? or What shall we wear? <u>6:31</u></i>
10 <i>Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. <u>6:34</u></i>
11 <i>if you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more your Father <u>7:11</u></i>
12 <i>Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, this is the Law and the Prophets <u>7:12</u></i>
13 <i>Therefore whoever hears these words of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man <u>7:24-25</u></i>

With these other uses in the sermon, it would be perfectly natural to simply understand Him as summing up the choices that disciples must make(7:13-23).

Yet there are several good reasons not to limit His words to the final section alone. First, these were also the final words of the sermon. Generally when a speaker finishes a sermon he sums up the entire sermon in closing and not just the final point. Second, it is unwise to limit these words to just the final few verses when there is no compelling reason to do so. Third, since the entire sermon falls

under the category of “*these words of mine*” it is much safer to act upon all the words. Finally, by summing up the entire sermon He also summed up the final words, giving every word in the sermon equal weight and power. For these reasons, it is much wiser to give every word in the sermon the added weight of these last words.

These Words of Mine

When Jesus spoke of “*these words of mine*” there are several good reasons to understand them as referring specifically to the words of this sermon that began in 5:1 and ends here. First, it is clear that the Holy Spirit intended it to be understood as what we now call the Sermon on the mount. At this point, Jesus ended “*these words*.” Obviously He did not finish all His teaching or complete His earthly ministry which was only just beginning. But Jesus did end this session of teaching with his disciples with these words. Hence it was the words recorded in this sermon that led to the people being “*astonished at His teaching*.”

*And so it was, **when Jesus had ended these words** that the **people were astonished at His teaching**, 29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Mt. 7:28-29*

Second, the Spirit made it clear that before Jesus began “*these words*” that “*great multitudes followed Him*.” When He had finished “*these words*” the same “*great multitudes followed Him*.” Third, before He began speaking “*He went up on a mountain*” and when He had finished speaking, “*He had come down from the mountain*.”

*25 **Great multitudes followed Him** — from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan. 1 And seeing the multitudes, **He went up on a mountain**, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. 2 Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: Mt. 4:25-5:2*

*When **He had come down from the mountain**, **great multitudes followed Him**. Mt. 8:1*

There is really no doubt that the Sermon on the Mount began in 5:1 and finished in 8:1. Nor is there any real question that “*these words of mine*” refer to the entire sermon.

The Choice

The options Jesus proposed centered on what to do after hearing. He is speaking to “*everyone who hears these words of Mine*.” After hearing this sermon, each listener must choose whether he will do the words he has heard or ignore them. Since faith comes by hearing, it also comes down to the faith and trust one puts in them. Those who hear and do obviously believe the words and are convicted that they must be done. Those who hear these words, but for whatever reason do not do them have not been convicted of the need to act. This was the same problem those Moses led out of Egypt had.

For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. Heb. 4:2-3

James dealt with this concept in two distinct ways. First, as Jesus did here, he explained that while hearing and understanding God’s word is commendable, and is more than multitudes of others will do, it will not be enough. We can’t just hear and understand! We must hear, understand and then do.

Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. Jas. 1:21-25

He gave a powerful reason for this in the next chapter. It comes down to faith. Since we are all made righteous by faith (Rom 1-4), it is extremely important that we manifest it properly. If we hear and understand God’s word, but do not act upon it, then we cannot prove that we really believed it. As a matter of fact if faith is not strong enough to get us to act, then it is a dead, barren and fruitless faith.

What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. 18 But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe — and tremble! 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture

was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. 25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. Jas. 2:14-16

So Jesus demanded action here. It proves our faith and shows our sincerity and zeal. If we "hear these words of mine," and act on them and do them, then we are *like* the wise man who is building our lives on the rock.

I Will Liken Him To

Again, the words are identical in both phrases. Jesus made two identical comparisons with two different choices made and two different outcomes experienced.

homoi-o-o "to make like" (akin to A, No. 1), is used (a) especially in the parables, with the significance of comparing, "likening," or, in the passive voice, "being likened," Matt 7:24,26; 11:16; 13:24; 18:23; 22:2 (RV, "likened"); 25:1; 4:30; 7:31; 13:18, RV, "liken" (KJV, "resemble"); v. 20; in several of these instances the point of resemblance is not a specific detail, but the whole circumstances of the parable; (Vine's NT:3666)

Jesus often used this term in parables to make an important comparison between something we clearly understand in the material world that is exactly the same way in the moral and spiritual world Jesus came to reveal. In this case the way "everyone" responds to "these words of mine" is identical to the way "everyone" builds a house. So this is a short parable revealing the consequences of each choice by comparing it to how each person builds a home and the consequences that follow.

Just as no chain is stronger than its weakest link, no home is stronger than its foundation. During a nice sunny day when all is calm and peaceful, a foundation is not an important part of living in the home. If one scrimped on the foundation they could afford to build a nicer home or put in more furnishings. To dig deep to find the bedrock, or to purchase and move the rocks (or in our case the concrete) deep enough to withstand that 100 or even 500 year flood is a lot of extra work, and unnecessary under normal circumstances. But sooner or later that time will come. Jesus gave more specifics in a similar comparison in Luke.

Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: 48 He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. Lk. 6:47-48

So the wise man considers the consequences of the easy way and the hard way, the path of least resistance and expense vs the path that leads to strength, security and comfort regardless of the initial expense. His wisdom is revealed at that extreme moment when everything can be saved or lost. Because of his foresight and wisdom, the house is saved from catastrophe and not only the home, but also the possessions and the lives within it will all be saved because of his "wisdom."

The foolish man in this comparison is the man who takes the easy way, the path of least resistance, the cheapest and most convenient. At the time, he seems wiser as he saves money and time not bothering with the extra work of digging the foundation.

But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great. Lk. 6:49

Yet as Jesus pointed out in both passages, the home of the wise man withstood and saved everything while the home built by the foolish man fell with great ruin.

The Great Fall into Ruin

The spiritual reality revealed by the wise man building on rock and the foolish man building on sand or earth is even worse than the physical illustration. At death, the rich man found himself in torment because he had laid the proper foundation and was unprepared. Jesus warned all men that His words (including "these sayings of mine"), would become the judge in the last day.

And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. 48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. 49 For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. 50 And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the

Father has told Me, so I speak." John 12:47-50

Jesus spoke of the fearful and dreadful consequences of rejecting or not doing His words. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, and great agony when the "house falls into ruin." All that was built by these people who heard but did not do "*these sayings of mine*," would be lost forever. As Jesus stated later, what is the profit, even if the whole world is gained by cutting corners. When the time of judgement comes and he loses the only thing he really had, "*his own soul*," there will be weeping.

*And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. 12 But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**.* Mt. 8:11-13

*The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be **wailing and gnashing of teeth**. 43 Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!* Mt. 13:41-43

*For **what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?** 27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then **He will reward each according to his works**.* Mt. 16:27

*"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, **'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:*** Mt. 25:41

*These shall be **punished with everlasting destruction** from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power* 2Th. 1:9

*And the **smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night,*** Rev. 14:11

These are just a few of the terrible things revealed in Scripture that awaits those who refuse to hear, obey and do "*these words of mine*." So there will be terrible consequences of inaction. He has revealed His expectations. We know exactly how we are to live our lives and direct our conduct. We need to first "hear" and then we have to "do." If we do not do these things, then we are exactly like a foolish man who built his home upon sand.