

The Parables of Jesus

- The Wise and the Foolish Builders

(Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-49)

As we review this parable it is important to note that we find this parable in both the Gospel of Matthew and in the Gospel of Luke. However, it is used at two different times. The time it is used in Matthew is not the same time that it is used in Luke. Therefore, Jesus taught and spoke this parable twice. If Jesus

took the time and taught from this parable twice, then we must take into account that this was an important teaching that He wanted to bring forth to His disciples at that time and therefore, it is an important teaching for you and I as His disciples, today.

We begin by looking at the first use of this parable by Jesus as found in the Matthew 7:24-27. In Matthew's account we see that it was used during the conclusion of Jesus' very first major teaching that really launched His ministry. It was the teaching that is commonly referred to as the "Sermon on the Mount." (Matthew 5, 6, and 7) I prefer to refer to it as "The Teaching on the Mount."

This teaching found in Matthew 5, 6 and 7 is fundamental to all of Jesus' teachings for those who would choose to follow Him – both at that time and for us today. It was Jesus' first in-depth teaching to His very followers but most importantly to His very first "chosen" disciples. As of this time in Jesus' ministry, we can only be assured that Peter, Andrew, James and John were "called" to be with Jesus (Matthew 4:18-22). Some of the others who would become known as the "twelve disciples" may or may not have been in the crowd listening to Jesus that day.

As mentioned previously, this parable was given as part of His concluding thoughts of this time of teaching. The verses prior to the giving of this parable "set the stage" for His listeners to grasp the full impact of this parable. Therefore, let us briefly review those verses just prior to our parable. They are very familiar to us.

Matthew 7:21-23 states, *"Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."*

The above scriptures are a vital aspect of Jesus' teaching concerning the person who desires to be a true disciple of His. We must remember that the definition of the term "disciple" is someone who changes their lifestyle, their manner of behavior and their character to that of the one they are choosing to follow. The entire "Teaching on the Mount" had to do with what a true disciple of Jesus would now choose to change their lifestyle to be. Obviously, it reflected the lifestyle, character and manner of behavior that Jesus lived and walked in. The message was clear. It was not the works that one did but rather it was the attitude of the person's heart. The "Teaching/ Sermon" exemplified what the character and lifestyle should be of the one who chooses to be a disciple of Jesus.

We need to truly hear what Jesus was saying. Today, we have a tendency to get caught up in "signs and wonders" and equate that with a person's relationship with God. Jesus was saying the exact opposite. Notice, the signs and wonders were being done in **His Name**. That is where the power was and is, not the person. Hey, we read in the scriptures that God allowed a jackass (excuse me, a donkey) to speak to accomplish His purposes. Was the donkey a child of God and was it "saved?" No, it was just a tool used by the Lord to accomplish His purposes.

It is the same for us today. We must understand that the works, the signs and wonders, are not necessarily a barometer of a person's spiritual walk and relationship with God. It is not the works that a person does in the "Name of Jesus" that God is seeking after. These are all wonderful. However, He is seeking after the

true worshipper who worships Him with a lifestyle, character and manner of behavior that exemplifies the fruit of the Holy Spirit who now dwells within a true born again child of God – the true disciple of Jesus.

Continuing with that same precept, Jesus now brings forth our parable. We know that this is the case by the very first word in Matthew 7:24, *“Therefore...”* The word “therefore” is an adverb which means that whatever is going to be said next is a result or consequence of what was just previously mentioned. In other words, the parable that Jesus is about to bring forth is in reference to a persons’ lifestyle, character and manner of behavior – the attitude of their heart – and not their works. The attitude of the individual’s heart is of primary importance to Jesus, not their works – even if those works are “Godly things” and of God. Having a good grasp of the context in which Jesus was going to use this parable, we can now continue with our parable of “The Wise and Foolish Builders.”

Matthew 7:24-27 - *“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”*

It is clear that Jesus is referring to the entire teaching that He had just presented in Matthew 5, 6, 7, as He states, *“... whosoever heareth these sayings of mine...”* Jesus is stating that the most important aspect concerning being a true disciple of His was that His listeners would actually **“do what He is saying.”** As mentioned previously, this is referred to in the scriptures just prior to the parable where we “hear” Jesus saying that those whom He truly “knows” would be **“doing the will of the Father,”** meaning not just in works but as a Christ-like lifestyle that would be exemplified by their character and personality.

The teaching found in this “Sermon on the Mount” in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, was to be a guideline to the lifestyle of a true disciple of Jesus. His teaching expressed the very lifestyle and character that Jesus, Himself, exhibited and lived. Therefore, Jesus’ life would be the role model for His disciples, not just for the “twelve” that would follow Him while He was on the earth, but it was and is the role model for every believer that would come afterwards - including us, today.

Let’s review some of the terms that Jesus uses in this parable. The first is the word “build.” This comes from the Greek word *“oikodomeō”* which means to erect something from the foundation. It can also infer that a restoration or rebuilding needs to be done. The second is the word “house.” This comes from the Greek word, *“oikia”* which means a dwelling place, a place to inhabit. It also can stand for the inhabitants of the house, as well as the family or the family line. Another term that Jesus uses is the term, “rock.” We will discuss this term a little later.

We also see two “characters” in this parable. The first character is a “wise man.” This comes from the Greek word, *“phronimos”* which is an adjective and refers to a person who is prudent, intelligent and mindful who takes great care in their interests. Another character that Jesus speaks of is a person who is referred to as a “foolish man” This comes from the Greek word *“mōros”* (where we get our English word “moron” - Hmmm). This again is an adjective and refers to a person who is godless and impious. Throughout the scriptures when the word “fool” or “foolish” is used, it is always used to describe a person or an action by an individual who is rebellious against God and the things of God and whose manner of behavior and lifestyle is reflective of such.

This is a fitting parable for Jesus to conclude His first important teaching. This parable sets the “tone” for not just Jesus’ ministry, but it clearly “draws the line” for anyone who is going to choose to follow Him and take on the lifestyle that He is about to role-model for the next three years. Jesus is clearly saying through

this parable to those who "have ears to hear," that if an individual chooses to believe in Him and chooses to change his or her lifestyle to that of the lifestyle that Jesus role-modeled, He goes on to tell us that the individual had made a very "wise" decision. That individual made a very prudent and intelligent choice. The individual's "house," their physical "dwelling place," their physical body, as well as one's "spiritual being," would then become a "spiritual house" that would be built or rebuilt (born again) upon the "Rock."

The term "Rock" used here has many times been taught and made to refer to Jesus. This is true but how is it true? We must remember that Jesus was teaching using references from the Jewish Scriptures. The term "Rock" when used in the Jewish scriptures always refers to the ways and precepts of God, the Father, (Psalm 62:7; 92:15; 2Samuel 22:3; Psalm 18:2). What this is saying to us is that the entire scripture, the Word of God, is the true "Rock." This "Rock," the Word of God, reveals to us all the precepts, principles and ways of God and His Kingdom. This is what the true Child of God is to trust in and "stand" upon. It is on this "Rock" that the true disciple of Jesus now chooses to make the choice to live their life by, and in obedience to. If the individual, as a true disciple of Jesus, follows these principles and precepts they will be able to stand firm, walk in the Christ-like lifestyle and experience God in all of His abundance and blessings.

It is actually God's Word that is the "Rock of our Salvation." Jesus was the perfect role model of the Word of God because He was the incarnate Word of God. Therefore, yes, Jesus can be referred to as the "Rock." However, it was the Word of God that He embodied, role modeled and preached that is to be the "Rock" we stand fast upon. If the disciple of Jesus (the born again child of God) lives their life by following and obeying the precepts and principles of God's Word during their most difficult times, as well as whatever life and the devil may throw their way, they **will not** fall or be destroyed. That disciple will have "life eternal" and experience abundant life in and through Christ.

Those that have heard but reject Jesus and choose not "to do" His precepts are referred to as "foolish" – rebellious against God. To these "foolish ones" Jesus very clearly states that "*great will be their fall*" - right into the depths of eternal damnation and separation from God. Jesus was teaching His disciples that it is wise and prudent to not only "hear" His words and believe in who He is but it is wise, prudent and imperative that they also go and live it out within their lives. It is a wise person who follows after and chooses to change their lifestyle to that of Jesus. This is the only wise thing to do unless the individual is just out and out hard-hearted, stubborn or rebellious and rejects the teachings of Jesus. (Hmm...)

Now, let's move on to the second use of the parable of the "Wise and the Foolish Builders" as found in Luke 6:47-49. As mentioned previously, Jesus uses this parable a second time. However, it is in a totally different setting. If we read Luke 6:13-18 we see that at this time, Jesus had just selected and named all of His 12 disciples. In the account in Matthew 5 of the "Sermon on the Mount" we discussed that He had only selected 4 at that time. Also, Luke 6:17 tells us that Jesus and His disciples, "*came down to the plain,*" where He was met by the multitudes. In Matthew it tells us that He "*went up the mountain then sat*" and taught. From this we can see that this is a different setting from the account in Matthew. Therefore, I believe, it is a second use of this parable by Jesus.

If we look closely at what Jesus teaches in the context as a whole in this setting in Luke 6, we see Jesus repeated much of His earlier teaching from the "Sermon on the Mount" but in a little different way (Luke 6:20-38). These teachings were so very important for His disciples to grasp. Now, having all 12 of them with Him, Jesus believes that these precepts are so fundamental to the faith that He takes the time to teach them again. Being that He is teaching this a second time we can then understand why there are some differences from the Matthew account. Just as any good teacher would, when he/she teaches a lesson a second time, it is delivered in a little different way. Yet, the message and fundamental content is the same. This is exactly what Jesus did. However, at the conclusion of this time of teaching, Jesus again refers to this parable of the "Wise and Foolish Builders." In this version He adds some other aspects to this parable.

Let's now "listen" to Jesus as He presents this parable for a second time. Luke 6:47-49 - *"Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."*

The main emphasis by Jesus in this time of teaching was that if an individual claims to be a disciple of Jesus and they are stating that He is their **Lord**, then their life and lifestyle should be manifesting the lifestyle of Christ. *"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46)

Jesus was expressing that everything He had just taught concerned what the character and lifestyle of a disciple of His should be just as He did in the account in Matthew. However, in this account of the parable, Jesus adds another aspect. He added the words, *"... and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock..."* Why did Jesus add this phrase to this parable here? We must also take notice that Jesus uses two very separate and distinct terms - "foundation" and "rock." Why did Jesus add these two separate and distinct terms to this parable here? Let's see...

As discussed previously, the Jewish scriptures referred to the "Rock" as being God's Word - His precepts, principles, His holiness and justness, as well as ways of His love, grace, mercy and peace. In the Scriptures, the term "foundation" or "foundation stone," is used to refer to the "Good News" of Messiah/ Jesus (Isaiah 28:6; 1Corinthians 3:11). Jesus is our "foundation stone," our cornerstone in which all that follow after Him will be like. He is the role-model in which all of the other "living stones" (1Peter 2:4-6) of the "house" will be modeled after. Another way the scriptures reveal this is by declaring that Jesus was the "First Fruit of many." Through accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior, the believer can now build their "spiritual house," their life, upon the "Foundation Stone" of salvation that is found in and through Jesus. Jesus' ministry was "laid" and "founded upon" the "Rock" - the ways, precepts and plan of salvation established by God, the Father.

The "digging deep" part refers to a true heart of repentance by the individual that "digs deep" within themselves and recognizes their need to be rescued from imminent peril. It recognizes its need for God. This type of "heart" recognizes its sinful ways. This is the heart that is "poor in spirit." It cries out for God to "save" them from their state of being lost and separated from a loving Father, God. It makes a decision to "turn" from and repent from that sinful lifestyle and turn towards God, the "Rock," whose ways and precepts found in His Word are righteous and brings life to the believer.

It is a "heart" that allows Jesus to come and be their sure "Foundation" that is laid upon the solid "Rock" of the principles of God. The believer's "house," their life and lifestyle, will now be able to manifest the Kingdom of God and "not be shaken" but will stand strong no matter what may come against them.

Through this parable given in Matthew and then again in Luke, Jesus speaks of a lifestyle of continual obedience to the principles, precepts and commandments of God. As we live our lives - living a lifestyle that is led by the Holy Spirit, founded upon the "Rock" of God's Word and on the "Foundation Stone" of Jesus who is our role-model - we will have life eternal. We will have a true relationship of being in "oneness" with the Father and with Jesus. If a person "hears" but chooses not to do these sayings of Jesus - great will be their fall - right into the depths of eternal damnation and separation from God.

As we have discussed, Jesus was teaching His disciples that it is wise and prudent to believe in Him as Messiah, follow after and choose to change their lifestyle to that of the lifestyle He role-modeled. Jesus puts it in such a way that it would be the only sensible and wise thing for any individual to do unless they are just out and out hard-hearted, stubborn or rebellious. The question each of us must reflect upon is this, "Am I the wise one or am I the foolish one?" Hmm...