

Focus Text

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And 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. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.”

(Matthew 7:24–29, ESV)

1. Put Into Practice

““Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.”

(Matthew 7:24–25, ESV)

AS Jesus concludes the sermon on the mount, He makes a final comparison between those who are wise and those who are foolish. This comparison is standard throughout the bible. Solomon uses it throughout Proverbs. The concept is simple: wise people live their lives based on good and wise information, and foolish people base their lives on foolish choices. Jesus is going to use topography to help drive home this point. Most houses in Israel are built using the process of developing clay blocks and finding a suitable rock foundation. The bedrock in Israel is easy enough to dig through in the sandy soil. A wise person will dig down to bedrock before building their home. The house will stand the chaos of the storm because it has a stable base. Jesus tells us his teachings here in the sermon are the basis for building one's life. Please pause and ask, “What have I learned in the Sermon on the Mount?” You have hopefully learned what it means to be one of God's Blessed Children, meek, humble, and a peacemaker. Maybe you have learned how to love and treat your spouse and to fight for your home and marriage. Perhaps you have learned humility and not showboating in giving, praying, and serving. Maybe you've learned how to pray and to trust in God's daily provision. Overall, Jesus notes that God is merciful and gracious to those who love Him, and God will judge those who use and manipulate Him. These are consistent themes throughout the bible. The storms are a metaphor for chaos, mainly persecution from the religious elite who abuse their power. Yet, the metaphor of storms throughout the bible represents chaos incarnate. Following the teachings of Jesus prepares the Christ follower to withstand all sorts of hardships, everything from depressing days to martyrdom. Jesus, in His graciousness, has given us the tools to resist the devil, our sinfulness, and the wickedness of the world; we must build our lives upon His teachings. One final thought, Jesus being God is showing us His character of love. A loving Father won't always remove obstacles, as much as we wish He would, yet He prepares His children to withstand them by guiding them. The Sermon on the Mount shows us God's love for us because He is preparing us for the storms and how to stand firm when they rage.

“Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”

(Luke 6:47–49, ESV)

“The juxtaposition of the wise person and the fool is a feature of Wisdom.¹ Many OT texts appealed to the security and stability of God as the rock”¹

“The wise of heart will receive commandments, but a babbling fool will come to ruin.”
(Proverbs 10:8, ESV)

“A wise man’s heart inclines him to the right, but a fool’s heart to the left.”
(Ecclesiastes 10:2, ESV)

“The wise remain silent until the right moment, but a boasting fool misses the right moment.”
(Sirach 20:7, NRSV)

2. Passivity Leads to Peril

“And 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. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” (Matthew 7:26–27, ESV)

However, the freedom God grants us to choose is once again on full display. The lazy worker would place their blocks on the sandy topsoil of the region because they cannot be bothered to spend the needed time digging down to bedrock. Jesus knows that there will be people who will try to mimic the faith but will not build their lives on the solid bedrock of Christ’s teachings. In the Western world, we have a movement known as carnal Christianity, wanting to be named as a Christian without surrendering their lives to the Lord of all creation. They would rather build their lives on the hedonic pleasures of the day and yet claim to be saved by Christ. Jesus acknowledges that unless life is built upon His teachings, the chaos of life will destroy any chance of salvation and security. Jesus’ rationale is simple: the love of God is transformational. If one professes to love God yet refuses to act accordingly, that is not love, and it will not bring them the security they desire. The sands represent the shifting of the world. It moves according to its passions and has no stability, and a man foolish enough to build their life on it will have a great fall.

The war of the two kingdoms. God’s Kingdom is both eternal and secure for those who humbly place their trust and lives in Him. Satan’s Kingdom is an ever-shifting one, uncontrolled and unstable, following one’s passions and one day being destroyed. A foolish decision is placing one’s eternal soul into the hands of Satan and his shifting kingdom.

“And behold, you are to them like one who sings lustful songs with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, for they hear what you say, but they will not do it.”
(Ezekiel 33:32, ESV)

¹ Nolland, John. 2005. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

“The failure to do is the difference between foolishness and wisdom and means that sand has been substituted for rock. Hearing without doing also has an overtone of judgment in Ez. 33:32. Destabilisation due to the washing away of sand from around the foundation also makes the house more vulnerable to the stresses imposed by the elements at other points. The imagery contemplates not just damage but utter ruin. 522 This is perhaps more than the logic of the story can guarantee, but it is no more than is contemplated in the application”²

3. Perceive His Power

“And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.” (**Matthew 7:28–29, ESV**)

As Jesus concludes His teachings, the audience remarks that He is different than the scribes and Pharisees. He takes authority over the law and does not lean on Moses. Matthew’s story shows us that indeed Jesus fulfills the Law and Prophets, as people marvel at Him.

“Thus for the believer something of the glory and power of the heavenly Lord shines in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus’ ἐξουσία makes him different from the Jewish scribes. Matthew states here himself what we said earlier about the interpretation of the antitheses formulas: Jesus speaks in his own name. He does not hide his authority behind that of Moses nor does he legitimate it by appealing to tradition.⁹ Therefore, the church’s interpretation has correctly called attention to the sovereign “but I say to you” of the antitheses and to the christological tenet of the “fulfillment” of the law and prophets.¹⁰”³

² 522 Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:724 (following Jeremias, *Parables*, 194 n. 8), are probably right that a fixed or proverbial expression is being reflected (see Philo, *Mut. nom.* 55; *Migr. Abr.* 80; *Ebr.* 156). The expression in complete form goes on to speak of the impossibility of restoration. Even when this completion is absent, it would be implied.

Nolland, John. 2005. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

³ 9 See above, II A 2.2 (Better Righteousness, I: Antitheses [5:21–28]) no. 7. Davies-Allison (1.726) call attention to y. Pesah. 6.1.33a: it was the authority of Shemaiah and Abtalion that caused Hillel’s teaching to be accepted.

¹⁰ Cf. John Chrysostom 25.1 = PG 57.327: Jesus does not attribute his words to someone else (Moses); he himself is the one who possesses power and who will judge.

Luz, Ulrich. 2007. *Matthew 1–7: A Commentary on Matthew 1–7*. Edited by Helmut Koester. Rev. ed. *Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Application

“In Mere Christianity, C. S. Lewis wrote, “A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said wouldn’t be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on the level with a man who says he’s a poached egg—or else he would be the devil of hell; you must take your choice. Either this was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But don’t come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great moral teacher. He hasn’t left that alternative open to us. He did not intend to.”*⁴

One of the modern ideas is that Jesus is a great moral teacher sent to give us a better way of life. The truth is, either you believe that Jesus is fully God and fully man and that His teachings are divine and authoritative, or he is a lunatic whom we should all ignore; there is no middle ground.

So, will you build your life on His teachings and seek to be a Committed Follower of Jesus, or will you be the fool who builds their life on the shifting sands of modernity, realizing that all the pleasures of the world cannot and will not save you? Amen.

⁴ * C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1960), 41.
Morgan, Robert J. 2000. *Nelson’s Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations, and Quotes*.
Electronic ed. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.