

Matthew

Chapter 7

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MATTHEW CHAPTER 7

The Sermon on the Mount continues with Jesus teaching His disciples how to treat others. He concludes with the two foundations that we have the option of building upon.

JESUS ON JUDGING OTHERS (7:1-6)

The Lord stresses that instead of looking at the faults of others, we should first examine our own weaknesses.

Matt. 7:1 Do not judge, so that you too will not be judged.

Do no judge, The word judge (Greek *krino*) often carries the idea of condemn as here. The passage is concerned with fault finding. It should not be taken as a prohibition of all judging or discerning of right and wrong since Matthew records Jesus' teachings that we should make such judgments (vs. 6, see also 7:15-20; 10:11-15; 16:6,12; 18:17,18).

so that you too will not be judged. The parable of unforgiving debtor (18:23-35) illustrates the point clearly.

Matt. 7:2 By the same standard you are judging others, you will be judged, and by the same measure you are measuring others, it will be measured to you.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *measured* some manuscripts read *measured back*.

By the same standard you are judging others, you will be judged, and by the same measure you are measuring others, it will be measured to you. This proverbial saying occurs in Mark 4:24 in a different sense, with reference to care in receiving Jesus' teaching, and in Luke 6:38 with reference probably to generosity in giving. It occurs commonly in Jewish literature to indicate divine retribution.

Matt. 7:3 And why do you see the speck that is in the eye of your brother, but you do not perceive the plank that is in your own eye?

And why do you see the speck This illustration is drawn from the carpenters workshop and shows the hypocrisy of criticizing others. A "speck" is a tiny splinter of wood or straw; word used in secular Greek metaphorically of something minute.

that is in the eye of your brother, This indicates that it is primarily the Christian community.

but you do not perceive the plank that is in your own eye? The obvious plank is obvious to all except the person that has it.

Matt. 7:4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, there is plank that is in your own eye?

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *can you say* some manuscripts read *are you saying*.

Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, there is plank that is in your own eye?’ Judgments of faults is to begin with oneself.

Matt. 7:5 Hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck from the eye of your brother.

Hypocrite, Matthew’s favorite term makes this point emphatic.

first take the plank out of your own eye, First things first.

and then you will see clearly to take out the speck from the eye of your brother. This passage concerns relationships in the community of faith and may be regarded as one expression of the ethic of love that is a summary of the law and the prophets. Although disciples cannot avoid making judgments (18:15-18), their judgments *are to be charitable*. The same standard of judgment we apply to others will in turn be applied to us. Hypocrites ignore the significant failures in their own lives and become preoccupied with the failures of others.

Matt. 7:6 Do not give what is holy to the dogs, nor throw your pearls before the pigs, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *they trample* some manuscripts read *they may trample*.

Do not give what is holy This tough saying stands alone, but qualifies the prohibition of judgment. It probably refers to consecrated food that was to be eaten only by priests and their families (Exodus 29:33,34; Leviticus 22:10-16; Numbers 18:8-19).

to the dogs, These were unclean animals to be fed with unclean food (Exodus 22:31).

nor throw your pearls before the pigs, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces. It would be equally unthinkable to throw something as valuable as pearls before swine (cf 2 Peter 2:22 for a similar contemptuous linking of dogs and pigs).

THE GENEROSITY OF GOD (7:7-11)

God wants to bless His people, Jesus tell us. Therefore we must present to Him our needs.

Matt. 7:7 Ask, and it will be given to you, seek and you will find; knock and it will be open to you.

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Vaticanus* reads *it is being opened*.

Ask, and it will be given to you, The exhortation is now to persistent prayer.

seek and you will find; The verbs, in the present tense in Greek, indicate persistent continuous prayer.

knock and it will be open to you. There are three commands in this verse. We are, however, not told what to request, who it is that seeks, or that for which the person knocks.

Matt. 7:8 For everyone that asks will receive, and he who is seeking will find, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

For everyone that asks will receive, Those who receive the kingdom brought by Jesus.

and he who is seeking will find, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Note that all of the promises are in the future tense.

Matt. 7:9 Or what man is there among you, when his son will ask for bread, he will not give him a stone will he?

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Vaticanus* along with a few other manuscripts do not have *is there*.

Or what man is there among you, when his son will ask for bread, he will not give him a stone will he? The reason for confidence is consideration of Fatherhood. A human father will not meet his son's request for food with useless or harmful substitutes.

Matt. 7:10 if he will ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?

if he will ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? The requests are not for the miraculous, but rather the necessities of life.

Matt. 7:11 Therefore, if you being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father in heaven give good things to the ones asking him.

Therefore, if you being evil, This is the same word for evil as 6:13. It is a strong word assuming man's sinfulness.

know how to give good gifts to your children, Even evil fathers know how to do the best for their children.

how much more will your father in heaven If human fathers provide for their children, how much more will our Heavenly Father.

give good things Luke tells us more specifically this is the Holy Spirit (11:13).

to the ones asking him. The believers are the ones who ask.

THE GOLDEN RULE (7:12)

In one verse, Jesus sums up how we are to treat others.

Matt. 7:12 Therefore, all things whatsoever you wish that people do to you, in the same manner you yourselves also do to them; this is the Law and the Prophets.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) do not have *therefore*.

Therefore, all things whatsoever you wish that people do to you, in the same manner you yourselves also do to them; this is the Law and the Prophets. The golden rule. The Emperor Alexander Severus reputedly had it written in gold on his wall—not a bad example to follow!) It sums up the law and the prophets.

It is from this saying and that of 22:37-40 that love became the dominant and summarizing theme of the Christian ethic. To act in this manner, in constant deeds of love, is to bring expression that to which the law and the prophets pointed. That is, a world where only good is done to others, the return to paradise of the Garden of Eden. To do good to others is to mirror the activities of the Father (7:11) which finds its supreme fulfillment brought by the Son. No other teaching is so readily identified with Jesus; no other teaching is so central to the righteousness of the kingdom and the practice of discipleship.

THE NARROW GATE AND THE WIDE GATE (7:13-14)

There are two roads from which to choose, the wide road to destruction or the Lord's narrow highway to life.

Matt. 7:13 Enter in through the narrow gate. Because wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads unto destruction, and there are many who enter in through it.

Note on a variant reading. Some manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) do not have the words *the gate*. *Codex Sinaiticus*, and the church Father Clement, do not have the word translated *there are*.

Enter in through the narrow gate. Because wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads unto destruction, and there are many who enter in through it. Warnings against false discipleship.

Matt. 7:14 How straight is the gate, and narrow is the road that leads to life, and there are few that find it.

Note on a variant reading. Some manuscripts read *because* instead of *how*.

How straight is the gate, and narrow is the road that leads to life, Life is eternal life and is parallel into entering into the kingdom of heaven.

and there are few that find it. This does not *necessarily* mean a small amount, but rather not everyone will go in. There is no universalism (the doctrine that everyone will eventually end up in heaven) in the teaching of Jesus (see John 10:9).

GOOD AND BAD FRUIT (7:15-23)

Jesus explains that the true believers will be distinguished from the false believers by their fruit.

Matt. 7:15 Beware of the false prophets, who comes to you in sheep's clothing, but inside they are ravenous wolves.

Beware of the false prophets, False prophets offer an alternative to Jesus' way of discipleship.

who comes to you in sheep's clothing, but inside they are ravenous wolves. Despite their outward profession and appearance these people are mortal enemies of the gospel

Matt. 7:16 You will recognize them from their fruits. People do not gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles, do they?

You will recognize them from their fruits. There are two types of fruit (doctrine and behavior). Profession of discipleship is not enough.

People do not gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles, do they? An obvious example from nature.

Matt. 7:17 In this manner, every good tree makes good fruit, and the rotten tree makes bad fruit.

In this manner, every good tree makes good fruit, and the rotten tree makes bad fruit. This is a maxim or proverbial saying.

Matt. 7:18 A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *produce* Codex Vaticanus and a few Latin manuscripts read *bear*.

A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree The word is also used in an ethical sense in the New Testament (Ephesians 4:29, NRSV translates it "evil").

produce good fruit. This verse stresses that it is contrary to nature for a good tree to produce bad fruit.

Matt. 7:19 Every tree not making good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Note on a variant reading: Some manuscripts have *therefore* before *every*.

Every tree not making good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. This is the common metaphor for future judgment already encountered in Matthew (3:10,12; cf. 13:40,42,50; 18:8,9; 25:41; Luke 13:6-9, John 15:6).

Matt. 7:20 Indeed, from their fruits you will recognize them.

Indeed, from their fruits you will recognize them. We find the same phrase as vs. 16. As the sermon draws to a close, we are presented with a stern warning against hypocrisy and hypocrites (although neither of these words are used). Some people pretend to be something they really are not. These false

prophets as they are called here, can undermine the true believers if they are followed. The ultimate test of truth is what these people *do*, not what they *say*.

Matt. 7:21 Not everyone saying to me, ‘Lord Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven; but only the one doing the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Note on a variant reading: After the verse some manuscripts have *he himself* (or *this one*) *will enter the kingdom of heaven*.

Not everyone saying to me, ‘Lord Lord,’ While the word translated “Lord” in the gospels is often no more than a polite form of address (sir), in Matthew it is generally used in contexts which indicate a deeper and more religious meaning.

will enter into the kingdom of heaven; but only the one doing the will of My Father who is in heaven. Not the hearers but the doers of the Word.

Matt. 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?’

Note on variant readings: After *Lord, Lord* two manuscripts read *Did we not eat and drink in Your name? After demons Codex Sinaiticus has many*.

Many will say to me in that day, The Day of Judgment.

‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, Prophecy does not mean simply, nor even primarily, of predicting the future, although that can be included (cf. Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11). It has the idea of the proclamation of truth in the broadest sense. In Matthew both John the Baptist (11:9; 21:26) and Jesus (14:5; 21:11, 46 and a self-designation in 13:57) are described as prophets.

and in your name drive out demons, In Jesus’ name refers to in Jesus authority.

and in your name perform many miracles?’ Charismatic activities done apart from righteousness, have no self-contained importance, and are in themselves insufficient for entry into the kingdom of heaven.

The question arises as to how they could have driven out demons and performed miracles in Jesus’ authority and still not have been Christians. There are several possible answers:

1. The exorcism of demons and miracles did not occur. What we have is merely the *claim* of these individuals that they did them, not the acknowledgment of their deeds.
2. These were false signs, not genuine supernatural deeds. These individuals could have involved some sort of sleight of hand work or deception.
3. Some feel these signs were not necessarily false. Keener writes:

The miracles Jesus mentions are not necessarily false; it is possible to prophesy by the Spirit's inspiration and yet be disobedient to God and unsaved (1 Sam 19:20-24; Keener, *Background*, p. 65).

Matt. 7:23 And then I will confess to them, that at no time have I known you. Depart from me the ones who work the lawlessness!

Note on a variant reading: After *the ones* some manuscripts have *all*.

And then I will confess to them, that at no time have I known you. Depart from me the ones who work the lawlessness! Notice that Jesus presents Himself as the judge. Probably no passage in the New Testament expresses more concisely and more sharply that the essence of discipleship, and hence participation in the kingdom, is found not in words, nor in religiosity, nor even in the performance of spectacular deeds in the name of Jesus, but only in the manifestation of true righteousness. That is doing the will of the Father as now interpreted through the teaching of Jesus. Relationship with Jesus is impossible apart from doing the will of God. Neither good, important words (Lord, Lord) nor good, random deeds of mercy (e.g. driving out demons) can substitute for the full picture of righteousness that Jesus gives in the sermon. Religion can never take the place of actual obedience to the teaching of Jesus. At the same time, the larger framework of grace should not be forgotten, nor the reality of forgiveness available to the disciples (cf. 6:12). The seriousness of the ethical demand upon the disciples does not cancel out the priority or significance of grace manifested in Jesus and the kingdom.

THE WISE AND THE FOOLISH BUILDERS (7:24-27)

There are only two foundations on which to build upon—the slippery sand or Jesus the rock.

Matt. 7:24 Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine, and is doing them, he will be compared to a wise man who built his house upon the rock.

Note on variant readings: *These* is not found in some manuscripts. Some manuscripts read *I will compare him* rather than *will be compared*.

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine, and is doing them, he will be compared to a wise man who built his house upon the rock. The well-know parable of the two builders closes the Sermon on the Mount.

Matt. 7:25 And the rain came down, and the floods came, and the wind blew and beat against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock.

And the rain came down, and the floods came, and the wind blew and beat against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. A house built on a firm foundation will stand.

Matt. 7:26 And everyone who hears these words of mine, and is not doing them, he will be compared to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *everyone who hears* a few manuscripts read *whoever is hearing*.

And everyone who hears these words of mine and is not doing them he will be compared to a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. The wrong foundation.

Matt. 7:27 And the rain came down, and the floods came, and the wind blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and the fall of it was great.

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Sinaiticus* does not have the phrase *the wind blew and*. After *great* some manuscripts have *exceedingly*.

And the rain came down, and the floods came, and the wind blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and the fall of it was great. The sandy foundation will not stand.

THE AMAZEMENT OF THE CROWDS (7:28,29)

The crowds were astounded by Jesus' teaching.

Matt. 7:28 And it came about when Jesus finished these words, the crowds were amazed at his teaching.

And it came about when Jesus finished these words, the crowds were amazed at his teaching. His teaching bewildered them.

Matt. 7:29 For he was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Note on variant reading: Many manuscripts do not have *their*. Some manuscripts have *and the Pharisees*.

For he was teaching them as one having authority, The teaching of Jesus was characterized by authority.

and not as their scribes. The crowd was astonished at the teachings of Jesus. The emphasis is that Jesus taught with authority, not as their scribes. Obviously it is to emphasize to the Jewish Christians that Jesus, not the rabbinical authorities, is the one who speaks with authority.

The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount was radical both in content and in the unique authority that undergirded its forthright, confident delivery. Matthew will not miss the opportunity here at the end of a masterful distillation of the teaching of Jesus to call his readers' attention to the supreme authority of the Teacher. Jesus is not one among other Rabbi's; His authority centers not on the tradition of the Fathers, nor even the Law, but somehow, mysteriously and remarkably, it centers in Himself. As the final and authoritative exposition of the meaning of the righteousness of the Law, this teaching has incomparable authority that can be accounted for by only one fact: the unique person of Jesus, the one teacher, the one master, the Christ (23:8-10). Only such personal authority can support the radical and surprising teaching and its exclusive claims (cf. John 7:46).

SUMMARY TO CHAPTER SEVEN

Chapter seven concludes the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus tells us that the essence of our righteous conduct is the golden rule (vs. 12), “Do unto others and we would have them do unto us.” Therefore, we are not to judge others in a condemning way (1-6). Rather we are to look into our own heart and see our own faults.

Next Jesus discusses God’s generosity (7-11) with examples from everyday life. If even the unbelieving fathers know how to take care of their own children, how much more will the heavenly Father?

He concludes the Sermon by stressing the two roads a person can take, and the two foundations one can build upon.

When He finished the crowd was amazed at His magnificent teaching for Jesus spoke to them as One having authority. He could do this because He was the authority.