

**Series: Sermon on the Mount**  
**Choosing the Right Kingdom**  
**Matthew 7:13-28**

**Introduction**

*"The mind is a universe and can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven." – John Milton.*

*I am not going to Heaven because I have preached to great crowds or read the Bible many times. I'm going to Heaven just like the thief on the cross who said in that last moment: 'Lord, remember me.' – Billy Graham.*

Many mistakenly assume that all religious roads lead to heaven. Sadly, Hell will be populated by many religious people, not just atheists and agnostics. The scribes and Pharisees taught that the Jews were the heart and soul of God's Kingdom. Yet, Jesus had the harshest words for these leaders. Seeing someone refuse God's love and take a stand against Him is heartbreaking. But it's even more tragic when someone relies on a religious creed or doctrine to save them.

In this great Sermon on the Mount, Jesus contrasts His Kingdom with that of contemporary Judaism. Judaism had long ago left God and become just a religion. Jesus identifies His Kingdom as the authentic one spoken of in the Old Testament by the prophets. He challenges the people to contemplate their eternal destiny, bringing them to the point of decision.

It is not just enough to hear the words of Jesus; we must act upon them. Jesus challenges His audience with a choice every person must make. It's a choice between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of this world. It's a choice between religious humanism and a relationship with Jesus Christ.

In verses 13 and 14, Jesus contrasts these two kingdoms with an illustration of two gates. In verses 15-23, He distinguishes between two kinds of guides, and in verses 24-27, He points out two foundations upon which people build their lives.

So first, let's look at the illustration of the two gates.

**I. The Two Gates (7:13-14)**

Some think God governs His Kingdom the same way America is governed. God's kingdom is not a democracy; it's a monarchy, and Jesus is the King. Amazingly, Jesus cautions his listeners to turn away from current mainstream Judaism and enter His Kingdom because the nation has lost its way spiritually.

In Verses 13-14, Jesus says, *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."* (Matthew 7:13-14 NKJV)

Jesus makes it clear that those who choose citizenship in His Kingdom are different from the citizens of this worldly kingdom. He also makes it clear that it's essential to choose the right Kingdom. He says there are only two gates to choose from, and we must choose one or the other.

Ultimately, the choice is either the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Satan. Heaven or Hell. Eternal Life or Eternal Death. It is a choice between being religious or being devoted to Christ. Religion is man's efforts to reach up to God, but Jesus Christ is God's way of reaching down to man. Religion relies upon a person's good works to save them, but Christianity rests upon Christ's atoning work on the Cross as the only sufficient means of salvation.

The narrow way is the way that leads to eternal life, and the gate is the Lord Jesus Himself. Jesus said in John 10:7, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep." (John 10:7 NKJV)

Entrance into the Kingdom of God requires faith in Jesus Christ as God's Messiah and our Savior. It's not that the gate is so hard to find or so poorly marked. Jesus publicly pointed out that He was God's provision for the forgiveness of sins. He often declared that He was the way to eternal life. He said the gate is narrow because we must narrow all options to only one.

We must eliminate all other gates. It is a choice that makes the way of Christ too exclusive and restrictive for many. The way is narrow because Jesus is the only entrance to eternal life and the Kingdom of Heaven.

Only by accepting the shed blood of Jesus can we approach God. Salvation is a personal act of faith. People are not saved in clusters or groups but individually. You can only get to heaven by following God's way, and that way is by accepting Jesus Christ.

However, you can go to Hell any way you want. Many roads lead there. God's way of salvation is simple – accept Jesus. The gate to Hell is broad and inviting. You can go to Hell as an atheist or an agnostic. You can go there as a Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Catholic, or under any denominational label you choose. You can go to Hell as a preacher, a priest, a rabbi, or a layperson. You can go to Hell as a billionaire or a pauper. Hell is not exclusive at all.

Citizens of God's Kingdom choose to trust in Jesus as the Son of God, who gives us His righteousness. We cannot modify God's plan of salvation to our own liking. God does not accept any other means of salvation. This really irritates a lot of people. But God declares in His word that there is no other way to salvation than through faith in His Son. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6 NKJV)

Many people would rather choose any other way than God's because other ways allow them to keep their pride, possessions, and personal preferences. There are

just two gates to consider. The one is wide and popular. The other is narrow and less seldom traveled. Our eternal destiny hangs upon the choice we make between these two ways.

To journey the broad road and enter through the wide gate will lead you to the way of destruction. The narrow way is the way of faith in Jesus Christ and is the only way that leads to eternal life.

If you follow Jesus, your path may be narrow, but your destiny will be sure.

## **II. The Two Guides (7:15-23)**

The next illustration Jesus uses is the one of two guides.

Verse 15 says, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits, you will know them. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Matthew 7:15-23 NKJV)

Many guides would like to lead you to the wide gate and the way that leads to destruction. These false prophets are not only blind themselves, but they lead others to destruction with them. In Luke 6:39, Jesus spoke a parable to them: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch? (Luke 6:39 NKJV)

In Matthew 23:15, Jesus says, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves." (Matthew 23:15 NKJV)

Jesus warned His listeners about false prophets in Matthew 7:15, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." (Matthew 7:15 NKJV)

False prophets are particularly dangerous because they appear to be genuine. They have credentials. Their outward appearance and demeanor might cause you to think they are reliable guides. They make a good impression. They have impressive resumes. They work hard on their image. They sound like they know what they're talking about. They can be highly educated and connected with all the right people.

Based on the external indicators, we might assume them to be trustworthy. But Jesus says the only way to detect false prophets is by their fruits. Judging by external actions is uncertain, but evaluating based on fruits is very reliable.

The proof of the root is in the fruit. Good trees produce good fruit, and rotten trees produce bad fruit. Jesus says, **"Therefore by their fruits, you will know them."** (Matthew 7:20 NKJV)

So, what are these fruits? This is where you have to exercise some wisdom because false prophets are not without religious activities. False prophets can use deceptive signs and wonders to sway people. In verse 22, Jesus says, **"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'"** (Matthew 7:22 NKJV)

It shouldn't surprise us when false prophets engage in acts of kindness and even miracles, claiming their power comes from God. But listen to how the Apostle Paul describes them in 2 Corinthians 11, **"For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan, himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works."** (2 Corinthians 11:13-15 NKJV)

Religious works accompany false prophets, often unusual and spectacular, and even done in the name of God. Satan willingly gives up the glory to God when he knows that people are really following him! The Scriptures divide the fruit of the false prophets into three general categories.

### **The first category is their teachings.**

According to Jeremiah 23, false prophets speak from their own delusion and not by divine command. Jeremiah the prophet says, **"Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the LORD."** (Jeremiah 23:16 NKJV)

False Prophets don't defend God's love or justice; they challenge and deny it and make God a slave to their own desires.

### **The second category is the effect of their teaching upon people.**

The teaching of false prophets leads people to seek material wealth and possessions rather than lay up treasures in heaven. The teaching of false prophets leads people to reject God's sovereignty and justice and creates division and conflict. False prophets stir up controversy and strife, leading people away from the gospel's truth (Acts 13:8) and persecuting genuine Christians (Mark 13:22).

### **Finally, false teachers lack moral character.**

They are easily distinguished by their pride and arrogance (2 Peter 2:10), their greed (Jeremiah 8:10; Titus 1:2; 2 Peter 2:3,14), and their immoral activity (Jeremiah 23:11,14; 2 Peter 2:14). They are driven by their own self-serving interests (2 Peter 2:10,12; 3:3), and they prey upon the weak and the guilt-ridden (2 Timothy 3:6-7; 2 Peter 2:14,13).

While they profess to know God, their deeds deny Him. (Matthew 7:22-23; 2 Timothy 3:5; Titus 1:16). While they delight in authority, they refuse to submit to it (2 Peter 2:10). Jesus was referring to many of the Jewish leaders of his day as false prophets. Jesus taught that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was insufficient to enter into His Kingdom (Matthew 5:20). He even singled out the Jewish leaders as blind hypocrites (Matthew 23:13-14; Luke 6:39-40). He pointed out the Pharisee's pride and arrogance in Luke 11:43. He exposed their greed and abuse of the afflicted (Matthew 23:14). And He says they were men controlled by their appetites (Matthew 23:25).

The implications here are absolutely astounding to Christ's audience. They knew what He was saying was true, but they were amazed that He would say it publicly. But it all makes sense when we look back from our present understanding of the work of Christ.

We know that Jesus clearly identified Himself as God and the Judge before whom every person will stand in the final judgment. We know and believe that Jesus will pronounce the final verdict and sentence all false prophets to their everlasting torment. There could be no clearer statement of Christ's deity than in these verses.

So, who do you choose to listen to? Do you listen to the many voices you hear in the world today? Or do you listen to the voice of the Spirit of God calling you to faith in Christ?

### **III. The Two Foundations (7:24-27)**

Jesus' final illustration is the two foundations. Verses 24-27 are the conclusion of Sermon on the Mount. Jesus says, "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 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. "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." (Matthew 7:24-27 NKJV)

Verse 28 says, "And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (Matthew 7:28-29 NKJV)

A wise person hears the teaching of Jesus and makes it their own by personal application. We must accept and apply these teachings of Jesus to our lives and continue applying them in everyday living. There is a contrast between the two

foundations. One house fell and the other stood because one had a sure foundation, while the other did not. The solid foundation is the teaching of Jesus Christ. "... therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man ..." (verse 24).

Both men built a house; the only difference was the foundation. One was built upon rock, and the other on sand. One house was built upon faith in Christ; the other was built on faith in something else.

Genuine Christianity is distinguished from every other religion by its foundation and ultimate source of authority. It is a mistake to base your life upon some revelation other than the Bible. The eternal stakes are high! People live and die with their own choices. When you choose which gate you will enter and which road you will travel, the end of each pathway is still well out of sight. But the great storms of life will test the foundation upon which you build your life.

Sadly, many will not learn from the folly of choosing the wrong gate, the wrong guide, or the wrong foundation until it is too late to reverse their destiny. Your life may look perfect today, but I ask you, how strong is the foundation?

## **Conclusion**

What gate have you chosen? You must choose one. And just as there are two gates, there are two guides. Based on appearances, you can't always tell the difference. But when the fruit is scrutinized, it can always be identified as good or false. God requires us to make a decision.

Jesus points out that the narrow gate is the way of salvation. His teaching exposes false guides who would lead us astray, and He provides us with a sure foundation upon which to build our lives. Have you passed through that narrow gate? Have you trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as the door of salvation? Is the Word of God your foundation and your guide? It's something you need to seriously consider.

Maybe you need to make that choice today. We must all stand before the One who spoke these words, and each of us must give an account to Him as the God and Judge of the universe. He will either say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; ...enter into the joy of your Master" (Matthew 25:21) or depart from me; I do not know you (Matthew 7:23).