

THE GREATEST TEACHER OF ALL

Matthew 7:28-29

Intro: I have been saying for the last four weeks that verses 13 through 27 for the conclusion to our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. And last week I pointed out to you the way in which the Lord emphasized the number 2 in His conclusion to His message.

- 1) Two gates, leading to two ways, and ending in two destinations.
- 2) False prophets and true prophets, good trees and corrupt trees, evil fruit and good fruit.
- 3) Those who enter the kingdom of heaven and those who are told to depart from the Lord.
- 4) The wise man and the foolish man, the house built on the rock, and the house built on the sand, the house that stood up under the rain, floods, and wind, and the house that fell.

As we come to the last two verses in chapter 7 this morning, we again are confronted with two – the teaching of Jesus and the teaching of the scribes. And these verses give us Matthew's comment as to the reaction of the people to the teaching of the Lord in comparison to their response to the teaching of their scribes.

Now in all of these *two's*, we are to understand that there are two, and no more than two. There are only two gates for people to go through leading to two ways. The one is narrow and the other is broad. The one leads to life and the other leads to destruction. So if people do not choose the narrow gate, it makes no difference what other gate they might take, they are all classed as one, and they lead to destruction. The narrow gate, of course, is through Christ Who is the way, the truth, and the life. All other gates lead to destruction.

There are just two kinds of prophets – true prophets and false prophets. And you will know them by their fruits. A true prophet produces good fruit, and only good fruit; a false prophet produces bad fruit, and only bad fruit. A true prophet is true to the Word of God; a false prophet may use the Word of God, but he does it in such a way that his teaching is a denial of the Word of God.

The one who enters the kingdom of heaven is the one who does not just say, "Lord, Lord," but who does the will of our heavenly Father. The one who is told to depart from the Lord, may say, "Lord, Lord," but he lives to do what he wants to do.

And finally, the wise man builds his house, his life, upon the rock. The

rock represents the Word of God, and Christ Himself . The foolish man has no place for the Word of God in his life, nor does he have any place for Christ. And the whole human family can be divided into these two categories.

Now, when the Lord had finished, we see that as the Lord had been teaching, the multitude listening to Him had been comparing in their minds His teaching with the teaching of their own scribes. And they “were astonished at his doctrine [his teaching], for He taught them [lit.] as having authority, and not as the scribes.” The people without being told to do so, realized the great difference between the teaching of our Lord and the teaching of their scribes.

And so this is the comment that the Holy Spirit led Matthew to write in commenting upon the teaching of our Lord in contrast with the teaching of the scribes.

From all that our Lord has said throughout this Sermon on the Mount, we have to realize that all true teaching has two parts. There is that which is doctrinal, and this is followed by the practical. All teaching has some kind of an objective. For example, the chemistry teacher seeks to ground his students in the facts of the science of chemistry, but his ultimate object is to get his students into the lab where they can conduct practical experiments. A history teacher covers whatever period of history that happens to be his field, but his object, if he is a good teacher, is to show that one of the values of studying history is practical, that we will benefit ourselves from what others have done in the past which was right, and that we will not make the mistakes that they made. That is the value of reading the historical and prophetic books of the OT. We can see the mistakes that people made, and the consequences of those mistakes, in order that hopefully, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, we will not make the same mistakes, and so avoid the judgments of God. If most of our politicians knew the Bible, they wouldn't approve of many of the things that they condone because the Bible tells us what happened to the people, the cities, and the nations who did what they are doing.

So all teaching, if it is real teaching, has practical results.

Let us begin by thinking about the teaching of the scribes. Matthew mentioned it last in these two verses, but I want to take it up first. Then we will understand more about what the people had discovered.

I. THE TEACHING OF THE SCRIBES.

First of all, who were the scribes?

In answering that question, we need to reflect on those who were the teachers of Scripture in the OT. And, of course, this was primarily in the hands of the priest and Levites. The Apostle John tells us in John 1:17 that “the Law was given by Moses.” And the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy tell us that Moses was not only the man through whom the Law was given, but he was the first interpreter of the Law. And Aaron stood by his side in this capacity. They were not only teachers of the Law, but it was their responsibility to see that the people kept the Law. And they were assisted by others, priests and elders, in this most important work.

We also learn that in the time of Ezra, who was a priest, he was the major one, along with Nehemiah, who taught the people the Law. Remember the verse that we have been learning in Ezra 7:10:

For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

That is the kind of a teacher Moses was – he taught himself first, and then the people. When we read that Ezra taught his people “statutes and judgments” it means that he taught them to do what he had done: to understand the law of the Lord, and to do it. Any person who teaches the Bible had better follow in their steps. Pastors today are to teach people the meaning of the Word of God, but they must practice what they preach if there is to be power in their teaching.

In Nehemiah 8:8 we read what the Levites did in Nehemiah’s day:

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading (Neh. 8:8).

However, as time went on, the priests became influenced by Greek philosophy, and a group of men known as “scribes” became the teachers of the Law. They were what we would term *scholars* today. Most of these, it seems, were Pharisees. And when we move on down to the time of our Lord, it was the scribes and Pharisees who were the major opponents of the Lord even though they claimed to be the true inheritors of the position that Moses had. Let me read to you what the Lord said about them according to the first few verses of Matthew 23. Here are His words:

- 1 Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,
- 2 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:
- 3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.
- 4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers (Matt. 23:1-4).

The major problem with the scribes and Pharisees was that they did not

practice what they preached. They taught much that was true (although they also taught much that was not true), but they failed as far as the application of the Word of God to their own lives was concerned. And so though they claimed to be the successors of Moses, they failed where Moses had succeeded. Moses was not perfect, but it was his desire to live according to the Word of God.

So, in the light of what the Lord had been saying, the scribes and Pharisees were “false prophets.” They mixed enough of the truth in to deceive the people, but they did not do what they were telling the people to do.

Now in Scripture it is obedience to the Word of God that produces Christian character. And the ultimate object of the teaching of Scripture is the transformation of our lives from what we have been into what God wants us to be. We can't do this on our own, and this is what we need to walk in dependence upon the Holy Spirit each day.

So I hope we understand enough about the scribes and Pharisees to see what their problem was. And remember that they were Israel's main Bible teachers when our Lord was here on earth.

Now let us look at:

II. THE PEOPLE'S RESPONSE TO THE TEACHING OF THE LORD.

We find this in both verses of our text.

A. First, “the people were astonished” (Matt. 7:28).

The word for people here is οἱ ὄχλος. This means *a crowd, a multitude, a great number of people*. And Matthew seems to indicate that this was the common reaction that prevailed among all who had been listening to the Lord Jesus. They “were astonished at His doctrine.” They had never heard teaching like the Lord Jesus had given to them. This means that they were *struck with amazement*. A. T. Robertson in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament* explained this statement in this way:

They listened spellbound to the end and were left amazed. Note the imperfect tense-- a buzz of astonishment. The verb means literally "were struck out of themselves."

You can imagine that the crowd made a great sound as they spoke to each other about what they had just heard. They had listened in silence, but at the end they could not keep silent any longer.

But what else do we learn about their reaction.

B. “For He taught them as ... having authority” (Matt. 7:29).

The word “one” is not in the original text, but was added to by the translators to make it clearer. But it is a stronger translation to leave that word out. “For He taught them as ... having authority.” This same Greek word which is here translated “authority” is translated as “power” in Luke 4:32: “And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.”

Again quoting Robertson concerning the teaching of the scribes, this is what he had to say:

They [the people] had heard many sermons before from the regular rabbis in the synagogues. We have specimens of these discourses preserved in the Mishna and Gemara, the Jewish Talmud when both were completed, the driest, dullest collection of disjointed comments upon every conceivable problem in the history of mankind. The scribes quoted the rabbis before them and were afraid to express an idea without bolstering it up by some predecessor [but not with Scripture]. Jesus spoke with the authority of truth, the reality and freshness of the morning light, and the power of God's Spirit. This sermon which made such a profound impression ended with the tragedy of the fall of the house on the sand like the crash of a giant oak in the forest. There was no smoothing over the outcome.

You see, even today people can detect the difference between a true teacher and a false teacher. Many follow false teachers because they have never heard true teaching. But when this crowd of Jews who had never heard teaching like the Lord Jesus gave them, were exposed to the truth, they realized that here was something new, something they had never heard before, and they were drawn to the Lord Jesus and His teaching.

We don't know how many of them actually turned to the Lord on that occasion, and became true believers in Christ. It may have been that many of them were greatly impressed at the moment, but did not follow on to seek the Lord, and to know Him in salvation.

We, too, have been greatly impressed with the Lord's words in this Sermon, haven't we? I wish that I had done a better job in teaching these three chapters. But I pray that none of us will forget what we have learned so that we will go on living just like we did before these words of the Lord Jesus. My explanation is not the important thing. If that has been helpful, I give all of the glory to the Lord. But what is important is to be seen in

the very words which the Lord Jesus spoke on that occasion, words that are just as true and just as needed as they were in that day approximately two thousand years ago.

But I must not close before I attempt to answer the question,

III. WHAT MADE THE TEACHING OF THE LORD JESUS SO POWERFUL, SO OVERWHELMING WITH AUTHORITY?

Let me give you three answers to that question, and I would like to make the application from our Lord to all of us who are here today, and to those who will hear this message on our radio broadcast, or on tapes..

A. It was because of Who He was.

The Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God, God manifest in human flesh. And all of the power of the Godhead was revealed when the Lord Jesus spoke. And as such, He had supreme authority, supreme power.

Do you remember the time when the Pharisees and chief priests sent officers to arrest the Lord, and what they said when they came back without the Lord? They said, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46). The scribes were not only mere men, but, in spite of their position in Israel, they were unregenerate, unsaved men. And with all of the authority they had because of their position, their authority was nothing in the presence of and in comparison with the Lord of glory.

But, you might say, how can this apply to us? We aren't Deity; we are only sinners saved by grace. Yes, I am fully aware of that. But we need to remember that the first prerequisite of any servant of the Lord must be that he knows the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior. And although ladies do not have a ministry in the church, you have a ministry. And the requirement for you is just the same. If you expect to serve the Lord where you are, your first requirement is that you truly know the Lord. No person can be a true servant of God who is unsaved, and no one can be saved who is not trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

So, as with our Lord, who we are is extremely important if we are to serve the Lord.

But there is a second reason for the Lord's power in His ministry.

B. It was because of His perfect life.

You know those statements from Scripture about our Lord and His relationship to sin. He “knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21). He was “without sin” (Heb. 4:15). He “did no sin” (1 Pet. 2:22). “In Him is no sin” (1 John 3:5).

But then there was the positive side of His holy character and life. He was the only person who has ever lived who could say, “I do always those things that please Him” (John 8:29). Also in John 6:38 we read that our Lord said, “For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.” The Lord never did anything that was displeasing to the Father, but He always did that which was pleasing to Him.

You and I have often sinned by doing that which is displeasing to the Father, and we have often sinned as well by not doing that which is pleasing to the Lord. But it is always the case that the more we strive, by the grace of God, to do His will, and not to displease Him in any way, the greater will be the blessing of the Lord upon our lives and upon whatever ministry the Lord has given to us. This is where the scribes failed miserably, and this is where we need to pay close attention to our lives. It is said of godly Stephen, that his enemies “were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake” (Acts 6:10).

Finally, concerning the authority and power of the Lord Jesus:

C. It was because of what He taught.

The Lord was always careful in His ministry to speak only the words, the very words, which the Father had given Him to speak. We can say that the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ was a ministry of the Word of God. He told His enemies, the Jews, “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me” (John 7:16). He also said to the Jews in another place, “I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him” (John 8:26), and, “As my Father hath taught Me, I speak these things” (John 8:28). In our Lord’s High Priestly prayer in John 17, He said this to the Father,

7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me (John 17:7-8).

Our Lord’s entire ministry was devoted to preaching and teaching God’s Word. The Word has come to us in our Bibles, but if we want to see the

Lord's blessing, the Word of God must be our ministry.

Concl: When the Lord was leaving His disciples, He said this to them about *authority*:

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:18-20).

We live and serve under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. But only those who know the Savior can claim that authority, and it also requires that we are living in obedience to the Word of God, and that our message is the message of Scripture.

When the Lord spoke of the house built upon the sand, He was speaking not only of the people of Israel, but of the nation itself. And it was a kind of prophecy of the fall of Israel. They had failed to learn of history. Their leaders were unsaved, and so their lives could not be pleasing to the Lord, and they failed to minister the Word of God, and only the Word, to their people. May the Lord help us to understand the authority of Christ in these days when the world needs to be confronted with people who know the Lord, living godly lives, and devoted to the ministry of the Word of God. May we never depart from the example of our Lord.