

The Wise And Foolish Builders

(Mt 7:24-27)

Introduction

1. Barnes comments that: “No comparison could, to a Jew, have been more striking” and explains: “Palestine was, to a considerable extent, a land of hills and mountains. Like other countries of that description, it was subject to sudden and violent rains. The Jordan, the principal stream, was annually swollen to a great extent, and became rapid and furious in its course. The streams which ran among the hills, whose channels might have been dry during some months of the year, became suddenly swollen with the rain, and would pour down impetuously into the plains below. Everything in the way of these torrents would be swept off. Even a house erected within the reach of these sudden inundations, and especially if founded on sand, or any unsolid basis, would not stand before them. The rising, bursting stream would shake it to its foundation; the rapid torrent would gradually wash away its base; it would totter and fall, and be swept away. Rocks in that country were common, and it was easy to secure for their houses a solid foundation.”
2. After hearing Jesus' teaching on what it meant to be a citizen of God's kingdom, His listeners were faced with a choice about how they would respond. This parable contains three key elements that together challenged both His original audience—and us today—to make a decision.

I. Builders.

A. All are builders.

1. Building, is what the story is about.

- a. From the earliest times men have been building their homes, somewhere to live.
- b. Christians are also building and Jesus has allotted us something to work with—time and resources, though not of the same quality or in equal amounts.

B. All build in different ways.

1. Some build haphazardly floating through life, along the way squandering resources and missing opportunities.
2. Others are the opposite. Focussed and goal-orientated, they are determined to take whatever God has put in their hands and make the most of it.
3. Most of us fall somewhere in between.

II. Foundations.

A. Foundation choices.

1. In the story.

- a. This is where the builders part company; they go about their work in different ways, one building upon sand (26) and the other upon rock (24). Luke vividly says that “he dug deep and laid the foundation upon a rock” (Lk 6:48). Quite possibly both finished houses would look the same, but time would say differently.
- b. Both approaches have their advantages, the first takes less effort but the other provides long term gain.

2. As in the story, Christians also need to choose a foundation and Jesus wants His people to choose the right one.

- a. The person who hears and acts upon Jesus' sayings is building life upon a solid foundation (24) but the one who fails to act is the fool, building a life which is unstable (26). These are the only options.
- b. Note the binary choice in life – either we do what Jesus says, or we don't. Such a concept of two basic choices is not new to Jesus' teaching.

B. Related choices.

1. Two paths (7:13-14).
 - a. The broad path with few kerbs.
 - 1) It is the way of tolerance and permissiveness with few boundaries or rules to restrict thought or action (13).
 - 2) It is the path of choice for many but they take too restricted a view and don't see the potholes ahead.
 - b. The narrow path, difficult to tread and found by few (14).
2. These two paths have different destinations, life and destruction.
 - a. A decision to make with only two choices.
 - b. We are urged: "Enter by the narrow gate" (13).
 - c. Do you see the thread- two foundations but before that two paths?
3. Contrary voices (7:15-23). The warning rests on two assumptions: 1) That these will come and, 2) That we can identify them.
 - a. False prophets which try to make us feel comfortable when taking the broad path (7:15).
 - 1) An age-old problem "Therefore do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who speak to you, saying..." (Jer 27:29).
 - 2) In NT times (Gal 1:6-7; Ac 20:29-31).
 - 3) Our own fleshly desires (Gal 5:16-17).
 - b. The second assumption – that we can identify them. Verses 16-20 explain how.
 - c. It is those who do the will of the Father who will enter heaven so we must be very careful about which voice we listen to.

C. Related choices yes, but essentially the same choice.

1. The choices:
 - a. Two paths but God's people must choose the narrow path.
 - b. Two sets of voices but the voices which agree with Jesus must be obeyed.
 - c. Two possible foundations but God's people must build their lives upon the sayings of Jesus.
2. This is the same choice but expressed in different ways.

III. The Coming Storm.

A. The inevitability of storms.

1. One is coming to all of us.
 - a. When young, fit and healthy and life's opportunities lay ahead, it is very tempting to push such forebodings to one side.
 - b. We try to protect ourselves by taking out insurance but this is neither comprehensive nor adequate.
2. A storm will reveal the truth about a house. If a builder wants a house to withstand a storm, he has to build for the storm.
3. Types of storms.
 - a. Financial.
 - b. Family.
 - c. Health.

4. Christians don't respond to life's tragedies in the same way.

a. How do we account for that? Perhaps Jesus would say, "Look at the foundations".

b. Building on the sands will suffice for sunny days but leave us unprepared for life's storms.

B. If we don't meet a storm in life, we will at death.

1. Perhaps Jesus had in mind the final storm to be faced by all when the last trump will sound (1 Cor 15:52). This may be suggested by the closing context of chapter seven. He spoke about:

- The broad gate that leads to destruction (13).
- The trees that will be thrown into the fire (19).
- The calling to account at the end of time (22-23).

2. Or perhaps both.

Concluding Remarks.

1. We are all builders and so we need to examine the foundation we are laying.

2. Jesus said that the wise builder is the one who both hears and acts upon His words.

3. May the Lord help us to both better understand His word and then obey it.