

Matthew 7b

What was the warning Jesus gave to the disciples (v. 15)? The same warning which the Old Testament prophets also gave about false prophets (cf. Deuteronomy 13; Jeremiah 6:13-15; Ezekiel 13; 22:28; Zephaniah 3:4). He did not explain exactly what they would teach, only that they would deceptively misrepresent divine revelation. Their motive would be ultimately self-serving, and the end of their victims would be destruction.¹

How did Jesus describe the false prophets? After previously presenting the true way of access into His anticipated kingdom, Jesus gave a warning about false prophets. He referred to these advocates of the broad way as ferocious wolves who appear harmless as sheep.

How would the disciples be able to recognize the false prophets (v. 16)? One need only look at the fruit they produce. Grapes and figs do not grow on thorn bushes or thistles. Good fruit trees produce good fruit, but bad fruit trees produce bad fruit. This principle is true in the natural world and in the spiritual world. In Jesus' evaluation, the Pharisees were obviously producing bad fruit; the only thing to do with bad trees is to cut them down and destroy them. If they do not fulfill their purpose for existence, they should be removed.²

"By their fruit you will recognize them." Their licentious lives and destructive teachings betray them. A tree or plant produces fruit according to its character. The life and teaching of those who claim to speak for God should be tested by the Word of God. If they do not speak according to this word, there is no light in them (Isaiah 8:20).³

What was the destiny of the false prophets (v. 19)? Their destiny is to be thrown into the fire. The doom of false teachers and prophets is "swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1). They can be known by their fruits.

The words and works of a prophet eventually reveal their true character, just as surely as the fruit of a tree reveals its identity. Of these two criteria, words and works, works are the more reliable indicator of character. Given a choice between believing what we see a person doing and what that person claims he did, almost everyone will believe what he saw him doing.⁴

What is required for entrance into the heavenly kingdom (v. 21)? Obedience to the Father's will determines entrance into the messianic kingdom,

The Lord Jesus next warns against people who falsely profess to acknowledge Him as Savior but have never been converted. Not everyone who calls Jesus, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven. Only those who *do* the will of God enter the kingdom, not those who merely profess admiration for Jesus. The first step in doing the will of God is to believe in the Lord Jesus (John 6:29).⁵

What is the picture of judgment day for unbelievers (vv. 22-23)? On judgment day when unbelievers stand before Christ (Revelation 20:11-15), many will remind Him that they prophesied, or cast out demons, or performed many wonders—all in His name. But their protesting will be in vain. Jesus will declare to them that He never knew them or acknowledged them as His own. Verse 23 is often referred to as the "scariest" verse in the Bible!

From these verses we learn that not all miracles are of divine origin and that not all miracle workers are divinely accredited. A miracle simply means that a supernatural power is at work. That power may be divine or satanic. Satan may empower his workers to cast out demons *temporarily*, in order to create the illusion that the miracle is divine.⁶

In the end, there is one basis of salvation; it isn't mere verbal confession, not "spiritual works," but knowing Jesus and being known by Him. It is our connection to Him – by the gift of faith that He gives to us – that secures our salvation. Connected to Jesus we are secure; without connection to Him all the miracles and great works prove nothing.

Jesus Himself would sentence the self-deceived hypocrites to depart from His presence. Thus Jesus claimed again that He is the Judge who will determine who would enter the messianic kingdom and who would not..⁷

These are not people who *lost* their salvation. Instead, they never truly had it ("*I never knew you*").

What are the options Jesus presented to His listeners (vv. 24–27)? Jesus closes His sermon with a parable that drives home the importance of obedience. It is not enough to hear these sayings; we must put them into practice (James 1:22). The disciple who hears and does Jesus' commands is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. His house (life) has a solid foundation and, when it is battered by rain and winds, it will not fall.

The person who hears Jesus' sayings and does not do them is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. This man will not be able to stand against the storms of adversity: when the rain descended and the winds blew, the house fell because it had no solid base.

If a person lives according to the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, the world calls him a fool; Jesus calls him a wise man. The world considers a wise man to be someone who lives by sight, who lives for the present, and who lives for self; Jesus calls such a person a fool. It is legitimate to use the wise and foolish builders to illustrate the gospel. The wise man puts his full confidence in the Rock, Christ Jesus, as Lord and Savior. The foolish man refuses to repent and rejects Jesus as his only hope of salvation. But the interpretation of the parable actually carries us beyond salvation to its practical outworking in the Christian life.⁸

How would you describe the crowd's reaction to Jesus' words (vv. 28-29)? As a result of this sermon, the crowds of people following Jesus were amazed at His teaching. The authority of Jesus is what amazed them, for He taught as a Spokesman from God—not as the teachers of His time who were simply reflecting the authority of the Law. He spoke with authority; their words were powerless; they only quoted other rabbis. His was a voice; theirs was an echo.⁹

As our Lord ended His message, the people were astonished. If we read the Sermon on the Mount and are not astonished at its revolutionary character, then we have failed to grasp its meaning.

¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Matthew, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 229.

² Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "Matthew," The Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 34.

³ William MacDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1229.

⁴ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Matthew, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 231.

⁵ William MacDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1229.

⁶ Ibid., 1229.

⁷ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Matthew, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 232.

⁸ William MacDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1230.

⁹ Ibid.