

**IV. The King exhorts his hearers to perceive (believe) and act on His word (teach) to receive life (7:13-27).**

*The rest of the Sermon is now very directive (applicational) toward the listener. He will be warned to act on the Words of the Sermon (revelation based on O.T.) instead of the false prophets (human wisdom).*

**A. The hearer should not determine the truth of the king by the way of the masses,<sup>1</sup> for their are few who perceive truth (7:13-14).**

*The illustration used is of an entry point. There are two entry points, thus to two different kingdoms for one to enter. The one kingdom is based on one's perception (false), which is entered by self-righteousness. The other is based on one's perception of the Old Testament and the King and is based on imputed righteousness. The Pharisees followed the crowd (pleased men) as well as their followers followed blindly the leaders. Jesus is saying that correctness is not determined by the size of the crowd (similar to what He said in the Beatitudes) but by the revelation alone. The size of the crowd is again human perception with the eyes. He will now describe the alternate way, that of the false prophets, the proclaimers of self-righteousness.*

13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it.<sup>14</sup> "For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

**B. The hearer should reject those who do not teach the righteousness of God accurately (7:15-23).**

*This whole section is a warning and description of the false prophets. Not only is their identity made (how one recognizes them) but also their ultimate judgment is described (what happens to those who enter by that wide gate).*

**1. They glorify themselves externally, yet internally they are motivated by self-centered values, not valuing brothers as God does (7:15).<sup>2</sup>**

*The illustration here is that aspect of a sheep that would be compared to a ravenous wolf. The sheep appears harmless, that is, his teaching is not going to harm one. However, he says they are actually very harmful for, as a ravenous wolf, they will take one's life.<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the inclusion of "the Law and the Prophets" these exhortations demonstrate a difference between the "Sons of the Kingdom" much as the Beatitudes.

<sup>2</sup> Refer back to the whole section regarding the *hesed* which God has for brethren (5:21-48) and intends that the representative have the same.

<sup>3</sup> Quite frequently this is used to show that they have 'head knowledge', i.e., that they look like Christians, having a profession, but are not until one sees their heart. However, notice that this is not the illustration to show a Christian or not by the knowledge of their heart (even though it is their heart that is the problem), but that they do not look harmful.

15 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

**2. They can be identified by their teachings on the basis of the Law and the Prophets (7:16-23).**

*So, here in context, if one cannot identify them by their traits as harmful, how would one discover them? Jesus moves on to answer that question. They can only be identified by the teachings which they affirm through their confession. And it is by that confession that they will be judged. These teachings must conform to the Law and the Prophets (and thus Jesus).*

**a. Like a tree and its fruits, their activities (teachings<sup>4</sup>) will reveal their beliefs. If they teach that they achieve the righteousness of God through their good works then one will see self-glorifying works (self-righteousness before God) (7:16-20).**

*Jesus has now related the identity of the false prophets to two periods of time; the present identity and the future identity at the judgment. The illustration is that they can see them by their confession (fruits). And it is on that basis that the judgment will take place also. Thus, as exhorted previously in the Sermon, one should judge from the judgment aspect of God, or else they will be in error. Thus they can now judge whether one is a true or false prophet on the same basis that God does (and will judge them).*

*As a tree can only produce what is in its genetic makeup, so also can a prophet only speak what he truly feels in his heart. If his heart is different then he will speak what is in a different heart.*

16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits.

**b. The ultimate measure of their teaching is that their teachings (fruits<sup>5</sup>) will be weighed on the basis of the words of the king (Jesus and the O.T. preached the righteousness of God given to man) will be cast out of the kingdom because they have not kept the Law and the Prophets (7:21-23)**

**1) The basis of future judgment is acting on the revelation of God concerning Himself by the representative (7:21).**

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<sup>4</sup> Refer to Matt. 12:33-37 for a parallel to this verse for validation that teachings (words) are one's fruits.

<sup>5</sup> Note that James (3:18) also uses this same definition. The fruits are "righteousness", not the righteousness of the person himself (cf. 5:17-20), but the righteousness of God in the King. ("And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."). Thus the fruit more specifically defined is the righteousness of God, testified by the believer.

*The point of this statement is that it is not the act of ultimate submission that determines one's destiny at the time of entry into the kingdom, but response to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ ("the will of the Father"). The will of the Father is from the prayer in Matt. 6:10 ("Thy will be done") which is the essence of God's righteousness ("Hallowed by the Name") represented on earth, and this through the King.*

21 "Not everyone who says<sup>6</sup> to Me, 'Lord, Lord',<sup>7</sup> will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.

**2) External supernatural miracles, and self-works, do not indicate a perception of God, but imputed righteousness as received (7:22). (cf. Deut. 13:1ff. for miracles and their parallel to God's word.)**

*The Lord then goes to the judgment day to give an insight into the basis for judgment. Not all will enter the kingdom, and so this is the criteria that they offer, that of works and a perceived relationship to God. The works are supernatural miracles (cf. Deut. 13:1) as well as the casting out of demons and prophecy. The prophecy is not related to a pronouncing of a Name as the Israelites used to do in a superstitious way, nor in the physical casting out of demons<sup>8</sup> (cf. Matt. 12 where the sons of the Pharisees cast them out).*

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<sup>6</sup> A question may arise as to the present tense participle here. It might appear in English that the person is saying that during Jesus life (present tense) but will not enter the kingdom of heaven later. Thus the present tense confession does not indicate a future entry. However, in the Greek the present participle normally indicates aspect as opposed to indicating the time of the action and usually is in agreement with the tense of the verb which it accompanies. Thus a future tense verb would indicate an aspect which takes place at the future time (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:17, "We who are alive (present participle, i.e., "who shall be living" at that time) . . . shall be snatched up in the clouds." (Goetchius, The Language of the New Testament, p. 179, Scribner, 1965).

<sup>7</sup> This double use of "Lord" here (*Kurios*) in the Greek poses a question as to why He would use a double use of this. On the face of it, one might suppose (reader intent) that He is using it for emphasis as these are in essence very seriously attempting to gain His favorable response to their request to enter the kingdom. However, on an investigation into the Old Testament and the knowledge that "*kurios*" could be YHWH, Adonai (Ruler), Master or Sir it is discovered that this use is not uncommon in the Old Testament. When the phrase "*YHWH Adonai*" appears in the Old Testament it is translated by the Septuagint frequently using a double "*Kurios*", which is the case here in Matt: 7:21 and in places like Psalm 8:1,10 and Psalm 110:1. When it is reversed as in "*Adonai YHWH*" then the Septuagint tends to translate it with *Despota Kurie* which would be Master Lord or Ruler YHWH. So, if the Septuagint is to be followed here, it would appear that it is the use of both *YHWH* and *Adonai* in the form a titles. Thus the indication is that this Ruler at the judgment seat is being titled both the Covenant God of Israel but also the Ruler of Psalm 8 and Psalm 110; the Second Person of the Trinity who is to rule the universe. It would seem best to take this as a reference to Old Testament usage as in Psalm 110, thus designating Him as YHWH Himself (the covenant God of Israel) as well as Adonai (The Second Person of the Trinity who will rule on David's throne, representing the Father).

<sup>8</sup> The casting out of demons would have been to relieve a physical ailment which the demon was causing. While it would have been perceived as a good work, it was not accompanied by a perception of unworthiness and glory to God. Notice here that their claim is of a righteousness that they possess by their works, not by God's imputation.

22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord<sup>9</sup>, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

**3) Defenses of self-works (a self-righteousness to achieve the righteousness of God) indicate the presence of disobedience to the Law (7:23).**

*The judgment is that they have not obeyed the Old Testament and are contrary to God since they do not have His righteousness.*

*Recall that the kingdom in the Old Testament was a concept of living at rest in the land. Deuteronomy 9 declared:*

3 "Know therefore today that it is the LORD your God who is crossing over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and destroy them quickly, just as the LORD has spoken to you. 4 "Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them out before you, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is dispossessing them before you. 5 "It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. 6 "Know, then, it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people. 7 "Remember, do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD. 8 "Even at Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath, and the LORD was so angry with you that He would have destroyed you.

23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

**C. The King exhorts men to hear and act on His words (7:24-27).**

**1. A perceptive man will build his theology on the words of the King as a wise man builds his house on a rock (7:24-25).**

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock.

25 "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock.

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<sup>9</sup> This does not indicate that they had at sometime thought they had trusted in Christ but only had head knowledge. They are saying this at the end in the judgment day. Jesus is clearly God ("YHWH" or LORD) and the Ruler ("Adonai" or the King) and they will obviously be acknowledging Him as such. Also they are not saying that they believed in Jesus, but are addressing Him as YHWH or Adonai, since He is obviously such. Refer to 25:47 where those who are to depart into eternal fire, refer to Him as Lord.

2. **A foolish man will build his theology on the words of the false prophets who promote self-righteousness as a man builds his house on sand, which will not stand against the judgment (7:26).**

26 "And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand.

27 "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall."