



First Baptist Church Selmer

COMMANDED! • CONFIRMED? OR CONDEMNED? • MARK 12:34; MATTHEW 7:21-29 •
8/31/2025

MAIN POINT

Faith and obedience are two sides of the same coin. The true test of genuine faith is the obedience that flows from it.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Who is the most famous person you have met?

Who is the most famous person who knows you? Why is this a different question than the prior one?

We close this series this week with Jesus' response to the eternal destination of the questioning scribe. This example sets forth an evaluation tool in regards to anyone about their heart's motives, their love for God and others, and obedience to follow His commands.

It is one thing to know Jesus, but it is quite different for Jesus to know us. We close today with the hardest words that anyone could hear in regards to their eternal state: *"Depart from me, I never knew you."* Our prayer is that no one ever has to hear those words.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MARK 12:34

34 *"And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.'" And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions."* (ESV)

Do you believe the scribe had felt justified in his eternal destination up unto this point?

What do you think the scribe thought when he heard the words, *"You are not far from the kingdom of God"*?

For what reason do you believe this response from Jesus essentially stopped the conversation and questioning?

Jesus' response to the scribe was interesting. Not only did the scribe stand in silence, but also the crowd that had gathered. In all honesty, if the scribe, in his extensive knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures, was going to miss God's Kingdom, how could anyone else stand a chance?

Jesus cared far less about the scribe's knowledge of His Word than his intention to obey it. Knowledge is good, but action is better (James 1:22-25). For the scribe to meet the standards to get into the Kingdom of God, his heart's motive (love for God and others) and his obedience (to Christ's commands) must be spot on.

Let's look further at Jesus' teaching about those who would be close, yet still miss the Kingdom of God.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 7:21-23.

21 *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"* (ESV)

Which activities did these people perform? Did they outwardly look like Christ's followers?

What were these people substituting for their relationship with Christ?

**What are the outward marks of Christianity we consider important today?
Could a person do those things and still not be known by Jesus?**

Jesus just finished talking about false prophets who acted as if they were followers of Christ but were actually enemies (vv. 15-20). Now Jesus speaks of what it would look like for those false prophets on judgment day. They performed acts that looked very spiritual, but they lacked a relationship: Jesus did not know them. Jesus called them workers of lawlessness, meaning they did what they thought was right but did not follow His Word.

In verses 21 through 23, Jesus stressed relationships over outward works. Why did He then teach about obedience?

How is a relationship with Jesus related to obedience to Jesus? Is it possible to truly have one without the other?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 7:24-29.

24 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

28 And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, 29 for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes." (ESV)

Why is it important to build a house on a solid foundation? What happens when a house has foundation problems?

How is obedience similar to building on a solid foundation?

What kind of "rain" falls in believers' lives? How might this rain reveal the solidity of their foundation?

The wise hears... then acts.

The foolish hears... then does nothing.

Jesus said the person who was like *"a man who built his house on the rock"* was the person who heard and obeyed His words. Those who *"built on sand"* heard but did not obey. Jesus wants people who both hear and obey. When we are in a relationship with Jesus, we will walk the road less traveled (obedience) even when difficult times come into our lives. It's during those seasons of difficulty when we see just how solid our foundation really is.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Why is it important that we understand and practice obedience that flows from a relationship with Jesus? What does obedience look like that doesn't come from an authentic relationship with Him?

In what ways do you regularly hear and obey the words of Christ? Is there anything in your life that keeps you from fully obeying?

How can the body of believers at our church encourage each other to true obedience and not simply outward works?

PRAYER

Pray that your group and everyone at our church would be characterized by obedience to the words of Christ. Ask God to help the people of your group share Christ and the opportunity to have a relationship with Him with those around them.

COMMENTARY

| MATTHEW 7:21-29

7:21-23. This embellishment on the two-trees theme shares many similarities with Matthew 25 (note verses 11-12, 41-44). As is true throughout the sermon's conclusion (7:13-27), the emphasis here is on doing God's will. This time the doing is contrasted with lip service, calling Jesus "Lord, Lord." This double usage of "Lord" is found elsewhere only in 25:11 (also a parabolic reference to the day of judgment) and Luke 6:46 (parallel to this verse). Since the occasion for these quotes is on that day, on the verge of entering the kingdom of heaven, we can safely assume that "Lord" is to be taken with the impact of the Old Testament Adonai. Jesus here indirectly acknowledged His deity.

But the point of the passage is that someone else's acknowledgment of Jesus' deity will not be sufficient for their entrance into the kingdom if they have not done the will of the Father. This is the first time in Matthew that Jesus has said, "My Father." It is significant that Jesus so closely associated himself with the Father that He implied His own deity as well as His role as the final judge.

The evidence that the claimants brought before Jesus in 7:22 would seem quite spectacular and convincing to most of Jesus' listeners. These were the kinds of works Jesus had been doing for some time (4:23–25). They were validating His claims and drawing large crowds. Therefore, this was a startling statement for Jesus to make. His listeners must have thought, If we cannot believe prophecy, exorcisms, and miracles—especially those done in the name of Jesus—as signs of a true prophet, then what can we believe?

Jesus went to this length to demonstrate the importance of righteousness by faith alone in Christ alone (Rom. 4) as the criterion for entry into the kingdom. Even doing the activities that He was doing was not sufficient. We should be warned that counterfeits today will look very much like they are carrying on the work of Jesus. But we must look at their lives as well as their works. Our culture's compartmentalization between people's personal lives and their professional lives was a foreign concept to Jesus.

In 7:21–23, we have seen at least three ways the counterfeits try to get by without actual obedience: (1) lip service, claiming loyalty to Jesus as Lord and God; (2) spectacular signs; and (3) performing these signs in His name—in essence, claiming them to be the work of God. What would lead someone to such an elaborate subterfuge? It seems easier to obey than to go to all this trouble in an attempt to fool the Lord. Pride is the answer. In our efforts to protect the little god of self, we humans can go to amazing lengths.

Jesus' response to the counterfeits was harsh, knowing He will be the eternal judge. In the first part of His response, He used a verb meaning to "know by experience." The greatest blessing in life and eternity is to know the Lord personally and to be known in the same way by Him. The greatest curse is to have this relationship denied.

The second part of Jesus' response, "Away from me, you evildoers," is a quote from Psalm 6:8. In this psalm, David warned evildoers of their judgment, subsequent to his petition to God. Matthew used the present tense with an imperative force of the verb, meaning "go away, depart." He also used "evildoers" as a synonym for those who practice evil. This is significant in light of Jesus' clarification of the original intent of the Old Testament law in 5:17–48. This is the bottom line of the sermon and kingdom righteousness. Even if a person performed works identical to those of Jesus, did those works in the name of Jesus, and called on Jesus as Lord and God, he would still be breaking God's law if his life was not lawful according to Jesus' definition throughout this sermon. True righteousness can be derived only from the Savior.

7:24-27. In this third and final challenge to choose between life and destruction, Jesus made it even clearer that the criterion for a righteous life is obedience to Jesus' teaching. His righteousness was diametrically opposed to pharisaical self-righteous works. The possessive pronoun "Mine" is in the emphatic beginning position in that phrase. Jesus was equating His own words with the will of His Father (7:21). Jesus was claiming to have the same authority as the God who authored the Old Testament Scriptures—a claim He also implied in clarifying the original intent of the law in 5:17-48.

Jesus did not leave it to the crowd to perceive His authority (7:28-29). He claimed it openly. This is quite an audacious claim, unless He actually had the authority to make it. Jesus did not give His skeptics much room to maneuver in their opinion of who He was—He was either everything He says He was... or He was nothing at all. He must be fully accepted or fully rejected, for no "good moral teacher" would say the astonishing things Jesus did unless they were true. Jesus is God's Son.

Anyone who knows of the coming judgment (7:21-23) but ignores Jesus' teaching is as foolish as a person who builds a house on sand. The people represented by the two builders share one similarity and one difference. Both "keep on hearing" the words of Jesus. The present tense may imply that both hearers had been exposed to His teachings. In any case, both hearers were now accountable to obey what they had heard. However, the first person "keeps on doing" what Jesus taught, while the second "keeps on not doing" what Jesus taught.

The first man was wise; the second man was foolish. The first man found stability and blessing in this life and in eternity; the second experienced calamity in this life and in eternity (the rain, floods, and winds can represent both hardships in this life and God's final judgment). Notice that wisdom (the rock) means to put the words of Jesus into practice.

7:28-29. Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount with only His intended audience (His disciples) present, but by the time He concluded, a crowd had gathered. Matthew's closing comments to the sermon emphasize that the crowds were amazed. Matthew used the Greek imperfect tense to denote an ongoing effect in Jesus' listeners. They just could not get over it. But it says nothing about their commitment. This is the only one of five discourses Matthew recorded in which he commented on the crowd's response. This does not mean that this discourse was unique, for Matthew continued to use the same word of the crowds response to Jesus' teaching in a more general way (13:54; 19:25; 22:33).

Most likely, he wanted his readers to understand that the crowd had this kind of response to Jesus' teaching wherever He went and whatever He taught.

Both the content and manner of Jesus' teaching were overwhelming. Unlike other teachers, He taught with authority (7:29). Unlike them, He did not cite other authorities—only His own and His Father's. And it was He alone who decided who would enter the kingdom and on what basis they would do so—through a personal relationship with God.