

How to Be Wise and Not A Fool

Matthew 7:24-29

Introduction 1) Every human person has a source(s) of authority that informs and shapes what we call a worldview. This authority influences how we think, act, and live. It may even determine how we die. Norman Geisler accurately points out, “The truth is that a worldview is like colored glasses; it colors everything at which we look. It is a grid through which one views all of life. As such it helps form our thoughts, values, and decisions. The tragedy is that most people do not even know what their worldview is, how they got it, and how important it is in their lives.”

(Foreword to W. Gary Phillips, William E. Brown and John Stonestreet, *Making Sense of Your World: A Biblical Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield, 2006, vii).

2) How we “get” our worldview comes back to the issue of the authority that trust, that we follow. And, though it is possible to take an involved and sophisticated look at this issue, the possible sources of authority that mold and shape our decision-making and way of life can be boiled down to four:

- 1) Reason – I think
- 2) Experience – I Feel (peer pressure would be here)
- 3) Tradition – We have always done
- 4) Revelation – God says in His Word

3) In a real sense we are going to grant ultimate authority in our lives to a source

that we believe provides reliable knowledge and wisdom for life's decisions. In this context, I love the clarity and simplicity of James, the half-brother of our Savior, the Lord Jesus. James says there are two and only two types of wisdom in life: wisdom from above that comes from God and wisdom from below that comes from man and sometimes Satan. In James 3:13-18, he helpfully contrasts the two for our edification.

Wisdom From Above	Wisdom from Below
1) Good conduct	1) Bitter Jealously
2) Meekness	2) Selfish ambition
3) Pure	3) Boasts
4) Peaceable	4) Lies
5) Gentle	5) Earthly
6) Open to reason	6) Unspiritual
7) Full of mercy	7) Demonic
8) Full of good fruits	8) Disorder
9) Impartial	9) Every vile practice
10) Sincere	
11) Produces a harvest of righteousness sown in peace by peacemakers	

Quite a contrast and difference isn't it?!

4) James is not the only person to simplify life in this 2-fold manner. Jesus did it first, and it would not surprise me in the least if James got his insights from his brother and what he taught at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 7:24-

29 concludes one of the greatest sermons ever preached. It also provides an appropriate end to chapter 7 where Jesus and Matthew contrast:

- 1) the narrow gate of life vs. the wide gate of destruction 7:13-14
- 2) the good tree of fruit vs. the bad tree of fruitlessness 7:15-20
- 3) the genuine confession of the obedient vs. the false profession of the disobedient 7:21-23
- 4) the solid rock of wisdom vs. the shifting sands of foolishness 7:24-27
- 5) the teachings of the Master vs. the teachings of men 7:28-29

5) Some years ago, I came to define true wisdom as, “the ability to see life from God’s perspective and to then act accordingly.” I am certain, but it could have come from reflecting on these final verse of the Sermon on the Mount. The text easily and naturally divides into 2 paragraphs with each paragraph diving into 2 parts.

I. Build your life on the strong foundation of God’s Word 7:24-27

Jesus was a master teacher in every way. One particular characteristic of His teaching skills was to tell simple and easy to remember stories that contained profound truth. One such story concerned two men who built what would appear to be two very similar houses. The only difference: the foundation. One wisely chose to build his house on a rock solid foundation. The other foolishly chose to build his house on a shifting sand foundation. The end results could

not have been more different and consequential. In both instances the story points to how one responds to the words of Jesus.

1) Know that Word and obey the Word and be wise 7:24-25

- Jesus intends for this story to apply to any and all who hear His words. The word “everyone” (*pas*) makes that evident. And, let’s be clear here. Jesus never sets His words against or in opposition to Holy Scripture as Matthew 5:17-20 makes clear. He certainly has a different hermeneutic than the scribes and Pharisees, but there is absolutely no difference between the words of our Savior and the words of Scripture in terms of reliability, authority and sufficiency. Jesus notes two qualities of the “wise man.” First, he hears the words of Christ, in context, the words of the Sermon on the Mount. Second, he does them, he obeys them. Immediately my mind goes to James 1:22-25 where we read, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.”

- To hear God’s Word and then obey these words is to be like a wise home builder who constructs his house on a rock solid foundation. Why is he called wise? Because as verse 25 informs us, the storm of judgment is coming. I fully agree with David Platt who writes, “We must hear Jesus. When He says that there is a storm coming, He is not talking about what we so often identify as the “storms of life.” Those storms are real and they are painful – storms like cancer, divorce and losing a loved one – and the Bible certainly addresses them. However, Jesus is referring to a cataclysmic reality, a final and utterly devastating storm of the future judgment of God” (*Matthew*, CCE, 100). Chuck Quarles points out that the word translated “wise” (*phronimos*), “appears a total of seven times in Matthew and most frequently describes one who wisely prepares for the coming of the Messiah through faithful service and obedient living” (*Sermon on the Mount*, 343). The storm of God’s judgment is coming for all. Will you be able to stand when that day comes?
- There is a basic theological truth that runs throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation: “Revelation brings responsibility. The more you hear and know of God and His Word, the greater is your responsibility when you stand before Him in judgment.” Those who

are wise will both hear his Word and obey His word. When the storm of eschatological judgment comes their house “will not fall, because it had been founded on the rock” (v.25). Hymn writer John Rippon got it exactly right, “How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in his excellent word.”

2) Know the Word and disobey the Word and be a fool 7:26-27

- There is an unfortunate contrast found in verses 26-27 to the wise man of verses 24-25. Jesus calls him a foolish man (v.26). At first, at least on the surface, there doesn't appear to be any differences between the two. John MacArthur notes at least four similarities between the wise man and the foolish man:
 1. Both builders heard the gospel, the same sermon, the words of Christ.
 2. Both proceed to build a house after having heard the same message.
 3. Both apparently built their houses in the same general location.
 4. Both build houses that were very similar, at least outwardly (*Matthew* 1-7, pgs. 481-82).

What then is the difference? Their foundation. Their obedience to the Word!

- The foolish man hears the words of Christ but “does not do them.” (v. 26). He is a hearer only deceiving himself. He is the person who week after week hears faithful gospel preaching but it never takes. He hears the word again and again but never obeys. Perhaps he even gets an M.Div or a Ph.D. but he is never transformed and made new (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- He thinks because he has a form of godliness he is safe, when in actuality he is headed toward horrible and eternal destruction. Building on sand equals hearing the word and disobeying it. It is foolish and makes you a fool! You build on sand, disobedient to the gospel (cf. Rom. 1:5). Judgment day arrives like a terrible storm and when it does the house fell, “and great was the fall of it” (v. 27). Quarles notes the image of the storm was a familiar one for eschatological judgment in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. Texts like Jeremiah 23:19-20 says, “Behold, the storm of the Lord! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest; it will burst upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his heart. In the latter days you will understand it clearly.” Jeremiah 25:32 adds, “Thus says the Lord of hosts: Behold, disaster is going forth from nation to

nation, and a great tempest is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth!” Text like Isaiah 28:16-22, Ezekiel 13:10-16 and Matthew 24:37-39 seal the deal that final judgment is in view in this passage (Quarles, 345-46).

- You deceived yourself into thinking you will be ready and you’re not. You thought listening was enough, that normal and superficial allegiance, casual and comfortable Christianity, would suffice, but on that day you will discover you were wrong. Charles Spurgeon says of the fool, “Yet though he was industrious, he was foolish [and] the crash was terrible; the sound was heard afar... The overflow was final and irretrievable. Many heard the fall, and many more saw the ruins as they remained a perpetual memorial of the results of that folly which is satisfied with hearing, and neglects doing” (*Matthew*, 78). I read this and I am haunted by the words of Revelation 14:11 and its picture of hell, “And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night...” O how essential it is that we build our lives on the strong foundation of God’s Word, hearing it and obeying it. After all Proverbs 12:7 reminds us, “The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand.” And, Proverbs 14:11 provides a fitting complement, “The

house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will flourish.”

II. Listen to the teachings of the Son of God not the wisdom of man 7:28-29

Sinclair Ferguson is spot on when he writes, “Jesus did not preach [the Sermon on the Mount] in order to be admired for his homiletical skills. He preached it to produce obedience” (*The Sermon on the Mount*, 171). Verses 28-29 give us a summation of the crowd’s response to the sermon. The conclusion itself looks back to the beginning of the sermon in 5:1-2. Together they provide natural bookends to the sermon. Now, you cannot help but notice what the verses do not say. There is no word or indication of being wise obeyers to the teachings of Jesus. The response of the crowds, I fear like many others, is more superficial than substantive. It is only skin deep. The heart, at least for many, is apparently unchanged. I can imagine no greater tragedy than for someone to meet Jesus, hear His words, and walk away astonished and amazed, but still unchanged.

1) The words of Jesus are amazing 7:28

- Jesus has concluded the sermon. No doubt Matthew has provided for us a condensed and accurate summation of what was certainly a much longer address. Verse 28 simply says, “the crowds were astonished at his

- teaching.” Peterson colorfully paraphrases in the *Message*, “when Jesus concluded his address, the crowd burst into applause. They had never heard teaching like this.” The word “astonished” could be translated “amazed” and is a reoccurring theme in Matthew (cf. 13:54; 19:25; 22:33). It is an imperfect verb tense. Osborne notes it “depicts an ongoing feeling of wonder as they went home” (*Exegetical Commentary on Matthew*, BEGCNT, 276). Their amazement continued for a while.
- And, the source of their amazement? His teachings (Gr. *didache*). The focus here is on content whereas the emphasis in verse 29 is the manner in which he taught. His words stunned them. They blew their minds. John 7:26 cannot be improved upon, “No one ever spoke like this man.”

2) The words of Jesus have authority 7:29

- The teachings of Jesus stood in stark contrast to the religious scholars of the day, “the scribes.” These spiritual guides taught by a derivative authority. To validate their doctrine they would appeal to the authority of their esteemed and respected rabbinic predecessors. Not so with Jesus. His authority resided in Himself! Even the liberal New Testament scholar Georg Strecker gets it right when he writes, “Because the [authority] of Jesus is named as the reason for the astonishment...a specifically christological assertion is involved here.” (*The Sermon on*

- The Mount*, 172). This teacher, the Lord Jesus, is unlike any other teacher who has gone before Him and, for that matter, is unlike any other teacher who will come after Him. His authority resides in Himself.
- Quarles draws attention to the importance of the word “authority.” He notes that, “it introduces a prominent theme in the next major section of the Gospel (8:9; 9:6, 8; 10:1),” and that “it also anticipates the conclusion of the Gospel as a whole (28:16-20) in which Jesus insists, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.”” (*S.M.*, 358). The authority of this teacher is none other than the authority of deity Himself! Spurgeon says it so well, “He spoke royally: the truth itself was its own argument and demonstration. He taught prophetically, as one inspired from above; men felt that he [spoke] after the manner of one sent of God. It was no fault on their part to *astonished*; but it was a grave crime to be astonished and nothing more” (p. 79). When God is speaking, this will always be the case!

Conclusion: The gospels are right. No man ever spoke like this man. No man ever taught with the authority of this man. Indeed, no man ever lived like this man, died like this man, or rose from the dead like this man. It is the wise who hear His words and obey them. It is the fool who hears them and rejects them. The wise

will stand on solid rock at the judgment. The fool will only experience a tragic and great fall.