

A Solemn Warning

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 June 2016

Preacher: William Philip

[0 : 00] Good, well now we come to our Bible reading, or really two readings. We're going to hear first from the prophet Ezekiel in chapter 13, and you'll find this on page 700 if you have our big hardback Bible, Ezekiel chapter 13.

And then we shall turn after that to Matthew chapter 7. Our minister, Willie Philip, is going to be finishing off his series on the Sermon on the Mount this morning with the final section of Matthew 7.

But we'll start with Ezekiel chapter 13, and the reading is verses 1 to 14. The condemnation of false prophets.

Ezekiel chapter 13, verse 1. The word of the Lord came to me. Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who are prophesying, and say to those who prophesy from their own hearts, Hear the word of the Lord.

Thus says the Lord God, Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing. Your prophets have been like jackals among ruins, O Israel.

[1 : 08] You have not gone up into the breaches or built up a wall for the house of Israel that it might stand in battle in the day of the Lord. They have seen false visions and lying divinations.

They say, declares the Lord when the Lord has not sent them, and yet they expect him to fulfill their word. Have you not seen a false vision and uttered a lying divination whenever you have said, declares the Lord, although I have not spoken?

Therefore, thus says the Lord, Because you have uttered falsehood and seen lying visions, therefore, behold, I am against you, declares the Lord God. My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and who give lying divinations.

They shall not be in the council of my people, nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord God.

Precisely because they have misled my people, saying, peace when there is no peace, and because when the people build a wall, these prophets smear it with whitewash, say to those who smear it with whitewash, that it shall fall.

[2 : 20] There will be a deluge of rain, and you, O great hailstones, will fall, and a stormy wind break out. And when the wall falls, will it not be said to you, where is the coating with which you smeared it?

Therefore, thus says the Lord God, I will make a stormy wind break out in my wrath, and there shall be a deluge of rain in my anger, and great hailstones in wrath to make a full end.

And I will break down the wall that you have smeared with whitewash, and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation will be laid bare. When it falls, you shall perish in the midst of it, and you shall know that I am the Lord.

Amen. Well, let's turn now to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 7. You'll find this on page 812 in our church Bibles.

Page 812. Matthew 7, reading from verse 21, the words of Jesus as he concludes the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 7, 21.

[3 : 23] 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.

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? And then will I declare to them, I never knew you.

Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. Everyone, then, who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

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. 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.

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.

[4 : 32] And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

Amen. The words of the Lord to us, and may they be a blessing to us this morning. Let's turn, shall we?

Am I on? Yes. Let's turn to Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 7, and to the verses that we read.

We're coming today to the last of our series in the Sermon on the Mount. We've listened together for many weeks now to Jesus himself, expounding the marks of those who are his true people.

Began, remember, with the extraordinary portrait that we have of true Christianity in the Beatitudes. Those who have answered Christ's call, who have found his grace, who therefore live his mercy, and who share in his true experience, which, remember, Jesus tells us will be to be reviled and persecuted in this world, and yet to be blessed, to be rejoicing with gladness in the reward of heaven that is sure and certain.

[5 : 55] And then, of course, we've heard Jesus go immediately on to speak about his mission, the mission of his people. He speaks in verses 13 to 20 of Matthew 5 of the culture of mission that will impact the world.

It's got to be as distinct as the tang of salt or as the shaft of light in the darkness. And then he goes on to speak about the commands for mission that will empower that mission, that will direct Christ's people in the way of true kingdom righteousness.

And it's the way, Jesus says, of fulfilling the holy law of God. And it's that lifestyle which we have called the manners of Christ's people, the practice of true Christianity according to the Lord Jesus himself.

It's that lifestyle that he expounds and applies for us in the rest of Matthew 5-7. We saw the true kingdom morality in chapter 5 of what we call true heavenly relationships lived out here and now on the earth in this world, visible to the people of this world.

But that, of course, can only flow out of a true kingdom mentality. That is, it flows out of people whose hearts are already possessed with the ways of heaven. Heaven is deeply rooted in their hearts here and now because the gospel of the kingdom has got a hold of their whole lives.

[7 : 20] so their nerve center, the control center of their being is truly possessed by the love of heaven itself. And that means that the Father in heaven fills their heart, fills their soul and their mind and their strength in all that they think and feel and do.

And that's what we saw the rest of chapters 6 and 7 are about, about having that true kingdom perspective with your heart set firm in heaven so that your vision is from heaven and not from earth.

And when that's true we understand, don't we, that our whole devotional life is lived as a life of personal devotion to the Father and for the Father, no one else. Not for the eyes of men, not for this world.

And then we also understand that our whole daily life is lived as a life of practical discernment lived out from the Father because we see with heaven's sight and we see with the eyes of heaven.

And therefore we're living free from the anxieties and fears of this world's sight because we know that all of our earthly needs will be met by our Father in heaven.

[8 : 35] We live with a heavenly perspective on everything in our daily lives. And according to Jesus this is kingdom living. My people, he says, have and live truly heavenly relationships here and now on this earth because they have heavenly realities in their hearts now in this life on earth.

And that's the heart of Christ's message that we've seen him expound it throughout the whole of this that we call the Sermon on the Mount. But of course in these last couple of weeks we've been looking at the very end, the concluding verses from chapter 7 verse 13.

And we've seen, haven't we, that Jesus not only teaches and expounds and instructs in his preaching, he exposes. He exposes the human heart.

He presses his message home. And he forces a decision. And he demands from every one of his hearers, he demands a response. And if Jesus then is demonstrating what the true preaching of the Christian gospel is and he most certainly is doing that, remember right back at the beginning in chapter 4 verse 23 before the sermon, we're told Jesus was going everywhere throughout the synagogues of Galilee teaching and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom.

That's what he's doing in the Sermon on the Mount, preaching the genuine gospel. So if he is doing that, he is also teaching us as his followers how to proclaim the Christian gospel truly.

[10 : 11] And it won't be true Christian preaching unless it also probes and challenges and exposes and crucially unless it demands a response.

Unless it issues in the challenge of the gospel of Christ as it did on the lips of Jesus himself. Now that is very important for us to be clear about.

Especially when we rightly understand that sharing the gospel whether personally or in the pulpit, wherever we're doing it, that it must never be less than teaching the truth from scripture. That is absolutely true.

That is what we must do. But if we follow Jesus' example, it will never be merely instruction. Because the preaching of true Christianity according to the Lord Jesus himself always demands a response.

because the gospel of the kingdom is God's call upon human beings. And when the sovereign ruler of the universe calls, a response must be made.

[11 : 17] We must be clear about this. It's no good just being hearers, even willing hearers, of the message of the gospel. The gospel of Jesus is a summons.

It's not just instruction about God. It's not just revealing the ultimate unique truth about God, although of course it is that and it does that. Nor is the gospel merely an extraordinary offer of grace and mercy to human beings, although thank God it most certainly is that.

No, the gospel is a divine summons to action. and there must be in every heart, in every life, there must be a true response to that kingdom message, a real life, whole of life response to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And Jesus himself could not have been more clear. We have seen it again and again. The choice is stark and the contrast is deeply shocking between the real response of true personal faith in Jesus and that which is merely outward or half-hearted or lip service.

Look at Matthew 7 verse 21. It's very, very clear. Saying Lord, Lord or singing Lord, Lord is not enough. Impressive words like that.

[12 : 47] Impressive worship verse 22. Even dramatic, charismatic phenomena may mean absolutely nothing according to Jesus. As may all kinds of impressive works done in the name of Christ and his church.

Mighty works done even in Jesus' name. But of no use at all on that last day when all is truly revealed. Look at verse 22. Many on that day will say to me Lord, Lord did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons and do mighty works in your name?

And then I will declare to them I never knew you. That is very sobering.

It's very shocking. According to the Lord Jesus Christ and his preaching of his gospel what really matters and the only thing that does matter is really and truly knowing Jesus Christ and being known by him.

So that on that day verse 22 and by the way read later on in Matthew chapter 25 what Jesus says explicitly about that day.

[14 : 05] He says that is the day when the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him and he will sit on a glorious throne and before him will be gathered all the nations and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep and the goats.

The only thing that matters is by being known by him so that on that day we are not among those to whom Jesus will say I never knew you depart from me these terrible words here in verse 23 and make no mistake in Matthew chapter 25 Jesus is absolutely explicit how terrible these words are and what they mean listen depart from me you cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels and Jesus says these will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous to eternal life friends make no mistake according to Jesus himself not knowing him personally and truly and so not living your whole life on earth for him and with him it has eternal it has everlasting never ending consequences to depart from Jesus in his very own words means nothing less than a departure into outer darkness into the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth into a perpetual curse into eternal fire into eternal punishment read Matthew 25 later on and you will see it all there in black and white don't take my word for it and you see that is why at the end of this sermon on the mount

Jesus ends with such a solemn note a note of solemn warning in verses 24 to 27 it's very striking isn't it Jesus begins his sermon repeating the word blessed blessed blessed but he ends his sermon with the calamity of judgment I don't think the preaching teachers in college would think very much of that do you Jesus would be told to go away and rewrite his sermon you can't possibly begin that way and end that way no no no it's the other way around but Jesus is the one who speaks the truth of God and the truth of God the real gospel of God does not hide the hard bits the unpopular bits the bits we don't like the bits we find unpalatable and indigestible that is the mark of the false prophet says Jesus the false teacher that he warns about in verse 15 you'll know them by their fruits and especially by the words they will not speak the words they shy away from and deny or at very least ignore the stark reality of what Jesus says there that a choice must be made against the world's broad road to destruction and a choice for the only way the narrow way the true gospel that alone will lead away from destruction and to eternal life the starkness of that choice says Jesus will always be denied by the false prophets of the broad church but no says Jesus the true preacher of Christ and his kingdom must speak the whole gospel a true gospel and the true gospel of God is always a word both of promise and of warning of blessing and of judgment at the hand of God and Jesus knows how easily our hearts deceive us

Jesus knows how easily and how quickly we deceive ourselves and so he wants to undeceive us before it's too late because he says the truth will out in the end that is not in any doubt there is he says there is a great storm coming and that will reveal what the true foundations of every human life has been every life ever lived and so Jesus must warn us now he must warn us while we still have time to respond see appearances appearances can be so very deceptive can't they you can look at two marriages and from a distance outwardly all might look the same but the fact is one is solid and stable and the other one is actually falling apart but it's only when the crisis comes that the truth is forced into the open or two houses look exactly the same they look solid and substantial they both look as safe as houses it's what we say but it's only when the real storm comes that the foundations are revealed for what they are solid or in fact utterly deficient and unable to present or prevent disaster and Jesus says that is the way it is with professions of faith in Jesus Christ is it a real solid confession of Christ that will stand through that great day or is it in fact a mere profession with no real foundation in true and personal knowledge of the Savior and therefore heading for devastating exposure well let's look at these final verses 24 to 29 and you'll notice that they are dominated by one thing by the words of Jesus himself verse 24 these words of mine and it is these words that convey with absolute authority what verse 21 calls the will of my father in heaven look first at verses 24 to 27 where we see words that bring a solemn warning a storm is coming a storm of certain judgment is coming to this world says Jesus and it will sweep away all who have not done the will of my father in heaven by building their entire life in this world on the rock that is the lordship of Christ and the words of his saving gospel therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built on the rock the rain fell the floods came the winds blew and beat on that house but it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand the rain fell the floods came the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell and great was the fall of it friends do you notice how

Jesus is absolutely black and white about the finality of that judgment in stark contrast to the flippancy and to the foolishness of those who will only look at the present time and not at that day now it's true of course that there are many storms in life and the storms of life may very well at many times expose the reality of otherwise of our Christian faith we see that things like bereavement or illness or great hardship or some calamity that comes in and reveals the truth about where our anchor in life really is I nearly sang that old hymn this morning the BB hymn will your anchor hold in the storms of life nor it's your favorite I know but you see the storm that Jesus has in view here is not in fact those storms of life great and troublesome as they may be Jesus has in focus the great crisis of judgment the final judgment when everything is revealed with absolute clarity for all this entire world and verses 24 to 27 are just an evocative picture of what Jesus has already said explicitly in verse 22 when he talks about that day that's the

[23 : 10] Old Testament language that everybody knew that meant the day of judgment the day of the Lord and in fact that whole picture of the coming storm is one that none of his heroes would miss they knew their Bible they knew Ezekiel and all the other prophets and the context here is just the same it's false prophets saying peace peace it's what Ezekiel said live easy build your lives any way you like live any way you like just plaster it over with a lovely white plaster of your religion and it looks great it hides all the frailty but don't worry all will be well and God said how wrong you are because I will send a storm rain and wind and hail and flood and you will be exposed your pathetic pretense at godliness it's going to collapse and every one of you will perish you thought that way all false assurance is buoyed up by the false prophets of the broad church it will be exposed and shown to be worthless because a day of judgment is coming says

Jesus and on that day verse 27 mightily will be the collapse of all false and fraudulent faith and that is the truth of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ it is a word of solemn warning however much the world may scorn that or reject it or ignore it however much the worldly broad church wants to downplay it and pretend it all away never speak of it it's not just here read through the gospels you see it's Jesus message all the time everywhere in Matthew chapter 24 he's absolutely plain that on that day it will be just exactly like the great storm that came way back in Noah's day do you remember when a skeptical world paid absolutely no attention at all to Noah's warnings just ridiculed him building that ridiculous ark in the middle of dry land as if a flood is coming how ridiculous listen what Jesus says as were the days of Noah so will be the coming of the son of man for as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking marrying and giving in marriage until the day when Noah entered the ark and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away so will be the coming of the son of man then two men will be in one field the one will be taken and one left two women will be grinding at the mill the one will be taken the one left therefore stay awake for you do not know on what day your

Lord is coming but know this if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into therefore you also must be ready for the son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect therefore says Jesus here in verse 24 the NIV is better here it begins with therefore it's the conclusion of Jesus sermon therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be prepared we'll be building for that storm build with that day in view all the time build on the rock because you do not know what day that storm is coming what does he mean what is this building on the rock what is this only rock of safety that we can rely on for eternity the only safe passage through that storm of ultimate judgment well it's quite plain look verse 24 it's Jesus and his words everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be building on the rock see the clarity of

Jesus true preaching of the gospel over against the fog and the blurred messages of this world and over against the false prophets of the worldly church not their reassuring message of peace peace God will never judge anybody all will be okay no but a clear message of going the narrow way the exclusive gate and that way is exclusive submission to Jesus Christ and his words it is obedience to him and his unique kingly rule absolutely to the end it just means as John Stock puts it that Jesus lordship has become a deep and central reality in life see a real response to the gospel of the kingdom is not just a beginning it's not just entering through the narrow gate it's about enduring to the end and standing through that judgment and that's the Bible's constant message Jesus is saying it again and again and again he says that the ongoing way that leads to life is a lonely way often verse 14 do you remember it's the minority way it's the way over against the broad way that everybody else is on it's always been so the way of the true prophet was always the minority voice against all the false prophets who tell you what you want to hear but it's endurance on that way through all the storms of life that reveals the true foundation that will stand at the very end it's the whole point of

Jesus parable of the sower remember it's the end it's the harvest alone that shows the full extent of the good soil shows the abundant fruit nothing left then is there of the path or the rocky ground or the thorn or the thistles and Jesus gospel is full of just these kind of words of solemn warning again in Matthew 24 he says that there'll be tribulation along that road there'll be hatred along that road there'll be many false prophets who will lead many astray lawlessness will increase says Jesus and the love of many will grow cold many will retire to the broad and easy way but Jesus says he who endures to the end will be saved friends we need to listen to Jesus we need to trust him when the way is hard and lonely and full of tribulation don't look to the green grass of the other road the broad road the inviting road that beckons you so strongly don't look there to that road look instead to the end where both roads are leading and see the storm that is coming to those who are on both of those roads and remember that Jesus says only one of those roads can ever lead you through that storm be warned that's Jesus gospel it's a warning of a storm coming but human beings don't like warnings do we something deep within us hates being warned by somebody else about something maybe somebody should tell all the politicians campaigning about the referendum for that the more dire warnings we have the more we want to vote against we don't like warnings because it implies we're not in control it implies that we're not able ourselves to know what's best and decide what's best and endure whatever might be coming you say to a child don't do that you'll hurt yourself what's the first thing that child will do I can do that not hurt myself something deep within us isn't there because we only think of the present we only think of the here and now what we can see what we can touch with our own eyes we don't believe warnings about the future we think we'll be able to handle it we'll be able to overcome whatever happens I can handle it that's why people blithely refuse all warnings to evacuate don't they when there's a hurricane coming do you remember hurricane Katrina all those years ago in New Orleans everyone was told to evacuate but some people said no we'll stay in our homes we can weather the storm and the storm came and we saw the bodies didn't we floating in the water same with the flood warnings we had just this year in the north of

[32 : 24] England there were people who wouldn't heed the warnings determined to stay in their houses same with the bushfires in Australia same with everything we hate warnings but the storm did come and the flood did come and the fires did come and those who didn't heed the warning found they couldn't handle it they couldn't survive it and the gospel warning that could have saved them they didn't heed and you see the gospel of God friends the true gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ always contains warnings as well as promise has done right from the very beginning from the very first words that God spoke to human beings even before the great transgression of the fall eat of all the trees in this garden and you shall live forever eating from the tree of life in the presence of God said the Lord just don't eat of that one tree over there or else you'll die human beings don't like warnings so they ignored the warning and of course the consequences were calamitous but because God so loved us the Son of God himself came with a message of wonderful promise and warning again that if we will heed him we need not perish but can find everlasting life and again and again and again all through the Gospels he warns us there's a storm coming a great storm the judgment day and everything will be revealed forever so listen says

Jesus listen now and respond now to the only thing that matters and Jesus is absolutely clear his message alone his words alone verse 24 these words of mine received and responded to with complete submission and trust only these can save you from that coming storm of judgment and that's what's emphasized in the last two verses 28 and 29 with which Jesus rounds off his teaching because these words of solemn warning that tell us of the storm of judgment that is surely coming they are unquestionably also words of singular authority words that tell us that the Savior has come who alone can shelter you from that storm when Jesus finished these things the crowds were astonished at his teaching he was teaching them as one who had authority not as their scribes see what he's telling us do you see what the crowds clearly grasped the sole exclusive centrality of Jesus Christ himself and his words of unique authority these are the only foundation the only rock that will last the only gate the only way the only sure rock of salvation forever the only way to stand in the judgment to come is to have built your entire life on Jesus Christ and on his words on his singular authority because Jesus has told us he himself is the way and the truth and the life as John says or in his words here he is the narrow gate the only gateway to life verse 13 and he alone teaches the way of his kingdom with absolute authority that's the testimony of the crowd here in verse 29 and he does so does he not in stark dogmatic terms of black and white life and death heaven and hell blessing and judgment not like the words of the scribes the religious professionals for all their credentials so friends do not trust the words of any clergy of anyone whoever they are however official they are however much they say they speak in Jesus name if they do not echo the stark clear words of Jesus Christ and his preaching do not trust them third Jesus says he is the judge look at verse 23 it's just assumed by Jesus isn't it I will judge I will declare he says the final verdict on that day just as in

Matthew 25 he's equally plain the son of man will separate people forever as the shepherd separates the sheep and the goats he is the judge of all men and hence the preaching of true Christianity the preaching of Jesus himself and his apostles is to proclaim his coming as judge of all the earth that is the heart of the New Testament apostolic gospel you don't believe me read later on in Acts chapter 10 you'll find when Cornelius brings Peter into his house and says to him tell us everything the Lord Jesus commanded you apostles to preach to the world and what does Peter say he says Jesus commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead to him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name he is the way and he alone teaches the way of salvation because he alone is the judge and therefore he alone is the one who can save you and pronounce the verdict on that day and so finally his words look at verse 24 these words of mine are what revealed to us uniquely and authoritatively the father's will verse 24 everyone who hears these words of mine and does them is like a man who built his house on a rock verse 21 the one who does the will of my father in heaven is the one who inherits the kingdom do you see that is what it means to understand the gospel it's

Jesus revelation of the will of the father that means there is no light found or no light needed from any other religion from every philosophy from any science from anywhere else that's why verse 28 it was so clear to all the people that he spoke with unique authority about god and his salvation they were astonished they weren't ignorant people these people knew their bibles they knew this man was unique they knew they were hearing a singular authority that the maker and the judge of all men was standing in front of them and telling them the ultimate truth about this world and offering to them to be their savior friends what that means for us is simply this you cannot do god's will without submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ and if you think you can Jesus says an almighty and terrible shock is awaiting you on that last day that was Israel's huge error in the main that's what Paul says in Romans chapter 10 they would not submit to God's righteousness revealed ultimately and uniquely in Jesus Christ they stumbled over him he says they stumbled over the one who was the end the goal the climax of all the law and the prophets of all the covenants of all God's revelation to man they thought they could have God and turn their back on Jesus Christ no says God he is the way and the only way and that's still the mistake of so so many people all the world over today religious people and they're religious people they do not submit to the words of Christ to his unique gospel but that is the will of the father in heaven that you repent that you enter his kingdom that way through that gate in that name because there is no other name under heaven by which men must be saved whether you're a Jew or a Gentile whether you're a great man or a small man where you're simple whether you're highly educated whoever you are there is no other way do you remember what Paul said to those great philosophers and learned men in Athens God will no longer anymore ignore your learned ignorance what a slap in the face that was for them and all their culture and learning no he commands all men everywhere to repent says Paul because he has fixed the day when he will judge the world in righteousness by the man he has appointed and to this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead the Lord Jesus Christ alone will judge this world so friends this must be the true message of all Christ's people for this world it is a solemn warning but it is also the command and the call to receive that eternal life it's a plea to listen to him to hear his words and do them to know him to be known by him to build your life on the rock that is his gospel of salvation and no other to come to him and never to stray from him all the days of your life

and jesus says to us when you do that you will not find his yoke burdensome not the heavy yoke of dead religion but the joyful wonder being yoked together with him in a union that will last forever that will outlast the sun and that will stand through the great storm when everything is revealed for what it truly is verse 24 everyone who hears these words of mine and does them builds on the rock and they will stand and they will never ever fall on that great day because this rock jesus christ and his words this rock is everlasting let's pray hide me then my refuge be rock of ages cleft for me lord help us to love only the lord jesus christ and honor and obey only the lord jesus christ and his words that we may cleave only unto him as long as we live these lives on earth and then stand through him when the great storm comes and rise to praise him in life everlasting amen