

A Summons with new authority

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Preacher: William Philip

[0 : 0 0] ...to Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 7, and the reading that we read together earlier. It will help me and you have that in front of you. Well, we've been looking at the Sermon on the Mount under the general title, I suppose, of Demands That Go Deep.

And tonight we come to the last section of the study. The title today would have to be this, A Summons with New and Ultimate Authority.

From the very beginning of the story of salvation, indeed from the very beginning of the story of human history, God has revealed himself to humankind. And that revelation always, always calls for a response.

That response is what the Bible calls faith. That is, trust. Believing God's word of revelation, his word of revelation and promise of salvation through his Deliverer.

Believing it and submitting to it. In humble obedience, submitting to his Lordship. That's always the way. If you go to the book of Deuteronomy, for example, you'll have 30 chapters of God laying out the book of his covenant.

[1 : 2 0] What it means to be God's people. What it means to be the recipients of his grace. And then, towards the end of chapter 30, he says this. See, I have set before you today life and death, blessing and curse.

Now choose life. And that means, love the Lord your God. Obey his voice. Hold fast to him. For he is your life. Revelation demands response.

That's what faith is. Now in Jesus, the climax of that whole story has come. And he, at last, is the Deliverer that was long promised. Who's come to accomplish all that had been promised as a way of salvation.

And also, he is the full and the final revealer of God to humankind. And all the way through the Sermon on the Mount, he's taught with extraordinary authority.

He's expanded with finality. God's law, God's commands, his ways for his kingdom. And so therefore now, at the end of that great exposition of God's way of life, he's now giving an ultimate call for authority.

[2 : 3 4] An ultimate response is required. Submission to his lordship. Submission to obeying him. And what that means is that obedience to God can no longer be just obedience to the Torah, to the Old Testament.

It must be now, first and foremost, obedience to Jesus Christ. And to his authority, because he is the climax of all God's revelation. And that means, for example, that true Jewishness must become Christian.

Judaism is not just rejection of Jesus of Nazareth, it is in fact rejection of the God of Israel. The continuity with the Old Testament faith can only be through Jesus Christ, because he is the Messiah, the climax of all.

And so, Jesus, present now, before the nation of Israel, confronts Israel and shows up the truth. He brings the nation, as it were, to a moment of decision.

It's a moment of revelation. It shows whether their knowledge of God and their devotion to God is really real, or had been all along, or whether in fact it was just false. Jesus forces the issue.

[3 : 56] It's rather like a courtship. They go on for some time through letters and phone calls and talking and so on, and then after a time the engagement comes, but the climax comes at the altar.

The bride and groom stand there. The bride has to take the vows. Will she really say yes and become her husband's wife? Will she really say yes and change everything, begin a new life together?

Any failure to decide at that point, well, that's disaster, isn't it? That's the rupture of the relationship forever. There comes a point when the chips are down.

And that's the moment that's facing Israel as a nation here, as Jesus confronts them. He confronts Israel as her king, as her Messiah, as her Lord. It's also the decision facing every individual Israelite, every Jew that was listening to Jesus at the time.

But it's also, you know, the decision that faces, and has faced, every single human being since, every single person who's heard the voice of Jesus. Because he is the climax of all truth.

[5 : 09] All revelation about God. All revelation about the world. All revelation there is about salvation and the life to come. So, whether you're Jewish this morning, and there may be some here who are.

Whether you've been seeking light and enlightenment in other religions, whatever that might be, or in no religions at all. Whoever you are, Jesus' presence in his words, the gospel of his kingdom, confronts and exposes and forces a decision, forces a choice.

As one commentator says, the Sermon on the Mount is not meant to be admired, but obeyed. Don Carson, in his little book, says this, nothing could be more calamitous than to meditate long and hard on Matthew 5 to 7, and then to resolve to improve a little.

No. What Jesus is demanding is something absolute. It's something truly radical. Like Moses, he's setting before people life and death, blessing and curse, heaven and hell.

And he's saying, choose. Choose life. And he spells it out with total clarity. Especially the consequences of refusing him.

[6 : 31] And he urges us, verse 13, to enter, to choose life. And he leaves us in absolutely no doubt what that means, and what it doesn't mean. Verses 13 to 29 of our chapter here are set in front of us in the Bibles, in black and white.

And it is indeed a very, very black and white message, isn't it? We're going to look at it under four headings. It's a message about a stark choice, a shocking contrast, a solemn warning, and finally a single authority.

A stark choice, first of all. Verses 13 to 20 speak about the unavoidable, scandalous exclusiveness of Jesus' one way of salvation.

Over against a world that insists on tolerance, on relativism, on inclusiveness. And, and against such values of the world which appear to have penetrated deeply into even the worldly professing church.

Look at verses 13 and 14. The emphasis here is particularly on the beginning of the Christian life, isn't it? It's all about entering on a road, a way that, that leads to life.

[7 : 49] And the choice is very stark, isn't it? Look, there are two ways. There are two gates. There are two destinations. There are two groups of people travelling on them.

Only two. Now that's language, isn't it, that's very offensive in today's pluralist world. It's extremist.

The inner world where we want to talk about the third way or the middle way or the middle ground. I mean, our language gives it away, doesn't it?

We talk about centrist. We talk about mediating positions. We talk about middle of the road. And we talk about extremists. But no, says Jesus, there's only two ways.

And they go to two very different destinations. Do you see that? Life or destruction? It's very shocking to post-modern years.

[8 : 49] Maybe it's very shocking to you this morning. But just look at what Jesus says. First of all, there's two ways and two travellers, he says. The one way leads to life.

The way that leads to life, though, he says, is not the broad way, the tolerant way, the way of diverse opinions, diverse moralities.

No. It's the confining way. It's the narrow way. It's a way that's bounded by God's commands, by God's revelation. Nor is the way that leads to life, he says, the way of mainstream opinion or majority opinion.

Many, the majority, he says, are on the broad way leading to destruction. By contrast, those on the way to life are apparently a despised minority. May well be that the narrow way shouldn't be thought of as separate.

One common data suggests, in fact, that the narrow way is right in the middle of the broad way. It's just that it's going in the opposite direction. And I think that's a helpful way of looking at it. I wonder if many of you have ever tried to struggle down a tunnel in the London Underground when you're going in the wrong direction and everybody's just come off a train.

[10 : 05] It's almost impossible, especially if you're carrying a suitcase. But that's the image, you see, that Jesus gives us here. That's the two ways, that's the two crimes. They're very, very different, aren't they?

Look at the two destinations, life or destruction. Nothing in between. Notice, there is a destination at the end of the way.

Our life now, the life that we see, isn't all that there is. It's not an end in itself. It's not the end of the story. The fact is, though, that so many are on the Broadway, enjoying the delights of the Broadway, so captivated by the Broadway, that they don't see that it's actually got a drastic and terrible end.

A little bit like perhaps being a driver, driving along one of these motorway flyovers that seem to be all over the place in Glasgow, but suddenly they end in thin air. You could be driving merrily along and find yourself collapsed completely.

That's the picture. And that's why people are very unwilling to face up to the fact of the two gates, isn't it?

[11 : 13] Jesus says the Broadway has a wide gate. It may even be that there's no gate at all. The marginal reading there suggests it could be read the way is wide and easy.

The point being that it can be entered into easily. You almost don't have to make any decision to get on the Broadway. You don't have to leave anything behind to squeeze through the gate to get on the Broadway.

You don't need to confront anything or forsake anything in your life. Your sin, your pride, your self-righteousness, your ambition. No, you can just waltz on gaily on the Broadway, nothing hindering.

But not on the narrow way, you see, it's got a narrow gate. You can't drift through this gate. You can only find it by a clear and definite decision.

You've got to force yourself through it. Jesus somewhere else, doesn't he, talks about it being like the eye of a needle and a camel trying to get through. You've got to squeeze through it.

[12 : 12] And when you squeeze through this gate, well, it strips off a whole lot of things from you. You're forced to leave them behind, your sin, your pride, your self-determination.

Maybe even your close relatives or friends. The narrow gate can be like those airport gates where it's only passengers who can go beyond here.

You can leave a terrible farewell to your loved ones. That can be what it means sometimes for the narrow gate, Jesus says. So you can't mistake it, can you? We can't get around it.

There are two ways, there are only two ways. And Jesus says you're either on one or you're on the other. You're either walking with the crowd down the tunnel or you're struggling up the middle against them, beating your way against the tide.

There isn't any third way. You see, Jesus means by that that we've all made a decision. We're on one of the ways because there only are two.

[13 : 16] There's no limbo where you haven't yet chosen which way you're on. If we haven't entered the narrow way, by definition, we're on that broad road.

Totally clear. Totally different. The world hates that kind of clarity, doesn't it? Hates it. Wants to have the broad way, but it wants to have the destination of the narrow way.

That's what the world wants. It's what we all want. Have our keg and eat it. And so of course a gospel which would offer those things, that you can live on the broad way and still get to the destination of the narrow way, well that would be very, very attractive, wouldn't it?

Very appealing in our post-modern world. Religion without morality. Spirituality, but nothing to constrain you. All the icing, none of the bread.

So it shouldn't surprise us, should it, that there will always be those, even within the church, who are keen to offer that solution. Both and. And that's what verses 15 to 20 speak about.

[14 : 22] False prophets, verse 15. They look genuine, they look orthodox, they look Christian, but what does Jesus say in reality? They're dangerous wolves, they're ferocious, they're destructive, they're evil.

Jesus, well he's just so politically incorrect, isn't he? He'd never win a general election, would he? In fact, if he was standing as a parliamentary candidate, the leadership would have silenced him and kicked him out and got somebody else flown in because he's off message.

Notice, Jesus doesn't say about these alternative teachers in the church, he doesn't say, oh there are people with an alternative viewpoint in a broad church such as ours. We love to talk about that, don't we?

Everyone's very keen to say, it's great to be a broad church. I remember when I was a candidate studying for ministry and I doubt if it's changed, we were always told that we had to go to have attachments with very liberal churches to broaden us out.

I was once given a great lecture on the benefits of bread. I took my Bible out and I read this verse and said that's what Jesus thinks is a broad way. It wasn't very popular.

[15 : 35] But Jesus says the only place that a broad road leads you is to destruction. He didn't say oh these teachers come and give us a rich addition from other perspectives.

No, he said they're false. Verse 16 and 17. He says they're diseased. He says they're bad. That's pretty stark, isn't it?

That's pretty dogmatic. And we don't like dogmatism today, do we? But Jesus unfortunately is very dogmatic here. And he warns us to be alert so that we can be protected against these kind of teachings.

All the way through the Bible you see we're plagued with false prophets. And always, read through the Old Testament, always they're in the majority. Remember Elijah and the prophets of Baal?

Poor little Elijah. And all these great colourful priests of Baal. If you were looking on, who would you think is the most impressive? Remember the story in 2 Chronicles 18 of Ahab and King Jehoshaphat.

[16 : 41] And Jehoshaphat said, isn't there a prophet of the Lord to add to these hundreds of other prophets who are all telling us what you want to hear? Ahab says, oh there is that one chap, Micaiah, but he never tells me what I like so I don't consult him.

Always the majority of prophets who will tell you what you want to hear. And Jesus himself clearly tells us that we'll have that right to the very end, right to the end, within the professing church.

The New Testament epistles are full of warnings for that very reason. We've got to be realistic. It's important that we are realistic and have our feet on the ground in the church today.

There never will be a perfect Christian church. There never will be a perfect denomination. Never, ever, right till the end. Jesus tells us plainly, there will be false teachers.

That doesn't mean that we're not to be concerned about that, of course not. Quite the opposite. That's why the pastor teacher is called not only to teach the truth but to refute error all the time.

[17 : 47] And that's what Jesus is warning us about here so we can recognise these people, not so that we have a kind of narrow-minded heresy-hunting type of attitude. Remember the context here, the verses that came before that we looked at last week were telling us to use great care how we judge.

But he is wanting us to have a health preserving concern for God's people, for his flock. So we've got to recognise them. Well how do we recognise these wolves in sheep's clothing?

Well he says in verse 16 we recognise them by their fruits. What are these bad fruits? Well first of all their bad fruit is their message, their teaching, their message about the way to life.

In Matthew 12 Jesus uses exactly the same imagery again of a tree and its fruit to talk about the false words of the teachers of the scribes. And the wolves Jesus tells us are those who deny Jesus clear teaching about the one way of salvation through him alone, about life and death, about heaven and hell.

You see the false teachers, the wolves, are people who are against narrowness. They love broadness. They hate black and white. They hate dogmatic.

[19 : 00] They love shades of grey. They may be orthodox in many things. They may even be orthodox in almost everything. It's just that they leave out and don't talk about the things that are uncomfortable and don't want to be heard.

Especially things like the judgment of God. That was the mark so often of the Old Testament prophets, wasn't it? They loved a popular message. You see, judgment's never popular, is it? So in Jeremiah chapter 8, the false prophets were saying, peace, peace.

But God said there's no peace. God doesn't really mind about your sin. Oh yes, he does. In Jeremiah chapter 23, God denounces the false prophets, woe to you, he says, who say no judgment.

Who say, God's a God of love, he could never punish. And it's just the same today, isn't it? A friend of mine was asked to be a university missionary, just in the last year or so.

And he was told by a certain group of students that they would not support his mission if he dared to talk about judgment or hell. Somebody told me, somebody who teaches in a college training people for ministry, somebody told me that one of his former students went for an interview for a job in a church and was told if you come to work in this church, you're not allowed to mention sin on Sundays.

- [20 : 27] Because we're hoping there be unbelievers there. This question was, well how do you hope to turn them into believers then? Well we can talk about sin on Wednesdays when it's only believers so as not to offend others.

And that's all around us today in our broad church, which is heading for destruction, says Jesus. You can't call people sinners, you can't call people to repent and change their lives, no, you've got to affirm everybody, affirm their behaviour, tell them they can stay on the broad way and they'll get to the right place in the end.

No, says Jesus, they're dangerous. They've deceived themselves and worse, they're deceiving other people. Verse 19 says they're heading for judgment, look, every tree like that is cut down and cast into the fire.

Every tree, not just themselves, but those who follow them in the fire of judgment. You'll know these false teachers by their teaching, what it avoids.

You'll know them also by their fruit in terms of their life and their legacy. True prophets, true teachers surely will have lives that are characterised by the kingdom, by the fruit of the spirit.

- [21 : 43] The Sermon on the Mount will reflect them. Of course, we're great deceivers, all of us, aren't we? And we may well be deceived for a time.

Apparently, thorn bushes could look very much like vines. There were thistle flowers apparently that looked very much like figs from a distance. But sooner or later it becomes clear.

When you get close to a tree and you try to use the fruit, it becomes very clear. And we've got to assess people and movements in the church, both by the lives of the leading lights of those in them and by their legacy.

Where does it lead to in the long run? The liberal theology movement that began in the 19th century began with a great desire for being relevant, making the gospel relevant to the modern world, a world of new science and new ways of thinking and so on.

It seemed such a great thing. It seemed like these were sheep leading God's people. But the legacy tells a very different story. Decimation of the church in the 20th century.

- [22 : 49] The progressives who, since the war, have wanted to reinterpret the Bible, particularly its teaching, for example, in the New Testament on male headship.

Oh, that only applied to the Greek and Roman world and we live in a new world now, women's liberation and so on. What has that led to? It led to the feminization of the church.

You go to many churches in Scotland today, you'll hardly find a man in the place. It's all women. What do you expect? And worse, the same hermeneutic that began with that reinterpretation of what the Bible says about male headship has now led, in exactly the same way, to a reinterpretation about arguments to do with sexuality, in particular homosexuality.

That's what we're seeing today. Well, says Jesus, there will always be false teachers, wolves in the church, and especially as we near the end. They're plausible.

They'll be cuddly. They'll be lovable. Fluffy sheep. The media will love them. They'll always be on the Today program on Thought for the Day. They'll always be the expert brought on the TV to give their voice about whether the resurrection really happened.

[24 : 03] They'll be people who are media friendly. The world will love fluffy sheep. But watch them, says Jesus. Watch their teaching. Watch for teaching that loves to blur the clear cut black and white of Jesus' message about salvation.

Watch the lives and legacy. Watch for the corruption in the church that ensues. Jesus' way and the way of truth is crystal clear here.

It's about stark choices. It's also, isn't it, about a shocking contrast. Look at verses 21 to 23. It speaks of the surprising simplicity of a true relationship with God through Jesus Christ against the expressiveness, the extravagance, even the spectacular nature of so much religious and spiritual profession, which is ultimately utterly wrong.

If we're to take heed who we hear, true teachers, not false teachers, we also get to take heed how we hear, says Jesus. We can be deceived by others.

He says we can deceive ourself. Everyone is in danger, verse 21. Everyone, not everyone, who says to me, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

[25 : 21] He says there's a hearing that can lead to mere saying, verse 21. Lord, Lord. That's religion, he says. That's what leads to destruction.

Because actually, as verse 23 makes clear, actually it's lawlessness. And that's the essence of sin. But also, verse 21, there's a hearing that leads to doing.

Doing the will of my Father in heaven. Obedience to God. That's relationship, he says. And only that leads to life. Because verse 23 makes clear what really matters is knowing God and being known by him.

Whether Jesus can say, I know you, or I've never heard of you. That's what matters on the day of judgment. And the problem is, you see, that the way of religion, which is really the way of the world, can seem terribly impressive.

And so it can be terribly deceptive. What Jesus is saying here is you can be in church, you can be apparently all fine and dandy, but in the reality, you're actually on the broad road leading to destruction.

[26 : 27] Isn't that shocking? There's all the difference in the world, isn't there, between hitting a golf ball and playing the game of golf.

And one of the greatest deceivers, one of the most iniquitous conspirators in making you think there is no difference is something called the golf driving range. You go to this great wide open space and you get a big basket of balls and you hit the ball long and hard and it feels great and it's so satisfying and you just feel, I am the greatest since Tiger Woods.

And then you go on to the golf course and there's fairways and there's bunkers and there's rough and there's a place I always go, the river.

And you realize that hitting a ball is one thing, but playing the game of golf is just another thing altogether. Totally different. And that golf driving range has allowed you to utterly deceive yourself.

And that's the difference between outward profession, saying Lord, Lord, and real performance, doing the will of my Father. There's a vast gulf between those and yet we can so easily deceive ourselves that our faith is real and genuine.

[27 : 54] Verse 22 is clear, many do, they'll say on that day, look, we're genuine, let us in. Look at this spurious discipleship, verse 21.

It's got impressive words, hasn't it? Lord, Lord. Clearly these are folk who claim to be Christian. They profess, they use all the right language, it's public, it's visible. They've got impressive worship, haven't they?

Verse 22. It's fervent. They prophesy, they teach. It's even spectacular, they cast out demons. What could be more impressive than that?

There's impressive works, aren't there? We've done many mighty works in your name. It could be political, it could be social, it could be evangelistic, it could be all numbers of things. Clearly they expect it to be admitted into Christ's kingdom.

But no, they're totally mistaken. Why? Because the essence of salvation is not religion, it's relationship, it's knowing Jesus and being known by him. And it's possible, Jesus is saying, to have all of this and still never to have known him truly.

[29 : 05] He can say, and apparently he will say, depart from me, I never knew you. That's very shocking. Despite all that apparent Christianity, he calls them workers of lawlessness in verse 23.

That is the essence of sin. 1 John 2 says, sin is lawlessness. And all this is a total contrast from those who will enter the kingdom of heaven on the last day, who don't just hear and say, Lord, Lord, but verse 21, who hear and do, they perform.

The contrast is between saying and doing, but it's deeper than that, isn't it? Because these people who will not be admitted, they also do mighty works. It's not just that you do it, it's about why you do it, and it's about who you're doing it for.

And from the outside, it might look the same. It all might look very orthodox. Just as in chapter, in verses 24 to 26, the two houses apparently look exactly the same.

And what was different? What was underneath? The foundations. One was rock, and the other was sand. And you see, the real disciple is the one who has a relationship with the Father in heaven through Jesus Christ.

[30 : 21] He does the will. He obeys Jesus' word out of a willing submission to him as Lord, as Savior, as Master. He's willingly and joyfully obedient just because it is Jesus who asks him to do it.

It's an expression of love. Not a way of trying to earn a favor. You see, religion, verse 22, says, look what I've done for you, Jesus. Look at all these mighty works.

Look what I've said. Look what I've done. You must let me into your kingdom. That's the voice of self-justification. But relationship, you see, realizes that Jesus is the only way, the truth, the life.

That we can't build anything on our own. So we throw everything on him, on the rock of his grace. We build our future, our eternity, there and there alone.

The first, you see, is like a man who tries to win the heart of the woman he loves, or perhaps enhance a loveless marriage that he's in by bringing presents and gifts of great extravagance, trying to impress the one who doesn't really love him.

[31 : 31] The second is like a man who just loves to show the wife who he loves deeply and who loves him, loves to show her his love and his gratitude and his thanksgiving.

Or simple things. Doing the washing up, helping with the cleaning, putting the kids to bed. All the things that most of us husbands don't really do as we should do.

But that's the shocking contrast, isn't it, between religion and relationship that's real. It's the motivation. It's what lies beneath. It's the foundation.

And the real way that leads to life is so simple. It's just summed up in that word, obedience. When Jesus says, repent and follow me and obey me in my commands, he's saying that the Father's will is what I tell you to do.

That's real faith. That's kingdom righteousness, listening to me, doing what I say. No one's saved by obedience, of course. We're saved by the grace of God in Christ.

[32 : 37] But it's equally true to say that no one is saved without obedience. Why? Well, because real faith works. The Bible is unanimous on that. James chapter 2 says real faith works.

It can be seen. Jesus himself in John chapter 14 says, if you love me, you'll keep my commands. Conversely, the one who keeps my commands, he's the one who loves me.

He says that the obedient, fruit-bearing disciple is the one who proves to be a true disciple. Contrary-wise, 1 John 2 says that if we say we love God and don't keep his commands, then we're liars.

The truth's not in us. So don't be deceived. You see, Jesus is saying, take heed what you hear. Don't be deceived into thinking it's just Lord, Lord, and not obeying my voice.

A profession can be very loud. It can be very orthodox. It can be fervent. But it can be empty. We're saved, as Peter says, by obedience to the truth.

[33 : 39] The truth requires obedience, not just belief. So Jesus says, if you think that you can go on committing adultery, for example, and think that's consistent with a profession of salvation, you're absolutely wrong.

Or dishonesty, or covetousness, or whatever. You're deceived. If you think that you can teach that these things are consistent with the Christian way of life, you're wrong.

You're deceived. Teaching homosexual practice. Or that other religions may lead to the same life. Or that nobody needs the scriptures anymore.

That may look like true faith. May use all sorts of religious language. But Jesus says, it will be revealed as utterly, utterly wrong. Worlds apart.

Although on the surface it may look similar, just as two marriages can. So can two professions of faith. In reality, the contrast is huge. And quite shocking.

[34 : 46] So how do you tell which is real? Well, Jesus' answer is that only a storm reveals the truth, isn't it? Verses 24 to 27 speak about a solemn mourning.

Jesus is absolutely black and white about the finality of a certain judgment. Totally against the flippancy, the foolishness of those who live only thinking of the present.

It's true that the storms of life may expose us. May expose what's real or what's otherwise about our faith. We know that. Isn't that right? You can often tell a lot when somebody is faced with a terrible storm, a bereavement, or illness, or hardship, or some calamity.

That can reveal the truth. That's been hidden for a long time. But Jesus is really talking here not about those things, but about the last judgment. When everything is revealed.

Absolutely plain. Verses 24 to 27. The two house builders are simply a vivid picture of what he's saying in verse 22. On that day, when he says in verse 22, on that day, I will say depart.

[35 : 50] That's an Old Testament word meaning the day of judgment. And the storm is exactly the same. In Ezekiel chapter 13, God speaks about a storm. The context is false prophets saying, peace, peace.

There'll be no judgment. Live easy. Build a feeble wall and we'll whitewash it to make it look good. But God says, I'm going to send a storm, wind, and rain, and hail.

And your wall, your pathetic pretense of godliness is going to be crumpled and utterly destroyed. All that false assurance is going to be exposed.

That's just what Jesus is saying here. The day of judgment is certainly coming. And mighty will be the fall. The collapse of false faith.

However much the world scorns and rejects that idea now, however much the worldly church likes to pretend that that will not happen and likes to ignore that teaching about judgment, Jesus says it's absolutely clear.

[36 : 56] That's why he says in verse 24, Therefore, build with that storm in mind. Build on the rock. What is the rock?

Verse 24. These words of mine. Jesus and his word. Not the shifting sands of the fog and the blurred message of the wolves or of the world.

Rather, total submission to him and trust and obedience right to the end in his word. And that means, as John Stoltz put it, that Jesus' lordship has become a deep and central reality in our lives.

You see, his kingdom is not just about entering. The gate leads to a way. And the way leads to the end. And it's about enduring and standing at the end in the judgment. That's what counts. And Jesus says again and again in his gospel, the way is hard that leads to life.

And it will be lonely at times. And it's endurance through all the storms of life that reveals the true foundation. And that will be the thing that stands at the end in the great storm.

[38 : 03] In Matthew chapter 24, Jesus warns, there will be tribulation and hatred and many will fall away. Many false prophets will come, he'll say, and lead people astray.

Lawlessness will increase. The love of many will grow cold. There will be many, many things in life to cause a great urge to retire to that broad way, that comfortable way. That way where everyone's going in the same direction as you.

But Jesus says, he who endures to the end will be saved. Friends, when the way is hard and lonely, when it may be a way of tribulation for you, don't look to the green grass on that broad way.

Don't do that. Look to the end of both ways. And see that there is a storm coming. And realize that there's only one way that can weather that storm.

The way that you're on, the way of Jesus. And that brings us as we close to these last two little verses of the Sermon on the Mount. Verses 28 and 29.

[39 : 16] It speaks of a single authority. You see, it's a sole and exclusive centrality of Jesus himself as the only foundation that will last.

That's the only gate. That's the only way. That's the only rock. The only way, says Jesus, to stand in the judgment is to have your life built upon him and his gospel.

He is the way. He is the gate. He alone teaches the way of the kingdom in stark, dogmatic, black and white. Life or death, earth and heaven.

He's the judge. Verse 23 just assumes it. It'll be I who declare on that day, he says. His words, verse 24, are the Father's will.

There's no light found anywhere else. There's no light needed anywhere else. He is the ultimate light in revelation of God. And that's why, verse 28, it was absolutely clear to everybody who heard him that he spoke with a totally unique authority.

[40 : 20] About God, about salvation. These people were astonished. They weren't ignorant people. They knew their Bibles off by heart. They'd been taught in it since they were youngsters. But they recognized he was absolutely unique.

One who called them with authority. So I have to say to you, you cannot obey God. You cannot do God's will without submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you think you can, a terrible, terrible shot is awaiting you on that day. That is God's will. That you repent and enter his kingdom.

That's Jesus' message. So, friends, listen to him. Hear his words and do them. That means come to know him. Come to be known by him.

Build your life on the rock of his message of salvation. Come to him. And don't ever stray from him. Whatever the way of the world wants to draw you to.

[41 : 21] And when you do come to him, you will find the beginning and all the way through that his yoke is not the burdensome yoke of religion.

It's a joyful wonder of being yoked together in a union with the Savior that goes on forever. Verse 24 says, everyone who hears these words of mine and does them builds on the rock.

Everyone. And that rock cannot fall. That rock is everlasting. So, Jesus says, choose, just as Moses said.

Love the Lord Jesus Christ. Obey him. Hold fast to him. He is the only way.

The only gate. Only rock. Only way of standing at the last. Well, let's pray.