

Twenty-Eight Days With Matthew

Day 7 – John 7

Prayer:

Lord, advance Your Kingdom into all the world. Enable all You have called to worship You by living according to Your Word. Enable our reading of this final section of The Sermon On The Mount to sharpen our daily response to Your love and move us to joyful obedience. In Your Name we pray. Amen.

Meditation:

Matthew continued Jesus' keynote address on Kingdom living in Matthew 7. Beginning at 7:1, Jesus' words "Judge not...", found in 7:1, are merely a continuation of the "flow" of Jesus' teaching from chapter 6...and, of course, chapter 5:1 where the Sermon on the Mount began.

Many well-meaning Christian mis-read and mis-apply Jesus' teaching, "Do not judge." Perhaps Eugene Peterson's easy-to-read translation, *The Message*, best clarifies what Jesus meant.

"Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment." (Matthew 7:1 MSG).

Jesus did not teach that Christians shouldn't judge or discern anyone's behavior, words or actions. Jesus wouldn't teach that we put our Christian convictions on hold, would He? Of course not!

Christians need to be spiritually discerning of themselves and others. They need to correct and encourage each other...in loving, caring and spiritual manner (cf. Galatians 6:1-4). What Jesus condemned in this portion of Matthew was doing what the Pharisees were so well known to do—criticize, pick-apart, intimidate and mercilessly shame people. This kind of ruthless, merciless treatment, Jesus taught, was not appropriate for His Kingdom.

In 7:7ff., Jesus continued teaching more about prayer...*again*. This is a natural throwback to chapter six which contains so much teaching about prayer: The Lord's Prayer, the evils of hypocritical prayer, and the "don't worry" and "seek first the Kingdom" teaching at the end of chapter six.

Why did Jesus teach so much about prayer? Obviously because prayer was such an important, central and essential part of living in His Kingdom. The disciples wanted to know about prayer. Jesus simply made sure He fulfilled their request. Ought we, also, have such an emphasis on prayer in our lives, too?

The final portion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount almost reads like "Wisdom Literature," of which the Old Testament Book of Proverbs is probably the best example. The Book of Proverbs is just that: a compilation of short one, two or three verse snippets of wisdom.

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First, note the many topics Jesus addressed in such rapid-fire, Proverb-like manner in Matthew 7: prayer (7:7-11); the Golden Rule, which “sums up (i.e. “fulfills”) the Law and the Prophets” (7:12); and warnings against false prophets (7:15-23). *Second*, note that with each one “proverb” or bit of wisdom, He gave a short description, comment or warning to make His point more vivid and memorable.

Jesus’ sermon concluded with a final exhortation to build on the rock (7:24-28). Though present throughout Jesus’ sermon, note Jesus’ penchant for the dramatic at the very end of His discourse. “And [the house] fell with a great (i.e. “mega”) crash” (7:27 [NIV]). It must have been a dramatic, memorable and impressive end to Jesus’ sermon!

It certainly was! Matthew reported the response of all who heard.

“When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at His teaching, because He taught as One who had authority, and not as their teachers of the Law” (Matthew 7:28-29 [NIV]).

The people are amazed at this remarkable, authoritative teacher...and totally unimpressed, if not disgusted, by “their teachers of the Law.” Jesus’ initial, major sermon had two inevitable results: to further advance the Kingdom and to sow the seeds of murderous envy and jealousy among the teachers of the Law.

The crowds were “amazed.” The Greek word Matthew used for “amazed” is “*ekplesso*.” It means “to be blown away,” and “to shock or astonish.” Jesus’ message was not a humdrum re-statement of the obvious. It was fully—and amazingly—authoritative in a way that reminiscent of only the greatest of the Prophets: Isaiah, Elijah, Jeremiah, Hosea and Moses.

For those who read on, many more amazing things are in store. The Sermon on the Mount was merely a precursor for greater and even more amazing demonstrations that Jesus, the Chosen Messiah of God, would wield Messianic authority in ways never before seen (cf. Isaiah 64:3-4)!

It won’t take long to see more examples of His authority. Matthew, like his audience, was eager to see the Kingdom is advance...ever more rapidly...and moving toward fulfillment right before their very eyes.

Prayer:

Lord, having considered Your Sermon on the Mount, how can we not be amazed at Your teaching! As You addressed the crowds, You also addressed us. Move us so that we may love You so much as to live as You proscribed: not judgmentally, in prayer, watching for false prophets, and founding our lives on

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You, the Rock of Salvation. Move us to even greater amazement of Your authoritative grace and love in our lives each day. In Your name we pray. Amen.

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