

JESUS ON LISTENING TO JESUS (MATTHEW 7:13-27)

Video 2

To understand why Jesus closes so dramatically, we need to consider what he's been warning against throughout his sermon.

Jesus has been warning his hearers against acting in one way (on the outside) but being someone very different (on the inside). Jesus has been emphasising that living for his kingdom isn't just a case of right behaviour but also right attitude.

This is why the Sermon opens in Chapter 5 with the Beatitudes – Jesus' beautiful attitudes. You're blessed when you're pure in heart, when you hunger and thirst for righteousness within.

It's why Jesus has said that the full significance of the Old Testament's teaching on murder isn't just that we don't kill anyone – but also that we don't seethe in anger against them.

It's why Jesus warns us against practicing our religious acts in front of others to be seen by them – and instead that we should give, pray and fast in secret.

Jesus doesn't just want his followers' *behaviour* to reflect his coming kingdom. We prove that we believe in his coming kingdom through our *attitudes* – whether they're seen by others, or not.

This heartbeat to the Sermon helps us understand what Jesus is warning against.

In context, walking on the broad road that leads to destruction isn't referring to a life of debauchery; it's referring to people who pursue good behaviour, but only on the outside.

Building your house on sand doesn't just generically describe anyone without Jesus; it particularly refers to those who look good on the outside but who have no foundation. Their behaviour doesn't rest on anything deep down.

When we put it all together, Jesus is demanding complete authenticity, inside and out.

So yes, our behaviour matters. But Jesus is emphasising that it's possible to live a pretty good life on the outside, and to use our behaviour as an excuse to avoid paying attention to our hearts.

So, what should we do?

We should start by being honest. Each of us falls short. Even if we present well on the outside, we should admit what's true on the inside.

If we don't yet know Jesus, we should run to him for mercy. Jesus died that we might be forgiven. And, as we saw at the beginning of the sermon, he welcomes all who are poor in spirit.

But what if we are trusting Jesus?

We too can rest in his forgiveness.

But we must recognise that outward impression isn't everything. We must ask Jesus: "Continue to change me by your Spirit. Make my attitudes beautiful. Help me reflect your ways from the inside out."

Following Jesus like this will feel hard. Sometimes it's going to feel like walking on a difficult path. It will feel like digging down into rock.

But as we pursue Jesus' path, we show the world that God is not just interested in our behaviour, but our hearts. He's interested not just in our actions, but our integrity.

That's the kind of God he is. That's the kind of people he wants.

And that's the kind of kingdom we look forward to being welcomed into one day, fully and finally.