

# All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 28

by Zac Poonen

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*Jesus teaches that the narrow gate and the broad way are choices we make in life, and that we must take the Sermon on the Mount seriously to follow the path of obedience and life.*

**Duration:** 25:34

**Scripture:** Matthew 3:10, Matthew 7:13, Matthew 7:15-16, Matthew 7:19-20, Galatians 5:24

**Topics:** "Discerning False Prophets", "Crucifying The Flesh"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the importance of taking the Sermon on the Mount seriously, emphasizing the narrow gate and way that leads to life as taught by Jesus. It warns against false prophets who may appear as sheep but are actually wolves, focusing on the need to discern them by their fruits, particularly humility and love. The message stresses the crucial act of crucifying the self-centered nature inherited from Adam to truly belong to Christ and bear good fruit.

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## Transcript

We turn once again to continue our study in all that Jesus taught based on Matthew 28, verse 20, 19 and 20. Go into every nation and make disciples and teach them to do all that I commanded you. That's what we've been looking at and we've been looking especially at what Jesus commanded us to do.

In the Sermon on the Mount, a very important passage of scripture, because most Christians have not taken it seriously. I would say the shallowness of the lives of many Christians is primarily because they have not taken the Sermon on the Mount seriously. So today we come to Matthew 7 and verse 13.

These are the concluding parts of the sermon. Conclusion to what he had already taught. And we need to read these verses in the context of what precedes it in chapters 5 and 6 and the first part of chapter 7. Enter by the narrow gate.

What does he mean? That what he's preached so far is, in a sense, a very narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction. And many are those who enter by it.

Destruction is eternal hell. Did Jesus speak about hell in the Sermon on the Mount? He certainly did. He spoke about it three times.

The word hell comes in the Sermon on the Mount and let's just look at it. The way to destruction. Matthew 5, 22.

If you're angry with your brother, you're guilty before the court. And if that anger gives expression to words of anger, you're guilty before the Supreme Court. And if it goes further to serious words of anger, you'll be guilty enough to go to hell, to destruction.

Again he says in Matthew 5, 28. If a man looks at a woman to lust for her in his heart, it's better you pull out your right eye. Otherwise you can be thrown into hell.

Better to cut off your right hand, verse 30. Otherwise you can be thrown into hell. That's the way to destruction.

The way of anger, uncontrolled anger. And the way of uncontrolled sexual desire. And that is a wide way.

There are multitudes of people walking along that way. The world is full of people who are angry and saturated with sexual lust, uncontrolled sinful sexual desire, exploiting poor women, etc. That is a broad way to destruction.

What about a Christian who says he's a born again Christian and goes along that way watching internet pornography and taking advantage of poor women being exploited and who expresses his anger outwardly. That's the way to destruction. And whether he calls himself a Christian or a non-Christian, it makes no difference.

He's on the way to destruction. It's a wide way. The wideness is sometimes made by preachers who say, Well, we don't have to be so narrow-minded and say that only those who overcome these things are going into life.

No, they make the gate wider. Jesus said the way to life was like a needle's eye. Can a camel go through a needle's eye? No.

It's easier, he said, for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a man who is rich in himself to possess the kingdom of God. See, our richness is not only in wealth, it could be in our intellect and our intellectual arguments. When we come to scripture and we take away the seriousness of these words with intellectual arguments, Well, you're not going to enter God's kingdom.

That's a wide road that leads to destruction. But the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life. And that's the way Jesus spoke in the Sermon on the Mount.

What he's saying is, all that I've spoken here so far is a very narrow gate and a very narrow way. But that's the way that leads to life. And there are very, very few people who find it.

Do you expect multitudes of people to choose the way in the Sermon on the Mount? Not at all. As we said earlier, the Sermon on the Mount is not meant for non-Christians. It's not meant for non-disciples.

It's meant for those who have already laid a foundation in their life of repentance and faith in Christ, who are born again and become God's children. Now, if a person has not taken that first step and he tries to follow the Sermon on the Mount, he's like a person who's building his house without a foundation. But here it's speaking about disciples who are seeking to follow the Lord.

They find this is a very narrow gate and there are very few who find it. So I don't expect many, many people, multitudes of people to come rushing to obey the things written in Matthew 5, 6 and 7. So when you think of these mega churches with thousands of people sitting there, you wonder, are these the few

people who have found the way to life? Or are these people part of the broad way that's leading to destruction, being led astray by false preachers? Well, just going there, we don't want to judge any of them. I'd be delighted if 30,000 people in one little area want to obey the Sermon on the Mount and follow Jesus.

I'd be happy if we have a church of 300,000 people who want to follow Christ. But not 300,000 people who just want to go to heaven without following Christ on earth. And I want to say to you, from what I've observed, that in most churches, the people who are sitting there want to go to heaven without following Christ on the earth.

Now, that's not the true church of Jesus Christ. That's the church against which the gates of hell prevail. And that type of church is one where the preachers have made the gate wide so that multitudes of people can get in without paying the price.

Wide so that you can love money and imagine that you love God as well. They've made the gate wide. And then, of course, they're deceiving themselves that they are building followers of Jesus in that church.

So, we need to see very clearly that it's at the end of the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus explained this gate is very small. And this way is very narrow that leads to life. And there are very, very few that actually find it.

And then, the very next thing he says is, Beware of the false prophets. So, again, we've got to see it in its context. Who are these false prophets? Are these false prophets the ones who are talking about some other religion, bringing the holy book of some other religion? No.

These are false prophets who come in sheep's clothing. Sheep's clothing means the appearance of being a servant of Jesus Christ. Appearance of being a sheep, one of the sheep of Christ.

They come in sheep's clothing. They look like sheep. They come with a Bible in their hand.

But they've made the way broad. They've explained away the commands of Scripture saying, This is not necessary. That's not necessary.

It doesn't mean exactly this. And people have explained away so many things in Scripture. If they come to a verse like, Rejoice in the Lord always.

Well, they say, it doesn't mean 24-7. It means, generally speaking, most of the time, Philippians 4-4. When it says in Philippians 4-6, Be anxious for nothing.

They say, it doesn't mean nothing. It means, generally speaking, you should avoid anxiety. When it says in 1 Thessalonians 5-18, It doesn't mean that we must give thanks and everything for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus.

It doesn't mean everything. God's Word has been diluted and robbed of its sharpness and its power by preachers. And even small things like it says that a woman should cover her head to show her submission to male authority.

People say, well, that doesn't mean that we have to do that. That was for that culture in Corinth. Everything is explained away.

There's an explanation for everything. And God's Word has been diluted. When it says that if you don't take sexual sin radically, you can go to hell.

You say, no, it's not that serious. And what is going to happen in the final day? You will discover when you stand before Jesus Christ that God meant exactly what He said. Christ meant exactly what He said.

Now, if you don't believe that these words in the Bible are Scripture and the Word of God, you can be honest and scratch them out. Or tear up those pages and say, that's not the Bible. But you're being dishonest and hypocritical if you keep them there in the Bible and say this is God's Word and you don't follow it.

It's that hypocrisy that God is going to judge among God's people. God loves an honest person. I believe God loves many atheists more than He loves hypocritical Christians.

Because they're honest. They don't believe there's a God and they act like there's no God. The businessman out in the world, he says there's no God but money and he worships money.

He's honest. But it's Christians who say that Jesus Christ is the true God, I'm going to listen to Him, the Bible is God's Word, and then live just like those worldly people. They are the hypocrites.

Remember, when Christ was on earth, He condemned the hypocrites more than anybody else. The adulteress was saved, the thief on the cross, the murderer was saved, but the hypocrites went to hell. So the same thing is going to happen today.

People have the Bible in their hand, with sheep's clothing, speaking the right doctrine, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. Why does a wolf put on sheep's clothing? In order to come in the midst of the flock pretending to be a sheep and all he wants is to bite the sheep and get what he can out of them. It's a picture of a preacher who comes, who's got his Bible college degree, perhaps he quotes scripture and he's eloquent speaker and all he wants is to get your money.

Whenever you find a preacher like that, think of this verse, a ravenous wolf who's come in sheep's clothing. That person is not a shepherd, he's a wolf. A good shepherd cares for his sheep, he's interested in leading his sheep to green pastures and by still waters, not to bite off the sheep like a lot of preachers do.

Then he goes on to say, you will know these false prophets by their fruits. Notice that, not by their gifts. Now many people seek to identify a man of God by his gifts.

That is the biggest mistake of Christians. They go directly against what Jesus has said in Matthew 7, 16. He said, you will not be able to identify a true prophet of mine or distinguish between a true prophet and a false prophet if you look at the gifts.

Both may appear to have gifts. A true prophet has gifts but, what the true prophet has in addition is fruit. And so if you want to know whether a person is a true prophet of God, don't see whether he's got a healing gift.

Don't see whether he is eloquent. Don't see whether his doctrines are right. Both their doctrines will be right.

They've got sheep's clothing. How to distinguish which is a real sheep and which is a wolf? By their fruit. What is the fruit of the spirit there in life? Primarily humility.

Has he got humility? Has he got a genuine compassion for people? Is he free from the love of money? Is he always compelling you to pay your tithe? That's a wolf without a shadow of doubt. And most preachers are wolves like that today. A lot of them only preach on giving your tithe to their ministry.

And giving you all types of false promises that God will give you a hundred times if you give to their ministry. Don't be deceived by these television preachers or any other type of preacher who's a ravenous wolf who's after your money. You will know them by their fruits.

Always look for fruit. The fruit of goodness and kindness and humility which treats you with respect and who's not out to get your money. I mean, in other words, look for the fruit of Jesus Christ in their life.

Where do you find Jesus Christ going after anybody for their money? Never once, he never took a collection and offering at any time in his meetings. When he healed the sick, he did not take an offering. He didn't ask the disciples to go with an offering bag and collect money from the people he healed like we see in today's healers and preachers.

I believe they're humbugs compared to Jesus Christ. You never find any of the apostles doing that either. They never preached to people or healed people.

You say, well then, how will we have money for God's word? Yes, you can keep a box there and let people voluntarily give whether they want to give or don't want to give. Don't put a bag in front of them and compel them to give. And certainly, the Bible teaches that Jesus and the apostles would never take a cent from unbelievers.

It's a great tragedy today that unbelievers are invited to a meeting and they hear the gospel coming from them. Do you have to pay money to get your sins forgiven? Do you have to pay money to get yourself healed? Beware of false prophets. They are worse than unbelievers.

I remember once someone invited me to sit on the platform for a big healing meeting in Bangalore and I said, well, I'm all for getting unsaved people to Christ, but I want to know whether the gospel is absolutely free and even the praying for the sick is free. And I said, let me use an illustration. If I were to go and buy a CD player from a non-Christian store, shop, and I take it home and I find the next day it doesn't work, I take it back to the store and say, hey friend, this doesn't work.

He will refund the money to me. If I paid 2,000 rupees for that, now apply that illustration to your situation, I say to them, you conduct a healing meeting and this big guy from somewhere comes and before he prays for the sick, you take a collection bag around. There's a non-Christian there who brings his paralyzed wife to the healing meeting to be healed and you pass the collection bag around and that man, because of his non-Christian background, thinks that it's only if I give money you pray for that sick wife and he's not healed.

Now he comes back to you to the next day and say, hey, your product didn't work. Your prayer didn't work. My wife is not healed.

Will you please return the 2,000 rupees I gave you and put in the bag? Will you give it to him? No. I say, you're a bigger crook than that non-Christian storekeeper who gives me back the money when his CD

player didn't work. You give the money to him but you don't do it.

I say, how in the world can I sit with all of you on a platform and conduct this type of humbug called a healing meeting in Jesus' name? I say, show me a healing meeting where you don't take any money at all, where you don't take a collection and where people are genuinely healed. That's the type of healing meeting that Jesus and the apostles had. A lot of what goes on today is just a gimmick and used to collect money for the welfare of false prophets.

They come to you in sheep's clothing. You will know them by their fruits. You don't go to thorn bushes to gather grapes, he says in Matthew 7, 16.

You don't go to thistles to get figs. Do you? It's so simple. I mean, if you want to go to get grapes, you go to a vine to get grapes.

You don't go to a thorn bush to get grapes. The fruit manifests what the tree is like. When you see thorns coming out of it, you know that's not fruit.

Those are thorns. So always look for fruit, not for gifts. Gifts can be deceptive.

Satan, for example, has got tremendous gifts. But he's got no fruit, no character. And Satan can give those abilities to his servants.

And the Bible says that Satan can serve and appear as ministers of righteousness. Further, he goes on to say, So every good tree bears good fruit. There's no doubt about it that a good tree will always bear good fruit.

You can buy good fruit and tie it up in a bad tree and cut off all the bad fruit and fool people that your tree is a good tree. But it isn't. When I look at a lot of Christians, the way they live, appearing to be good in public and really pretty bad in the way they live in their homes and in their offices is like, let's say, a bad tree in his garden that produces rotten, stinking, dried up mangoes.

But he doesn't want anybody to think he's got these rotten, dried up mangoes. So every time one of those comes up, he takes the scissors and cuts them off. And he goes to the market and buys very luscious, expensive mangoes and ties it up very cleverly on this tree.

And people look at this tree and they can't see all this tied up and they say, It looks very nice, but it's just a tree. He just put on. It's something which is meant to deceive people.

This is hypocrisy. A good tree will produce good fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit.

And a bad tree cannot produce good fruit. So what should you do with a tree that does not bear good fruit? It says it must be cut down, Matthew 7, verse 19, and thrown into the fire. That is the great need.

That nature of ours that we have inherited from Adam needs to be crucified. That's the meaning of cut down. When John the Baptist said that Jesus is coming with an axe that he's laying to the root of the tree to cut it down, this is what he meant.

He's going to cut it right down in the root, throw it in the furnace, and replace it with another tree. You see, many people haven't experienced this. They've just tried to get rid of superficial sins in their life and responded to Christ.

They're not really saved because the root is still there. It's like when you come to a doctor and you have some symptoms. He won't just give you some ointment to get rid of those symptoms.

He says, I need to give you an antibody that hits the root of the disease, and when the root of the disease is hit, then these symptoms will disappear. That's how a good doctor treats his patients who are sick, and that's how Jesus also does it. He says there's a root to all these problems in your life, and the root is a self-centered life.

From that self-centered life, only fruit that seeks your own will come. Now you can tie nice fruit there and like many preachers, preach eloquent things and preach nice things, but if you're a self-centered person, you'll be seeking your own all the time, and until you hit the root of that, you're not going to be really experiencing the salvation that Christ came to give. I think of numerous people who have come to our church in Bangalore and told me, Brother Zach, I never knew what it was to be really converted till I came here because I never knew what repentance was till I came to your church.

I thought I was born again and I took baptism somewhere, but I never knew how serious sin was. I never knew what repentance was because I didn't know what sin I had to turn from. When I came here, I saw and I heard what sin really was.

It was a self-centered way of life, and I saw that I had to turn from that, and it is only now that I'm really saved. I believe a lot of people who imagine that they're saved and born again are not because they have not turned from their self-centeredness. The root of that bad nature has not been hit by the axe.

That bad tree has not been cut down. They're trying to produce good fruit on a bad tree. Here it says about those who belong to Christ.

What's the mark of those who belong to Christ? Let me read you a verse in Galatians 5 You may say you belong to Christ. You may say you're a part of that good tree. Well, here's a verse.

Galatians 5 24 says, Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh. The flesh speaks of that self-centered life that wants to do its own will. Their attitude towards that self-centered life is crucify it, kill it.

You know the Romans reserved crucifixion for the worst criminals. Not the ordinary criminals. They would be just jailed.

The worst criminals were crucified. And when you see that the self-centered nature you got from Adam is the worst possible criminal and deserves to be crucified, then you have understood what repentance is all about. Then you can belong to Christ because those who belong to Christ it says here, have taken this attitude.

With all its passions and desires. Now that verse means nothing. If you say, well even if you don't do that you belong to Christ.

Then what does that verse mean? Supposing those who belong to Christ may not have crucified the flesh with his passions and desires, then God's word is meaningless. But God's word is true. A good tree that produces bad fruit must be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Crucified. Then we can have this other nature that the Holy Spirit gives us that produces good fruit. Now a lot of people who have fruit may not have the gifts of the Spirit.

It doesn't matter. God gives different gifts to different people. But if you can remember this thing that Jesus repeated twice here, you'll be saved from a lot of deception.

Verse 16, you will be able to identify a true and a false prophet not by their gifts, but by their fruits. Again he repeated in verse 20, so then you will know them by their fruits. If only all Christians had just taken this one simple sentence to heart, we would be saved from a tremendous amount of deception that there is today in Christianity.

Christianity today can be divided into two categories. The Babylonian, corrupt, the harlot Christianity described in Revelation 17 which is going to be burnt up and destroyed by God one day. And the pure holy bride of Jesus Christ called Jerusalem in Revelation 21 that will shine with its glory through all eternal ages.

And the way to distinguish between the two, both may have gifts, remember, but only one will have the fruit of the Spirit of humility and love and goodness and freedom from the love of money. So whenever you look at a preacher, this is what we need to look for. Is he a true prophet or is he a false prophet? Is he a false prophet? Is he a real sheep or a wolf in sheep's clothing? This is such an important word for our day and the way to distinguish it is, does he preach the Sermon on the Mount? Does he preach the narrow way that leads to life? Or is he just showing off and not preaching the truth? Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, in a day of deception, we thank you for the light of your word which leads us along the right path so that we don't miss the way. We want to know the truth so that we are not deceived for these things are of eternal significance and value. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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