

Authority and Power in Action

Scripture Reading: Matthew 7:13-29

In the last message, we observed the authority and power in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, as found in Luke 4:1-32. In this message, we will observe how Jesus teaches us to look for authority and power in others who claim to be His messengers. It is their lack of authority and power in their lives that will require us to use discernment and not be deceived. It is also for our own warning, so that we do not become like those people, who have a form of godliness, but deny its transforming power (II Timothy 3:5).

Matthew 7:13-15 – The Narrow Gate & The Wide Gate

Don't expect popularity with the world. The world is trying to overcome us in 2 ways:

- Openly intimidate and condemn Christians for the narrowness of the way of Christ and the gospel of His cross (John 14:6; 16:33 cp. Galatians 6:12,14; II Timothy 3:12).
- Deceptively fashion an alternate Jesus and an alternate gospel. This establishes a counterfeit church / an alternate Christianity (Galatians 1:3-9).

How shall we identify the deceptive, destructive wolf in sheep's clothing?

Matthew 7:16-23 – Look for fruit in the lives those who are teachers and leaders.

People are compared to vines and trees. How nice they look **isn't** important. How they produce fruit **is** important. Abraham Lincoln asked the question, "If we call a sheep's tail a leg, how many legs does a sheep have?" If the person said, "five," Lincoln would say, "No, only four. Calling a sheep's tail a leg, doesn't make it a leg." Even so, you can call a hedge of thorns a grape vine, but you still end up with thorns – not grapes. You can have a thistle plant and call it a fig tree, but you will get thistles – not figs. This world is full of people who can create a good appearance and sound good. But plug your ears and watch what they are doing. Carefully search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11). They skillfully avoid true doctrine and submission to God's word – even though they quote Scripture the whole time!

It is possible for a person to handle the Scriptures in such a way that it appears like God is speaking through them. But actually they are teaching their own ideas or possibly the doctrines of demons (I Timothy 4:1). In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus is showing us that there are people who have deceived themselves, as well as others. This kind of person may think that they can show their faith by their works (James 2:17-18). But something else is missing. We must be saved

from a dead faith that has not works (James 2:14). We also must be saved from dead works that lack a living faith (Hebrews 9:14). The kind of faith we need is shown by an active, intimate relationship with the living Christ. In Matthew 7:23, Jesus explained that the people, mentioned previously, did not have that active and intimate relationship with Him which would have caused them to do truly good works. *"I never knew you"* would be the most horrible thing to hear from Jesus Christ when we stand before Him.

Consider Jeremiah 2:8, *"The priests did not say, 'Where is the Lord?' and they that handle the law did not know Me ... "* See also Jeremiah 23:30-32; Revelation 3:14-22.

Matthew 7:24-27 – The Authority and Power of Jesus Christ must be seen in the lives of all those who profess to know Him.

Another test of the Lord's authority and power in our lives is illustrated by comparing two houses built on two different kinds of foundation. Nothing was said about the quality of the houses. It was the quality of the foundations that made the difference.

- The Leaning Tower of Pisa, Italy leans almost four degrees because of a poor foundation.
- There have been houses, built on unsettled soil, that did not collapse, but the cement floors sunk so much that there were two-inch gaps under the partition walls.
- There have been beautiful homes, built on the sides of cliffs and steep hills, that have collapsed into the sea.

Jesus specifies that the rock foundation we need in our lives is obedience to His words (Matthew 7:21,24; 28:18-20; Romans 16:25-27).

In Matthew 7:28-29, we see that Jesus spoke with authority and power, as He also did in Luke 4:30-32.

If we want the Lord's authority and power in our lives and in our efforts of ministry and service, we must seek:

- Fruit – godly character and godly works in our lives
- An active and intimate relationship with Christ through His word
(*Make sure you are known by the Lord!*)
- A humble and honest pursuit of obedience to the will of Christ