

# THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

## The King's Arrival: A Study of Matthew 1–7

### STUDY TWENTY-THREE

## Three Non-Politically Correct Warnings

*Matthew 7:13–23*

*When Jesus came toward the end of the Sermon on the Mount, He said, in so many words, “You cannot remain on the fence. You must get off on one side or the other.”*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

JESUS composed His Sermon on the Mount like a symphony in four movements. As you recall from our overview in *“The Sermon of All Sermons,”* Jesus opened with an inspiring overture, the Beatitudes, introducing the movement titled, “Out with Hypocrisy!” (Matthew 5:1–48). In this first section, Jesus taught us how to live by God’s kingdom-values—making us the salt and light of the world—and what it means to model true righteousness from the heart.

In the second movement, “Down with Performance!” (6:1–34), Jesus told us to avoid religious grandstanding by giving, praying, and fasting privately to truly experience life with God. The third movement, “Up with Acceptance!” (7:1–5), trumpets a warning against the hypocrisy of judging others and pointing out their sin while ignoring our own.

Jesus arranged His sermon to climax in the fourth movement, “On with Commitment!” (7:6–29). In just one verse, He summed up righteous-living and right-relating to conclude the main body of His sermon:

*“Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.” (7:12)*

He then transitioned to His application section—*the grand finale!* Having presented God’s truth, Jesus now compels us to action. In this *Searching the Scriptures* study and the next, we’ll tune our hearts to these soaring strains of Jesus’ masterful composition.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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*Matthew 7:13–23*



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

In your own words, express your willingness to receive God's Word as well as your desire for Jesus to strike up a melody of devotion in your heart.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Read Jesus' complete applicational section, *Matthew 7:13–27*. Notice that Jesus continues His technique of teaching in “twos.” Previously, Jesus contrasted *two kinds of righteousness*—external and internal; *two treasures*—earthly and heavenly; *two masters*—mammon and God; and *two kingdoms*—of this world and of God. Now, Jesus' words hit closer to home.

Will our righteousness be external or internal? Where will we invest our treasure? Whom will we serve? And, ultimately, will we seek His kingdom? We must decide. There is no middle ground. No muddled “both-and.” The decision He sets before us is a firm “either-or.”

Jesus illustrated His challenge with four more “twos”: two *paths* (Matthew 7:13–14), two *trees* (7:15–20), two *responses* (7:21–23), and two *foundations* (7:24–27). In this study, we will examine the first three of these illustrations and save the fourth for the next study.



### Observation: Paired Alternatives, Controversial Warnings

Observation is the initial task in *Searching the Scriptures*.<sup>1</sup> Look intently at what the verses say and try not to assign meaning too quickly or add concepts that aren't there.



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### Two Paths—Matthew 7:13–14

What do you see in *Matthew 7:13–14*? Describe the gates and paths. How many people are on each path? Where do the paths lead?

### Two Trees—Matthew 7:15–20

How did Jesus describe “false prophets” in *Matthew 7:15*? How do they deceive people and what is their true nature?

According to *7:16–20*, how did Jesus say we can identify false prophets? How can we know the true nature of people in general?



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### Two Responses—Matthew 7:21–23

In Matthew 7:21, Jesus says, “Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter [the Kingdom of Heaven].” In contrast are those who, like false prophets, disguise themselves behind religious masks—only putting on the appearance of living in obedience to God. What did Jesus say these people *claim*, according to 7:21–22?

On judgment day, what will Jesus say to these pretenders? Despite their claims, what did they *actually do* that sealed their judgment (*Matthew 7:23*)?

*Jesus said that there is a wide and narrow gate. There is good and bad tree. There is a right and wrong response. We must come to terms with this truth, whether we like it or not. We can't stay neutral. It's either Christ or it's lostness. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Interpretation: The Meaning of Jesus' Illustrations

Remember the interpretation rule of thumb: a *text* is best understood in its *context*. Throughout His sermon, Jesus had been teaching the heart of the law and putting true righteousness on display (Matthew 5:20). Christ alone has fulfilled God's law (5:17), and He alone can help His followers truly obey it.



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### Enter the Narrow Gate

The first step to following Jesus on His good path is to enter “the narrow gate” and not the “wide” gate (Matthew 7:13). On pages 134–135 of his commentary, Pastor Chuck Swindoll says that by pointing people *one* way, Jesus rejected the popular notion of “pluralism”—which states that many paths lead to God. According to Pastor Chuck, why might Jesus’ teaching sound naive to the politically correct, pluralistic thinker?

On the broad “highway,” there are no morals to obey and no truths to believe (7:13–14). Why does this broad road lead to destruction? And why is Jesus’ narrow way difficult?

*Jesus is the only entrance to life eternal. Jesus, the One who is the most compassionate, gracious, and caring was also exclusive and narrow. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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### Bear Good Fruit

Although false prophets or false teachers appear trustworthy, they are bad trees who bear bad fruit. What “bad fruit” do you think gives away a false teacher (*Matthew 7:15–16*)?

What “good fruit” do you think Jesus was referring to in (*7:17–20*)? For help with the answer, reflect on Jesus’ teaching throughout His sermon about the “good fruit” of true righteousness—such as the Beatitudes (*5:3–10*), loving our enemies (*5:43–45*), prayer (*6:5–13*); seeking God’s kingdom (*6:33*), and the Golden Rule (*7:12*).

*Listen to the person teaching you! Does this teacher have a high view of Scripture? Does this teacher exalt Christ above all others, including himself or herself? If not, you have a false teacher on your hands. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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### Do the Will of the Father

Like the wolves who wore sheepskin, people who claim Christ as their lord but break God's laws are pretenders. They are all talk and all show, and their deeds shine glory on themselves rather than draw praise for the "heavenly Father" (Matthew 5:16). Conversely, what reveals the nature of a true follower of Christ, according to 7:21?

What did Jesus mean when He said, "do the will of my Father in heaven" (7:21)? The Lord's Prayer provides a clue (6:9–13).

*Don't be impressed by so-called miracle workers or those who use impressive religious language or who claim to exorcise demons. Not all of them are of God.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Correlation: The Way, the Truth, and the Life

Correlating our passage with other Scriptures clarifies and confirms our interpretation. Jesus described one way to God's kingdom: "through the narrow gate" (Matthew 7:13). What insight do the following verses offer regarding Christ's pathway versus the broad path?



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*Proverbs 14:12*

*John 10:9; 14:6*

*1 Timothy 2:5*

Write a principle summing up the truths these verses teach about Christ?





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False teachers are as dangerous as wolves because they point people toward “wide” gates that lead to destruction. What insight about these pretenders did Paul give in [2 Corinthians 11:13–15](#)? How does Paul’s explanation help you understand the reason for Jesus’ judgment?

*Satan is not a little, red-skinned creature with a pitchfork and horns. He’s an angel of light and can impress massive numbers of people with his appeal. Beware of the suave, appealing style of false teachers! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Application: Personal Questions

Jesus designed His illustrations to knock us off the fence of uncertainty and point our feet His way. He presented only two gates to enter, two paths to follow, two crowds to join, and two destinations to pursue. Which do we choose?

Which way does your heart lead you? Do you feel the tug of the Holy Spirit leading you? Use the space below to express to the Lord in prayer the path you long to travel through life and the fruit you wish to bear.



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Not everyone is trustworthy who claims to lead you the right way. Can you identify any “wolves” who may be deceiving you? If so, bring your relationship with this person before the Lord and find a faithful friend who is a Christ-follower to help you identify the good or bad fruit. What action might you need to take?

The music of Jesus stirs our hearts to respond to Him. Let His truth fill your soul with worship and a longing to listen to His voice, obey His teaching, emulate His life, and follow His way.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, I hear the melody of Christ resonating through my soul, plucking my heartstrings, and filling my life with love. Because He leads the way, I know where to go; because He speaks truth, I am confident in what I believe; and because of His life, I can depend on His power to do Your will. In His name I pray, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

