

Sand and Rock

Some years ago, I was traveling on American Airlines to Washington D.C. The plane left in the Arizona afternoon and landed in Dallas, Texas in the evening. Then I boarded a connecting flight to Washington D.C.'s Ronald Reagan Airport. My assigned seat on this flight was next to a young woman who was a journalist. Sometime after lift-off, we started talking about a number of subjects. Eventually I mentioned Jesus Christ. She was not a Christian, yet she started asking questions. This was unexpected. Usually, most people act embarrassed or say, "I am not interested." So I had the opportunity to explain that Jesus Christ was God, that He died for her sins and returned to life. I explained that Jesus would forgive her sins if she wanted Him to do that. After we landed at the Ronald Reagan Airport and as we were walking down the corridor, she turned to me and told me that she was not interested in Jesus. She had just wanted to see what I would say. I was surprised! She had seemed really interested. Had she rejected Jesus? I did not know. All I knew was that the seed of truth was planted and, Lord willing, someday the seed would grow. Was she like the foolish man in Jesus' illustration who built his eternal house on a sandy seashore?

Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall. (NASB) Matthew 7:24-27

SAND. Jesus' last illustration in the Sermon on the Mount may describe her current house, one built on sand. His illustration of the water, and wind crashing against the houses on the sand and against the rock is a picture of the certainty each person has of going to hell or to heaven. A foundation built on sand is one that is not built on Jesus. Only Jesus the solid rock is safe and secure.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, He called men and women to believe in His message. He called folks to believe if for no other reason than because of His miracles.

... If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and understand . . . (NASB) John 10:37-38

In the middle of John's gospel, he writes,

But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him . . . (NASB) John 12:37

Here Jesus calls His listeners to hear His words and act. The journalist heard and did not act.

MORE SAND. Judas, the apostle, is an amazing example of one who rejected Jesus' words and did not respond. He preferred a sandy foundation. Jesus had called him to be His disciple (Luke 6:13-16). Judas had seen Jesus' many miracles, heard His teachings, and had seen the crowds hang on Jesus' every word. He was part of the suspense between Jesus and the religious leaders. He prayed with them and spent time with them. He was with Jesus and the other disciples during the last supper when Jesus said that one of them would betray Him. The other disciples did not suspect Judas. They wanted to know who it was.

Simon Peter therefore gestured to him, and said to him, "Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking." (NASB) John 13:24

Judas was part of the inner group, yet the other disciples did not know it was Judas. He looked good! He looked like them. He appeared to be no different than the others. They did not know that Judas was stealing their money (John 12:6). The gospels call him the "Son of Perdition" (John 17:12). He saw no need for Jesus in the end. He built his house on sand and when the waters of God's judgment comes some day, he will be destroyed.

THE ROCK. Remember Nicodemus? He was the Pharisee who came to Jesus at night and asked,

"Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." (NASB) John 3:2

Nicodemus saw His miracles and was believing. Jesus told him that he must be born again. He must have a spiritual birth. Apparently, Nicodemus left Jesus the evening with his house still on a foundation of sand. But sometime later we find Nicodemus defending Jesus against his fellow Pharisees.

Nicodemus said to them (he who came to Him before, being one of them), "Our Law does not judge a man, unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?" They answered and said to him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? (NASB) John 7:50-52

His fellow Pharisees rebuked him. The next time we see Nicodemus, he is helping Joseph of Arimathea bury Jesus' body. It appears that he was born again and had finally built

a new house - one on the rocks.

And after these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. He came therefore, and took away His body. And Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night . . . (NASB) John 19:38-39

I believe Nicodemus was born again and some day we will see him in heaven. I believe he built his house on the solid rock - Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION. Jesus finished the Sermon on the Mount with a call to believe and act on His words. How did the people respond? The Holy Spirit says they were amazed.

The result was that when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

(NASB) Matthew 7:28-29

But Jesus called them to do more than be amazed. He was showing them their foundation was sand. The Sermon on the Mount describes the nature of a true disciple. He corrected the Pharisees' false teaching and warned us that it is not good enough to just be self-sacrificing or to love and serve God and others. Jesus' point is that we can NEVER build this foundation. Jesus always starts here! He, Himself, is the only sure foundation. We are sinners and we need Jesus' forgiveness because we cannot be these things on our own. When we respond to Jesus our God, He builds our house for us - on the Rock!

