

The Parable of Two Houses

(Luke 6:47-49)

As with so many of Jesus' parables, this parable (also known as the parable of "the wise and foolish builders" or "the two foundations"), tells the story of Israel's last day's judgment and restoration which had begun through the ministry of Jesus and would conclude at the end of the Jewish age in AD70. Let's begin by reading the parable as it is recorded in the gospel of Luke.

Luke 6:47-49

Everyone who *comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them*, I will show you whom he is like: he is *like a man building a house*, who dug deep and *laid a foundation on the rock*; and when *a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built*. But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly is like *a man* who built a house *on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great*.

As we seek to understand this parable, I suggest the following points as guidelines for interpretation:

- The *two men* represent *the two covenant-sons of Abraham* - Ishmael and Isaac (Galatians 4:21-31).
- The *two houses* represent *the two kingdoms* - the kingdom of Judaism and the kingdom of Christ.
- The *foundation on the rock* represents *faith in Christ and obedience to his gospel of the coming kingdom of God*.
- The *flood and ruin of the house* represent *the judgment and destruction that was coming upon Judaism (the O.C kingdom) in AD70*.

To validate these points as legitimate guidelines for interpretation; several things must be accomplished. First, we must prove that the scriptures did in fact teach the existence of *two covenant-houses* during the first century.

Hebrews 3:1-6

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, *as Moses also was in all His house*. For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. *Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant*, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; *but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house - whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end*.

It is important to understand that scripture identifies both the "house of Moses" and the "house of Christ" as the church. For example, although the word "church" (Gr. ekklesia) is not used in the text, the writer of Hebrews clearly identified *both himself and his audience (who were the church) as the house of Christ* when he says; "Christ was faithful as a Son over *His house - whose house we are...*" (Hebrews 3:6). Likewise, Stephen identified *the children of Israel who came through the wilderness under the leadership of Moses as the church* when he said concerning Moses; "*This is he that was in the church in the wilderness...*" (Acts 7:38). The reality of these *two covenant-houses* becomes even clearer in the following passages....

1 Corinthians 10:1-4

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; *and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food*.

Galatians 3:26-27

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. *For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ*.

The contrast in these two texts is unmistakable. Moses and Christ represent *the headship of two covenant-houses*. Those baptized into Christ constitute the “*body of Christ*”, those baptized into Moses constituted the “*body of Moses*”. As Paul went on to say in Corinthians 10:11 (DBY), “*Now all these things happened to them as types, and have been written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come*”. Thus, the *house of Moses was the nation of Israel (the church in the wilderness)* who had been delivered from the bondage of slavery in Egypt through the exodus. Conversely, the *house of Christ was the faithful remnant of the nation of Israel (the church under the new covenant)* who had been delivered from the bondage of sin and death (empowered by the old covenant) through the second/new exodus.

Next, we must prove that these *two covenant-houses* were in fact *two covenant-kingdoms*. Notice what the Lord spoke through Moses....

Exodus 19:3-6

Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say *to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel*: You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then *you shall be My own possession among all the peoples*, for all the earth is Mine; and *you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*” These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.

Peter declared that this promise made to *Israel (the house of Moses) under the old covenant*; had been fulfilled in *the church, the house of Christ under the new*.

1 Peter 2:9

But you are *a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession*, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Furthermore, John declared that *the church (the house of Christ) had become the kingdom of God* as promised through Moses. Said plainly, the rule and dominion of the King (his kingdom) flows from the church of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:5-6

and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood - and *He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father* - to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

And finally, we must prove that these *two covenant-houses (kingdoms)* were headed in *two different directions* who would arrive at *two different destinies* in the first century.

Matthew 16:18

I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock *I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.*

Ephesians 2:19-22

So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built *on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone* in whom *the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*

1 Peter 2:4-5

And coming to *Him as to a living stone* which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, *as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood*, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Revelation 21:1-1-3, 22:10,12

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw *the holy city, new Jerusalem*, coming down out of heaven from God, *made ready as a bride adorned for her husband*. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, *“Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them....”* And he said to me, *“Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.... Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.”*

The church who is *the house and kingdom of Christ* was in the process of being built into the new covenant temple, the dwelling place of God. The goal and destiny of this new covenant house is seen in the book of Revelation, which John placed in the lifetime of his own generation. (The fact that Revelation 22:12 is a direct quote of Matthew 16:27-28 lets us know that phrases such as *“the time is near”* and *“I am coming quickly”* are to be limited to Jesus’ generation). However, this was clearly neither the story nor the destiny of *the house of Moses* in the first century. In fact, it was just the opposite. While the house and kingdom of Christ was being built up and adorned that it might be glorified, the house of Moses and kingdom of Judaism was being weakened and defiled that it might be torn down and left completely desolate. Notice the following passages concerning the direction and destiny of the house of Moses....

Matthew 23:23,34-36,38

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and *have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness*; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.... Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; *some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth*, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I say to you, *all these things will come upon this generation*. Behold, *your house is being left to you desolate!*

What needs to be understood is that Matthew 23:38 refers to more than just the desolation of the temple of Herod; it refers to the destruction and abandonment of *“house and body of Moses”*, the *“church in the wilderness”*. As a matter of fact, the word “desolate” in Matthew 23:38 is the Greek word “eremos” which literally means, *“a wilderness”*. Keep this definition in mind, it is highly significant. As the children of Israel were preparing to enter Canaan, the Lord issued the following warning through the mouth of his servant Moses. *“Now behold, you have risen up in your fathers’ place, a brood of sinful men, to add still more to the burning anger of the Lord against Israel. For if you turn away from following Him, He will once more abandon them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all these people.”* (Numbers 32:14-15)

It was this warning of his father that Jesus was alluding to in the words, *“your house is being left to you desolate”* (*a wilderness*). By rejecting Christ and the gospel of the kingdom, *the house of Moses* had once again *“turned away from following the Lord”*. They had indeed *“risen up in the place of their fathers”* by refusing to enter their inheritance through the new covenant. As a result, *their house, that is, the entire body and kingdom of Moses would once again perish in the wilderness* according to the word of the Lord. The destruction of the temple of Herod in AD70 was the physical and temporal sign that *the house of Moses had been forever abandoned in the wilderness*, never to rise again.

Matthew 12:22-26,28-29,43-45

Then a demon-possessed man who blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, *“This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?”* But when the Pharisees heard this they said, *“This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons”*. And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, *“Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand.”* If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom

of God has come upon you. Or how can anyone *enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house....* Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it. Then it says, *'I will return to my house from which I came'*; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. *Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation.*

In Matthew 12, the casting out of demons from the sons of Israel signified that Satan had been bound, and that Jesus had begun to plunder and conquer his house, that is, his kingdom. What this means is, *the house of Moses (the kingdom of Judaism) had become the house and kingdom of Satan who had made his dwelling in the minds and hearts of the people.* By rejecting Christ and his kingdom, the children of Israel had become children of their "father the devil" (John 8:44). Those who had been freed from the tyranny of the strong man (Satan) were to abandon that house and make their abode in *another (the house of Christ)* before the strong man returned. Those who would fail to do so would become slaves in the kingdom and house of Satan (Judaism) and the wickedness of that house would be worse than it was at the first. This would all be accomplished in *that "evil generation"* who lived during the first century. (Matthew 22:45)

Revelation 18:1-2,20,24

After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was allumined with his glory. And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, *Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird....* Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, *because God has pronounced judgment for you against her. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth.*

What is so significant about this passage is that John sees the judgment and destruction of Babylon as the fulfillment of Jesus' words in both Matthew 12 and Matthew 23. Notice, John identified Babylon as the city *guilty of the murder of "all who have been slain in the earth"* (Revelation 18:24). But, Jesus said concerning Jerusalem and the Jews of his day; *"so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth.... Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation."* (Matthew 23:35-36). Furthermore, John identified Babylon as the *"dwelling place (the house) of demons"* and a *"prison of every unclean spirit"* (Revelation 18:2). While Jesus said that Jerusalem and the Jews of his generation *would become a "house" for wicked and unclean spirits* (Matthew 12:43-45).

Thus, during the first century generation there existed *two covenant-houses representing two covenant-kingdoms inhabited by two covenant peoples heading toward two different destinies.* The house of Christ (the church) was destined for glory, honor, and immortality, while the house of Moses (Old Covenant Israel) was destined for judgment and indignation in the day of the wrath of God (Romans 2:5-10). With all of this established, let's read once again the parable of the two houses.

Luke 6:47-49

Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like *a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock;* and when *a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.* But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly is like *a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.*

At this point the parable should be somewhat obvious. The man who laid the foundation of his house on the rock was *the righteous remnant of Israel (the Isaac-sons of Abraham)* who had put their faith in Christ and obeyed his teachings concerning the coming of the kingdom of God. *The house this man was building was the church; the house and kingdom of Christ,* which would be spared from the judgment of God as it was built upon a rock and therefore could not be shaken. The man who built his house with no foundation was *the unfaithful majority of*

Israel (*the Ishmael-sons of Abraham*) who had rejected the person of Christ and his gospel of the kingdom of God. *The house this man was building was the defiled house of Moses (the old covenant kingdom of Judaism) which was in the process of passing away and was destined for destruction through the righteous judgment of God.*

Yet the point of Jesus' parable doesn't end here. For those who had ears to hear, the fulfillment of this parable *would bring the fulfillment of a promise of mercy given under the old covenant.* Notice the similarity in language between the parable of Jesus and the prophecy of Isaiah....

Luke 6:49

But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly is like *a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.*

Isaiah 28:1-3 (NLT)

What sorrow awaits the proud city of Samaria - the glorious crown of the drunks of Israel. It sits at the head of a fertile valley, but its glorious beauty will fade like a flower. It is the pride of a people brought down by wine. *For the Lord will send a mighty army against it. Like a mighty hailstorm and a torrential rain, they will burst upon it like a surging flood and smash it to the ground.* The proud city of Samaria - the glorious crown of the drunks of Israel - will be trampled beneath its enemies' feet.

The historical context of Isaiah's prophecy was the impending judgment of Samaria (the northern kingdom of Israel) at the hands of the Assyrians in 722BC. Thus, the message of Jesus to the Jews of his day was this; *unless they would abandon the work of building a house (a kingdom) that was destined for destruction, they would suffer the wrath and judgment of God just like Samaria had.* But that's not all. The application of this prophecy to the parable of Jesus become even clearer as go on. Notice what Isaiah says next....

Isaiah 28:14-15

Therefore, listen to this message from the Lord, *you scoffing rulers in Jerusalem.* You boast, "We have struck a bargain to cheat death and have made a deal to dodge the grave. *The coming destruction can never touch us, for we have built a strong refuge made of lies and deception.*"

In Isaiah's day, the "scoffers" in Jerusalem were the leaders of the city who denied that such a judgment of God as was coming upon Samaria could ever come upon *them and their kingdom.* Their confidence in their boast was based on their covenant made with Assyria under the reign of Hezekiah. They falsely assumed that their *treaty of peace* with a foreign nation would allow them to avoid the judgment of God and thus, "cheat death". But notice the Lord's response to their attitude of arrogance....

Isaiah 28:17

I will test you with the measuring line of justice and the plumb line of righteousness. Since your refuge is made of lies, a hailstorm will knock it down. Since it is made of deception, a flood will sweep it away.

The Lord declared that since *the kingdom of Judah (the house of Moses)* had been built upon corruption and deception, *thus lacking a true foundation,* their covenant of peace would not stand, and they would eventually be judged and destroyed just like Samaria. That judgment was historically accomplished between 605-586BC by king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Although the judgment of God was sure to come, *so was his mercy.* Amidst this prophecy of doom, the Lord gave a promise of restoration. The days would come when He would *establish a new house, that is, a new kingdom, built upon a firm foundation stone; and whoever would believe (build their house) on it would never be shaken.* Below is that promise....

Isaiah 28:16

"Therefore, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: *"Look! I am placing a foundation stone in Jerusalem, a firm and tested stone. It is a precious cornerstone that is safe to build on. Whoever believes need never be shaken.*

And of course, this promise was fulfilled in Jesus. He is the precious foundation stone of the new covenant house, the church, the body and kingdom of Christ. Whosoever builds upon him by faith will never be put to shame.

1 Peter 2:4-6

And coming *to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God*, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture: *Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in him will not be disappointed.*

Thus, in the context of Isaiah 28, the message of Jesus in the parable of two houses was this:

The state of the kingdom of Judah and Judaism was very much the same in Jesus' day as it had been in the time of Isaiah. Rather than justice and peace, the *house of Moses* had been built upon theft and bloodshed and therefore *lacked a foundation of righteousness*. As a result, the Lord would once again judge the nation and destroy the kingdom; only this time the destruction would be final. Yet God in his mercy *had fulfilled his promise given through the prophet Isaiah*. Christ had become the chief and precious stone which had been laid as the foundation of the new covenant temple, the house and body of Christ. Those who had put their faith in him and had received his gospel of the coming of the kingdom of God, had begun to build *his house* which guaranteed their deliverance from the wrath of God that was coming like a flood upon the nation. The only way to escape was to abandon the house of Moses. By putting their faith in Christ as the foundation stone of the new covenant temple, they had joined together with God in the building of his eternal kingdom; the house and body of Jesus Christ. Those who would build and abide in this house would receive the mercy promised in Isaiah, *“He who believes in him will not be disappointed.*

And, at the *completion* of the house, the *destiny* of that house was realized....

Revelation 21:3

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, *“Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.”*

In the church, which is the house and kingdom of Christ; the tabernacle of God is among men; where God himself dwells among his people.