



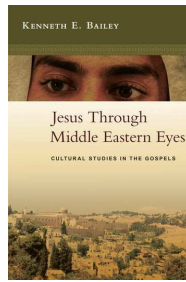
The two builders

Jesus' Parables

No. 3

Luke 6:46-49

Parable structure



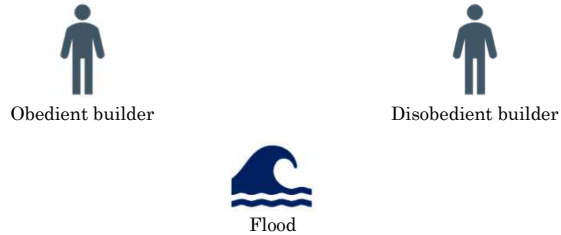
Why do you call me "Lord, Lord," and not do what I tell you?

1. Every one <i>coming to me and hearing my words and doing them</i> I will show you what he is like.	HEAR MY WORDS Do Them
2. He is like a <i>man building a house, who dug down and went deep and laid a foundation upon rock;</i>	BUILT HOUSE Foundation
3. And when a <i>flash flood</i> arose, the <i>stream</i> broke against that house, and the <i>stream</i> was not strong enough to <i>shake it</i> , because it was <i>well built</i> .	FLOOD House Not Shaken
4. And the one <i>hearing and not doing,</i>	HEAR Not Do
5. he is like a <i>man who built a house upon the ground without any foundation;</i>	BUILT HOUSE No Foundation
6. against which the <i>stream broke,</i> and immediately it <i>fell,</i> and the <i>ruin</i> of that house was <i>great</i> .	FLOOD House Falls

Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 322.

- Structure called *step parallelism*
- Step parallelism places climax at end of each series of steps, so in this case at the end of verse 48 and 49 (i.e. sections 3 and 6 here)
- Contrasts two alternative ways to behave and their consequences

Parable's characters



- Obedient builder
 - “who comes to me and hears my words and does them”
 - Contrast with disobedient builder is only in doing or not doing Jesus’ words, since both hear them
- Disobedient builder
 - “hears and does not do them [Jesus’ words]”
- Flood
 - A reality of our world that comes to everyone, good or evil – represents God’s judgement (ultimately on Judgement Day)

Parable's literary context

- In Luke:
 - Addresses those who call Jesus "Lord, Lord"
 - Comes at end of section on ethical teaching, "The Sermon on the Plain"
 - Beatitudes and woes, love your enemies, judging others, a tree and its fruit
 - Followed by new section
- In Matthew (Mt 7:24-27):
 - Comes at end of section on ethical teaching, "Sermon on the Mount"
 - Beattitudes, salt & light, Christ fulfilling the law, anger, lust, divorce, oaths, retaliation, love your enemies, Lord's Prayer, fasting, treasure in heaven, don't be anxious, judging others, ask God, the Golden Rule, a tree and its fruit, entering heaven
 - Followed by a new section

Differences in versions

- Matthew's version:
 - Built on rock vs. sand
 - Wise man vs. foolish man
 - Rains -> floods and winds -> fall or not
- Luke's version:
 - House with foundation vs. no foundation
 - Man vs. man
 - Broken river/stream banks -> fall or not

Parable's social context

- Building a house done by owners, not contractors
- “building a house is not an easy endeavor. Rather it involves exhausting and frightening efforts, strenuous hardships, along with continuous and life threatening struggles.” —Ibn al-Tayyib
- Israelites only built in summer (winter too cold)
- In summer, clay soil like bronze
 - Lots of effort to dig down to rock
 - However, rock always present a little beneath the surface
- In winter, rains come, clay softens to mud and walls built on clay sag and easily collapse
- Isaiah 28:14-18 expresses same reality with same metaphor

Isaiah 28:14-18

Therefore *hear the word of the LORD*, you scoffers,
who *rule* this people in *Jerusalem!*

Because you have said,

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1. | a. "We have made a <i>covenant with death</i> , | COVENANT MADE WITH
Death, Sheol |
| | b. and <i>with Sheol we have an agreement</i> ; | |
| | c. when the <i>overwhelming scourge passes through</i> | |
| | d. it will <i>not come to us</i> ; | |
| 2. | a. for we have made <i>lies our refuge</i> , | REFUGE
Shelter made |
| | b. and in <i>falsehood we have taken shelter</i> "; | |
| | therefore thus says the Lord GOD, | |
| 3. | "Behold, I am laying in Zion for a <i>foundation</i>
a <i>stone</i> , a <i>tested stone</i> , | BUILDING
Material |
| | a <i>precious cornerstone</i> , a <i>sure foundation</i> : | |
| 4. | 'He who <i>believes</i> [in it—LXX]
will <i>not be shaken</i> .' | INSCRIPTION |
| 5. | And I will make <i>justice the line</i> ,
and <i>righteousness</i> the plummet; | BUILDING
Tools |
| 6. | a. and <i>hail</i> will <i>sweep away the refuge of lies</i> , | REFUGE
Shelter destroyed |
| | b. and <i>waters</i> will <i>overwhelm the shelter</i> ." | |
| 7. | a. Then <i>your covenant with death</i> will be <i>annulled</i> , | COVENANT ANNULLED WITH
Death, Sheol |
| | b. and <i>your agreement with Sheol</i> will <i>not stand</i> ; | |
| | c. when the <i>overwhelming scourge passes through</i> | |
| | d. you will be <i>beaten down by it</i> . | |

Parable's surprises

- Behaviour of foolish man (placed second)
- Fragility of foundationless house
- Greatness of ruin

Parable's theology

Theology

- Jesus is Lord (v. 46)
- Jesus' word is true, and should be obeyed
- Obedience has costs
- Obedience has rewards
- Disobedience has immediate benefits
- Disobedience has ultimately disastrous consequences ("great ruin")
- Placed at end of Sermon on the Mount/Plain, this emphasises the nature of Jesus' words: they are not advice or suggestions, they *must be obeyed*

So the parable's point is?

- The person who knows Jesus' words and doesn't do them will have their life (now and after death) shattered
- The person who knows Jesus' words and obeys them, will have a secure life (now and after death)
- Saying that we love Jesus' teachings and yet refusing to follow them is asking for disaster
 - A modern context where this parable is useful is in discussion about Christians who refuse to bow to some social trend, such as sexual license, materialism, relativism, identity politics, etc.

Break time!

DIY Parable

Take the theology and build your own using a contemporary context

Parable context?

Context must:

- Communicate the foundational nature of Jesus' words
- Communicate the good results of obeying Jesus' words
- Communicate the great disaster of not obeying Jesus' words

Parable's story

Should have:

- Surprise
- Symmetry & simplicity
- Shared metaphors
- Setup for judgement

Must communicate:

- The foundational nature of Jesus' words in all human life
- The life-or-death importance of obeying Jesus words