# A HARMONY OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS — CHAPTER SEVEN

*Matthew 7, Mark 3 (continued), and Luke 6–7 Woven Into One Continuous Narrative*

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2026

## Table of Contents

## Preface: Continuation of the Harmony

This volume continues the harmony of Matthew, Mark, and Luke through their seventh chapters. Chapter seven is one of the richest in the harmony project, containing the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, the response of the crowds to Jesus's teaching, and then a series of events from Luke and Mark that immediately follow the Sermon in the narrative sequence.

The chapter divides into three movements. The first completes Matthew 7 — the third and final chapter of the Sermon on the Mount — with its teaching on judging others, prayer, the narrow gate, false prophets, the test of fruit, and the parable of the two builders. The second records the crowd's astonished response to the Sermon's conclusion. The third moves into the narrative material of Luke 7 and Mark 3: the healing of the centurion's servant, the raising of the widow's son at Nain, John the Baptist's question from prison and Jesus's answer, and Jesus's defense of John and rebuke of the unbelieving generation.

Each section is identified by its source Gospel in brackets:

**[Matt]** = Matthew

**[Mark]** = Mark

**[Luke]** = Luke

**[Matt / Mark]**, **[Matt / Luke]**, **[Mark / Luke]**, or **[Matt / Mark / Luke]** = parallel passages

The translation throughout is the **American Standard Version (ASV, 1901)**, a public domain text of high scholarly accuracy. No words are invented or paraphrased; all text is drawn directly from the ASV.

Chronological ordering follows the scholarly consensus of A.T. Robertson's *A Harmony of the Gospels* (1922), Kurt Aland's *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, and Orville Daniel's *A Harmony of the Four Gospels* (2nd ed., 1996).

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## Part Six: The Conclusion of the Sermon and the Ministry in Galilee

### Section 61 — Judge Not [Matt 7:1–5]

Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me cast out the mote out of thine eye; and lo, the beam is in thine own eye?

Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

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### Section 62 — Pearls Before Swine [Matt 7:6]

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you.

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### Section 63 — Ask, Seek, Knock [Matt 7:7–11]

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent?

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

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### Section 64 — The Golden Rule [Matt 7:12]

All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets.

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## Section 65 — The Narrow Gate [Matt 7:13–14]

Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it.

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## Section 66 — False Prophets and the Test of Fruit [Matt 7:15–20]

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

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## Section 67 — Not Everyone Who Says Lord, Lord [Matt 7:21–23]

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works?

And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

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## Section 68 — The Two Builders: Rock and Sand [Matt 7:24–27]

Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock.

And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof.

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## Section 69 — The Crowd's Response: He Taught as One Having Authority [Matt 7:28–29 / Mark 3:20–21]

And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

And he cometh into a house. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

## Section 70 — The Healing of the Centurion's Servant [Matt 8:5–13 / Luke 7:1–10]

And when he had ended all his sayings in the ears of the people, he entered into Capernaum.

And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick and at the point of death. And when he heard concerning Jesus, he sent unto him elders of the Jews, asking him that he would come and save his servant. And they, when they came to Jesus, besought him earnestly, saying, He is worthy that thou shouldest do this for him; for he loveth our nation, and himself built us our synagogue.

And Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say the word, and my servant shall be healed.

For I also am a man set under authority, having under myself soldiers: and I say to this one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

And when Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned and said unto the multitude that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole.

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## Section 71 — The Raising of the Widow's Son at Nain [Luke 7:11–17]

And it came to pass soon afterwards, that he went to a city called Nain; and his disciples went with him, and a great multitude.

Now when he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, there was carried out one that was dead, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came nigh and touched the bier: and the bearers stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother.

And fear took hold on all: and they glorified God, saying, A great prophet is arisen among us: and, God hath visited his people. And this report went forth concerning him in the whole of Judaea, and all the region round about.

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## Section 72 — John the Baptist's Question from Prison [Matt 11:2–6 / Luke 7:18–23]

And the disciples of John told him of all these things. And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to the Lord, saying, Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?

And when the men were come unto him, they said, John the Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?

In that hour he cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits; and on many that were blind he bestowed sight. And he answered and said unto them, Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me.

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## Section 73 — Jesus's Testimony Concerning John [Matt 11:7–15 / Luke 7:24–30]

And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to say unto the multitudes concerning John,

What went ye out into the wilderness to behold? a reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out to see? a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.

But what went ye out to see? a prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written,

*Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, Who shall prepare thy way before thee.*

Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah, that is to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

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## Section 74 — This Generation: The Children in the Marketplace [Matt 11:16–19 / Luke 7:31–35]

But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the marketplaces, who call unto their fellows and say,

We piped unto you, and ye did not dance; we wailed, and ye did not mourn.

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a demon. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.

And wisdom is justified by her works.

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## Appendix: Notes on Chapter Seven

### On the Conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 7 contains the third and final chapter of the Sermon on the Mount, and its structure is deliberately culminating. It moves from the personal (how one sees one's brother) to the universal (the two ways, the two trees, the two builders) before ending with the crowd's astonished recognition that this teacher differs fundamentally from all teachers they have known.

The Sermon began with the Beatitudes — declarations of blessing for those who are poor in spirit, mourning, meek, hungry for righteousness. It moves through the antitheses (the radicalization of the Mosaic commands), the three pillars of piety (almsgiving, prayer, fasting), teaching on treasure and anxiety, and now concludes with a cluster of sayings that function as a summation and a challenge.

### On Judging and the Beam in the Eye

The command "Judge not" (Section 61) is among the most quoted and most misunderstood sayings in the Gospels. The Greek *mē krinete* is a present imperative of prohibition — "stop judging" or "do not make it your habit to judge." The context, and what follows in the same passage, makes clear that Jesus is not prohibiting all evaluation of conduct — Section 66 explicitly commands discernment of false prophets "by their fruits," and verse 6 commands discrimination in the sharing of holy things. What is prohibited is the posture of the person who magnifies another's small fault (the mote, or speck, of dust) while ignoring his own disabling fault (the beam, or plank, of timber). The hyperbolic disproportion — a speck versus a structural timber — is deliberately comic and self-implicating.

### On the Golden Rule

The Golden Rule (Section 64) — "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them" — is unique in its positive formulation. Many ancient traditions, including Confucian ethics, Tobit 4:15, and later rabbinic literature, contain the negative form: "Do not do to others what you would not have done to you." Jesus's positive formulation requires active initiative rather than mere restraint. Matthew's addition — "for this is the law and the prophets" — presents the Golden Rule not as a replacement for the Old Testament but as its ethical summary, parallel to the double commandment of love (Matthew 22:37–40).

### On the Narrow Gate

The image of the narrow gate and the broad way (Section 65) has generated enormous interpretive discussion. The Greek *stenē* (narrow, tight, constricting) and *tethlimmenē* (straitened, pressed, afflicted — from *thlibō*, the verb used for the pressure of persecution) describe the way of life not as intrinsically pleasant or easy but as the only way that arrives at life. The broad road is broad precisely because it requires nothing — no repentance, no moral reconstruction, no willingness to be seen as few. The saying does not define who the "few" are

with any demographic precision; it is an urgent personal invitation to choose the difficult road rather than a theological calculation about the proportion of the saved.

## On "I Never Knew You"

Section 67 contains one of the most alarming sayings in the entire Sermon. It is addressed not to the obviously irreligious but to people who have prophesied, cast out demons, and performed "many mighty works" in Jesus's name — people whose religious résumé is impressive by any ordinary standard. The verdict pronounced over them is the most devastating possible: "I never knew you." The Greek *egnōn* is the aorist of *ginōskō*, the verb of intimate personal knowledge. The problem is not the works; the problem is the absence of a relationship of mutual knowing. "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity" — the word *iniquity* (*anomia*) means literally lawlessness, the absence of conformity to God's will. Works performed without the foundation of genuine relationship to God are ultimately lawless however religious they appear.

## On the Two Builders

The parable of the two builders (Section 68) brings the entire Sermon to its structural close with a double image of extraordinary vividness. In the Palestinian setting, the distinction between rock and sand would have been immediately understood: the limestone bedrock of the hillsides versus the sandy wadis (dry riverbeds) that appear stable in summer but become violent torrents in the rainy season. A house built in a wadi on the dry sandy floor looks fine for months — until the rains come. Jesus applies the image without elaboration: "Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them" is the rock builder; "every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not" builds on sand. The distinction is not between those who hear and those who do not hear — it is between those who hear and do, and those who hear and do not. Both have heard the Sermon. One obeys; one does not. The storm is identical for both. The outcome is not.

## On the Centurion's Faith

The healing of the centurion's servant (Section 70) introduces into the Gospel narrative the first explicit commendation of Gentile faith over Jewish faith. The centurion is a Roman military officer — precisely the kind of representative of the occupying power that Jewish nationalism despised — and Jesus says of him: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Matthew's account (8:5–13) omits the mediation of the Jewish elders and the second group of friends, suggesting a more direct approach. Luke's layered account, with the elders pleading the centurion's worthiness and the centurion himself then sending friends to forestall Jesus's visit, presents a more complex social and cultural picture. Both accounts preserve the centurion's central word: "Say the word, and my servant shall be healed." The military analogy he draws — I command and am obeyed; so may you command from where you stand — is an act of theological imagination: he has understood, from outside Israel's covenant, something about Jesus's authority that insiders have not yet grasped.

## On the Raising at Nain

The raising of the widow's son at Nain (Section 71) appears only in Luke and is the first resurrection miracle in the Synoptic narrative sequence. Three details are theologically significant. First, Jesus acts without being asked — he sees the widow's grief and is moved by

compassion before any request is made. Second, he touches the bier — an act of ritual defilement under the Levitical code, as touching the dead rendered one unclean. As with his touching of the leper (Section 34), the defilement does not pass from the dead to Jesus; life passes from Jesus to the dead. Third, Luke's language is deliberate: "he gave him to his mother" echoes almost exactly the LXX of 1 Kings 17:23, where Elijah restores the widow of Zarephath's son — "and he gave him to his mother." The crowd's response — "A great prophet is arisen among us" — confirms that the echo is intentional.

### On John's Question and Jesus's Answer

John's question from prison — "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" (Section 72) — is among the most humanly candid moments in the Gospel narrative. John, who had proclaimed Jesus as the Coming One with such certainty at the Jordan, is now imprisoned by Herod Antipas, apparently expecting a different kind of messianic intervention than what Jesus is providing. Jesus's answer is itself a quotation — a mosaic of Isaiah 35:5–6 and 61:1 — describing the signs of the messianic age: blind receiving sight, lame walking, lepers cleansed, deaf hearing, dead raised, poor having good news preached to them. The answer is an implicit "yes" that requires John to revise his understanding of what the Messiah comes to do.

Jesus's commendation of John that follows (Section 73) is the most extravagant praise of any human being in the Gospel record: "Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist." And then, immediately, the paradox: "yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." John stands at the threshold of the new age but does not enter it; the least citizen of the kingdom Jesus brings stands in a relationship to God that exceeds even John's prophetic greatness. The declaration that John is Elijah "that is to come" identifies him as the forerunner of Malachi 4:5 — a claim that the disciples later find perplexing in connection with the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:10–13).

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