THE QUESTION

How did John Chrysostom explain the wise and foolish builders (Matthew 7:24–27)?

Asked by a THF member on August 16, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 8 numbered quotations · the 7 early Christian passages we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/how-did-john-chrysostom-explain-the-wise-and-foolish-builders

The short answer *From the text: says what the passages say*

Chrysostom takes up the two houses in homily 24 of his Homilies on Matthew, where he quotes Christ's words about the foolish builder. Across his sermons he reads the rock and the sand as virtue and vice, and teaches that trouble does not ruin a soul; its own carelessness does.

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POINT 1 OF 6

His Matthew homilies quote the foolish builder

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

In homily 24 of his Homilies on Matthew, Chrysostom quotes Christ's warning about the man who hears but does not obey. This is where these passages show him working through the end of the Sermon on the Mount.

1 "And everyone, He says, who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be compared to a foolish man who built his house on the sand."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Matthew* 24 (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 7, page 5 Read it in the library ›

POINT 2 OF 6

The two houses stand for virtue and vice

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Chrysostom says we should not stop at sand, rock, rain and wind. The picture is about two kinds of life. The house on the rock is virtue, and the house on the sand is vice.

2 "Rather, we are to understand virtue and vice as the meaning of these things, and learn from them that no one harms a man who does not harm himself."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *No One Can Harm the Man Who Does Not Injure Himself* 1 (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 3, page 5 Read it in the library ›

3 "For when we place virtue and vice side by side, we can know the difference more exactly. One had built on the rock, and the other on the sand."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Matthew* 24 (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 6, page 5 Read it in the library ›

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POINT 3 OF 6

Carelessness, not trouble, causes the fall

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Both houses faced the same rain, floods and wind. Chrysostom points out that only one fell. He uses this to teach a city in hard times that trials do not destroy a person; laziness and foolishness do.

4

"It is not the trials themselves, but the laziness of those being tested, that is likely to bring about their downfall."

later in the same passage

"Do you see that it was not the attack of these trials that caused the fall, but the foolishness of the builders?"

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on the Statues* 4 (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 1, page 5 Read it in the library ›

POINT 4 OF 6

Bible lives show who built on rock

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

In his Matthew homily, Chrysostom compares people in Scripture to the two builders. Elijah, with only his sheepskin, stood firm like a house on rock, while King Ahab, for all his power, trembled before him.

5

"Therefore, though Ahab was a king, he feared and trembled before the prophet, before the man who had only his sheepskin."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Matthew* 24 (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 6, page 5 Read it in the library ›

POINT 5 OF 6

The rock is heavenly things that never change

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Preaching on Ephesians, Chrysostom quotes the wise builder and asks what the rock is. He answers that it is the heavenly blessings Christ promises, which no change on earth can touch.

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6 “And what is that rock but those heavenly things which are beyond the reach of every change?”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Ephesians* 1 (c. 386–407 AD) **Source 2, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 6

The firm build on rock; the shaken hope

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

Chrysostom says Christ's saying about the house on the rock fits believers who are already firm. For those who are shaken, Paul gives the picture of hope as an anchor. Elsewhere he urges frightened hearers to hold that anchor and stay unmoved.

7 “For regarding those who are very firm and philosophical, Christ rightly made that statement, saying, "Whoever has built his house on a rock," in”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Hebrews* 11 (c. 386–407 AD) **Source 4, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

8 “And taking hold of the sacred anchor, the hope that is in God, remain unshaken and immovable.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on the Statues* 16 (c. 386–407 AD) **Source 5, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not show the exact section or line where his comment on Matthew 7:24–27 begins.
- They come only from Chrysostom, so they do not show how other early writers read this parable.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

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WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 7 early Christian passages we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages (sources 1–7, grouped by writer, earliest first). **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF's updated English unless marked "1885 English" (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). "… [continues online]" marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *7 passages from 1 writer*

John Chrysostom, *c. 386–407 AD · sources 1–7*

1. *Homilies on the Statues* 4 **Quote 4, page 3** "hears these sayings of mine and does them, I will compare him to a wise man who built his house on a rock. And the rain came down, and the… [continues online] **read ›**
2. *Homilies on Ephesians* 1 **Quote 6, page 4** "who hears these words of Mine, and does them, will be likened to a wise man who built his house upon the rock. And the floods came, and the winds… [continues online] **read ›**
3. *No One Can Harm the Man Who Does Not Injure Himself* 1 **Quote 2, page 2** you like snowstorms, nor a crowd of disasters, nor any mixed mass of all the evils that come upon mankind, that can disturb even a little the man who is… [continues online] **read ›**
4. *Homilies on Hebrews* 11 (1885 English) **Quote 7, page 4** "in regard to those who are very firm, and philosophic, Christ with good reason made that statement, saying, Whosoever has built his house on a rock… [continues online] **read ›**
5. *Homilies on the Statues* 16 (1885 English) **Quote 8, page 4** "hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand… [continues online] **read ›**
6. *Homilies on Matthew* 24 **Quotes 3, 5, pages 2, 3** "For when we place virtue and vice side by side, we can know the difference more exactly. One had built on the rock, and the other on the sand. Therefore… [continues online] **read ›**
7. *Homilies on Matthew* 24 (1885 English) **Quote 1, page 2** "every one, says He, that hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be likened to a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand… [continues online] **read ›**

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Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “How did John Chrysostom explain the wise and foolish builders (Matthew 7:24–27)?” on August 16, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY