

The Sermon On The Mount

Memory Text: “And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” (Matthew 7:28, 29)

Setting The Stage: “Authority”: the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience.

“Having authority”: not dogmatically, but on His own authority, rather than quoting earlier expositors of the law, as the rabbis did in their teaching. Consider Jesus’ use of the phrase, “Verily I say unto you” (Matt. 5:18; 6:2, 5, 16; totaling 28 times in Matthew), “He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear” (Matt. 11:15), and “I say to you” (Matt. 5:22, 32, 39, 44; totaling 10 times in Matthew).

Who originally bestowed the blessings on the people? God was the One who pronounced the blessings (see Duet. 28). Jesus thought it not robbery to be equal with God (Phil. 2:6). What are you going to do about the claims of Jesus? He is either Lord (as He declares Himself to be), liar (saying what He is not), or lunatic (deluded in believing what He thought He was to be). He can only be one. Doesn’t it make sense that He can only be Lord?

Jesus is the promised “Seed”: “In the book of Exodus, we see God lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, “baptize” them in the Red Sea, bring them through the wilderness for 40 years, work signs and wonders, and meet with them personally on a mountaintop where He gives them His law. In the book of Matthew, we see Jesus come out of Egypt, be baptized in the Jordan River, go out into the wilderness for 40 days, work signs and wonders, and meet personally with Israel on a mountaintop where He amplifies this same law.”

Matthew wants his readers to know that in Jesus all the covenant promises were fulfilled. If we accept Christ as Savior then all the promises are for us well (see Gal. 3:16, 29)!

Sunday – Principles & Standards

Matthew 5-7; 7:12

It has been hailed as “the essence of Christianity.” It is known as the “Magna Carta [equivalent to U.S. Bill of Rights] of the Christian kingdom.” It is called the “Manifesto [a public declaration of policy and aims] of the King.” And rightly so.

Luke places the sermon after Jesus’ night of prayer, ordination of the twelve, and descent to the plain. The ordination was the first step in organizing the church – the

kingdom of grace (12 charter subjects), and the Sermon on the Mount is the inaugural address of the King where the conditions of citizenship are given, and the law of the new kingdom is issued along with its objectives. The Sermon on the Mount is the constitution of the kingdom of grace and you couldn't ask for a better constitution than this.

To fully appreciate the significance of the Sermon on the Mount it's important to understand not only each principle as it's stated, but also the relationship of each principle to the whole. The sermon is bound together by a unity that isn't seen to a casual reader. Notice this outline that helps us see the relationship of the various parts to the whole:

The Privileges & Responsibilities of Citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven

I. Perfection of Character/Christ-likeness the Goal of Citizenship (Chapter 5)

- How to become a citizen of the kingdom (5:3-12)
- Citizens of the kingdom as living representatives of its principles (5:13-16)
- The standard of conduct in the kingdom of heaven (5:17-47)
- Transformation and Christ-likeness the goal of citizenship (5:48)

II. Incentives to Right Living & Exemplary Citizenship (Chapter 6)

- Right motives in worship, service, and human relations (6:1-18)
- The aim of life: planning and living for the kingdom of heaven (6:19-24)
- God provides for those who make the kingdom first (6:25-34)

III. Privileges & Responsibilities of Citizenship (Chapter 7)

- The golden rule and the power to apply it (7:1-12)
- Obedience and self-discipline the test of citizenship (7:13-23)
- A call to decisive action (7:24-27)

How would you summarize the Sermon on the Mount? With what statement within the sermon would use to encapsulate it?

Matthew 7:12: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." Not, "Do onto others what they have done unto you." ☺

Jesus took a negative precept and transformed it into a positive one. This is the difference between true Christianity and all false religious systems that have a form but lack the power of the gospel. The golden rule takes supreme selfishness (what we would like others to do to us) and transforms it into supreme selflessness (what we would do for others). This is the glory of Christianity.

"Christ disappointed the hope of worldly greatness. In the Sermon on the Mount He sought to undo the work that had been wrought by false education, and to give His hearers a right conception of His kingdom and of His own character...Without

combating their ideas of the kingdom of God, He told them the conditions of entrance therein, leaving them to draw their own conclusions as to its nature. The truths He taught are no less important to us than to the multitude that followed Him. We no less than they need to learn the foundation principles of the kingdom of God.” (Desire of Ages, p. 299)

What would the world be like if everyone lived the Sermon on the Mount? “Thy will be done on earth as it is heaven.” Heaven on earth!

Monday – The Sermon Versus The Law

Matthew 5:17-19, 21, 22, 27, 28; James 2:10, 11; Romans 7:7

By the time Jesus preached this sermon, He had already completed His first missionary journey. Jesus had made two trips to Jerusalem. During the first visit He cleansed the temple. During the second visit He was arraigned before the Sanhedrin. Jesus was over halfway through His ministry by this time (summer of A.D. 29).

Is the Sermon on the Mount a new law that Jesus was introducing, to replace the Law of God? There were rumors that Jesus was undermining the law and the prophets, but the only thing Jesus was undermining was the wrong application made of the law by the religious leaders. Contrary to popular thought in Christendom today, God’s law is still valid.

Matthew 5:17-19: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but [strong antithesis] to fulfill [fill full of meaning]. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

In **Matt. 5:21-47** Jesus selects certain precepts from the Ten Commandments (vv. 21, 27) and from the laws of Moses (vv. 33, 38, 43), and seeks to contrast His interpretation of them with that of the religious teachers. Certainly Jesus didn’t come to abrogate the law but to shine a spotlight on it and amplify it. There was more to the law than what appeared on the surface.

Isaiah 42:21: “The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness’ sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honorable.”

Tuesday – The Righteousness Of The Scribes & Pharisees

Matthew 5:20; Romans 10:3; Matthew 4:17; John

Matthew 5:20. Jesus standard of righteousness was far higher and deeper than the Pharisees righteousness of that time. But how could that be? The religious leaders were meticulous Sabbath keepers and tithe payers. They kept themselves from unclean foods and made the necessary offerings at the temple. How could a person get any more righteous than that?

It was if the disciples were in the little league and were told that the least they must do is beat the San Francisco Giants in the World Series; or that they being sprinters in elementary school had to run faster than Usain Bolt or Florence Griffith-Joyner in the 100m. How would that be possible? The following verses give us a clue.

The religious leaders of Jesus day had a righteousness that consisted in external compliance to the letter of the law. They taught that a man is judged by a majority of his deeds. So if the good deeds outnumbered the bad ones you were considered righteous. To compensate for any wrong behavior they implemented a merit system that they believed was their passport to heaven. But Jesus taught that any effort to attain to righteousness through religiosity is less than worthless. What they needed was righteousness from outside themselves. They needed a change of heart.

Jesus' teachings went all the way to the heart (murder is to hate, adultery is to lust). He showed that righteousness by works could not save us, only righteousness by faith in His word.

Romans 10:3: "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God."

Matthew 4:17: "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matthew 7:7, 8: "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."

Wednesday – The Principles Of The Kingdom

Matthew 5:43-48

Matthew 5:48. The "P" word. It can scare the most devoted follower of Jesus out of his/her mind. But what is the goal of citizenship? Christ-likeness is the goal citizenship, just as fruit is the goal of planting a fruit tree.

"Be ye therefore." Christ introduces the conclusion to be drawn from the six illustrations of higher, spiritual application of the law in vv. 21-47. In all these illustrations Christ has shown that in the kingdom He came to establish it is the inner attitudes and motives that determine perfection of character, and not the outward acts alone.

“Perfect.” “One who has reached the goal,” or “complete.” Paul speaks of “them that are perfect” (1 Cor. 2:6) and of “as many as be perfect” (Phil. 3:15). At the same time he realizes that there are new heights to gain and that he himself has not reach perfection. Sanctification is the work of a lifetime.

“The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been, - just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents, - perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. If eternal life were granted on any condition short of this, then the happiness of the whole universe would be imperiled. The way would be open for sin, with all its train of woe and misery, to be immortalized.

“It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God’s law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God.

“But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ’s character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.

“More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. So you may say, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2:20. So Jesus said to His disciples, “It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” Matthew 10:20. Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works—works of righteousness, obedience. {SC 62.3}

“So we have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us.” (Steps to Christ, p. 63)

Thursday – Receiving The Words Of The Kingdom

Matthew 7:24-27; 13:44-52

Instruction is only as good as it is followed up on and lived. That’s why Jesus appealed to His audience to “hear and do” what He had just spoken (See Matt. 7:24-27).

The importance of this sermon can't be underestimated. If these words are lived through the power of the indwelling Spirit then we build our house on rock, being able to withstand the storms of life and the ultimate storm that will break upon this world prior to Christ's return. It's good to get excited about Bible prophecy to know the nature of the storm and the time of the storm, but we should be just as eager to know how to live through the storm as well.

In **Matt. 13:3-9; 18-23**, Jesus tells us, through the medium of a parable, that our eternal destiny hinges on how we receive God's Word and what we do with it. In the parable of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price, Jesus reveals the appropriate reaction of those who have heard His words:

Matthew 13:44: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."

Matthew 13:45, 46: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

The stories point out the great value each man placed on what he found, insomuch that they sold all that they had to receive it. It will take parting ways with Satan, sin, and self in order to receive all the benefits and blessings of salvation that come to us through Jesus Christ.

Summary: "The Sermon on the Mount may be viewed as the constitution of the kingdom of God. In it we find the basic principles that govern the kingdom and a road map for the journey of its citizens. To discover these and live by them is the challenge that confronts the followers of Jesus." Are you willing to take up this challenge each day until Jesus ushers in His everlasting kingdom?