

# A Study of the Sermon on the Mount Part 1

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## I. The Sermon Introduction

### A. A general introduction

1. The most quoted **series** of chapters in the Bible
2. **Matthew 5** - the most frequently quoted chapter in the Bible
3. A common text used for the **instruction** of **new believers** by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century church

### B. The geographical context

1. “Mount of the Beatitudes” – on the **northwestern** side of the Sea of Galilee
2. At a location that was **central** to the majority of Jesus’ **life** and **ministry**
3. Not a **religious** center, but rather a “back-water” of several small towns alongside major **trade routes** connecting the major centers of the world

### C. The religious/political context

1. People under severe **taxation** by Caesar and Herod
2. Controlled by a strong Roman **military** presence
3. Diverse religious **perspectives** on their Jewish **faith** and **nation** and the present **political** oppression
  - a. **Sadducees** – the liberals of the day
    - Ruling party in the **temple**
    - **Denied** the bodily resurrection
    - Had **compromised** both religious and political issues in order to stay in power
    - Power they possessed was really a **puppet** power under the uncompromising rule of Caesar’s local rulers, the sons of **Herod the Great**.
  - b. **Pharisees** – the conservatives of the day
    - Primary **opposition** party
    - Exercised a strong voice of **dissent**

- Strong on **tradition**, tracing their heritage from the revival of **Ezra** now over 400 years prior
  - **Retrenching** in the face of the present liberal, compromising leadership
- c. **Zealots** – the activists of the day
- **Actively** opposed the present order
  - Committed to “**doing something**”
  - Commonly resorted to “**terrorist-like activities**” in order to attempt a renewed self rule
- d. **Essenes** – the quietists of the day
- **Retreating** from the compromised society with an emphasis on personal and community **purity**
  - Hoping to **wait out** the present religious and political chaos
  - Expecting to be **vindicated** when the “new order” was established

#### D. The social context

1. A **subsistence** culture
2. Far removed from the religious or social **subsistence** of other regions of Israel and the Roman Empire
3. A large population in **desperate need**: diseased, lame, social outcasts, people generally considered to be “**less than**”

#### E. The “Kingdom” context

1. Jesus **heralding** the arrival of the “kingdom of the heavens”
2. The kingdom as sphere of **rule**
3. The terms “kingdom of **God**” and “kingdom of **heaven**” as a primary theme of the Gospel of Matthew used **53** times

#### F. The Hermeneutical context

1. **Absolutist** view – interpreted literally and applied universally and absolutely
2. **Modification** view – generally a default view – all views other than absolutist view are some version of the modification view
3. **Hyperbole** view – Jesus resorted to hyperbole in order to dramatize his demands

4. **General Principles** view – Jesus intent was to illustrate general principles
5. **Attitudes** not **Acts** view – Jesus’ primary concern was the inner spirit lying behind the acts
6. **Double Standard** view – an attempt to preserve the radical character of the sermon without alienating the masses
7. **Two Realms** view – establishes two spheres: 1) spiritual, where people are under obligation to obey the sermon and 2) temporal, where natural law or common sense law are to be obeyed
8. **Analogy** of scripture view – sermon to be interpreted by reference to other teachings in order to lessen the radical nature of the sermon
9. **Interim Ethic** view – sermon given with the belief that the final judgment was imminent and calling people to abandon “normal life” in order to prepare. Since Jesus was wrong, the sermon must now be translated into principles that work long-term.
10. Modern **Dispensationalist** view – believes that the Kingdom of God has been delayed with an age of pure “sermon ethic” to follow
11. **Repentance** view – sermon is a new law for which the primary purpose is to bring people to repentance
12. **Unconditional Divine Will** view – sermon is the actual will of God – eternal not interim. Disciples of Jesus accept responsibility for compromises and detours while keeping their eyes on the “will of God.”
13. What do we do? Read and reread the sermon until our hearts, wills and minds are steeped in this atmosphere. Then let us live with courage and humility as disciples of Jesus.

## A Study of the Sermon on the Mount Part 2

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### II. The Audience

- A. Occurs in the context of the **crowds**
- B. Jesus initiates a move to the **mountain**
- C. Jesus sits down and His **disciples** gather
  1. Disciples understood broadly as the **crowds**

2. **Crowds** still present at the **conclusion** of the sermon

### III. The Beatitudes

#### A. General observations

1. **Beatitude** – Latin word in Vulgate used for “ **blessing**”
2. Beatitudes are commonly understood to mean the series of **pronouncements** of blessing in Matthew 5

#### B. Several perspectives on the significance of the Beatitudes

1. A New Testament **counterpart** to the Old Testament Law – seen as having **nine** statements as compared to the “**Ten**” Commandments – **Sabbath** understood to be the missing component
2. A skeletal **outline** of the rest of the sermon
3. The actual **qualities** or condition of those **present** in the crowd of Jesus’ disciples
4. The pathway for **admission** into the Kingdom of Heaven
5. The **character qualities** of citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven

#### C. Significance of the recurring use of “**Blessed**”

1. Lacks, possibly due to familiarity, the **startling** quality most likely heard by the first audience
2. Terms we might use today include the following: **fortunate, privileged, lucky, favorites**
3. Pronouncement of blessing is on **qualities** and conditions that are not normally regarded as **desirable**
  - a. **Spiritual poverty**
  - b. **Mourners**
  - c. **Hungry**
  - d. **Persecuted**

### IV. Beatitudes as an overview of kingdom admissions and the character qualities of kingdom citizens

#### A. Kingdom admissions

1. Recognition of **personal spiritual** poverty **essential** to saving faith
  - a. A willingness to **agree** with God regarding my true condition
  - b. An openness for God to **act** on my behalf given my own **inability**

2. A genuine **sorrow** that leads to repentance and opens the door for Christ to come alongside (**comfort**)
  - a. Sorrow for **personal** sin and sinfulness
  - b. Sorrow for **mankind's** rejection of the true King
3. A **meekness**, or humble willingness to receive what is not deserved (**heirs**)
4. The awakening of a **desire** for things to be “the way they ought to be” (**righteousness**) and the resulting satisfaction of knowing the promise of a kingdom realized
5. The birth of **gentleness** leading to attitudes and acts of **mercy** towards a broken, diseased, rebellious and crushed humanity still **enslaved** to the kingdom of this world
6. A singleness of **heart** devoted towards a God who is **salvaging** the ruin of creation that opens our eyes to the truth and character of God
7. An active working to make **peace**
  - a. **Engaged** in the conflicts of the world
  - b. Calling people to be **reconciled** to God
  - c. **Facilitating** reconciliation within humanity
  - d. A **God-likeness** begins to appear in our character
8. Living in the **crossroads** of life (the intersection of the Kingdom of **God** and the Kingdom of this **world**) brings suffering
  - a. Suffering is for the sake of **moving** things towards the “way things ought to be”
  - b. Suffering is specifically for the sake of **Christ** and is shared by Him
9. Those who suffer are then doubly **blessed** – a mark of **authenticity** of citizenship in the kingdom of the heavens

B. Kingdom qualities (Matt. 5:3-12)

1. Poverty of spirit / possessors of the kingdom (Mat 5:3)
2. Mourning / comfort (Matt 5:4)
3. Meekness / heirs of the earth (Matt 5:5)
4. Appetites / filled (Matt 5:6)
5. Merciful / recipients of mercy (Matt 5:7)
6. Pure hearts / vision of God (Matt 5:8)
7. Peacemakers / children of God (Matt 5:9)

# A Study of the Sermon on the Mount Part 3

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## Introduction

One purpose of the character qualities described in the Beatitudes just prior to this passage is influence. We as citizens of the kingdom of the heavens are commissioned to make disciples, or extend the realm of Christ's rule. To be effective, we must first of all "BE" this kind of people in order to influence the world in which we live. The effect of what we say will be significantly enhanced or obscured by what kind of people we are.

### I. Kingdom relationships (Matt 5:13-48)

#### A. Relationships between kingdom citizens and society (Matt 5:13-16)

##### 1. Illustrated by salt (Matt 5:13)

- a. **Positive** in nature
- b. **Essential** to life
- c. Affects by **contact**
- d. Consumed in its **mission**

##### 2. Illustrated by light (Matt 5:14-16)

- a. **Awakens**
- b. **Exposes**
- c. **Illuminates** and **informs**
- d. **Life-giving**

##### 3. Contrasted to other perspectives (implied, not specified)

- a. **Sadducees** – religious compromisers in order to retain power
- b. **Pharisees** – focused inwardly trying to get it right themselves
- c. **Zealots** – religiously empowered for political ends
- d. **Essenes** – isolated from society for the sake of "purity"

#### B. Relationship between Christ and the law (Matt 5:17-48)

##### 1. Key Terms

- a. **Law** and **prophets**: *entire Old Testament*
- b. **Destroy**: *to loosen and so by implication to demolish*
- c. **Fulfill**: *to bring to its intended end*
- d. **Righteousness**: *the way things ought to be*

## 2. Relationship summarized

- a. Harmony of **purpose** – to communicate the intention of God for His creation so we have the knowledge required for a life lived well – “That it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth.”
- b. Christ brings a righteousness that **exceeds** – supersedes as the sun does the stars – knows no ultimate limits
- c. Christ brings the law to its **fulfillment**
  - **Moral** law – fulfilled and equipped for a higher life by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus
  - **Judicial** law – nation state culminated in a “kingdom not of this world” that was foreshadowed by an earthly kingdom in Israel
  - **Ceremonial** law – person and work of Jesus was the reality of which the ceremonial law was a shadow
- d. Contrasted to the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees – See attached chart comparing the “Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees” and the righteousness of the Kingdom of Christ

## 3. Key Errors

- a. Christ came and **expanded** the law
  - Merely **reinforced** its teachings
  - Merely **expanded** its scope
  - Paul created the **theology** of Christianity
- b. Christ came and **abolished** the law
  - **Law** was Old Testament/**Grace** is New Testament
  - Leads to **antinomianism** (a lawless lifestyle)

## 4. Several Key Ideas

- a. God’s law is **absolute**.
- b. Christ did not come to **modify** or **minimize** the law.

- c. Christ came to bring **all** of the Old Testament to its **culmination**.
- 5. We believe that the ultimate authority for truth is found in the *person* and *character* of Jesus Christ; as **foretold** in the Old Testament, **revealed** in the Gospels and **explained** in the epistles. *FBEP*
- 6. Relationship illustrated (Matt 5:21-48)
  - a. Regarding **murder** (Matt 5:21-26)
  - b. Regarding **adultery** (Matt 5:27-32)
  - c. Regarding **oaths** (Matt 5:33-37)
  - d. Regarding **retaliation** and **love** (Matt 5:38-48)

## A Study of the Sermon on the Mount Part 4

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### I. Kingdom Worship (Matthew 6:1-18)

- A. The comprehensive sphere of worship
  - 1. Mankind **created** to be worshippers
  - 2. Mankind lives in **perpetual** worship
  - 3. Worship defined as the realm of primary **motivation** for all facets of life
- B. The motive as indicative of worship
  - 1. To be **praised** by man
  - 2. For the **pleasure** of God
- C. Reward determined by motive
  - 1. Reward given by **man** – temporal, fleeting and fickle
  - 2. Reward given by **God** – eternal, enduring and limitless
- D. The three spheres of worship
  - 1. **Alms**- deeds of righteousness done before a watching world
    - a. Give without **calculation**
    - b. Give without **announcement**
  - 2. Prayer – the contextualizing of our desires to the Father
    - a. **Intimacy** with the Father
    - b. **Simplicity** of communication
    - c. Content that reflects God's **sovereignty** and our **surrender** to His rule; our **dependence** on Him for sustenance both physically and spiritually

3. Fasting – the disciplined surrender of the flesh to the purposes of God
  - a. To be a **natural** part of our lives – not a morbid “put-on”
  - b. To be an extension of joyful **surrender** to the Father
  - c. To be done as a **means** of exposing the needs of our hearts and **surrendering** to the gift of grace

## II. Kingdom values (reflectors of our worship) (Matt 6:19-34)

### A. Values indicated by the location of treasure

1. Only two treasure **chests** (Matt 6:19-20)
  - a. **Earth** – realm of the temporal
  - b. **Heaven** – realm of the eternal
2. **Singularity** of our treasure (Matt 6:21-24)
  - a. Location of our treasure indicates location of our **heart**
  - b. Location of our treasure indicates **master**
  - c. **Impossibility** of having two treasures

### B. Values tested by the “worry factor” (Matt 6:25-26)

1. Futility of **worry** regarding food illustrated by birds
  - a. **Inability** to plant, harvest and store
  - b. **Ability** of the Father to care for them
  - c. Greater value of God’s children inspires **faith**, the deterrent to worry
2. Futility of worry regarding clothes illustrated by flora (Matt 6:28-32)
  - a. Inability of **flowers** to work and spin
  - b. Exquisite **beauty** of God’s provision unequaled even by the wealthiest
  - c. Brief life-span of flora compared to mankind encourages **faith**
3. Futility of worry regarding our bodies (Matt 6:27)
  - a. Our inability to shape even the **temporal** circumstances of life definitively
  - b. Temporal aspects of life the object of **pursuit** for the “Gentiles”
  - c. Worry **borrow**s tomorrow’s potential trouble
4. Superiority of trust (Matt 6:33-34)
  - a. Places focus on **eternal** realities
  - b. Uses the **material** realm to forge our faith
  - c. Leads to true **freedom**

# A Study of the Sermon on the Mount Part 5

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## III. Kingdom Life (Matthew 7:1-28)

### A. A life of discernment (Matt 7:1-6)

#### 1. The danger of **self-righteous** judging

- a. A new and higher standard of righteousness potentially a **measuring stick** to be used on our fellows
- b. A critical judgmentalism often indicative of **declining** spiritual health
- c. Often results in **battered** brothers rather than **bettered** brothers

#### 2. The importance of **self-judging**

- a. Primary focus of Sermon ethic is on **character, motivation** and **intention**
- b. Heart issues can be expressed in **multiple** ways and **diverse** behaviors
- c. God knows our **hearts** and helps us discern the thoughts and intents of our hearts, but we are seriously **limited** in knowing these things about others.

#### 3. The safety of **Integrity**

- a. Place ourselves honestly before the expectation of Christ, deal with **personal** character and behaviors
- b. In the spirit of the Beatitudes, recognize **personal** need and failure
- c. Discernment protects the **beauty** and reputation of what is truly **valuable**

### B. A life of confidence (Matt 7:7-11)

#### 1. Confidence in the Father's **abilities**

- a. **Ask** – request in order to receive
- b. **Seek** – pursue in order to find
- c. **Knock** – persist in order to access

#### 2. Confidence in the Father's **goodness**

- a. **Unregenerate** fathers give good things to their children
- b. A perfectly **good** Father, knows how to give good things

### C. A life of **Focus** (Matt 7:12-14)

#### 1. The **singleness** of love

- a. Same standard for others as for **self**
  - b. Fulfills the **intent** of the Old Testament
2. A restricted Kingdom **entrance**
- a. Narrow admissions gate and difficult path leading to **life**
  - b. Contrasted to an easily accessible entrance and easy path leading to **destruction**
3. A **minority** Kingdom
- a. The majority will always be on the **easiest** path to destruction
  - b. Only a minority will enter the **Kingdom**
- D. A life of **Evidences** (Matt 7:15-20)
1. Inevitable **counterfeits** of the genuine
- a. Observation of **fruits** born reveals true quality of the tree
    - i. Healthy **tree** = healthy **fruit**
    - ii. Diseased **tree** = bad **fruit**
  - b. Careful observation **reveals** the true character of prophets
  - c. Failure to produce good fruit results in the **destruction** of the tree
2. Dual **dangers** in counterfeiting fruit
- a. Trying to **replicate** the kind of fruit good trees produce without becoming good trees
  - b. Claiming the **status** of good tree without ever producing the kind of fruit good trees produce
- E. A life of **Obedience** (Matt 7:21-28)
1. Rooted in a **relationship**
- a. A professed relationship alone is **inadequate**
  - b. A relationship that produces obedience indicates true relational **knowing**
  - c. Relationship provides context for a genuine **obedience**
2. Expressed in **wisdom**
- a. **Wisdom** - truth applied well to life decisions
  - b. Acts in **harmony** with the way things really are
  - c. **Endures** the inevitable hardship and testing of life
3. Contrasted to **foolishness**

- a. Foolishness – values present convenience
- b. Acts in ways that seem most feasible in the moment
- c. Fails the inevitable hardship and testing of life