

Lesson 237

The Sermon on the Mount – An Introduction

Story Elements



- **Text:** Matthew 5:1-7:27 (also Luke 6:20-49)
- **Setting:** circa AD 28, atop a mountain somewhere near the sea of Galilee.
- **Characters:** God, Jesus, and many disciples
- **Plot:** Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Mount, in which he teaches about life in the Kingdom of Heaven.
- **Key word(s):** “*kingdom of _____*” – This is a phrase that describes the rule and reign of God in the heart of a person.
- **Climax: *Matthew 7:24-27*** - In the final verses of Jesus’ sermon we see a dramatic ending – an ultimatum is given: *every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not...* Here we see that Jesus’ is not adding a new system of teaching to all the other rabbis – he is the Law Giver whose truth separates between eternal life or eternal judgment.

Context

1. While healing multitudes in Galilee, Jesus went up into a mountain, sat down, and taught his disciples.
 - (a) The sermon that Jesus preaches is a summary of what he had been preaching during his earthly ministry.

Mark 1:14 ...Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, **15** And saying, *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*

Matthew 3:2 And saying, **Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**

APPLICATION → Matthew Henry states, “His text was, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* This is a sermon on the former part of that text, showing what it is to *repent*; it is to reform, both in judgment and _____;”¹

- (b) Matthew states that *his disciples came unto him*, but we should remember that previously great crowds had also come unto him for healing (Matt. 4:24-25). Though Jesus’ words are aimed at his disciples, many others, though less devoted, would need to hear his clear teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven, and his strong denunciations of pharisaical _____.

Comparison

2. The Sermon on the Mount has often been related to Moses receiving the Law on Mt. Sinai.
 - (a) Matthew Henry compares and contrasts the two this way:

“Christ preached this sermon, which was an exposition of the law, upon a mountain, because upon a *mountain* the law was given; and this was also a solemn promulgation of the Christian law. But observe the difference: when *the law was given*, the Lord *came down* upon the *mountain*; now the Lord *went up*: then, he spoke *in thunder and lightning*; now, *in a still small voice*: then the people were ordered to keep their distance; now they are invited to _____: a blessed change!”²

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1627.

² *Ibid.*, 1628.

(b) Edersheim believes that the Beatitudes correspond to the Ten Commandments:

“These [Beatitudes] present to us, not the observance of the Law written on stone, but the realisation of that Law which, by the Spirit, is written on the fleshly _____ of the heart. These Ten Commandments in the Old Covenant were preceded by a Prologue. The ten Beatitudes have, characteristically, not a Prologue but an Epilogue, which corresponds to the Old Testament Prologue.”³

Controversy

3. Many skeptics and enemies of Christianity are fond of saying that Jesus merely regurgitated rabbinic sayings in the Sermon on the Mount. Nothing could be further from the truth.
 - (a) While many phrases that Jesus used were commonly used in rabbinic teaching (e.g. “poor in spirit” or “kingdom of heaven”), Jesus teaches these concepts in a way _____ to rabbinical teaching.
 - (b) Edersheim gives several examples of similar language between Christ and the Talmud while showing the incredible disparity between the two. One example will suffice us:

Regarding Matt 7:14 “which speaks of the fewness of those saved, and also verse 26, which refers to the absolute need of doing, as evidence of sonship. We compare with this what the Talmud says of Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai, whose worthiness was so great, that during his whole lifetime no rainbow was needed to ensure immunity from a flood... The same Rabbi was wont to say: ‘I have seen the children of the world to come, and they are few. If there are three, I and my son are of their number; if they are two, I and my son are they.’”⁴

APPLICATION → The student of the Bible will read the Sermon on the Mount and immediately understand the Lord is not mimicking rabbinism’s language but dismantling its _____.

4. There are some hyper-dispensationalists that teach that the Sermon on the Mount is not relevant for Christians because it was preached to a Jewish crowd. Such theories are nonsense and should be rejected. The purpose of the Sermon on the Mount was not to guide the Jew to legal perfection but to teach the disciple of Christ how to live the Kingdom Life. There is not a gospel for the Jew and one for the Gentile – there is only one gospel, which is _____. (Rom. 1:6)

Content

5. The following is a simple outline of the Sermon of the Mount that will help us to follow the Savior’s preaching over the next few weeks:
 - (a) The **Character** of the Citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 5:3-16)
 - (b) The **Conduct** of the Citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 5:17-7:12)
 - (c) The **Commitment** of the Citizens of the Kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:13-27)

APPLICATION → *And he opened his mouth, and taught them...* “When Jesus opens his mouth, let us open our ears and _____.” – Charles Spurgeon

Answer Key: Key word(s): “heaven” • 1. → practice; b) legalism • 2. a) draw near; b) tables • 3. a) contrary; → legalism • 4. Christ’s • 5. → hearts

³ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971) Book III, 529.

⁴ Ibid. 540.