

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

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THE BEATITUDES

(Matthew 5:1-4)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. No discourse or sermon, which the Lord ever preached, has captivated the world like the Sermon on the Mount. Friends and foes of Christianity have written volumes on this discourse. Often there has been more heat than light; yet all would agree that for moral and ethical principles the Sermon on the Mount has never been surpassed.
- B. The key to the Sermon on the Mount is found in 5:1-2. Multitudes of people were following the Lord Jesus for the miracles of healing he had done among them (4:24, 25). For reasons unknown to us Jesus left the multitudes, went up into a mountain and began to instruct His disciples. The disciples may have included more than the original twelve but the important thing is that these were believers. They had by faith trusted in Jesus Christ, so whatever interpretation one holds on the Sermon on the Mount must be related to people who have already experienced the new birth. Secondly, it says that Jesus Christ taught them (5:2), so the Sermon on the Mount has something to do with ethical and moral teaching for regenerate or saved people.
- C. There have been many viewpoints on why Christ preached the Sermon on the Mount but they can be boiled down to five.

1. Ethical Teaching For The Whole World: This view has been held by the liberals who speak of the Sermon on the Mount as their manifesto of salvation for individuals and society. As one leading liberal said "All theology is contained in the Sermon on the Mount. If we could live by it all would be all right."

OBJECTIONS: (1) Written to disciples; (2) No mention of the gospel in the whole sermon; (3) Liberals have a work system if the Sermon on the Mount brings salvation.

2. Law To Bring Conviction of Sin: Some scholars see the Sermon on the Mount is filled with law; therefore they conclude that it was preached to bring about a conviction of sin so His hearers would repent and turn to God.

OBJECTION: The sermon is directed towards disciples.

3. Law In The Millennial Kingdom: Because the Lord has just offered the kingdom to the Jews based on their repentance (4:17), He now instructs them on the law of the Kingdom when it is established on the earth.

OBJECTIONS: (1) If this is the law for the Kingdom Age why did He tell His disciples to pray "Thy Kingdom Come?" (6:10); (2) why will believers be persecuted for righteousness if the future kingdom is a time of blessing? (5:10, 11); (3) Why does Christ speak about entering the kingdom? (7:13, 21); (4) Teachings on divorce, swearing, false prophets, poverty and temptation are all through the Sermon on the Mount and there will be none of this in the Millennium.

4. Christian Living: Some scholars take this just as rules for Christian living without putting it in its historical context of the offer of the earthly kingdom.
5. Principles For Living Until The Kingdom Is Set Up: The best interpretation is the sermon was preached by the Lord to instruct the disciples as to how they should live in the interim preceding the kingdom. The Lord is saying the kingdom is at hand (4:11) -- now here is how you ought to live in view of the coming kingdom. This does not mean the sermon has no relevance to Christians today. The great difference is in the proximity of the kingdom. Whereas the disciples lived with the kingdom looming over them, we do not know where Christ shall return and when the kingdom shall be made manifest. Christians today are to apply these truths of the Sermon on the Mount to their lives as children of the kingdom as they wait for God to establish His kingdom on this earth. The sermon is ethical and more teaching for any group of disciples waiting for the kingdom to be established. NOTE: These teachings would certainly apply to all Christians today, for the disciples, who heard this message in a few short years would become part of the Church, the body of Christ. Surely they would not overthrow these teachings of our Lord.

II. BACKGROUND TO THE BEATITUDES

- A. Beatitudes” comes from the Latin meaning the blessings, referring to the 9 blessings of Matt. 5:3-12. You will notice that each beatitude has three parts. First, there is a pronouncement of blessing. Second, here is a reference to some basic virtue; and third, there is a description of Christ’s coming kingdom.
- B. Notice that each Beatitude also has some description of the future earthly kingdom. You will notice that each one concludes with something like this: “theirs is the kingdom of heaven; they shall be filled, they shall inherit the earth, they shall be comforted,” and so on. There is both a present and a future aspect to these rewards for faithful living. Every believer is a child of the yet future kingdom, even those in His church. The Church shall help rule (Rev. 5:10) but it will also inherit the kingdom as spiritual seed of Abraham (Rom. 8:17; Eph. 5:5).

POINT: As Christians seek to apply the Beatitudes to life; this gives them the assurance that they are Christians. Also they can experience in a spiritual sense something of yet future earthly kingdom.

- C. Not only does each Beatitude contain a pronouncement of blessing and some description of the kingdom, it also refers to basic virtues such as meekness, mercy, purity and so on.

NOTE: Christians, who are children of the yet future kingdom, when they display these wonderful virtues, give a preview to the non-Christian world as to what the future kingdom is going to be like. For all these virtues that the Christian experiences spiritually now will be completely manifested in the future kingdom.

NOTE: These virtues, and for that matter, all the Sermon on the Mount, tell us the difference between the saved and the non-saved. This is very important in our day when the world has come into the Church and the Church has become very worldly. The distinctions have become blurred and it is hard to determine who is a true

Christian. But those who have trusted Christ and manifest these virtues are the children of God.

III. POVERTY OF SPIRIT: “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

- A. Christ Jesus is not emphasizing physical poverty here but poverty in spirit. There is no particular virtue by spirituality in being poor physically. This word in the Greek means to be of absolute and abject destitution. It describes a man who has nothing at all. A person who is characterized by poverty of spirit is one who recognizes that in God’s sight he is nothing. He is gentle and has a humbleness of spirit, and he realizes his utter need of God in all of life. A humble dependence on God.
- B. The world places confidence in self-reliance and self-expression, putting emphasis upon man’s innate power to lift himself up. But to have spiritual poverty one is to be spiritually emptied -- emptied of self-confidence, self-importance and self-righteousness. One must be emptied of self before he can be filled with the Spirit.
- C. To be poor in spirit means a complete absence of pride, a complete absence of self-assurance and of self-reliance. It means a consciousness that we are nothing in the presence of God. It is nothing, then, that we can produce; it is nothing that we can do in ourselves. It is just this tremendous awareness of our utter nothingness as we come face to face with God.

POINT: When we realize our nothingness then the words of Christ become real, “For without me ye can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

- D. Those Christians who evidence their salvation by a spirit of spiritual poverty are guaranteed a place in Christ’s future kingdom.

IV. MOURNERS: “*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*”

- A. The second Beatitude is a benediction on the mourners. The word mourn is the strongest word for sorrow in the Greek language. But what does the Lord mean by those that mourn? He does not mean the crybabies, sob sisters or the emotionally miserable, nor is He referring to those who go around with a long face and a pained expression. He is looking at a man who has a sense of bereavement because of his spiritual failures. He recognizes his shortcomings and falls down before God in sorrow. The Arabs have a proverb, which says, “All sunshine makes a desert.” This is true. A man who never sees his failure before God and has never mourned has never come into contact with God. His life is a spiritual wasteland.
- B. The world says be jovial and laugh away your cares, but the Lord says to mourn for our spiritual inadequacies. Only when the Christian sees his own sinfulness will he turn to Christ for help.
- C. The Christian has much to be grieved over. The sins, which he now commits -- both of omission and commission -- are a sense of daily grief to him, or should be, and will be, if his conscience is kept tender. An ever-deepening discovery of

the depravity of his nature, the plague of his heart, the sea of corruption within ever polluting all that he does -- deeply exercises him. He becomes conscious of his surging unbelief, the wellings of pride, the coldness of love, the insidiousness of deep-seated prejudices and his insufficiency of fruit and he cries, "*O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?*" His mourning leads him to Christ for daily cleansing.

NOTE: One of the basic reasons that God is not blessing His Church today is because of her failure to repent of her sins and serve God in humbleness.

- D. Yet the Christian does not stop at his own sins for he mourns over the sins of others. He is concerned about the state of society, and the state of the world as he sees the moral muddle and unhappiness and suffering of mankind. He sees and hears of wars and knows that it is all due to sin. He mourns for the world and longs to see those in it come to Jesus Christ at any personal cost to his own reputation.
- E. The mourners shall be comforted by God now and will find complete comfort in the future kingdom, which is coming. The man, who abhors his sin, sees the terribleness of his rebellion, understands that sin breaks the Savior's heart and turns to Christ, and finds the comfort of God in daily living.

NOTE: Kingdom will be a time of conflict. (Isa. 66:13; Lk. 2:25)

V. **CONCLUSION**

- A. If you are here this mourning without Christ, your sin has separated you from God and you will have no part in His earthly kingdom or His heavenly Kingdom, except you recognize your sin and turn to Jesus Christ.
- B. Only judgment awaits those who refuse to receive Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour.