

JESUS, ISRAEL & PROPHECY

Week 3 – Proclamation of the King; the Sermon on the Mount

Exodus 19:16-20

God, from the mountain top, gave the children of Israel the law – the 613 commandments – and established Israel as a nation. God the Father spoke to Israel from the mountain.

Matt. 5:1-2 – “*And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. ² Then He opened His mouth and taught them. . . .*”

On Mount Sinai, God gave the children of Israel the letter of the law – spelling out the 613 commandments (moral/civil/ceremonial). The law was good; it was holy because it reflects Who God is. The law was from God. The law can only condemn; it cannot save. Romans 3:20 – “*Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*” The law shows us our need of a Savior. Gal. 3:24 - “. . . the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”

On the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee rises the “mount of the Beatitudes” on which, according to tradition, Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount. There has been no hard archaeological evidence establishing this as the actual site. The topography of the land, however, gives testimony to its likely authenticity. The gentle slope descending from the top of this particular plateau forms a natural amphitheater that could easily accommodate masses of people in relative comfort. The acoustics are such that a single man without the aid of modern-day amplification could easily address a large crowd and be heard and seen. No other area around the circumference of the lake possesses these particular characteristics. It was here, it is thought, that Jesus presented the spirit of the law - the inner condition of mind and heart. In the Sermon on the Mount, we don’t find basic, fundamental law for law cannot produce the state of blessedness upon which Jesus focuses. The quality of life that Jesus sets forth is the product of grace alone. Jesus carries His listeners beyond the letter of the law to the true spirit and intent of the law. He describes a lifestyle which no human being could live in his own power. Thus, the life described by Jesus in this sermon is a life of grace and glory which comes from God alone. The Sermon on the Mount presents a radically different agenda than what the nation of Israel expected from the Messiah. This great message tells us how we should live when Jesus is our Lord. The Sermon on the Mount lays out for the follower of Jesus what daily living looks like with Jesus as Lord. The Jews had been focusing on the letter of the law. They were astonished at Jesus’ teaching (Matt. 7:28) as He preached the spiritual implications of the law. The Millennial/Messianic Kingdom was to be a rule of righteousness (Psa. 2; Isa. 2; Isa. 11; Jer. 33:11; Hab. 2:14; etc.) as well as a rule of peace. It demanded much of subjects as well as providing much for them.

Matt. 4:25-Matt. 5:1-2 – “*Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan. And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. ² Then He opened His mouth and taught them. . . .*” The occasion for the Sermon on the Mount comes after the commencement of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee. He had been healing all kinds of diseases and

gathering a large following of people – not just from within Galilee, but from without as well. During this time Jesus had been teaching and preaching in synagogues.

The lives of the common people of Jesus' day revolved around two oppressive and often opposing forces: the pronouncements of their Jewish religious leaders who controlled everything they, the common people, believed; the imperial power of Rome who controlled everything the Jewish people did. Jesus spoke to His people who were beaten down, intimidated, and made to feel utterly hopeless. When Jesus said that it's not the religiously self-righteous but rather "the poor in spirit" who will inherit the kingdom of heaven. . . or that it's not the militarily mighty but rather the "meek who shall inherit the earth," the people couldn't believe their ears. They had never heard such pronouncements!

Jesus sat – He took on the customary posture of teaching as a Rabbi would teach. Sitting was the symbol of a Rabbi's teaching authority and a signal to the people that the very first statement out of his mouth should be memorized. Jesus' disciples came to Him. Jesus' words were directed toward the disciples and the multitudes that gathered. By the end of the Sermon on the Mount, the people were amazed (Matt. 7:28). The first part of the Sermon, and the part on which we're going to focus, has been labeled as the Beatitudes – the "blessings." The Beatitudes can be understood as BE-attitudes – what we should "be" as opposed to what we should "do." These are the attitudes that should rule our lives. These are the attitudes that characterize believers as we live under Jesus' rule. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave the people the proper interpretation of the righteousness which the Law of Moses demanded – righteousness that comes from God alone – not righteousness that we attempt to muster up from within ourselves. God's righteousness is the righteousness necessary for entering the Kingdom! Thus Jesus declares in Matt. 5:20, ". . . *unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*" Jesus called the disciples and the people to a deeper, more radical holiness – a holiness which involves an internal conformity to the spirit of the law rather than merely an external compliance to the letter of the law. Sinners are capable of nothing but a flawed and imperfect righteousness (Isa. 64:6). Therefore the only righteousness by which sinners may be justified is the perfect righteousness of God that is imputed to those who believe (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:5).

Regarding the timeframe that the Sermon on the Mount addresses, there are those who would say that in this sermon, Jesus taught about the Kingdom of God that is yet to come. There are those who agree with that statement but then add that the sermon has application for us today. I understand the sermon for the future physical/earthly kingdom on earth that God promised Israel; however, I also understand how there can be application today. I do believe, though, that the primary application is for the future kingdom days. When Jesus talks about the kingdom of heaven, He talks both in future and present terms. Jesus is talking about the character of the genuine citizens of His promised kingdom. He is talking about the character of those who are true believers in our Lord Jesus. Only true believers will go into the literal, physical, earthly kingdom of God (Matt. 25:31-40).

Dr. Charles Ryrie of Dallas Theological Seminary said, “If a businessman today practiced the Sermon on the Mount, he would go broke.” We could say if a church today followed New Testament principles, there would be many who would say we, as the church, wouldn’t exist. You couldn’t exist doing the things the NT says that believers are to “be”. BUT, that’s exactly what Christianity is about. It’s about God doing the impossible through those who obey Him, through His Spirit and His grace as He works in us.

There is a certain pattern in the Beatitudes. If you look at Matt. 5:3, Jesus says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.” This is in the present tense. When you drop down to Matt. 5:10, Jesus says, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.” We have, again, the present tense. Matt. 5:4-9 are in the future tense.

One of the key words we must deal with is the word, “blessed,” because it is so often repeated. “Blessed” literally means “happy, fortunate, blissful.” The context speaks of more than a surface emotion. Jesus was describing the divinely bestowed well-being that blesses only the faithful.

Matt. 5:3 – *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

The poverty Matthew is speaking of is abject poverty; and it is poverty in spirit – spiritual bankruptcy. When we declare spiritual bankruptcy, there is nothing left in the bank. There are NO assets. There is nothing. There is nothing to protect or preserve. Spiritual poverty is the kind of poverty we have as mankind. Theologically it’s called depravity. Man has nothing to offer God that will equal, earn, or merit God’s righteousness.

- Romans 3:10 – *“There is none righteous, no not one;”*
- Romans 3:11 – *“There is none who understands, there is none who seeks after God.”*
- Romans 3:12 – *“They have all turned aside, they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, not one.”*
- Romans 3:13 – *“Their throat is open tomb, with their tongues they have practiced deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips.”*
- Romans 3:14 – *“Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.”*
- Romans 3:15 – *“Their feet are swift to shed blood.”*
- Romans 3:16 – *“Destruction and misery are in their ways;”*
- Romans 3:17 – *“And the way of peace they have not known.”*
- Romans 3:18 – *“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*

The multitudes who gathered on the mount lived under the burden of requirements they could not meet. They were spiritually bankrupt. When you’re poor in spirit – when you have nothing left in and of yourself, you are blessed because God’s blessings can come upon you. Throughout the OT, this was the message. Hab. 2:4 – *“The just shall live by faith”* – not by works – not by external compliance. In the OT we read of OT saints (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Daniel) who trusted in God alone for their salvation – who embraced the

promises of the Messiah Who was yet to come. It's one thing to be depraved. It's another thing to be well aware of it – to recognize that apart from God's grace and mercy we are hopelessly lost in our sins.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit” is the foundation for all that is said in the Beatitudes. It is the foundation because spiritual poverty is the prerequisite for eternal life. Nobody gets into heaven who thinks they have cause to be there. We don't even, in and of ourselves, recognize our poverty. That too is a work of God's grace. We have nothing. It is all of God's mercy; it is all of His grace. Acknowledging our spiritual bankruptcy is a prerequisite for salvation.

Acknowledging our spiritual bankruptcy is a prerequisite for Christian living. We need to be very careful that we don't say to ourselves, “OK, I'm saved. I've already realized that I'm bankrupt. So, I'm good to go.” Be careful!! In Deut. 9:1-6 - *“Hear, O Israel: You are to cross over the Jordan today, and go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself, cities great and fortified up to heaven,² a people great and tall, the descendants of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you heard it said, ‘Who can stand before the descendants of Anak?’*

³ *Therefore understand today that the LORD your God is He who goes over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has said to you.* ⁴ *“Do not think in your heart, after the LORD your God has cast them out before you, saying, ‘Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land’; but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out from before you.* ⁵ *It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.* ⁶ *Therefore understand that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people.”*

Matt. 5:4 - *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”* In Romans 8:18, Paul speaks about the sufferings and the groanings of life – that they exist – because we are part of a fallen world. When we're not mourning, something is wrong with that picture. Mourning ought to be an ongoing part of life. Mourning is the appropriate response to sin. Ongoing mourning leads to repentance for that sin. We need to ask God to change us daily! Repentance is not just a feeling word – an emotion word. Repentance is an action word. We need to be sorrowful for our sin and ask God to change our direction, our mind, our perspective. We would not rejoice and praise God as we ought apart from the mourning that comes in response to sin.

Matt. 5:5 - *“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”* We often equate meekness with weakness. Meekness and weakness are opposites. Meekness means power under control. “What makes us mad?” The answer to that question will go a long way into providing us with the insight to determine if ours is a power out of control or a power under control.

Matt. 5:6 – *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, or they shall be filled.”*
 Jesus is not talking about mere hunger, but about starving after righteousness. Jesus is the only One Who can satisfy. The Pharisees and their self-righteousness were a “turn off” to many. Jesus, God in the flesh, Emmanuel, is offering satisfaction through Him Who is true righteousness. Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, God presented Himself as the only One Who could satisfy (Psa. 43; Psa. 90). As water and food is to the body, so righteousness is to the spiritual life. We as humans hunger and thirst not only for food but for satisfaction in life. (Isa. 55:1-2; Jer. 2:13)

Moses hungered; he desired to be a holy man (Ex. 33:13). Nehemiah hungered after righteousness (Neh. 1:6, 11). Daniel sought to please God (Dan. 6:5, 22). Where are we in regard to thirsting after righteousness? For believers, when we come to faith in Jesus, when we trust Him alone for our salvation, we are filled and satisfied. All too often, however, that is where hungering and thirsting stops. Hungering and thirsting is continual. We need to hunger and thirst, actually starve, for righteousness in our lives. It is a day-by-day happening that is a continual part of our lives. We should yearn to continue to feed that desire to satisfy our lives – with righteousness. We are called to holy living as believers. We are called to live lives of holiness to our God, which is a sweet smelling aroma to Him (II Cor. 2:14).

Matt. 5:7 – *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”*

Those who have already received mercy will show mercy. It is mercy to be emptied of your pride and brought to poverty of spirit. It is mercy to be brought to mourning over your spiritual condition. It is mercy to receive the grace of meekness and to become gentle. It is mercy to be made hungry and thirsty after righteousness. Therefore, this one who is expected to show mercy is one who has already received it.

The merciful one will show it to those who are weaker and poorer. The merciful one will always look for those who weep and mourn. The merciful one will be forgiving to others, and will always look to restore broken relationships. The merciful one will be merciful to the character of other people, and choose to think the best of them whenever possible. The merciful one will not expect too much from others. The merciful one will be compassionate to those who are outwardly sinful. The merciful one will care for the souls of all men.

Matt. 5:8 – *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”*

To have a pure heart is to live a life that is pleasing to God – for the purpose of God – having a single-minded devotion to God.

The initial use of the word “pure” in the Bible is the sense of “clean” as opposed to “unclean.” It is impossible for us to have a pure heart apart from God’s grace. A pure heart is a gift from God. A pure heart is evidenced by the way we live. In I Peter 4:2 we read that a person devoted to the Lord no longer lives the rest of his life in the flesh following after the lusts of men, but lives for the will of God! And, nothing but the sight of God will satisfy the longings of our heart! To see God means to enjoy God’s presence in our life now – looking forward to seeing Him face-to-face when we die! (I John 3:2-3; I Peter 1:6-8; Job. 42:5)

Matt. 5:9 – *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”*

“Shalom” – peace; repairing that which is broken. “Peacemakers” – repairing what is broken among family members. The peacemaker possesses the desire for God to bestow His very best on another.

Matt. 5:10 – *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

II Timothy 3:12 – *“... all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”*

Jesus died the death I should have died! Persecution in one form or another – the mockery of family or friends, unfair treatment at the office, the loss of a job due to standing up for the Lord – is the promised destiny of all who “hunger and thirst” to live righteously.

We have come full circle. The poor in spirit are blessed because “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Those who are persecuted are blessed because “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Sandwiched in between are the six qualities that define the character of the true citizen of that kingdom – the person who desires to “be” all that God desires for him, for her to “be.”

Matt. 5:13 - *“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.”*

Salt does more than add zest to your meal. When you sprinkle salt on food, a chemical reaction occurs. Salt acts as a preservative that slows or retards the rate of decay. Jesus was illustrating that we as His followers can retard the rate of decay in our culture.

Matt. 5:14-16 - *“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.*

¹⁵ *Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

Jesus now compares His disciples to light which acts as a beacon – providing direction to a dark/confusing world. We can provide hope to hurting people. Jesus proclaimed, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). Jesus is the source of light. We reflect His light.

Matt. 5:17-18 – *“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”*

With these words Jesus affirmed the Bible. He affirmed the accuracy of the original writings down to the smallest letter or part of a letter.

Matt. 5:20 – “*For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*”

Here is the theme of the sermon. Jesus is calling His followers to a deeper, more radical holiness than that of the Pharisees. The Pharisees had a tendency to soften the law’s demands by focusing only on external obedience. In the verses that follow, Jesus reveals the full moral significance of the law and teaches the spirit of the law. The righteousness of the law involves an internal conformity to the spirit of the law. The life that Jesus lays out can only be lived by the power of the Holy Spirit of God!

The Lord’s Prayer/The Disciples’ Prayer – Matt. 6:9-15

Matt. 6:9a – “*Our Father in heaven. . . .*”

“Abba Father” - the word *Abba* is an Aramaic word that would most closely be translated as “Daddy.” It was a common term that young children would use to address their fathers. It signifies the close, intimate relationship of a father to his child, as well as the childlike trust that a young child puts in his “daddy.” It was very unusual for the Jews of that day to call God “Father” because it was considered too intimate. Sadly, there was an amazing remoteness even in the Jewish thinking of Jesus’ day. The Old Testament Jew understood that God was a Father. It appears that they understood it more in a national sense in terms of God’s overall care of the nation of Israel. They understood it in their covenant relationship with God. God’s covenants were with the nation of Israel. When God gave Israel the Ten Commandments, the Jewish people responded corporately, Ex. 19:8 – “*All that the LORD has spoken, we will do.*” We see in Scripture, however, that many had a personal relationship with God, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, King David, Solomon, Daniel. . . . God called Abraham His friend. God spoke with these individuals.

Following the exile, following 430 years of no prophetic revelation from God (between the book of Malachi and Matthew), God appeared to be more remote. When Jesus came, here was God in the flesh – God residing with man. Philip said to Jesus, “Show us the Father.” And Jesus said, “Have you been so long with me, Philip?

When Jesus told His people to pray, “Our Father” - it was a revelation. “Abba, Father” - we don’t come to God as some indifferent, detached deal, we come to God as an intimate Father, we use the term Abba.

Matt. 6:9b – “. . . *hallowed be Your name.*”

Consider: effective and powerful prayer begins with an all-consuming desire to see our God honored and respected as the holy God He is! We must set God apart in our lives as HOLY!

Matt. 6:10a – “*Your kingdom come. . . .*”

There is coming a day when Jesus will set up His earthly kingdom. Guess where? On EARTH! Scripture tells us that Jesus will rule from King David’s throne in Jerusalem. At that time He will restore the earth.

He's going to break the tyranny of sin and rule in righteousness and peace and believers will rule and reign with Him. In the book of Revelation we read that Jesus is coming – He's coming. At the end of the book we read, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." "Your kingdom come."

Matt. 6:10b – “. . . *Your will be done. . .*”

The primary purpose of prayer is not to change our circumstances; the primary purpose of prayer is to change us. Prayer is not our bending God's will to agree with our wills; prayer is bending our wills into agreement with God's will. Prayer is a discipline of selfless submission.

Matt. 6:11 – “*Give us this day our daily bread.*”

Until we pray about GOD – His character, His kingdom, His control, we are not ready to pray about ourselves. “Daily bread” - “Daily” indicates a continual attitude of dependence upon God and ongoing gratitude for His faithful provision. Bread is a basic staple of life that represents our needs versus our wants.

Matt. 6:12 – “*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*”¹³ *And do not lead us into temptation. . .*”

Mankind has two things in common: we have each hurt/offended God; we have each hurt/offended others and have been hurt/offended by others. When we're born again, God has forgiven us for our rebellion toward Him – for our sinning against Him (Psa. 51:4 – “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in Your sight”) We must forgive others for hurting/offending us! Forgiven people should be forgiving people.

Matt. 6:13 - “. . . *deliver us from the evil one.*”

I Peter 5:8 warns us that our adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion seeking to devour us. We need God's protection; and so we are told to pray for His protection.

Matt. 6:25-32 – We read of three don't's – we're not to worry about our life, our clothing, about what we're going to eat.

Matt. 6:33 – “. . . *seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*”

We are to focus on God – on the divine level – and God will take care of the physical. When Jesus' rule in my life is manifest – there's peace and joy which overcomes worry! And, we are to seek His righteousness – His holiness. We are to pursue godliness. AND, “. . . *all these things shall be added to you.*”

Psalm 84:11-12 – “*For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.*”¹² *O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in You!*”

QUESTIONS:

How do you understand the Beatitudes?

What was Jesus' proclamation to the people through this sermon?

What impacted you most regarding the Sermon on the Mount?

How can you apply the Sermon on the Mount to your life today?

What significance does this sermon have for the future?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:

Choose a passage from the Sermon on the Mount and write down your observations and questions and begin to answer those questions.