

A "Bird's Eye View" of the Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5:1-2, 7:28-29

INTRO – Today, we begin a series on the Sermon on the Mount. We will be taking several weeks to go through this teaching, verse by verse. It is important, however, before we do that to see the big picture. Forgetting to do this has caused many problems in the teaching of this Sermon, from proclaiming social moralism to dismissing the whole Sermon as irrelevant to those who are "under grace and not under the law". Spiritually discerning these words of Christ is critical to living lives of personal and practical holiness.

TEXT – "And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:... 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." Matt 5:1-2, 7:28-29

Jesus as Teacher and Preacher

In the Open - The pattern established here is teaching disciples in the presence of others. This impacts how we are to think about our gatherings.

The Spoken Word - God has seen fit to teach us through the written word and teach us through gifted teachers. Jesus certainly could have taught any way He wanted. His primary vehicle was preaching and teaching. If the spoken word was good enough for Jesus.....

Authority, not Intelligence – They are impressed not with Jesus' knowledge, but with His authority. Truth is not primarily a matter of education, but of faith. We must pray for authoritative preaching (Eph 6:18-19). And we must come expectantly, prepared to listen.

Authority, not Moralism – Jesus states absolutes in the Beatitudes. He corrects teachings on the law in His day "you have heard it said", with His own words "but I say to you". He never proves His authority. He simply asserts it. He ends the sermon stating that people will call Him 'Lord', and that His teachings are the only way to persevering salvation. All others end in ruin. The sermon is imbedded with His deity.

Being and Then Doing – This is the simple outline of the Sermon, and the point of it. We are not to live like this in order to be Christian; rather because we are Christians we are to live like this. Everything after the Beatitudes must be understood in this light. Forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer is just one example (Matt 6:12, see also Titus 2:11-14). This is emphasized in key verses at the end of the sermon (Matt 7:15-20).

Breaking it Down – 5:3-10 describe the character of true (and ordinary) Christians. Verses 11-12 describe what the world will think of such people, and 13-16 describe generally what we must do. That doing, especially in regard to the Law, is described in the rest of chapter 5. Chapter 6 instructs us how we are to live before the Father in deeds, prayers, and pocketbooks. Chapter 7 crescendos with a series of commands and warnings from a God of no-compromises.

Preparation – Read and reread the Sermon with these thoughts in mind. You may find yourself questioning God, and making excuses for yourself. Or, as true disciples, you will discover yourself both crushed to the ground in a holy poverty of spirit, and raised up in overwhelming mercy and triumph.

Dave Hatcher – July 11, 1999