

DISPENSATIONALISM (14)

In fact, we make the following observations about this Sermon on the Mount:

Observation #1 - It is not actually named Sermon on the Mount. **Matt. 5:1-2**

It is verbal teaching He gave to His disciples while He was sitting down with them on a mountain.

Observation #2 - It is instruction given in a specific context of presenting a Kingdom of Heaven repentance message to Israel. **Matt. 4:17**

Observation #3 - It is instruction given while Jesus Christ is actually present on earth.

Observation #4 - It is instruction Christ gives to Israel as her King in specific regard to the O.T. Law in connection with Kingdom matters. **Matt. 5:17-19**

These are presented by Jesus Christ as legal requirements of righteousness that is necessary for one to get into the Kingdom (Matt. 5:20). This text is not designed to convict the world of its sin; it is designed to show that Israel does not have the necessary legal requirements to get into the Kingdom.

Observation #5 - It is not a Pauline presentation of the grace Gospel.

Paul said the Gospel of grace was his Gospel that he received directly from Jesus Christ and the message of believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved from your sins, is not the message found in the Sermon on the Mount.

Observation #6 - The N. T. Church is nowhere to be seen or found in this text.

In fact, what is presented here is not even to be given to the Gentile world, but only to Israel (Matt. 10:5-6). In fact, a logical question for anyone to ask would be this: "When Jesus Christ was physically here on earth presenting Himself in Palestine as the King of the Jews and Messiah of Israel, why would He sit down on the side of a mountain and start lecturing about the Church and the Christian life that these people know nothing about? It does not even make logical sense.

In fact, Jesus will not even predict the Church Age will come into existence at some point in the future until Matthew 16:18.

Observation #7 - Jesus did not give this instruction so various societies could improve and become nicer places where people can live.

He did not give this instruction for the purpose of changing the world sociologically.

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Observation #8 - Any true application of this teaching to the Church must be filtered through Church truth because it is given in the context of national Israel.

There are applications that may be made from all Scripture; but proper application may only be made by knowing dispensational distinctions. Any application to the Church of the Sermon on the Mount must be secondary and not primary for this Sermon is for Israel.

A primary application for the Church would mean that this Sermon is to be applied word-for-word by the Church and by every believer living in the Grace Age.

A secondary application for the Church means there are lessons and principles that we may glean from the text, but it is a message that is being addressed word-for-word to the Jew in view of Christ's coming Kingdom for Israel and it is given long before He goes to the cross.

Observation #9 - The sermon should be interpreted consistently.

Those who oppose dispensationalism tend to pick and choose what they want to accept. For example, in Matthew 5:17-20, there is an emphasis on keeping every law in the O.T.. What about the dietary restrictions of the O.T. law? What about the feasts and festivals?

When we read this sermon, there are at least three specific warnings that challenge the Jews not to do certain things or they will be in danger of hell (Matt. 5:22; 29-30). We know in the Church Age that one who believes on Jesus Christ cannot ever be condemned and go to hell (Rom. 8:1).

Observation #10 - Although this sermon is about Israel's kingdom, there are some wonderful applications we may make.

For example, in any dispensation, it is always the poor in spirit and the humble and never the proud who are pleasing to God and blessed by God. The Holy Spirit works in our lives to make us people of humility that depend on God. Certainly we should be people of our word and our yes should mean yes and our no mean no. There are wonderful applications we may make from the Sermon.

The Sermon on the Mount begins with what is called the "Beatitudes" or "be-attitudes" (**Matt. 5:3-12**). **These things describe what Israel must be and one day will be.** There are certain things to observe about this:

- 1) The actual word "beatitude" is not in the text. The word comes from a Latin word "beatus" which means blessed or happy.
- 2) There are nine total blessed statements in the list: 5:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.
- 3) Each blessed statement contains the conjunction "for" (οτι) which gives a reason why one may be considered to be blessed. It gives the cause of it.
- 4) The verbs of verses 3 & 10 are present tense meaning it was a present reality for Jews hearing this.
- 5) The verbs of verses 4-9 are future tense, meaning these are things that will happen in the future.

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6) The word “blessed” is one that means to have a particular type of happiness which comes as a result of knowing one is in a favorable position with God. According to Gerhard Kittel, this word, even in secular Greek, always referred to a happy state in view of being in a favorable position with the “gods” (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 362).

It is accurate to define “blessed” as being in a state of Spiritual joy and happiness, knowing that one is favored by God and knowing one has a share in eternal things. Israel longs for the moment when she knows once again she is favored by God.

7) Jesus Christ gave these Kingdom instructions to Israel at a time when Rome was dominating the world. Rome was a power-crazed society. Roman authority was anything but what is described in these verses. The things described here by the King were attitudes and actions totally contrary to what the world viewed as kingly.

8) Jesus gave this instruction in a Pharisaical Jewish religious world given to man-made traditions and rules that proudly and arrogantly dominated Israel (Matt. 6:1-2).

9) The pronoun changes in Matthew 5:11-12 from “they,” “theirs” and “those” (verse 3-10) to an emphatic “you” and “your.” This indicates that verses 11-12 are aimed straight at His immediate disciples, not the nation Israel.

Having made these observations, the real question for this study is how do we interpret this?

Interpretive Way #1 - Some have said it is a sermon designed to teach the way of salvation.

Those who suggest this say it teaches a works salvation. But here is the problem with this. Where in this sermon do you see the Pauline Gospel message of believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved? It is not present anywhere in this sermon. Also, when the Sermon was proclaimed, Jesus was proclaiming it in a context of a repentance kingdom message to Israel (Matt. 3:2).

Interpretive Way #2 - Some have said it is a sermon specifically given to the Church and binding on the Church.

Those who take this position typically do so by pointing out that there are at least 15 allusions of the sermon in the book of James. What these people fail to point out, as Ryrie said, there are also about 15 or more teachings in the sermon that are not found in James (*Dispensationalism*, p. 98). Now one argument that is used is that Matthew wrote after the Church was established. But again, as Dr. Ryrie points out, “application is not interpretation” (*Ibid.*, pp. 98-99). If we are saying this is for the Church, then what do we do with Matt. 10:5-15; 15:24-26; 19:21; 24:20? This is why many churches recite the Lord’s Prayer week after week (Matt. 6:9-10).