

Sermon on the Mount—Beatitudes Introduction
Matthew 5:1—12

With Jesus having been confirmed to be the Son of God at His baptism and the only person able to overcome Satan’s temptation He now is ready to focus on the crown. Beginning with Matthew 4:17 Jesus begins to preach that the Kingdom is at hand. This Kingdom is a heavenly Kingdom that will be brought to earth when Christ appears at His Second Coming. It will be established in answer to the “Lord’s Prayer” in Matthew 6 when Israel will be praying for God’s will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Many people are confused by Matthew’s use of the term “Kingdom of Heaven.” This is because the traditions of men have made this Kingdom to be a spiritual kingdom with Christ residing on the throne of a believer’s heart. They diminish the intent of the many passages in the Old Testament that clearly show the Kingdom Christ will rule is a literal, physical, political kingdom ruled from a literal Jerusalem with Christ on a physical throne (2 Samuel 7:8—17; Jeremiah 23:5—6). Just as the Roman Empire extended beyond Rome, the Kingdom of Heaven will extend beyond heaven to earth. This will happen at the Second Coming.

Revelation 11:15 Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”

The Disciples understood completely and correctly that when Jesus had discussed the Kingdom with them that He meant it to be a physical and tangible kingdom.

Acts 1:3, 6 ³To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a *period* of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God...⁶So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” (See also Matthew 20:21; Luke 19:11—12)

Under David Israel’s kingdom was in its full glory. Israel was looking for the One who could restore their kingdom to its previous glory. They knew Christ was their Messiah and that He would literally restore the kingdom. Just as David’s kingdom was real so will Christ’s Kingdom be.

Matthew is not presented in chronological order. We know Jesus selected the Disciples before He preached the Sermon on the Mount from Luke 6:12—49. Jesus was confirmed for the job of King, He had selected His cabinet (the 12 Disciples) and now He will spell out the precepts (Sermon on the Mount) for the soon-to-come Kingdom.

The Audience

Jesus spoke these words to Israel, specifically to the Little Flock (believers) within Israel who were going to be going into the Millennial Kingdom. People had come from all over the region to hear Him (Luke 6:17) The Sermon on the Mount was the next logical step to take in order to set up a new Kingdom. This Sermon is usually applied to today’s believers as precepts that we are to strive to meet. Although we are able to follow some of Jesus’ instructions, there are others that cannot be followed if His instructions are to be taken literally.

This can be likened to us keeping the laws of Wisconsin while living in Minnesota. We can certainly follow many of their laws but there are things that they must do that we don’t have to and there are things we need to do in Minnesota that they don’t need to do. If I were to buy something in Minnesota and pay only 5% sales tax, I would be breaking the law in Minnesota even though I would be conforming to Wisconsin’s law. If I did some remodeling in Wisconsin and didn’t charge sales tax because Minnesota does not require me to do so, I would be breaking Wisconsin’s law. In the same way I cannot follow laws for the Millennial Kingdom while I am living in the Age of Grace. As we will see below, each of the Beatitudes is directed specifically to believing Israel.

Overview

The Sermon (or discourse) is contained in chapters 5, 6 and 7 of Matthew. The image given in Matthew 5:1 is that of Jesus going up on a mountain and sitting down. The books of Prophecy show a mountain as symbolic for a kingdom. This, then, is a picture of Christ on the throne in the Millennial Kingdom.

Isaiah 2:2 Now it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it.

The Sermon on the Mount extends the commands found in the Mosaic Law. Since no one is able to obey the Law, it is impossible for anyone to obey what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount. The only way it can be done is by the power of the Holy Spirit. This will happen before believing Israel enters into the Millennial Kingdom. Christ will put His law in their hearts and give them the Holy Spirit so they will be able to keep His ordinances to the letter.

Jeremiah 31:33—34 ³³ “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Ezekiel 11:19—20 ¹⁹ And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.

Ezekiel 36:26—27 ²⁶ Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

We saw this happening in early Acts when the Holy Spirit came upon the believers of Israel (Little Flock) they were able to emulate all the commandments given to them by God. They were all completely unified in thought and spirit (Acts 2:44—46). This was a foretaste of the coming Kingdom and was all in preparation for the coming Tribulation and Kingdom. Those who were lawful had a place in the Kingdom while those who were lawless (anyone who disregarded the Mosaic Law) would be thrown into the everlasting lake of fire.

Matthew 13:41—42 ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, ⁴² and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Each of the characteristics listed in the Beatitudes will be rewarded with a particular blessing. The characteristics are the traits of believing Israel during the Tribulation while the reward is tied to the coming Kingdom. For instance, those who are poor in spirit (they know they are in a hopeless state without a Savior) will be blessed with the Kingdom of Heaven. In other words the ones going through the Tribulation know they are in a hopeless state apart from their Messiah. Their reward will be found in the Kingdom at the Messiah’s Second Coming. All of the characteristics of those who will become a part of the Kingdom are good characteristics and can certainly be applied to the Church today. Behavior that was good in Jesus’ day is good today. However, when we rightly-divide Scripture we can see that our reward is not the Millennial Kingdom on this earth but a Heavenly hope.

Philippians 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

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