

The Sermon On The Mount



Sermon Outlines

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To God Be The Glory!

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The Sermon On The Mount

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

1. In **Matthew 5-7**, we have recorded the most famous sermon that has ever been preached...
 - a. Commonly referred to as **The Sermon On The Mount**
 - b. It has touched more hearts, and in turn has sparked more sermons than any other
2. But what is Jesus talking about in this sermon?
 - a. What is the **theme**?
 - b. What is the **content** of this sermon?
3. As we begin this series of lessons on **The Sermon On The Mount**, these are some of the questions we shall try to answer

[To begin, let's try to determine the **theme** of the sermon...]

I. THE THEME

A. THE SETTING HELPS TO DETERMINE THE THEME...

1. In **Mt 3:1-3**, we read of the preaching of John the Baptist
 - a. Who was sent to prepare the way of the Lord
 - b. The theme of his preaching concerned "the kingdom of heaven"
2. In **Mt 4**, we read of the beginning of Jesus' ministry
 - a. After His temptation, Jesus begins preaching a message similar to John's - **Mt 4:17**
 - b. His preaching in Galilee pertained to the "gospel of the kingdom" - **Mt 4:23**

B. A PHRASE USED REPEATEDLY REVEALS THE THEME...

1. "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" - **Mt 5:3**
2. "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" - **Mt 5:10**
3. "...shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven" - **Mt 5:19**
4. "...shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" - **Mt 5:19**
5. "...will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" - **Mt 5:20**
6. "Your kingdom come" - **Mt 6:10**
7. "But seek first the kingdom of God" - **Mt 6:33**
8. "... shall enter the kingdom of heaven" - **Mt 7:21**

[Both the **setting** and the use of a particular **phrase** should lead us to conclude that the **theme** of Jesus' sermon on the mount is: "**The Gospel Of The Kingdom Of Heaven.**" With this in mind, let's briefly consider the **content** of the sermon...]

II. THE CONTENT AND ITS BASIC DIVISIONS

A. THE CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM...

1. Their character and blessedness - **Mt 5:3-12**
2. Their relation to the world - **Mt 5:13-16**

B. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM...

1. In contrast to **traditional interpretations and applications** of the Law - **Mt 5:17-48**
2. With respect to man's relation to God - **Mt 6:1-33**
3. With respect to man's relation to man - **Mt 7:1-12**

C. THE EXHORTATION TO ENTER THE KINGDOM...

1. The "beginning" of the way - **Mt 7:13-14**
2. The "progress" along the way - **Mt 7:15-20**
3. The "end" of the way - **Mt 7:21-27**
 - a. Contrasting "sayers" with "doers" **21-23**
 - b. Contrasting "hearers" with "doers" **24-27**

[In view of its content, we can appreciate why some have called this sermon of Jesus "**The Magna Carta Of His Kingdom;**" and by others, "**The Manifesto Of The King.**"

Before we examine the sermon any closer, it may be helpful to define the expression "**kingdom of heaven**" so we can better appreciate and apply the teachings of Jesus found in this sermon...]

III. DEFINING THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

A. COMPARING IT WITH THE KINGDOM OF GOD...

1. Some try to make a distinction (e.g., Scofield Reference Bible)
2. But a quick comparison of the gospels indicate that the terms refer to the same thing
 - a. Cf. **Mt 4:17** with **Mk 1:14-15**
 - b. Cf. **Mt 5:3** with **Lk 6:20**
 - c. Cf. **Mt 13:31** with **Mk 4:30-31**
3. We find that Matthew used the expression "kingdom of heaven" almost exclusively, while the other gospel writers used the phrase "kingdom of God"
4. It may be that since Matthew wrote his gospel to the Jews, he chose to use the phrase "kingdom of heaven"...
 - a. Because of the Jews' reluctance to use the name of God (out of reverence)
 - b. Because of the Jews' misconception of the coming kingdom
 - 1) Many anticipated a physical kingdom
 - 2) The expression "heaven" (literally, "heavens") would emphasize a spiritual kingdom

B. INVOLVES FOUR INTERRELATED CONCEPTS...

1. **God's kingship, rule, or recognized sovereignty**
 - a. The term "kingdom" as used by the Jews often stressed the abstract idea of rule or dominion, not some geographical area surrounded by physical boundaries
 - b. Possibly used this way by Jesus in **Lk 17:21**
 - c. It is used this way by Jesus in **Mt 6:10** ("Thy **kingdom** come; thy **will** be done")
 - Thus, the "kingdom of heaven" is wherever the God of heaven is allowed to **rule** in the hearts of men
2. **It is spiritual in nature**
 - a. Not a physical kingdom - **Jn 18:36**
 - b. But one that is spiritual - **Ro 14:17**
3. **Its visible manifestation today is in the form of the Lord's church**
 - a. Which is the community of souls in whose hearts God is recognized as Sovereign

- b. That the church constitutes the kingdom on earth, consider:
 - 1) How the term “church” and “kingdom” were used interchangeably - **Mt 16:18**
 - 3) The description of those in the churches of Asia - **Re 1:4,6,9**
- 4. **It also involves the “new heavens and new earth”**
 - a. The “kingdom of heaven” has a future element as well as a present one
 - b. Its future aspect is spoken of by:
 - 1) Jesus in **Mt 25:34**
 - 2) Paul in **1 Co 15:50; 2 Ti 4:18**
 - 3) Peter in **2 Pe 1:10-11**
 - c. Peter described the coming of its future state in **2 Pe 3:10-13**

C. SUMMARY OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN...

- 1. In the **present** sense...
 - a. It is found wherever the **sovereignty of God** is accepted in the hearts of men
 - b. It is a **spiritual kingdom**, for God rules in the hearts of men
 - c. Its outward manifestation today is the **Lord’s church**
 - d. The kingdom was “**inaugurated**” on the Day of Pentecost in **Acts 2**
- 2. In the **future** sense...
 - a. The kingdom will be “**culminated**” with the coming of the Lord
 - b. It will include that “**new heavens and new earth**” described by Peter and John
 - c. It will be experienced only by those in the church who are submitting to God’s will
- **Mt 7:21-23; 2 Pe 3:13-15a**

CONCLUSION

- 1. With this understanding of the “kingdom of heaven,” we will more likely...
 - a. Appreciate the **character and blessedness** of the citizens of the kingdom (**Mt 5:3-16**)
 - b. Understand the need for the **righteousness** expected of its citizens (**Mt 5:17-7:12**)
 - c. Respond to the **exhortation to enter** the kingdom if we have not done so (**Mt 7:13-27**)
- 2. Our next study will concentrate on “**the beatitudes**” (**Mt 5:3-12**), in which we examine the character and blessedness of those who are citizens of the kingdom of heaven

Have you responded to the exhortation to enter the kingdom? Remember the words of our Lord to Nicodemus in **Jn 3:3-5**...

The Sermon On The Mount

The Beatitudes (Mt 5:3-12)

INTRODUCTION

1. As we begin to take a closer look at **The Sermon On The Mount**, we notice first that section referred to as **The Beatitudes**...
 - a. In verses 3-12, Jesus describes the blessedness of those who possess certain qualities
 - b. It is as though Jesus was answering two questions the people may have been asking:
 - 1) Who are the citizens of this “kingdom of heaven”?
 - 2) What benefits do they receive?
2. My treatment of this passage will be somewhat different than normal
 - a. Many studies examine each beatitude in detail before moving on to the next
 - b. But we will survey the entire section twice, from two different perspectives

[First, let’s look at **The Beatitudes** from the viewpoint of the question: “**Who are the citizens of the kingdom?**” In other words...]

I. THE CHARACTER REQUIRED OF THE CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM

A. INVOLVES SEVERAL INTERRELATED QUALITIES...

1. Only those who possess **all** of these qualities are truly citizens of the kingdom
2. For it should be evident that some...
 - a. May be “poor in spirit,” but do not “hunger and thirst after righteousness”
 - b. May “mourn,” but are not “pure in heart”
 - c. May be “meek,” but are not “peacemakers”
 - d. May be “persecuted,” but not “for righteousness’ sake”
3. It takes **all** of these qualities, and in this sense the passage is similar to **2 Pe 1:5-11**
 - a. Where various qualities are also listed
 - b. Where each of them are needed **in conjunction** to assure that “an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom”

B. CHARACTERISTICS OF CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM...

1. **Poor in spirit**
 - a. “To be poor in spirit is to have a humble opinion of ourselves; to be sensible that we are sinners, and have no righteousness of our own; to be willing to be saved only by the rich grace and mercy of God” - **Barnes**
 - b. I.e., convicted of one’s own spiritual poverty
 - 1) Exemplified by the tax collector in **Lk 18:13**
 - 2) Such people God will accept into His good favor - **Isa 57:15; 66:1-2**
 - c. The opposite of “poor in spirit” would be “proud of heart,” and those who are such are more like:
 - 1) The Pharisee in **Lk 18:9-14**
 - 2) The Laodiceans in **Re 3:17-19**
2. **Mourn**
 - a. But to do so in a specific sense: over one’s own spiritual poverty, one’s sinfulness

- b. Like David did after his adultery with Bathsheba - **Psa 51:3-4**
- c. Note the relationship between these first two characteristics
 - 1) Unless one is first “poor in spirit”
 - 2) They will not “mourn” over their spiritual poverty
- 3. **Meek**
 - a. I.e., gentle, easy to be entreated
 - 1) Would rather suffer injury than inflict it
 - 2) Not out of weakness, but out of humility, realizing one’s own poverty of spirit, one’s own sinfulness
 - b. A good example of meekness is Moses
 - 1) He was certainly not a weak or timid man - **Exo 32:19-20; 30-34**
 - 2) But when personally attacked, he was very humble - **Num 12:1-3**
- 4. **Hunger and thirst for righteousness**
 - a. I.e., looking for the righteousness which will meet:
 - 1) Their spiritual poverty
 - 2) Their mourning over the same
 - b. To “hunger and thirst” suggests not a halfhearted search, but one exemplified by:
 - 1) David in **Psa 42:1-2; 19:12-14**
 - 2) Paul in **Ph 3:7-15a**
- 5. **Merciful**
 - a. Loving towards those in misery (e.g., the “Good Samaritan”)
 - b. Possessing a forgiving spirit toward those who sin against them - **Hendricksen**
 - 1) E.g., Jesus in **Lk 23:34**
 - 2) E.g., Stephen in **Ac 7:60**
 - c. Jesus stressed this characteristic on several occasions...
 - 1) Later in His sermon, in teaching on prayer - **Mt 6:14-15**
 - 2) In His parable of “The Unforgiving Servant” - **Mt 18:21-35**
 - d. This virtue grows “out of our personal experience of the mercy of God.” - **Lenski**
- 6. **Pure in heart**
 - a. “singleness of heart, the honesty which has no hidden motive, no selfish interest, and is true and open in all things.” - **Lenski**
 - b. Refers to one who is sincere, honest, without hypocrisy
 - c. That such a quality is necessary to see God, cf. **Psa 24:3-4**
- 7. **Peacemakers**
 - a. Those who devote their lives to making peace by following the Prince of Peace
 - 1) Involves effort to be at peace with all men - **Ro 12:18-21**
 - 2) Involves helping others to be at peace with God by proclaiming the gospel of peace - cf. **Ro 5:1** and **Ep 6:15**
 - b. “At peace with God and thus themselves filled with sweet peace, they live in peace, if possible, with all men and work to keep and to make peace where peace is threatened or lost. Theirs is the work of true Christians who follow in the footsteps of the Prince of Peace.” - **Lenski**
- 8. **Persecuted for righteousness’ sake**
 - a. “The tense and voice of the verb (passive perfect) may be regarded as permissive:
 - 1) “Who have allowed themselves to be persecuted, or have endured persecution”
 - 2) “The idea is that they did not flee from it but willingly submitted to when it came to them.” - **Lenski**
 - b. In what way, is explained in verse 11, and includes being:

- 1) Reviled or reproached
- 2) Persecuted
- 3) Slandered falsely
- All for Jesus' sake
- c. That such persecution would often afflict those who are citizens of the kingdom, see **Ac 14:21-22; Ph 1:29-30; 2 Ti 3:12**

[Such are the **characteristics of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven**. But is it worth it? To answer that, let's now look at the "The Beatitudes" from the viewpoint of another question: "**What benefits do citizens of the kingdom receive?**" In other words...]

II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM

A. THEIR CONDITION CAN BE SUMMED UP IN ONE WORD: "BLESSED"...

1. This word stands at the beginning of the sermon, and is used nine times in nine verses
2. It can literally mean, "how very happy" is the one described
3. We can infer from verse twelve that "blessed" involves great joy and gladness ("rejoice and be exceedingly glad")

B. THEIR BLESSEDNESS IN LIGHT OF BENEFITS RECEIVED...

1. **Theirs is the kingdom of heaven**
 - a. As defined in the previous lesson...
 - 1) They are under the kingly rule of God
 - 2) They are in a spiritual kingdom
 - a) Which today involves being in the "church," the **present** manifestation of the "kingdom of heaven"
 - b) Which will involve the "new heavens and new earth" in the kingdom's **future** and **eternal** manifestation
 - b. Note that the first (**5:3**) and last (**5:10**) beatitudes include this expression, which I take to imply that the blessings in between likewise apply to those in the kingdom
 - c. Just as the kingdom is both present and future, we shall observe that the blessings described involve both the present and future
2. **They shall be comforted**
 - a. This is in reference to those who mourn over their sins and spiritual poverty
 - b. They are comforted even now - **2 Co 1:3-5**
 - c. They shall be comforted in the future - **Re 21:1-4**
3. **They shall inherit the earth**
 - a. In one sense, they inherit it now
 - 1) As a result of putting the kingdom of God first - **Mt 6:33; Mk 10:29-30**
 - 2) Though they may have less than some who are wicked, God enables them to enjoy it more! - **Ecc 5:19-6:2**
 - 3) This explanation seems consistent with the context of Psalms 37, from which the phrase was taken - **Psa 37:1-11, 16-29**
 - b. But in another sense, there yet remains a promise concerning a "new earth" for those in the kingdom now - **2 Pe 3:10-13**
4. **They shall be filled**
 - a. With the righteousness which we so desperately need, found only in Christ - **Ph 3:8-9**
 - b. Received presently, through the precious blood of Christ - **Ro 5:9**
 - c. Received in fulness when adorned in the white linen of righteousness in preparation for

the marriage of the Lamb - **Re 19:5-9**

5. **They shall obtain mercy**
 - a. Those in the kingdom enjoy forgiveness of sins through Jesus' blood - **Re 1:5-6**
 - b. They shall also be shown mercy in escaping the righteous wrath of God in the Day of Judgment - **Ro 5:9**
6. **They shall see God**
 - a. Presently, those in the kingdom see God through their Lord Jesus Christ - **Jn 14:6-7**
 - b. But in the future, we shall see Him face to face - **Re 21:3; 22:3-4**
7. **They shall be called sons of God**
 - a. Even now we are called the sons of God - **1 Jn 3:1-2**
 - b. How much more so, in the future! - **Re 21:5-7**

CONCLUSION

1. Perhaps we can better understand why citizens in the kingdom are truly **Blessed**.
2. Certainly the benefits of the kingdom outweigh anything this world has to offer, or any persecution it might inflict!
3. But the **blessedness** of the citizens is only for those who have the **characteristics** of the citizens in ever-increasing measure. Do we?

Next, we will look at the citizens of the kingdom in their relation to the world (**Mt 5:13-16**)...

The Sermon On The Mount

Salt And Light (Mt 5:13-16)

INTRODUCTION

1. In **The Beatitudes**, the **character** and **blessedness** of the citizens were described
2. In the final beatitude, Jesus described the attitude the world would often display towards the citizens of the kingdom - **Mt 5:10-12**
3. Jesus now proceeds to describe the opposite: The influence of the kingdom upon the world.
4. He does this by using two metaphors: **salt** and **light**

I. “YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH” (Mt 5:13)

A. SALT HAS SEVERAL CHARACTERISTICS...

1. It is white, enhances flavor, preserves, etc.
2. Based on the context, it is probably salt’s ability to enhance flavor to which Jesus refers
 - a. Notice: **“...but if the salt loses its flavor...”**
 - b. Salt has the ability to give flavor to that which is otherwise bland
 - c. Job mentioned this ability in **Job 6:6**

B. THROUGH THE METAPHOR OF “SALT”...

1. Jesus shows that the relationship of the citizens of the kingdom to the world is one of:
 - a. Making the world palatable (bearable) to God, and possibly to others as well
 - b. Perhaps making it possible for God to continue to bear with this world and its “distasteful” wickedness
 2. The idea that the righteous few can make it is easier for God to forbear the many wicked is illustrated:
 - a. In Abraham’s conversation with God over Sodom - **Gen 18:20-32**
 - b. In God’s dealing with Jerusalem - **Jer 5:1**
- From God’s point of view, the citizens of the kingdom give the world what good “flavor” it has!

C. JESUS WARNS AGAINST LOSING OUR FLAVORING ABILITY...

1. With pure salt...
 - a. It actually never loses its flavor
 - b. But when mixed with impurities salt can lose its ability to enhance flavor
2. We too might lose our ability to be a “flavoring agent” for the world...
 - a. If we allow “impurities” into our lives - **1 Co 15:33**
 - b. Therefore, we need to keep ourselves from sin - **Ep 5:3-7**

D. IF WE LOSE OUR FLAVOR...

1. How are we going to be “seasoned”? (impurities prevent us from being useful)
2. We will be thrown out!
 - a. Is Jesus teaching the possibility of losing our salvation?

- b. He certainly does elsewhere! - **Mt 13:40-43; Re 3:15-16**

[First of all, then, we are told of the relationship of the citizens of the kingdom to the world **from God's point of view** ("You are the salt of the earth.") Continuing, we find Jesus teaching concerning the citizens of the kingdom as to their **primary function** in the world...]

II. "YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD" (Mt 5:14-16)

A. USED BY GOD TO TRANSMIT HIS GLORY TO THE WORLD...

1. They are "lights" in a dark world - **Ph 2:14-15**
2. Their purpose: to proclaim the praises of God! - **1 Pe 2:9; Ep 5:8b-9**

B. THEY ARE NOT A "LIGHT" IN AND OF THEMSELVES...

1. Only in the Lord - **Ep 5:8a**
2. Christ is the "true" or "original" light - **Jn 8:12**
3. Citizens of the kingdom are simply "luminaries" reflecting The One True Light, just as the moon reflects the sun - **2 Co 4:6**

C. CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM HAVE A TWOFOLD RESPONSIBILITY AS "THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"...

1. They must be **visible**
 - a. Implied by Jesus in His use of a "city" and a "lamp stand" as metaphors
 - b. Jesus therefore expects His followers to be seen by the world - e.g., **Jn 13:35; 17:21**
2. They must **radiate** (give light)
 - a. This principle conveyed by the idea of the lamp
 - 1) Designed to shine on a lamp stand
 - 2) Not put under a basket
 - b. This principle explicitly stated in **"let your light SO SHINE before men"**
3. The purpose of such visible radiation: so men may glorify the Father in heaven - e.g., **1 Pe 2:11-12; 2 Co 9:12-13**

CONCLUSION

1. Why be concerned with being **"the salt of the earth"** and **"the light of the world"**?
2. Because of the One Who is described as "your Father who is in heaven"!
 - a. This expression should remind us that God is both:
 - 1) **Tender** (He is our "Father"; a term of tenderness)
 - 2) **Majestic** (He is "in heaven")
 - b. Such a Majestic Being Who is willing to be our Father makes Him:
 - 1) Worthy to be pleased!
 - 2) And worthy to be praised!
3. We who claim to be the children of God, citizens of the kingdom, are we:
 - a. **Pleasing to our Father?** (by being "the salt of the earth")
 - b. **Praising Him?** (by being the "light of the world")

If not, then may the prayer of David in **Psa 51:10-15** become our own:

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

“Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me [by Your] generous Spirit. [Then] I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.

“Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, [And] my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.”

The Sermon On The Mount

Jesus And The Law (Mt 5:17-19)

INTRODUCTION

1. Having described the **citizens** of the kingdom, Jesus now proceeds to describe the **righteousness** of the kingdom, which takes up the bulk of His sermon
2. He begins by correcting a false impression some may have had about His relationship with the Law of Moses and the Prophets...

I. "I DID NOT COME TO DESTROY BUT TO FULFILL"

A. SOME MAY HAVE THOUGHT JESUS INTENDED TO TOTALLY DISREGARD THE LAW...

1. That His coming and teaching would regard the Old Law in a negative light
2. For the expression "**to destroy**" means literally to "**to destroy utterly, to overthrow completely**" - Vine's

B. ON THE CONTRARY, HIS PURPOSE WAS TO FULFILL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS...

1. For they **foretold the coming of the Messiah** (Christ)
 - a. There are approximately 330 prophecies concerning the Christ found in the Law and the Prophets
 - b. For example, **Deu 18:15,18-19; Isa 53:1-12**
2. For they **foretold the coming of the kingdom of God**
 - a. One example is **Dan 2:44**
 - b. Jesus was preaching the fulfillment of that prophecy was now at hand - **Mk 1:14-15**
3. For they also **foretold the establishment of a new covenant**
 - a. See **Jer 31:31-34**
 - b. That Jesus brought in this new covenant is confirmed in **He 8:6-13**

C. THEREFORE, UNTIL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS WERE FULFILLED, JESUS TAUGHT THAT...

1. The Law would be as permanent as the heavens and the earth - **Mt 5:18**
 - a. As He said in **Lk 16:17**, "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail."
 - b. There would be no change at all, until it was fulfilled
 - c. Not even a "**jot**" or a "**tittle**" (Hebrew grammatical markings, similar to the dotting of an "i" or the crossing of a "t")
2. A person's treatment of the Law (while still in force) would affect their standing in the kingdom (**Mt 5:19**). How so...?
 - a. Remember that the kingdom has a **future** aspect - **Mt 7:21-23**
 - b. Those who lived before the coming of the kingdom in its **present** sense (the church) could still be in the kingdom in its **future** sense - cf. **Mt 8:11** (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob)
 - c. Their standing would be affected by their treatment of whatever Law of God was in effect when they were alive!

- d. For example, notice what Jesus said would happen to the “sons of the kingdom,” those Jews who by the Law had the right to inherit the kingdom but did not appreciate its fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ! - cf. **Mt 8:12**

D. AN IMPORTANT QUESTION: DID JESUS FULFILL THE LAW...?

1. **If He did not...**
 - a. He failed His purpose in coming to this earth! - **Mt 5:17**
 - b. We had better observe the Law in its strictest sense! - **Mt 5:18-19** (including circumcision, not eating unclean meats, etc.!).
2. **If He did...**
 - a. He accomplished His purpose! (notice **Jn 17:4**)
 - b. We should not be surprised to find a **new** Law or Covenant
3. Jesus must have fulfilled the Old Law...
 - a. For there has been changes:
 - 1) In the **priesthood** - **He 7:11-14**
 - 2) In the **Law itself** - **He 7:18-19,22**
 - b. Even as the Law itself foretold, it has been replaced by a New Law - **He 8:6-13**

[Though Jesus ultimately fulfilled the Law and the Prophets, at the time He was preaching the Sermon they had not been fulfilled. So, true to His statement in verse nineteen, He taught His disciples to be faithful to God’s Law as it then stood.

What about the contrasts found in **Mt 5:21-48**? Are not these to be viewed as comparisons between the **Old** Law and the **New** Law? Here are some thoughts along these lines...]

II. THE NATURE OF THE CONTRASTS MADE BY JESUS

A. MANY UNDERSTAND JESUS TO CONTRAST THE “OLD” WITH THE “NEW”...

1. I.e., comparing the Law of Moses with the Law of Christ which would govern His kingdom
2. This in essence has Jesus teaching:
 - a. That the Old Law only condemned the **outward** actions
 - b. But that the New Law introduced by Jesus condemned the **inner** conditions which led to the outer actions

B. I UNDERSTAND THE CONTRAST TO BE A DIFFERENT ONE...

1. A contrast between:
 - a. The **traditional interpretation and application** of the Law of Moses
 - b. The **righteousness of the kingdom** Jesus would require of His disciples
2. That in fact Jesus demonstrated that the righteousness of the kingdom was...
 - a. Not only **contrary** to the manner Jewish leaders of old interpreted and applied the Law
 - b. But **in harmony** with the original spirit of the Law as given to Moses and the Israelites

C. REASONS FOR SUCH A VIEW...

1. The other view would seem strange in light of **verse 19**
 - a. Jesus had just warned against any alteration of the commandments of the Law!
 - b. The first view has Jesus doing the very thing He had just warned against!
2. If Jesus was referring to what Moses had commanded in the Law itself, more likely different wording would have been used
 - a. At other times, when Jesus was definitely referring to what the Law actually said,

He would say things like:

- 1) "Moses commanded" - **Mt 8:4**
- 2) "It is written" - **Mt 4:4,7,10**
- b. Instead, we find Jesus repeatedly using phrases more likely to refer to **oral** teachings and interpretations rather than the revealed **written** Word of God:
 - 1) "You have **heard** that it was **said** to those of old" - **Mt 5:21,27**
 - 2) "Furthermore it has been **said**" - **Mt 5:31**
 - 3) "Again you have **heard** that it was **said** to those of old" - **Mt 5:33**
 - 4) "You have **heard** that it was **said**" - **Mt 5:38,43**
3. In two of the contrasts, Jesus refers to statement not even found in the Law of Moses!
 - a. "...and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment" - **Mt 5:21**
 - b. "...and hate your enemy" - **Mt 5:43**
 - Jesus was reacting, not to the Law itself, but the way the Law was often used!
4. The Law and the Prophets were just as concerned with the inner thoughts of the heart as was the Law of Christ - cf. **Deu 6:4-7; Isa 29:13-14**

CONCLUSION

1. In this study we have stressed two things:
 - a. Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, and He did!
 - b. That the contrasts to follow in **Mt 5:21-48**...
 - 1) Are between the traditional interpretations and applications of the Law of Moses and righteousness expected of those in the kingdom of heaven
 - 2) Not between the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ!
2. Jesus has more to say about the righteousness of those in the kingdom, which will be considered in our next study

The Sermon On The Mount

Righteousness Of The Scribes And Pharisees (Mt 5:20)

INTRODUCTION

1. As Jesus prepares to contrast the righteousness of the kingdom with the traditional interpretation and application of the Law, He does so with a strong warning to those who would enter the kingdom of heaven
2. Found in **Mt 5:20**, Jesus warned them that *“unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven”!*

[To appreciate and be able to apply what Jesus said, it might help to define **the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees...**]

I. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES DEFINED

A. THEY WERE KNOWN TO “SAY AND DO NOT” - Mt 23:1-4

1. Though they were often teaching the truth, they did not often practice what they preached!
2. From them many parents got the saying **“Do as I say, not as I do”**

B. THEY WERE KNOWN TO DO THINGS TO BE SEEN OF MEN - Mt 23:5-7

1. They enjoyed wearing religious garments that separated them from others, and delighted in having places and titles of honor
2. Does this sound like any religious leaders today?

C. THEY WERE KNOWN TO NEGLECT PARTS OF GOD’S LAW - Mt 23:23-24

1. In their case, they would emphasize the **lighter** matters of the law, while neglecting the **weightier** commands
2. Or as we would say today, they **majored in minors and minored in majors**

D. THEY WERE LOVERS OF MONEY - Lk 16:13-15

1. **Mammon** was their god, though they would be quick to deny it and try to justify themselves before men
2. Does this sound like any **“prosperity preachers”** we see and hear today?

[Such was the level of “righteousness” the scribes and Pharisees had as a group! Why must our righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees? The kingdom of heaven demands more!]

II. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM

A. WE LEARN IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT THAT...

1. We cannot **“say and do not”** - **Mt 7:21**
2. We cannot **“do things to be seen of men”** - **Mt 6:1**
3. We cannot **“neglect”** ANY commandments of God’s law - **Mt 5:19**
4. We cannot be **“lovers of money”** - **Mt 6:24**

B. THIS SHOULD SERVE AS A WARNING TO ANY WHO THINK THEY CAN BE FAITHFUL CHRISTIANS, CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM, BUT...

1. **Do not** combine their profession of faith with suitable deeds - cf. also **Ja 2:14-17; 1 Jn 2:4-6; 3:18**
2. **Do not** keep their personal, private lives consistent with their public appearance and profession - cf. **Mk 4:22**
3. **Do not** make diligent effort to observe ALL that Jesus commanded - cf. **Mt 28:20; Jn 8:31-32; 2 Jn 9**
4. **Do not** remain free from the enticement of materialism - cf. also **1 Ti 6:9-10; 1 Jn 2:15-17**

CONCLUSION

1. Without question, then, our righteousness as citizens of the kingdom must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees
2. But how can our righteousness be consistent with that demanded by our King? It is possible only by the **grace** of God...
 - a. Whereby **His mercy** provides forgiveness to those in Christ - **1 Jn 1:9**
 - b. Whereby **His strength** makes it possible to live according to the “righteousness of the kingdom of heaven”! - **Ph 4:13**

In our next study, we will begin to notice examples Jesus gave as to **how** our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees...

The Sermon On The Mount

Murder And Anger (Mt 5:21-26)

INTRODUCTION

1. In what way is our righteousness to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? - **Mt 5:20**
2. Jesus illustrates in what way through a series of contrasts; the first concerning **murder and anger** - **Mt 5:21-26**

[We notice first...]

I. THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION CONCERNING THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT (ON MURDER) - Mt 5:21

A. NOTE THAT I SAY “TRADITIONAL”...

1. I.e., that which had been taught by the “**traditions of the elders**” - cf. **Mt 15:2**
 - a. That Jesus is referring to such is in view of His preparatory remarks: “You have **heard**”
 - b. Referring to **ORAL traditions** rather than the **WRITTEN Law** (cf. earlier lesson on “**Jesus & The Law**”)
2. Which traditions had likely been accepted by the scribes and Pharisees

B. THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT...

1. Is seen in the phrase “**whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment**”
2. The term “**judgment**” likely refers to the **local courts** of their day
3. This interpretation may sound fine, but evidently did not go far enough in how the Law should have been interpreted...

II. THE TEACHING OF JESUS AND KINGDOM RIGHTEOUSNESS

A. JESUS APPLIES THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT AS THE LAW ORIGINALLY INTENDED (AND TAUGHT ELSEWHERE IN THE LAW)...

1. Not only is murder wrong, but the emotions which often lead to murder as well - cf. **Pro 6: 16-19**
 - a. Not only are “**hands that shed innocent blood**” (murder) an abomination to the Lord
 - b. But also a “**heart that devises wicked plans**” and “**one who sows discord among brethren**” (due to anger)
2. This being true, the Law should have been interpreted and applied accordingly
3. This Jesus does in **Mt 5:22**...
 - a. One who is angry with his brother without a cause should be in danger of the **judgment**
 - 1) I.e., the local courts through Palestine
 - 2) Which were normally reserved for common criminals
 - b. One who says to his brother “**Raca!**” (blockhead) should be in danger of the **council**
 - 1) I.e., the Sanhedrin council
 - 2) Which was the high court normally reserved for special criminals

- c. One who says “You fool!” would be in danger of **hell fire**
 - 1) I.e., Gehenna
 - 2) The place of everlasting torment - **Mk 9:43-48**
4. In this way, the “traditional interpretation and application” of the Law fell far short of what it should have been
 - a. The “**righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees**” had just been condemning murderers when those with hateful emotions were just as guilty!
 - b. The “**righteousness of the kingdom**” is in harmony with the original intent of the Law - notice **Ga 5:19-21**

B. JESUS EMPHASIZES THE SERIOUS NATURE OF SUCH EMOTIONS BY ILLUSTRATING HOW THEY AFFECT OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOD AND MAN...

1. We should not try to worship God when we are “at odds” with a brother
 - a. Repair your strained relationship with a brother before worshipping God - **Mt 5:23-24**
 - b. Otherwise, it won’t do us any good - cf. **1 Jn 4:20-21**
2. We should be quick to “make amends” lest uncontrolled anger cause us to wind up in court, possibly prison! - **Mt 5:25-26**
 - a. Many “hotheads” have let their anger prompt them to do things that sent them to prison!
 - b. But notice how those in the kingdom are to act - **Ro 12:18-21**

CONCLUSION

1. In the first contrast between the **righteousness of the kingdom** and the **traditional treatment of the Law**, Jesus:
 - a. Declared that the ancients did not go far enough in applying the Law
 - b. Illustrated how it should be applied by those seeking to surpass the “righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees”
2. We have seen that **the righteousness of the kingdom is actually in harmony with the Law and the Prophets!**

In the next lesson, we shall consider what Jesus taught in regards to the matter of adultery...

The Sermon On The Mount

Concerning Adultery (Mt 5:27-30)

INTRODUCTION

1. As we continue our study of “The Sermon On The Mount” we find Jesus still discussing “**The Righteousness Of The Kingdom**”
2. Having dealt with the subject of **murder**, He then addressed the subject of **adultery** - **Mt 5:27-30**
3. As we consider His words on this subject (and the ones to follow concerning divorce), it may be that we find His teachings hard to accept...
 - a. But Jesus did warn us (in **verse 20**) that the righteousness expected of those who would be citizens of His kingdom is one with very high standards
 - b. Therefore, if we truly desire to be citizens of that kingdom, we must be willing to accept whatever Jesus requires of us!

[On the subject of adultery, notice that...]

I. JESUS GOES BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT (28-30)

A. THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION...

1. Evidently stressed that as long as one did not commit the actual act, one was not guilty
2. Thereby emphasizing the “letter” of the Law, but not appreciating the “spirit” behind the Law as well

B. BUT JESUS INTERPRETS AND APPLIES THE LAW DIFFERENTLY...

1. One does not have to commit the “act” to be guilty of adultery
2. One is just as guilty when one “**looks at a woman to lust for her**”
3. **Note:** Not the “looking” only, but “to lust” for her is what is wrong
 - a. “**to lust**” means to have a strong desire for, to possess and dominate completely
 - b. A person may look at another with admiration for beauty and not be guilty of “lust”

C. JESUS’ INTERPRETATION WAS IN KEEPING WITH WHAT THE LAW OF MOSES ACTUALLY TAUGHT...!

1. Notice that the Tenth Commandment condemned coveting a neighbor’s wife - **Exo 20:17**
2. Even in the time of Job, to “look at a woman to lust for her” was considered wrong - **Job 31:1**

[So serious is such “lusting,” Jesus goes on to say what we should do with respect to the lustful eye or any other stumbling blocks...]

II. JESUS’ PROGNOSIS FOR THE LUSTFUL EYE AND OTHER STUMBLING BLOCKS (29-30)

A. “PLUCK IT OUT AND CAST IT FROM YOU...”

1. That Jesus is not being literal should be obvious, for one could still stumble with the left eye or hand
2. The key to understanding this passage is found in **Mt 18:7-9**
 - a. The **eye** and **hand** represent **offenses**
 - 1) Offenses are **stumbling blocks** that lead a person to sin
 - 2) These would be enticements to do wrong, beguiling allurements

B. THE MEANING OF JESUS' TEACHING...

1. Take drastic action in getting rid of whatever will tempt you to sin
2. Such should be the case in regards to **all** sin, as well as the sin of adultery

[As we contemplate upon Jesus' words, there are several...]

III. IMPORTANT LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

A. THE PRESENT IS NOT OUR ONLY LIFE; WE ARE DESTINED FOR ETERNITY!

1. The future holds the possibility of **hell** (Greek, **gehenna**, the place of everlasting torment)
2. What we do or not do in the present will determine our place in the future

B. NOTHING, NO MATTER HOW PRECIOUS, SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO DOOM OUR GLORIOUS DESTINY!

1. God's goal for us is the **kingdom of heaven** in all its eternal glory!
2. What on **earth** can be worthy of losing that?

C. SIN, BEING A VERY DESTRUCTIVE FORCE, MUST NOT BE PAMPERED!

1. Sin is to the soul what cancer is to the body
 - a. Delay can be deadly!
 - b. Halfway measures, halfhearted efforts, only give sin time to wreak havoc!
2. **Radical surgery** is what's necessary to treat the "**cancer**" of **sin**!
 - a. Cut off those things that might lead you to look upon others to lust after them
 - b. Such stumbling blocks might be certain books, movies, pictures, situations
 - c. How much better to dwell upon such things as mentioned in **Ph 4:8**!

CONCLUSION

1. The affect of what Jesus taught is certainly challenging!
2. But if it wasn't possible, Jesus would not require it of us - cf. **Mt 11:28-30; 1 Jn 5:3**
3. Of course, in our efforts we are not alone, for God and Jesus are with us! - cf. **Ph 2:12-13; 4:13**

It is important to keep this in mind, especially in our next study on the subject of divorce...

The Sermon On The Mount

The Effects Of Divorce (Mt 5:31-32)

INTRODUCTION

1. As we continue our study of “The Sermon On The Mount,” we find Jesus in our text still discussing **The Righteousness Of The Kingdom**
2. Having dealt with the subjects of **murder (21-26)** and **adultery (27-30)**, He now addresses the matter of **divorce (31-32)**
3. The effect of what Jesus teaches on this subject is even more challenging than His comments on adultery, but please keep in mind...
 - a. Jesus warned us in verse 20 that the righteousness of those who would be citizens of His Kingdom is one with very high standards
 - b. If we truly desire to be citizens of that kingdom, we must be willing to accept whatever Jesus may require of us
 - c. We should take courage from the fact that we are not alone in our efforts to do God’s Will, and that whatever strength is needed will be provided (cf. **Ph 2:12-13; 4:13**)

[On the subject of divorce, then, consider first...]

I. THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF THE LAW (31)

A. “WHOEVER DIVORCES HIS WIFE, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE...”

1. This was the traditional interpretation of **Deu 24:1-4**
2. In applying the Law, they had focused in on the mention of giving a certificate of divorce
3. I.e., they concluded divorce was permissible as long as a certificate of divorce was given to the wife

B. BUT IS THIS WHAT THE LAW ACTUALLY SAID...?

1. Please read **Deu 24:1-4** carefully...
 - a. Verses **1-3** are simply describing a particular situation
 - b. It is in verse **4** that Moses actually commands what must not be done
 - c. Which was: **“her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination to the Lord”**
 - d. This passage is simply forbidding a man to remarry his wife after she had been married to another (cf. **Jer 3:1**)
2. But the scribes and Pharisees had interpreted it to permit divorce as long as a certificate of divorce was given to the wife
 - a. Is this a proper interpretation and application?
 - b. What does Jesus say?

II. JESUS’ INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF THE LAW ON DIVORCE (32)

A. “WHOEVER DIVORCES HIS WIFE FOR ANY REASON EXCEPT SEXUAL

IMMORALITY CAUSES HER TO COMMIT ADULTERY...”

1. The only acceptable grounds for divorcing a wife is **adultery**
2. Otherwise, divorcing a wife **“causes her to commit adultery”**
3. How? By placing her in a position where she is likely to remarry, in which she becomes **“defiled”** (cf. **Deu 24:4**)
4. Isn’t that what the Law stated in **Deu 24:4** and **Jer 3:1**?
 - a. That is why the first husband couldn’t take her back
 - b. Even if her second husband had died!
 - c. Because the wife had become “defiled”!
5. Notice these comments by **Keil & Delitzsch...**
 - a. “The second marriage of a woman who had been divorced is designated by Moses a defilement of the woman...a moral defilement, i.e., blemishing, desecration of the sexual communion which was sanctified by marriage, **in the same sense in which adultery is called a defilement** in Lev. 18:20 and Num 5:13,14...”
 - b. “Thus the second marriage of a divorced woman was placed implicit upon a par with adultery, and some approach was made towards the teaching of Christ concerning marriage (Mt 5:32)...”
 - c. “If the second marriage of a divorced woman was a moral defilement, of course the wife could not marry the first again even after the death of her second husband... because the defilement of the wife would be thereby repeated, and even increased, as the moral defilement which the divorced wife acquired through the second marriage was not removed by a divorce from the second husband, nor yet by his death.”
6. Therefore, Jesus was simply making very clear what the Law itself implied: **that to divorce a woman except for sexual immorality would cause her to be defiled when she remarried!**
7. This interpretation and application of the Law by Jesus is in harmony with Paul’s understanding of the Law - cf. **Ro 7:1-3**
 - a. A woman was bound by the Law to her husband as long he lived
 - b. If she married another while her first husband was still living (implying a certificate of divorce was given), she became an adulteress (i.e., defiled)!

B. “WHOEVER MARRIES A DIVORCED WOMAN COMMITS ADULTERY...”

1. Jesus goes on to say that anyone who marries a person who has been divorced (lit., “put away”) also commits adultery!
2. Jesus does not use the definite article in reference to one put away, therefore He seems to refer to any “put away” person!
 - a. I.e., a person “put away” for reasons other than adultery cannot remarry
 - 1) Because such would “cause them to commit adultery”
 - 2) Or to put it in O.T. terms “become defiled”
 - b. Nor can a person “put away” for the reason of adultery remarry
 - 1) For such a person is an “adulteress” or “adulterer”
 - 2) As such, is “defiled” and would thereby cause anyone who married that person to commit adultery!

CONCLUSION

1. Elsewhere Jesus elaborates as to who has the right to divorce their spouse and be free to remarry, i.e., an innocent spouse whose spouse is guilty of fornication - **Mt 19:3-12**

2. But in this passage, Jesus teaches that the righteousness of the kingdom demands...
 - a. That a man cannot divorce his wife without causing her to commit adultery (by her subsequent marriage), unless she has already committed adultery
 - b. That whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery
 - What is said about a man divorcing his wife would also be true about a woman divorcing her husband - cf. **Mk 10:11-12**

3. Therefore, I believe that a careful study of the Law concerning divorce reveals...
 - a. That Jesus' teaching was really in harmony with the Law itself
 - b. But the traditional interpretation and application of the Law had missed the mark by placing emphasis upon the mention of giving a certificate of divorce

4. As difficult as Jesus' (and the Law's) teaching on the subject of divorce might seem in today's permissive and immoral society, those who respect the authority of Jesus Christ will abide by His teaching, knowing all the while that He provides...
 - a. Forgiveness for any failures to live by His teachings in the past!
 - b. Whatever strength we may need to live by His teachings in the future!

Our next study will concern Jesus' teaching on the matter of oaths...

The Sermon On The Mount

The Swearing Of Oaths (Mt 5:33-37)

INTRODUCTION

1. We have examined the teachings of Jesus concerning **murder, adultery, and divorce**
2. Now, as we consider **verses 33-37**, we find Jesus dealing with **the swearing of oaths**
3. We will look at what Jesus taught from the viewpoint of four questions...

[The first is: **“What did the Law of Moses actually teach concerning the swearing of oaths?”**]

I. THE TEACHING OF THE LAW

A. THREE PASSAGES MAKE VERY CLEAR THE TEACHING OF LAW CONCERNING THE SWEARING OF OATHS OR VOWS...

1. “And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God; I am the LORD.” - **Lev 19:12**
2. “If a man vows a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.” - **Num 30:2**
3. “When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you.” - **Deu 23:21**

B. IN EACH CASE, THE EMPHASIS WAS ON TRUTHFULNESS & FAITHFULNESS...

1. A person must be truthful when he swears an oath; he must truly mean it
2. He must also be faithful in keeping the oath; he must carry out his word

C. THIS EMPHASIS ON TRUTHFULNESS “IN THE HEART” WAS STRESSED BY THE PSALMS AND PROPHETS AS WELL...

1. In **the Psalms** we read:
 - a. “LORD, who may abide in your tabernacle?
Who may dwell in Your holy hill?
“He who walks uprightly,
And works righteousness,
And speaks the truth in his heart;” - **Psa 15:1-2**
 - b. “Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?
Or who may stand in His holy place?
“He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol,
Nor sworn deceitfully.” - **Psa 24:3-4**
2. **The Prophets** often bemoaned the lack of truth in the heart:
 - a. “Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem;
See now and know;
And seek in her open places
If you can find a man,

- If there is anyone who executes judgment,
Who seeks the truth,
And I will pardon her.
“Though they say, ‘As the LORD lives,’
Surely they swear falsely.” - **Jer 5:1-2**
- b. “Hear the word of the LORD,
You children of Israel,
For the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land:
“There is no truth or mercy
Or knowledge of God in the land.
By swearing and lying,
Killing and stealing and committing adultery,
They break all restraint,
With bloodshed after bloodshed.” - **Hos 4:1-2**

[So the teaching of the Law was clear: Vows to the Lord should be kept, and truthfulness in all things was expected. Our second question is this: **“How had the Jews, and in particular the Scribes and Pharisees, traditionally interpreted and applied the Law?”**]

II. THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION

A. FROM JESUS’ COMMENTS, IT APPEARS THE EMPHASIS HAD SHIFTED...

1. **From** truthfulness in all things
2. **To** honoring only those vows sworn “to the Lord”

B. SO THAT IN APPLICATION, VOWS MADE NOT “TO THE LORD” WERE NOT AS BINDING...

1. That the Jews had made such arbitrary distinctions between their vows, cf. **Mt 23:16-19**
2. Because of this distinction, daily conversations were often spiced with meaningless oaths to make impressions; for example:
 - a. “I swear by heaven”
 - b. “I swear by the throne of God”
 - c. “I swear...by the earth...by Jerusalem...by the altar...by the temple...by my head...”

[By shifting the emphasis from **truthfulness** to honoring only those vows made **to the Lord**, the Jews in their application of the Law justified the use of meaningless vows. This leads to our third question: **“What did Jesus teach in response to this abuse of the Law concerning oaths?”**]

III. THE TEACHING OF JESUS

A. HE EXPOSED THE HYPOCRISY IN MAKING ARBITRARY DISTINCTIONS...

1. **Mt 23:20-22** clearly shows that when one swears by...
 - a. “the temple”
 - b. “the throne of God”...he is swearing by the LORD also!
2. **Mt 5:34-36** likewise teaches that one cannot swear by these things without involving God
 - a. Heaven is the throne of God
 - b. Earth is His footstool
 - c. Only God can change our hair color (without the use of dyes)

-- **Therefore, any oath is an oath “to the LORD!”**

B. INSTEAD OF MAKING SUCH OATHS, JESUS ENJOINED A PRACTICE IN HARMONY WITH THE LAW CONCERNING “TRUTHFULNESS IN THE HEART”...

1. Let your “yes” mean “yes”
 2. Let your “no” mean “no”
- Any more than this is evil, and would be contrary to speaking “truth in his heart” (**Psa 15: 1-2**)

[In exposing the hypocritical distinctions made by the scribes and Pharisees in their oaths, and in commanding us to speak simply and truthfully, the words of Jesus have led many to ask our fourth and final question: **“Did Jesus forbid even those oaths made in court?”**]

IV. MAKING OATHS IN JUDICIAL MATTERS

A. ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF CHRISTIANS SWEARING OATHS UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS...

1. Both Jesus and James qualified their statements concerning oaths
 - a. **Mt 5:34ff** - “swear not at all” is immediately qualified by Jesus to refer to flippant and hypocritical oaths commonly voiced by the people
 - b. **Ja 5:12** - the command “do not swear” is also qualified by James to refer to the same kind of meaningless oaths
2. Also, consider the following points:
 - a. God has sworn an oath to us - **He 6:16-18**
 - b. Jesus was willing to answer under oath before the Sanhedrin court - **Mt 26:63-64**
 - c. Paul made solemn oaths in his epistles - **2 Co 1:23; Ga 1:20**
 - d. An angel of God swore an oath - **Re 10:5-7**

B. IN LIGHT OF THESE ARGUMENTS...

1. Some believe that Jesus and James were only condemning the flippant, profane and hypocritical oaths...
 - a. Used to make impressions
 - b. Used to spice daily conversations
...but were never intended to be kept
2. And that the **exception** to not swearing oaths can be:
 - a. Solemn oaths made in judicial circumstances
 - b. Those oaths on occasions of solemn religious importance (as in the case of Paul)

C. PERSONALLY, I PREFER TO TAKE THE SAFER COURSE...

1. In other words, to “swear not at all”
 2. Fortunately, in this country we are allowed the option to “confidently affirm” in judicial matters
- But I would not judge those brethren who themselves solemnly and honestly “swear oaths” in judicial circumstances

CONCLUSION

1. Again we see that **the righteousness of the kingdom** exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees

- a. Whereas they would often spice their statements with vows and oaths in order to be believed
 - b. Citizens of the kingdom are to be so truthful that their simple “yes” means “yes” and their “no” means “no”
2. So truthful and trustworthy are the disciples of Christ to be, it would not be necessary for them to swear oaths or have to say “I promise” to be trusted
 3. Can this be said of us?
 - a. Can others “bank” on our words?
 - b. When we say we will do something, is it as good as done?

Our next study examines the teaching of Jesus concerning **vengeance**...

The Sermon On The Mount

Taking Revenge (Mt 5:38-42)

INTRODUCTION

1. As we continue our study of Jesus' "Sermon On The Mount," bear in mind that we are still discussing **The Righteousness Of The Kingdom**
2. We have seen Jesus contrast this "righteousness" to that of the scribes and Pharisees, in how they interpreted and applied the Law to such matters as:
 - a. Murder - **Mt 5:21-26**
 - b. Adultery - **Mt 5:27-30**
 - c. Divorce - **Mt 5:31-32**
 - d. Swearing Oaths - **Mt 5:33-37**
3. In this lesson, we shall consider what Jesus taught concerning **vengeance** - **Mt 5:38-42**

[First, by comparing...]

I. THE LAW OF MOSES AND THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION

- A. CONCERNING THE STATEMENT: "AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH..."**
 1. It is found in **Exo 21:24-25**
 2. A parallel passage is **Deu 19:21**
- B. FROM THE CONTEXT, IT IS SEEN THESE STATEMENTS WERE ACTUALLY LAWS FOR THE CIVIL COURTS TO APPLY...**
 1. Notice carefully **Deu 19:15-21; Exo 21:22-23**
 2. They were given to guide the priests in meriting out proper punishment
- C. IT APPEARS THAT THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES HAD...**
 1. Interpreted these statements so as to justify **personal** retribution!
 2. Applied them by frequently taking matters of revenge into their own hands
-- **Just as many people do today!**
- D. BUT THE LAW OF MOSES REPEATEDLY FORBID PERSONAL VENGEANCE...**
 1. Consider **Lev 19:18; Pro 20:22; 24:29**
 2. Both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, the matter of vengeance was to be left up to God and His duly appointed agents: **civil governments** - cf. **Ro 12:19; 13:1-4**

[Therefore, there is really no difference between what the Law taught and what we find in the New Testament; there is no place for personal vengeance in the lives of those who the children of God. Now let's examine more closely...]

II. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM AS TAUGHT BY JESUS

A. JESUS PROCLAIMED TWO PRINCIPLES...

1. **Do not resist an evil person (39a)**
 - a. Not only should you not take vengeance into your own hands...
 - b. But don't even oppose (resist) the evil person when the evil is being done!
2. **React to the evil being done by doing good! (39b-42)**
 - a. This principle is illustrated by Jesus with several examples...
 - 1) Reacting to **physical abuse (39b)**
 - a) "Turn the other cheek"
 - b) This may refer to offering the other cheek as an expression of love
 - 2) Reacting to a **civil suit**, by giving more than what the person is suing for! (**40**)
 - 3) Reacting to **government oppression**, by offering to do more than what is being demanded of you! (**41**)
 - 4) Reacting to **those seeking help**, by giving them what they ask for! (**42**)
 - b. In each case, the principle is the same
 - 1) We are not to resist the person...
 - a) Who would mistreat us
 - b) Who would try to deprive us of our possessions
 - 2) Instead, react in a positive manner...
 - a) Demonstrate love towards them
 - b) Do so by giving them freely **more** than they were hoping to gain by force, oppression, or manipulation!

B. IS THIS TO BE TAKEN LITERALLY...?

1. Why not?
 - a. We have several O.T. examples...
 - 1) **Joseph**, in forgiving his brothers - **Gen 45:4-15**
 - 2) **David**, in sparing the life of Saul - **1 Sam 24:8-15**
 - 3) **Elisha**, in feeding the army of the Arameans - **2 Kin 6:8-23**
 - b. We also have several N.T. examples...
 - 1) **Jesus**, our prime example - **1 Pe 2:20-23**
 - 2) **Stephen**, when he was being stoned - **Ac 7:59-60**
 - 3) **The Hebrew Christians**, who "joyfully accepted" the plundering of their goods - **He 10:32-34**
2. If not, then how do we apply these words of Jesus?
 - a. What does Jesus mean?
 - b. Give some examples of how to apply these teachings...???

C. ARE WE TO APPLY IT UNCONDITIONALLY...?

1. I.e., must we decide who is "worthy" to receive this kind of treatment?
 - a. Jesus does not give us any indication that we are to use "discretion"
 - b. Paul does give some qualifying instructions (e.g., **2 Th 3:10**)...
 - 1) But it applies to those who are Christians
 - 2) And we have a responsibility to "judge" those in the church, leaving those outside to God - **1 Co 5:9-13**
2. I find striking the attitude of the Christians of the second century, A.D.:
 - a. "Do good, and give liberally to all who are in need from the wages God gives you. Do not hesitate about to whom you should not give. Give to all. For God wishes gifts to be made to all out of His bounties." (**Hermas, 135 A.D.**)

- b. “And he said to love not only our neighbors but also our enemies, and to be givers and sharers not only with the good but also to be liberal givers towards those who take away our possessions.” (**Irenaeus, 185 A.D.**)
 - c. “Do not judge those who is worthy and who is unworthy, for it is possible for you to be mistaken in your opinion. In the uncertainty of ignorance it is better to do good to the unworthy for the sake of the worthy, than by guarding against those who are less good not to encounter the good. For by sparing and trying to test those who are well-deserving or not, it is possible for you to neglect some who are loved by God, the penalty for which is the eternal punishment of fire. But by helping all those in need in turn you must assuredly find some who are able to save you before God.” (**Clement of Alexandria, 190 A.D.**)
- These statements were written at a time when Christians were constantly mistreated, abused, and manipulated by others!

CONCLUSION

1. Summarizing the teachings of Jesus concerning vengeance...
 - a. Do not resist evil
 - b. Respond to evil by doing good in turn
2. The teachings of Jesus in this passage are admittedly challenging, and opposed to what we might call “human nature”
3. But we are called upon to be “partakers of the divine nature” (**2 Pe 1:4**); in other words, to be more like God than men
4. And as we will see in the next lesson, it is in order to be truly “sons of your Father in heaven” that Jesus teaches a standard of righteousness that far exceeds that of the scribes, Pharisees, and most people today!

At the very least, let us expend as much energy in seeing how we can apply this passage to lives, as many spend in trying to explain it doesn't really mean what it appears to say!

The Sermon On The Mount

Treatment Of Enemies (Mt 5:43-48)

INTRODUCTION

1. The last section on the subject of **vengeance** contained teachings of Jesus that are certainly challenging - **Mt 5:38-42**
2. Taken literally, it would require radical conduct on the part of those who are Christians
3. Perhaps we can glean some insight into why we should act in such a manner, when we consider what Jesus says in this section concerning the **treatment of enemies - Mt 5:43-48**

[First, let's examine...]

I. THE LAW OF MOSES AND THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION

A. NOTE THE O.T. DID NOT REALLY SAY "HATE YOUR ENEMY"...

1. It did teach to "love your neighbor as yourself" - **Lev 19:18**
2. But it also taught that kindness was to be shown to your enemy - **Exo 23:4-5; Pro 25:21-22**

B. AGAIN, THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION MISAPPLIED THE LAW...!

1. Though it did enjoin the command to "love your neighbor"...
2. It inferred from this command that one had the right to "hate your enemy"! - **Mt 5:43**

[In contrast, consider...]

II. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM AS TAUGHT BY JESUS

A. IT DEMANDS THAT CONCERNING OUR "ENEMIES"...

1. We "love" our enemies (i.e., show "active good will" towards them) - **Mt 5:44**
2. We "bless" those who curse us (i.e., speak well of them)
3. We "do good" to those who hate us (i.e., treat them kindly)
4. We "pray" for those who spitefully use us and persecute us
 - a. Notice, we are to pray FOR them, not just about them
 - b. I.e., pray for their well-being, salvation, etc.

B. THIS IS AN EXPANSION OF THE PRINCIPLE STRESSED EARLIER...

1. Don't seek vengeance! - **Mt 5:38-39a**
2. Instead, react by manifesting aggressive love! - **Mt 5:39b-42**

[Why respond to our enemies in this way? Jesus explains...]

III. THE UNDERLYING REASON TO REACT IN THIS WAY

A. “THAT YOU MAY BE SONS OF YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN...”

1. That is, to demonstrate ourselves to be truly His children! - **Mt 5:45**
2. What is our Father like?
 - a. He gives material blessings to both the evil and the good, both the righteous and the unrighteous - **Mt 5:45b**
 - b. He is kind to the unthankful and evil - **Lk 6:35-36**
 - c. He offered His Son while we were yet sinners and enemies! - **Ro 5:8,10**
 - d. He loved us before we loved Him - **1 Jn 4:10**
3. As taught elsewhere, we are to imitate our Heavenly Father - **1 Jn 4:11; Ep 4:31-5:2**

B. TO BE DIFFERENT THAN THE TAX-COLLECTORS...

1. In Jesus’ day, they were despised by the Jews, because they made themselves rich by collecting taxes from their fellowmen for the Roman government
2. And yet, they would...
 - a. Love those who loved them - **Mt 5:46**
 - b. Greet cordially those who greeted them - **Mt 5:47**
3. We are no different if our love is limited to our brethren or friends!

C. TO BE “PERFECT, JUST AS YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN IS PERFECT...”

1. The word **perfect** means “brought to completion, full-grown, lacking nothing”
2. In this context, it has reference to the matter of showing love and mercy (cf. the parallel passage in **Lk 6:36**)
3. When we display love and mercy to our enemies...
 - a. We are “complete,” “full-grown” in demonstrating love
 - b. Just as our Father is when He shows kindness to evil and unthankful men! - **Mt 5:48**

CONCLUSION

1. This section of scripture is just another vivid demonstration of how the righteousness of the kingdom **exceeds** the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees - cf. **Mt 5:20**
2. The principles presented in this sermon are certainly challenging to our understanding, and to the application of them in our lives
3. But if we really want to be...
 - a. “sons of your Father in heaven”
 - b. “perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect”...
4. It is imperative that we be influenced...
 - a. More by the teachings and example of the Son of God
 - b. Than by the attitudes and example of the “tax-collectors”!

In the next lesson, we shall begin to consider the righteousness of the kingdom **with respect to man’s relation to God** - **Mt 6:1-33**

The Sermon On The Mount

Charitable Deeds (Mt 6:1-4)

INTRODUCTION

1. In chapter five, we found Jesus contrasting the righteousness of the kingdom with what the scribes and Pharisees were **teaching**
2. As we enter chapter six, we find the contrast to be with what they were **practicing**
3. The entire chapter expounds upon the righteousness of the kingdom **with respect to man's relation to God**, especially in the practice of certain acts of righteousness...

[In verse one, we find...]

I. THE BASIC PRINCIPLE GOVERNING OUR ACTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (1)

A. PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS CONCERNING THIS VERSE...

1. Some manuscripts, upon which the KJV and NKJV are based, have the Greek word **eleemosunen**
 - a. Translated “alms”, or “charitable deeds”
 - b. Which would make verse one refer specifically to almsgiving, or charitable deeds
 2. Older manuscripts, upon which the ASV and NASV are based, have the Greek word **dikaiosunen**
 - a. Translated “righteousness”
 - b. Which would make verse one speaking in general terms, establishing the principle to be applied to **all** acts of righteousness
- Textual support seems strongest for **dikaiosunen**, making verse one **an introductory statement** concerning all righteous acts

B. THE BASIC PRINCIPLE...

1. It is **not** to completely avoid **any** practice of righteousness before men - cf. **Mt 5:16**
2. Rather, it is to avoid the doing of such **just to be seen of men**
3. Therefore, it is proper to do good works before men...
 - a. When we are trying to secure praise for **God**
 - b. But **not** when we are trying to secure praise for ourselves!

C. CONSEQUENCES OF IGNORING THE BASIC PRINCIPLE...

1. If, in the innermost being of your heart, you do not mean to please and glorify God, **He will not reward you!**
2. What reward you may have will be limited to the praise of men - cf. **Mt 6:2,5,16**

[Consider how Jesus applies this to the matter of charitable deeds...]

II. CONCERNING CHARITABLE DEEDS (2-4)

A. WHAT “NOT” TO DO... (2)

1. Don't be like the "hypocrites" (literally, "actors")
 - a. Who sound trumpets in the synagogues and streets
 - b. Who are looking to be honored by **men**
2. "They have their reward"
 - a. I.e., they receive exactly (and **only**) what they wanted: the praise of men
 - b. But remember verse one...
 - 1) They have no reward from the Father in heaven
 - 2) Neither in the present or in the future!

B. CHARITABLE DEEDS DONE PROPERLY... (3-4a)

1. "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing"
 - a. This involves avoiding not only the praise of others, but **self** praise as well
 - b. Some thoughts by others on what this metaphor means:
 - 1) "The right [hand], [represents] me with my good deed; the left, me with my good opinion about my deed." - **Lenski**
 - 2) "The expression probably refers to the fact that as much as possible a person must keep his voluntary contribution a secret not only to others but even to himself; that is, he should forget about it, instead of saying in his heart, 'What a good man, woman, boy, girl, am I!'" - **Hendricksen**
 - c. How can one develop the ability to give in this way?
 - 1) Perhaps by giving so often it becomes "second nature"?
 - 2) So that you do it without much thought (just as with anything done repeatedly)?
2. **Note:** Jesus is not condemning public giving per se (cf. **Ac 2:44-45; 4:34-37**)
 - a. He is condemning the spirit which seeks publicity
 - b. He is teaching "secret-giving" in the sense of "secret to one's self"
 - c. "The true Christian cares not how much men hear of his public charities, nor how little they hear of his private ones." - **Toplady**

C. THE FATHER'S REWARD FOR PROPER CHARITABLE DEEDS... (4b)

1. "Your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly."
2. The reward may be experienced to some degree in this life - **Psa 41:1-3**
3. It will certainly be experienced at the Judgment Day - **Ecc 12:14; 2 Co 5:10; 1 Ti 6:17-19**

CONCLUSION

1. Christians who have been blessed materially have been given a charge to be "rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share" - **1 Ti 6:17-19**
2. The teaching of Jesus **assumes** that His disciples would engage in "charitable deeds" (cf. **Mt 5:42**), and in this section He has directed His words to the spirit and manner of such deeds

Our next study will examine Jesus' application of the basic principle concerning the practice of righteousness to the subject of **prayer**...

The Sermon On The Mount

Prayer (Mt 6:5-15)

INTRODUCTION

1. The sixth chapter expounds upon the righteousness of the kingdom **with respect to man's relation to God**, especially in practicing certain **acts of righteousness**
2. Remember that **verse one** likely provides an introductory statement concerning all acts of righteousness: ***"Take heed that you do not do [them] before men, to be seen by them..."***
 - a. We have seen this principle applied to charitable deeds
 - b. Now we shall consider how Jesus applied it to the practice of **prayer**

[First, we find...]

I. WHAT "NOT" TO DO IN REGARDS TO PRAYER (5)

A. DO NOT BE LIKE THE "HYPOCRITES"...

1. Who love to pray...
 - a. Standing in the synagogues
 - b. On the corners of the streets
2. This they do "that they may be seen of men"

B. "THEY HAVE THEIR REWARD"...

1. That is, they are indeed seen by men
2. But that is the extent of their reward (the praise of men)
3. They will have no reward or blessing from God!

C. JESUS IS NOT CONDEMNING "ALL" PUBLIC PRAYING...

1. This is evident from the fact He Himself prayed in public - **Mt 11:25; Jn 11:41**
2. So did Paul - **Ac 27:35**

[The emphasis is the same as stated in verse one, "do not do your [deeds of righteousness] before men, **to be seen by them.**" How, then, are we to pray as to be heard by God...?]

II. ELEMENTS OF PROPER PRAYER (6-15)

A. MUST BE DONE "TO BE SEEN OF GOD," NOT MEN... (6)

1. This is the main idea being "praying in secret"
2. "The sincere and humble worshiper, one who is not interested in making a public display for the sake of enhancing his prestige, will find the secluded nook or den to be most appropriate for his devotions." - **Unknown**
3. The person who prays much in secret is praying to be seen of God, not men!

B. MUST BE DONE "TO BE HEARD OF GOD," NOT MEN... (7)

1. By avoiding the use of "vain repetitions"
 - a. As was often practiced by the heathen religions

- b. “The heathen tried to tire out their gods with such endless prayers. Mere formulas were repeated over and over again; the Jews had such prayer formulas, Catholics also have them in the form of their rosary.” - **Lenski**
2. Since “the Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him,” prayers to be heard by God do not have to be filled with superfluous words

C. MUST BE PATTERNED AFTER THE MANNER JESUS DESCRIBED... (9-13)

1. The phrase “in this manner”...
 - a. Suggests that “The Lord’s Prayer” is a **pattern** for praying
 - b. I.e., not a liturgical exercise as sometimes practiced
2. The **pattern** of proper prayer:
 - a. First, **simplicity**
 - 1) Cf., the word “therefore”; it connects what follows with what was said before
 - 2) Jesus’ pattern is an “illustration” in contrast to the “many words” used by the heathen (In the prayer itself, note the brevity of words)
 - b. Then, in its **content**, proper prayer includes...
 - 1) Reverence for God and His “Name” (that is, His Being and Character) - **Mt 6:9**
 - 2) Praying for the progress of God’s Kingdom and His Will on the earth - **Mt 6:10**
 - 3) Asking for physical necessities - **Mt 6:11**
 - 4) Also, our spiritual needs
 - a) Forgiveness of sins - **Mt 6:12**
 - b) Protection and deliverance from evil - **Mt 6:13**
 - 5) Praising God - **Mt 6:13**

D. MUST BE OFFERED WITH A MERCIFUL SPIRIT... (14-15)

1. As indicated in the pattern prayer itself - **Mt 6:12**
2. Otherwise, we cannot expect mercy for ourselves - cf. **Mt 18:21-23; Ja 2:13**
3. This must be important; it is the only part of the prayer upon which Jesus elaborates!

CONCLUSION

1. The privilege of prayer is one of the most important blessings to be enjoyed by the children of God in this life
2. How important, then, that we be sure to pray in such a manner as to be seen and heard by our Father in heaven!
3. Next, we shall examine what Jesus says about **fasting**...

The Sermon On The Mount

Fasting (Mt 6:16-18)

INTRODUCTION

1. In this section, Jesus continues to expound upon the righteousness of the kingdom **with respect to man's relation to God**, especially in the practice of certain **acts of righteousness**
2. Remember that verse one provides an introductory statement concerning all acts of righteousness...
 - a. We have seen this principle applied to **charitable deeds** and to **prayer**
 - b. Now we shall consider how Jesus applies it to the practice of **fasting**

[Again, we find a clear contrast; this time, it is...]

I. FASTING TO BE SEEN OF MEN vs. FASTING TO BE SEEN OF GOD (16-18)

A. FASTING "TO BE SEEN OF MEN" ... (16)

1. As practiced by the hypocrites of Jesus' day, it involved:
 - a. Doing so with a "sad countenance"
 - b. Doing so with "disfigured faces" (perhaps by applying ashes?)
2. The only good such fasting might do them is win the praise of men, but certainly not of God!

B. FASTING TO BE "SEEN OF GOD" ... (17-18)

1. To be done without any outward appearance of fasting
 - a. Therefore, it should include "anointing your head"
 - b. Also, "washing your face"
2. By doing this, only God will see your fasting and He will reward you openly (perhaps by answering those prayers that were offered while fasting)

[The teaching of Jesus concerning fasting is easy to understand, but a question often raised today is this: **Should Christians fast today? If so, why, when and how?** Let's examine these questions a little further...]

II. FASTING BY CHRISTIANS TODAY

A. SHOULD CHRISTIANS FAST TODAY...?

1. Consider the example and teachings of Jesus.
 - a. He fasted during his forty day period of temptation in the wilderness - **Lk 4:1-2**
 - b. In His teaching on the subject of fasting:
 - 1) He assumed His disciples would fast -- He said "when," not "if" - **Mt 6:16-17**
 - 2) He said they would fast when He was gone - **Mt 9:14-15**
 - 3) He taught:
 - a) How to fast so as to incur God's good pleasure - **Mt 6:16-18**
 - b) When done properly, fasting **would** incur God's good pleasure - **Mt 6:18b**
 - c) Fasting should be done only when the occasion rightfully calls for it - **Mt 9:16-17**
 - d) There would be occasions when prayer joined with fasting would be called for

- Mt 17:20-21

2. Consider the examples of the church fasting
 - a. The brethren at Antioch - **Ac 13:1-3**
 - 1) Fasting in their service to the Lord
 - 2) Fasting and praying as they send out Paul and Barnabas
 - b. The churches in Galatia - **Ac 14:21-23**
 - 1) Done in **every** church
 - 2) When appointing elders
3. Consider the example of Paul fasting as a minister of Christ
 - a. He listed fasting among those things which proved him as a minister of Jesus Christ - cf. **2 Co 11:23-28**
 - b. Are we not commanded to imitate him, even as he imitated Christ (and both fasted in their service to God)? - **1 Co 11:1**

[At the very least, we can say that it is not inappropriate for Christians to fast today. Unless we have medical reasons not to fast, we have very good examples to motivate us to fast! But to be sure that we fast for the right reason, we raise another question...]

B. WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS FAST...?

1. People often fast today for various reasons.
 - a. Some do it solely for health reasons
 - b. Others do it only in times of grief and sorrow
 - c. Still others do it as a way to gain self-control
 -- But these are not reasons Christians should fast in their service to God - cf. **Co 2:20-23**
2. Christians should fast when faced with situations requiring divine help
 - a. This is consistent with the majority of fasting in the **OT**; people of God fasted...
 - 1) In times of war, or at the threat of it (Israel)
 - 2) When loved ones were sick (David)
 - 3) When seeking God's forgiveness (Ahab, Daniel)
 - 4) When seeking God's protection (Ezra)
 - b. This is consistent with the examples of fasting in the **NT**; fasting occurred...
 - 1) When dealing with temptations (Jesus)
 - 2) When serving the Lord (the church at Antioch)
 - 3) When beginning a work for the Lord (again at Antioch)
 - 4) When selecting and appointing elders (in Galatia)
 - c. Such fasting should be done in conjunction with prayer
 - 1) For fasting, when done properly...
 - a) Humbles the soul - **Psa 35:13**
 - b) Chastens the soul - **Psa 69:10**
 - 2) And the prayers of a humble person are more likely to be heard! - **Ezr 8:21-23**

[This being true, then let's look more specifically at...]

C. WHEN SHOULD CHRISTIANS FAST...?

1. Whenever occasions arise requiring divine help
 - a. These may be occasions on an individual level
 - 1) When faced with difficult temptations
 - 2) When faced with the serious illness of a loved one
 - b. These occasions might be on a congregational level

- 1) As when appointing elders
- 2) As when sending out missionaries
2. Whatever occasions call for persistent praying would call for fasting joined with prayer
 - a. Are we not taught that God is more likely to answer our prayers if we are persistent?
- cf. **Lk 18:1-8**
 - b. Also if we fast in the proper way? - **Mt 6:17-18**

[So whenever there is a matter requiring much prayer, fasting in conjunction with such prayer would be appropriate. Finally, let's take a look at...]

D. HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS FAST...?

1. Not to be seen of men.
 - a. As our text points out - **Mt 6:16-18**
 - b. Whether fasting as individuals or with others, it is important that we not do it to impress others
2. Not as some regular ritual.
 - a. This point Jesus made in **Mt 9:14-17**
 - b. It should be done only when the occasion calls for it (such as situations where you would already be spending much time in prayer)
3. Not without true repentance.
 - a. Cf. **Isa 58:3-9**
 - b. All the praying, all the fasting, is of no avail if it is not accompanied with penitent obedience on our part
4. Some practical suggestions
 - a. Don't go out and fast just because it sounds like "a neat thing to do"
 - 1) Take the subject seriously and prayerfully
 - 2) Fast only when the occasion is a serious one
 - 3) One in which you desperately desire God's help
 - b. If you have never fasted before...
 - 1) Start slow, fast only for brief periods of time
 - 2) End slow, gradually breaking your fast with fresh fruits and vegetables in small amounts
 - c. Fast when you have time to spend in prayerful meditation
 - 1) Remember the purpose for fasting
 - 2) To humble oneself in God's sight; to seek a favorable answer to prayer for some important plea

CONCLUSION

1. There is much more that could be said on this subject
2. But I hope that this suffices to stimulate our thinking on a subject which has often been neglected in both study and practice
3. But implied in Jesus' teachings in The Sermon On The Mount is that His disciples **would** fast; and so it is important that we do it in a way to be seen of God, and not by men

Our next study will examine how Jesus deals with the problem of **materialism**...

The Sermon On The Mount

Materialism (Mt 6:19-24)

INTRODUCTION

1. Jesus continues to expound upon the righteousness of the kingdom **with respect to man's relation to God**
2. In this section and the one to follow (concerning **anxiety**), we learn that man must have his priorities concerning material things properly aligned if his relationship with God is going to be what it should

[To keep our priorities straight, Jesus taught several principles and illustrations which should govern our lives...]

I. LAY UP YOUR TREASURES IN HEAVEN (19-21)

A. IN HEAVEN, NOT ON EARTH...

1. For on earth:
 - a. Moth and rust destroy (i.e., material things are perishable)
 - b. Thieves break in and steal (material things are subject to theft)
2. But in heaven:
 - a. Neither moth nor rust destroys (our treasures are imperishable) - cf. **1 Pe 1:3-4**
 - b. Thieves do not break in and steal (our treasures are securely guarded) - cf. **1 Pe 3:4-5**

B. BECAUSE WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE YOUR "HEART" (AFFECTIONS, HOPE, DREAMS) WILL BE ALSO...

1. If your treasure is on **earth**, your heart will experience much disappointment
 - a. As the things for which you have affection decay or are one day destroyed by fire
 - b. As the things in which you find your primary joy are suddenly gone through things like theft
2. But if your treasure is in **heaven**, your heart will not suffer great disappointments
 - a. For your treasure is "incorruptible, undefiled, and does not fade away"
 - b. Nothing can take your treasure away from you, for it is "reserved in heaven for you ...kept by the power of God through faith"
3. With treasures laid up in heaven, whatever happens on earth will not devastate you! - cf. the Hebrew Christians in **He 10:32-34**
4. When these words of Jesus are taken to heart and applied, how true His words in **Mt 7:24-27** will be!
 - a. The "storms" of life will not overwhelm us
 - b. Because we have built our foundation upon such words of Jesus as found in our text!

C. HOW CAN WE LAY UP TREASURE IN HEAVEN...?

1. First, by becoming children of God, and thereby "joint-heirs with Christ" - **Ro 8:16-17**
2. Then, by using material wealth which we may have to bless those around us...
 - a. As Jesus instructed the rich young ruler, in order to "have treasure in heaven" - **Mt 19:21**
 - b. As He instructed His disciples, in order to have "a treasure in the heavens that does not

fail” - **Lk 12:33-34**

- c. As Paul wrote Timothy to charge those rich in this present age, that they may be “storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” - **1 Ti 6:17-19**

[The importance of such generosity is seen in the illustration next used by Jesus in His sermon...]

II. THE LAMP OF THE BODY IS THE EYE (22-23)

A. IN THIS METAPHOR USED BY JESUS...

1. The **body** likely represents the “soul” or “inner man”
2. The **eye** likely represents the “gaze of the soul” or the “heart of man”
3. The word **good** in Greek means “simple, single, uncomplicated”
4. The word **bad** in Greek means “wicked, evil”
5. And in the Scriptures, the expression **evil eye** is used to mean “envious, covetous” - cf. **Pro 23:6; Mt 20:15; Mk 7:22**

B. AN EXPLANATION BASED UPON THESE DEFINITIONS MIGHT THEN BE...

1. If the heart or gaze of the soul be single (in its love of God and the things of God)...
 - a. Then one is filled with “light”
 - b. In other words, goodness, righteousness, and truth - cf. **Ep 5:8-10**
2. But if the heart or gaze of the soul be evil (envious, or covetous)...
 - a. Then one’s soul is filled with “darkness”
 - b. The opposite of “light”: selfishness, wickedness, and falsehood!

[Thus the need to be rich toward God and free from covetousness of material things (cf. also **Lk 12:13-21**; especially **15** and **21**). To strike home the point once more that we should not make material things our treasures in this life, Jesus proclaims...]

III. YOU CANNOT SERVE BOTH GOD AND “MAMMON” (24)

A. FOR NO ONE CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS...

1. A **master** by definition demands “total loyalty”
2. Such is certainly true with God - cf. **Exo 34:14**

B. WE HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN GOD AND MAMMON...

1. **Mammon** is an Aramaic term which refers to wealth, prosperity
 2. When wealth is coveted, and becomes the priority in our lives, it becomes a “god” - cf. **Ep 5:5; Co 3:5**
- **So the choice becomes one as to whether we shall worship the One True God, or be “idolaters” following after a false god!**

CONCLUSION

1. Jesus is obviously teaching us to **choose God!**
 - a. Because **mammon**...
 - 1) Is susceptible to decay and theft - **Mt 6:19-21**
 - 2) Will make us blind, selfish creatures
 - b. Whereas with **God**...

- 1) Our treasures are secure
 - 2) We will be kind, righteous people
2. But if we follow Jesus' teachings concerning **material things**, what about our physical necessities of life? Don't we have to **worry** about providing these things?

Our next study will examine what Jesus taught about **anxiety** over physical necessities in this life...

The Sermon On The Mount

Anxiety (Mt 6:25-34)

INTRODUCTION

1. Jesus continues expounding upon the righteousness of the kingdom **with respect to man's relation to God**
2. In the previous section concerning **material things (Mt 6:19-24)**, Jesus exhorted us to:
 - a. "Lay up treasure in heaven"
 - b. "Keep the eye good"
 - c. "Serve God, not mammon"
3. But if we follow Jesus' teachings concerning material things, what about the **physical necessities** of life? Such things as food and clothing?

[Beginning in **verse 25**, Jesus gives several reasons why we should not **worry** about such things...]

I. "IS NOT LIFE MORE THAN FOOD AND THE BODY MORE THAN CLOTHING?" (25)

A. DO NOT "WORRY" ABOUT FOOD AND CLOTHING...

1. The word in the original means "distracted"
2. I.e., don't let **anxiety** about food and clothing distract you from more important things in life (like Martha did) - cf. **Lk 10:38-42**

B. IS NOT LIFE AND BODY MORE IMPORTANT...?

1. This is an argument from the **greater** to the **lesser** (similar to **Ro 8:32**)
2. Life and body are certainly more important than food and clothing
3. Who provides our lives and our bodies? God!
 - a. If He is powerful enough to create life...
 - b. Isn't He also able to provide food & clothing to sustain that life?
4. "He who has displayed so great goodness as to form the body, and breathe into it the breathe of life, will surely follow up the blessing, and confer the smaller favor of providing that the body be clothed, and that life preserved." - **Barnes**

II. "LOOK AT THE BIRDS OF THE AIR" (26)

A. AN ARGUMENT FOR CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S PROVIDENCE...

1. The birds are an example of God's ability to provide
2. Through His providential workings in nature, God provides for their needs
 - a. This does not mean they do not work for their needs (indeed, they are often very busy, gathering insects and worms, preparing nests, caring for their young)
 - b. But they are not guilty of overdoing a good thing (as was the rich fool in the parable) - cf. **Lk 12:16-21**

B. "ARE YOU NOT OF MORE VALUE THAN THEY?"

1. This is an argument from the **lesser** to the **greater** (contrast **verse 25**)
 - a. If God through His providence provides for their needs, would He not for you?
 - b. A similar argument is found in **Mt 10:29-31**
2. Are you not more valuable than birds?
 - a. You who are created in the image of God?
 - b. You who were redeemed by the blood of His Son?
3. Why, then, let concern over physical needs distract you from what is really important in life?

III. “WHICH OF YOU BY WORRYING CAN ADD ONE CUBIT TO HIS STATURE?” (27)

A. AN ARGUMENT ILLUSTRATING THE HELPLESSNESS OF MAN...

1. There are many things in this life which we cannot affect by “worrying”
2. For example, worrying will not make our bodies grow any taller

B. THE IMPLICATION SEEMS TO BE...

1. **Worrying** about food and clothing cannot guarantee that you will have them tomorrow
2. As victims of “Hurricane Hugo”, the “Great Quake of ‘89” and “Hurricane Andrew” have come to realize

IV. “CONSIDER THE LILIES OF THE FIELD” (28-30)

A. ANOTHER ARGUMENT FOR CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S PROVIDENCE...

1. Like the argument in **verse 26** (the “birds of the air”)
2. It is also an argument from the **lesser** to the **greater**

B. “HOW THEY GROW...”

1. Without any “toil” whatever on their part, nor any “care” bestowed on them by any human agency
2. Yet their glory surpasses Solomon in all his glory! How?
 - a. Through God’s providential care!
 - b. By so ordering the affairs of this life to assure that they accomplish what they were designed to accomplish!

C. “WILL HE NOT MUCH MORE CLOTHE YOU?”...

1. If God is able to so clothe the grass of the field...
 - a. Which is here today
 - b. And gone tomorrow
2. Is He not **able** to do so for you?
3. Is He not **willing** to do so for you?
 - a. You who are created in the image of God?
 - b. You who are designed to spend eternity with God?

D. “O YOU OF LITTLE FAITH?”...

1. If we **worry** about food and clothing, then we are of “little faith”
2. We have **little faith** in God’s...
 - a. Promise to care for us!
 - b. Power to deliver that promise!

V. JESUS’ SUMMARY CONCERNING ANXIETY OVER MATERIAL THINGS (31-34)

A. DON'T WORRY ABOUT FOOD AND CLOTHING... (31-32)

1. People without God (the Gentiles) naturally worry about these things
2. But we have God as our Heavenly Father Who is aware of our needs, and able to provide them!

B. SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS... (33)

1. I.e., make the rule of God and His Will for us the number one priority in our lives
2. We can do this by:
 - a. Serving God instead of mammon
 - b. Letting the “lamp” of our body be a “good eye” (i.e., focused clearly on that which is good, true, and righteous)
 - c. Laying up treasure in heaven (by using our earthly treasure to help others - **Mt 19:21; Lk 12:33-34; 1 Ti 6:17-19**)
3. Do this, and God will provide for your physical needs, **for He is able and willing!**

C. DON'T WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW... (34)

1. Today has enough trouble with which to concern yourself
2. Let tomorrow take care of itself (by trusting in God!)

CONCLUSION

1. The motto today seems to be “Don’t worry, be happy!”; but Jesus qualifies that motto by saying:

“Don’t worry, seek God’s will first, and you will be happy!”

2. If we can take to heart what Jesus has taught, then truly our lives will be like homes built on a rock (cf. **Mt 7:24-25**)...
 - a. For no matter what “storms” of life may come our way...
 - b. ...our treasure is in heaven and our Heavenly Father will provide for us during our sojourn here on earth!
3. If we don’t follow Jesus’ teachings, if we allow ourselves to serve mammon which is perishable...
 - a. Then we must go through life on earth without God’s help!
 - b. And we have no hope of eternity with God when we die!

Our next study will begin a new section in the “Sermon On The Mount”: The righteousness of the kingdom **with respect to man’s relation to man (7:1-12)**

The Sermon On The Mount

Judging Others (Mt 7:1-6)

INTRODUCTION

1. In **Mt 6:1-34**, we saw the righteousness of the kingdom in respect to **man's relationship to God**
2. In **Mt 7:1-12**, we will examine the righteousness of the kingdom in respect to **man's relationship to man**
3. Three subjects are discussed in this section:
 - a. Judging others - **Mt 7:1-6**
 - b. Asking, Seeking, & Knocking - **Mt 7:7-11**
 - c. The Golden Rule - **Mt 7:12**

[We begin, then, with the matter of judging others, noting first **verses 1-2** which are often misused...]

I. VERSES 1-2 OFTEN USED TO FORBID ALL MANNER OF JUDGING

A. ANY ADVERSE OR UNFAVORABLE CRITICISM...

1. Such as pointing out a fault in someone else
2. Even if it be truly "constructive" criticism

B. THE EXERCISE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE...

1. Exercising discipline of any sort does require "judging" others as to their moral or spiritual condition
2. Since such judgment is involved, some feel **verses 1-2** rule out any sort of church discipline

C. EXPOSING THOSE WHO TEACH ERROR...

1. It requires making a judgment in order to consider whether someone is teaching error
2. Therefore, some people, in light of **verses 1-2**, believe that we cannot speak out against those who teach error

II. JESUS IS NOT RULING OUT ALL FORMS OF JUDGING

A. CONSIDER THE "IMMEDIATE CONTEXT"...

1. **Mt 7:6** implies that some judgment is to be made as to who are "dogs" and who are "hogs"
 - a. Otherwise, how can we know when not to give that which is holy to "dogs"?
 - b. Or how can we know when not to cast our pearls before "swine"?
2. **Mt 7:15-20** implies that we must make judgments in determining who is a false teacher ("by their fruits you will know them")

B. CONSIDER THE "REMOTE CONTEXT"...

1. On another occasion, Jesus taught people to "judge with righteous judgment" - **Jn 7:24**
2. Christians have a responsibility to "judge those who are inside" the local congregation - **1 Co 5:9-13**
3. We are taught by the apostle of love (John) to "test the spirits" (which requires making

judgments) - **1 Jn 4:1**

[There is not a contradiction here; as we continue on in our text, we notice that...]

III. JESUS EXPLAINS THE JUDGING HE CONDEMNS

A. JUDGING WHEN ONE IS BLIND TO HIS OR HER OWN FAULTS... (3-5)

1. Jesus is saying “that is it wrong for anyone to concentrate his attention on the speck in his brother’s eye, and while thus occupied, to ignore the beam in his own eye” - **Hendriksen**
2. Paul taught the necessity of proper “introspection” when trying to help others - **Ga 6:1**

B. JUDGING WITHOUT MERCY AND LOVE...

1. “The Lord is here condemning the spirit of censoriousness, judging harshly, self-righteously, without mercy, without love as also the parallel passage (**Lk 6:36-37**) clearly indicates.” - **Hendriksen**
2. James warns against making judgments without mercy - **Ja 2:13**
 - a. If we make judgments without showing mercy, then no mercy will be shown when we are judged!
 - b. Just as Jesus said in **verse 2**...
 - 1) “For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged”
 - 2) “With the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you”

IV. JESUS IMPLIES THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE MUST JUDGE!

A. AFTER WE HAVE CORRECTED OUR OWN FAULTS... (5)

1. First, we must remove the “beam” from our own eye
2. But when we have done so, we are able to see, discern (judge), and be of help to others who are overcome in their faults
3. Indeed, the “law of Christ” requires us to! - cf. **Ga 6:1-2**

B. BETWEEN THOSE “WORTHY” AND THOSE WHO ARE “HOGS & DOGS”... (6)

1. With those who are receptive, we are to be long-suffering in trying to help them come out of their error - cf. **2 Ti 2:24-26**
2. But for those who are not, we are not to waste what is good and holy on them!
 - a. Cf. the instructions of Jesus to His disciples - **Mt 10:12-15**
 - b. Cf. the example of Paul and Barnabas at Antioch of Pisidia - **Ac 13:42-46**
3. Determining who is which requires “judgment” upon our part!

CONCLUSION

1. The kind of judging forbidden by Jesus is that which **Lenski** calls: “self-righteous, hypocritical judging which is false and calls down God’s judgment on itself.”
2. This is the kind of judging that was also condemned by James when he wrote:

“Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?”

- *Ja 4:11-12*

3. May God help us to refrain from such judging, and be more apt to remove the “beams” from our own eyes; for only then we will be useful in helping others with their problems...

The Sermon On The Mount

Asking, Seeking, Knocking (Mt 7:7-11)

INTRODUCTION

1. In **Mt 7:1-12**, we are examining the righteousness of the kingdom in respect to **man's relationship to man**
2. Three subjects are discussed by Jesus in this section:
 - a. Judging Others - **Mt 7:1-6**
 - b. Asking, Seeking, Knocking - **Mt 7:7-11**
 - c. The Golden Rule - **Mt 7:12**
3. In Jesus' comments on **judging others**, we found Him telling us:
 - a. To abstain from judging others, yet also to determine who are "hogs" and "dogs"
 - b. Not to be hypercritical, yet to be critical
 - c. To be humble and patient, yet not to "cast our pearls before swine"
4. How can we have the wisdom to judge properly in these matters?
 - a. **Ja 1:5-8** tells us that wisdom comes from God through prayer
 - b. So it is not surprising that in conjunction with the matter of judging others Jesus discusses an important principle that relates especially to prayer...

[What is Jesus teaching us in this section on "Asking, Seeking, and Knocking"...?]

I. THE PRINCIPLE TAUGHT IS THAT OF PERSEVERANCE (7-8)

A. IMPLIED IN THE "CONTINUOUS ACTION" OF THE GREEK TENSE...

-- Literally, Jesus is saying:

1. **"keep on asking"** and it will be given to you
2. **"keep on seeking"** and you will find
3. **"keep on knocking"** and it will be opened to you

B. JESUS OFTEN APPLIED THE PRINCIPLE OF PERSEVERANCE TO PRAYER...

1. In the parable of "The Persistent Friend" - **Lk 11:5-8**
2. In the parable of "The Persistent Widow" - **Lk 18:1-8**

C. THE PRINCIPLE OF PERSEVERANCE CAN ALSO BE APPLIED IN OTHER AREAS...

1. Such as **Bible study**
 - a. Many people give up too soon in their Bible studies
 - b. But those who persevere in their studies are the ones who benefit from the blessings God's Word provides - cf. **Psa 1:1-3; 119:97-104**
2. Or **evangelism**
 - a. Many do not bear fruit because they give up too soon
 - b. But we reap what we sow; the more persistent we are in sowing, the more we will eventually reap

II. A MOTIVE FOR PERSEVERING, ESPECIALLY IN REGARDS TO PRAYER (9-11)

A. GOD DELIGHTS TO GIVE GOOD THINGS TO HIS CHILDREN...

1. To illustrate, Jesus gives a simple argument (from the lesser to the greater)
2. I.e., men give good gifts to their children who ask
3. How much more so, will our Father in heaven!

B. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE IN REGARDS TO PRAYER...

1. As Jesus promised to His disciples in **Jn 14:13-14; 15:7**
2. As the apostle John wrote in **1 Jn 5:14-15**
3. And as James wrote in **Ja 4:3**

CONCLUSION

1. So, in all things, let us persistently look to God for the help we need!
2. Especially when it comes to judging others, that we might receive the wisdom to do so without violating our Lord's teachings against censorious judging...

The Sermon On The Mount

The Golden Rule (Mt 7:12)

INTRODUCTION

1. We come now to **verse 12**, where we find “**The Golden Rule**”...
2. This “rule” serves as a perfect summary of the kind of righteousness the kingdom of heaven expects in respect to **man’s relation to man**

[But what is **the golden rule**? Was Jesus teaching anything new or original by what He stated? Well, in a way it was something new...]

I. THE “GOLDEN” RULE VERSUS THE “SILVER” RULES

A. MANY BELIEVE JESUS WAS SIMPLY REPEATING WHAT OTHERS HAD TAUGHT...

1. The **Hindu** religion taught: *This is the sum of duty: do naught to others which if done to thee would cause thee pain.* - **The Mahabharata**
2. The **Buddhist** religion taught: *Hurt not others with that which pains yourself.* - **Udana-Varga**
3. The **Jewish** traditions taught: *What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow men. That is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary.* - **The Talmud**
4. The **Muslim** religion taught: *No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.* - **Hadith**
5. The **Baha’i** faith teaches: *He should not wish for others that which he doth not wish for himself, nor promise that which he doth not fulfil.* - **The Book of Certitude**
6. Some others:
 - a. *Do not do unto others what angers you if done to you by others.* - **Isocrates 436-338 BC**
 - b. *“Tzu-kung asked, ‘Is there a single word which can be a guide to conduct throughout one’s life?’ The Master said, ‘It is perhaps the word “shu”. Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire”* - **Analects, 15.24**

B. JESUS’ “RULE” WAS POSITIVE, WHILE MOST OF THE ABOVE ARE NOT...

1. Jesus’ “rule” requires you to do something favorably to others, while the others only prohibit you from doing something unfavorably to others!
 - a. **Jesus:** Do unto others what you want them to do to you
 - b. **Others:** Don’t do to others what you don’t want done to you
2. With the others, all that is required is that you don’t harm other people; with Jesus, what is required is that you show kindness to others
3. Jesus’ rule is truly the **Golden** rule, the others are **Silver** rules (of value, yes, but not as much as “gold”)

[The only exception appears to be that found in Hadith (the traditions of Islam); but then, some of Islam is admittedly based upon what Jesus taught 600 years before Mohammed. So what Jesus taught was something new compared to what “uninspired” teachers had taught prior. But in another sense it was nothing new; rather, in a simple and easy to remember statement, Jesus gives us...]

II. A GUIDELINE FOR RIGHTEOUS CONDUCT TOWARDS OTHERS

A. IN PERFECT HARMONY WITH THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS...!

1. Just as we have seen in the rest of Jesus' teachings - cf. **Mt 5:21-48**
2. This one "rule" summarizes what the Law and the Prophets were all about
3. Just as the commandment "Love your neighbor as yourself" summed up the Law according to Paul - **Ro 13:8-10**

B. A SORT OF "POCKET KNIFE" OR "CARPENTER'S RULE"...

1. That is, something that is always ready to be used
2. For example, even in an emergency, when there is no time to consult a friend, teacher, or book for advice, "the golden rule" can be guide for proper conduct
3. Treat others as you would be treated, and it is unlikely you will ever do the wrong thing

CONCLUSION

1. Even in this way, we find that Jesus did not come to "destroy" the Law, but to fulfill it in every way, including summarizing its righteousness in ways easy for us to understand and apply!
2. Throughout the first twelve verses of Matthew 7, then, there is a continuous theme: **the righteousness of the kingdom in regards to man's dealings with man**
3. And what are the basic points?
 - a. Be careful in your judgment of others
 - b. Persevere in looking to God for help in making proper discernment
 - c. In your treatment of others, treat them like you want to be treated

In our next (and last) study, we will consider the final section of the Sermon On The Mount:

Exhortations In Entering The Kingdom - Mt 7:13-27

The Sermon On The Mount

Exhortations In Entering The Kingdom (Mt 7:13-27)

INTRODUCTION

1. In His sermon thus far, Jesus has expounded upon:
 - a. The **citizens** of the kingdom - **Mt 5:3-16**
 - b. The **righteousness** of the kingdom - **Mt 5:17-7:12**
2. Now, in the final part of the sermon, Jesus extends several **exhortations** to all who would enter the kingdom - **Mt 7:13-27**
3. In doing so, our Lord...
 - a. Describes the beginning of **The Way That Leads To Life**, urging people to choose it rather than **The Unbeliever's Boulevard** - **Mt 7:13-14**
 - b. Gives warning with respect to His followers' progress upon **The Way That Leads To Life** - **Mt 7:15-20**
 - c. Stresses the necessity of **doing**, over simply **hearing** and **saying** - **Mt 7:21-27**

[Before we consider the exhortations of Jesus, let's review just what it is that Jesus is inviting all men to enter into...]

I. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN - A REVIEW

A. THE TERM "KINGDOM OF HEAVEN"...

1. Synonymous with the "kingdom of God" - cf. **Mt 4:17** with **Mt 1:14-15**
2. Refers to God's kingship, or rule, from heaven
3. The kingdom of heaven is focused in the Person of Jesus Christ, and is especially manifested where He rules in the hearts of men - **Lk 17:20-21**

B. THEREFORE, THE "KINGDOM OF HEAVEN"...

1. Is **spiritual** in nature - **Jn 18:36; Ro 14:17**
2. **Today**, it includes the **Lord's church** on earth (for those who submit to the Will of Christ are added to the kingdom) - **Co 1:13; Re 1:9**
3. In the **future**, it will involve the **new heavens and new earth**, where we will be with God and Jesus eternally! - **Mt 13:40-43; 2 Pe 3:10-13; Re 21:1-22:5**

[Stated simply, those who accept Jesus' exhortation to enter the "kingdom of heaven" will be in the **church** now and in the **new heavens and new earth** later. Let's now focus in on...]

II. THE EXHORTATION TO ENTER THE KINGDOM (13-14)

A. THE "ENTRANCE" INTO THE KINGDOM IS A "NARROW" ONE... (13a)

1. It is a **gate** that:
 - a. Requires self-denial and obedience
 - b. Has no room for...
 - 1) A consuming desire for earthly goods - **Mt 6:19-20**

- 2) An unforgiving spirit - **Mt 6:14-15**
- 3) Self-righteousness - **Mt 6:1**
- 2. Compare it with the **gate** that leads to destruction (**13b**)
 - a. Which is wide
 - b. Which allows many to enter with no sacrifice on their part
 - c. And is therefore chosen by most people

B. THE “WAY” OF THE KINGDOM IS “DIFFICULT”... (14)

- 1. It requires a righteousness that exceeds that of many religious people - **Mt 5:20**
- 2. It requires a change in our behavior - **Mt 5:21-7:12**
- 3. Because of its difficulty, many choose not to travel its path
 - a. But it is the only way to life!
 - b. The only alternative is the way that leads to destruction!

[Jesus tells us like it is: no illusions, no false promises of “beds of ease”; there are only two choices, and He exhorts us to take the one that leads to life! But as already suggested, the way to life is difficult, and there are dangers along the way. Jesus now warns of one...]

III. BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS (15-20)

A. WHO CAN LEAD US ASTRAY... (15)

- 1. Paul warned of this very real danger, which church history certainly seems to confirm - **Ac 20:28-31**
- 2. Peter likewise warned that false prophets would lead many away - **2 Pe 2:1-3**
- 3. As did John (**1 Jn 4:1**) and Jude (**Ju 3-4**)

B. HOW SHALL WE IDENTIFY THESE FALSE PROPHETS...? (16-20)

- 1. By their “fruits”!
 - a. As manifested in their **lives** (through their covetous and immoral practices, cf. **2 Pe 2:14-15**)
 - b. Or as manifested in their **teachings** (which are not in harmony with the teachings of the apostles, cf. **1 Jn 4:5-6**)
- 2. Therefore, we must be “fruit-inspectors”
 - a. We cannot judge their hearts or motives - cf. **Mt 7:1-2**
 - b. But if their lifestyle or teachings are contrary to that found in the Word of God, let us beware!

[Finally, in His exhortations to enter the kingdom, Jesus makes it clear that one must be a **doer** of the Word...]

IV. THE NECESSITY OF BEING “DOERS” OF THE WORD (21-27)

A. ONLY BY “DOING” THE FATHER’S WILL CAN WE ENTER THE KINGDOM... (21-23)

- 1. “Faith only” will not suffice - **Mt 7:21**
- 2. Doing many “mighty works” won’t help either, even if done sincerely “in Jesus’ name” - **Mt 7:22**
- 3. Those who depend upon such are described as those who practice “lawlessness”; i.e., without authority - **Mt 7:23**

B. ONLY BY “ACTING” UPON JESUS’ WORDS SHALL WE BE ABLE TO STAND FIRM... (24-27)

1. Against the “**storms of life**”
 - a. That come upon all people, whether Christians or not
 - b. For example, applying **Mt 6:19-21** will prevent us from being overwhelmed should we suffer the loss of material things
2. In the “**Day of Judgment**”
 - a. When we hope to enter the “future state” of the kingdom of heaven
 - b. When we hope to hear those wonderful words: “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” - **Mt 25:34**

CONCLUSION

1. Notice **Mt 7:28-29**...
 - a. Now that we have come to the end of Jesus’ sermon on the mount, I hope that we too have been astonished by His Words!
 - b. Jesus spoke with authority then, how much more since His glorious resurrection! - cf. **Mt 28:18**
2. With such authority, He did not mince His words...He told us of:
 - a. The character and blessedness of those in the kingdom - **Mt 5:3-12**
 - b. Their relationship to world - **Mt 5:13-16**
 - c. The high standard of righteousness they are called to display to glorify their Father in heaven - **Mt 5:17-48**
 - d. The proper practice of that righteousness - **Mt 6:1-18**
 - e. The necessity of putting the kingdom of God first in our lives - **Mt 6:19-33**
 - f. The way to properly treat our fellow man - **Mt 7:1-12**
3. As difficult as some of these things may seem, Jesus made it clear:
 - a. It is the **only** way to life eternal - **Mt 7:13-20**
 - b. Only those who are willing to **do** the Will of God can have a firm hope to participate in the kingdom of heaven both present and future - **Mt 7:21-27**
4. Of course, we learn from Jesus and His apostles elsewhere that there is Divine Assistance to live up to high standards Jesus has set...
 - a. There is **the blood of Jesus** to provide forgiveness for us when we fail to meet those standards
 - b. There is **the power of the Holy Spirit** to assist us in putting off the “old man” and putting on the “new man”
5. How about you...?
 - a. Are you in the kingdom now? - cf. **Jn 3:3-5; Ac 2:38**
 - b. Are you living according to the teachings of Jesus as found in this sermon?

I hope that these series of expository outlines have challenged you to greater faithfulness in your service to the Lord!