

JESUS TEACHES KINGDOM ETHICS

Matthew 5-7 is commonly called, “The Sermon on the Mount.” It is the most famous of Christ’s sermons.

Matthew Chapter 5-7 – Kingdom Ethics

“We have now come to the famous sermon on the mount. There is nothing to compare with it in all the literature of the world. Even the greatest of the world’s moral, religious, and philosophical statements blush and stammer in the presence of this sublime declaration.”– **John Phillips**

When Jesus got done with this teaching what was the response of the people?

Matthew 7:28–29 (NKJV)

28 And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching,

29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Jesus taught them with the authority of the Messianic King – which He was! Thus, His profound par excellent TEACHING was a major evidence that He was indeed the King presenting the kingdom.

But what is the significance of this teaching? Scholars have long debated this.

“The Sermon on the Mount is probably the most famous of all the teachings of Christ, but it is difficult to determine exactly what the purpose is.” – **The Moody Bible Commentary**

But if we think in context, realizing the thematic format of Matthew, it is not that difficult. Matthew does not simply go from chapter 4 to chapter 5 without design. There is a connection here. The message in the Sermon on the Mount in Matt. 5-7 continues on with the KINGDOM THEME.

The Sermon on the Mount does not present the way of salvation but rather presents “**kingdom ethics**” which are indicative of the REPENTANCE called for by Christ in view of the kingdom being at hand. (cf. Mt. 3:2; 4:17). The Sermon on the Mount amounts to a detailed explanation of what true REPENTANCE looks like in the lives of those prepared to enter into the kingdom.

“Jesus’s sermon therefore must be understood in the context of His offer of the kingdom to Israel and the need for repentance to enter that kingdom. ... The sermon showed how a person who is in right relationship with God [a true repenter] should [now] conduct his life. ... The sermon applies to Jesus’ followers today for it demonstrates the standard of [kingdom] righteousness God demands of His [kingdom citizens].” – ***The Bible Knowledge Commentary***

There is a “***kingdom ethic***” applied to the Church today as seen in the NT. We can only live out this “***kingdom ethic***” by the power of the Holy Spirit in accordance with the New Covenant which is indicative of kingdom reality.

As God’s people we are kingdom people and are therefore to live accordingly. The kingdom is not here yet, but we are to live in light of it as those whose citizenship is ultimately going to be in the kingdom.

In chapter 4 Jesus lays down the necessity of REPENTANCE to enter the kingdom (4:17). Now in chapters 5-7 He lays out how those truly repentant should then live and what is to characterize their lives. This “***kingdom ethic***” is what defines those that are truly repentant. This is what it means to live out repentance in light of the coming kingdom.

“The purpose of the Sermon on the Mount, which is not to present the way of salvation but principles of character and conduct for those who are members of the kingdom – who already belong to Christ.” – ***Howard Vos***

As kingdom citizens this is how God’s people should live as so instructed by the King.

A couple of footnotes:

- Matt. 5-7 is the first of five major discourses in Matthew (cf. chps 5-7; chp. 10; chp. 13; chps 18-20; and chps 24-25).
- The discourse in Matt. 5-7 has similarities to what has been called “***The Sermon on the Plain***” in Luke 6:17-49, but it also has dissimilarities. Therefore, it is debated as to whether these are two different sermons on two different occasions or whether they just overlap in terms of content.

Matthew 5:1 (NKJV)

1 And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him.

Some see two different groups here, namely the multitudes in one group and the disciples in another. Luke 6:17 mentions “**a crowd of His disciples**” but also, “**a great multitude of people**”. That seems to emphasize a distinction between those merely in the crowd and those who were His disciples.

The multitudes are those referenced at the end of chapter 4. The word “**disciple**” means “**learner**” or “**follower**”. And note the emphasis says they were “**His disciples**” indicating some level of personal commitment.

The emphasis here is on those who were learning followers coming to Him as He was seated on the mount – perhaps near Capernaum. Often this was the posture of rabbis or teachers when they went to teach. They would SIT down in a prominent place so they could easily be heard while the listeners would characteristically stand (cf. Lk. 4:20; Mt. 13:2; 23:2; 24:3).

Maybe we could try that. On a Sunday morning all the learners could stand for an hour while I teach. I am sure it would cut down on sleeping. All those at home listening via the internet could get out of their recliners and stand up for the duration of this message. I think we are on to something here – and it is BIBLICAL! 😊

Matthew 5:2 (NKJV)

2 Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

Disciples are LEARNERS and learners need a teacher, and in this case it was the King spelling out His **kingdom ethic** to His disciples who had evidently responded to the message to repent in view of the coming kingdom. Jesus now goes on to explain what is to define KINGDOM people.

Repentance comes first, which is to be followed by kingdom living indicative of true repentance!

1 Thessalonians 2:11–12 (NKJV)

11 as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children,

12 that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.