

The Sermon on the Mount

Introduction

INTRODUCTION:

- I. If you open your Bibles to the LAST book in the OLD TESTAMENT, you will find the book that bears the name of its author – the name MALACHI.
 - A. Like all Hebrew names, the name Malachi had a special meaning.
 1. The name simply meant “Messenger.”
 2. Very little is known about this prophet, except that he prophesied during the days of Nehemiah.
 - a. Those were the years after the children of Israel were allowed to return their own land after spending 70 years as captives in a foreign land.
 - b. Those were also the years when the Israelites had rebuilt the walls of the city of Jerusalem and the great Temple, both of which had been torn down when the city was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC.
 - B. The prophecies of Malachi were penned some 400 years before the coming of Jesus Christ.

1. With his FINAL words, found in the FOURTH chapter of Malachi, a deep and troubling SILENCE fell over the nation of Israel.
 - a. There were no prophets of the Lord God in Israel for the next
FOUR CENTURIES.
- C. So what were Malachi's final words? What was the last thing God said to His people in those days?
 1. **Malachi 4:4-6** – *"Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. 5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. 6 And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."*
 2. The final words of Jehovah to the Israelites were simple and yet very profound.
 - a. They were admonished to keep the Law of Moses with all its statutes and judgments.
- D. But there was also a PROMISE and a WARNING in these final words of Jehovah.

1. The PROMISE was that Jehovah would send Elijah the prophet to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.
 - a. It would be a time of RENEWAL and REDEDICATION – a time of RESTORATION among the people of Israel.
2. But with the PROMISE came this warning – Jehovah would send Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD, when Jehovah would strike the earth with a curse.
3. And so with that PROMISE, and with that WARNING the voice of Jehovah fell silent.

BODY:

- I. Some 400 years LATER, an angel of the Lord appeared to an aged priest of Israel by the name of Zacharias and announced that his wife Elizabeth would give birth to a son, even though she was also advanced in years.
 - A. But it is what the angel SAID about this child that is most significant.
 1. **Luke 1:14-17** – *"And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. 16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 He will*

also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

2. The child's name was to be John – a name that means "Jehovah is gracious."

B. Very little is known about John's FORMATIVE years, except for ONE VERSE recorded in the gospel of Luke.

1. **Luke 1:80** – *"So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel."*

C. And when the day of John's manifestation finally arrived, Luke tells us **(Luke 3:1-3)** that it was in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pilate was governor of Judea and Herod was the tetrarch of Galilee.

1. Suddenly, after 400 years of silence, we're told: *"the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. 3 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins..." (Luke 3:2-3)*
2. Matthew's account **(Matthew 3:1-6)** says: *In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" 3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one*

crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'" 4 Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him 6 and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

- D. Four hundred years of silence suddenly ended with the preaching of the prophet John – a man who had come in the spirit of Elijah (or like the prophet Elijah) turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers.
 - 1. John not only came preaching the need for national repentance – a time of renewal and restoration – he also came preaching that the KINGDOM that had been prophesied throughout the Old Testament, was NOW AT HAND!
- E. But John did one more thing.
 - 1. Through his preaching of repentance, and by turning the hearts of the people back to God, John prepared the way for the coming of the Messiah – Jesus Christ.
 - 2. John was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy – he was: *"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'"*

II. But John's message not only contained the PROMISE of the coming kingdom, it also carried a WARNING – just as the Old Testament prophet Malachi said it would.

A. In **Matthew chapter three**, we find John sternly rebuking the religious leaders among the Pharisees and Sadducees who had come from Jerusalem to hear him preach.

1. **Matthew 3:7-12** – *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, 9 and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 10 And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."*

2. There was the WARNING – a great and terrible day of the Lord was coming.
 - a. John said the ax had already been laid at the root of the tree – Jehovah was poised to cut down the nation of Israel for its continual ungodliness and disobedience.
 - b. Jehovah was preparing to throw every unproductive tree into an eternal fire.
 - c. He was prepared to separate the wheat from the chaff and gather the wheat into the barn, but burn the worthless chaff with unquenchable fire.
 - d. In other words, the days of the nation of Israel were numbered – and in less than 40 years, the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed, its temple leveled to the ground, and the nation of Israel would simply cease forever as a nation of God's chosen people.

III. It is at this point that Jesus of Nazareth entered the scene, and began preaching in the region of Galilee.

A. His message carried the same theme as the preaching of John.

1. **Mark 1:14-15** – *Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."*
 2. **Matthew 4:17** – *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*
 3. **Matthew 4:23-25** – *And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. 24 Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. 25 Great multitudes followed Him — from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.*
- B. The preaching of Jesus was described by Matthew and Mark as the *"gospel of the kingdom."*
1. Jesus was preaching the GOSPEL – the GOOD NEWS – about the coming KINGDOM.
 2. This kingdom would not be the kind of physical kingdom the Israelites were familiar with. It would be a spiritual kingdom – a

kingdom where the Messiah would reign as Lord of lords and King of kings within the hearts of His disciples.

3. It would be a SPIRITUAL kingdom that would best be characterized as an intimate, holy RELATIONSHIP between the Lord and His devoted disciples.

C. However, to be a PART of that kingdom – to ENTER INTO that relationship with the Lord in this spiritual kingdom – there would FIRST need to be dramatic change in the lives of those who would become the Lord's disciples.

1. There would be a need for the disciples of the Lord to manifest GENUINE REPENTANCE, as well as a need to both KNOW the will of the Lord, and DO the will of the Lord in every area of their lives.
2. Therefore, to SIMPLIFY the gospel of the kingdom and reduce it to its most ELEMENTARY form, Jesus went up on a mountain, followed by throngs of His disciples, and sat down to preach the most profound sermon in the history of the world – a sermon we know today as The Sermon on the Mount.

IV. What is this sermon all about, and why has it had such a dramatic impact on mankind since it was first preached some two thousand years ago by Jesus?

- A. Someone once said, if we were to take all the principles of Christian character and all the principles of Christian living found in the New Testament, and condense all that into its most simple and elementary form, we would have The Sermon on the Mount.
1. In other words, it's been said The Sermon on the Mount summarizes the CHARACTER and ATTRIBUTES of a true disciple of Christ.
 2. In preaching the "*GOSPEL (good news) of the kingdom,*" Jesus was preparing His disciples for the coming kingdom and its Law – Jesus was introducing the fundamental truths of the Law of Christ.
 3. Although Jesus was teaching to a Jewish audience who were living under the Old Testament Law of Moses, the Lord's teachings in The Sermon on the Mount apply to US TODAY just as much as they did to His disciples over two-thousand years ago.
 4. These are timeless KINGDOM PRINCIPLES – timeless ETERNAL TRUTHS.
- B. Let me illustrate what I mean by having us look at **Matthew chapter 5**, where The Sermon on the Mount begins with what we commonly call the "BEATITUDES."
1. We will take a closer look at each of these beatitudes in another lesson, but for now, notice that Jesus SPECIFICALLY connected

each of these beatitudes with the kind of person who would be part of the coming kingdom.

a. For example, Jesus BEGAN His teaching on the “beatitudes” with, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* (**Matthew 5:3**)

(1). This is the SAME kingdom Jesus said was *"at hand."* How do we know this? Because Matthew frequently uses the phrase *"kingdom of heaven"* to refer to the spiritual kingdom Christ came to establish – the Lord’s church.

b. As Jesus CONCLUDED the "beatitudes" He AGAIN connects these teachings to the kind of person who would be part of coming kingdom: **Matthew 5:11-12** – *"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

(1). Some might say, "there’s nothing about the KINGDOM in these verses – the word doesn’t even appear in these verses."

(2). While the word "kingdom" isn’t found in these two verses, it is certainly implied. The disciple’s of Christ would be

reviled and persecuted, and have all kinds of evil spoken against them falsely for His sake when they would go forth preaching the gospel of Christ after the SPIRITUAL KINGDOM – the Lord's church – was established.

C. So, in essence, Jesus is saying two very important things:

1. First, He declared that the citizens of the coming kingdom would be those who have the characteristics of the "beatitudes" in their lives:
 - a. Those who are "*poor in spirit*" (v. 3), those who "*morn*" – morn over their sins (v. 4), those who are "*meek*" (v. 5), those who "*hunger and thirst for righteousness*" (v. 6), those who are "*merciful*" (v. 7), those who are "*pure in heart*" (v. 8), and those who are "*peacemakers*" (v. 9).
2. And second, Jesus said His disciples would be blessed when they were persecuted for HIS sake – persecuted because they are faithful to HIM and HIS teaching. **(Matthew 5:10-12)**
 - a. When would that persecution take place? The disciples of Lord would be persecuted for HIS sake when they went forth to proclaim that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God – when they would go forth preaching the gospel of Christ.
 - b. The book of Acts is literally filled with examples of the disciples being persecuted for HIS sake:

- (1). Peter and John arrested (Acts 4)
 - (2). All apostles arrested and beaten (Acts 5)
 - (3). Stephen arrested and martyred (Acts 6-7)
 - (4). Church at Jerusalem persecuted (Acts 8)
 - (5). Saul (Paul) threatened with murder (Acts 9)
 - (6). James murdered, Peter imprisoned (Acts 12)
 - (7). Etc. etc. etc.
- c. So, Jesus said His disciples would be persecuted for HIS sake when they went forth to preach the gospel of the kingdom.

CONCLUSION:

- I. So what can we conclude from what we have seen here?
 - A. First, in His opening statements in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus clearly connected His teaching to His coming kingdom.
 1. He BEGINS and ENDS His teaching on the “beatitudes” by connecting them to His coming kingdom.
 2. Then Jesus said men would be blessed when they were persecuted for HIS sake – persecuted because they are faithful to Him and His gospel.

II. The voice of God that pierced the silence of the Mount of Transfiguration said, *“This is my beloved Son, Hear Him!”*

A. Are you listening to the voice of Jesus? Are you following the teachings of Jesus?

1. The Hebrew writer says, *“Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him?” (Hebrews 2:1-4)*

2. So, I want to ask you the same question the Hebrew writer asked his readers: *“how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him?”*

a. You can NEGLECT and even REJECT the gospel, but you can't escape the judgment.

b. All will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and every knee will bow. (Romans 14:11)