

# Mountainous Truth

## Matthew 5-7



## 01 | Present Reality | Matthew 5

There is a strong emphasis on the connection of the mountain with this great sermon. The very name of the sermon projects this truth. Matthew flows into this sermon from his overall assessment of the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. The success of this ministry was profound; it affected foreign lands bordering on Palestine. Matthew's conclusion is, ***Great multitudes followed Him – from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan,*** (Matthew 4:25).

However, the multitudes did not motivate this great sermon; it was the disciples. They become the focus of its teachings. Matthew is very specific about this focus. ***He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened his mouth and taught them,*** (Matthew 5:1, 2). Luke gives us further details of the setting. Jesus actually went to the mountain to pray. In fact, He spent the entire night (Luke 6:12). Evidently He received from His Father instructions concerning the choosing of His disciples. There was a large group of disciples from which He chose twelve (Luke 6:13-16). As He came down to the valley a large multitude gathered and many miracles took place (Luke 6:17-19). Then Jesus focused on His disciples and began this great sermon (Luke 6:20).

We live in a different age, culture, and knowledge level. It is very difficult to place us in the sandals of one of the Jews of that great multitude or even the disciples. What did they hear? How did they respond? How different was the message of Jesus from what they had always been taught? This issue is strong enough Matthew responds. At the close of the sermon, he reflects, ***And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes*** (Matthew 7:28, 29). His description is ***the people were astonished*** (ekplesso). This Greek word begins with "ek." "Intensifying" is the purpose of this prefix. "Plesso" is being intensified, which means, "to strike out, force out by a blow." It is found only in the New Testament in the sense of knocking one out of his senses. Jesus' pronouncement in this sermon was radically different; it astonished them!

It was the great "Manifesto of the Kingdom of Heaven!" All they experienced was the Old Covenant; this is a presentation of the New Covenant. There are as many outlines to the Sermon on the Mount as there are scholars. If their conclusion is Jesus, each one is legitimate. Only when He is at the center does the puzzle of the Sermon on the Mount become a picture. Jesus is not only the speaker of the sermon; He is the key unlocking the door to its entrance. If one asks, "How can this sermon be done?" Jesus must be seen as The Answer!

It appears the Sermon on the Mount is divided into three sections distinguished by the three chapter divisions. Many titles could be stated delineating the content. May I suggest these three? They are “Present Reality” (Matthew 5), “Progressive Relationship” (Matthew 6), and “Permeating Reception” (Matthew 7).

As we approach this chapter, keep in mind the astonishment of the listening Jews; they were “knocked out of their senses.” It was not because Jesus added new laws for them to perform or presented a new moral code of holiness. It was not a new standard of righteousness, but a new standpoint of righteousness. Outside of the Sermon on the Mount, every moral system is a road one must travel. It requires self-denial, great discipline, struggling, and effort to arrive at the goal or morality. It is a goal finally achieved, the end result. Jesus’ approach is the exact opposite. He does not end with the goal, but begins with it. He places His disciples immediately into the position all other teachers present as the end. Others present ways of becoming the children of the Kingdom; Jesus simply states that you are a child of the Kingdom. He Himself is the reason for this state. What others labor to earn, He gives! Others demand, He bestows! The Sermon on the Mount is not a new law or moral system but a new life.

Since this is true, the promises attached to many of the statements within the sermon are not rewards or results. They are the natural essence of the Kingdom. Look carefully at the “Beatitudes!” One does not become *poor in spirit* and therefore enter the Kingdom. The *poor in spirit* dwell in a spiritual state; it is the spiritual state of the Kingdom. In other words, a description of the condition of the inner present spiritual reality of the member of the Kingdom is the Eight Beatitudes. The inner awareness of the child of the Kingdom is one of absolute helplessness. Is this not the fundamental motivation driving him constantly to Jesus? King Jesus becomes His only source!

“Mourning” is a natural state resulting from being *poor in spirit*. The vision of all that self-sourcing produced is heartbreaking. It becomes so dominate that the child of the Kingdom lives in a state of always responding out of his helplessness. It compels him to Jesus, the King. The Kingdom is not a reward for those who *mourn*; it is the dwelling place within the Kingdom.

One does not develop “meekness” as an attribute of life and receives the Kingdom as a reward of achievement. The Kingdom person is *poor in spirit*, a constant recognition of helplessness. He understands and mourns over the disaster in his life and world produced by the “rich in spirit,” the pride of life. He dwells in a state of aggressive anger against all such pride; this is called “meekness.” Since he is *poor in spirit* he does not attack as from pride; he lives in the heart of Jesus; he thinks with the mind of the King. He conquers sin as he joins the dying of Jesus, the cross! He is gentle and mild. In other words, if you are *poor in spirit* (properly understood) you *mourn*; if you *mourn* over the results of all self-centeredness, you are *meek*. If you are *meek*, you are in the Kingdom. If you are in the Kingdom, you are *poor in spirit*, you *mourn*, and you are *meek*. The connecting link between each of these is Jesus. Since He is the Kingdom, the only possibility of being these is He. It is His grace and forgiveness, which bring it to pass.

These three beatitudes whelm up within the child of the Kingdom with a passionate, undying *hunger and thirst for righteousness*. This is the appetite of those in the Kingdom. The Christian is not

one who is constantly attempting to control his appetite for sin. The state of the Kingdom is not resisting, but embracing. We are not constantly swimming up stream; He attracts us with the wonder of His love! We *hunger and thirst* for Him as a lover for his beloved. As the stomach longs for food, so my soul longs for Him. *As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God* (Psalms 42:1).

The first four beatitudes focus on our direct response to Jesus; the last four beatitudes focus on the flow of Jesus through us to our world. The first one is *mercy*. Expressed through the child of the Kingdom is a compassionate, benevolently merciful involvement of through and action, the heart of Jesus. The *mercy* of Jesus is experienced in the Kingdom; therefore the child of the Kingdom is merciful. This enables Him to experience more *mercy*.

The child of the Kingdom who has this heart interacts with his world in a state of holiness. He is *pure in heart*. This purity is not contained in laws or duty, but in condition and inner sincerity. Is it his personal holiness? Can he claim ownership to it as if he produced it? All the previous beatitudes declare “No!” He dwells in the state of the Kingdom, Jesus. The nature of Jesus is now his nature. His helplessness, *poor in spirit*, drove him to “mourning” over the devastation of the destruction of his own self-effort. “Meekness” and *hunger and thirst* compel him in his focus on Jesus. *Mercy* and *pure in heart* are his living experience.

This child of the Kingdom lives in “peace.” “Peace” radiates and permeates all of his surroundings. It is not the absence of conflict, but the reigning of the King of Rightness. In fact, this dominates within the circumstances of “persecution.” This child does not respond from outward pressures and conflicts, but reacts from the inner heart of Jesus, the state of the Kingdom.

This brings us fully into the first part of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5). The Old Covenant was introduced with God descending upon Mt. Sinai. The Israelites had a frightening experience “knocking them out of their senses.” God gave them the Ten Commandments. Jesus, the King of the Kingdom, introduces the Kingdom of Heaven with the Eight Beatitudes. The Ten Commandments were the Law written on tablets of stone; the Eight Beatitudes are written on the fleshly tables of the heart (Jeremiah 31:33). This is not the observance of the Law, but the realization of that Law by the Spirit!

The Ten Commandments in the Old Covenant were preceded by a Prologue (Exodus 19). However, the Eight Beatitudes are followed by an Epilogue (Matthew 5:13-48). This Epilogue begins with a clarification of the “state” of the child of the Kingdom (Matthew 5:13-16). If there is any confusion concerning the Kingdom of Heaven not being a reward for keeping the law, it is immediately made plain. Jesus adds a variety of images to help us. The King of the Kingdom of Heaven is speaking to the children of the Kingdom. What is this “state” of being children of the Kingdom? It is *salt* (Matthew 5:13). The essence of *salt* is its flavor. If this is lost, activities of serving as *salt* are present, which are nothing. It is *light* (Matthew 5:14-16). A light shines in darkness; it is not what it does, but what it is! Both of these images speak “state of being.” They take place because of who we are in Him!

After this clarification, Jesus launches into the conclusion of the Epilogue. It is in this section the continuity of the New Testament and the Old Testament is highlighted. The Old Covenant is not

destroyed but is fulfilled in Jesus (Matthew 5:17-20). This is the great message of the Sermon on the Mount. In the following verses, Jesus clearly displays what “fulfillment” of the Law means. Jesus highlights the literal application of the Law as proposed by the Scribes and Pharisees in contrast to the fulfillment in Him. Jesus states, **“You have heard that it was said to those of old,”** (Matthew 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43). He then continues by stating, **“But I say to you,”** (Matthew 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44). Each time He took the literal interpretation of the Law and internalized it; He also intensified it. The application of the Law moved from a duty to the flow of His nature within us; it is the Kingdom of Heaven, salt, or light.

The Law proposed abstaining from the activity of murder. Judgment focused on those who did a murderous deed (Matthew 5:21). The Law drew a line regarding the treatment of my brother. How does one filled with the nature of the King relate to his fellowman? What about anger? How important is reconciliation with my brother who has something against me? Should I agree with my adversary? This is the law on a whole new level! It is internalized and intensified. The Law was content in not committing murder; the Kingdom of Heaven is a state of love. We dwell in His nature (Matthew 5:21-25).

The Old Covenant took pride in the absence of committing adultery. Conquering the sexual drive of the body so as not to commit the act is the highest level of the old. But the child of the Kingdom has the mind of Christ. We must see women through the eyes of Christ. This applies to our entire body drives. The body must be a servant to the indwelling King (Matthew 5:27-30). This internalizes and intensifies the Old.

Marriage in the reality of the Kingdom is extremely different from the old approach. Those of old looked for an easy escape from marriage. Jesus stated the reason for this viewpoint. He said, **“Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so,”** (Matthew 19:8). The phrase **hardness of your hearts** means “destitution of spiritual perception.” It has to do with stubbornness and obstinacy. It indicates man’s resisting attitude toward God and His grace when he ought to have a willing and receptive heart. The old standard was self-centered and self-serving. Jesus, the King of the Kingdom, gives us a redemptive attitude toward our spouse (Matthew 5:32-33). This internalized and intensifies the marriage vows.

The “old” based honesty on “swearing.” The command of the Old Testament was **“You shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the Lord,”** (Leviticus 19:12). The Jews interpreted this to mean that swearing falsely by any other name was allowed. God stated the law, **“If a man makes 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,”** (Numbers 30:2). The old system interpreted this statement as permitting the renegeing on oaths made to anyone but God. People would swear by “heaven,” “earth,” “Jerusalem,” or their “head.” These were all substitutes for God’s name. When they were pressed to keep their word, they felt no obligation. After all, it was not an oath based on the name of God. The “old” created a system of manipulation, conniving, and twisting.

This thinking appalled Jesus. The Kingdom of God is a state of being; the King reigns within us. There is no need for swearing at all. There is no outward pressure for honesty; there is inward reality of

honesty. This is the integrity of the heart of Jesus dwelling within the believer. We are children of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 5:34-37). This moves integrity from an outward pressure and internalizes it; it also intensifies as an expression of our entire lives.

***“An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,”*** (Matthew 5:38) is a quotation taken directly from the Old Testament (Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21). It reflects one of the most ancient law codes. It simply requires that punishment exactly match the crime. We use this same principle in our day when we state, “Tit for tat.” The expression of this law comes from a heart of revenge. There is a “get even” spirit in its essence. The good factor of this proposition is its limitation. One could “get even” with another individual, but only to the extent they injured you.

Jesus internalizes and intensifies the old standard. The state of the Kingdom of Heaven is the heart of Jesus. There is no revenge. It is a redemptive heart. Because I know the pain of the loss of an eye, I would not want to inflict this upon another. The cross is present in the very beginning statements of Jesus’ preaching (Matthew 5:38-42).

The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees stated, ***“You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy,”*** (Matthew 5:43). Of course, they eliminated a key phrase in the Old Testament quotation, ***“You shall love your neighbor as yourself,”*** (Leviticus 19:18). They also added to this statement, ***“and hate your enemy.”*** The Kingdom state of being does not distinguish between those people you personally like and those you do not. At the heart of His explanation, Jesus gives us the display of His Father! ***“He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust,”*** (Matthew 5:45). If we would be *sons* this same nature must indwell us. We are called to be ***“perfect (in love), just as your Father in heaven is perfect (in love),”*** (Matthew 5:48). These statements take the old approach of the scribes and Pharisees and internalize and intensify them. The Law of God becomes the nature of our lives and we have His very heart. None of this is possible without the indwelling of the Spirit of Jesus within us. The old system of achieving and accomplishing is replaced with experiencing and embracing. What a privilege!

Jesus what are You revealing to me through this study?