

## Section 10

## JESUS PREACHES AND HEALS IN GALILEE

(Parallels: Mark 1:35-39; Luke 4:42-44)

TEXT: 4:23-25

23. And Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people.
24. And the report of him went forth into all Syria: and they brought unto him all that were sick, holden with divers diseases and torments, possessed with demons, and epileptic, and palsied; and he healed them.
25. And there followed him great multitudes from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judaea and *from* beyond the Jordan.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Why do you suppose Matthew introduces this obviously general summary into his account at this point?
- b. What does this section indicate about the nature of Jesus' popular ministry?
- c. If Jesus wanted to start a new religion, why did He begin in the Jewish synagogue? What good could be accomplished by beginning this way? What is the connection, if any, between classic Judaism and religion of Jesus?

### PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

Then Jesus went all over Galilee, as He continued teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of God's approaching reign, curing every disease or malady that was among the people. His reputation spread even throughout the whole territory of Syria. Sufferers from every kind of illness or torturing disease, racked with pain, those possessed with demons, the epileptics, the paralyzed—they were all brought to Him and He healed them! Countless crowds of people followed Him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and from Transjordan.

## NOTES

## I. THE EVANGELISTIC EFFORT

4:23 **And Jesus went about in all Galilee.** With these three verses Matthew summarizes the first general tour of Galilee, of which the chapters that follow may be specific incidents. Jesus apparently made three such evangelistic tours of Galilee in the effort to win its populace: this one, another after the onset of unbelief (Lk. 8:1-3), and a third just before the collapse of His popularity (Mt. 9:35—11:1).

Though Matthew does not record it, Mark (1:35-39) and Luke (4:42-44) both tell what significant preparation Jesus made before embarking upon His first great evangelistic campaign. After a busy day of great popularity, preaching and prodigies, Jesus arose early the next morning to pray alone. Peter's words of rebuke and anxiety only served to heighten the temptation to satisfy all the wants of His townspeople at Capernaum, "Everyone is looking for you." A synagogue full of expectant and admiring people eager to listen might have satisfied the ambition of many a rabbi. Yet Jesus has other plans and goals to reach: "Let us go elsewhere into the other towns that I may preach the good news of the kingdom of God there also; for that is why I was sent." Jesus' eye was on the nation, not upon that small-town excitement which had turned the heads of His disciples. His mission was not mainly or simply humanitarian! His mission was redemption! His was not to one small city, but to the whole flock of "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The natural compassion of God within Him for suffering humanity caused Jesus to minister to their bodies. But His miracles were intended to point the mind beyond the acts themselves. He intended that these miracles should function as signs of His identity and prepare their minds for His message (Jn. 5:20; 10:24, 25; 14:10-14). They must see that through this Man God is compassionately and mercifully working in their midst and that the message of this One was that of God! How often these signs were misunderstood may be gathered from outstanding examples such as Capernaum, who, ironically, here wishes to keep Him from leaving her (cf. Mt. 11:20-24).

**teaching in their synagogues.** For a full treatment of the subject "synagogue," see under standard Bible reference works, especially Edersheim's detailed descriptions (*Life*, I, chap. X). Jesus could not have chosen a more logical approach to the Jewish people than through

the synagogue, for this was the most important institution in the life of His people, with the only single exception of the temple. Though some teaching was possible in the temple (see, for example: Jn. 5:14ff; 7:14—10-18, 22-39; Lk. 19:47, 48), yet the synagogue was unquestionably the institution essentially adapted for teaching. Further, the liturgy of the synagogue was such that it furnished Him the opportunity that He could best utilize for starting His formal public teaching. The ruler or president of the synagogue could invite to speak any person whom he judged to be qualified. Thus, at least at the first, there was an open door to Jesus in any town large enough to have a synagogue. Then, after Jesus had taught a particular lesson, there would have been time for discussion of the new doctrine He brought, for questions, for talk and fellowship with Him. (Illustrations: Lk. 4:16-37; Mk. 1:21-28; Mt. 12:9-14)

Those Christians who tend to reject various human inventions as unworthy of Christian practice or consideration on the ground that they are without divine approval should ponder our Lord's acceptance and use of the synagogue. The synagogue has no proven origin prior to the Babylonian captivity in which it arose out of a felt need for worship of God in a strange land. Certainly, true worship had to be rendered Jehovah at Jerusalem in the temple and at the stated feast-days and hours and in the appointed way. Yet the more devout Jews, living in captivity and having no sanctuary, altar or priesthood, felt the need to hear the word of God and pray together. And even after their return from exile, they continued their synagogue practice even in Jerusalem where stood first Zerubbabel's temple and later Herod's temple at which all the Mosaic sacrifices were offered (Ac. 6:9; Jn. 2:13-20) and where all the services were kept. The synagogue as an institution served mainly for a local tribunal as well as school house for elementary education. However, worship, in the sense of prayers and reading of the Scriptures, developed into a regular "service" or liturgy before the time of Jesus. In this human invention, brought into being without demonstrable divine sanction or prohibition, Jesus and His apostles participated by using to the full the opportunity it provided not only for proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom, but also for their own personal worship. Obviously, they would continue this latter only as long as their good relationship to Judaism remained intact. With the gradual disintegration of those ties that began during Jesus' ministry and continued until the ultimately necessary mutual separation

of Judaism and Christianity as well as the establishment of a distinct, Christian worship, the frequenting of the synagogues became less and less.

While Jesus knew that at Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship God (Jn. 4:19-22; cf. Dt. 12:1-14), yet, by His apparent approval and usage of the synagogue, He indicates that the mere fact that a thing—a project, a tool, an aid, an instrument, a means—has no particular divine sanction or prohibition, is no good argument against its use. He ever laid the emphasis on the manner and motives for which a thing is used. The synagogue could NEVER be used as a substitute for the temple. The two existed side by side in Jesus' day and He worshiped BOTH at the temple at the stated feasts AND at the synagogue. (Cf. Lk. 4:16) For Him the synagogue did not pose a choice between itself and the temple, for worship at the temple was God's clear command. At the same time, He worshipped and taught in the synagogue, because it was a most logical and practical means of giving witness to His reliance upon the law and the prophets and His example taught the importance of practical, weekly devotion to God by praying with God's people.

Further, the influence of the synagogue-plan upon the formation of the Christian congregation after Pentecost cannot be overlooked. Inasmuch as the synagogue had been so much a part of the culture of the apostles, it should not be at all surprising that they should utilize its basic form of worship and government when they established the Church. Rather, it perhaps would have been more surprising had they not done so, although Jesus could have instructed them in a completely different form of worship and government. The fact that He did not should cause His disciples to re-evaluate their acceptance or rejection of things not either prohibited or sanctioned in God's word.

For more direct information on the synagogue, see standard reference works and the following suggestive scriptures: Mt. 6:2-5; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54; 23:6, 34; Mk. 1:21-29, 39; 3:1; 5:22-38; 6:2; Lk. 4:15-38, 44; 6:6; 7:5; 8:41; 11:43; 12:11; 13:10; 20:46; 21:12; Jn. 6:59; 9:22; 12:42; 16:2; 18:20; Ac. 6:9; 9:2, 20; 13:5, 14; 41:1; 15:21; 17:1-17; 18:4-26.

#### **preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing.**

Matthew summarized Jesus' activities in such a way as to express perfectly His true purposes, as declared by the Lord Himself (Mk. 1:38; Lk. 4:43):

1. Jesus came to reveal the MIND of God. He defeated man's ignorance and corrected his misunderstandings.
  - a. Not about the universe or the world in general, for man could learn this on his own, given enough time.
  - b. But about the true knowledge of God, man was in gross ignorance. Jesus came to reveal what man could not have found out by himself. Decisively He puts an end to all groping and guessing about God by revealing Him!
  - c. And man had a lot to learn about the true nature of himself. Man is at his very best as servant of God, as a subject of God's kingdom: this is that for which God planned man, not for self-rule or self-satisfaction. He revealed God's will for man.
2. Jesus came to reveal the HEART of God. He conquered man's heart by demonstrating the Almighty's loving concern for man, by healing his diseases. This was very important:
  - a. Man, writhing in pain or tortured by a lingering illness, finds sermons about high morality and noble ideals quite unconnected with his personal, painful reality. He might ask himself, "What does God care if I waste away here on this bed of affliction?"
  - b. Then, Jesus mercifully touches the man's affliction, heals his body and opens the man's grateful heart to the message of the kingdom. Now the man is ready to listen and respond to Jesus.
  - c. Matthew lays a proper emphasis on this healing ministry by mentioning both the great variety of healings that Jesus accomplished as well as the widely scattered areas from which people came to be healed.

## II. THE EXTENSIVE EFFECTIVENESS

### 4:24 The report about Him went forth into all Syria.

It is not easy to establish the exact bounds of *Syria* in Jesus' time nor the exact use Matthew may make of the term. In OT times Syria had been the small country just north of Palestine. But following the conquests of Alexander the Great and the Maccabean period,

Syria had come to mean the whole area from Egypt clear up to the Orontes River and Antioch.

Note how Luke in the parallel (4:44) uses the word *Judea*, not in the sense of "the area around Jerusalem," but in the sense of "the whole country of the Jews" or "Palestine." He often does this. (Cf. Lk. 1:5; 7:17; 23:5; Ac. 2:9; 10:37)

Even if Matthew intends the smaller region, obviously the fame of Jesus is travelling like a prairie fire. Certainly there were Jews living in Damascus (Ac. 9:2, 20-22) and in Antioch (Ac. 11:19), whose business and family connections kept them in touch with Palestine. Besides, the regular caravan routes from Babylon to Egypt passed directly through Galilee and carried all the most interesting gossip great distances.

**They brought unto him all those who were sick.** Because of the mixed population of Galilee and the certainly Gentile population of Syria, it is incompatible with the merciful love of Jesus to think that non-Jews brought to Him should be turned away. (Cf. 8:5-13; 15:21-28; Lk. 17:11-18) **Sick with various diseases:** for specific cases, see 8:1-17; 9:18-31. Those **possessed with demons:** for examples, note 8:28-34; 9:32-34. For discussion of *demons and demoniacs*, see comments on 8:28ff. **Epileptic**, a later case: 17:15. **Paralytic** means any lame or partially or totally paralyzed person; specific case: 9:1-8. **And He healed them!** What glorious, un-failing power! There were none sent away, rejected due to failure: there were no incurable cases. There was no anxious waiting for weeks when Jesus touched those bodies.

### III. THE ELECTRIFYING EFFECT

4:25 **Great multitudes followed Him.** What an eager, excited audience to whom His earth-shaking messages could be preached! He has their attention: their hearts are open. But where did these crowds come from? From all over Palestine, says Matthew. (See map)

**Decapolis**, is a name meaning "ten cities," which refers to the federation of ten independent city-states located all but one (Scythopolis/Beth-Shan) on the east side of the Jordan Valley. They were inhabited mostly by Greeks or Romans. Because they were completely independent of local rule, Matthew rightly separates them from the area "beyond the Jordan," although, logically and geographically, Decapolis was also beyond the Jordan.

## ET CETERA

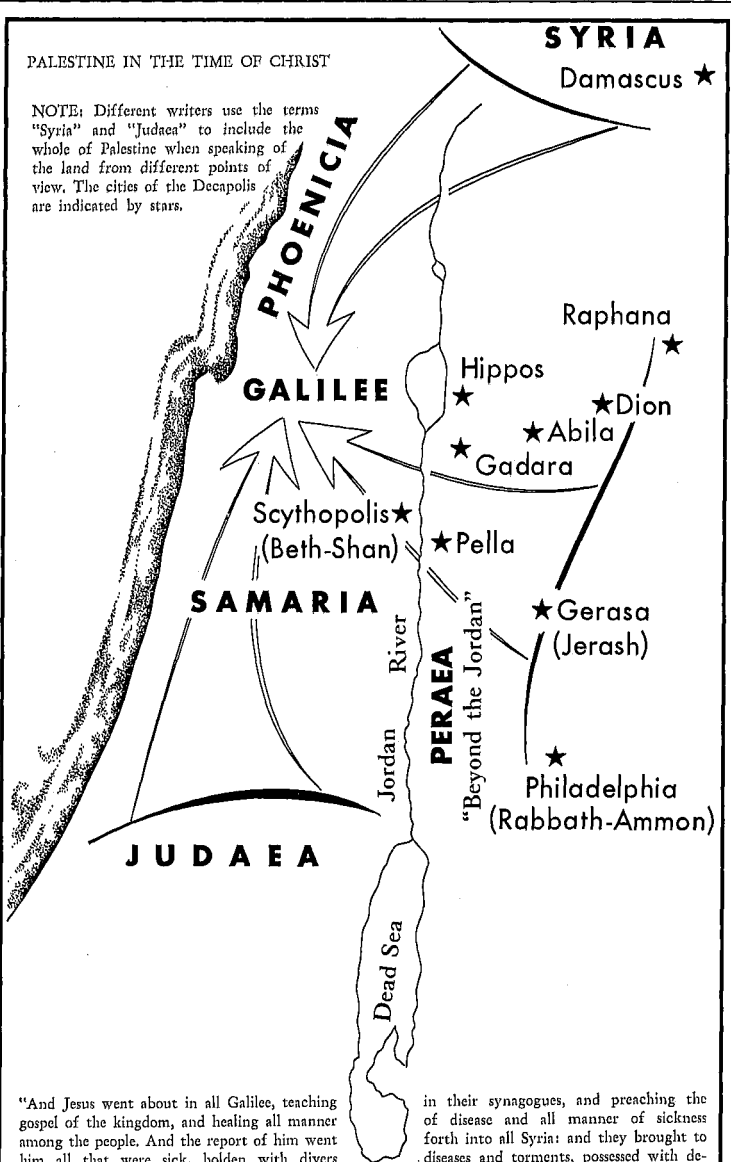
The sheer generality of this passage draws our attention to the all-sufficiency of Jesus. He can meet man at any point of his human experience, at any physical crisis, at any spiritual condition, and save him! Matthew's swift summary also gives another impression: Jesus is keenly interested and especially drawn to the "et ceteras" of human existence. Without doubt there were in these vast assemblages individual wrecks who had lost all hope, all self-esteem, all love. Yet, Jesus had time to deal gently with each one! Whether they were strangers, foreigners and sinners of every sort mattered not to Jesus, for he loved them and mercifully welcomed each one. To Jesus, the nobody was really somebody whom He could love, heal and save. Thank God for such mercy! Most of us are nobodies, but in Jesus' eyes we have value. Who would dare fail to respond to such a Master as He?

## FACT QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by the following words or phrases in the text:
  - a. holden
  - b. divers diseases
  - c. torments
  - d. demon possession
  - e. epileptic
  - f. palsied
2. What events are recorded in the parallel passages as having occurred just prior to this first general tour of Galilee?
3. According to the parallels, how did Jesus prepare Himself for this extensive evangelistic effort?
4. Of what value was the Jewish synagogue to the ministry of Jesus? What opportunities did it provide Him?
5. Tell something of the nature and use the Jews made of their synagogues.
6. What was the obvious purpose for which Jesus was sent, as revealed in this text and its parallels?
7. What effect did this evangelistic tour have upon the nation?
8. Locate the different areas whence people came to be healed by Jesus.

PALESTINE IN THE TIME OF CHRIST

NOTE: Different writers use the terms "Syria" and "Judaea" to include the whole of Palestine when speaking of the land from different points of view. The cities of the Decapolis are indicated by stars.



"And Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner among the people. And the report of him went him all that were sick, holden with divers demons, epileptic, and palsied; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judaea and from beyond the Jordan."

in their synagogues, and preaching the of disease and all manner of sickness forth into all Syria: and they brought to diseases and torments, possessed with demons, and there followed him great multitudes from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judaea and from beyond the Jordan."

Matthew 4:23-25



## EXPOSITORY SERMON CHAPTER FOUR

## "THREE TERRIFIC TEMPTATIONS" (4:1-11)

*Introduction:* Importance of Jesus' temptations at this time in His life just before He began His ministry: He stood to gain or lose control of Himself, His miraculous ministry, His relation to the Father, and, finally, the world He had come to win. His temptations and His victories can teach us something about ourselves, our temptations and how to overcome. Let us see these three terrific temptations from three points of view:

## I. AS SATAN PRESENTS THEM:

- A. Self-interest: making provision for a personal passion, appeasing animal appetites, "all that the body longs for."
- B. Sensational: satisfying a scriptural scruple by spectacular stunts, "all that entices the eye."
- C. Success: the glittering glamor of gold and glory; "the glamor of all that men think splendid."

## II. AS JESUS EXPOSED THE TEMPTATIONS:

- A. FAITHLESSNESS: a distrust of divine dependability which was nothing more than a rash recipe for rescue.
- B. FOOLISHNESS: a presumption upon paternal protection.
- C. FORFEITURE AND FAILURE: fawning for fictitious favors while ignoring the implications of idolatry.

## III. AS WE TOO MAY OVERCOME THEM: using Jesus' methods, we must conquer

- A. By unwavering reliance upon God's Word, for in it He has given
  - 1. His revelation of Himself—His Nature, His Character, His Will.
  - 2. His unfailling promises to bless and sustain us
  - 3. His threatened punishment of sin
  - 4. His provision of a Savior
- B. By unhesitating refusals of the forbidden desire.
- C. By so loving others that we cannot bring ourselves to sin against them. By loving not our own lives, pampering our desires or even seeking our own ends.

CONCLUSION: We ought not be "taken in" by any temptation. Why?

1. Because we have in God's Word the standard of truth, by which we may measure every judgment in the world of personal relations. Such a measurement must render immediately clear the true and the false in every situation of life.
2. Because we have also seen the exceeding deceitfulness of sin. Hence, we should be morally armed by the knowledge of the strength of the enemy whom we must face.
3. Because we have Jesus' perfect example that proves for every man that Satan is not invincible.

Therefore, what we do with any temptation is clearly up to us. But our decision bears with it eternal consequences. Our only safeguard is constant loyalty to God, making use of His divinely-appointed means of combat.

### DO YOU HAVE THE WORD IN YOUR HEART?

From your memory of the scripture text of Matthew's first four chapters, locate, identify and explain the following passages. Give all the relevant facts, that is, tell who said it, when, where, to whom, why. Are there any parallels in the other Gospels? Are there any variant manuscript readings of this passage, or significantly different translations? Tell as exactly as possible the true meaning or intended point of each text. Tell at least the problems involved in trying to interpret and apply each passage, if there are any, and try to solve the problems.

1. "It becometh us to fulfill all righteousness."
2. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."
3. "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, And they shall call his name Immanuel . . ."
4. "Out of Egypt did I call my son."
5. "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
6. "Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of repentance."
7. ". . . he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and *in* fire."
8. "The people that sat in the darkness saw a great light, And to them that sat in the region and shadow of death, to them did light spring up."
9. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."
10. "The voice of one crying in the wilderness . . ."

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW  
SOME NOTES INTRODUCTORY TO  
THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

FOR WHOM IS THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT INTENDED?

Jesus laced this message with open declarations and not-too-hidden suggestions of His absolute authority and deity. He promised blessings, breathed warnings and encouraged faith, all on the basis of Who and What He was. Those non-believers or shallow disciples who were in His audience would receive no encouragement from His words, if they did not accept the always present, underlying premise which gives coherency to His words: His right to say what He was saying. Jesus is not merely passing out deliciously sweet propaganda pieces, palatable to any and every appetite. In fact, there is much in the Sermon that is quite unacceptable to those who still think they have a right to judge Jesus by picking and choosing from among His teachings. A simple test might quickly demonstrate this truth: ask some out-spoken admirer of Jesus, who pretends to base his ethics on the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, whether he considers the "other cheek policy" (Cf. Mt. 5:39) to be a valid ethic for the modern age. Or, listen for his description of those whom he considers to be well off in this world. If he differs with Jesus, he is placing himself above Jesus by retaining the right to reject the Lord's authority. Point him to Jesus' conclusion to the Sermon.

Certainly Jesus addressed His words to those whose light of faith had only begun to burn and, consequently, needed intelligent attention. On the other hand, Jesus needed to reveal the nature of true righteousness, even if its high standards threaten to discourage the beginner's faith. Again, He must be so crystal clear that such grand concepts as He must deliver shall be accessible to the simplest follower and yet forever high enough to challenge the most advanced disciple to keep climbing. Addressing hypocrites who confided in their own goodness, He must unmask them, leaving them no cover.

Just because His "disciples" (cf. 5:1; Lk. 6:17; Mt. 8:1) were in the majority does not mean that the Sermon must have meaning only with reference to them. To be sure, the life techniques He describes are meant only for those who accept His point of view and way of thinking, but the infinitely high morality He demands is intended to bring the smug and self-satisfied to their knees, crying, "Lord, what must I do to be saved?" Thus, Jesus left the door open

## INTRODUCTORY TO SERMON ON THE MOUNT

to all who would enter the kingdom of God, while frankly letting the worldlings know what they could expect to find under God's rule.

### IS THIS THE SAME SERMON AS RECORDED BY LUKE?

Plummer (*Luke*, 176, 177) has already plumbed the question to its depth and his fine observations are worthy of notice:

1. The relations between the two discourses will never cease to be discussed, because the materials are insufficient for a final decision . . .
2. Any preacher repeating a carefully prepared sermon would begin and end in the same way, and would put his points in the same order . . .
3. Nor does it follow that those portions which Luke gives as having been uttered on other occasions were not also uttered as parts of a continued discourse . . . The fact that Luke meant to record these other occasions may have been part of his reason for omitting the similar words in this discourse.

For the purposes of this study, we will be using them together as one sermon to be commented upon, in order to draw attention to all that Jesus said and meant upon a subject raised. If they are really two different sermons, they are yet for each other the finest of parallel passages.

### THE DEITY OF CHRIST IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Here are some suggestions for further study, which indirectly imply or openly state that unique relations that Jesus of Nazareth shared with the Father, a relation that was shared by no other man. If Jesus be the final, once-for-all revelation of God, these important details, which form an integral part of the Sermon on the Mount, lift it beyond the reach of those who would pick and choose from it those parts which please them or which fit into their preconceived systems. Jesus' claims and implied authority, if vindicated by the proper credentials, give Him the right to reveal what man could not discover by the exercise of his reason or of his sense or by testimonies from the wisdom and experience of the ancients. Thus, those who would think themselves wise to reject certain portions of this Sermon are basically rejecting Jesus, for His importance to humanity is wrapped up in what He said and did. But what did He say?

## THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

1. *Jesus demonstrated an absolute authority greater than Moses.* (Cf. 5:21, 22, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34). "You have heard what the Law of God said to the fathers, but I say to you . . ." Moses could not pretend any authority but what he received from God, while Jesus speaks with an authority that is inherent in His being and essential to His nature. His was a standard greater than that of Moses (5:48), because He went straight to the heart of the man, converting that first, and did not judge merely outward acts. His judgments upon man's heart are more far-reaching than any law, which punishes only external sins, ever could be; hence, Jesus exercised an authority greater than any law-giver. But Moses' law was given him by God; so, when Jesus raises the standards, He presumes to put His hands upon God's law? Those wide-awake critics in His audience who heard these words cited above, must have been rocked back on their heels as they exclaimed, "Who does he think he is? That is God's law with which he is tampering!" That is exactly the right question, since its answer must be: "He must think that He is God, for only God can change the law!"

2. *Jesus demonstrated a knowledge of things that only God could know for certain.* (Cf. 5:3-12; 6:1, 4, 6, 8, 32; 7:11, 21) He knew with absolute assurance exactly what God would do when man seeks to do things Jesus' way or else when he refuses to do so. With unerring foreknowledge of final outcomes, Jesus explains what sort of life really leads to true happiness. He lays bare the futility of hypocrisy, because it cannot reach any goal beyond immediate applause.

3. *After picturing the heart of man as He sees it, He boldly declares Himself to be the Judge of the world (7:21-23) upon whose word the eternal fate of men depends (7:24-27).* The Master expressed Himself in such a way as deliberately to separate Himself from the human race, even though elsewhere He identified Himself with it in other ways. (e.g. Jn. 5:27) In the Sermon, Jesus never refers to God as "our Father" but always refers to Him as "your heavenly Father," with the single exception when He spoke of God as "my Father" (7:21) with such force as to distinguish Himself as the Judge of the ages. (The cases of "your Father" are 5:16, 45, 48; 6:1, 4, 6, 8, 14, 15, 18, 26, 32; 7:11. The only "our Father" is the address to a prayer for use by Jesus' disciples, 6:9).

4. *Jesus' own sinless life underlies the ethic He presents for the imitation of others.* Though He preaches moral perfection, there is not even the slightest hint of a confession of personal weakness or

## INTRODUCTORY TO SERMON ON THE MOUNT

failure. For instance, were Jesus conscious of any sin, only the basest hypocrisy could have allowed Him to proclaim Himself the very fulfillment of the law and prophets. (5:17)

5. Jesus puts persecution in His name on the same plane with that suffering known by those mighty men who spoke for God. (5:10-12) The prophets were persecuted for their devotion to God; Christians are to endure it because of their devotion to Jesus. The implication is clear: *Jesus is identifying service to Him with service to God.*

6. *Jesus claims that His words are the Rock upon which the life can be securely built to withstand any tempest.* (7:24-27) Upon Jesus you either make or break yourself, for He is the great stone of stumbling and rock of offence (Isa. 8:14) and the crushing stone (Lk. 20:17, 18) or else the chief cornerstone (Isa. 28:16; cf. I Pet. 2:3-8). How are we to understand Paul's interpretation of the mighty Rock in the wilderness? (Cf. I Cor. 10:1-4 with Dt. 32:3, 4, 15, 18, 30, 31)

Indeed, how could Jesus, with almost every breath, presume in one way or another to be the Son of God, the world's Savior and Judge and infinitely superior to the greatest lawgiver and somehow quite separate from the rest of the race, without incurring the charge of madness in the extreme, were He not what He pretended to be? Were Jesus the Son of God, He could not properly speak with less authority than that which is essential to His nature. Examining therefore each of the above suggestions or declarations of Jesus' deity, one is led to the single conclusion, consistent with His entire life and vindicated by His super-natural credentials, that He was indeed God come in human flesh to reveal the mind of God. (Remember Jn. 1:1-14, 18; 3:11-13; Heb. 1:1-3)

At this point, the admirer of Jesus must make a moral decision:

**EITHER** he must reject Jesus for having violated His own ethic by deliberately pretending to be what in fact He was not. For in this case, His moral precepts are corrupted, just as the source pollutes all that flows from it.

**OR** he must accept Jesus' moral sanity and render Him the worship due only to God. He must obey Jesus, finding in Him perfect consistency between the doctrine He taught and lived, and His claims as vindicated by His mighty acts.

## THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

### JESUS' PURPOSE FOR PREACHING THIS SERMON

What is Jesus trying to accomplish by preaching this message? Usually, the best way of determining what an author or speaker meant to achieve is to listen for his own declaration of intention. But in the case before us, this method fails us, since Jesus does not expressly declare His design. So we must search among His words and what few historical circumstances are available to us, to ascertain His motives.

Among the historical circumstances there is seen a definite need for such a sermon as this. At this point in Jesus' ministry it is becoming urgently important that Jesus define His ideals and objectives to correct the hazy, confused or mistaken concepts of His followers. With regard to the concerned, confused and jealous religious leaders, He must declare His basic position and indicate His plans. He must relate Himself to "the law and the prophets."

Among His words, certain ideas keep repeating themselves from various angles. He makes passing references to "the kingdom of God" (5:2, 10, 19, 20; 6:10, 33; 7:21) and to "righteousness" (5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 33). Another great emphasis is the recurring use of the expression "your Father" (5:16, 45, 48; 6:1, 3, 6, 8, 14, 15, 18, 26, 32; 7:11), which, like a symphonic melody keeps singing the love of God and invites the disciple to come alive to this royal relationship. And, more than by mere allusions, He describes the true nature of righteousness and its infinite importance to entrance into God's kingdom. The composite sketch that emerges from Jesus' bold, swift strokes is that of an ideal disciple or a man saturated with the Kingdom point of view. The first two chapters of the Sermon are dedicated almost entirely to Jesus' discussion of man's heart, his attitudes and his motivations.

Out of this information arise two questions:

1. Is Jesus forecasting who would really be happy in His messianic kingdom, in such a way as to attract those whose hearts were truly seeking God's will and, at the same time, repel those who would not really want to submit themselves to His rule? There are many who would not be happy in Jesus' service even if they could get into it. Is Jesus describing *what kind* of man will really find fulfillment?
2. Or, is Jesus laying down conditions for entrance into the kingdom, or perhaps, listing some of the requisite qualities which

## INTRODUCTORY TO SERMON ON THE MOUNT

must characterize every citizen of the kingdom? While inquiring sinners are not referred to any declaration of this sermon as a term of pardon (Cf. Ac. 2; 8; 9; 10 etc.), yet most of the Beatitudes point to the only frame of mind in which a man can be converted to the Lord. Further, all of Jesus' language contains descriptions of the true righteousness, which His interpreters, the apostles, worked into requisites for vital power and joy in the kingdom.

The Master is probably doing something of both. However, there are several distinct goals that He is NOT at all trying to reach, goals which many of His expositors have mistaken for His goals.

### I. JESUS IS NOT PRESENTING AN ETHICAL CODE WHICH MAY BE DIVORCED FROM HIS DEITY AND CONSEQUENT AUTHORITY TO COMMAND THESE IDEALS.

Some individuals and organizations feel that they can replace the Church by incorporating the teaching of the Sermon into their philosophy without a necessary belief in Jesus or a significant loss of moral vigor to reach these ideals. It is to the disgrace of the Church that they do sometimes practice some of these principles more consistently than do they who belong to Christ. There have been great men who have served humanity, who were full of altruistic and self-giving service, and who come from different, if not opposite, religious dogmas. The world, on the basis of its acquaintance with such men, is inclined to suggest that the ethics of Jesus' sermon could also be extracted from its religious context and be practiced with just as much meaningful success as those great non-Christians. The great damage done to Jesus' ethical standard by those who share this opinion is that they try to apply Jesus' teaching to society *en masse*, rather than to the converted individual, as did Jesus. Any attempt to apply the standards of Christian holiness to any society other than Christian individuals serves only to destroy the standards and fail in the attempt to apply them to the world in general, and reduce Christianity to a harmless theory unworthy of further serious consideration. Such a use ignores Jesus' wisdom and His capacity to reveal the proper viewpoints which direct suffering humanity's steps to the true happiness.

The frame of reference in the Sermon is that of saints who have surrendered their will, emotions, intellect and conscience to Jesus as Lord and Master of all of life and, thus, they share the Kingdom point of view. The Sermon is directed against all "wise" men of



## THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

earth who would praise Jesus as "reformer," "great teacher," "man ahead of his time," and yet would unashamedly reject His deity on subjective grounds. These are but damning Him with faint praise, if they stop short of His DEITY! Recall how Jesus handled Nicodemus when that learned doctor called Him "Teacher come from God." Jesus challenged whether that night visitor actually received Him as the revealer of God or not! One can hardly read the lines of the Sermon without being ever conscious of the divine authority of the One who preached it. One cannot excise this theme without slicing the Sermon to shreds.

### II. JESUS DOES NOT INTEND THE SERMON TO BE A FULL, FINAL REVELATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE.

The Sermon is not the gospel, for it has nothing in it about a redeeming cross or a risen Savior. Paul declares (I Cor. 15:1-4) that the essence of the gospels lies in what God has done through Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. The religion of Jesus is a message of fact to be believed, not merely some ethics to be practiced. If a handful of rules scissored from three memorable chapters were the condensation of all that Jesus had to offer to mankind, why should He have had to go to the cross and endure that bitter rejection by His race? How much simpler it would have been to have returned immediately to heaven after preaching this Sermon! But this Sermon could not be the gospel: the death of Jesus for my sins is good news! May not Paul's warning (Gal. 1:8, 9) be interpreted in this fashion? "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than the redemptive act of Jesus, whether they bring the divine standard in the Sermon on the Mount or the Mosaic Law or whatever, let him go to hell!" Certainly, it is not the Sermon in you which is the hope of glory, but CHRIST in you. (Gal. 4:19; Col. 1:27, 28)

In fact, the Sermon is not good news at all. The more we study it, the worse news it becomes. Opening our heart to Jesus' words, we suddenly realize that we are hypocrites at best and unspeakably vile at worst. The Sermon examines the vile, impure heart of man in the light of God's holiness and that light is painfully bright as it searches out the exceeding sinfulness of man and condemns the darkness in him. To the outsider, this Sermon is LAW, law that is far more perfect than that of Moses, far more stringent, harsh and demanding. It is an ideal that must produce despair of attainment.

## INTRODUCTORY TO SERMON ON THE MOUNT

But this is the very goal that Jesus means to attain. Only when man is broken by that perfect standard will he be willing to come to Jesus for healing and filling. For the insider, the disciple, it is not law in the sense of a code to be legalistically or heartlessly applied. It is, rather, a vivid description of the new type of human nature which will arise in us, even though the Sermon itself does not touch upon the exact method by which this nature comes into being. This latter task would be left to the apostles to accomplish. So it is not in any way intimated that Jesus had given a complete statement of His message in this one Sermon.

### III. JESUS DID NOT PREACH A UNIQUELY NEW ETHIC.

Partial parallels have been thought to have been found to practically all His teaching in the writings of the Greek philosophers, the oriental thinkers and the Hebrew prophets. Granted this possibility, someone might draw the wrong conclusion that, therefore, there is nothing new or revealed by Jesus, and, as a consequence, we can do without Him, provided we follow all the sage precepts ever transmitted by Jesus and other men. No greater mistake could be made, for, as Edersheim (*Life*, I 526) observes,

The new teaching, to be historically true, must have employed the old forms and spoken the old language. But the ideas underlying the terms equally employed by Jesus and the teachers of Israel are, in everything that concerns the relation of souls to God, so absolutely different as not to bear comparison.

To this, Marshall (*Ethics*, 8) adds,

From the religious point of view, however, it would be disconcerting rather than otherwise if there were no parallels anywhere to the ethical insight of Jesus, for in that case we would have to conclude that, apart from Jesus, God had left Himself without witness. But where is the ethical teacher, in Greece, Palestine or India, who can supply parallels to that ethical insight *at every point*? The newness is to be found in the unique combination of ethical precepts which Jesus presents, a combination which has no parallel anywhere; it is not seen in particular exhortations but in the absolute intensity of His ethics. . . . Jesus supplied, not so much new ethical precepts, as a new *direction* to the ethical life

## THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

of man, and invested it with a new *power*. His concern was not to formulate a new moral code but to lead men into such a new relationship with God that they would be endowed with power to do the good they knew.

If there be a unique freshness about the ethics of Jesus, it is to be found in its revolutionary approach to the usual problems which all ethical systems must touch, such as personal, family and social relations. The Lord drives home the absolute indispensibility of heart purity and thorough-going righteousness, as contrasted to mere concern with externals.

### IV. NOR DID JESUS BRING ANOTHER LAW OF CHRISTIAN CONDUCT.

As has been intimated above, the Sermon has the same effect as law to the non-disciple whose imperfection it cannot but condemn. The Master's demands for absolute perfection "even as your Father in heaven is perfect," are so rigid and exacting that worldlings and unthinking Christians reject Jesus and His ideals. Such Christians would deny their own Lord to be a Teacher qualified to reveal the mind of God concerning the true nature of man and righteousness, and they impugn His wisdom by criticizing His ideals as impracticable, either because they seem to be too exalted for everyday application or because they seem too unrealistic in a world ruled by force. But there are three inescapable facts which respond to this shallow reasoning:

1. Jesus offers unimpeachable credentials as to His identity and His right to reveal these standards which the unaided mind of man is incapable of originating and which he is unqualified to judge.
2. The objection that the Christian ideal is so lofty that human nature can never attain it is no argument that it is unusable or must be modified before it can be practicable. Jesus, while living in this human nature, did practice what He preached! By so doing He proved His ideals quite practicable to all who live in human flesh. Not only that but He also demolishes our fabric of self-justifications for our failures to measure up. (Ro. 8:1-4) Again, a man's ideals must always exceed his reach, else what good are ideals? Ideals, by their very definition, are needed to keep men morally sensitive, conscientious and stretching to reach the heights.

## INTRODUCTORY TO SERMON ON THE MOUNT

3. But the religion of Jesus is not one of struggling up the never-ending stairway toward perfection, but one of taking the elevator of justification by faith, by which one arrives instantly at perfection imputed to him by virtue of his relation to Jesus. It is a religion of regeneration and arising out of death, burial and resurrection and of being empowered by God's own Holy Spirit. Of course, Jesus' teaching seems to be unworkable *by men as they are*, but He plans to remake them through conversion.

Everything Jesus teaches is impossible unless He can put His Spirit into us and remake us from within. Apart from Jesus, therefore, we can do nothing! (Cf. Jn. 15:5) Apart from Him, we cannot live these rules!

At the other extreme, there are people who completely undervalue the Sermon's ideals. Many a man thinks he lives the golden rule, for example, just because his philosophy is "live and let live." Some may imitate Jesus part of the way, for purely selfish reasons: "Honesty is the best policy—good for business, you know." Jesus did not intend that the blazing glory of His Light should be filtered down into a fifteen-watt slogan of rather harmless and dubious application. These show only a gross ignorance of what Jesus said and meant, for he who can study the Sermon without suffering distress of conscience had better reexamine his conscience. If the natural man can hear this Sermon without its producing despair in himself, either he has no conscience or else had paid no attention. If used as a Christian moral code without Jesus, the Sermon becomes the harshest of laws, condemning man and leaving him hopeless. That glib shallow assertion of the rich young ruler must be changed to: "None of these things have I kept from my youth up: God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Only Jesus can provide the power to reach these impossible goals.

The Sermon is not another rigid discipline like that of Moses. The Beatitudes, for example, express God's gracious mercy to the imperfect. Marshall (*Ethics*, 101) notes,

Jesus must never be regarded as a second Moses, a new Lawgiver, drawing up a code of rules to be rigidly observed by all His disciples. To think thus is to relapse into the very 'legalism' which He condemned. 'Instead of framing laws, He stated principles and made them so few and broad

## THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

that no one could overlook them . . . Jesus' concern was not to 'legislate,' to prescribe rules and regulations for every situation in life (for casuistry was foreign to His spirit and genius), but to lead men into the Kingdom of God, that is, to bring men under the rule of God, freely accepted as the rule of God, freely accepted as the rule of their lives. . . . So the moral imperatives of Jesus are not 'laws,' they aim at making explicit the ethical ideals and principles which are implicit in that new relationship to God into which a man enters when the Kingdom is established within him.

### V. JESUS INTENDED TO DESCRIBE RIGHTEOUSNESS

If, then, Jesus did not intend to reveal a novel, unique, ethical code that could be divorced from His authority, nor hoped to cram into these few words the whole Christian message, nor set up a law greater than that of Moses, of what value is the Sermon on the Mount to the disciple for whom it was intended? In what relation to these rules does the Christian stand? God loves us too much to let us go on with trashy ideals. Jesus came not only to save man but to reorient him toward new life ideals. Jesus wants to make man as beautiful as God wanted him to be when He first thought of him. He intends for us to take these rules as clues as to how those who count themselves as citizens of His kingdom will act. The rules are not the Law all over again, but they are rather the effect of Christ living in us. They are not the legal cause of a moral effect. The rules help us to guard against self-complacency which assumes: "I am good enough. I know enough. I love and give enough." The lessons of Jesus' Sermon lead us to the single conclusion that we must acknowledge that we are His DISCIPLES and that we must keep learning. Our Savior and God is still above, ahead and beyond us!

### RADICAL REQUISITES OF REAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

What is the essence of that righteousness which Jesus is teaching? What kind of character does His demand require? How does one get to be that kind of person?

#### A. *Not a daring demand of due deserts for doing duty*

True fellowship of God is enjoyed on the basis of faith in His mercy, not on the basis of the perfection, or any degree thereof, to which one might attain by keeping law. (See notes on 5:3, 7) The

## INTRODUCTORY TO SERMON ON THE MOUNT

right way to keep law is to begin with a perfect knowledge of every area of its application and to adhere consistently to all of its requirements. This is why man just cannot be justified by law, since he starts out ignorant and forgetful, and, as an expected consequence, he cannot keep it consistently. Paul quotes several prophets with devastating effect:

There is none righteous, no, not one.  
No one understands, no one seeks for God.  
All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong;  
No one does good, not even one . . .  
There is no fear of God before their eyes. (Ro. 3:10-18)

So, God has concluded all under the condemnation of sin, that He might show mercy to everyone.

Apparently, not even God Himself could write a law which at once would be a sufficient standard of righteousness conformable to His own character and at the same time be the standard which any (not to say, every) man could meet. Paul is not inventing a hypothesis contrary to fact when he declares, "Verily, if there had been given a law which could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by law." (Gal. 3:21) So it was God's purpose, in giving His Law to the Israelites, to show for all time and to all nations the futility of trying to be righteous, or, to attain absolute righteousness, on the basis of law.

The basic failure of law to be a description of true righteousness lies in its tendency to standardize people at the same level of growth in righteousness, rather than to promote unlimited growth toward perfection. All that law can accomplish is list certain acts which ought to be the expressions of right attitudes. But how can any law truly regulate attitudes? For instance, how could Lev. 19:18 be applied or enforced by law? Law just cannot control character merely by limiting conduct; the character must be recreated from within. But the will of Christ describes an ideal so much higher than any human or fleshly standard that man might choose, that the soul instinctively cries out, "How can I get to be that way?"

### *B. It is a dedication of desires*

True righteousness is a matter of motives, character, desires and attitudes as well as conduct. But some might ask, "If a Christian is not under law, how is he to be controlled?" Our conduct may be

## THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

controlled by the slightest wish of Jesus, if our motives have been changed and our character regenerated. It then becomes sufficient to know what Jesus said and what He meant by it. As Christians, we have the benefit of all the instructions of Christ and His apostles, who revealed the very mind of God to us. Anything in the New Testament which illuminates the will or character of Jesus leads us, and it does not need to be stated in the imperative mood with penalties stated for disobedience. Thus, even without specific and detailed laws, we have a means of knowing what God would have us do. No law could ever have the authority for us as much as the gentlest suggestion from Jesus! Thus, it is quite mistaken to consider the new covenant writings, i.e., the New Testament, as a prison for curtailing the activities of the reborn man within the walls of a legalistic system. Rather, all that Jesus said, when applied in the spirit of Jesus (in the way He meant it), becomes both our highest control and our deepest motivation. If any church has to make laws for itself, it confesses its own failure to convert men to Jesus!

Those passages which seem to suggest that a Christian is somehow "under law to Christ" (I Co. 9:21), or guided by the "royal law, the law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25) or judged by it (Jas. 2:8, 12) on the basis of failure to keep "the whole law in every point" (Jas. 2:9-11), are but illustrations of the *principle* of the need for salvation by grace and become a *description of the principle* which controls the Christian. They cannot be construed so as to contradict the great truth: "Ye are not under law but under grace." (Ro. 6:14) Paul (I Co. 9:21) means only that he is not without a principle of control as a Christian, but is simply controlled by Jesus; he cannot mean that as a Christian he is trying to be justified by law.

### *C. It has a dynamic drive for deeds and development*

The real dynamic of true righteousness may be found in the implications of the following descriptive phrases:

1. Dead men cannot sin, because they are free from the reach of law (Ro. 6:3-11; Gal. 5:24) and, paradoxically, they must not sin, since their sinful desires died too. By dying, we have already accepted our own damnation and our release from that judgment.

## INTRODUCTORY TO SERMON ON THE MOUNT

2. A new creature, reborn, regenerated from the dead (Gal. 6:15; II Cor. 5:17-19; Tit. 3:5; Jn. 3:3-5). Now we are not mere men because we have become Jesus Christ on earth. (Gal. 2:20; Ro. 8:9, 29; Eph. 1:22, 23)
3. Righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Ro. 14:17)
4. Christ in you; every man perfect in Christ (Col. 1:27, 28); having the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:1-11). A Christian sins, not against law for he is not under it, but when his thoughts and actions are out of harmony with the mind of Christ.
5. Fruit of the Spirit; no law against such character (Gal. 5:22, 23, 25)

According to Jesus, then, out of the converted heart of a regenerated man will naturally come those attitudes and actions which please God. Therefore, in His viewpoint, religion and ethics, worship and service, piety and deeds, or faith and righteousness must all be the same thing. Each of these ideas must express merely slightly differing viewpoints of the same thing, the product of regeneration in the heart. Jesus constantly refused to distinguish between them since there can be no double standard of worship offered God and service rendered mankind.

Real righteousness amounts to admitting that we do not possess it. If we are to be really righteous, we must admit God's righteous sentence against our sins and admit that our guilt deserves His condemnation. Further, we must recognize that our self-righteousness has kept us from doing His will. (Cf. I Jn. 1:8-10; 2:1, 2; 3:1-10). We must place our hope in Christ's victory and be released from the necessity of self-defence against a relentless legal code. In short, we must be saved by His grace, not merely by our knowledge of certain doctrines. Our faith is not so important in what it can do for God at this point as in what it is willing to receive from God. The righteousness that Jesus expects is not to be found, therefore, in merely outward circumstances or in external observances or even in the acts of religious service which we perform for God, but rather in the entire transformation of our character until it mirrors perfectly the character of God!



THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW  
THE REASONABLENESS OF THE REDEEMER'S  
REWARDS FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Is it a serious ethical defect in the teaching of Jesus that He offers rewards as inducements to faithfulness in His service? Jesus did not hesitate to guarantee the magnificence of the prize to those persecuted for His sake (Mt. 5:10-12), or the security of remuneration (*misthos*) to those who receive prophets, righteous men, apostles and little children for what they represent (Mt. 10:40-41; Mk. 9:41), nor does He shrink from threatening the faithless with a reward suited to them (Mt. 16:27; 10:28; 7:27). It is regarded almost as an axiom in the modern world that to associate the idea of reward with virtue is to fabricate a base, unworthy ethic. Is Jesus, by His mention of these positive and negative rewards, encouraging the idea that godliness is simply the best policy or that prudence dictates virtue, not for the sake of goodness, but for selfish ends arrived at by selfish calculation? Is "duty for duty's sake" and "virtue of no ulterior motives" the final statement of the only valid ethic?

While it is right to refuse to be enticed to be good by the hope of some present material bonus or to be blackmailed into a virtuous life by fear of some physical punishment, yet the mere mention of some reward or punishment do not thereby render unworthy an ethical system, since those who preach this doctrine of "duty for duty's sake" are seeking *some reward* in an appropriate amount of happiness insuing from their application. Otherwise, would they not cease to hold this opinion? An action by which nothing is achieved is futile, else good men would ask themselves whether any virtue were worth the effort. Let us examine Jesus' idea of rewarding faithfulness, to see the validity of His ethic for today's life. Jesus idea of rewards . . .

I. DEMONSTRATES THE FINALITY AND IMPORTANCE OF CHOICE  
Marshall, citing Taylor, (*Challenge*, 204) notes:

It is the supreme assertion of the conviction that choice is real and that everything is staked on the quality of our choice. If happiness depends on character and character is genuinely made by our choice, we cannot refuse to contemplate the possibility that character, and with it happiness, may be lost beyond the power of recovery by sufficient persistence in choosing evil and sufficient indolence in choosing good.

## INTRODUCTORY TO SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Indeed, the choice means everything! To every man Jesus freely and generously offered all the treasury of God on the condition that they choose to be His disciples. But His disciples are to be remade man, for, without His Spirit working in them, they would only be frustrated by His demands. Jesus has no fear that such a disciple would try to make a claim upon God for rewards proportionate to the man's piety, since, as far as the disciple is concerned, the need to put God in debt to him does not exist. Jesus' disciple stands in a different relationship to God: he has already been justified on the basis of his faith in God's grace. The choice of that new life and position before God is all-important, since it finally leads to ultimate happiness. Needless to say, its contrary is also equally true.

An adequate concept of grace must repudiate the suggestion that man can make a claim upon God for a reward calculated upon the basis of so much work, so much reward. Jesus' parable on the laborers in the vineyard (Mt. 20:1-16) warns the apostles specifically and all disciples in general against the wrong spirit involved in asking Jesus "What shall we have?" (Cf. Mt. 19:27). Jesus' intent is to place the apostles in positions of great honor (Mt. 19:28) and to bless richly any follower (Mt. 19:29). Such rewards as these are not exactly proportioned to the work done, but are established by the free choice of the Giver. The reward does have some relation to the work done, but it is received because God promised it, not because it is earned. Then too, there is the disciple's confession after he has labored to the very limit for his Master: "I am an unworthy servant: I have only done what was my duty." (Lk. 17:7-10) Note that only a disciple of Jesus could afford to say this, for those who have not chosen Jesus must defend their own righteousness as "a worthy servant."

Seeming exceptions to this rule, that the choice of salvation by grace rules out the necessity of this-for-that rewarding, are those verses which suggest positively (as, Mt. 10:41, 42; Mk. 9:41) and negatively (as, Lk. 6:37, 38) that man will be blessed or condemned "measure for measure." However, this rigid justice describes how God *could* act and not necessarily how He *will*. God is always better than His promises, but the disciple must not presume.

Rather than lay emphasis upon calculated or *quantitative* remuneration (so many good deeds for so much reward), Jesus confers *qualitative* rewards. The inducements which Jesus offers possess certain qualities that are perfectly suited to the character of the receiver, not

## THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

quantities satisfying to his greed. Only highly moral and spiritually-minded people will enjoy what Jesus offers: the kingdom of heaven, consolation and courage, satiation with righteousness, the vision of God, the privileges of God's sons (Mt. 5:1-12), becoming truly great (Mt. 20:25-28), gaining one's own soul (Mt. 16:24-27). These are not the kinds of reward that appeal to the selfish and calculating. The question, according to Jesus, should be not "how much?" but "what kind?" Seeming exceptions to study: Mt. 19:27-30; the effect of the story upon the hearers: 25:14-46; I Cor. 3:8, 14, 15.

Further, Jesus' idea of rewards . . .

### II. CONDEMNS ALL HYPOCRISY

How perfectly hypocritical is the sinner who hopes that he can be good enough often enough to "buy God," i.e. by doing a certain number of good deeds purchase those rewards that he could not otherwise expect. Were he starting from a solid base of impeccable righteousness, perhaps he might have been able to start earning, and thus put God in debt to him. (Cf. Ro. 4:4) But God has declared every man under the condemnation of their sins so that He might have mercy upon all. This is why Jesus scorned the popular pharisaic righteousness which would make God a debtor to some sinner because of his supposedly accumulated "treasury of merit." (Cf. Lk. 18:9-14)

Jesus soundly condemned all pious practices inspired by the hope of some immediate reward, for instance, the praise of men. These did not seek God's praise or reward, (Jn. 5:42-44; 12:42, 43) and so would not receive any more than they sought. He counselled men to do good to their fellows without expecting to receive some sort of recompense from them (Lk. 14:13ff; Lk. 6:27-38), for God rewards such conscious selflessness (Lk. 6:35).

Therefore, before Jesus may be criticized for offering an ethic which seems to glorify "virtue for ulterior motives," His abhorrence of hypocrisy must be weighed into the conclusion. He rewards no hypocrites who would serve God for ulterior motives!

Last, Jesus' idea of rewards and punishments . . .

### III. SHOWS ITSELF PSYCHOLOGICALLY SOUND

While virtue at its highest is unconscious of itself, man rarely breathes that rarified air! The idealists may want man to do good for its own sake without seeking further reward, but this desire

## INTRODUCTORY TO SERMON ON THE MOUNT

scarcely touches the common man as he actually is. To man as he is, a goodness which achieves no end beyond itself is meaningless and futile. God could require that men practice it, but He could be ill-assured of their doing so. But man is just not made that way. He responds most readily to desirable promises and refrains from doing those things which bring him the prospect of pain or punishment. It is to this actual nature of man that Jesus addresses Himself. It may be well for the idealists to wish that man were quite different so that they could rule no acts as having moral worth unless done freely out of an utterly uncalculating goodness of heart. Nevertheless, Jesus begins with man *where he is* and takes him where he ought to be. But how does Jesus propose to bring man out of all that is ignoble and corrupting in the world, and help him to become a partaker of His own divine nature? How does He arouse in us that courageous spirit that keeps trying to answer His call to His own glory and excellence? By knowledge alone? By some unreachable ideals only? No, He has granted to us His precious and very great promises that though these incentives perfectly adapted to our real nature we might be spurred to act rightly, that is, act ethically. (II Pet. 1:3, 4) Unblushingly, the apostles make the same appeal: "Look to yourselves, that you may not lose what you have worked for, but may win a full reward." (II Jn. 8)

### REVIEWING THE SERMON IN OUTLINE FORM

*The Occasion:* Jesus probably ordained the Twelve to be apostles (Mt. 5:1a; Mk. 3:13-19a; Lk. 6:12-16) and preached to a vast multitude (Mt. 5:1b, 2; Lk. 6:17-20).

*Theme:* "The Wise and Godly Man"

- A. The Character and Blessings of the Wise and Godly Man (Mt. 5:3-12; Lk. 6:20b-26)
- B. The Mission of the Wise and Godly Man (Mt. 5:13-17)
- C. The Relation of the Wise and Godly Man to the Law (Mt. 5:17-48; Lk. 6:27-36)
  - 1. His attitude toward the Standard (Mt. 5:17-20)
  - 2. His attitude toward Anger or Hate (Mt. 5:21-26)
  - 3. His attitude toward Lust (Mt. 5:27-32)
  - 4. His attitude toward Truth (Mt. 5:33-37)

## THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

5. His attitude toward Personal Vindication (Mt. 5:38-42; Lk. 6:27-31)
6. His attitude toward Perfect Love (Mt. 5:43-48; Lk. 6:32-36)
- D. The Religious Motives of the Wise and Godly Man (Mt. 6:1-18)
  1. His basic motive (Mt. 6:1)
  2. His motivation for doing others good (Mt. 6:2-4)
  3. His motivation in prayer (Mt. 6:5-15)
  4. His motivation for fasting (Mt. 6:16-18)
- E. The Wealth and Worries of the Wise and Godly Man (Mt. 6:19-34)
  1. His attitude toward earthly treasurers (Mt. 6:19-21)
  2. His attitude toward his own dedication (Mt. 6:22-24)
  3. His attitude toward "the necessities" (Mt. 6:25-34)
- F. The Dangers Facing the Wise and Godly Man (Mt. 7:1-27; Lk. 6:37-49)
  1. The danger in harshly criticizing others (Mt. 7:1-5; Lk. 6:37-42)
  2. The danger in failing to discern important differences (Mt. 7:6)
  3. The danger in failing to recognize God's provision (Mt. 7:7-11)
  4. The danger of missing God's basic standard of conduct (Mt. 7:12)
  5. The danger of choosing the wrong way of life (Mt. 7:13, 14)
  6. The danger of being led astray by false prophets (Mt. 7:15-20; Lk. 6:43-45)
  7. The danger of self-deception (Mt. 7:21-23; Lk. 6:46)
- G. The Wisdom of the Wise and Godly Man in Obeying Jesus (Mt. 7:24-27; Lk. 6:47-49)  
The *Impact* of Jesus' Message (Mt. 7:28—8:1)