

Life of Christ

The Sermon on the Mount

I. The Setting

- According to Matthew 5:1-2 it was on a mountain. This could also refer to a high place, a plateau.
- In Luke 6:17ff. we are told it was on a plain. Therefore, it is most likely that this sermon was delivered in an area around the Sea of Galilee on one of the hilly plains.
- Many scholars place the Sermon on the Mount on the Peaks of Hattain, a rather hilly area near the Sea of Galilee.

II. The Recipients

- There are many views as to the recipients of this sermon. For a more comprehensive discussion of these views refer to D.A. Carson in *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, pp. 126-128. The following is a synopsis of the views presented there:

A. An exposition of the law to drive men to grace (Lutheran position).

Although this viewpoint has merit, the Sermon on the Mount contains many commands that are very attainable. Additionally as we will see, Christ did not redefine the Old Testament Law, He clarified it.

B. A roadmap to moral, social behavior (Social-Gospel position).

There are many moral and social implications in the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, but their applicability run much deeper than the social gospel. Without the power of the Holy Spirit, it is not possible to fully live out the commands we find in this sermon.

C. A set of moral standards used to teach morality within Matthew's community (popular modern view).

D. A set of ethical standards applicable to all believers of all ages (Mennonite-Anabaptist position).

This is much too narrow a viewpoint. Although the teachings are very applicable to Matthew's immediate audience, the principles far transcend them alone and apply to others throughout history.

E. A summons to personal faith and decision (Existential position).

The problem with this position is that the Existentialists leave God out of the picture. It is hard to believe that Christ preached a whole sermon outlining God's moral character and desires for men if God is an amorphous blob somewhere beyond our comprehension.

- F. The proclamation of an “interim ethic” to be followed until the start of the Church.

Why would Christ preach a sermon that takes up several chapters of the New Testament only to supersede it with the real Gospel two or so years later. Not a very plausible viewpoint!

- G. An intensification or radicalization of Old Testament law.

The problem here is that God has always wanted men to obey Him from the heart. The Old Testament law was merely a codification of what men should do if they had a right heart attitude for God. Also, Christ does not redefine the law, He clarifies the law.

- H. A moral, ethical law applicable to the Millennial Kingdom first offered by Christ to the Jews (classic Dispensational view).

This is the popular dispensational viewpoint, but the problem here is that there are commands in the Sermon that make no sense when interpreted in light of the Millennium. For example, the exhortation to endure persecution (which will not exist in the Millennium), and the exhortation to love our enemies hardly sounds like Millennial life.

- I. An eclectic view:

1. It is a description of the ethical, social, and moral behavior of Kingdom Citizens whether that kingdom is the Interim Kingdom (the Church), or the Millennial Kingdom.
2. Its moral truths are applicable and binding to believers today since each one of the truths is repeated elsewhere in the New Testament.

III. The Sermon

- A. The Character of Kingdom Citizens - Matthew 5:3-12

1. Humility - Matthew 5:3

- Some believe this refers to those who are poor in material wealth, but if we compare Luke 6:20 with Matthew 5:3 we find that Christ is talking about the poverty of spirit that exemplifies one who is humble.

Isaiah 66:2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

Psalms 34:18 The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

Isaiah 57:15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

- Christ is basically saying that those who are humble are the only ones who can find their way into the Kingdom. Men who are self-sufficient will never submit to God as their only resource and hope of salvation. See Christ's denunciation of the Pharisees in John 9:39-41.

2. Sadness over Sin - Matthew 5:4

- Mourning in this verse does not refer to grief or sadness over the vicissitudes of life, but of a deep sorrow over one's sin. This naturally follows from the first Beatitude in which one recognizes their spiritual poverty and utter dependence on God.

Psalm 51

Psalm 32

Romans 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

- Only those that mourn over their sin will find the comfort of God.

Proverbs 28:13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

- God can forgive all of our sins but none of our excuses.

3. Meekness - Matthew 5:5

- Meekness (*prautes*) describes power under control. It was used in classical Greek to refer to a horse that had been broken.
- Those who are meek do not assert their rights. They are content to depend totally on the power of God and His purpose, allowing Him to make things right. Meekness is one of the characteristics of those that are truly Godly.

Ephesians 4:1-2 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

Colossians 3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

- The reward of the meek is that God will give to them the earth as an inheritance.

Psalms 37:9-11 For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and

the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

4. Hunger for Righteousness - Matthew 5:6

- **Note that this is a hunger and thirst for righteousness. Deep within the heart of every Kingdom Citizen is a desire for righteousness.**

Psalms 42:1-2 To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah. As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

Psalms 63:1-2 A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

- **This Beatitude follows logically from the others in that those who are poor in spirit, broken over their sin, and meek, are given the righteousness of God which comes by faith in God alone.**

5. Merciful - Matthew 5:7

- **Mercy (eeleon) refers to that quality of character that pities the miserable condition of the one to whom mercy is shown. This character quality was completely lacking in the New Testament era and was even looked upon with contempt by the Roman and Greek cultures of that day.**
- **Mercy can also be described as “compassion in action.”**

Lamentations 3:22-23 It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

- **The text of this verse is emphatic which means that only those who show mercy will receive mercy.**

Psalms 18:25 With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright;

James 2:13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

Proverbs 14:21 He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.

6. Holiness - Matthew 5:8

- **“Pure in heart” refers to those who make every effort to be holy within. Many have a moral façade on the outside, but inside are full of evil.**

This was the problem that the Scribes and Pharisees had, and the one that Christ hit them with the hardest (Matthew 23:25-26).

Matthew 15:19-20 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man.

Proverbs 4:23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

James 4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

Psalms 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

- “Pure” is the word *katharizo*, which morally refers to freedom from the filth of sin, and qualitatively refers to integrity of character.
- The reward of the pure in heart is that they will “see God.” One cannot worship in the presence of God with known sin and defilement in their life.

7. Peacemaker - Matthew 5:9

- Peace is not the cessation of hostility, but is based on a proper relationship founded on truth. Without truth, there can be no real peace.
- Those who are peacemakers have as their goal the salvation of others, so that those who are redeemed may have peace with God and the peace of God.
- A person who is a peacemaker, must have first obtained peace with God.

8. Persecuted - Matthew 5:10-12

- Many Christians have a hard time with persecution since they feel that to be persecuted is something not to be desired. However, the New Testament teaches that suffering and persecution is a normal part of the Christian life.

1 Peter 1:7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

John 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

John 15:18-21 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but

because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

- **The results of persecution are two-fold for the believer. First, it affirms that we are citizens of the Kingdom, and secondly it promises future glory.**

Romans 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

1 Peter 1:10-11 Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

B. The Influence of Kingdom Citizens - Matthew 5:13-16

- In these four verses Christ describes what the influence of Kingdom Citizens should be in a lost and decaying world. He uses two common metaphors to describe this influence, salt, and light.
1. Salt - Matthew 5:13
 - In ancient times salt was commonly used as a preservative, as a form of money, as a bond of friendship, and as a seal for covenants.
 - There are many suggested interpretations to Christ's use of salt.
 - a. Since salt stings when it is put on a wound, some say that Christ is emphasizing that Kingdom Citizens should prick the consciences of those with whom they come into contact.
 - b. Since salt enhances the flavor of foods, some would say that the Kingdom Citizen is to enhance the quality of life of those with whom they rub shoulders.
 - c. Since salt creates thirst, some say that the Kingdom Citizen should create a thirst for God in those around them.
 - Although all of the analogies above have merit, it seems to be best to understand Christ's use of salt to refer to the preserving influence of the Kingdom Citizen. Because of our lifestyle and character, we should be a retardant acting against the moral and spiritual corruption of society.

- Sadly, Christ points out that a Kingdom Citizen can lose their “saltiness” by becoming contaminated with other things. Sin will destroy the effectiveness of the Kingdom Citizen rendering them “good for nothing.”

2. Light - Matthew 5:14-16

- The second metaphor Christ uses is that of light. Throughout the Bible sin and wickedness are referred to as “darkness” while purity and holiness are referred to as “light.” Therefore, it is easy to see that Christ is referring to the fact that the Kingdom Citizen should be a light, drawing men to Christ. They should reveal the wickedness of the world thus allowing men to see the light of the Gospel.

Philippians 2:15-16 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

- It is interesting to note that the Kingdom Citizen “is light.” They do not have control over the light that they emanate, they can only hide it under a bushel basket so that it cannot be seen.

C. The Kingdom Citizen in Relation to Old Testament Law - Matthew 5:17-48

1. Christ and the Law - Matthew 5:17-20

a. The Priority of the Scripture - Matthew 5:17

- In this single verse Christ states for all time that He did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it. “Destroy” is the word *kataluo*, which means “to render inoperative, to abolish.” “Law” refers to the entire revelation of God as revealed in the Old Testament.
- Instead of abolishing the law, Christ came to fulfill it. How?
 - 1). Christ fulfilled the moral law of God (as embodied in the Ten Commandments), by living a perfect, sinless life. He did not break a single commandment of God.
 - 2). Christ fulfilled the judicial law of God (that law that set Israel apart from all other nations). When Christ died on the cross, the judicial law was completely fulfilled and terminated.
 - 3). Christ fulfilled the ceremonial law of God by becoming the perfect, once-for-all sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 9-10).
 - 4). Christ fulfilled the law as a means of righteousness by providing the righteousness of God by faith, imputed to all who would believe (Romans 10:4).

- b. The Permanence of Scripture - Matthew 5:18
- Not only did Christ affirm the priority of Scripture, but He affirmed its permanence as well. A “jot” refers to the smallest Greek letter (*iota*), and “tittle” refers to the small stroke of a pen that separated one Hebrew letter from another. Christ is saying that every point of God’s law, down to the minutest detail, will be completely fulfilled.
- c. The Pertinence of Scripture - Matthew 5:19
- Christ not only affirms the priority and permanence of Scripture, but He goes further to affirm the pertinence of Scripture, that is, every command of Scripture is valid and binding.
 - In Christ’s days, some Pharisees taught that since it was not possible to keep the whole law, one could choose one commandment to keep, and if they kept that commandment rigorously, it was as though they kept the whole law. Unfortunately, James states that if one breaks a single law, it is as though all the law were broken (James 2:10).
 - Going further, some Pharisees taught that if one would only “intend” to keep the law, that was good enough. Christ destroys that entire belief in this one single statement.
 - Note that it was the religious leaders of the day that invented ways to “legally” circumvent the law of God (Mark 7:1-13, Matthew 23:14).
- d. The Purpose of Scripture - Matthew 5:20
- Finally, Christ gives the purpose of the Scriptures, righteousness.
 - When looking at the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, one finds that it was a form of righteousness, but not the kind that God required. Specifically, it was:
 - 1). External - the Pharisees prided themselves on their external piety, but they completely lacked internal motive.
 - 2). Partial - the Pharisees only partially kept the law since it was not possible to keep it all.
 - 3). Redefined - the Pharisees redefined the law to make it easier for them to keep.
 - 4). Self-centered - the Pharisees made sure that the law suited their purposes, even if it meant cheating their parents out of support (Mark 7).
 - The righteousness required by God for His Kingdom Citizens is the “righteousness which is of God by faith” (Philippians 3:9).

This righteousness does not come by law keeping, but by faith in Christ (Romans 10:3).

2. Anger and Reconciliation - Matthew 5:21-26

- Throughout the rest of chapter 5 of Matthew, Christ uses the phrase “you have heard it said by them of old” or “you have heard that it has been said.” These phrases are references to the teachers of the law, the Scribes and Pharisees. Christ is contrasting what they taught with God’s original purpose.
- Some teach that Christ is redefining the law of God. However, that is unlikely since He just finished affirming the permanence and immutability of God’s law. He would hardly then go on to redefine it.
- Others say that Christ was intensifying the law. Again, this is hardly believable since He just finished affirming the perfect nature of the law. God would hardly have given His law only to require its intensification or modification by Christ.
- Christ strips away the external command “Do not kill” to show that the ultimate action is based on a prior condition, hatred towards one’s brother. God is not interested in merely the external, but the internal as well.
- Note that anger towards one’s brother interferes with one’s worship. The picture used by Christ is very vivid. It pictures a man who has taken his animal to the priest in order to have it sacrificed, and as he lays his hand upon the animal in order to identify with it, he remembers that he has an unreconciled relationship. Christ says that he should leave the sacrifice, reconcile himself to his brother, then return to offer his gift to God.
- Finally, Christ urges swift reconciliation while there is time. The longer a relationship goes unreconciled, the harder it will be to reconcile it later. What started out to be a minor disagreement may turn into a grudge that lasts for many years.

3. Adultery and Purity - Matthew 5:27-30

- The second example used by Christ is that of adultery. Most of the listeners of Christ’s message would have been free from the physical act of adultery, but none would be free from the mental act of adultery.
- Note that the mental act of sin precedes the look. When a man looks upon a woman to lust after her, the adultery has *already* been committed in his heart. Looking at the woman does not produce adultery, it only is the act of finding an object for the adultery already in the heart.
- It is interesting to see this borne out in the account of the Woman Taken in Adultery in John 8. Christ told the accusers, “whichever ones of you are not guilty of *this* sin may cast stones.” It was not sin in general, but

the specific sin of adultery that Christ told them they must be innocent of.

- In order to strengthen the seriousness of sin, Christ tells His listeners that if a member of our body causes us to sin, we would be better off to have it cut off and cast from us rather than our entire body be cast into hell. The right eye referred to the best eye, and the right hand referred to the best hand. Christ is not being literal in this statement, but He is stressing the seriousness with which we need to deal with sin.
- In relation to ourselves, we need to be very careful to avoid evil. This may mean that we need to be careful with what we read, watch on television, or engage in.

4. Divorce and Remarriage - Matthew 5:31-32

- Probably no subject arouses as much controversy in evangelical Christianity as that of divorce and remarriage. Since this is such a large subject, we cannot hope to cover it in its entirety, but there is a lot we can learn from this short passage. For a more complete discussion refer to the book, *On Divorce* by John MacArthur or see pp. 307ff. in the *MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Matthew 1-7*.
- In Christ's days, a heated debate was occurring between two schools of rabbinic thought. One school taught that a man could divorce his wife for almost any reason, the other taught that a man could divorce his wife only for fornication. Understandably, the more liberal view was the more popular.
- Basically, there are four possible positions:
 - 1). No divorce and no remarriage under any circumstances.
 - 2). Divorce, but no remarriage.
 - 3). Divorce and remarriage under certain circumstances.
 - 4). Divorce and remarriage for all circumstances.
- Number 4 is invalid for obvious reasons given by Christ in this passage. He certainly denied the liberal position of the day by stating that only fornication (*porneia*) was grounds for divorce. Number 1 is invalid as well, since Christ affirms that fornication is a grounds for divorce. This means that there is at least one valid reason for divorce. Finally, number 2 is invalidated by critically examining Paul's discussion of divorce and remarriage in 1 Corinthians 7. Paul affirms that fornication and abandonment is a valid grounds for divorce, and assumes remarriage is a valid option for innocent parties.
- Christ shatters the liberal view of His day by pointing out that God's original intent was that marriage be permanent. God allowed divorce because of the hardness of men's hearts, but it was not His perfect desire that divorce be allowed.

- The only reason Christ gives for divorce in this passage is that of fornication. Some try to say that it only refers to divorce during the one-year engagement period for Jewish couples, but that is really stretching the point. There is nothing Christ said that would even hint that that interpretation was what He had in mind. “Fornication” is from *porneia*, which refers to any and all forms for sexual perversion.
- Paul expands the grounds for divorce in 1 Corinthians 7 to include abandonment by an unbelieving spouse.
- In all cases, it is assumed that if the grounds of divorce are right, then remarriage is an option. For example, in the Old Testament if a person committed adultery, they were killed thus freeing the other to remarry. God, in His forbearance, allows the innocent party to remarry because of the unfaithfulness of their spouse although He does not exact the death penalty today as He did in the Old Testament.

5. Oaths and Truthfulness - Matthew 5:33-37

- Christ again shatters the façade of piety exhibited by the religious crowds of His day by stating very clearly that a man’s word binds that man under all circumstances.
- The rabbis of that day taught that if one did not swear by the gold of the temple or some other thing, then their word was not binding (Matthew 23:16-22). It is sort of like saying that you will do something, but then refuse to do it under the pretense that “my fingers were crossed.”
- Christ emphasizes that the word of the Kingdom Citizen is their bond. They should not have to swear by anything. Their simple “yes” and “no” should be sufficient.

6. Retaliation and Self Sacrifice - Matthew 5:38-42

- This passage has been used by many throughout the centuries to teach the concept of non-retaliation. That is, it is immoral for anyone to stand up for their own protection, or the protection of others. In fact, some religious groups use this verse to justify the fact that they will not serve in any of the armed forces.
- Christ is referring to the ancient law principle of “lex talionis.” This principle stated that what one does to me, I must do to them in exact proportion.
- It is easy to see how this idea came about in the Jewish law since the Old Testament clearly states, “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” However, the Old Testament law was referring to “judicial law” not “personal law.” In other words, it is improper for a Kingdom Citizen to retaliate in kind to others, but it is not wrong for a Kingdom Citizen to allow the law, and even aid the law, in retaliating against crime or other wrongs.

- Also, Christ is not referring to the ability of representatives of government or church leadership to exercise authority and corporal punishment in dealing with evil. This would contradict Christ teaching in Matthew 18 and Paul's discussion of government in Romans 13.
- A Kingdom Citizen, therefore, is one who does not resort to personal retaliation but allows themselves to be taken advantage of, deferring all retaliation to civil authority and ultimately to God.

7. Hatred and Love - Matthew 5:43-47

- Christ's final teaching on the relation of the Kingdom Citizen to the law is in the area of loving one's enemy. It is easy to love those who love us, but the character of a Kingdom Citizen is that they love even their enemies.
- Christ rubs the salt into the wound a bit when He says that even publicans and sinners love those who love them. If we do that, we are no better than the worst of humanity.
- In contrast, we as Kingdom Citizens are to love our enemies, just as God loved His enemies.

Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

- Not only are we to love our enemies, but we are to pray for their salvation. Christ on the cross prayed for His enemies, the very ones who were crucifying Him, and as a result the centurion became a believer along with one of the thieves.

8. The Demand for Perfection - Matthew 5:48

- In wrapping up this part of His sermon, Christ states that the Kingdom Citizen is to be perfect, just as the Father is perfect.
- In our own strength this is impossible, but with the power of the Holy Spirit, it is possible for us to attain such a high standard of living.

D. The Kingdom Citizen and Hypocrisy - Matthew 6:1-18

1. The Principle - Matthew 6:1

- Probably no single issue was the subject of Christ's condemnation and scorn more than the issue of hypocrisy. "Hypocrisy" is a transliteration of the Greek word *hupocritais*, which is a theatrical term used to describe the use of various masks in order to portray various characters. Religious hypocrites wear masks to hide the real wickedness within.
- The word translated "alms" in this verse is *dikaionomai* which really means "righteousnesses." Christ is not referring to alms, but to righteous acts performed in order to impress others.

- This is further borne out by the use of the word *theaomai*, which means “to play a part to be seen, to put on a show.” Hypocrites are very sure that everyone sees their righteous acts in order to draw attention to their supposed holiness.
- Christ discusses the problem of hypocrisy by using three well-known examples, alms, fasting, and prayer.
- Hypocrisy and hypocrites are always seen in a very negative way in Scripture. Some of the most scathing rebukes and condemnations are directed at hypocrites.
- Hypocrisy is described in many ways in the Bible. For example:
 - a. It is seen as leaven which has a spreading and infectious effect - Luke 12:1.
 - b. It is seen as a whited sepulcher which looks good on the outside, but is full of decay and death on the inside - Matthew 23:27-31.
 - c. It is seen as a whited wall which looks beautiful, but is really only a thin veneer of paint covering mud and bricks - Acts 23:3.
 - d. It is seen as an overgrown grave which one steps on and becomes ceremoniously defiled without knowing it - Luke 11:44.
 - e. It is seen as a broken pot covered with silver to hide the flaw - Proverbs 26:23.
 - f. It is seen as tares, which looks like wheat but is really a weed - Matthew 13:38.
 - g. It is seen as a wolf in sheep’s clothing - Matthew 7:15.
 - h. It is seen as a well without water indicating its failure to provide spiritual life - 2 Peter 2:17.
 - i. It is seen as a cloak to cover sin - 1 Thessalonians 2:5.
 - j. It is seen as hired mourners who put on a show but care little for the thing for which they are mourning - Matthew 9:23.

2. The Example of Alms - Matthew 6:2-4

- Almsgiving was one of the most visible ways in which hypocrites paraded their righteousness. In Christ’s day there was no welfare system, so those who could not work for a living were totally dependent on the generosity of others.
- What some think Christ is referring to is the practice of certain of the Pharisees in having trumpets blown as they were about to give out alms to the poor. The trumpet would serve as a call to the beggars to come for money, and a call to others to come for a display of righteousness.

- In distinction to the Pharisees, Christ tells His listeners that the Kingdom Citizen does not calculate on what he should give, but his giving is totally spontaneous, even to the point that the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing.
- The phrase “they have their reward” has as the verb a word which means “to pay in full and give a receipt.” In other words, Christ is saying that those who do their alms to be seen have received full payment for their act when others see their righteous works, and as a result have no reward from God. On the other hand, those who give with the right motive will receive a reward from God Himself, whether anyone sees what they do or not.

3. The Example of Prayer - Matthew 6:5-15

a. The audience of prayer - Matthew 6:5-6

1). Not men - Matthew 6:5

- Another major area of exhibition for the hypocrite is that of prayer. In New Testament times, prayer had become very ritualized to the extent that there were certain times of the day in which one prayed. The hypocrite made sure that when those times came, they were on a busy streetcorner or even in the middle of the street so that their religiosity may be seen.
- Christ again affirms that those who pray in order to be seen have completely and totally received all the reward they will get. There is nothing God owes them.

2). But God - Matthew 6:6

- Instead of attempting to be seen of men, the Kingdom Citizen desires that they be seen of God.
- Christ is not teaching, as some would have us believe, that the closet is a magical place to pray, that somehow our prayers are better heard by God there. What Christ is actually teaching is that since God is omnipresent, it matters little where we pray because God can see us.
- The Kingdom Citizen is not interested in what other people think of their prayers, they are more interested in communing with God.

b. The content of prayer - Matthew 6:7-8

1). Not vain repetition - Matthew 6:7

- In developing their religious system, the Pharisees had totally destroyed the meaning and method of prayer.

- a). Prayer had become ritualized.

The Pharisees had made prayer a matter of reciting memorized prayers, not of true communion with God. For example, they would repeat the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4ff.) and the *Shemoneh Esreh* (The Eighteen). Prayer had lost its significance and had just become meaningless repetition.

- b). There were special prayers for special occasions.

Pharisees had developed prayers for waking up, going to sleep, going on a trip, etc. etc. etc. All without meaning and purpose.

- c). There were prayers for certain times.

- d). Prayer had become long.

One of the greatest fallacies of prayer is “the longer the better.” Christ emphasizes in the example prayer giving in this passage that longer is not better, but proper content is better.

- e). Prayer had degenerated into vain repetition.

Prayers were full of statements repeated over and over again with the idea that the more something was said, the more likely was God to answer.

- f). Prayer had become a theatrical display.

To the Pharisee, “image was everything.” They were more interested in the way they looked when praying, than they were in the content of their prayers.

- 2). But sincere requests - Matthew 6:8

- In contrast to vain repetition, the Kingdom Citizen makes their requests knowing that God already knows what they need, even before they ask. This is not to say they are not to ask, but that they do not need to tell God something over and over again for Him to listen.

- c. The model of prayer - Matthew 6:9-15

- In this passage we see Christ’s model prayer. Instead of the Lords Prayer, we really have here the Disciples Prayer.
- Although many repeat this prayer word for word, it is not meant as a “canned prayer” but as an example. Each part of this prayer gives us a pattern for our own prayers.

1). The Recipient - Matthew 6:9b

- First and foremost is the recipient of prayer, the Father. When we pray, we are to pray to the Father, not to Christ, and not to the Holy Spirit.
- Christ is the one through whom we have access to the Father.

Ephesians 2:18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

- It is the Holy Spirit that enables us to pray intelligently and according to God's will.

Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

2). The priority of prayer - Matthew 6:9c

- The priority of prayer is the holiness and majesty of God. Too often we fly into God's presence as though we are doing Him a favor by showing up. We need to stop, right at the beginning of our prayer, and recognize the infinite holiness of God and our own unworthiness.
- When we "hallow" God's name, we set it apart. "Name" refers to the character and essence of the individual who bears that name. In the same way, God's name refers to His character.
- Note that this is the opposite of taking God's name in vain.

3). The program of prayer - Matthew 6:10a

- Thirdly, we see the program of prayer, which is God's Kingdom. This should be the cry of every believer, the realization of the Kingdom of God.
- The goal of history is the realization of God's righteous reign through Christ. When we pray for the coming of the Kingdom, we are truly praying according to the will of God.

4). The desired results of prayer - Matthew 6:10b

- First and foremost on the mind of the Kingdom Citizen is the will of God. Too often we pray hoping to somehow mold

God's will to our own, when in reality we need to mold our will to God's.

- Behind every prayer request for the Kingdom Citizen should be the unshakable desire that God's will be accomplished at all costs. Christ Himself followed this pattern in the Garden of Gethsemane when He prayed, "Thy will be done."

5). The provision of prayer - Matthew 6:11

- After exalting God and humbling himself, the Kingdom Citizen now turns and acknowledges the provision of God. He sees that the ultimate source of all his sustenance is God and not himself.
- The Kingdom Citizen must be ever careful not to think that he is self sufficient.
- Later on in this same passage Christ emphasizes that the Kingdom Citizen should not be concerned about the provision of his earthly needs but needs to realize that his Heavenly Father will provide for him. The Kingdom Citizen's first priority is the Kingdom, God takes care of the earthly provision.

6). The forgiveness of prayer - Matthew 6:12

- The Kingdom Citizen is a forgiving person, realizing that God's forgiveness for us is contingent upon us forgiving others.
- This verse is not teaching that God will *judicially* not forgive a person, but that He will *parentally* not forgive a person.
- Note that sin is considered a debt to God.

7). The protection of prayer - Matthew 6:13a

- The protection of prayer is a call to avoid temptation and the evil one. Within the heart of the Kingdom Citizen is a desire to escape temptation which carries the potentiality of failure. They so desire to please God that they do not even want to be subjected to the possibility of falling.
- Secondly, the Kingdom Citizen desires deliverance from the "evil one." The word translated "evil" is *ho ponaros*, which means "the evil one" or Satan.
- Peter's problem in Mark 14:66ff. was that Peter failed to seek the protection of God, and as a result he was sifted by Satan.

8). The preeminence of prayer - Matthew 6:13b

- Finally, prayer should close with praise to God's character. The Kingdom Citizen realizes that all of creation exists to praise and glorify the creator.

d). A brief warning - Matthew 6:14-15

- Christ closes His discussion of prayer by giving a warning regarding those who may have trouble forgiving others. Someone has once said that we are most like God when we forgive others. Christ tells His listeners that if they fail to forgive others for the wrongs that others have done to them, they will not receive forgiveness from God, someone they have wronged far worse.
- This concept of forgiveness is further explained by Christ in the Parable of the Two Debtors in Matthew 18:21ff.

4. The Example of Fasting - Matthew 6:16-18

- The third, and final area that Christ discusses regarding the subject of hypocrisy is that of fasting. Although God only required a single fast in the Old Testament (the Day of Atonement), the Pharisees and religious leaders took the idea of fasting to new levels by requiring many fasts. Some even fasted twice per week (see the Parable of the Tax Collector and Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14).
- Although fasts are not required by God, there are times in which men should fast. When one is particularly burdened by some great trial or situation or overcome by sin, fasting is a normal response to such stress. Note, however, that fasting is always connected to prayer.
- On the other hand, the Pharisees fasted all the time, and when they did they made sure to make themselves look like it, so that everyone would see their religiosity.
- Christ condemns this behavior by stating again, "They have their reward." The only reward of the religious hypocrite is the applause of men, God owes them nothing.
- Instead of disfiguring oneself to look like one has been fasting, Christ says that those who fast should anoint themselves with oil. In other words, don't make it appear as though you are fasting, wear your deodorant, comb your hair, and don't wear a frown. God who sees your fast in secret will one day reward you openly.

E. The Kingdom Citizen and Money - Matthew 6:19-34

1. Treasure - Matthew 6:19-24

- Christ now turns to the Kingdom Citizen and money. Money is one of the two surest barometers of spirituality, the other being the tongue. It is interesting to note that Christ had more to say about money than He

did about any other single subject. The way one handles their money is a sure indicator of their relationship with God.

a). The Safe of the Kingdom Citizen - Matthew 6:19-20

1). A Bad Investment

- In these two verses Christ tells the Kingdom Citizen to lay up treasure in heaven, not on the earth. In those days, wealth existed in one of three major forms, money, clothing, and grain.
- Garments are not a sure way to keep wealth since they can be destroyed by moths, wear out, or decay.
- Grain is not a good way to store one's wealth since it can be eaten by mice, insects, and other animals. The word used in verse 19 for "rust" is *broxis*, and means "to eat." Thus Christ is probably referring to grain, not money since gold does not rust.
- Money is not a good way to store wealth since it is subject to being stolen. Since there did not exist a central banking system, people would store their money in a hole in their wall or under the floor. Because the walls consisted of dried mud, it was a fairly simple thing for a thief to break through the wall and steal the treasure within.

2). A Good Investment

- Instead of storing wealth on the earth, the Kingdom Citizen is to store their's in heaven. Christ is not saying that we are to give all our resources away indiscriminately, but He is saying that when we think of our treasure, its location should be heaven.
- What kind of treasure can one lay up in heaven?
 - i). The souls of men won through our ministry or giving - 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20, Luke 16:1-13.
 - ii). Good works for which we will be rewarded - 1 Corinthians 3.
 - iii). Money invested in God's Kingdom.

b). The Security of the Kingdom Citizen - Matthew 6:21

- Instead of the Kingdom Citizen putting their security in the passing things of this life, they put them in the eternal things of heaven. Christ states this by using an axiomatic phrase, "where your treasure is, there will your heart be." Where we put our treasure is where we put our security.

- Peter emphasizes this point in 1 Peter 1:3-4 where he states that our inheritance is laid up in heaven. Unlike the earthly inheritances we may receive, this inheritance is unfading (will not lose its value), incorruptible (not subject to decay), and undefiled (not tainted with the stain of sin.)
- c). The Sight of the Kingdom Citizen - Matthew 6:22-23
- In order to further emphasize His point, Christ puts forth a parable. This parable states that if one's eye is evil, that is, blind, then one's entire life is in darkness. On the other hand, if one's eye is good, then one's life is full of light. In other words, our view of money will determine the way we view life. If our "eye is evil", that is, we have the wrong view of money, then we will fail to live as God would desire His Kingdom Citizens to live.
 - For a look at the "evil eye" refer to Proverbs 23:6 and 28:22.
 - One cannot stress this point too much. The way one handles their money is a very accurate measure of where they have their heart. If one's heart is in heaven, then one's treasure will be there as well.
- d). The Service of the Kingdom Citizen - Matthew 6:24
- Finally, Christ emphasizes that the Kingdom Citizen serves the right master. Those who serve money cannot serve God, and those who serve God cannot serve money.
 - Many Christians are wiped out in their spiritual lives because they are so busy serving money that they have little time left over for God.
 - Serving God and serving money are mutually exclusive.
2. Trust - Matthew 6:25-34
- In light of His teachings on money, Christ now turns and applies it to everyday life. A Kingdom Citizen, whose treasure is in heaven, needs to realize that God will provide all his needs.
- a. Life and food - Matthew 6:26-27
- The first promise by God is that those who are Kingdom Citizens will receive provision from God for their daily food. God is not interested in starving His children but will provide for them.
 - We also need to realize that God provides our needs through work. It is never right for a Kingdom Citizen to kick back and wait for God's provision (see 2 Thessalonians 3 regarding Paul's view of work).

- In emphasizing this issue Christ points out that if God can take care of the birds He certainly can take care of His own.
 - In verse 27 Christ turns to another issue, that of length of life. The idea of adding one cubit is not to stature, but to one's length of life. Christ's point is well taken. By worry we certainly will not live longer, but will quite possibly live shorter.
- b. Body and clothes - Matthew 6:28-30
- Secondly, God will take care of the Kingdom Citizen by providing necessary clothing. Christ states that the Kingdom Citizen should not be preoccupied with what they will wear, since if God can clothe the flowers and the grass, He certainly can take care of His own.
- c. God's provision - Matthew 6:31-34
- Christ drives home this discussion to the Jew, especially to those who think of themselves as being part of God's Kingdom, by saying that the Gentiles (those without the covenant) seek after all of the things He just described because they have no concept of God and His provision. In distinction, those who claim to know God should not be pursuing the same things, since they can be assured that God will care for them.
 - Christ sums up this entire section by saying in verse 33 that the Kingdom Citizen seeks the Kingdom of God first, and everything else will be added.
 - Instead of worrying about things, the Kingdom Citizen realizes that each day has its own cares. Instead of thinking about tomorrow's, the Kingdom Citizen takes solace in God's provision and care, knowing that God will take care of tomorrow as well.
 - Some of the results of worry:
 - 1). Worry dishonors God by not trusting in His provision.
 - 2). Worry allows one to be mastered by their circumstances instead of allowing their circumstances to be mastered by God.
 - 3). Worry leaves God out of the picture.
 - 4). Worry denies the trustworthiness of Scripture by not believing what the Bible says about God's care and provision.
 - 5). Worry fails to consider the power of prayer (Philippians 4:6-7).

F. The Kingdom Citizen and Others - Matthew 7:1-12**1. Negatively - Do not judge others! - Matthew 7:1-6****a. The danger of being judgmental - Matthew 7:1-5**

- Many try to take this passage and use it to condemn the process of dealing with another person's sin. They want to make it say that we cannot say anything negative about anyone. In fact, some use this to effectively stifle negative and justified criticism of their actions and sin.
- However, it is clear that Christ is not saying that we cannot discern sin in others and then proceed to deal with it. To do so would negate His teaching in Matthew 18 regarding church discipline and His teaching later on in this same chapter when He tells His listeners to beware of false prophets.
- What Christ is actually saying is that we should not take it upon ourselves to condemn another person's motives nor are we to think that we should judge others for sins that we are guilty of ourselves. There is a place for pointing out sin in others, but when that is done it is always with the goal of restoration in mind, never condemnation.

1). What is Scriptural judgment or discernment in relation to others?

- a. It is not condemnation - Matthew 7:1-5
- b. It is not contention - 1 Corinthians 1:11, Titus 3:9
- c. It is corrective - Galatians 6:1, Matthew 18:15-20

2). Who is to be confronted with sin or wrong?

The only person we are to confront in the context of Matthew 7:1-6, Matthew 18:15-20, and Galatians 6:1-2 is any brother who falls into sin whether that sin is against us, against others, or against God. It does not refer to unbelievers.

- Note 'Brethren' in Galatians 6:1.
- Note 'restore' in Galatians 6:1. This assumes a previous position of grace.
- Note 'one another' in Galatians 6:1. This is a clear reference to the body of Christ.
- It is a 'brother' that sins against us in Matthew 18.
- It assumes that he is part of the church.
- The goal is restoration.

- 3). Why is this brother to be confronted with his sin?
- a). In Galatians 6:1 the problem is that this brother was overtaken in a fault.
 - i). The word “overtaken” is *paralambano*. It has the idea of an inadvertant stumbling. It is something that happens when one’s guard is down.
 - ii). The word “fault” is *paraptoma*. It means trespass. Again, it is not some flagrant sin, but something that has caught someone by surprise.
 - a). In Matthew 18:15-20 the problem is that the brother has sinned against us or against the church.
 - i). Galatians 6:1 refers to any trespass, Matthew 18:15 refers to sin. Trespass stresses the inadvertancy of the violation, sin stresses the premediation of the violation.
 - ii). Galatians 6:1 refers mainly to the innocent blunders we all make, Matthew 18:15 speaks of grosser levels of sin.

- 4). Who is to do the confrontation?

The person who points out this trespass is “ye who are spiritual.”

- a). The word “spiritual” is *pnematikos*. It is used to refer to someone who is controlled or characterized by the Spirit. This means:
 - i). They exhibit the fruit of the Spirit as mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23.
 - ii). They exhibit love as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13.
- b). Spirituality is not “maturity” but “condition.” Someone can be a baby Christian and yet exhibit spirituality if they are walking in the Spirit. On the other hand, someone could be a long-time Christian and exhibit carnality.

- 5). Why are we to confront fellow believers who fall into sin?

- The purpose of confrontation is restoration. We should desire to restore a sinning brother to the fellowship, not treat them as outcasts or objects of gossip.
- a). Note Christ and Peter in Luke 22:31-34.
- b). Note the emphasis on restoration in Matthew 18:15-20.
- c). Note the word “restore” in Galatians 6:1.

- 6). How do we confront a sinning believer?
- a). The spirit is to be one of meekness. The work “meekness” is *prautase*. It is used to refer to someone who does not demand their rights. Look at the following verses:
 - b). The idea is that we are not to confront someone while asserting our rights. Another way to look at this is to ask “What is confrontable?”
 - i). What is confrontable?
 - Sin - Matthew 18:15
 - Trespass - Galatians 6:1
 - Immorality - 1 Corinthians 5
 - ii). What is not confrontable.
 - Personality conflicts.
 - Personal preferences.
 - c). A good example of meekness is Christ before the Sanhedrin and before Pilate. Although He was innocent, and could have called 12 legions of angels, He did not. Christ never stood up for His rights.
 - d). We consider ourselves knowing that if it were not for the grace of God we would be guilty of the same sin. We should never confront others thinking that we are superior to them in some way. That is the message Christ is saying in Matthew 7:1-6 where we are told to get the splinter out of our own eye before we try to get the 2x4 out of another's.
- b. The danger of being undiscerning - Matthew 7:6
- The danger of being undiscerning is that we would fall into the trap of judging those that we should not. For example, it does little good to confront a sinner in the same manner as we would confront a believer since they have no idea of what God demands.
 - Christ's use of “swine” and “dogs” is very descriptive. A Jew considered Gentiles to be dogs. Unlike the pets of today, the dogs of Christ's time were filthy, mangy animals who traveled in packs scavenging for food. A pig to a Jew was the most unclean of all animals, something that no orthodox Jew would come near.
 - The moral lesson here is that those who do not know God are like the undiscerning pigs who trample pearls into the mud. They do not know the rich treasures of God and His word. To them it is something of little value. They would rather continue to enjoy

the slop of the world rather than the bread of life. In fact, when we confront them with the truth we run the risk of having them trample it into the mud and then turning to harm us.

2. Positively - Love others as you would have them love you - Matthew 7:7-11
 - a. God's promises to His children demands it - Matthew 7:7-8
 - The first reason we are to love others is that God's promises to us demands that we love others. Two of the greatest problems in confronting sin in others is the ability to discern what is right and wrong, and the ability to then correctly confront and deal with the sin. Christ promises us that if we lack the wisdom to know what we should do, we can "ask", "seek" and "knock."
 - It is interesting to note that these verbs are in the imperative mood which indicates a command. When we lack wisdom, we continue to ask, continue to seek, and continue to knock. Note the comparison of this command with James 1:5 where we are told that if we lack wisdom in dealing with our trials all we need to is ask God.
 - It is very important that we seek God's help in maintaining our relationships with others. We cannot always discern what is really going on in others lives and even if we do, we often lack sufficient wisdom to know how to correctly deal with the situation.
 - b. God's pattern demands it - Matthew 7:9-11
 - The second reason we are to love one another is the pattern of God. Christ uses a very common picture to paint the portrait of the way God hears the Kingdom Citizen, that being the relationship of a father to a son.
 - It would be unthinkable for a son to ask his father for bread only to get a stone, or to ask for a fish only to get a poisonous serpent. In the same way, it is unthinkable for God to give evil gifts to His own who ask Him for wisdom and discernment in dealing with others.
 - c. God's purpose demands it - Matthew 7:12
 - Finally, God's purpose for His children is that the treat others in the same way they would want others to treat them.
 - This has been called the "golden rule", the "Mt. Everest of ethics", and the greatest commandment for relationships ever given by God. We are to treat others exactly as we would want them to treat us.
 - Note that in context this means that we are not to judge and condemn others, since we do not want them to judge and condemn us.

G. The Kingdom Citizen: A Call to Decision - Matthew 7:13-27

- Christ sums up the Sermon on the Mount with a warning and a call to action.
1. Two Ways - Matthew 7:13-14
 - Christ warns His listeners to make sure that they enter the right way. One of the saddest things that Christ faced was the fact that after His departure the Pharisees and religious leaders of Israel would continue to lead the people into hypocrisy and ultimately hell. Paul's great concern in Acts 20 was that there would arise false prophets out of the midst of the Ephesian church who would lead people astray.
 - Christ illustrates this warning by pointing out that there are two paths marked "heaven" but only one gets there. Christ is not making a distinction between true faith and paganism, but between true faith and hypocrisy.
 - a. Two groups
 - First note that there are two groups in view here. The first group entered in at the strait gate, which refers to a very narrow and restrictive turnstile. Those who enter at that gate cannot take anything with them.
 - The true way is also narrow. There is not a whole lot of "do your own thing" on the narrow path. It is doubtful that anyone would say that Christianity is a broad way, instead they would say that it is very narrow. God has given specific commands and instructions that we must obey. One does not please God by "doing their own thing."
 - The second group is those who enter the broad way. On that road there is room for everything, and everyone. There are no restrictions. One can live as they want, and be just fine.
 - In context, Christ is contrasting His way, the way of the cross, with the way of the Pharisees. The Pharisees made sure that their brand of religion was attainable. They lowered God and raised themselves so that they could meet God "halfway."
 - b. Two destinations
 - These two paths have as their destination two places, one is heaven, the other is hell. Although both are marked "heaven", only the narrow way takes one there.
2. Two Trees - Matthew 7:15-20
 - Christ drives home His warning by pointing out that at the gate of the broad way are "wolves in sheeps clothing." This refers to false prophets who wear the wooly robe of a prophet and huckster their form

of religion to the unwary. Christ points out that instead of being prophets, they are actually wolves.

- It is interesting to note that Paul picks up on this description of the false prophet in Acts 20:29 where he warns the Ephesian elders of wolves who will enter into the church and not spare the flock.
- The way one discerns between a wolf and a prophet is by looking at the fruit. False prophets cannot bear good fruit, neither can good prophets bear evil fruit. All one needs to do is to look at the fruit of the life of the prophet to see whether they are genuine or not.
- Fruit is described in the New Testament as the Fruit of the Spirit which are the godly attitudes described in Galatians 5:22-23, the souls of those won to Christ as described in Proverbs 11:30, and righteous deeds as seen in John 15.
- Note that we are to discern between true and false prophets. If we misinterpret the first part of Matthew 7, then we are left with problems here.

3. Two Claims - Matthew 7:21-23

- Along with the two types of prophets are two claims. It is frightening to realize that there are men today who think they are doing God's work, when in fact they are doing the work of Satan.
- It is clear that Christ is referring to the Pharisees in this passage, as they are the ones who made the claim that they knew God. It is a shocking thing to live one's life believing one is on the right path, and they find oneself in hell.
- It is also important to note that ministry results do not necessarily imply that the one doing the ministry is a true prophet. We need to be very careful to hold a man up as a true prophet because of the results of his ministry when in fact his personal life is bankrupt.

4. Two Builders - Matthew 7:24-27

- Christ closes the Sermon on the Mount with a call to action.
- He states that those who hear His words and obey them are like a man who builds a house on the rock. When the storms of life hit, that house will stand because it is built on the rock of God's promises.
- On the other hand, those who do not listen to what Christ is saying are like those who build their house on the sand. When the storms of life blow, their house becomes rubble.
- Another possible way to interpret this verse is that Christ is referring to the storm of God's judgment. Those who build their life on God's promises will withstand His judgment, those that do not will suffer His wrath.

H. The Authority of the Preacher - Matthew 7:28-29

- The reaction of the crowd to Christ's teaching was one of astonishment. The Scribes and Pharisees of Christ's day taught by quoting other rabbis and teachers. The great commentaries on Jewish law, the Talmud and Mishna, were a compilation of the teachings of rabbis. Unlike them, Christ taught with authority.
- The reason Christ could teach with authority is that He was the authority. Being God, He knew exactly what God's righteous demands were, and was able to articulate them with clarity.