

The Sermon on The Mount

As one eminent theologian wrote, “The Sermon on the Mount is probably the best-known part of the teaching of Jesus, though arguably it is the least understood, and certainly it is the least obeyed.”

One might well ask why this is the case, when Christ’s words are so specific, but such is man’s resistance to God’s authority that the vast majority of Christians have chosen to believe that Christ’s clear words do not mean what they say, preferring instead to accept the less clear words of the Apostle Paul, which Peter declared were easily open to misinterpretation by the unwilling, which will cost them dear, 2 Peter 3:16, *‘as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.’*

The Sermon on The Mount reveals the behavior expected of us as Christians, by our Saviour. It speaks of expected humility, compassion, teachability, righteousness, mercy, sincerity, peacemaking, persecution, and our joy in being the example Christ requires, especially in our desire to honour God’s Commandments, Matthew 5:1-20. *‘Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.’* Revelation 22:14. Without that, we will have no right to the tree of life!

Of course, we are not under the Old Covenant now, but the New, Hebrews 10:16, *‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.’* In it, God’s Laws, as **magnified** or ‘filled to the full’ by Jesus Christ in the sermon on the mount, are written upon our hearts. Matthew 5:17, *‘Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.’* Isaiah 42:21, *‘The LORD was pleased, for his righteousness’ sake, to magnify his law and make it glorious.’* How would God do this? Ezekiel 36:27, *‘And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.’* *ESV.* Sadly, as we will see, today many believe that they have the Holy Spirit, who have not, because they have not repented, Acts 2:38, *‘And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’*

We see in Matthew 5:18 that God’s Laws will continue to exist until heaven and earth pass away. *‘For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled’.* So, it is no wonder that we find that, in God’s Kingdom, *all the world* will observe them, Isaiah 2:3, *‘...for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.’*

But we are told in Galatians 3:19 that Moses’ law was **added** because of transgressions (sins) until Christ came, and it was transmitted by angels through a mediator, Moses. *‘Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed [Christ] should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.’* However, we know that **God Himself** spoke the Ten Commandments from Sinai, and His own finger wrote them on the tablets of stone, not angels, while ‘transgressions’ in this verse proves the existence of God’s [moral] Laws *prior* to Moses. Exodus 20:1 *‘And God spoke all these words saying ...’* And Deuteronomy 9:10, *‘And the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words that the LORD had spoken with you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly.’*

That is why Galatians 3:17 explains that 430 years earlier, the laws which God had taught to Abraham would **not** be annulled by those which Moses added. *'This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void.'* *ESV*. That covenant obviously included Abraham's **belief** in and practice of God's Laws, which he kept, as Genesis 26:5 shows, *'because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.'*

So, we see that God's Commandments, Statutes and Laws existed long before Moses and we should not confuse them with the temporary and ceremonial laws, sacrifices, rituals and offerings which Moses introduced in the Old Covenant to point to Christ's coming, and which are now annulled.

Even in the earliest chapters of Genesis the Sabbath existed, Genesis 2:3, *'And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.'* Abel understood to bring a lamb for a sin offering as a token of faith in God's **redemptive grace**, but Cain's worship, *"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power [the teaching he had received] thereof"* (2 Timothy 3:5) was **unacceptable** to God. At the time of Noah God obviously expected His laws to be kept as best as man can, but man's rejection of them brought about the flood, Genesis 6:5, *'And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.'* God's 'clean and unclean' determined how many animals entered the ark, Genesis 7:2, *'Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate.'* And the Sabbath was made a **quite separate** and perpetual (Hebrew: always, eternal, everlasting) covenant in Exodus 31:16, *'Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.'* All these Laws and Statutes existed long before the Sinai covenant!

For well over a thousand years the Church understood and taught that men should keep the Ten Commandments. They became the basis of British law and were carried around the world by missionaries, but now the Christian Church has lost its way. Bishops and commentators have exhausted their ingenuity in attempts to explain away Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount. It has become a choice once again between the traditions of men or the words of Christ; a nebulous love with no absolutes, or the *real* love of the Commandments of God, the first four of which tell us *how* to love God, and the last six *how* to love our fellow man.

However, most of the Church has chosen the broad way as against the narrow, Matthew 7:13, *'Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat,'* and the evil fruits of that error are now what we see in society around us. Our choice as Christians is simply between obedience and disobedience, John 14:15, *'If ye love me, keep my commandments'*, said Jesus Christ, for the alternative becomes lawlessness, Matthew 7:23, *'And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.'* ('Iniquity', Greek 'anomia', Strongs 458, 'violation of law, or lawlessness'.)

God's word clearly tells us that to ignore Jesus Christ's words will prevent the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and our right to the tree of life. Acts 5:32, *'And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.'* Romans 2:13, *'For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.'* In the light of Jesus Christ's words, very many have been led into believing that they have the Holy Spirit when in reality they have been deceived, Revelation 12:9, *'And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.'*

In absorbing and applying this teaching, all of us need to consider how dangerous it is to accept Christ's words. As a result of our acceptance of His teaching, we will belong to that company who are called and chosen and **being judged now** as to our faithfulness, Revelation 17:14, *'These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.'* 1 Peter 4:17, *'For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?'* 1 Corinthians 11:32, *'But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.'* It therefore behoves us to ensure that what we know, and what we say, is also what we do.

Jesus Christ set the standard, pattern and example in the sermon on the mount, and will not accept compromise or hypocrisy from his Bride to be. We are His witnesses, because we obey Him. Like the Apostle Paul, when we find false doctrine in the Church, we cannot remain silent. We owe that to our brethren and our husband-to-be, even at the cost of rejection or loss of fellowship in the church.

If we hope to take part in that marriage ceremony on the Sea of Glass in Heaven, the aftermath of which is described in Revelation 14:1-5, we cannot afford to be **defiled** by continuing association with false churches (women – as pictured here) once we have recognized false doctrine. Only by repentance and faithful loyalty to our Espoused will we become part of the Bride of Christ, *'And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were **not defiled** with women; **for they are virgins**. These are they which **follow the Lamb** whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, [Greek 'bought from the men', i.e. from their false teaching] **being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb**. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.'*

This then, is the Sermon on The Mount, our pattern, which was provided by Jesus Christ for those who wish to become part of His Bride in the first resurrection. Let us take His words to heart and always remember the example which He set for us, 1 Peter 2:21, *'For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.'*

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