

## **The Teachings of Jesus**

### **Living A Life of Blessing**

#### **Matthew 5:1-12**

### **Introduction**

The teachings of Jesus were simple and yet profound, especially considering the times in which He lived. Jesus began his teaching ministry about 30 AD during a time of ruthless and often brutal Roman occupation of Palestine.

There were four major religious groups among the Jewish people during this time: the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, and the Zealots. Each group held a different viewpoint. The Pharisees were the Rabbinic teachers who required strict observance of the Mosaic Law and all the Jewish customs and rituals. The Sadducees were a priestly group of Levites in charge of the temple. They represented the aristocratic group of the Hasmonean High Priests whom Rome appointed to replace the original High Priestly lineage. The Essenes were a priestly order believed to be descendants of the "legitimate" high priestly lineage, which the Hasmoneans ousted. The Essenes awaited a Messiah that would establish a Kingdom on earth and free the Israelis from oppression. The Zealots were a group of militant Jews who wanted to throw off Roman rule and bring freedom to their homeland by force. They were the political activists of their day. Nazareth, located in Galilee, was a well-known center of Zealot activity.

The teachings of Jesus were a fresh new approach to the old established traditions. The Ten Commandments, given to Moses on Mount Sinai in the Old Testament Book of Exodus, were a series of "Thou shalt not's," describing the evils a person must avoid in daily life on earth.

The message of Jesus was one of humility, charity, and love. Instead of focusing on the outward signs, Jesus taught about the transformation of the inner person. The teachings of Jesus describe virtues that will lead to a life of blessing. He also teaches that divine love is the core motivation for the Christian.

All of the Beatitudes have an eschatological meaning; their promise of blessing is not for this world but for the next. These blessings comprise a central theme of Matthew's Gospel. The Kingdom so long awaited in the Old Testament is not of this world; it is the future of the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus offered a way of living that would result in eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

He taught that a much better life could be experienced in eternity than the very best life lived here on earth! He presents eight Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount to introduce us to this better life!

In Matthew Chapter 5, Jesus unveils a controversial new view of how a person should live. "And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated, His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

Blessed *are* those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. Blessed *are* the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. Blessed *are* the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed *are* the pure in heart, For they shall see God. Blessed *are* the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

(Matthew 5:1-12 NKJV)

So, seeing the multitudes, Jesus went up on a mount and prepared to teach His disciples. And when He was seated, His disciples came to Him. Jesus assumed the customary seat of authority as he prepared to teach the people.

## **I. Jesus Teaches From A Position of Authority**

The typical posture for teaching in that culture was for the teacher to sit and the hearers to stand. It was the accepted posture of all the rabbis in the synagogue schools. So when Jesus is seated and ready to teach, his disciples come and stand around him. But when Jesus speaks, it's like God himself is speaking (because he is!).

The Truth of heaven is being spoken by God himself - not an inspired human prophet like Samuel or Isaiah or John the Baptist. The difference between a life based upon human reason and a life based upon faith is simple – human reason is faulty because of sin, but a life built on faith rests upon a supernatural power backed by a supernatural God.

Logical reasoning may very well point us to the reality of God, but it doesn't cause us to experience God's love and community. Sadly, human logic often fails in trying times, while those with faith usually prevail.

The teachings of Jesus gave the people new insight regarding authority. Christ's teaching simply stated was: Be humble, treat others like you want to be treated, if compelled to go a mile, go the second mile, don't be angry with your brother, spend your time getting the mote out of your eye and stop judging others, love others as God loves you.

There are probably no three chapters of the Bible that reveal the perfect heart of God and the imperfect human heart with such impact as Matthew does. Living up to these standards seems impossible, yet we know the teaching is true.

After the resurrection, Jesus commissioned his disciples to continue his teachings, saying, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the

end of the age." Amen. (Matthew 28:19-20 NKJV)

Our faith does not overlook the power of Christ. As we learn to accept Christ's authority, we become empowered to prevail even through persecutions and trials. Jesus is our example. He demonstrated his power by overcoming infirmities and healing diseases. His power overcame death, hell, and the grave. All suffering, sorrow, and grief must surrender to the authority of Christ.

The power of God establishes the authority of Christ. Not only does Christ hold a position of authority, but He also proclaims God's Truth with authority.

## **II. Jesus' Teachings Are Proclaimed with Authority**

Some teachers are so boring to listen to; even if they did have something to say, you'd miss it because they already put you to sleep. When Jesus began teaching, people wanted to listen to what he had to say. I imagine Jesus spoke with energy, projecting His thoughts earnestly and sincerely. He spoke so freely and passionately that the multitudes crowded in to hear him.

Spurgeon wrote, "... (Jesus) spoke like a man in earnest; he enunciated clearly, and spake loudly. He lifted his voice like a trumpet, and published salvation far and wide, like a man with something to say which he desired his audience to hear and feel."

They heard a message on ethics as Jesus told them how to live. In the teachings of Jesus, we learn what His Kingdom is all about. Jesus presented a radically different agenda than the Nation of Israel expected from the Messiah. This great teaching tells us how we will live when Jesus is our Lord and Master.

None of the Jewish groups could agree on what the messianic Kingdom would be like. Some saw it as spiritual. Some saw it as shaking off the Roman yoke. But Jesus taught that peace was first to be achieved in the heart! Jesus taught that a person's inner attitude dictates their outward behavior and that their core beliefs influence their ethics and daily living. The basics of Jesus' ministry were built upon these teachings.

You might say the Sermon on the Mount was Jesus' "standard" sermon. It was the core of His itinerant message: a simple proclamation of how God expects us to live, in contrast to the common Jewish misunderstandings of that life. The teachings of Jesus were delivered over and over throughout his ministry.

Jesus continually trained the disciples in the message He wanted them to carry to others. It was the message He meant to be passed on through them. Matthew shows Jesus instructing his disciples in a message He knew would change lives forever. It was a message that had a significant impact on the early church. The early Christians constantly referred to it.

They were convinced of Christ's authority, heard Him proclaim God's Truth, and were captivated by His power.

### **III. His Followers Were Captivated by Authority**

America is definitely a "house divided." There is a strain in American society that rejects the very idea of authority. However, our Judeo-Christian system is based on authority.

There are no elections in the Kingdom of Heaven. If we are dissatisfied with God, we cannot vote him out of office. God's authority is absolute, unshakeable, and unchangeable. God's power is unlimited, and his authority is boundless. The Jews saw all human authority as deriving from God's authority.

In the Book of Genesis, God exercises his authority directly in the world through his actions and relationship with ordinary people like Adam, Noah, and Abraham. In the Book of Exodus, we see God exercising his authority through his prophets. In Deuteronomy Chapter 18, the people ask God not to speak to them directly anymore. "If I hear the voice of the Lord my God any more or ever again see this great fire, I will die."

The role of the prophet, the one who received the word of God for the Nation, was a crucial figure. It's why false prophets were considered to be so dangerous. Not only were prophets crucial to the community's religious life, but they were essential to the success of the Nation.

Their political leaders, Judges, and Kings received their authority because God chose them. God chose some leaders through his prophets. Other leaders were chosen by human means by election or by inheritance, but their authority was only legitimate if God endorsed it through his prophets. If leaders lost God's favor, they had little success in governing on human authority alone.

However, by Jesus' time, things had changed. The voice of prophecy had gone silent. God was still seen as acting in the world, but his voice was no longer heard. God's authority had taken up residence in the written scriptures, the Torah, or teaching, what we now call the Old Testament. Because the people no longer had prophets to guide them, they turned to the scribes and the teachers, the experts in the scriptures, for guidance in spiritual matters and daily. Living a Godly and righteous life was carried out through studying the Torah and keeping its commandments and regulations.

When we think of prophets, we think of prophetic speech inspired by God, predicting the future. However, most of the prophets were people of action, not just big talkers. Elijah and Elisha were miracle workers, raising the dead, causing ax heads to float, and calling down fire from heaven. The power of God was revealed not just in the Words of the Prophets but also in their deeds.

Many of the scribes and teachers were good and wise people. But most were not influential people. Their authority came from the scriptures, but they had little of this authority and power in themselves.

In the days of the prophets, the prophets were the point of the spear. God continued to act in the world, but the scribes and teachers watched from the sidelines. Compared with the Roman Emperor and the military and political leaders of the day, they all seemed small and powerless.

That makes Jesus an amazing leader to those synagogue worshippers in the little town of Capernaum. Jesus spoke not with the borrowed authority of scripture but with an authority even more significant than that of the prophets of old. Even when Jesus read the scriptures, it was as if they were being heard for the first time.

Jesus was not just interpreting and repeating the old words of God in the scriptures; he was giving a new teaching with the same authority as the scriptures. They did not expect a new teaching with authority because they did not expect any new teaching to come from God.

The people in the synagogue immediately realize that Jesus is someone special, although they do not fully understand who he is. The people must learn for themselves that Jesus is a prophet like Moses, one raised up from among the people to speak the words of God. Jesus was a prophet like Elijah and Elisha, able to heal, raise the dead, and command the forces of nature. But, as they will see, Jesus is much more than a prophet: He is the Son of the Living God. And they were captivated by his teachings, for he taught as one having authority!

## **Conclusion**

Christian authority comes from one source only, from the Truth. And that Truth is a person, Jesus Christ, the son of God. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh. His words and deeds of power are written down for us the Gospels. Yet we are not to be like the scribes and teachers of the law, only listening to the words of God in the writings of those long-dead prophets.

Our Truth is that Jesus is alive this very day, and through his gift of the Holy Spirit, he can bring the Gospel to life in your heart and His body, the Church. And Just as Jesus not only preached but healed and forgave, it is not just through good words that the Church shows it is the living Body of Christ, but through its ministry and mission of healing, mercy, and prayer.

When Jesus commissioned the Church, he said, "**Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**" Amen." (Matthew 28:19-20 NKJV)

This is what God expects from those who truly want to live a life of blessing.