



11. Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:29)

"The Sermon on the Mount" from *The Life of Christ* by Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-90)

The New Moses and the New Law:
 "For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."
 (7:29)

The Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:29)

Matthew's First Discourse

- After the Infancy Narrative (chs. 1–2), the Sermon on the Mount is **the next major Matthean addition** to the basic Marcan narrative
 - Ends Part 1: Proclamation of the Kingdom (3:1–7:29)
 - Some scholars question a historical sermon, proposing that Matthew collected teachings from throughout Jesus' ministry and assembled them here
 - A historical Sermon on the Mount is supported by the Book of Mormon's Sermon on the Temple
- **Many of the teachings here appear in different places in Luke's gospel**
 - Jesus may have repeated many of the same teachings at different times to different audiences
 - Matthew may have brought many of Jesus' teachings, perhaps given at different times and different occasions, together in one sermon
 - However, there is no reason to doubt that such a sermon occurred
- Opening Formula (5:1–2)
 - **Jesus' going up a mountain (reminiscent of Moses' ascending Sinai)**
 - **Jesus' sitting down to teach (a rabbinic posture)**; he then "opened his mouth and taught them, saying . . ."
- Concluding Formula (7:28–29)
 - **"when Jesus had ended these sayings" (a formula Matthew frequently uses to end one of his five blocks of discourse)**
 - **notes that the people were astonished "for he taught them as one having authority . . ."**

Traditional Site of the Sermon on the Mount



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11. Matthew 5–7 (Sermon on the Mount)

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Audience

- The **Disciples**, presumably **the Twelve** but maybe including others
 - “These are the words which Jesus taught **his disciples** that they should say unto **the people** . . .” (Matthew 7:1 JST; see also 6:1 and 7:4 JST)
 - This affects the application of some of the teaching
- The **multitudes** remained below
 - Jesus *may* have repeated some of the basic teaching to the crowds when he came down the mountain
 - *Or* the sermons could be two versions of the same sermon
 - Cf. The “**Sermon on the Plain**” (Luke 6:17–49)
- Compare to the “Sermon at the Temple” (3 Nephi 12:1–17:4)
 - [Instruction to the **Disciples 1**: Commission (11:18–28)]
 - Instruction to the **Multitude 1**: Requirements of the Christian Life (12:1–13:24)
 - Instruction to the **Disciples 2**: God Will Provide (13:25–34)
 - Instruction to the **Multitude 2**: Judgment and the Will of God (14:1–15:10)
 - Instruction to the **Disciples 3**: Christ and Israel (15:11–16:20)
 - Instruction to the **Multitude 3**: Ponder and Pray (17:1–4)

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Structure

*Our first extended example of the Master’s discourse, the Sermon on the Mount is both **ethical** and **eschatological**, teaching how disciples should live and giving promises and warnings about his final coming*

- **Opening Formula** (5:1–2)
- **The Kingdom of Heaven: The Beatitudes** (5:3–12)
- **Marks of the Disciple** (5:13–16)
- **The Fulfillment of the Law** (5:17–48)
 - **Old Law not Annulled** (5:21–20)
 - **6 Antitheses** (5:21–47)
 - **The Great Injunction: Be Ye Perfect** (5:48)
- **True Piety** (6:1–18; **proper actions**)
 - Almsgiving (6:1–4)
 - Prayer and forgiveness (6:5–15)
 - Fasting (6:16–18)
- **Orientation towards God** (6:19–34; **proper attitudes**)
- **Proper Conduct** (7:1–12; **more proper actions**)
- **Warnings** (7:13–27)
- **Concluding Formula** (7:28–29)



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11. Matthew 5–7 (Sermon on the Mount) (Structure)

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The Beatitudes (5:1–12)

9 Beatitudes, from the Latin title *beatus*: “happy” or “fortunate”

- Some see an **analogy to the Ten Commandments** (the “Decalogue,”) with the first beatitudes representing our **relationship to Deity** and the latter reflecting our **relationships with others**
 - *Others see the beatitudes as building upon one another until we are like Christ*
- **Poor (or broken) in spirit**
 - “... who come unto me” (3 Nephi 12:3)
- **Mourn**
- **Meek** (gentle < humble, powerless)
- **Hunger and thirst for righteousness**
 - “... with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 12:6)
- **Merciful**
- **Pure in heart**
- **Peacemakers**
 - Peace with God, peace with those around us, peace with nations, sharing the peace of Christ
 - Note how the ascending order of the beatitudes helps us be more effective peace makers
- **Persecuted for righteousness**
- **Persecuted for Christ’s sake**

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Marks of the Disciple (5:13–16)

- **“Ye are the salt of the earth”**
 - Salt as a preservative, as a “flavor enhancer”
 - Generally salt loses its flavor when it is *corrupted*
- **Light of the World parable with its more familiar application** (contra Mark)
 - Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matt 5:14–16)
 - Compare 3 Nephi 18:24—**Christ is the light we hold up!**

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Jesus' Authority Stressed

- “Verily I say unto you . . .”
 - **“Amen . . .”**: Authoritative introductory formula
 - Usually said at the end of a statement or prayer by others to indicate that they approve, agree, or recognize the foregoing as true . . . **Jesus says it at the beginning, establishing that what he says is true!**

- “For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” (7:29)
 - See 3 Nephi 15:4-5, Behold, I say unto you that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses. **Behold, I am he that gave the law**, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel . . .”

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Fulfilling the Law

- “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, **till all be fulfilled.**” (5:18)
 - Yod (smallest Hebrew letter) or Iota (smallest Greek letter)
 - stroke (Hebrew seraph)
- Fulfill (**plēroō**):
 - to perform, execute, accomplish
 - **to bring to an end, finish, complete** (a period, portion of time, a work, etc.)
 - **to fill the requirements of**, answer (a purpose), comply with (conditions)
 - **to fill completely, to make complete . . . i.e., to make deeper!**
- Meaning of fulfilling the law here?
 - **Types and shadows of Christ would soon be fulfilled**
 - Especially sacrificial symbolism
 - “Therefore those things which were of old time, which were under the law, in me are all fulfilled. . . . Behold, I say unto you that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses. . . . Behold, I do not destroy the prophets, for as many as have not been fulfilled in me, verily I say unto you, shall all be fulfilled. And because I said unto you that old things have passed away, I do not destroy that which hath been spoken concerning things which are to come.” (3 Nephi 12:46, 15:4, 7)
 - **Fulfilling the intent** (spirit vs. letter; principle vs. observance)
 - **Fulfilling with a higher standard** (lower speed limit example)

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Jesus and the Law of Moses

- Remember, the Law of Moses was **not** just about sacrifices, rituals, and seemingly picky rules!
 - **The main thrust of the law was loving God and loving others and living correctly (being at peace) with each**
- **The law included many eternal principles that existed before and continued in effect afterwards**
 - We tend to focus just on the ritualistic practices that ceased after the atonement
 - **Example:** The principle of sacrifice existed before (Adam to Moses) and continued afterwards (with a broken heart and a contrite spirit) afterwards, although the complicated sacrificial system of the law of Moses ended with Jesus' ultimate sacrifice (see 3 Nephi 9:19-20)
- **How Jesus fulfilled the law**
 - **With his sacrifice, certainly**
 - *Yet when the Sermon on the Mount was delivered, Jesus had not yet accomplished his atoning sacrifice (contrast with the Nephite Sermon at the Temple)*
 - **Also with his teachings**
 - He began to "fulfill" or complete the meaning of many important commandments **during this very sermon** by calling people to **live a higher standard** and **accomplish the intent of all divine law**
 - This is seen in the following pericopes, the so-called "Six Antitheses" (5:21–47)

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11. Matthew 5–7 (Sermon on the Mount)

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6 Antitheses (5:21–47)

- Dialectic (logical reasoning)
 - **thesis** (proposition: here, **the Mosaic Law**)
 - **antithesis** (counterproposition: here, **the law of Christ**)
 - **Synthesis** (logical conclusion arising from thesis and antithesis: *here no synthesis because Jesus' counterpropositions are authoritative and stand!*)
- **On Murder and Anger (5:21–26)**
 - Extends the Sixth Commandment to the feelings and motivations behind anger killing
 - "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, **Thou shalt not kill**; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That **whosoever is angry with his brother** <without a cause> **shall be in danger of the judgment**: and whosoever shall say to his brother, **Raca**, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, **Thou fool**, shall be in danger of hell fire." (Matt 5:21–22)
 - without a cause: the JST and 3 Nephi 12:22 omit this "escape clause"
- **On Adultery and Lust (5:27–30)**
 - Extends the Seventh Commandment to the feelings and motivations behind sexual sins
 - "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, **Thou shalt not commit adultery**: But I say unto you, That **whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart**." (Matt 5:27–28)

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6 Antitheses (cont.)

- **On Marriage and Divorce (5:31–32)**
 - A “hard saying” of Jesus about the sanctity of marriage
 - “It hath been said, **Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement**: But I say unto you, That **whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.**”
- **On False Witness and Swearing (5:33–37)**
- **On Resisting Evil (5:38–42)**
 - Rejected OT ideas of retribution and retaliation The old “**eye for eye, tooth for tooth**” law of retribution (Lev. 24:20) is replaced with **forgiveness and love**
- **On Enemies (5:43–45)**
 - **Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you**

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11. Matthew 5–7 (Sermon on the Mount)

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“Be Ye ‘Perfect’ . . .”

- **The Great Injunction: Be ye therefore perfect**, even as your Father which is in heaven” (5:48)
 - **“Be” in Greek is future tense**
 - Perhaps future imperative
 - Perhaps “predicative future”
 - **teleios**: Greek for “**complete, whole, mature, full-grown**”
 - For Aristotle, the *telos* or “end” for which something was meant is its purpose
 - Example of the acorn and the oak tree: **the full oak tree is the *telos* of the acorn**
- **Exposition: Even Christ, though “perfect” morally, is not perfect (i.e., mature and fully the measure of his creation) until after the resurrection (see 3 Nephi 12:48)**
 - **Jesus’ mortal ministry among the Jews**
 - **morally perfect, in the sense of completely flawless in choosing right over wrong, being sinless, etc.**
 - Still subject to death, pain; not yet glorified
 - **Jesus’ Nephite visitation**
 - **Morally perfect**
 - **Resurrected, a body like the Father’s**
 - **Spiritually complete, full-grown**
 - **Physical completeness or wholeness will come with the resurrection**
 - **We must seek to obtain the moral and spiritual stature of the Father and the Son**

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11. Matthew 5–7 (Sermon on the Mount)

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True Piety (6:1–18): Proper Actions

Ethics: doing the right thing, at the right time, for the right reason

- **True worship and righteous acts come from the heart**
 - Cf. the Beatitudes and being persecuted not only for righteousness but for Jesus—i.e., having him in our hearts as our example and our motivation
- **Almsgiving (6:1–4)**
- **Prayer and forgiveness (6:5–15)**
 - Emphasis on the omniscience of God, focus of prayer
 - *The Lord's Prayer (6:9–13) [more next slide]*
- **Fasting (6:16–18)**

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The Lord's Prayer (6:9–13)

"After this manner therefore pray ye: 'Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: [For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen].'"

- **Address**
 - Father image in antiquity and today
- **3 God Petitions** (sc. the Jewish tradition of blessing God, not just asking him to bless us . . .)
 - "Hallowed be thy name . . ."
 - "thy kingdom come . . ."
 - "thy will be done . . ."
- **4 human petitions**
 - Daily bread
 - Forgiveness
 - Intervention against temptation (see JST Matt. 6:14)
 - Deliverance from evil
- Closing **doxology** (an expression of "praise")
 - "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen" lacking in many early manuscripts

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Orientation towards God (6:19–34): Proper Attitudes

- **Wealth and True Treasure (6:19–24)**
 - “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: **But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: **For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**” (Matt 6:19–21)
- **Dependence upon God (6:25–34)**
 - “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! **No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.**” (Matt 6:22–24)
 - “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light” (6:22 NRSV)
 - **Mammon**, Aramaic for “wealth”
 - Radical renunciation of the world and its concerns

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Proper Conduct (7:1–12): More Proper Actions

- **Judging (7:1–5)**
 - “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”
 - “. . . Judge not *unrighteously*, that ye be not judged: *but judge righteous judgment*” (7:1–2 JST)
 - How does this counsel apply to priesthood leaders as opposed to average members? How *do* we apply it to ourselves?
- **Treatment of sacred things (7:6)**
 - “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”
 - *Some LDS commentators connect this with the “temple context” of the Sermon on the Mount*
- **Prayer with faith (7:7–12)**
 - “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened . . .”
 - “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” (7:12)
 - As we would have the Father do for us, we should do for others. . . A different spin on this verse in the context of its pericope

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11. Matthew 5–7 (Sermon on the Mount)

18

Final Eschatological Warnings (7:13–29)

- **Strait versus wide gate (7:13–14)**
 - *Strait* here means “narrow”
- **False teachers (7:15–20)**
 - False prophets
 - “by their fruits,” parabolic language
 - Eschatological language: “Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.”
- **False Disciples (7:21–23)**
- **The Wise vs. the Foolish Man (7:24–27)**
 - Eschatological warning: “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock . . .” (7:24-25)
 - *The rock is Jesus! (see Helaman 5:12)*
- **Jesus’ Authority (7:28–29)**