

The King's Constitution

Matthew 5:1-3

Introduction

The Sermon on the Mount has been called ‘the greatest sermon ever preached’ and the greatest speech ever delivered. Chapters 5-7 are one continuous sermon. The whole sermon was delivered on a mountain somewhere in the Galilee near Capernaum. That is why it is called ‘the Sermon on the Mount’. We will spend several weeks on these chapters. The truths of this sermon went off like bombs among the people and the religious community of Israel. This is the Constitution of the new King which forever changes the way humanity thinks about God. The first great article in the King's Constitution is ‘humility’.

The United States Constitution begins with the Bill of Rights. The first ten amendments insure our rights to to freedom of religion; speech, free association, petition, assembly etc. The Constitution of heaven begins with four attitudes:

- Our attitude toward ourselves (v.3);
- Our attitude toward our sins (vv.4-6);
- Our attitude toward the Lord (vv.7-9);
- Our attitude toward the world (vv.10-16).

As Citizens of Heaven our mandate from King Jesus is adopt an attitude of personal humility; we mourn over sin; we experience God's mercy and declare our independence from the world. The world praises pride not humility. The world endorses sin; not personal purity. The world is at war with God. We must expect that our King's enemies are our enemies.

One of the great enemies of our King is personal pride.

Our Lord's theme is true righteousness; pictured by Christ (5:1-48); true righteousness practiced by believers (6:1-7:12); and true righteousness proved—by tests (7:13-29); the test of self-denial; will I walk the narrow way (7:13-14); the test of fruit-bearing; what comes from my life (7:15-20); the test of obedience; am I both saying and doing (7:21-29). Since the theme is true righteousness Jesus will contrast true righteousness with the false righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees and religious leaders. Jesus will also describe the laws in His Kingdom; the spiritual principles that are to govern those interested in living in His Kingdom.

What is true righteousness? How good do you really have to be to go to heaven? The Religious leaders taught that being good consisted in the things you did (obeying the rules, observing the regulations). Righteousness consisted of praying, fasting, giving, etc. Jesus will focus on the condition of the heart. What do you believe in your mind about God, about yourself, about others? What you believe deeply in your heart will eventually manifest in your behavior and conduct. The King's Constitution begins with a Bill of Blessings.

There are many mistakes people make in reading this Sermon.

The King's Constitution

Matthew 5:1-3

1. Some will apply it to nations when it was meant for individuals.
2. Some will apply it to the unsaved when it was meant for believers.
3. Some will make it a Christian law to be obeyed; rather than a description of the Christian life lived in the power and working of the Holy Spirit (see Romans 8:1-4).

Some Bible teachers and scholars suggest that since Matthew is the “Kingdom Gospel” and this is the King’s Constitution in the Kingdom Age that it only applies to God’s people in the Kingdom Age. I think it is safe to say that if Israel had received her king; and if these principles would have been put into practice—but since Israel rejected her King—Matthew 5-7 must await the future Millennium for a full and final fulfillment. But the fact is—that this Sermon cannot be restricted to the future Millennium—since in the millennium there will be no thieves (6:19); or Pharisees (5:17-20); or false prophets (7:15). If Satan is bound in the Millennium why pray “Deliver us from the Evil One” (6:13). Or is there fasting in the Millennium (6:16-18); or why pray “Thy Kingdom come” (6:10) if we are already in the Kingdom?

The Jewish people were expecting an earthly kingdom—freedom from Rome—but Jesus will upset their thinking and their expectations by announcing the spiritual basis for His Kingdom. The principles will apply in every age. In fact most of the sermon content will be repeated elsewhere in the NT epistles to the Church. I am willing to concede that the Sermon on the Mount is a charter for the future kingdom— but we dare not say it has no meaning or value or application right now!

Are you a Christian? Are you a current follower of Jesus Christ? Do you claim citizenship in Christ’s Kingdom? Are you willing to accept the Constitution of the King? What if accepting that Constitution means you will be perceived as a misfit or a failure by this World’s standards? **These Blessings are your rights—these principles are what Jesus invites us to believe—and so govern our behavior in His Kingdom!**

The religious leaders had for the most part left people with the impression that righteousness was a matter of external or outward acts (see Matt. 23:23-28; Luke 11:37-41). Sin was mainly an outward act only (Luke 18:9-14; Mark 2:13-28). Righteousness was something you did in front of others so people would see how good you really are (Matt.23:2-12). Jesus comes along and says; no—righteousness is first and foremost a condition of the heart—something internal and then outward (Matt.5:1-16); sin is a matter that deeply involves the heart and not simply our actions (5:17-48); righteousness is something for God to see—and not simply for men to praise (6:1-18).

The King's Call For Happiness (vv.1-2)

Matthew 5:1–3 (NKJV) 1And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him.

2Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

In the ancient world it was the custom of Rabbi’s to stand when preaching and sit when teaching. Even now in colleges and universities, the main teaching position in a college is called “the chair of history or philosophy”. “So here we see Jesus seated, ready to give an authoritative, important, significant teaching” (see Jon Courson p. 86).

Will Durant said in every generation there are a few people who make a lasting impression. The person who stands head and shoulders in every generation is Jesus Christ. Even secular and ag-

The King's Constitution

Matthew 5:1-3

nostic historians concede the powerful and permanent impression made by Jesus. We judge people based on what they say and do and the permanent impression made on humanity.

Everything Jesus will say—in these next two chapters is intended in part to make people aware of their sinful condition, their total inability to keep the standard and force them into the arms of the Savior!

Millions of people have believed that if they can just obey the Sermon on the Mount then all the just requirements of God will be met. The problem of course is that the standard Jesus sets is higher than keeping the commands of Moses. Nobody was ever saved by keeping the Law (Gal. 2:16; 3:10-11); and the Sermon on the Mount far exceeds the Law of Moses in terms of righteousness and expectation. In the Law of Moses if a human being unlawfully took the life of another human being he or she was guilty of murder! In Jesus' mind a person who is angry with brother or sister without cause has committed the moral equivalence of murder. Lust is adultery in the heart.

The Sermon on the Mount doesn't mention the Holy Spirit or the blood of Christ—yet the basis for it is Calvary and the power to live it is by the Holy Spirit. Please bear in mind these are not simply commands to obey—but rather the character of a righteous person—the character that comes from a real walk with Jesus. Right from the start we run the risk of following into the Pharisaic trap of keeping the letter—and neglecting the spirit.

Article 1: Humility: The Right To Be Humble (v.3)

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The King begins with a call to happiness and then proceeds to a call for humility.

The section has been called for centuries “the beatitudes”. Beautiful attitudes. We find in these blessings a description of our Lord's character. It begins with the familiar phrase; “Blessed”.

Blessed: O How Happy

The word translated ‘blessed’ (*makarios*) was a word usually reserved for the gods. Homer used the word to describe a wealthy man; Plato a successful man; it was used in the Greek culture to mean the state of being of the gods who were unaffected by trial or tragedy or circumstances.

In our Constitution we are guaranteed the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Many people pursue happiness but find it illusive. In the Constitution of the Kingdom—happiness is a result of faith and obedience to the King. Real happiness, true happiness comes as a result of loving and obeying the Lord Jesus. Loving Jesus implies relationship and obeying Jesus implies respect. The Bible says “Happy are the people who's God is the Lord” (Psalm 33:12). David said; “Happy is the man whose sins are forgiven” (Psalm 32:1). Citizens of the Kingdom

The King's Constitution

Matthew 5:1-3

should be of all people the most happy. When Jesus uses the term “Blessed” he presents the possibility for true happiness. Have you ever heard someone say; “All I want is to be happy.” Or “All I want for you is that you are happy”. How could message like the Sermon on the Mount make anyone happy? Yet one of the reoccurring themes of this message is happiness. We are left with the impression that God really does care about our happiness and our well being. The Lord desires to save us from sin.

The happiness or blessedness that Jesus speaks of is the overwhelming joy—poured into the believer's heart—that overflows—because we share—in the salvation brought by our King.

The King's Constitution does not begin with an individual bill of rights but rather a declaration of dependence upon the Lord. The world says the first step in being happy is to watch out for yourself. Be assertive, be confident, feel good about yourself. In Christ's government you are commanded to be humble, compassionate, meek, merciful, righteous, pure in heart, peacemaker and persecuted for the very righteousness you seek to practice. In the world's eyes these are the very marks of what it means to be a loser (J. MacArthur p.133-134).

Poor In Spirit

The expression “poor” means destitute of provision. In the South they sometimes say; “dirt poor”. To be poor in spirit meant humble—to have a correct assessment of oneself. The Greek word is *ptochos*—*and was used to describe beggars who would shrink, cower or cringe*. In classic Greek it was the beggar with an outstretched empty hand. Romans 12:3; “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”

The poor in spirit are those who recognize their need, their absolute dependence for God in all things!

Jesus said, “I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matt.11:29).

The poor in spirit get their outlook from God. They are poor ‘inwardly’ having no ability in themselves to please God’ (Walvoord and Zuck p. 29). When you see the holy, righteous God in all His glory and majesty you get a real picture of how unholy and unrighteous you are. Isaiah the prophet leveled warning after warning to Israel in the first 5 chapters of his book. Woe unto you Israel, you have forsaken your, God, your religious rituals mean nothing to me.” Wash yourselves, make yourself clean, put away the evil of your doings, from before my eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow” (Isaiah 1:16-17). For several chapters Isaiah lists the warnings; and in chapter 6 Isaiah receives a vision of God; he sees God high and lifted up—and sees himself low—“woe is me. For I am undone. Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts” (Isaiah 6:5).

The King's Constitution

Matthew 5:1-3

A vision of God will reveal the truth about ourselves. We see Jesus. And then we see ourselves. When Peter realized Who Jesus was on the boat on the Sea of Galilee he said, "Depart from me. I am a sinful man." When John saw his friend Jesus glorified in heaven he fell down as if dead.

Humility begins when you see God and then see yourself, spiritually destitute and dependent on God. You realize you have nothing that can save yourself; pride is gone, self-assurance is gone, and you stand with nothing to offer God except an empty hand and an empty heart. It doesn't mean cowardly, or weak. The meaning is the exact opposite of positive self-regard or positive self esteem. The world wants you to praise yourself, to assert yourself.

You mean there is no place for self esteem? If esteem means 'correct assessment of self' yes there is a place. If esteem means unconditional commitment to the self—then **no there is no place for self-esteem**. Humility is not false humility. The Bible does not say or teach that human beings have no value. God made us. We are created in His image. God hates pride and arrogance and Isaiah wrote (66:2) "to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at my word."

Jesus loves the broken hearted, the crushed in spirit. When Jesus told the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-gatherer to "certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt." The Pharisee stood praying and giving thanks that he was not like these sinners—most certainly like the tax-gatherer. It would be like a doctor or lawyer at Church standing next to the IRS agent praising God that they are involved in noble careers but the IRS is committed to exploitation and evil.

Jesus puts this article first for good reason. Humility precedes all the other characteristics and attitudes. John Chrysostom said, "Humility is the mother, root, nurse, foundation, and center of all other virtues."

Marian Anderson, the black American singer (contralto) who deserved and won worldwide acclaim as a concert soloist, didn't simply grow great; she grew great simply. In spite of her fame, she remained the same gracious, approachable lady; never one to put on airs she was the model of humility. A reporter while interviewing Miss Anderson, asked her to name the greatest moment in her life. The choice seemed difficult to others in the room that day, because she had so many big moments; for example:

The night Conductor Arturo Toscanini announced; "A voice like hers comes once in a century."

In 1955 she became the first black to sing with the Metropolitan Opera Company of New York.

In the following year in her autobiography; "My Lord, What a Morning" was published, a best-seller.

In 1958 she was a United States delegate to the United Nations. On several occasions throughout her illustrative career, she received medals from various countries around the world.

The King's Constitution

Matthew 5:1-3

There was that memorable time she gave a private concert at the White House for the Roosevelt's and the King and Queen of England.

Her hometown Philadelphia had on one occasion awarded her the \$10,000 Bok Award as the person who had done the most for the city. In 1960 she sang at Kennedy's Presidential inaugural. In 1963 she was awarded the coveted Presidential Medal of Freedom.

There was that Easter Sunday in Washington DC when she stood beneath the Lincoln statue and sang for a crowd of 75,000, which included Cabinet members, the Supreme Court justices, and most members of Congress.

Which one of those big moments would she chose? None of them. Miss Anderson quietly told the reporter that the greatest moment in her life was the day she went home and told her mother she wouldn't have to take in washing other people's laundry ever again!

The Kingdom of Heaven

The expression "Kingdom of Heaven" appears only in Matthew's Gospel. This has generated volumes of debate. How is the kingdom of heaven different from the kingdom of God? One explanation offered is that Matthew's Gospel is presented to the Jewish people—who out of respect are reluctant to name or pronounce the name of God or use the expression God.

In the ancient world people had a more personal and dramatic understanding of kings and kingdoms. The king or sovereign held absolute power over the subjects in that kingdom. But kings also had responsibilities towards their subjects. The King was expected to provide;

Protection From Enemies In the Territories controlled by the King.

Provision for Subjects.

Secure Order—in the sense of peace—the peaceful or lawful resolution of conflict.

Represent the deity (in the Old Testament the King stood for God representing God's authority to the people.

The Kingdom of Heaven is the place where God rules. There is a mystery associated with this Kingdom. The Kingdom is in at least one sense a present experience (Luke 11:20; and 17:21); when Jesus spoke or taught or performed miracles the Kingdom was present. But the New Testament writers also tell us that the Kingdom is future. The fullness of the Kingdom awaits the return of our Savior as the rightful king. Some theologians use the expression "already—and not yet". There is a sense in which the kingdom of heaven and the promises of that kingdom are already a part of the church and the believer's experience. But there is also a sense in which that power and that influence remains to be experienced. The fullness of the Kingdom will be realized when Jesus shows up.

Conclusion

For the Christian; the way up—is the way down. Later Jesus says; "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matt.23:12).

The King's Constitution

Matthew 5:1-3

The poor in spirit are those who know only God can save them; only God can protect them. The proud in spirit are those who hold out hope that God will accept or approve or applaud their lives apart from Christ.

Are you trying to gain entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven on your own?

If pride turned angels into demons than humility no doubt can turn demons into angels. No wonder Jonathan Edwards said, "Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil's reach as humility."

William Barclay summed it up this way; "Christian humility is based on the sight of self, the vision of Christ, and the realization of God."

No wonder they that really know God must embrace humility—they cannot be proud.

Samuel Rutherford wrote; "Humility is a strange flower; it grows best in winter weather, and under storms of affliction." He also said, "Our pride must have winter weather to rot it."

Humility is a strange thing. The minute you think you've got it, you've lost it. A man famously introduced J. Hudson Taylor founder of the China Inland Mission. The introduction was filled with flattery. When Taylor came to the pulpit he quietly said, "Dear friends, I am a little servant of an illustrious Master." The late A.W. Tower was once presented to a congregation in a similar manner, and his response was, "All I can say is, dear God, forgive him for what he said—and forgive me for enjoying it so much."