

## **SERMON ON THE MOUNT** **(For the kingdom of ISRAEL or the kingdom of HEAVEN?)**

A bit of confusion exists in some circles as to the teaching and application of the Sermon on the Mount by the Lord, as recorded in Matt. 5-7. We once heard the director of one of our “schools of preaching” **publicly** saying that Jesus was merely “correcting the thinking” of the erroneous teaching of the “scribes and Pharisees”, who had misled all the Jews through the years. Actually, the scribes usually taught correctly, for Jesus once said that the people **should** listen to the scribes, for they taught correctly, but their example was poor. He said, *“The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do: but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not”* (Matt. 23:2-3). When it came right down to it, their **teaching** was correct, but their example was bad.

Remember, Jesus made His appearance on earth at the very END of Judaism. In view of this truth, we need to ask two questions. **FIRST, why would Jesus come to earth and preach a great sermon to merely correct the thinking of the scribes who had misled the people for 1500 years? SECOND, why would God have let His people believe and practice errors and wait till just before the end of that era to let them know they did not have a correct understanding of His will to follow?** They would have such a little time to start obeying Moses’ law, from the time the sermon began until it ended at the cross. Yet, some seem to think this is what Jesus was doing.

We are told in the scripture that *“The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it”* (Luke 16:16). When John came preaching, he did NOT preach the law of Moses, but he preached that the *“kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Matt. 3:1-2). Then, when Jesus had been baptized and tempted, HE *“began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Matt. 4:17). In spite of these passages, some **still** say that Jesus was preaching a sermon on correcting the errors of the scribes in Matthew 5-7. Jesus was not preaching the kingdom of Old Israel to a bunch of misled Jews, but to His “disciples” (Matt. 5:1), those already following Him. He had already selected these disciples, and began to tell them more about the teachings **of** that coming kingdom of God or heaven.

IN that sermon, He never **ONCE** even referred to the OLD kingdom except to say that those in the “coming” kingdom would have citizens whose conduct would be righteous which would EXCEED the conduct of scribes and Pharisees in their bad example. He refers to the coming kingdom two times in 5:19, and once in verse 20. He immediately starts quoting FROM the Old Testament, and does so some six times in chapter 5. He does so to make a **contrast** between some of the points of Judaism under Moses’ and what He would teach on the same subject. Each time after quoting directly from what Moses wrote, He used the word “But”, showing what HE was going to say would be somewhat different, or contrasted with the “righteousness” of those under the law, with what those in the kingdom of heaven would demonstrate.

In each of the six quotations from Moses, Jesus quotes the **exact** wording of the law of Moses. That wording was ALL the Jews had from God on the subject, and that was ALL that God held them accountable to do. Each time Jesus would say, “But I SAY” unto you. He

never says what Moses wrote was in error, or wrong, but that what HE (Jesus) was about to say would be somewhat different, in that He would get right to the heart of those for those living in the kingdom of heaven, and that their “righteousness” would “exceed” the conduct of the scribes and Pharisees.

To be consistent, whatever Jesus was trying to do with **one** of the quotations, would apply to **all** of the quotations. Some might argue that Jesus indeed WAS trying to explain the law of Moses in the first quotation, consistency would demand that He was doing it to all of them. Yet, we clearly know that the matter discussed in the following paragraph is a contrast between what Moses wrote and what He was about to say.

One quick example of the differences between the keepers of Moses’ law and Jesus’ law, is in what He said about the writing of divorcement. In Matt. 5:31, He referred to that in saying, “*It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.*” Now, **this** was not some “erroneous interpretation” the Scribes said, but this was the exact wording of what GOD said through Moses in Deut. 24:1. Jesus did not say that this statement was incorrect, and that He was going to give the “correct” meaning of the passage. True, the Jews had different philosophies of what it meant, but Jesus never tried to correct what Moses said. Jesus then states, “But I say...”, and goes on to reveal that “fornication” would be the only cause for a divorce that God would accept in the kingdom age, that would permit a marriage to another, while under the law of Moses that was not the case. Moses said nothing about “fornication” being that exception, for Moses only spoke of a bill of divorcement. Matthew 19 clearly shows a contrast between what Moses taught, and what Jesus was then teaching that would replace what Moses allowed.

Could anyone read Deut. 24:1 and conclude that it actually meant “fornication” would be the only permissible cause for divorce and remarriage, and that just now that meaning is being understood through the words of Jesus? Hardly! Dan Billingsly used to “argue” that the Hebrew word for “uncleanness”, being ervah, actually meant “fornication” but his opponents pointed out that the word is used almost 50 times in the Old Testament, and is used to refer to Noah’s nakedness (Gen. 9:22), the barrenness of the land (Gen. 42:9) and the literal nakedness of a man’s wife belonging to only to the husband (Lev. 18:7-11). Billingsly could not gainsay this point.

Jesus’ “sayings” or teaching actually began in Matt. 5:3, and did not end until Matt. 7:27. His message was different than the law as given by the scribes (Matt. 7:29), and His teaching is the “authoritative” teaching from God. At the very END of these “sayings”, in His final words of the sermon, He **again** speaks of the “kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 7:21). He said that **ONLY** those who do the Father’s will can enter into it. He gives the example of some who will claim to have followed HIM (Jesus—not MOSES) but could not enter heaven because they had not kept **His** (Jesus’) “sayings”—from beginning to end. Thus, the Lord says that **ONLY** those who do HIS “sayings” (from Matt. 5:3 to the end of the chapter can enter in). Now, if the sermon on the mount is a correction of the teaching Moses gave, then those who enter heaven would **have to be the Jews who followed Jesus’ “correction” of the passages Moses originally gave. WHO CAN BELIEVE IT??** Yet, some DO apparently believe such, to be consistent.

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