

lr-nt-08
February 18-24
“Blessed Are Ye”
Matthew 5; Luke 6
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(Here is inspirational background into the fuller importance of the Sermon on the Mount)

I. Jesus Christ had come to establish a New Israel. The Sermon on the Mount was *a vital STEP* in a series of significant events relating to that truth.

A. This pattern of events followed the same pattern as the establishment of Old Israel.

B. Actually that pattern had **pointed to Him** and His Kingdom, now to be fulfilled.

C. This pattern is as follows:

1. He, the *Greater than Moses*, was called to **come up out of Egypt**.

2. Next, He **passed in and out of deep waters signifying death** (through His baptism).

a. His baptism in Jordan was as Israel passing through the Sea (Paul called Israel's crossing through the Sea a “baptism” 1 Cor. 10:1-4).

3. There the Holy Ghost descended on Him (**as Israel had been blessed with a fire to lead them and a cloud to comfort them**) (1 Cor. 10:1-4).

4. He went into the wilderness to suffer trials and temptations.

a. He overcame all temptations there, unlike Israel, who succumbed in their wilderness temptations.

5. **Now He leads His people to a Mountain to make Covenants.**

II. The Sermon on the Mount was actually **Jesus covenanting with His New Israel, as He as Jehovah had previously covenanted with former Israel at Mount Sinai**

A. Thus everything is stated in terms of a covenant: “If you will do this, I will do that.”

1. If you are poor in spirit – [I will lead you into] the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. If you are meek -- [I shall let you] inherit the earth.

3. If you hunger and thirst for righteousness – [I will fill you with righteousness].

4. If you are merciful – [I will give you] mercy.

5. If you are reviled and persecuted for my sake – [I will greatly reward you]. Etc.

B. We should remember the Old Testament is actually “The Old Covenant” and the New Testament is actually “The New Covenant.” Here He is first offering that Covenant.

III. Further, He actually teaches He did not come to destroy the old Law given at Mount Sinai, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17-18).

A. That is, most of the observances of the Mosaic Law taught of His ministry: the sacrificial offerings taught of His atonement, crucifixion and resurrection. Most of the Law in some way taught of Him.

B. The Law was not all fulfilled at His first coming, but “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, until all be fulfilled” (v. 18).

IV. The Law which Jesus now gives on this Mountain is **a higher Law than that of Sinai.**

A. Since the Jews knew the old Law came from God, Jesus' statements are very bold, putting Himself above Moses, showing He is truly God Himself.

B. In giving His new Law, Jesus made reference to the Old, but then **replaces it with something far more enlightened.**

1. Ye have heard ... Thou shalt not kill. **But I say...** Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgments (v. 21-26). (See JST version).

2. Ye have heard... Thou shalt not commit adultery. **But I say...**whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery... in his heart (v. 27-30).

3. Ye have heard... Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. **But I say** unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you (v. 43-47).

V. Furthermore, in offering these covenants on this Mountain, **Jesus is firmly establishing He has come as Israel's Bridegroom. And He is re-offering a betrothal to Israel.**

A. Generally Israel understood the Law given at Sinai was as a covenant between Jehovah and themselves.

B. They knew the Lord likened it to a betrothal between a bridegroom and His bride.

C. The Old Testament is full of references to this covenant, and Jehovah as Bridegroom.

D. The Lord through His Old Testament prophets repeatedly emphasized that when Israel worshipped other beings, they were thus as adulterers.

E. When Jesus came, He and John the Baptist bore clear witness that He was Israel's Bridegroom (Matthew 9:15; John 3:29).

1. "The friend of the bridegroom rejoiceth ...because of the bridegroom's voice."

VI. Jesus also challenges man with a true view of "Perfection."

A. Many believe that for men to consider they can become like God is blasphemous.

B. Here Jesus says that perfection like God **is not only possible, but commanded!**

(Though admittedly it will not be accomplished on our own nor in this mortal life).

C. Our prophets confirm this:

"I believe the Lord meant just what he said: that we should be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. That will not come all at once, but line upon line, and precept upon precept, example upon example, and even then not as long as we live in this mortal life, for we will have to go even beyond the grave before we reach that perfection and be like God."

"But here we lay the foundation. Here is where we are taught these simple truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ, in this probationary state, to prepare us for that perfection. It is our duty to be better today than we were yesterday, and better tomorrow than we are today....If we are keeping the commandments of the Lord, we are on that road to perfection." (Joseph Fielding Smith).

D. Jesus also shows what perfection really is.

1. We tend to think of perfection as "looking perfect" and "doing things perfectly."

2. Jesus is **teaching perfection is really tied to how we treat other people, especially those who would be our enemies** (v. 38-48).

3. And as with all other commandments, we know we can only achieve this ultimate goal with the help of Jesus the Christ.
 - a. An excellent article on how the Lord helps us overcome our weaknesses in our strivings for perfection is in the February 2011 *Ensign*, p. 13, ‘His Grace is Sufficient’ by Kimberlee B. Garrett.

VII. One LDS scholar shows that when Jesus visited the Nephites after His resurrection and gave to them the same Sermon, it was deliberately in a temple setting, and was in every way also a covenant making event.

- A. See John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount*.

VIII. When the Lord established *ancient Israel*, He led them through certain steps pointing to what Jesus would do in establishing a New Israel **in the Meridian of Time**.

- A. And again, the **culminating feature was a covenant making in a “Mountain.”**
- B. The Lord repeated this pattern in creating His Latter-day Israel.
 1. Thus Joseph Smith led the Saints into the “then wilderness of Ohio”, where the great endeavor was to build the Kirtland Temple
 - a. The Temple is the “Mountain of the Lord’s House.”
 2. In a fuller repeat of the pattern, Brigham Young led the Saints across a great river, into the wilderness, to the establishment of a temple in the top of the Mountains.
- C. We should feel deep gratitude that the Lord has given us in our dispensation the same opportunity to make covenants with Him as He did to ancient Israel at Mount Sinai and to His New Israel in the Meridian of Time at both Galilee and Bountiful.
- D. **For this same marvelous experience is made available to us as we go to His temple and there enter into our own personal covenants with our Eternal Bridegroom.**
- E. The Sermon on the Mount was the first offering of the New Covenant by Christ.
- F. Now, in the Latter-days in Holy Temples, He offers us The New and Everlasting Covenant.

IX. The Sermon on the Mount in and of itself is a masterpiece of truth and beauty!

- A. So profound and beautiful are its teachings, the “Sermon on the Mount” appears in textbooks of “Masterpieces of Literature.”
- B. Many people from other cultures have become Christian because they recognize the truth and beauty of these teachings.
- C. Even if not becoming Christian, most people come to understand these teachings are the true way to love, joy and peace.
- D. Major leaders in the world have been guided by these principles in seeking to overcome injustices for their people, through their own sufferings.
- E. Therefore, these teachings of Jesus have had a profound effect upon history, both of the world and in the Churches.

But the greatest impact was as the offering of His New Covenant.