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# Rightly Dividing the Gospels

—Installment 41—

The Sermon on the Mount

—Part 15—

Two Ways

False Prophets and False Disciples

Two Foundations

Reaction to the Sermon

~ 28 A.D., after Passover

Near Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee

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Albuquerque 06 January 2013

## I. Brief Review of Overview of the Sermon on the Mount

- A. We are treating Matthew's Sermon on the Mount conjointly with Luke's Sermon on the Plain
- B. Audience
  - 1. His disciples, whom he particularly addressed in a public setting among multitudes
    - a. That is, those whom he was preparing to receive and enter his kingdom
- C. Theme
  - 1. The kingdom and its distinctive qualities

## II. Covered so far

- A. Beatitudes ..... (Matt. 5: 3–12; Luke 6: 20–26)
- B. Salt and light..... (Matt. 5: 13–16)
- C. Relationship of Jesus' Doctrine to OT and Traditional Doctrine..... (Matt. 5: 17–48; Luke 6: 27–36)
  - 1. We considered the meaning of Jesus' declared purpose to fulfill the OT
    - a. Fulfillment of the OT means satisfying its objective—leading to Christ and the NT
  - 2. We showed that he meant for his commands in this sermon to be applied to Christians ..... vv. 19–20
    - a. These commandments pertain to the subjects of the kingdom, i.e. Christians
    - b. Those given in this instructional phase could be obeyed without abrogating the OT law
- D. The Distinctive Doctrines of Jesus ..... Matt. 5: 21–48
  - 1. In this section we saw Jesus modify existing OT doctrines in characteristic ways
    - a. Expanding their scope by spiritual application
    - b. Restricting their permissions in light of underlying spiritual principles

- c. These modifications make NT law considerably higher than OT law

### III. General Doctrines (covered)

- A. In this section Jesus presents a series of topical NT doctrines without drawing any particular contrast to the OT. Unlike the six commands of the previous section, Jesus' purpose here is NOT to modify the OT commands
  - 1. We see that he carries the OT commands intact into the NT, but with a new characteristic focus akin to that he brought to those commands he did modify
    - a. Interested in the spiritual roots (motive and manner) underpinning the acts
- B. Simplicity and Purity in Service..... Matt. 6: 1–18
  - 1. Almsgiving, prayer, and fasting
    - a. Spiritual character of the acts
    - b. God's reward vs. praise of men
    - c. Problematic prayer
  - 2. The Model Prayer
- C. Single-Minded Service ..... Matt. 6: 19–34
  - 1. Lay not up treasures on earth, but in heaven
    - a. The heart follows the treasure
  - 2. Anxiety
    - a. Take no thought (KJV), do not be anxious (NAS), do not worry (NIV)
    - b. Your Heavenly Father knows
    - c. Seek ye first the kingdom and all these things shall be added unto you
- D. Judgment ..... Matt. 7: 1–6; Luke 6: 37–42
  - 1. "Judge not, that ye be not judged"
    - a. We know from the teaching of Jesus and his apostles that the certain good kinds of judgment are approved and required:
      - i. The prohibition is against bad (proud, censorious, ungodly) judgment
- E. Ask, Seek and Knock ..... Matt. 7: 7–11
  - 1. Further instruction concerning *prayer*, moving the supplicant through a logical and effective progression of faithful action
    - a. All God's children who pray aright may be sure of being heard; and they further may be sure of satisfaction, provided their prayers are according to God's will
- F. The Golden Rule ..... Matt. 7: 12; Luke 6: 31
  - 1. In the hierarchy of God's law, it ranks second only to the Great Commandment (OT and NT alike)
  - 2. The Golden Rule is a different, more practical, form of the Second Commandment
    - a. The Rule captures in a few words the underlying and governing principle of all morality
    - b. If you will obey this one Rule, you will need little additional effort satisfy all God's law

#### IV. General Doctrines, concluded

##### A. Two Ways..... Matt. 7: 13–14

1. Jesus' command is simple but enigmatic: Enter in
  - a. Enter into what?
  - b. He speaks of city gates, those portals in the walls surrounding a city through which run the ways (roads) in and out
    - i. One a wide gate, spanning a broad way
    - ii. The other a narrow gate, spanning a strait way
  - c. But his meaning is not literal; he is not telling his disciples to enter a literal city
    - i. This figurative meaning is revealed in the destinations he names
      - (i) The wide gate and broad way lead to destruction
      - (ii) The narrow gate and the strait way lead to life
  - d. In the context of this sermon, whose theme is the Kingdom, we may rightly understand his command as "Enter the Kingdom"
    - i. Entry into the kingdom is tantamount to entry into life
2. The broad gate
  - a. The way to destruction (Hell) is simple to find and easy to follow
  - b. It is not rigorous or demanding
  - c. But like all roads, it leads surely to its destination
    - i. It feels free and accommodating, but its end is slavery and death
    - ii. Such a path is called a *trap*
      - (i) It works like a corral, where livestock are driven from wide pastures through narrowing fences into confining pens
        1. Or a mouse trap or a spider's web
  - d. "Many" — most people — enter there
    - i. They feel free on the way until the trap has shut upon them
3. The narrow gate
  - a. The way to life (Heaven) is hard to find and difficult to follow
  - b. *Strait* means narrow and confining — strict
    - i. Not *straight* — without curves
    - ii. But *strait* — as of a seaway barely wide enough to allow passage of a ship
  - c. This way is rigorous and demanding
    - i. It doesn't feel free, but it leads to real freedom and life
    - ii. This way might be called an *escape*
    - iii. It works like a mythical hidden city (e.g. Shangri-La), where an obscure and strictly guarded entry leads to a glorious open realm

- (i) Or like a tunnel under the walls of a prison
  - d. “Few” enter there
    - i. They feel restricted on the way but follow on in hope of an unseen glory
  - 4. The Bifurcation of Mankind
    - a. With this teaching, Jesus introduces one of the great themes of the gospel: the bifurcation (division into two parts) of mankind
      - i. Mankind is sorted into two parts by means of the kingdom
        - (i) The few who enter it, and follow unto life
        - (ii) The many who do not, and follow unto death
      - ii. This great theme is found throughout the Bible, but it is powerfully different now than under the OT
        - (i) In the OT, the division cleaved along lines of ancestry
        - (ii) Now it is a division of choice, animated by the Lord’s universal command: Enter into life
      - iii. The great bifurcation is taught in many ways, using literal and figurative language
        - (i) Literal
          - 1. Heaven and Hell
          - 2. Saved and lost
          - 3. Life and death
        - (ii) Figurative
          - 1. Sheep and goats
          - 2. Wheat and tares
          - 3. Right hand and left hand
          - 4. Light and darkness
          - 5. Noah’s ark (aboard and not aboard)
          - 6. Narrow way and broad way
          - 7. Rock and sand
      - iv. The common quality of all these figures is the number two
        - (i) Despite widespread imagination to the contrary, no third or fourth ways exist
        - (ii) Every way except the Way of Life will prove in time to be a tributary to the Way of Death
      - v. “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” .....  
 ..... John 14: 6
        - (i) No man enters a kingdom without becoming subject to its king
5. A note about grace
  - a. Our task is to enter and follow the way that leads to life, not arrive at its end

- b. We don't have to become flawless Christians or arrive at some predetermined degree of development
  - c. Jesus will carry us through to the end, provided simply that we are on the Way of Life
  - d. Falling down on the Way of Life isn't the end of the Way
  - e. *Apostasy* refers to the deliberate abandonment of the Way of Life, choosing to follow the Way of Death instead
- B. False Prophets and False Disciples.....Matt. 7: 15–23; Luke 6: 43–45
- 1. A *prophet* is one who sees the obscure
    - a. The subject — the prophecy — may be obscure because it lies in the future, or it might be something in the past or present that lies unnoticed or misunderstood
  - 2. In this context, it refers to one who claims to know the way to life, which is hard to find
    - a. In the pulpit or in private study with others, we function as prophets; but true or false?
    - b. A true prophet actually leads his followers to life
    - c. A false prophet claims to lead his followers to life, but actually leads them to destruction
  - 3. Beware them
    - a. The scribes and Pharisees were false prophets..... Matt. 23: 13
    - b. Many false Christs will come..... Matt. 24: 4–5, 23–25
    - c. Even among the elders of the Church..... Acts 20: 28–31
  - 4. Wolves in sheep's clothing
    - a. By this metaphor, Jesus says the predatory false prophet often disguises himself in mild manners, approximating those of the Lamb of God
    - b. In many cases, the disguise fools even the wolf himself, who believes himself to be a true prophet
  - 5. By their fruits ye shall know them
    - a. As with trees, so people are known by their fruits — the manifest results of their labors
      - i. The heart itself is obscure, but not the speech and actions which flow from its abundance
      - ii. Do we make Pharisees or true Christians?..... Matt. 23: 15
    - b. Some wisdom is needed in the application of this test
      - i. A productive fruit tree will yield some specimens of poor fruit
        - (i) But not so much as to provoke the gardener to cut it down
      - ii. And not all righteous labor yields fruit..... Parable of Soils, Matt. 13
      - iii. An unproductive tree, or one that yields mainly bad fruit, will be burned ..... Luke 13: 7
      - iv. Though we don't do the burning ourselves, we are commanded to beware
        - (i) Mark and avoid.....Rom. 16: 17–18
  - 6. "Lord, Lord"
    - a. This expression betokens the supplication of prayer
    - b. But not all who use it are true disciples

- i. Prayer alone does not save
      - (i) Prayer, like faith, must be true and obedient to be effective (“Ask, seek, knock”)
      - (ii) The “Sinners’ Prayer” is not the way to life
    - ii. Prayer is greatly to be encouraged among the saved, but it is not meritorious service as so many believe
      - (i) The Pharisees were excessively devoted to prayer
  - c. Many people, then and now, labor to please God in prayer while neglecting to obey him
    - i. They may even do mighty works in his name
    - ii. But lacking true works of obedience, such disciples are disowned by Jesus
    - iii. Despite their lamb-like manners and mighty works, they are actually “workers of iniquity”
      - (i) Many works honored among men as religious actually undermine true religion
  - d. These false prophets and false disciples are “many”
    - i. They are a sizable portion of the “many” on the Way of Death
    - ii. This warning should make us have great care as both teachers and disciples
- C. Two Foundations .....Matt. 7: 24–27; Luke 6: 46–49
  - 1. This concluding paragraph emphasizes the Christian character of the Sermon on the Mount
    - a. Its value is for those who choose the Rock — Jesus himself — as their foundation
  - 2. Why call ye me, “Lord Lord”
    - a. Jesus reiterates that prayer without obedience is worthless
    - b. Why give me the right title but withhold the attendant service? ..... Mal. 1: 6
  - 3. The wise man builds his house on the rock
    - a. For this he must dig deep
      - i. The Way of Life is obscure and hard to find; it is not superficial like the sand
    - b. But he weathers the storms of life by the strength of the firm foundation
  - 4. The foolish man builds his house on the sand, without foundation
    - a. This is much easier
      - i. The Way of Death is broad and easy
    - b. But he is destroyed by the storms of life, lacking foundation
  - 5. There is no rock but Christ
    - a. All other foundations are sand
  - 6. A note about grace
    - a. Our task is to found ourselves on Jesus
    - b. We need not build a flawless house
    - c. We may take damage in the storms
    - d. But Jesus will provide the strength to keep us standing

**V. Reaction to the Sermon ..... Matt. 7: 28–29****A. The multitudes were astonished**

1. The reaction of the disciples is not recorded; presumably, they were more familiar with the authority of Jesus

**B. He taught them as one having authority ..... Mark 1: 22**

1. The scribes to which they were accustomed spoke always in deference to the authority of Moses, their lawgiver
2. Jesus is not subservient to Moses, and he boldly proclaimed his own law by his own authority
3. We have marveled at the God-like standards of behavior Jesus has set forth; how much more astonishing must it have been to hear them spoken in his own voice

**VI. The Final Separation of the Kingdoms**

- A. <sup>10</sup>And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. <sup>11</sup>And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. <sup>12</sup>And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. <sup>13</sup>And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. <sup>14</sup>And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. <sup>15</sup>And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

<sup>1</sup>And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. <sup>2</sup>And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. <sup>4</sup>And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. <sup>5</sup>And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. <sup>6</sup>And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. <sup>7</sup>He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. <sup>8</sup>But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. .... Rev. 20: 10 – 21: 8