

The Sermon on the Mount

Introduction

The Analysis of the Sermon

This chapter will introduce the exegete to the methodology of analyzing the Sermon. This is of utmost importance as will be seen since it is the only way to determine the exact message of the Sermon.

First, the study of the context of the Sermon will take place. This will use the grammar of the Sermon (as well as Old Testament referents required by the context) to determine the initial meaning of the text. The Sermon will be analyzed to determine the single contextual thread that runs through the Sermon providing a single message.

Second, the points of the Sermon will be related to illustrations in the Book of Matthew. Since the book is story, any meaning in the Sermon must be played out in illustrations somewhere in the book. Should this not be the case, then one has to question why the Sermon, or the point, is in the book, if it makes no effect on the rest of the story. These illustrations will be compared to the points in the Sermon and thus will help to determine and validate the meaning found in the Sermon.

Third, the place of the Book of Matthew (and of course the meaning of the Sermon) is laid into the Old Testament theological movement to insure that the theology from the Book of Matthew (and thus the Sermon) fits into the Biblical theology of the Bible.

The Hermeneutics of the Sermon

In approaching the Sermon on the Mount for the first time, the primary purpose should be to understand exactly what the sermon has to say. That is, the exegete wants the words to give him precisely the information that Jesus wanted him to know, no more, no less. To do this, the interpreter should never want to glean information that he brings to the text himself,¹ but information that Matthew wanted to communicate to the reader. Historically many men have interpreted the Sermon, and almost just as many of those interpretations are disparate.² The job of the interpreter is not simply to evaluate many interpretations of the Sermon and determine which has the most consistency in a philosophical sense. The job of the interpreter is to read the Sermon using proven literary tools. These tools must not only provide understanding of the words of the Sermon from the immediate context, but must be able to validate that understanding as the unique meaning of Christ, or rather of Matthew as the author. It is the validation³ process which will reveal the difference between a correct interpretation and a false one.⁴

¹ It may seem strange for one to glean back from the text what he brings to it, but that is exactly what happens under the normal means of interpreting texts; that is through the glasses of one's own systematic theology. In other words, one fits the verses that he reads into the grid of the theology that one possesses and thus never comes up with anything else but what he already understands.

² "Disparate" here indicates "unlike". The use here indicates that the many interpretations cannot be merged into a common acceptable meaning. This incongruity indicates that one or more of them must be wrong. The ultimate goal of reading the text is to find the single meaning of the author.

³ In seeking to validate one's interpretation, it is absolutely necessary to use objective, accurate tools. Thus one must include an evaluation of the literary tools used. In other words proper literary tools

There are several *tools* which must be used in any interpretation and subsequent validation of narrative literature or story.. As much as possible these tools must be objective, and not subjective.⁵ This study must thus incorporate several levels of analysis and validation. The first level of analysis is the level of literary exposition; that is the analysis within its complete literary context. While the initial levels will primarily be used for analysis (determining the meaning), the later levels will be used primarily to validate.⁶

Levels of analysis (Determining the meaning)

1. **The Immediate Context:** The first thing which one investigates is the flow of the *immediate context*. In simpler terms this would be simply reading the Sermon itself using standard grammatical tools to understand the flow. This is the meaning derived from words, sentences, paragraphs and chapters.

Example: **Matthew 5:4** ⁴ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

The simple meaning of this is determined from the grammar. Using subject and verbs, etc., the simple meaning is that in some way it was good to be sad at that time over something for Jesus guaranteed a comforting from that sadness. Now it is impossible from this statement alone to see why it would be good to be sad (seeming contradiction), but the future holds the answer in some way.

When one continues in the context of the Sermon it can be seen that the comforting has arrived in Jesus since He will bring the full righteousness and forgiveness of sins longed for by those who eagerly awaited his coming. (This will be shown later).

2. **The Context of the Book:** The second area of analysis is to find the importance of the immediate context (step #1) within the greater context of the book. In the case of The

must be used to test the interpretation. If the wrong literary tools are used, the validation process fails and with it the ability to determine the truth. Thus, not only must the use of the tools reveal that the interpretation has a high statistical degree of reliability, but also an analysis to determine that the proper tools are used. For instance one could use a validation technique as follows; if it changes the reader morally. However, it can easily be determined that lives can be changed morally through many techniques apart from the knowledge of the text. Therefore the validation technique does not affirm a valid interpretation and must be disregarded. As part of this study, a presentation and analysis of the tools used in the interpretation of story literature will be done (Refer to the Appendix).

⁴ The interpreter should be able to validate his interpretation from the text alone. Reader response can never alter the words, and intent, of the author in the text. Thus textual (literary) tools are to be used. However, one should always consider others' interpretations of the text in his process of validation. He first considers whether one has used proper tools to analyze and validate the text and then having discovered that they are on common literary ground compares the others' findings with his own. Should he find differences he must determine the basis of the differences and alter his own or leave it based on the outcome.

⁵ Subjective tools may frequently be identified by the use of "probably", "likely", "perhaps" and other non-verifiable terms or the quotations from someone else who uses the same non-objective terms. Quoting another opinion, even if several hundred years previous, validates very little. Original work, where one uses the actual documents, is the most substantial justification.

⁶ In other words, the grammar of the context is used primarily to find the initial and unique meaning. Systematic theology, on the other hand, will not determine meaning from a passage, but will validate that the interpretation is viable when compared to the theology of the rest of the Bible (determined from context and grammar).

Sermon this would be examining its place in the Book of Matthew, understanding its effect on the literary argument of the book. In other words, the Sermon is only one part of a whole. Without the whole (like the Book of Matthew), an individual story (like the Sermon) may or may not be able to be understood. Without the part the whole may or may not be able to be understood.⁷ Thus the interpreter would see the Sermon's effect on the other items in the book, and those would indeed validate the interpreter's understanding of the Sermon.⁸

Example continued:

The context of the Book of Matthew points out that the gospel that the disciples were to take into the world (Matt. 28:20; "things I have commanded you") is this very theme, that Jesus has arrived with full righteousness which can be imputed to a man who believes. Thus, the mourning is seen more clearly, as that of the time before Christ when righteousness was not evident nor obtainable through the Kings of Israel. Now, Jesus has appeared and men are comforted.

3. **Old Testament Referents:** The third is the use of other literature as a referent. This means any Old Testament references that Jesus uses in the Sermon. These passages would affect the meaning that the reader perceives from the first area examined (immediate context).⁹

⁷ A good example of this is to remove the cross or the resurrection from any of the Gospels. The point each of the Gospels would be impossible to determine. Likewise if the story of the cross or the resurrection was isolated from the book, the purpose of each would be quite difficult to ascertain.

⁸ For instance, if the reader's understanding of the Sermon is not reflected throughout the Book of Matthew in numerous places then the reader's understanding is likely faulty. The more the sermon is found to be used in the remainder of the book, the more the validation. This is based on the very basic communication principle that everything is included in a piece of literature (especially story) to contribute to the meaning. If the Sermon affects nothing else in the book, then its value to the book is problematic (purpose for inclusion in the story of the Book of Matthew is unsolved).

The basic literary style in the Book of Matthew is obviously narrative or 'story'. However, one of the characteristics of 'story' is that everything listed in the book affects the meaning of the story. In other words, 'story' is based on a set of characters who move from a setting, through a tension, to an attempt to solve the tension. Everything in the book is contributing to the understanding of the characters and their movement through the story. Thus, interpretations that affect the audience of the story, but are not significant to the characters within the story are invalid.

⁹ The interpreter has no Biblical basis to assume Jesus uses a different meaning than that perceived in the Old Testament. On the face of it, if Jesus were to change the Old Testament to suit His purposes then He violates His own instructions in 5:17-19, not to mention the Old Testament warnings of changing meaning in Deut. 13:1-5 (the passage on false prophets). Jesus' very validation of Himself as the Christ was based on a precise fulfillment of the Old Testament. Thus if one perceives a different meaning in the Sermon than that of the Old Testament referent, then the reader may assume that he has misunderstood either the Old Testament referent or the New Testament use of that referent.

Note also that one of the major validations of Jesus and the Apostles is their use of the Old Testament. If that is taken away, then the major validation that Jesus requested that He be tested is removed.

This statement is only indicating similar messages. On the other hand, Jesus may add revelation which agrees with the earlier message, that is, to fill in details, give revelation about something else, etc. But He does not have the desire to change (nor the option of changing) the message of the Old Testament from its original meaning; for it is this very meaning that demonstrates that He is the Christ.

Example continued:

Jesus is using a quotation from an Old Testament text which contains both words, “mourn” and “comforted”.

Isaiah 61:2: “. . . to comfort all who mourn,”

In this passage in Isaiah, it predicts a time when the Messiah (“the Servant of YHWH”; the Davidic King to come) will bring righteousness and thus relieve those who have suffered through the Old Testament times under wicked kings (e.g., Ahaz of Isaiah 7). Thus, when Jesus quotes this verse He is pointing out that He will fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 61.

While these are listed in order, it is obvious that these work with each other. Understandings of other passages in the Book of Matthew (The Context of the Book) will be considered back into the Sermon to reexamine the perception of the immediate context (Immediate Context). Old Testament references (Old Testament Referents) will most certainly also affect the understanding of the Sermon (Immediate Context).

Additional validation levels beyond the literary context of the author reside in areas increasing less direct. These are those that include common theology derived from other books by the same author, then by other authors and then generally the collection of common themes and principles (systematic theology). These categories do not determine the meaning of a text but may validate the meaning already determined from the analysis by having similar meanings thus confirming that the meaning determined is increased statistical reliability that it was used by the author.

Levels of Validation (Finding similar meanings)

1. Other Biblical literature by the same author.

This will not affect the study of the Sermon since there are no other writings by Matthew to compare. However, if one was to study the Gospel of John, then John’s other writings would be of some benefit in validating the Gospel. In other words, John’s use of “light” and “darkness” would be primarily gained from their use in the Gospel. However, one would use 1 John to see if his use there was similar to, and thus validated, the use in John.¹⁰

2. Similar literature by other authors (New Testament)

This allows other New Testament authors to validate a meaning determined from the context of the sermon. James, 1 and 2 Peter, all seem to relate in varying ways to the message of the Sermon. To the degree that they match the message of the Sermon they can validate the meaning. In other words, the fact that other New Testament authors derived the same meaning from the Sermon will validate the meaning determined.

3. Systematic Theology

This is simply a collection of the theology of the Bible into its topical areas. The theology of the Sermon must agree with the theology found elsewhere in the text. If it does find agreement, this does not mean that the true meaning has been found, only that it is a

¹⁰ The use in 1 John, however, could be entirely different since it is a different literary piece. Thus it would have to be analyzed from John primarily and then secondarily from 1 John to see if it fit.

possible meaning. If it does not find agreement, then it may exclude itself from a possible meaning.

It is these areas that must be utilized in order, analysis first then validation. The following areas are those of minor, and some of no, concern.

1. **Philosophy**

This is a larger group of systematic theology which includes all interaction, not just the Biblical text and its related theology. When limited to true philosophy, this has some value. However, since the reasoning of the Bible is that uniquely to be found in the Biblical text (revelation versus human reason) it may not need to conform. However, if it does not conform, the reason for its nonconformance should be known. Contrariwise, conformance needs to understand the reasoning why it conforms.

2. **Opinion**

Opinions here mean simply the statement of others. This group has almost no validation value. The opinions of others, if that is their only basis (i.e., simply a famous or known name), has no value. The reason is, even though they may be right (a statistical low possibility), since the interpreter does not have any ability to validate their opinion it cannot help the interpreter. For instance, Ryrie may hold an opinion on a text. However, if his opinion does not have a higher validation (e.g., immediate context, systematic theology) then there is no validation (he is not working from the textual tools). However, if I hear his opinion (low level on validation) and then read his work and find out that he used immediate context (high level on analysis) then it is no longer opinion (low level) but the higher level of immediate context and thus analysis.

Therefore it might be seen that when one considers others interpretation, it is required that one is able to see the tools that they used and establish where they are on the levels of validation scale. If they are low, then the work cannot contribute to their own (assuming they used a high level of analysis). If they are higher up then the interpreter can add their work to their own at that level.

The interpreter must interact at all levels in order to statistically validate his interpretation. Without this work, he has not considered all the input levels.

A word should be stated here about cultural backgrounds. First of all, the interpreter must be sure that he is not interpreting the text based on his own background. However, the real importance here is the influence of the author's background into understanding the text. This must be considered on its own merits in each text. For instance, language is essentially background. The determination of the meaning of words, though primarily from the context, is identified into a cultural period. Thus, the most important determiner of meaning of those words is very high on the analysis scale. As the culture is brought into the text, the actual reference of the author must be established (is the author referring to this cultural event) and to that level is brought into the text. However, one must recognize that the understanding of historical events is subject to the frailty of man's perception and thus becomes very low on the validation scale next to the inerrant immediate context (high level).

First, the Contextual Examination of the Sermon

Several tools familiar to the interpreter will be used. The first is simply to examine the *who, what, when, where*.¹¹ While these may all not affect the interpretation equally, they must be examined to determine the importance to the author. Note also that these tools are not simply relegated to the Sermon alone, but must be determined by their usage within the book as a whole.

Who

The Individual 'Who': This requires an examination of the main characters included in the Sermon as well as in the book as a whole (since the sermon will play out in these characters in the whole book.) So while Jesus may not have Pharisees in His immediate audience, He most certainly refers to them as major antagonists (cf. 5:20). Thus, a character analysis must take place, determining the main characters, minor characters,¹² and their place within the narrative. This may be the most important analysis in the book. Remember, no theology may be utilized which is not carried by a major character in some manner.¹³

The National 'Who': Another aspect of the "who" is the identification of the national who. This, of course, enters the context by determining the uniqueness of Israel in relation to the theology of the book. The context cannot be determined without acknowledgment of the significant difference between Israel and the nations.¹⁴

What

This requires that one determine the central issue in the Sermon (the subject). This issue will be related to the issue of the whole book.

When

¹¹ The interpreter will examine also the *why* and *how*. However, these are interpretive tools as opposed to the initial objective questions of who, what, when, where. Thus the first four are primary.

¹² Note that minor characters normally are utilized to bring out some aspect of a major character. Minor characters do not carry the flow of the message on their own.

¹³ While it might seem to be possible that there would be theology which would not match a player in the narrative, it would have to be totally *out of context*. If the author was referring to a historical character (contemporary with the author, but not in the narrative) not represented by a character in the book, the reader would have no way of knowing about that character unless the author explained him. (In narrative literature this would indeed be out of context since the whole nature of narrative literature is to utilize characters and stories to explain). If it was totally prophetic (future to the author's situation, contemporary with a future reader), this would again be contrary to the nature of narrative literature since the contemporary reader (of all ages) would be interpreting it for his own situation (having no narrative referent) and would be subject to reader intent. It should be noted however, that prophetic warnings about future characters are able to be included in the narrative, since the author fully explains those characters (and their similarity to the other characters in the narrative).

Note that an understanding of the characters utilized in the narrative is part of the validation process. To relate a theology to a reader's contemporary situation without historical basis gives an interpretation without textual validation.

¹⁴ Also note that Gentile inclusion into the church has not been revealed during the Gospels. It is revealed by Paul in the Epistles as well as in Acts 10. Jesus did reveal the church's formation in Matthew 16, but the inclusion of Gentiles as an integral part of the church was not revealed until Paul (Ephesians 1--3, Colossians 1) and Peter (Acts 10).

Literary When

There is an immediate *when* in the book. For instance literarily it occurs following Jesus' baptism and temptation and just prior to the miracles' section. Thus there is a literary *when*. It may or may not correspond to the chronological *historical when*.

Historical (Chronological) When

There is also a historical *when*. There is a historical (chronological) sequence in the events. In other words, Jesus does this on His way to Jerusalem. Thus, this is when there is a historical sequence. Note that this historical sequence may be difficult to determine if the narrative does not reveal as precise a chronological sequence as desired. In addition there is the place that this occurs in the broader history of man. It occurs under the Roman Empire.

Dispensational When

However another historical 'when' is the most important. That is the theological chronology or the *dispensational when*. For instance, was this done under the Law, in the Kingdom, or in the period of delay (the church age, the age of grace), or when? A knowledge of the theological import of each dispensation *Biblically* is necessary here. A faulty knowledge, or ignorance, of these issues will provide a faulty understanding of the Sermon and of the Book of Matthew.¹⁵

Reader When

In addition, it is not only necessary to understand when Jesus *did* these things, but it is important to know about the audience's *when*. It must not be disregarded that the audience is the group to which the author desires to invoke *change*.¹⁶ Thus, the book is written for the purpose of application to the reader. Therefore the *dispensational when* of the reader must be determined also.¹⁷ However, in narrative literature, the *dispensational when* will be the primary aspect, for

¹⁵ This is not to be forced into the book, but is derived from the theological definition that Jesus uses, the Old Testament uses, and the apostles use - - in other words what God reveals He is using in the text with respect to theological times.

¹⁶ The issue that must never be missed is that any writing is to invoke change in the reader. It may be simply to educate. But in the Bible it is always to invoke theological education for the purpose of physical change.

¹⁷ This is very interesting, particularly in the Sermon. The gospels are one of the few cases where the reader is in a different dispensation than the events of the book. Too frequently readers of the Bible assume that all events in the text are for their immediate imitation. Thus, if the characters in the story were to do something, then the contemporary reader must imitate it. However, they have lost sight of the possibility that the author may be providing a historical *basis* for the theology, from which the reader will take his action. In other words, Jesus did not die on the cross so that man might duplicate this event. Man cannot duplicate this event. Yet the recording of that death provides the basis by which man is able to operate in this next dispensation. (This is not to say that Jesus death does not provide an application aspect of suffering for righteousness, only that the event was a one time historical event never to be duplicated again.)

Jesus was operating under the Law, and one cannot alter that historical and narrative truth for the sake of application.¹⁸

Where

Geographical Where

First of all is the general *where* which would include *heaven or earth, Israel, the nations, Jerusalem, etc.*

Scenario Where

Secondly, there is a more local *where*. This would be any local color that the author adds to the immediate context. For instance, the scene in Matthew is on a mountain, while Luke's is on a plain.

The Sermon's Relationship to the Book of Matthew

The Sermon is preceded by the validation of Jesus as the appointed King, the Messiah. Part of the function of the King was to represent the words of God as a mediator to the people. This was to be the new Adam, the new image, the Ruler of Genesis 1:26.

Matthew, the book, focuses on the Nation and particularly on the King aspect of the national representation. This is seen in the mention of "son of Abraham" and "son of David" in Matt. 1:1. This is a reference to the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12, 15, 22: a nation forever) and the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7: A king forever).

The book then turns to showing that Jesus has begun to fulfill the prophecies regarding the king.

Prophecy	O.T. Passage	Part fulfilled in Matthew	Part ultimately fulfilled
A Son born to a virgin who would deliver Israel from Gentiles unlike Ahaz	Isaiah 7:14	Born of Mary, a virgin	Servant of YHWH (Isa. 40-66), the Davidic King, who would deliver Israel from Gentile rule apart from Ahaz' seed through One greater than Ahaz.
The One who would be the ultimate Shepherd of Israel would be born in a lowly village of Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Born in Bethlehem	Unlike the evil shepherds of Israel who took advantage of the sheep, the Great Shepherd would rule over Israel
There would be a second Exodus to	Hosea 11:2	Escapes into Egypt for protection and returns to	Will be rejected (like Moses) but ultimately will return to

¹⁸ The reader will be incorporated only as he understands the dispensational change as explained in the book. This dispensational change is prophesied prior to the crucifixion and resurrection and is inaugurated in the disciples in the end of the book.

deliver Israel once again from the bondage of the Gentiles		Israel (under Rome, the new Egypt) to offer deliverance to Israel (like Moses fled to Midian and returned to Israel under Egypt to offer deliverance)	deliver Israel from Gentile control (in the tribulation).
The Gentile oppression of Babylon (the beginning of the Times of the Gentiles) on the children of Israel.	Jeremiah 31:15	Herod kills the boy babies in Bethlehem	The Times of the Gentiles continues (deliverance yet to come).
The Deliverer to be from Nazareth (not from Judah)	Isaiah 11:2, et. al.	Resides in Nazareth	He will reveal Himself to Gentiles and those outside of Jerusalem, and ultimately they will respond to Him.
The Servant of YHWH, the Deliverer from the Gentiles would be introduced by a crier to Jerusalem prior to the kingdom (wilderness on way to land)	Isaiah 40:3	John the Baptist points to Jesus as the One	Jesus will be rejected (Isa. 53) but will be resurrected to rule and return Israel to dominion.
The 'Son' would be the One who restored rule to Israel and to God	Psalms 2	Declaration that Jesus was the Son	Jesus would restore rule to the Jews over the Gentiles following the tribulation.

Beginning in chapter 4 the author validates Jesus' perfect humanity, but it is emphasized in the national sense, placing more emphasis on the national failures and Jesus' successes than to the Edenic failures of Eve. Following the testing, Jesus moved to His ministry of expanding to the Gentiles (a reference to Isaiah 11), which was a fulfillment of the commission of Israel in the latter days.

The author sandwiches the Sermon on the Mount between the prophecies of Matthew 1--4 and the events of healing and demon removal. These are validation miracles. Yet validation in the *words* of a prophet, here part of the King, was more important than miracles according to Deuteronomy 13:1ff. Thus, the author moves to record the King's conformance to God's word. Rather than introducing new material, the King applies the heart of the Covenant from the exact words of the Covenant to His present situation, confirming Himself to precisely minister the Word of God.

- 1 "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'¹⁹ (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,'
- 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 "You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him.
- 5 "But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you.

The result of the evaluation was that He indeed did have authority (7:28-29).²⁰ He did verify that He was the King (the representative of God who speaks for God). This was beyond the revelation of Deuteronomy in specific, but not outside of its meaning. In other words it was Deuteronomy as applied to the appearance of the King²¹ and His contemporaries.

Deuteronomy 18

- 15 "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.
- 16 "This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, lest I die.' 17 "And the LORD said to me, 'They have spoken well.
- 18 'I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 'And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require *it* of him.

The people recognize the validity of His words and position of the King at the end of the speech.

- 7:28 The result was that when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were amazed at His teaching; 29 for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes.

A. The position of the Sermon thus accomplishes two things:

1. Validation of Jesus as the Speaker for God (Authority)

¹⁹ This phrase "let us go after other gods" is speaking of revelation. YHWH was known only by His specific revelation. To offer a revelation different from the one of the already revealed Word was to go after other gods (or revelations).

²⁰ The authority which He had very clearly noted in the Sermon was that He was the King, the ultimate Administrator of God's mercy and righteousness to man. It was now His Words by which man would be judged or declared righteous. The Words of the Old Testament were now fulfilled in His Words. Thus to dismiss His Words were to dismiss God's Word. He indeed did have God's authority.

²¹ Note that He (Jesus) is revealed as this fullness within The Sermon. That a man named Jesus was to be the King was additional knowledge, but not outside, the meaning of the Old Testament. The King was always to be the One who administrated God's attributes on earth. What was unrevealed was *who specifically* it was to be.

In Deuteronomy the covenant explained the position of God and the position of the Israelite with respect to each other under covenant. The position of God was holy, the position of man was one of representative, who was not naturally²² holy. His position was to bring glory to the Sovereign. It was not to be done simply externally, for the representative was to belong to the sovereign from the heart.

Deuteronomy 6

- 4 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!
- 5 "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 "And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart;
- 7 and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 "And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9 "And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.
- 14:1 "You are the **sons** of the LORD your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave your forehead for the sake of the dead. 2 "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

2. The Validation of *The King*, Jesus of Nazareth.

The One who represented the holiness of God and the totality of man was now present and would bring the righteousness and mercy of God to the representative as seen in the story immediately following The Sermon.

- 8:1 And when He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. 2 And behold, a leper came to Him, and bowed down to Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." 3 And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

The leper, interestingly, was not primarily interested in his healing since he does not ask for that. He asks for 'cleansing'. That indicated that he longed to have his relationship with God (now in the temple services) restored. Having leprosy was simply the impediment that kept him from it. However, he recognizes that Jesus has the ability to cleanse him (put him back into a relationship with God). This would be imputed cleansing (righteousness that comes for Jesus). Thus, Jesus removes the cause of the uncleanness. However, Jesus fulfills the Law because there was the declaration of cleansing that needed to follow, and so Jesus sends him to the priest.

The Specifics of The Sermon

Who: The Addressed

²² Naturally here means that he could not derive holiness from his own being. Had that been the case he would have represented himself. It had to come from the Creator as source.

The Sermon “Who?”

It is clear that the beginning of the Sermon addresses disciples (5:1).

And when He saw the multitudes, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.

However at the end of the Sermon, it appears that there is a considerable crowd (7:28).

“The result was that when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were amazed at His teaching”

There have been several solutions proposed. First, some²³ have stated that while the Sermon began with the twelve, gradually the crowd increased. Others, which is proposed here, is that the term “His disciples” is indicating the people in the crowd who had desired to follow Him, and were likely more than 12 at that point. It is not until chapter 10 that the twelve are specifically named. At any rate it is clear that Jesus is speaking only to those who desire to attach themselves to Him whatever the number, and does not include non-followers.²⁴

Whether they were believers in imputed righteousness through Jesus at this point is difficult to establish, although it seems to be the case based on their anticipation of Jesus and who He was in the repentance at the call of John the Baptist. Matthew has told us that they had appeared at the teaching of John the Baptist and confessed their sins in preparation for the Kingdom. The two disciples whom Jesus had called had responded to Jesus as the focal point of the message of the Kingdom. However, note that it was in the Sermon that He would clarify the characteristics and requirements of the Sons of the Kingdom. It is following the Sermon that a full understanding of the validated Ruler that the text examines those who continue to follow Jesus. It seems best to understand that the disciples are being brought along in a process of understanding the fullness of who Jesus is. When the two disciples are called, and when the people repent to John the Baptist, they are the righteous of the Old Testament sense who anticipated the righteousness to come in the Messiah. It is thus in the Sermon that Jesus explains their status and the fullness that He is about to give them.

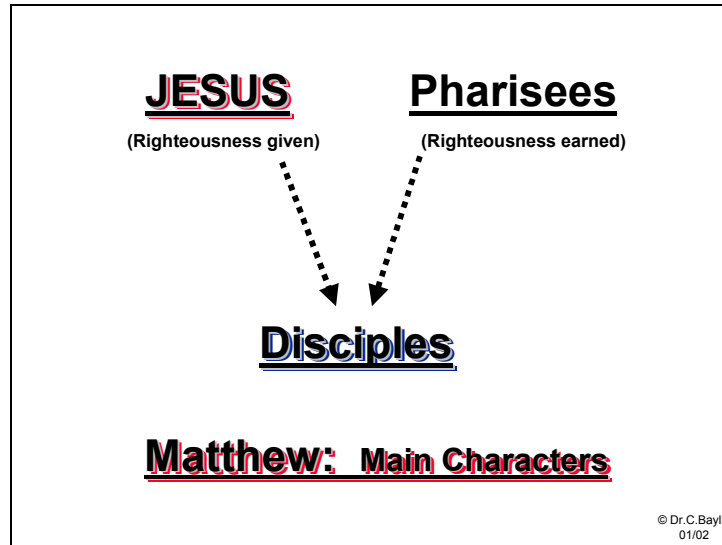
The Book “Who?”

The Book of Matthew introduces three major characters (or groups). These are Jesus²⁵ (positive), the Pharisees (negative) and the disciples (hearers of positive and negative). In the literary structure, Jesus is the Main Character. It is He who will respond to the tension and based on His theology will overcome the antagonists.

²³ This was proposed by Dr. John Martin, Bible 305, Dallas Theological Seminary.

²⁴ A survey of the term “you” or “your” (as applied to the listeners) in the Sermon is instructive. It is consistently used regarding a disciple (“hearers”) through the Sermon even in 7:15 (and following) when the discourse turns to provide a warning regarding the false prophets. Then the “you” is still applied to the hearer and is not related (except in the story example of the future judgment) to the false prophets (who are not the listener). In other words the false prophets, opponents to Jesus, are not among the listeners.

²⁵ It is not suggested that there is any sort of equivalence between Jesus and the Pharisees as to stature of a major character. Jesus is clearly God and stands uniquely in the annals of time as well as in the Book of Matthew. Jesus is the Main Character of the Bible as well as the literary structure of Matthew.



Jesus

Jesus is the positive character, the Main Character, the Protagonist, within the Book of Matthew. His theology and physical application never change throughout the book. However, His physical body moves from birth to death and resurrection.

Pharisees

The Pharisees are the negative characters, the antagonists in the book. Their theology never changes, however their intensity of physical application changes as they first examine Him and reject Him, then attempt to murder Jesus as the book progresses and finally accomplish that feat.²⁶

The Disciples

The disciples clearly identify with Jesus from the beginning of the book and always align themselves to Him as the true source of revelation, the King. However, their behavior of application never moves to the perfection required by the Sermon on the Mount. Since they have a similar fleshly heart of the Pharisees they are always exemplifying behavior consistent with Pharisical thought.

What: The Subject

The Character *What*

The question asked throughout the book, and clearly validated is that, *Jesus is the King, the authoritative Ruler on behalf of God.*

He is seen as the Speaker for God (the Greater Prophet of Deut. 18:15) as He stepped up on the mountain and spoke regarding the Law ("You have heard it said . . . but I say unto you .

²⁶ This demonstrates Jesus' principle in the Sermon that hate is murder. Their hate of Jesus comes to fruition in the murder of Him although He is innocent.

. . .) He is seen as the Judge on behalf of God (7:22: "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord'²⁷ . . . "). At the conclusion to The Sermon the people exclaim regarding His clear authority (7:28-29: ". . . the multitudes were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes."). The Centurion recognizes that Jesus has authority from God (8:9). This authoritative Ruler is God's righteousness in a Man. (5:10-11).

The Subject *What*

The Sons of the Kingdom

The prime subject of the Book of Matthew is the Kingdom. The main character is the establishment of the King in Jesus the Nazarene. What Jesus is establishing is the definition of the Sons of the Kingdom. Who are the true *representatives* (= sons) of God (= Kingdom).²⁸

A core verse is the differentiation between the Sons of God and those who suppose that they are (primarily represented by the Scribes and Pharisees). A crux verse in the Book of Matthew and The Sermon is 5:20.

20 "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

The uses of "The Sons of . . ." throughout Matthew illustrates the importance which representation is linked with the entry into the Kingdom.

- 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called **sons** of God.
5:45,48 45 in order that you may be **sons** of your Father who is in heaven . . . 48
"Therefore you are to be perfect (*τελειος*), as your heavenly Father is perfect (*τελειος*),
8:11,12 "And I say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline *at the table* with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the **sons** of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
13:38 "and the field is the world; and *as for* the good seed, these are the **sons** of the kingdom; and the tares are the **sons** of the evil *one*;"
21:28-30 "But what do you think? A man had two **sons**, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.' 29 "And he answered and said, 'I will, sir'; and he did not go. 30 "And he came to the second and said the same thing. But he answered and said, 'I will not'; *yet* he afterward regretted *it* and went.

The Criteria *What*

The Righteousness of God as opposed to the Righteousness of Man

There are two areas which totally encompass the criteria needed for entry into the Kingdom. The most obvious is *righteousness*.

²⁷ The phrase "Lord, Lord" here is likely the use of the Old Testament "Adonai YHWH".

²⁸ Probably a core Old Testament verse here is Deuteronomy 14:1 which pronounced Israel as the "sons of God". However, the 'son' there was an 'obedient' imitator 'son' and not a genealogical son. Israel had taken it to mean genealogical son (from Abraham) and that they would receive the kingdom instead of the Gentiles due to their genealogical (only) relationship. Jesus will point out that Deut. required 'obedient' images as well as 'genealogical' (Israelites from Abraham) images.

- 5:20 "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.
- 21:32 "For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax-gatherers and harlots did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him.

In the aspect of quantifiable righteousness, one needs the righteousness of God. This righteousness is never less than the holy standard which God set up in the Law. (cf. 5:17-20, 48). Therefore, one needs ***that*** righteousness, nothing less. It was clear that external activities would not accomplish this.

- 5:20 "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.
- 5:48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Imputed Righteousness through the King (by asking)

It is clear from The Sermon itself, that this righteousness must be given from God to His representative (as all good things must be.) In other words, for God to receive the glory then all must come from Him as source.

- 6:33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.
- 7:7 "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. 8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened.
- 7:11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

It is especially important to note that all the miracles and healings which are *given* by God in the chapter following The Sermon are given through the King. But especially note the imputed cleansing (leprosy made one out of relationship with God (unclean) in the Old Testament) which occurs in the story immediately following Jesus' descent from the mountain (descending in order to apply the Sermon to the people). This miracle validates the message of The Sermon as imputed righteousness through the King.

- 8:1 And when He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. 2 And behold, a leper came to Him, and bowed down to Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."²⁹ 3 And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Understanding

However within Matthew and The Sermon there is a prior requirement for receiving the righteousness of God by asking. This is the concept of *understanding*. In

²⁹ Note that the leper requests 'cleansing', not healing. There was a difference. To be healed would enable him to be normal in society and pursue activities without the hindrance of his disease. To be clean put him into a relationship with God enacted through a physical participation in the temple services. His disease prevented him from such. Thus his request indicates that what he desired was a relationship with God and not simply healing.

short this points out that the Pharisees (and others), having a depraved mind had wrongly perceived God. Having a wrong understanding of God restricted their ability to act appropriately. Thus, in The Sermon, Jesus states that those who do not understand cannot act. And vice-versa, those who understand, must act. The Pharisee in short did not see his unrighteousness under the Law and thus (being prideful) did not ask for righteousness.

This is seen in the story of the wise man and the foolish man at the end of The Sermon. The wise man has understanding (by definition) and the foolish man does not understand (by definition)³⁰. Thus the wise man who perceives God correctly acts (asks for righteousness, 7:7), while the foolish man, who does not perceive God, acts based on his false perception, and ends up judged based on his deeds (7:23) of the words of the King.

- 7:24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock.
- 25 "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock.
- 26 "And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand.
- 27 "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall."

Later in the parables of Chapter 13, the difference between the first three soils and the last successful one was *understanding*.

- 13:15 FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND **UNDERSTAND** WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I SHOULD HEAL THEM.'
- 13:19 "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not **understand** it, the evil *one* comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.
- 13:23 "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and **understands** it; who indeed bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

Therefore, the conclusion is that one must understand the Sermon on the Mount, else he can act no other way than on the basis of self-righteousness. And this understanding, and the righteousness it imparts, may only be gained by seeking God and asking Him.

- 20 "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

³⁰ Note that the terms 'wise' and 'fool' are used in Proverbs under the definition of one who receives the revelation of God ('wise man') and the one who rejects the revelation ('foolish man' or 'fool'). Proverbs chapter 1 states,

⁵ A wise man will hear and ^aincrease in learning, And a ^bman of understanding will acquire wise counsel, ⁶ To understand a proverb and a figure, The words of the wise and their ^ariddles. ⁷ ^aThe fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

This is a quite interesting and important note. It speaks about the depraved mind. Man is totally depraved including his self-perception. However, since he is depraved, he thinks his self-perception is accurate. There is the rub. He is locked into an endless circle of self-justification and cannot possibly find his way out.

When: The Time

Literary When

The location of The Sermon (5--7) is following the Prophetic indication of the King (1--4) and prior to the Miracle Validation of the King and the Calling of Disciples (8--10). Subsequent to that is the Rejection of the King by Israel (11--12). The Response of the King is that He explains the approaching Kingdom delay (trains His disciples for His absence and explains His rejection through interaction with the leaders of Israel) (13--23), His promised return to judge and provide the Kingdom for the true sons is explained (24--25). Then the implementation of righteousness and validation in resurrection is accomplished in 26--27. Finally (chapter 28) the disciples are sent out to teach all nations based on the Sermon, that is to proclaim the righteousness now available to be imputed by Christ.

Dispensational When

Jesus came and taught under the dispensation of the Law. The Age of Grace did not begin with His birth, but with His death and resurrection. The church age did not begin until later in Acts 2.

4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Galatians 4:4-5

17 Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. ¹⁸ "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not ¹the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:17-19

Reader When

Thus, Jesus taught under the period of the Law, and His teachings must be understood as being applicable to the people to whom He was teaching. However, with Jesus coming to put an end to the Law and introduce the Kingdom, His Sermon must be taken to be applicable in some measure to the period of time which the disciples were about to enter after His death. In other words, while the Sermon dealt with the duties under the Law to those present, it also pointed to His fulfilling the Law and their duties in the age to come.

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

20 ***teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;***³¹ and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. "

Matthew 28:18-20

The readership enters into the application of the book, since the nature of the book is to provide the foundation for the church which will come thereafter. Jesus selects the disciples and trains them for the age of delay (Parables of Matt. 13), establishing the foundation of the church (cf. Matt. 16, 18). Thus what is occurring in the gospel is foundational (not necessarily directly applicational) for the church to come.

The Periods of Time To Which Jesus Refers in the Sermon

The Past

Jesus refers to the period of the Law (which extends through His crucifixion). Particularly He deals with the Pharisees activity under the Law as He states, "You have heard it said . . . (Pharisee quoting the Law), but I say unto you . . . " (Jesus explaining the Law from the contextual message of the book).³²

The Present

The present tense is used throughout the sermon indicating a present mode of life for application. The beginning of the Sermon (The Beatitudes) reflects a present tense action or characteristic resulting in a present tense action or characteristic. The 'bookends' of the Beatitudes both reflect a present tense action or characteristic and a present tense result.

5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

5:10 "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The Future

There are three aspects of the future. There are several possible periods of time that are future to the Sermon, theologically speaking.

The Life of Christ Period

This period begins immediately following the Sermon and continues through the crucifixion and resurrection. The difference in this period and other periods is the PRESENCE OF THE KING, MAN LIVING UNDER THE AGE OF THE LAW.

³¹ At this point of the lesson it is simply meant to say that in some way Jesus expected what He had taught the disciples to be taught to the people of the period of time they were entering into. Thus, the Sermon is in some way applicable to the Church Age.

³² It should be noted, however, that Jesus was speaking to the people regarding their authority under the Law. There were times, for instance, that vengeance was appropriate on the enemies of God in the Old Testament. However, this was only to be accomplished under the partial judgment scenario of the Old Testament, and only through the specific revelation of God through His anointed. For instance, David was not supposed to execute vengeance on Nabal in 1 Samuel. David was anointed, but not in an official capacity as King, since Saul was occupying that spot. Yet after he becomes King, his authority to execute judgment is firm and he is criticized for avoiding it in the case of Absalom et. al. The period of time within which Jesus is addressing the crowd is to Israel under Gentile authority without a reigning King. Thus Israel has lost its authority to judge demonstrated by the lack of God's anointed King on the throne.

In addition, and perhaps even more significantly, is the point of the appearance of the King. The Old Testament saint had waited for and anticipated the fullness of the prophetic message from God. He had seen partial indications, types, symbols, and prophetic utterances. But he had not seen the fullness of God's love or justice come to earth. Now in the presence of Jesus, it could be seen. Having seen Jesus, and this fullness, was the *living guarantee* in space and time that the fullness *in space and time* (the Kingdom) would come.

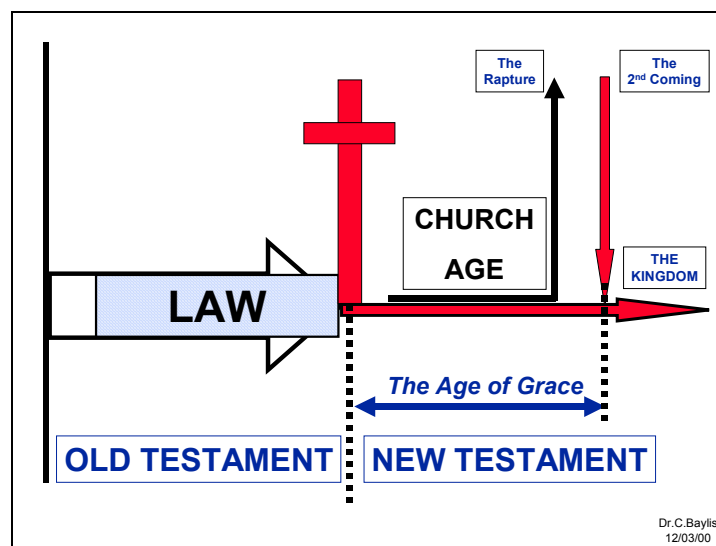
7:22 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'
23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

Since God's love is seen and the extent of it, and its word is validated in the first coming, then the believer is assured of his deliverance and the righteousness of God present in the future.

He who did not **spare** His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things³³?

Romans 8:32

The Age of Grace



This period of time extends, by definition, from Christ's death and resurrection to His Second Coming. It is characterized by the ABSENCE OF THE KING, MAN LIVING UNDER THE AGE OF GRACE.³⁴

³³ "All things" in the context of Romans is regarding the righteousness of God which relates us unconditionally to God forever.

³⁴ The Age of Grace is defined as the age by which man lives under the real and full forgiveness of God demonstrated through Jesus Christ. Under the Age of Law only sin was real and full. Forgiveness was anticipated. During the Age of Grace it is the amount of grace (forgiveness) that overwhelms the amount of sin that makes this the Age of Grace. (cf. Romans 5--8). The Kingdom continues in this grace, yet for our purposes, the Age of Grace will end at the Second Coming.

Within the Age of Grace is the time occupied by what is called the Church Age. This continues from Pentecost to the Rapture. Following the Rapture, the Nation of Israel again becomes the focus of God's movement in the Great Tribulation (seven years).

It needs to be noted, that this age is operating, not like the Old Testament period, but on the *guarantee* of God based on the King's appearance on earth.

The Kingdom

This period of time extends from the Second Coming of Christ through the 1000 year kingdom into the eternal kingdom. It is characterized by the PRESENCE OF THE KING, MAN LIVING UNDER GRACE.

This period does not add to the believer since he possesses everything following the resurrection of Christ. He however will *see* and *live* out the deliverance which he now possesses. The unbelievers will also see what they have rejected when they are judged by Christ at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom (Sheep and Goats Judgment) and the beginning of the eternal kingdom (Great White Throne Judgment). Thus righteousness (which the believer knew) will be seen on the earth.

Where

Geographical Where

The primary geographical location of significance is the nation Israel as opposed to heaven, earth, or the nations. In addition Jesus, in the book, is headed toward Jerusalem, the center of Israel, for His crucifixion.

Scenario Where

The location that is significant in The Sermon is 'the mountain'. In Luke, by contrast, Jesus descends to a level place. The significance of the mountain is its parallel to Moses in receiving the Law on the mountain. (Refer to the notes for specific reference).

Summary

All aspects of the ages are significant within the Sermon. First, the fact that the King is present is a demonstration by God, not only of the down payment of the Kingdom, but of the fact that the King, and He alone, was obedient to the Law. During the period of His presence, the disciples never demonstrate any exemplary success in following the Sermon. Thus during the period of the Presence of the King, the validity of the Sermon and the Kingdom is in the King Himself. He alone is the possessor of the Kingdom.

Yet it is His appearance and what He possesses that will enable the disciples to enter the next age without His visible presence. It is that which will allow them to endure persecution for His sake, and to continue in a period of time where His word (based on His death and resurrection) will be their comfort.

During the Kingdom ("Thy Kingdom Come") the King will be present once more, yet it is not this period to which most of the Sermon refers.³⁵ While it is referenced, and the disciple is urged to look for it, and to live in its anticipation, it is the period of delay for which the King is preparing the disciples. The King was to be rejected (5:11) and these words would keep them.

The Church is the group to whom the Gospel was addressed. This age lies clearly in the Age of Grace. Thus the words of the book were for the church, yet Jesus spoke them to a group under the Law in preparation for the age of Grace. The question that is asked is 'how could the same principles be applicable for those under the Law and those under Grace'? The answer is simple. The Law required holiness from the heart and always pointed to the King through Whom forgiveness would come (Gen. 3:15, Isaiah 53). While the fullness of forgiveness came only at the cross, the principles of a holy God were always the same. He is holy and requires holy behavior. There is never anything less. Man is depraved and can never meet that standard, and finds his hope in the King. Having seen the King, a man in the Age of Grace now acts on the basis of surety during a period of persecution, imitating God represented in the Sermon as seen in the King and based on His righteousness, which is now applied to the believer's account, held in heaven ("in Christ") apart from anyone's ability to take it through murder or persecution.

³⁵ Jesus will be present for the Kingdom and will speak the words of life again. If this sermon is for the Kingdom and excludes all other ages, then the "why" must be answered, since the King can speak the laws at that time. (Although it is possible that He was educating that audience to the rules of the Kingdom for some benefit, much as prophecy of the Kingdom gives benefit now.)