

February 18-24, 2019

Matthew 5: Luke 6

“Blessed Are Ye”

Summary: *Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Mount—Its teachings replace and transcend some aspects of the law of Moses—All are commanded to be perfect like their Father in Heaven.*

Jesus heals on the Sabbath—He chooses the Twelve Apostles—He pronounces blessings upon the obedient and woes upon the wicked.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

Focusing Attention on Him

Most discussions of the Sermon on the Mount concentrate on our "attitudes." There may be an underlying and supporting doctrine teaching a higher law. Could it be that the Savior is saying, "No matter who you are, rich or poor, mournful or happy, popular or persecuted, come unto me and I will give you

the Holy Ghost?"

Mount of Beatitudes - A Peaceful Place

On the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, on a higher elevation overlooking the sea, a higher law was given on the Mount of Beatitudes. Even ancient travelers have written in their journals of the peaceful feeling of this Mount. They have used the expression, "What a place of sweet spirit." A church designed by the Italian architect Barlucci marks the traditional location. Considering the proximity of this place to other communities nearby where Jesus taught and lived (Capernaum, Chorazim, and Bethsaida), the breathtaking view that inspires, and the feelings travelers have reported throughout the centuries, this is likely the place where Jesus shared an explanation of His mission with the twelve Apostles.

Leading the Sheep Today

Today, a farm house is there with more than a hundred sheep nearby. The boy shepherd leads them out every morning and returns in the late afternoon. Leading sheep is typical in this country. Usually there are about a dozen lead sheep, older ones from last year's flock. The shepherd often has them marked with bells around their necks. It is common to hear the boy talk to his sheep. He calls them when it's time to move on, and that's when the lead sheep immediately respond, ringing their bells as they run toward their shepherd. The ringing alerts the other sheep, and, like a wave, they follow the others.

Ancient Temple Practice

The shepherd's model is similar to an ancient biblical temple practice. For example, in the inner courtyard of the temple, the chief priest would light a fire and burn incense to signal his readiness for a sacrifice. That would alert the twelve priests in the next courtyard to wash and ready

themselves. Their signal to the congregation was the ringing of bells. The multitudes would then follow the priests to participate in the ritual.

Sermon on the Mount - A Shepherd's Model

In a possible shepherd's model, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, gives the Sermon on the Mount, apparently to the twelve disciples. In turn, their mission was to teach the multitudes. "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him." (Matthew 5:1)

Viewed as a Christian Guideline

The Beatitudes are often interpreted as Christian guidelines. "Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . mournful . . . meek . . . hunger and thirst after righteousness . . . merciful . . . pure in heart . . . peacemakers . . . persecuted for righteousness' sake." (Matthew 5:3-11)

Another Sermon on a Mount

However, there may be more to His intention, for another rendition of this same sermon is recorded as, "Blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me." (3 Nephi 12:3) In that sense, the Sermon on the Mount is inviting all people, whether rich or poor in spirit, happy or mourning, popular or persecuted, to come unto Him. He promised, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6) Again, more insight can be gained through another rendition of that verse which states that those hungering and thirsting after righteousness would be filled . . . ". . . with the Holy Ghost." (3 Nephi 12:6)

Law of Moses Fulfilled

Jesus indicated that the Law of Moses was fulfilled in Him. He was restoring a higher law, one that was governed and dictated more by the spirit and intent than by the letter of the law (which was given at Mount Sinai). A better understanding of the Sermon on the Mount comes when comparing it to the sermon and the commandments given on Mount Sinai. For example: "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother . . . shall be in danger of the judgment." (Matthew 5:20-22)

Additional Commandments

A closer look at the Beatitudes reveals that Jesus gave additional commandments. They were based on the original Law of Moses but had deeper spiritual meaning implying that the reason behind keeping the commandments was more the spiritual guideline than the letter of the law. Another example is, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh . . . to lust . . . hath committed adultery . . . already in his heart." (Matthew 5:27-28) Even clearer is the counsel, "Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that ye suffer [allow] none of these things to enter into your Heart." (3 Nephi 12:29)

The old and new laws are again like a chiasmus, with the Savior's ministry and subsequent atonement as the center, the turning point, linking the lesser and higher laws. The following poem illustrates the two principles.

Sermons on the Mounts (Daniel Rona)

The law was given, the standard set. But, best was not accepted yet.
We compromised with Heaven's voice, Just ten commandments was our choice.
Tooth for tooth and eye for eye, retribution was the cry.

Lesser Law

1. No other God -
2. Or image graven -
3. Not in vain, the name of Heaven -
4. Remember Sabbath,
5. Father, Mother -
6. Thou shalt not kill -
7. Nor defile another -
8. Do not steal -
9. Or false word belabor -
10. Do not covet the wealth of neighbor -

But then was promised a covenant new; inwardly, God would speak to you.
With sins forgiven and God revealed, a higher law on us was sealed.

Higher Law

10. Bless your neighbor -
9. Share a kindly word -
8. Give to others -
7. And clean thoughts preferred -
6. No need for anger to hide your smile -
5. Parents, children, walk the second mile -
4. Use the Sabbath, blessings to bestow -
3. The name of God in your good deeds show -
2. Your life will God's true image mirror,
1. As you and He become much nearer.

The secret of God's law is known—when action by intent is shown.
In Heaven's highest throne to stay, Use thought and reason to guide the way.
The highest law is now defined—in thought, in spirit and in the mind.

Chiasmus of the Law

As stated before, the two sets of law form a chiasmus around the ministry and atonement of Jesus—the lesser law that would lead to Him and the higher law to live like Him. Fifty days after Jesus' crucifixion at Passover, the Holy Ghost came upon the congregation in Jerusalem. The Jewish holiday commemorating the giving of the lesser law at Mount Sinai is also celebrated fifty days after Passover. Apparently, the same day was also used in giving the gift of the Holy Ghost, the higher law. The day is called Pentecost. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven

tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (ACTS 2:1-4)

A Biblical Leadership Order

Consider the leadership of the children of Israel, a council of three, with Moses, Aaron & Hur, a Council of Twelve Elders and a Council of Seventy. It is comparable to the leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The latter-day Israelites led now by the tribe of Ephraim (Joseph) are also organized with a “First Presidency of three, a Quorum of Twelve and a Council of Seventy.

Dead Sea Scrolls and Council of Twelve

The best preserved of these Qumran scrolls called *The Manual of Discipline*, describes the Essene’s organization (about 200 B.C to 70 A.D) that included a Teacher of Righteousness and two assistants. There was also a council of twelve overseers. Their priestly system included two castes: One of a higher authority that connected with an order of the *Melech Zedek* (righteous king), and another of lesser authority that connected with the Levitical, or order of Aaron. Jesus used the same system of government that was given to Moses, a system that partially continued to exist in other Jewish traditions up to and at the time of Jesus.