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**C1427 – July 213, 2014 – Matthew 2:1-12**  
**The Sermon On The Mount**

We come to the Sermon on the Mount. Tonight we'll be evaluating various approaches to the Sermon. Constable says, "The Sermon on the Mount is the first of five major discourses that Matthew included in his Gospel. Each one follows a narrative section, and each ends with the same formula statement concerning Jesus' authority (cf. 7:28–29). The Sermon on the Mount has probably attracted more attention than any discourse in history. The amount of material in print on this sermon reflects its popularity. It has resulted in the publication of thousands of books and articles."<sup>i</sup> John Martin mentions an author by the name of Kissinger who spent 125 pages listing "thirty-three schools of interpretation." Any analysis by me will, therefore, be admittedly limited in its scope since it is impossible to read all the published information on this vital discourse. As a result of all the published information John Walvoord said, "Few passages in the gospel have occasioned more disagreement as to their essential character than the Sermon on the Mount." Stanley Toussaint says, "after nineteen hundred years of careful investigation, fundamental problems still exist with regard to it." John Martin says, "Any open-minded interpreter of these chapters must admit that a consistent approach, although desirable, is difficult to achieve."<sup>ii</sup> Needless to say, it has been a rigor to work through the Sermon. However, I have come to a conclusion but it has taken several weeks to come to this conclusion. And it is a unique conclusion as far as I know. Therefore tonight I have prepared a presentation-evaluation of some of the interpretive approaches to the Sermon. This, I consider, part of my responsibility as a pastor-teacher. No one is a lone ranger or interpreter of the Bible. Jesus Christ has given gifted teachers to His Church and though none are infallible each have left valuable insights. Not only is considering what these gifted teachers have concluded a responsibility but also a mark of humility because it admits that others may have been taught things by the Spirit of God that we have not yet been

taught. So tonight we will consider the conclusions of these gifted teachers and compare these conclusions with Scripture in order to come to a final approach.

Just to give you an idea of some of the more outlandish approaches, Pope John Paul said the Sermon on the Mount was “pure gospel”. This is the *Soteriological Interpretation*. This interpretation views the Sermon on the Mount as the way to personal salvation. Because the Sermon is almost purely law this interpretation is salvation by works. And while that may be attractive to those trying to work their way to heaven it is contradictory to salvation by grace through faith. The fact is there is no mention of grace or faith or the Holy Spirit anywhere in the Sermon. If anything it is “pure law” not “pure gospel.” So much for the soteriological interpretation.

Another bizarre approach is the *Sociological Interpretation*. This interpretation views the Sermon on the Mount as the way to social salvation. It says that if society would simply adopt the principles Jesus taught in the Sermon into their legislation then the world would be a better place. While it’s true that the world would be a better place if people were poor in spirit, mourned over sin, gentle, merciful, pure in heart and sought for righteousness, etc..., history has shown us it is impossible for men to follow these principles. Men are depraved and wicked at heart. So much for the sociological interpretation.

Leaving the more bizarre approaches and bypassing many others we come to our own school of thought; those who embrace a grammatical-historical or literal interpretation of the Scripture. There are four views that we will consider; one is more widely accepted among evangelicals in general and the other three are distinctly dispensational. John Martin examines these four approaches that he deduced over the years in his article, *Dispensational Approaches to the Sermon on the Mount* in the book titled *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*. The four approaches he examines include the kingdom approach, the penitential approach, the interim ethic approach and the believer’s ethic approach. I studied all these views but am unsatisfied with all of them so I came up with my own view.

In presenting and evaluating each of these four views there are three critical things to keep in mind. The first is “How is Scripture to be interpreted?” Or

“What is the proper interpretive method?” Evangelicals in general have agreed to the literal, grammatical-historical approach. However, it is evident that there are nuances to how this approach is understood and there are some who overtly add elements such as “theological” or “critical” into the method. Consequently their views of the Sermon differ substantially from those that consistently follow the literal, grammatical-historical method. Since we are traditional dispensationalists then we seek to consistently practice interpreting Scripture according to the literal, grammatical-historical method, placing an emphasis on the context and the author’s intent. So the first issue is interpretation and we will be employing, or attempting to employ consistently, the literal, grammatical-historical method.

The second issue is whether the kingdom is being announced or offered? In other words, is there a genuine offer of the kingdom in view in the early chapters of Matthew or simply an announcement of its arrival? This is a hot topic. Many evangelicals and some professing dispensationalists reject the terminology that the kingdom was being *offered*. Erich Sauer is representative when he said, “...the New Testament knows nothing of an “offer” to the Jewish people by the Lord, at the beginning of His public ministry, to set up the earthly kingdom of Messiah, which offer being refused by the Jews the kingdom was consequently “postponed” to a later time.”<sup>iii</sup> Rather, he says, “Both John the Baptist and Jesus had declared: “Repent, *for* the kingdom of the heavens *has* drawn near” (Matt. 3:1, 2; 4:17). They did not say, “*If* you repent *then* the kingdom of the heavens will draw near.” The repentance of man was not the condition for the coming of the kingdom, but the coming of the kingdom was the ground of the demand for repentance. The kingdom itself had come in either case.”<sup>iv</sup> With that last sentence he betrays what he has done. What has he done? He’s revealed that he holds that there was a form of the kingdom that had already come at that time. In other words, the kingdom did not merely come near; it actually came. Not only is this an egregious violation of the meaning of ‘at hand’ in both John and Jesus’ preaching but it introduces a concept of the kingdom that is completely foreign to the straightforward reading of Scripture. This form of the kingdom as a spiritual kingdom that was being entered into by individuals who had repentance is not taught by the prophets. As George N. H. Peters says in his monumental work *The Theocratic Kingdom*, “Proposition 35. *The Prophets describe but one Kingdom....Obs. 1. There is one Kingdom under the Messiah,*

David's Son and Lord, in some way linked with the election of the Jewish nationality, which is *the great burden* of prophecy....Any other portraiture of it would be incongruous, and hostile to covenant and fact.”<sup>v</sup> He says again, “it is *a gross violation* of all propriety to take these prophetic descriptions and arbitrarily apply them, as many do, by dividing them—one part to the earth, another to the third heaven; one portion to the present time, and another to the distant future. This separation and disintegration of things that *belong together*, and relate to the *same period of time* and to *the same locality*...”<sup>vi</sup> The Scriptures only teach one kingdom. Sauer presents multiple forms of the kingdom and distinguishes the kingdom that came in the time of Christ with the kingdom in the future millennium. Sauer warns, “we must guard ourselves from a precipitate equalizing of “kingdom” with “Millennial kingdom.” The kingdom of God will indeed have in the end time its appearance in visible glory. But in its essence it is the royal estate of God, which sovereignty He displays in different times and dispensations in ever new forms.”<sup>vii</sup> What did he just do there to the kingdom? He re-defined it. He's got a now form and a not yet form. “Therefore” he says, “the term “kingdom of God” includes of course the Millennial kingdom, but at the same time comprises much more than this. Only the immediate context can make clear from case to case what particular historical form of the kingdom is meant; whether the Old Testament kingdom (Matt 21:43), or the present spiritual kingdom (in “mysteries”: Matt. 13:11), or the visible kingdom of the future (Luke 19:11), or the eternal kingdom.”<sup>viii</sup> Those passages are all interpretive battlegrounds but as George N. H. Peters says “Let it be candidly said, that any system of interpretation which will drive good men to ignore one of the plainest and most valuable guides in the interpretation of prophecy [i.e. the one kingdom concept], is most certainly defective.”<sup>ix</sup> Whenever one opens the door to multiple forms of the kingdom a string of logical consequences follows. Soon he will reject that the kingdom was offered in the early pages of Matthew as already discussed. A statement to the effect that only an announcement was being made stating the requirement of repentance to enter the now form of the kingdom. Before long they might say that the Church is that kingdom or that the two are at least crossing paths. Once this is done Israel and the Church are violently confused. At the last the Sermon on the Mount will be read as if it is addressed to the Church and then the whole meaning is lost. What must be maintained in order to avoid this confusing mess? Hold that a genuine offer of the kingdom was being made to the nation Israel. How the details would have worked out if the

nation had received Him is not a subject to be analyzed under the control of human rationalism. Certainly the cross work, the resurrection, the destruction of Rome, et. al would still have come to pass but the fact of God's plan does not make illegitimate the genuine offer that was being made. The text says "Repent, because the kingdom of the heavens is at hand." There is no other kingdom preached by the prophets than the earthly kingdom ruled by Messiah on David's throne in Jerusalem. The implied connection in the message is that repentance was necessary for that kingdom that had drawn near to actually come. If this is not a genuine offer then John and Jesus were illegitimate!

Third, lurking behind the rejection of a genuine offer of the kingdom and multiple kingdoms is another unbiblical concept. What is the biblical concept of God's sovereignty and human responsibility? One view of God's sovereignty borders on fatalism by not allowing the kingdoms arrival to be contingent on Israel's favorable response as the language suggests.<sup>x</sup> Sauer says, "Unbelief could not alter this." Yet Jesus said before His departure, "You will not see me till you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." If God states something to be contingent on human response then it is contingent. Those who border on fatalism reject that anything is contingent because they think it would then be uncertain. Therefore they say that if the kingdom was really being offered, contingent on Israel's favorable response, then the kingdom could have come without a cross. Such a thought is unthinkable to them. I agree that it is unthinkable, but that does not mean that upon Israel's favorable response Jesus would not have then had to go to the cross. God had clearly planned it; among other things that somehow would have occurred. It is not up to any human to reject this because he cannot figure it out. Those who border on fatalism are clearly thinking that if anything is contingent then God's plans could be interfered with. I reject the idea that contingency could interfere and maintain that on one hand God has planned all things from all eternity and on the other hand that this does not mitigate against man's genuine choices in bringing His plan to pass. The Scriptures teach a view of God's sovereignty and human responsibility that is best understood by the concept of contingency involving both God's plan and man's responsible choices. Since there is but one kingdom the proclamation of the kingdom was a genuine offer contingent on Israel's favorable response. If Israel had received the King the kingdom would have come. This does not negate the fact that the King, after being received, would have willingly laid

down His life on the cross and risen from the dead. Contingency doesn't state what will happen but rather the conditions upon which God will sovereignly bring certain elements of His plan to pass. Examples from Scripture are legion. Paul, when on the ship to Rome, came into a storm and God told him that all souls on board would survive; yet when some men tried to jump overboard, Paul warned that if they did they would surely perish. When his warning was heeded the men remained onboard with the effect that in the end all the souls did survive. Contingency views the situation as one in which the men could have genuinely decided to jump off the ship and perish but their decision not to evidences the sufficient influence of the Paul's warning to secure God's determined end. The plan was secure but the means by which the plan would be fulfilled was genuine human decision. Another example is seen in the troubling John/Elijah problem. Jesus told the nation that if they accepted John then He was Elijah. Yet they did not accept John and therefore John was not Elijah and Elijah is still to come. Contingency views the situation as one in which the nation could have genuinely accepted John and if they had he would have been Elijah and the kingdom would have come but their decision not to evidences that influences to the contrary were too strong for them to receive him. These examples, among others, demonstrate that all things are decreed by God's sovereign plan yet do not militate against the genuine responsibility and role of human decisions in the historical outworking of the plan. Therefore I uphold the traditional genuine *offer* view of the one kingdom of God and the role that Israel must play in accepting their King for that kingdom to come. This plays a serious role in how to understand the Sermon.

With those issues in the background let's review the setting. The placement of the Sermon early in Matthew's gospel establishes the context in which Matthew intended the Sermon to be understood. Chapters 1-4 present Jesus as the prophesied King and the kingdom He was offering as the prophesied kingdom. Martin agrees when says, "When the Sermon is examined in the context of Matthew it is found that it appears in the early part of the book in which John the Baptist and Jesus were preaching the message "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew placed the Sermon prior to the religious leaders' rejection of Jesus (chaps. 11 and 12) and prior to Jesus' rejection of them, which is immediately followed by His revelation of an interim period preceding the anticipated Old Testament kingdom (chap. 13)."<sup>xi</sup> The Sermon must then be understood in light of the governing context

of the offer of the one kingdom to Israel. The Church is not at all in view. The Church is unknown by any human being at this time. It will not be revealed until Matt 16 after the leader's rejection.

With that in view let's examine the first view; this one is held widely by evangelicals and some dispensationalists, particularly of the progressive stripe,<sup>xiii</sup> but also some traditional dispensationalists.<sup>xiii</sup> I think it is the worst view for a dispensationalist to hold. I personally do not think it is dispensational at all. It is called the *Believer's Ethic Interpretation*.<sup>xiv</sup> This view says that the Sermon on the Mount is primarily for believers of all dispensations. Jesus is teaching general principles of morality that are applicable to all men of all times. Martin says, "It is significant that Matthew did not record Jesus' words on ceremonial or dietary laws in his record of the Sermon. He used laws of basic morality, which transcend the Mosaic covenant and are applicable to all men of all time. This ethic, therefore, applies to all ages."<sup>xv</sup> The Believer's ethic interpretation follows this thinking. The preaching of John and Jesus to repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, states the demand for repentance necessary for an individual to enter into a spiritual form of the kingdom at that time. Because God planned for Jesus to go to the cross, be raised and to form His church then the Sermon is giving moral laws for the Church He knew was coming.<sup>xvi</sup>

This is a very weak view that glosses over important distinctions. It disregards the Jewish context of the Sermon and jumps straight to the Church when no Church is mentioned until Matt 16, after Israel's rejection. It disregards the ceremonial aspects mentioned in the Sermon that certainly could not apply to the Church. It disregards the clear differences between Israel under Law and the Church under Grace. It fails to understand the uniqueness of the offer of the kingdom at that time in distinction from the present time. It downplays the distinction of Israel and the Church and God's purposes concerning them. It necessarily holds to multiple forms of the kingdom. So much for the Believer's Ethic Interpretation.

The second view is the *Kingdom Interpretation*.<sup>xvii</sup> This is the oldest, most common and sometimes thought to be the only dispensational view of the Sermon on the Mount. Older dispensational writers such as Arno C. Gaebelein, L. S. Chafer and C. I. Scofield took this view among more modern dispensational writers like Donald Campbell. In this view the ethics Jesus

pronounces are the ethics of the future kingdom. The New Scofield Reference Bible says, “Having announced the kingdom of heaven as “near,” the King now, in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7), declares to His disciples (5:1) the principles of that kingdom.”<sup>xviii</sup> The Kingdom ethic interpretation<sup>xix</sup> is based on the following thinking. The Sermon falls in the context of John and Jesus offering the kingdom to Israel. The kingdom in view was the one kingdom defined by the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants to be an earthly kingdom with Jesus ruling on the throne in Jerusalem. If the nation accepted Jesus as the King then this kingdom would come. When the nation rejected the King the ethics of law expressed in the Sermon on the Mount were postponed and Christ began to reveal to the Church the ethics of grace primarily through the apostles in the Epistles. The Sermon on the Mount therefore applies directly to Israel and not the Church; though the general principles can be applied to the Church in a secondary fashion.

This view is not popular for a number of reasons but in my analysis many of the objections are responses to misrepresentations of the view. For example, Martin pigeon-holes the view as being applicable in the kingdom *only* and then launches into a criticism of this position by arguing that it was obviously applicable to those Jesus was speaking to since the kingdom was still to come. Yet adherents of the position, such as the editors of the New Scofield Study System, admit that it was applicable to Jesus’ audience when they claim that its principles are a reaffirmation of the Mosaic Law, that Jesus came to fulfill the Law and that the attitude of men toward this Law will determine their place in the coming kingdom.<sup>xx</sup> Campbell agrees saying, “this discourse will be pertinent when during the Tribulation period the gospel of the kingdom, heralding the coming King, will again be preached.”<sup>xxi</sup> The adherent’s only concern is that the Sermon not be directly applicable to the Church. Primary interpretation is one thing, application another. Our main concern should be primary interpretation, not application. Another common criticism is that Matthew composed his Gospel during the dispensation of the Church (c AD50) and therefore the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount must directly apply to the Church. This view is increasingly common in the literature yet it violates sound hermeneutics. The dispensation of composition does not determine the audience to whom it was immediately applicable. Moses recorded the entire Torah during the dispensation of Law and yet it records events under the previous dispensations of innocence, conscience, government and promise. Surely there is application to those who lived later



but the fact of his writing under the dispensation of the Law did not mean those sections of Scripture were not originally and primarily directed toward those who experienced them; such as Adam and Eve, Cain, Noah and his sons and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, et. Al. In the same way the Sermon on the Mount was written during the dispensation of the Church but was spoken under the dispensation of Law to Israel and therefore has primary application to them. The important question is not when was it written but to whom was it addressed. It should be obvious that Jesus was addressing Israel and they were living under the dispensation of Law. The fact that it was written later in the Church means very little. Matthew is recording the historical fact of what Jesus taught to the nation in light of the kingdom being 'at hand.' Did it have application to Jewish believers early in the Church? Surely it did. We can imagine the confrontations Jewish believers in the early Church faced with their fellow Jews over the Messiahship of Jesus as is well-attested by ancient history. Perhaps one of the arguments was that Jesus annulled the Law or the Prophets. By recording the sermon Matthew showed that indeed He did not, He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, not abolish them. His teaching in the Sermon established that. Further it is important to realize that the Kingdom view does teach secondary application of the general principles of the Sermon on the Mount to other believers. This should be obvious since principles proceed from the nature of the eternal, unchanging God. Even Scofield himself said, "But there is a beautiful moral application to the Christian. It always remains true that the poor in spirit, rather than the proud, are blessed, and those who mourn because of their sins and who are meek in the consciousness of them, will hunger and thirst after righteousness, and hungering will be filled...These principles fundamentally reappear in the teaching of the Epistles."<sup>xxii</sup> So some may think that proponents of the Kingdom interpretation went too far in emphasizing the ethics for the kingdom only but they do admit that all Scripture is "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" in the present time. However, the point of the Kingdom view is to clarify the primary interpretation and only then secondary application.

As to the overall character of the view it has several features that commend it. It respects the immediate context of the nation Israel being under the Mosaic Law. It respects the genuine offer of the kingdom by John and Jesus. It respects the nature of the kingdom being offered as the earthly kingdom predicted by the OT prophets. It respects the contingency of the kingdom

coming on Israel's repentance. It also recognizes that the ethics in the Sermon will be embodied by the future inhabitant of the kingdom. Its greatest weakness is that some forms do not show how to relate the Sermon to Jesus' immediate audience prior to the kingdom's arrival. All in all then, there are many points in favor of this view.

The second view is the *Penitential Interpretation*.<sup>xxiii</sup> This is the view of J. Dwight Pentecost and Arnold Fruchtenbaum. In this view Jesus states the true intent of the Law in order to impress upon His listeners the need for a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees. By recognizing that no one could live up to the true intent of the Law they would recognize their need for faith in Christ in order to enter the kingdom. Pentecost says, "The principle, then, becomes very clear that entrance into that kingdom was not on the basis of Pharisaic righteousness, for it produced none of the characteristics that Christ required. Rather, it was the righteousness being offered by Christ that would make them acceptable in the kingdom."<sup>xxiv</sup> This interpretation is based on the following thinking. John and Jesus both proclaimed the message of repentance in light of the 'at hand' kingdom (Matt 3:2; 4:17). The nation needed to repent because the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was not sufficient for kingdom entrance. This stark realization would drive them to the realization that the righteousness they needed was unattainable by human effort. Their only recourse would be to turn to faith in Jesus Christ whose righteousness would be imputed to them. The theme of the Sermon on the Mount is therefore Matt 5:20, "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

This view also has its critics. The strongest criticism is that the Sermon is addressed primarily to believing disciples not unbelievers. The disciples did not need to repent. They had already repented and believed in Jesus as the Messiah. Thus they already had imputed righteousness. In response to this criticism, the crowds were also present and it is unlikely that they were all believers. There could, therefore, be portions of the sermon that relate directly to their need for righteousness. Further, Jesus was training His disciples to be fishers of men and it is not unlikely that communicating the need for righteousness would be part of that training. Another common criticism of the view is often based on a misunderstanding of the expression Law and the Prophets. Proponents of the Penitential view refer to Jesus

fulfilling the Law as an expression of Jesus fulfilling the Mosaic Law. The criticism is that the view falls short because Jesus also came to fulfill the Prophets. In response it should be noted that the Prophet's role was to call the nation Israel back to the Law. They did not introduce anything additional to the Law. In effect then, the Prophets were wholly connected to the Law and so the criticism is not a substantial strike against this view.

On the whole the Penitential view has several things to commend it. It respects the immediate context of the message of John and Jesus of repentance. It respects the distinction in righteousness between that posited by the scribes and Pharisees and that posited by Jesus. It respects the genuine offer of the kingdom by John and Jesus. It respects the coming of the kingdom as contingent on Israel's repentance and acceptance of Jesus as their King. It recognizes a time of judgment preceding the kingdom when the nation Israel would be persecuted. It's most obvious defect is making imputed righteousness the main theme of the Sermon when believing disciples who already had righteousness were the main audience. Further there is no call for faith. Overall, the view has some things that commend it and some things that do not.

The third view is the *Interim Ethic Interpretation*. This is the view of Stanley Toussaint. In this view, Jesus is introducing a special ethic preliminary to the establishment of the kingdom. During this time the disciples would need to adhere to this very strict ethic. Toussaint says, "The sermon is *primarily* addressed to disciples exhorting them to a righteous life in view of the coming kingdom."<sup>xxv</sup> This interpretation is based on the following thinking: John and Jesus came preaching that the kingdom was 'at hand.' When John is arrested Jesus calls His first disciples and begins teaching and doing miracles that authenticate that He is the King. In response people began to flock to Jesus in anticipation of the kingdom. In this context the Lord primarily addresses His disciples, instructing them how to live in light of the coming kingdom. For those who live this way He pronounces blessing and reward in the kingdom to come.

This view seems to solve several problems that the kingdom and penitential views faced; albeit it necessary to repeat that some of those problems are due to a misrepresentations of the views; the kingdom view really doesn't have any problems unless the proponent indicates that Jesus' ethic was not aimed

at His present listeners at all. It does solve the problem of the penitential view which holds that the theme of the Sermon was addressing unbelievers and their need for imputed righteousness by showing that Jesus is primarily addressing believing disciples and their need for experiential righteousness for rewards in the kingdom.

However, the interim ethic view does have some problems. First, it claims Jesus is giving a new, special ethic rather than clarifying the true intent of the original Mosaic ethic. Jesus said that He came “to fulfill the Law;” not to give a new Law. Therefore the interim ethic view is weak on this point. It cannot account for Christ’s intent to fulfill the Law. A second common criticism that I do not find very problematic is, “When does the interim come to an end?” While proponents may not have directly answered this question, it seems consistent with Toussaint to say it would come to an end when the kingdom was no longer proclaimed to be ‘at hand.’ When the nation Israel rejected Jesus in Matt 12 the kingdom was never proclaimed to be ‘at hand’ again. Thus the interim ethic would have ended with the national rejection in Matt 12. Therefore it would not be directly applicable to the Church.

On the whole this view is interesting and has some points of merit but it does not seem to bear up under close scrutiny. It respects the context of John and Jesus preaching the kingdom as ‘at hand.’ It respects Jesus’ call of His first disciples and His authenticating miracles. It respects the initial popularity of Jesus in anticipation of the kingdom. It respects the primary addresses of the Lord as His believing disciples and the rewards they will enjoy in the kingdom if they follow His ethic. However, it falls short on the claim that Jesus was giving a new ethic distinct from the older Mosaic ethic.

The fifth view is the *Covenant Interpretation*. This is my view. It is a view based on the relationship of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. In this view Jesus is teaching His disciples that those who obey the true intent of the Mosaic covenant will be blessed under the provisions of the Abrahamic covenant in the kingdom that is to come. His interpretation of the Mosaic covenant and its righteousness stands in radical contrast to that of the scribes and the Pharisees. Their righteousness was an arrogant self-righteousness. Jesus Himself is the true embodiment of righteousness; poor in spirit, mourning over sin, gentle, hungry and thirsting for

righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, etc...His disciples should follow Him. If they did they would receive blessing and reward in the kingdom.

This view follows this line of thinking. At the root of the nation Israel is the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant. The terms of this covenant outlined that God will ultimately bless the nation Israel in the land, by the seed such that they are a global blessing. Within this covenant God gave the nation Israel the conditional Mosaic covenant. The terms of this covenant outline the obedience necessary for them to enjoy the blessings of the land, seed and global blessing. Jesus is teaching against the scribes and Pharisees who had reduced the terms of the Mosaic Covenant to mere external ritual. In order to qualify for the ultimate blessing in the land the nation needed to return to the true intent of the Mosaic covenant. If they did the Abrahamic Covenant would have been fulfilled and the kingdom would have come. Because they did not the kingdom was postponed. In the interim Christ has formed His body, the Church. The Church is not under the Mosaic Covenant. There are many precepts given to the Church that are similar to those under the Mosaic Covenant given to Israel. Because of this we can make general application to our lives. However, we have assets they did not have that enable us to meet the demands given to us in the Epistles. We have a grace upon grace, we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us, we are united to Christ and seated in the heavenly places. They looked for the kingdom; we look for Christ. There are significant differences. The Sermon on the Mount is therefore not for us. However, the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon will again be applicable when the Church is removed and Israel is again on center stage. Then they will need to follow these teachings in order to be spiritually prepared to receive their King and the kingdom.

Unfortunately there is widespread ignorance of the kingdom. Many want to see the Church as the kingdom itself or greater than the kingdom; the Church is not the kingdom, the Church is the bride of Christ in preparation for the kingdom. The kingdom is in the future and it is much bigger than the Church.

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<sup>i</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 4:21.

<sup>ii</sup> John A. Martin, "Dispensational Approaches to the Sermon on the Mount," in *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, p 36.

<sup>iii</sup> Erich Sauer, *Eternity to Eternity*, p 175.

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iv Ibid., Sauer, 176.

v George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom; Volume 1*, p 245.

vi Ibid., *Kingdom*, Peters, p 245.

vii Ibid., Sauer, *Eternity*, p 176.

viii Ibid., Sauer, *Eternity*, p 176.

ix Ibid., Peters, *Kingdom*, p 246.

x See Erich Sauer, *Eternity to Eternity*, pp 175-177.

xi Ibid., Martin, p 36.

xii E.g. John Martin.

xiii E.g. Jerry Hullinger.

xiv Also known as the Discipleship Ethic View. See Jerry Hullinger, *Is there a Dispensational Approach to the Sermon on the Mount?* [http://1024project.com/2014/02/17/is-there-a-dispensational-approach-to-the-sermon-on-the-mount/#\\_ftn3](http://1024project.com/2014/02/17/is-there-a-dispensational-approach-to-the-sermon-on-the-mount/#_ftn3)

xv Ibid., Martin, p 47.

xvi Specific arguments for this view from Hullinger's article include; First, Jesus in Matt 28:20 instructed his apostles to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you. For the original readers the "all things" would have included the Sermon on the Mount. Second, Jesus never retracts any of the words of the Sermon from binding on the lives of His disciples. Third, the Sermon in Luke 6 is the same sermon but not tied to the kingdom-offer. Fourth, if the principles do not bind us then how can we be a part of the kingdom of which it speaks and the rewards and penalties related to it? Fifth, the Sermon had a large influence on later NT writers. Sixth, the Sermon contains nothing new or unknown, but truths resting on passages of the OT. Thus even though they were spoken when the kingdom was at hand they maintain their validity today. Seventh, the present and future tenses argue for the validity now and in the future. Eighth, while Jesus spoke these things under the time frame of the Law, Matthew recorded them during the age of the Church as a teaching tool for church people. Ninth, true disciples were the primary audience. Tenth, the Sermon was given when the kingdom was being anticipated, the kingdom is still being anticipated today and therefore we should behave in the same manner.

These arguments are invalid for several reasons. First, to the argument that Jesus commanded his disciples to teach all nations to observe all that He commanded it may be said, first, that in Matt 10 Jesus told His disciples "do not go in the way of the Gentiles, go only to the house of Israel." So then it may be seen that the commandments prior to this statement are not to be included in the "all things. Second, it may be said that the character of the teaching in the early Sermon is completely contrary to that of Jesus' later teaching in the Upper Room. The character of the former is law; the character of the latter is grace. Chafer says that while the same precepts reappear they "do not reappear under grace in the character and coloring of the Law, but, rather, in the character and coloring of pure grace." Third, there are elements of a ceremonial nature in the Sermon such as going to present your offering at the altar that are entirely inconsistent with the Church (Matt 5:23). Second, to the argument that Jesus never retracted any of the words of the Sermon from binding on the lives of His disciples it may be remarked that there was no need to retract any of the words. What is important is not seeking for what was retracted but seeking for what is different. Of course there are similarities. Everyone recognizes this. That is not the issue. God is the same yesterday, today and forever. The issue is the mechanics of living under the economy of Israel changed in the economy of the Church. They had to live in the energy of the flesh; we can live in the energy of the Spirit. Third, to the argument that the Sermon in Luke 6 is the same sermon but not tied to the kingdom-offer it may be said that there are many convincing arguments that indeed they are different. Jesus probably did reiterate many elements of this sermon on different occasions but Matthew has his purposes and Luke his. Fourth, to the argument that if the principles do not bind us then how can we be a part of that kingdom and the rewards and penalties it may be responded that we are not subjects of that kingdom but rulers of that kingdom. We therefore share a different relationship to the kingdom than Israel. Fifth, to the argument that the Sermon had a large influence on later NT writers we may say that that may be the case. However, we may equally well say that they were under divine inspiration and that because God is the same yesterday, today and forever, they wrote many similar things. Sixth, to the argument that the Sermon contains nothing new or unknown, but truths resting on passages of the OT and therefore maintain their validity we

may say that it proves exactly the contrary. The truths of the Sermon come from Israel's Mosaic Covenant, the Church is and never will be under the Mosaic Covenant. That charter belongs solely and exclusively to Israel, not the Church. Seventh, to the argument that the present and future tense argue for validity now and in the future we may say that the present tense was then, when the kingdom was at hand. The kingdom was not at hand after Matt 12. Therefore it does not have validity now. Eighth, to the argument that even though Jesus spoke these things under the Law it was recorded by Matthew in the age of the Church and as a teaching tool to the Church we may respond, what do you expect? Was Matthew to write these things down virtually on top of the time of their occurrence? The dispensation changed in just over three years. If Matt and the other gospel writers were confined to these terms virtually nothing would have been written about Christ. Certainly Matthew did have his purposes of encouraging Jewish believers in the Church who faced much opposition from fellow 1st century Jews as to the Messiahship of Jesus. His teaching came with the authority of the Messiah and not as their scribes. It serves that purpose well. Ninth, to the argument that true disciples were the target of the Sermon we have no disagreement. Tenth, to the argument that the Sermon was given when the kingdom was being anticipated and the kingdom is still being anticipated to day we may respond that we are not anticipating the kingdom today, we are anticipating Christ's return for His bride, the Church.

<sup>xvii</sup> Also known as the Millennial View. See *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*. Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 89.

<sup>xviii</sup> New Scofield Study System, NIV, study notes, 1967, p 975.

<sup>xix</sup> These principles are considered by some to be reaffirmations of the Mosaic Law of the OT and not new principles. As the New Scofield Study System states, "In this sermon our Lord reaffirms the Mosaic law of the O.T. theocratic kingdom as the governing code in His coming kingdom on earth (5:17), and declares that the attitude of men toward this law will determine their place in the kingdom (5:19)." Chafer disagrees saying that they are both similar and dissimilar. "They are similar because they are both based on a covenant of works...They are similar because of elements which are common to both...They are dissimilar because of certain points in which they differ." (Chafer, *Systematic Theology, Volume 4*, p 211.

<sup>xx</sup> *Ibid.*, p 975.

<sup>xxi</sup> Quoted by Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 90.

<sup>xxii</sup> The Scofield Reference Bible, KJV, Ed. C. I. Scofield, 1945, p 1000.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Also known as the Repentance View. See Martin in article titled "Dispensational Approaches to the Sermon on the Mount," in *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, p 43. Also known as the Lutheran View, see Hullinger, [http://1024project.com/2014/02/17/is-there-a-dispensational-approach-to-the-sermon-on-the-mount/#\\_ftn3](http://1024project.com/2014/02/17/is-there-a-dispensational-approach-to-the-sermon-on-the-mount/#_ftn3)

<sup>xxiv</sup> Pentecost, *Words and Works*, p 176.

<sup>xxv</sup> Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 94

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