

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
XLV. The Sermon On The Mount: False And True Righteousness
A. Introduction To The Sermon On The Mount
(Matthew 5:1-2; Luke 6:17-19)

I. Introduction

- A. Isaiah 9:1-2 predicted that when the Messiah arrived and ministered in the spiritual darkness of Galilee, the people would see a Great Light, that this light would shine upon those who dwelt in the shadow of death.
- B. Christ's great Sermon on the Mount contains a key part of the revelation of that Great Light, and to understand the spiritual dynamics involved, we view an introduction of that sermon for insight and application:

II. Introduction To The Sermon On The Mount, Matthew 5:1-2; Luke 6:17-19.

- A. Though Jesus had attracted the positive attention of many people, they were ignorant of salvation truth:
 - 1. Right after appointing the Twelve as His disciples and apostles (Luke 6:12-16), Jesus came down from the mountain with them and stood on a wide, level plain where He could minister to the multitudes, Lk. 6:17a.
 - 2. The company of Jesus disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judaea and Jerusalem, from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon northwest of Galilee, came to hear Jesus and to be healed by Him, Luke 6:17b.
 - 3. Jesus was very popular at this time in His ministry: "Multitudes had heard Jesus' message that the kingdom was near. The message had been substantiated by the miracles that He had performed. These multitudes were curious and desired to see and hear for themselves the things about which they had heard. Thus far they had come to no conviction about the person of Christ and the truth that He proclaimed." (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 171)
- B. These multitudes were viewed by Christ as being outside the kingdom of God, that they needed to be informed on how to enter that kingdom, Ibid.
- C. However, great layers of false teaching had been taught and applied by Israel's religious leaders, and the multitudes needed to be informed of the truth in contrast to these errors just to **understand how** to **enter** God's kingdom, that they indeed might enter into the kingdom:
 - 1. Messiah's Forerunner in John the Baptist, the Old Testament writers, and Jesus had taught of the need for righteousness to enter the kingdom (Ibid.), and the Pharisees and Sadducees along with the people of Israel all believed that righteousness was the essential qualification for entrance into the kingdom, Ibid.
 - 2. However, what constituted true righteousness had to be discerned and thus acquired for one enter into God's kingdom, for there was a false righteousness to be shunned and true righteousness to be gained:
 - a. The Pharisees believed that keeping the traditions of the Law constituted true righteousness, that "a man was righteous if he attended the feasts, observed the rituals of sacrifice, and observed the traditions of the Pharisees," Ibid., p. 171-172.
 - b. The Sadducees "were concerned with the observances of the ceremonies of the Law," Ibid., p. 171.
 - c. The people of Israel "did not need to be told that righteousness was necessary for entrance into the kingdom. They would readily have acknowledged this truth, for Judaism taught it. The question in their minds would be, 'What is righteousness?' 'What kind of righteousness does the law demand?' 'Would Pharisaic righteousness admit us into Messiah's kingdom?'" (Ibid., p. 172)
 - d. In contrast to the view of Israel's leaders, Jesus taught as the "theme" in His Sermon on the Mount what "is found in Matthew 5:20: 'For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.'" (Ibid.) Jesus "preached a righteousness which came as the result of faith in His own person. Righteousness could not be earned by the works of people but had to be received as a gift from God." (Ibid.) Fittingly, then, as Jesus taught Nicodemus, the people needed the truth of John 3:16 NIV: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."
- D. "A conflict, then, arose between Christ and the Pharisees concerning righteousness," and Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount as a pre-evangelism message to illumine the truth against the error of Israel's teachers that the multitudes might cease relying on their works for salvation, but trust in Jesus to enter the kingdom!

Lesson: *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount was a corrective, pre-evangelism message to multitudes who were errantly taught that entrance into the kingdom was by works, and to inform them that salvation was only by faith in Jesus.*

Application: *May we heed Jesus' Sermon on the Mount to hold that salvation is not by works, but by faith in Jesus.*