

Episode: Three Gospels Series No. 04

Narrator: Matthew & Paul

Primary Scriptures: Matthew 5-7

Story Summary: Sermon on the Mount

Location: Kingdom of Judea (Israel)

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Matthew 5:3-10, 17, 37, 44-45; 6:1, 9-13, 19-20; 7:7-8, 12

Matthew shows the early ministry of Jesus to consist of traveling through Galilee while teaching, preaching, healing every sickness and disease, and casting out demons. Consequently, large crowds from all over Israel started following him. Matthew says Jesus saw the crowds, went up on a mountainside, sat down, his disciples came to him, and he began to teach “them.” It is not entirely clear if Jesus was teaching just the disciples, or the disciples and the crowd. This episode presumes Jesus was teaching everyone gathered there.

Although Matthew does not say where Jesus gave this teaching, one tradition holds that it was near the north end of the Sea of Galilee. In fact, there is a depression on a hillside located there where a speaker could sit and be heard for more than a hundred yards while speaking in a normal voice (it has since been planted in banana trees!).

Matthew presents the Sermon on the Mount as the words of Jesus, but it is very possible Jesus had already presented some or much of this material on other occasions while he was teaching and preaching. Although the teaching seems very long, it can be spoken in a normal voice in less than fifteen minutes.

In Matthew 15:17, Jesus insists that he has not come to abolish the Old Testament teachings, but to fulfill them. Throughout this talk, he teaches the Old Testament differently than the teachings they may have heard from others. You can only imagine the bewilderment, and possible delight, of the crowd as they heard his original and authoritative teachings. This would have especially been so because he was a plain Galilean, like most of the crowd, while many other teachers were highly educated and from the big city of Jerusalem.

The elite religious teachers generally tried to make themselves look good while downplaying the righteousness of poor people. Jesus made it a point to downplay the righteousness of the rich and religious rulers. His teachings threatened the whole order of Jewish society, and the Jewish leaders would respond harshly to the threat.

Though it may not have happened this way, imagine Jesus at the top of the hill teaching his disciples. After every couple of sentences, one of the apostles turns to the crowd and repeats the teaching in a loud voice that carries down the hill. As the sound of his words die, another person repeats them to the rest of the crowd. Words and concepts that have never before been uttered, penetrating the people’s hearts over and over and over.

Discussion Questions:

1. In what chapters can the Sermon on the Mount be found? How can you put these chapter numbers in your memory so that you don't forget them?
 2. Does Matthew say that he records the entire Sermon on the Mount?
 3. In this teaching, does Jesus teach like the other Jewish teachers?
 4. How did the crowd react to the Sermon on the Mount?
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1. Matthew 5, 6 and 7. 2. No. It is possible that Matthew's words are only part of the teachings that Jesus gave that day. 3. No, he gives very brief teachings on numerous topics. He does not quote any other religious leaders to support his conclusions. 4. Matthew 7:28 says the crowds were amazed because he taught with authority and not as the teachers of the law.

Application Questions:

1. Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with the verses known as the Beatitudes, found in Matthew 5:3-12. In these, he states that people who have certain situations or traits are specially blessed. Pick one of the Beatitudes that fits you, and visualize what it means to be blessed in the way Jesus describes. For instance, if you are a peacemaker, what does it really mean to be a child of God?
2. Matthew 5:14 says you are to be a light of the earth. Are you currently involved in any dark situations where you can be a light of righteousness and truth?
3. Matthew 5:22 indicates that anger is figuratively the same as murder. Do you currently carry any anger that you need to be relieved of?
4. Matthew 5:43 says to love your enemies. Do you have anybody in your life that you actively treat as an enemy? If you forgave them, would you be able to love them?
5. Matthew 7:12 says to do to others what you would have them do to you. Name something you have proactively done recently to positively affect someone else.

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Matthew 6:21 says your heart is where your treasure is. How do you spend your free time? What do you tend to stress about? How do you spend your money?
2. Matthew 7:1 warns about judging others. What is the difference in judging people and make a fair assessment of them so you know how to better interact with them?
3. Matthew 7:20 says you can be recognized for who you are by the fruit that you bear. Do you bear fruit? What does that say about you?