

The Sermon on the Mount

DEVOTIONAL STUDIES FROM THE
MEN'S MORNING FELLOWSHIP

[Matthew 7:28](#) And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching,
[Matthew 7:29](#) for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

So we come to the end of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. What a remarkable teaching it was and is! Some memorable highlights:

1. We saw the beatitudes – brief summary statements that summarize the way of living made possible by a relationship with the Lord.
2. It gave us an outline for prayer. We call it the Lord's Prayer but really it is for us to understand the intimacy of our relationship with God.
3. It revealed the Golden Rule of life.

- being changed to bring change -

It may have been given once, as a single sermon; or it may have been given over and over in different locations. Matthew certainly presents it as a single sermon.

There are a couple of images that suggest themselves as we look at Jesus delivering it as a single sermon:

1. Jesus spoke a great deal about the Law of Moses in His talk. His audience would have been reminded of Moses receiving the Law from God. When the Law was given the Lord came down on the mountain with thunder, lightning, and earthquake. The people were ordered to keep their distance from the mountain or die. Jesus ascended a mountain and invited all to draw near and hear. Then He spoke in a gentle but

- authoritative voice. Thus in the very giving of the sermon, clarifying and applying the Law, the people could see the change that was coming in the New Covenant.
2. Jesus sat as He delivered this talk. Teachers always sat; but something more may be pictured here. Since He spoke with such authority, His seated posture reminds you more of a King on His throne than a teacher giving a sermon. He was and is the King; these are the principles and precepts of kingdom living, both now and later.

It was a sermon intended for His disciples. Its thrust is not evangelistic - intended to call people into the church - but internal, as it sets standards for those already converted.

The instruction is intensely practical; it deals, not as much with things to be believed, but with things to be done. As we saw when we looked at individual beatitudes – this is what you already are (if you are a Christian).

In these closing verses we see that His disciples were **astonished** because Jesus spoke with **authority**.

Let's first talk about what it means to speak with **authority**. The religious teachers of Jesus' day did not speak with authority. They merely cited others as authorities for their positions. They would read a portion of the Law of Moses then tell you what various rabbi's had previously taught about it. They taught the traditions of men rather than the Word of God. It made more for debate than discipleship!

It's not unlike some Churches today which spend a lot of time teaching and discussing creeds of the faith rather than teaching God's Word. They refer to what I call the 'John's' – Calvin and Wesley. They tell you, "This is what John Calvin said," or, "This is what John Wesley said." And you thus embrace a theology based on the Word of God, either Reformed or Methodist (Arminian).

Not all of them, but many such adherents to the 'John's' spend most of their time arguing among one another or with other believers about their theology.

Jesus spoke with direct authority. We teach the Word of God as authoritative. I do not have authority; but the Word itself does and I am to simply expose what it says. When the Word is thus exposed, the people of God are directed authoritatively by God into attitudes and actions that are consistent with their new nature as believers.

Let me put it another way. If a believer is struggling in some area he or she can go to the Word of God for direction and guidance. When they discover what the Bible says about their situation they realize it speaks with authority. It's not the counsel of some man; it's the counsel of God. With the Word comes the enabling to perform it.

This book is my authority. It contains everything I need for life and godliness. I come to it pre-submitted, as it were. I come ready to hear and obey.

The hearers were also **astonished**. There are a lot of reasons we could cite to be **astonished**:

1. The original hearers were **astonished** simply because no one had ever spoken to them with authority. So I, as a believer, am **astonished** as I encounter things in the Bible which authoritatively give me a solid and sure foundation. I know I can trust its precepts and principles as bedrock to build my life upon.
2. I am **astonished** when I realize that the Bible is full of prophecy – most of which has been literally fulfilled to the letter.
3. I am **astonished** to see the simplicity of God's plan to reach the multitudes. It's **me** – as His witness; and it's **you**. It's one person being added then multiplying. Jesus uses common, ordinary folks in extraordinary ways.
4. Along those same lines, I am **astonished** that I can declare with authority to sinners that they can be saved by grace alone through faith alone. **I declare with delegated authority that their sins can be forgiven!**

We could go on-and-on. The **whole thing is astonishing!** Everything about knowing and walking with the Lord should constantly astonish us.

Does it? Or has my walk become routine and mundane? As the Sermon on the Mount ends I am challenged not so much to 'do' it as I am to realize how incredible it is to know God. **Astonished** at His authority, I won't be able to help but live-out the Sermon before others and thus reach them for Christ.

