

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 -7) An Overview

The ethical teaching of Jesus (ETJ) is summarized in the Sermon on the Mount (SoM). It is Matthew's collection of the principal teaching of Jesus on ethics and morality.

How are we to interpret the Sermon on the Mount, the heart of the ETJ?

Are these intended as laws for universal ethical and moral conduct?

Is the SoM a new Torah that replaces OT the Law of Moses? (Is that how Matthew's community understood it?)

Is it a rigorous ethic for an elite minority of Christians: Monastics? Clergy?

Are we to apply the Sermon on the Mount literally and exactly in all times, places, and situations?

Are these requirements for real discipleship and serious Christian living?
(Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*)

Or, are they merely principles or guidelines, like the "10 Suggestions" in Exodus 20?

Is the SoM intended more as a standard for being rather than doing, more about right attitudes than required actions?

Is the SoM a set of entrance requirements for Kingdom of God?

Is the ETJ not relevant for this dispensation, but only for the Millennium?
(Scofield Bible Dispensationalism)

Was the SoM merely an "interim ethic" for a hoped-for Kingdom that never came? (Albert Schweitzer)

Is the SoM a deliberately impossible standard meant to drive us to despair of self-effort and so to lead us to God's grace and faith for salvation?
(Luther)

How does the perfectionist standard of the ETJ fit with the gospel message of grace and forgiveness? (All is required but you get grace, mercy, and help? – CS Lewis)

Is the SoM a statement of the ideal will of God toward which we are to strive faithfully?

How does the already-but-not-yet nature of the KoG relate to the SoM?

How does the progressive nature of becoming like Christ relate to the ETJ?

Is the SoM to be interpreted mainly in the light of the dual love commands in Matt. 22:37-40?

Outline of the Sermon on the Mount

1. The Beatitudes (Mt. 5:3-12)
2. The Role of the Disciple as salt and light (Mt. 5:13-16)
3. Law, Righteousness, and Kingdom (Mt. 5:17-20)
4. The Antitheses (Mt. 5:21-48)
 - a. Murder, Anger, and Relationships (Mt. 5:21-26)
 - b. Personhood and Sexual Purity (Mt. 5:27-30)
 - c. Divorce and Fidelity (Mt. 5:31-32)
 - d. Communication and Honesty (Mt. 5:33-37)
 - e. Vengeance and Humility (Mt. 5:38-42)
 - f. Enemies and Love (Mt. 5:43-47)
 - g. Summary (Mt. 5:48)
5. False Spirituality (Mt. 6: 1-8, 16-18)
6. True Prayer; the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-14; cf. Luke 11:2-4)
7. Four Persistent Problems:
 - a. Possessions (Mt. 6: 19-24)
 - b. Anxiety (Mt. 6:25-34)
 - c. Judging Others (Mt. 7:1-6)
 - d. Persistence in Prayer (Mt. 7:7-11)
8. Summary and Conclusion:
 - a. The Golden Rule (Mt. 7:12)
 - b. The Two Ways (Mt. 7:13-20)
 - c. The Necessity of Action (Mt. 7:21-27)
 - d. Values and Priorities (Mt. 5:48; 6:33; 7:12; 22:37-40)

Selected resources for further study:

Serious commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew, such as C. Blomberg, D. Carson, D. Hagner, D. Harrington, C. Keener, J. Meier, G. Osborne, D. Senior.

Betz, H. D., *The Sermon on the Mount*. Fortress, 1995.

Davies, W. D., *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*. Cambridge, 1964.

Guelich, R., *The Sermon on the Mount*. Word, 1982.

McKnight, S., *Sermon on the Mount*. Zondervan, 2013.

Pennington, J., *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*. Baker, 2018.

Stott, J. R., *Christian Counter-Culture*. InterVarsity, 1978.