

**Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes**  
**Second Quarter 2016: *The Book of Matthew***  
**Lesson 3 “The Sermon on the Mount”**

**Read for this week’s study**

Matthew 5–7; Romans 7:7; Genesis 15:6; Micah 6:6–8; Luke 6:36; Matthew 13:44–52; Romans 8:5–10.

**Memory Text**

“When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Matthew 7:28, 29, NIV).

**Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide**

- I. Introduction
- II. Principles and Standards
- III. The Sermon Versus the Law
- IV. The Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees
- V. The Principles of the Kingdom
- VI. Receiving the Words of the Kingdom
- VII. Further Study

**Questions and Notes for Consideration**

**Facilitator: Jon Paulien**

1. Read Matthew 7:24-27. What is the primary difference between those who “build on the rock” and those who “build on the sand?” The lesson (Friday) brings out that on the shores of the Sea of Galilee in dry season, the difference between rock and sand is almost imperceptible. If that part of the analogy was in Jesus’ mind, how would it change the way you interpret this parable? How do the troubles of life reveal whether or not our foundation is built on rock or sand? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read lightly through Matthew, chapters five through seven. What are some of the main points Jesus seems to be making? How practical are these instructions for life in today’s world? How do you “do” the Sermon on the Mount? What do these instructions tell us about God? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Matthew 5:17-19, 21-22 and 27-28. What do these texts have to say about the role of the Ten Commandments in Christian life today? Is there any hint in the Ten Commandments themselves that a legal and outward reading is not enough? Read

Genesis 15:6. How does that enlighten us on the basis for salvation? (Monday's lesson)

4. Read Matthew 5:20. What does Jesus mean when He says that the righteousness of His followers must exceed that of the Pharisees, who were specialists in righteousness? How do verses 21-48 of the same chapter help illuminate His introductory words? In what ways is Micah 6:6-8 a summary of the Sermon on the Mount? (Tuesday's lesson)
5. Perhaps the most radical of all Jesus' teachings is found in Matthew 5:48. Is this standard even humanly possible? How do Matthew 5:43-47 and Luke 6:36 help us to understand Jesus' meaning in 5:48? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read Matthew 13:44-52. What is being said in these parables that can help readers to apply the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount to their own lives? In what ways does the separation that happens in the first two parables help us understand what is happening in the third parable? (Thursday's lesson)
7. While the concept of "truth" is crucial to an understanding of Jesus in the Gospel of John, and is closely related to the character of God, the word never appears in the mouth of Jesus in Matthew. Are there places in Matthew where the character of God is a major emphasis? (Friday's lesson)
8. What would it be like to live in a world where everyone followed the principles found in the Sermon on the Mount? (Friday's lesson)

## Outline of Matthew 5, 6

- I. Introduction (5:1,2)
- II. The Nature and Function of Discipleship (5:3-16)
  - A. The Nature of Discipleship (3-6)
  - B. The Function of Discipleship (7-12)
  - C. Salt of the Earth (13) [= A.]
  - D. Light of the World (14-16) [=B.]
- III. Better Righteousness (5:17-48)
  - A. Continuity with the Torah (17-19)
  - B. General Principle (20)
  - C. Six Illustrations of A & B (21-47)
    - 1. Anger (21-26)
    - 2. Adultery (27-30)
    - 3. Divorce (31-32)
    - 4. Oaths (33-37)
    - 5. Retaliation (38-42)
    - 6. Love (43-47)
  - D. Summary Statement (48)
- IV. Seek the Kingdom First (6:1-34)
  - A. Statement of General Principle (1)
  - B. Three Illustrations (2-18)
    - 1. Alms (2-4)
    - 2. Prayer (5-15)
    - 3. Fasting (16-18)
  - C. The Two Treasures (19-24)
  - D. Right Priorities Bring Freedom (25-34)

## Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

And when Jesus said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to be saved (enter the kingdom), what that meant was, than for a good man to be saved, because you couldn't be rich unless you were blessed, and you couldn't be blessed unless you were good. So that really puzzled them. When He said to the rich young ruler, "Give all that you have to the poor and come follow me," He wasn't testing his unselfishness. He was saying to the young man, give up all the evidence you're a good person. If you give up your wealth, the community will think you're a sinner and a heretic like me. And so when Jesus stood up at the Sermon on the Mount and said "blessed are the poor," that was heresy. Blessed are the poor? No, cursed were the poor. And that's because they were bad. So wealth was a sign of God's blessing, health was a sign of God's blessing, because you were a good person, you see. So when Jesus came to the cross and no one rescued Him, and He was afflicted, they *esteemed* Him smitten of God; and they were wrong. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Atonement and Your Picture of God*, recorded May, 1993, San Diego, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/1MMAANDP> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMAANDP> (Part 2)

And you remember in *Patriarchs and Prophets* where she explains what it really means to keep each of the Ten? It's the Sermon on the Mount, isn't it? The man who desires to do something wrong, may not do it but he's broken the rule. You see, the gentle words on the Mount of Olives have much more force than the other one which says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery". The Sermon on the Mount says if you even want to you've broken that rule.

So though it was much more gently given, there's no thunder, no lightening, no terror of the people, Jesus was giving it in those gentle terms in a far more powerful way. And some think that to talk about the law like this is to weaken authority and righteousness and virtue. It's just the opposite! You see, sin as just "breaking the rules" is not so difficult. It's bad enough, but to come to the place where you don't even *want* to do what's wrong is God's goal for us. That's not forgiveness, that's healing the damage done. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, *We've Camped Around This Mountain Long Enough*, #1, recorded July, 1989, South Dakota Conference Ministers Meeting} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/1MMCAMPED>

But the significant thing is that when Jesus began His ministry, His first described sermon got Him into trouble right away. Look at Matthew 5. Isn't this His first formal presentation described there, in the Gospels? So He arises. And seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and when He sat down His disciples came to Him. The Sermon on the Mount, we call it. In the Gospel of Luke, it says "He came to a level place," and some call it "The Sermon on the

Plain”, in Luke. If you look in *Desire of Ages*, Christ went up into the mountain, and seeing the people, He came down to this level place, and from there He spoke to the crowds, tying the two together. That’s incidental. “He opened his mouth, and taught them, saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

And He went on with the Beatitudes, and there aren’t very many—1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. And then He commented on their being the salt of the earth, and the light of the world; and He had to pause, because He sensed that their reaction was unfavorable to what He was saying, and He had to say, “Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them.” Why would He need to say that in the middle of this presentation? Is it that what He had already said would not seem to be in harmony with the Old Testament?

We need to pause on the meaning of “the Law and the Prophets”. As you know, the Jews divided the Old Testament into three canons: The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings; or The Law, The Prophets, and The Psalms. So that’s the long name for the Old Testament. The Law, The Prophets, and The Psalms. Sometimes that was shortened to The Law and The Prophets. Sometimes shortened to just The Law.

For example, Jesus, when they said, “You should not call yourself the Son of God; that’s blasphemy,” He said, “Does it not say in your law, we are all gods?” Little ‘g’. You know where that quote is? In the Psalms. So He called the Psalms, the Law. They knew what He was saying when He did this. Do you remember, near the end, that’s in Luke, isn’t it?

Jesus said everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.” They knew He was referring to the 39 books of the Old Testament.

So this isn’t “Think not that I have come to abolish the Ten Commandments.” Sometimes we use it as a key text like that. No. “Think not that I have come to abolish the whole Old Testament. I haven’t. I’ve not come to abolish the Old Testament. I’ve come to fulfill it.” Well, we think of fulfillment as fulfilling predictions. That’s too limited. He had come to fulfill it in every appropriate way, like explaining, telling them what it was all about; but they did not like His explanations. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Intertestament Period and Matthew*, recorded March, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/51MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/52MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

It was in the Sermon on the Mount that Christ uttered those memorable words that have continued to trouble saints and sinners alike ever since. “You therefore must be perfect.” Or should it be translated, “You therefore *will* be perfect.” Is it a promise or is it a command? The best known version of these words is one in the *King James Version*, now more than 300 years

old. And it's the first one on the Bible Reference Sheet. We hardly need to look it up, Matthew 5:48: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (KJV)

Whether those words are encouraging or forbidding, depends, as with so many of the other of our beliefs, upon the kind of person we believe our God to be—and our understanding of what He wants for His children throughout the universe. Especially us who live on this planet and therefore have been particularly caught up in the damaging consequences of the great controversy. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #14, "God Can Completely Heal the Damage Done" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/14MMCAG>

The word for obedience, as I mentioned, is a "willingness to listen." *God does not expect perfect performance.* I have just gone to my physician with an advanced case of arthritis, and he doesn't ask me to run the four-minute mile on the way home. He even helps me down the steps into my wheelchair, maybe. He says, "Do a little better this week, and be sure to come back, and take your medication." Now, what he asks of me is a "willingness to listen and cooperate." And I might die the next day, but I'm going to die his trusting patient. And I will arise his trusting patient and all will be well. So the performance God desires of us is the *willingness to listen.* He knows we are too weak to do it perfectly. I think to picture God as our Physician is the best model we could have. God knows our weaknesses. He wants us someday to be perfect: not just spiritually, but physically, mentally, socially—all those things. But He knows it is going to take a little time. What He wants right now up front is a sincere willingness to listen and stop cheating. Then the healing is guaranteed. God has the ability to perfectly restore every one of His children. No question. He has never lost a patient, except the patients who are unwilling to listen. So to know that obedience means primarily a willingness to listen, is the thing.

Lou: And James gives us a picture of what happens in our lives when we are willing to listen.

Graham: Oh, when we are willing to listen, we begin to behave like God—more and more like Him. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3 with Lou Venden, "All God Asks Is Trust" recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/3MMCAG>

We have two questions from different individuals about perfection. Let me read through them rather quickly. "You said that as trust in God grows, we behave more like God. That is, we move more toward being God-like or being perfect. Can we be perfect in this present world? If not, when can we expect to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect? If we can be perfect here,

can we be recognized as being perfect, and will everyone have the same degree of perfection?" Let me add this one: "You mentioned that when we get to heaven we might possibly have a lot to learn. Does this mean that while we are sinless, or perfect, we make mistakes?" People want to know about perfection.

Graham: Well, fortunately we have two hours coming up. We have a whole evening entitled, "God Can Completely Heal the Damage Done." I think it's that important; because a misunderstanding of perfection is a heavy burden and puts God in a very bad light. Now, I believe God can perfectly heal the damage done. No question about it. And perfection also needs to be understood as maturity and growing up—the right thing to do. And we will talk about the need to be so settled into the truth and grown up in the truth that we can survive the time of trouble. But as far as not making mistakes—a mistake is not a sin. And I think it is so important to be relieved of that. In the hereafter, you could plant your pomegranate tree too close to where you are living, and the Lord may come by later and say, "You know, you put it too close, didn't you. You might as well move it." That is not a sin. Sin is rebelliousness. Sin is distrust. Sin is not "making mistakes."

Lou: I remember as a child praying every evening and asking God to forgive me for all my sins and mistakes.

Graham: Yes.

Lou: Well I ran over that rather quickly and tended to think that the sins—I really preferred to think of them as mistakes.

Graham: A mistake didn't seem as serious as a sin.

Lou: That's right; maybe a little easier to forgive. If God is waiting for us to grow up in Him, won't He have to wait forever? Because there are always people being converted; is that why time goes on? When are we going to grow up?

Graham: That's true. There will be conversions right along, and we wonder how one could grow up in childhood to this maturity that we talked about. If God is not going to allow the closing events to occur until He has a generation like Job—mature enough and settled into the truth to pass through the time of trouble; thoughts that pass through my mind in that connection are this: I think we have assumed it takes a very, very long time to grow up from rebirth to maturity. I notice that when Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he suggested that they could be grown up much sooner.

And in Hebrews, it was just a few years later that he said, "By now you should be teachers, but I see you are still babes in the truth." I think that we could encourage people to believe they could grow up from rebirth to maturity much sooner; and it would be much more exciting. You know, when we're baptized, we think "I've launched myself on sixty-five years of slow

sanctification.” I think, “No, why not grow up without delay as quickly as possible and be settled into the truth?” But then when we have an absolutely out-of-sight, forbidding conception of perfection, we think “well, I’m not going to make it anyway.” The conception of perfection we find in the Bible is the conception of an individual who is so convinced of this truth about God, that if Satan should come as an angel of light—even as “Christ”, and say God is arbitrary, vengeful, unforgiving and severe, a twelve year-old might be able to say, “That’s not true and I will not believe it.” So I think we have made the difference too extended in there—and God can, under the accelerating, energizing events of the close of time, He can produce a generation of grown-up Jobs of all ages. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #4 with Lou Venden, “God’s Way of Restoring Trust” recorded February, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/4MMCAG>*

To servants, who think of salvation as dealing with their legal problems, perfection is yet another requirement. To friends, who think of salvation as healing the damage sin has done, perfection is an incredibly generous offer.

*Servants want to be completely forgiven. Friends want to be completely healed.*

Jesus didn’t come just to forgive sin. He came to do away with it. As Paul explains, God sent his son “to deal with sin,” (Romans 8:3, NSRV) “to do away with sin.” (Romans 8:3, GNB)

Forgiveness does not do away with sin. Sin is not something recorded in a book, to be forgiven from time to time. Sin is something that happens in people. Sin is rebellion and distrust. This is what Jesus came to eliminate. And the antidote for such sin is the truth about God himself.

“About that matter of perfection,” the heavenly Physician might call after us, as we walk away from his office. “Don’t worry about that at all. I’ve so designed my universe that it’s a law people become like the person they worship and admire.

“If you really stay my trusting friends, perfection will come. I’m not saying you won’t struggle any more. But the struggle won’t be the same.”

Servants struggle to overcome sin by trying to stamp it out. Friends know they can only get rid of sin by crowding it out with the truth. {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, 156. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

<http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter11.html>



### Further Study with Ellen White

Again, Christ had truths to present which the people were unprepared to accept or even to understand. For this reason also He taught them in parables. By connecting His teaching with the scenes of life, experience, or nature, He secured their attention and impressed their hearts. Afterward, as they looked upon the objects that illustrated His lessons, they recalled the words of the divine Teacher. To minds that were open to the Holy Spirit, the significance of the Saviour's teaching unfolded more and more. Mysteries grew clear, and that which had been hard to grasp became evident. {COL 21.1}

Jesus sought an avenue to every heart. By using a variety of illustrations, He not only presented truth in its different phases, but appealed to the different hearers. Their interest was aroused by figures drawn from the surroundings of their daily life. None who listened to the Saviour could feel that they were neglected or forgotten. The humblest, the most sinful, heard in His teaching a voice that spoke to them in sympathy and tenderness. {COL 21.2}

God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning. {DA 311.2}

Christ leaves us in no doubt as to the traits of character that He will always recognize and bless. From the ambitious favorites of the world He turns to those whom they disown, pronouncing all blessed who receive His light and life. To the poor in spirit, the meek, the lowly, the sorrowful, the despised, the persecuted, He opens His arms of refuge, saying: "Come unto Me, . . . and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28. {7T 269.2}

"God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3:17. Looking upon men in their suffering and degradation, Christ perceived ground for hope where appeared only despair and ruin. Wherever there existed a sense of need, there He saw opportunity for uplifting. Souls tempted, defeated, feeling themselves lost, ready to perish, He met, not with denunciation, but with blessing. {Ed 79.2}

The service rendered in sincerity of heart has great recompense. "Thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly." By the life we live through the grace of Christ the character is formed. The original loveliness begins to be restored to the soul. The attributes of the character of Christ are imparted, and the image of the Divine begins to shine forth. The faces of men and women who walk and work with God express the peace of heaven. They are surrounded with the atmosphere of heaven. For these souls the kingdom of God has begun.

They have Christ's joy, the joy of being a blessing to humanity. They have the honor of being accepted for the Master's use; they are trusted to do His work in His name. {DA 312.2}

It is the Creator of men, the Giver of the law, who declares that it is not His purpose to set aside its precepts. Everything in nature, from the mote in the sunbeam to the worlds on high, is under law. And upon obedience to these laws the order and harmony of the natural world depend. So there are great principles of righteousness to control the life of all intelligent beings, and upon conformity to these principles the well-being of the universe depends. Before this earth was called into being, God's law existed. Angels are governed by its principles, and in order for earth to be in harmony with heaven, man also must obey the divine statutes. To man in Eden Christ made known the precepts of the law "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Job 38:7. The mission of Christ on earth was not to destroy the law, but by His grace to bring man back to obedience to its precepts. {MB 48.1}

Christ longed to fill the world with a peace and joy that would be a similitude of that found in the heavenly world. [Matthew 5:1-12 quoted.] . . . {5BC 1084.2}

The gifts of Jesus are ever fresh and new. . . . Each new gift increases the capacity of the receiver to appreciate and enjoy the blessings of the Lord. He gives grace for grace. There can be no failure of supply. If you abide in Him, the fact that you receive a rich gift today insures the reception of a richer gift tomorrow. . . . {AG 104.2}

Through Christ's redeeming work the government of God stands justified. The Omnipotent One is made known as the God of love. Satan's charges are refuted, and his character unveiled. Rebellion can never again arise. Sin can never again enter the universe. Through eternal ages all are secure from apostasy. By love's self-sacrifice, the inhabitants of earth and heaven are bound to their Creator in bonds of indissoluble union. {DA 26.2}

It was taught by the Jews that before God's love is extended to the sinner, he must first repent. In their view, repentance is a work by which men earn the favor of Heaven. And it was this thought that led the Pharisees to exclaim in astonishment and anger. "This man receiveth sinners." According to their ideas He should permit none to approach Him but those who had repented. But in the parable of the lost sheep, Christ teaches that salvation does not come through our seeking after God but through God's seeking after us. "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way." Romans 3:11, 12. We do not repent in order that God may love us, but He reveals to us His love in order that we may repent. {COL 189.1}

**Recommended Reading:** *Desire of Ages* chapter 31 – "The Sermon on the Mount"

<https://egwwritings.org/>