

February 13-19, 2023

## Matthew 5; Luke 6

"BLESSED ARE YE"

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### Summary:

*Matthew 5. Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Mount—Its teachings replace and transcend some aspects of the law of Moses—All are commanded to be perfect like their Father in*

*Heaven.*

*Luke 6. Jesus heals on the Sabbath—He chooses the Twelve Apostles—He pronounces blessings upon the obedient and woes upon the wicked.*

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### Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

#### How can I visualize the Mount of Beatitudes?

It is a peaceful  
place. On the

northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, on a higher elevation overlooking the sea, a higher law was given on the Mount of Beatitudes. Even ancient travelers have written in their journals of the peaceful feeling of this Mount. They have used the expression, "What a place of sweet spirit." A church designed by the Italian architect Antonio Barlucci (1884-1960) marks the traditional location. Considering the proximity of this place to other communities nearby where Jesus taught and lived (Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida), the breathtaking view that inspires, and the feelings travelers have reported throughout the centuries, this is likely the place where Jesus shared an explanation of His mission with the twelve Apostles.

#### Were there many or were there just a few?

Until a few years ago, a farmhouse was located just below the Church. There with more than a hundred sheep that a boy shepherd led out every morning and returned in the late afternoon. Leading sheep is typical in this country. Usually there are about a dozen lead sheep, older ones from last year's flock. The shepherd often has them marked or evidenced with

bells around their necks. It is common to hear the boy talk to his sheep. He calls them when it's time to move on, and that's when the lead sheep immediately respond, ringing their bells as they run toward their shepherd. The ringing alerts the other sheep, and, like a wave, they follow. The shepherd's model is like an ancient biblical temple practice. For example, in the inner courtyard of the temple, the chief priest would light a fire and burn incense to signal his readiness for a sacrifice. That would alert the twelve priests in the next courtyard to wash and ready themselves. Their signal to the congregation was the ringing of bells. The multitudes would then follow the priests to participate in the ritual. In a possible shepherd's model, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, gave the Sermon on the Mount, in Israel, apparently to the twelve disciples. In turn, their mission was to teach the multitudes. Most of the references to "disciples" in the New Testament refer to the "General Authorities," the Twelve of that day. "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him." (**Matthew 5:1**) The "multitude" was in the Book of Mormon account, "And now it came to pass that there were a great multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful; and they were marveling and wondering one with another, and

were showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place. (3 Nephi 11:1) It seems that the number witnessing these events was a large number. And the multitude did see and hear and bear record; and they know that their record is true for they all of them did see and hear, every man for himself; and they were in number about two thousand and five hundred souls; and they did consist of men, women, and children. (3Nephi 17:25)

### **How are the Beatitudes sometimes misunderstood as a Christian guideline?**

The Beatitudes are often interpreted as Christian guidelines. "Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . mournful . . . meek . . . hunger and thirst after righteousness . . . merciful . . . pure in heart . . . peacemakers . . . persecuted for righteousness' sake." (Matthew 5:3-11)

Most discussions of the Sermon on the Mount concentrate on our "attitudes." However, there may be an underlying and supporting doctrine teaching a higher law. Consider it to be that the Savior was saying, "No matter who you are, rich or poor, mournful or happy, popular or persecuted, come unto me and I will give you the Holy Ghost?" The little-known understanding of that principles comes from the few extra words in the Book of Mormon's account of the "Beatitudes," another Sermon on a Mount that reveals more of the Savior's intention. "Blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me." (3 Nephi 12:3) In that sense, the Sermon on the Mount is inviting all people, whether rich or poor in spirit, happy or mourning, popular or persecuted, to come unto Him. He promised, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6) Again, more insight can be gained through the Book of Mormon rendition of that verse which states that those hungering and thirsting after

righteousness would be filled . . . with the Holy Ghost." (3 Nephi 12:6)

### **How was the "Law of Moses" fulfilled?**

Jesus indicated that the Law of Moses was fulfilled in Him. He was restoring a higher law, one that was governed and dictated more by the spirit and intent than by the letter of the law (which was given at Mount Sinai). A better understanding of the Sermon on the Mount comes when comparing it to the sermon and the commandments given on Mount Sinai. For example: "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother . . . shall be in danger of the judgment." (Matthew 5:20-22) A closer look at the Beatitudes reveals that Jesus gave additional commandments. They were based on the original Law of Moses but had deeper spiritual meaning implying that the reason behind keeping the commandments was more the spiritual guideline than the letter of the law. Another example is, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh . . . to lust . . . hath committed adultery . . . already in his heart." (Matthew 5:27-28) Even clearer is the counsel, "Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that ye suffer [allow] none of these things to enter into your Heart." (3 Nephi 12:29)

### **How do the "Old Law" and the "New Law" form a chiasmus centering on the Savior?**

The old and new laws are again like a chiasmus, with the Savior's ministry and subsequent atonement as the center, the turning point, linking the lesser and higher

laws. The following poem came to my mind and illustrated the two principles.

### THE SERMONS ON THE MOUNTS

The law was given, the standard set. But best was not accepted yet.

We compromised with Heaven's voice,  
Just ten commandments was our choice.  
Tooth for tooth and eye for eye, Retribution was the cry.

#### The Lesser Law

1. No other God -
2. Or image graven -
3. Not in vain, the name of Heaven -
4. Remember Sabbath,
5. Father, Mother -
6. Thou shalt not kill -
7. Nor defile another -
8. Do not steal -
9. Or false word belabor -
10. Do not covet the wealth of neighbor -

But then was promised a covenant new,  
Inwardly, God would speak to you.  
With sins forgiven and God revealed,  
A higher law on us was sealed.

10. Bless your neighbor -
9. Share a kindly word -
8. Give to others -
7. And clean thoughts preferred -
6. No need for anger to hide your smile -
5. Parents, children walk the second mile -
4. Use the Sabbath, blessings to bestow -
3. The name of God in your good deeds show -
2. Your life will God's true image mirror,
1. As you and He become much nearer.

#### The Higher Law

The secret of God's law is known  
When action by intent is shown  
In Heaven's highest throne to stay,  
Use thought and reason to guide the way.  
The highest law is now defined -  
In thought, in spirit and in the mind.

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### How does a member of the Godhead remind me of the Higher Law?

As stated before, the two sets of law form a chiasmus around the ministry and atonement of Jesus—the lesser law that would lead to Him and the higher law to live like Him. Fifty days after Jesus'

crucifixion at Passover, the Holy Ghost came upon the congregation in Jerusalem. The Jewish holiday commemorating the giving of the lesser law at Mount Sinai is also celebrated fifty days after Passover. Apparently, the same day was also used in giving the gift of the Holy Ghost, the higher law. The day is called Pentecost. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4)

### How does the Bible explain punishment for crimes?

In examining the scant information we have of Jesus' life, we see how privately and personally He takes burdens upon Himself. In the account of a woman taken in adultery, Jesus was questioned if she should be stoned. We will later discuss the redeeming lesson of His reply. Stoning is a capital punishment indicated in the Mosaic Law. Biblical punishments were based on the crime, unlike today's punishments, which are often based on the person or the circumstances. Stoning was the punishment for several capital sins including murder (Numbers 35:30), adultery (Deuteronomy 22:22-24), blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16), breaking the Sabbath (Numbers 15:32-35), apostasy (Deuteronomy 13:6-10), and rebellion against parents (Deuteronomy 21:18-21). A better insight to capital punishment can be seen in the *Talmud* (written biblical Jewish interpretations). Rabbinic interpretations of the ancient Jewish law of stoning indicate that it was required that the convicted person be thrown over a cliff. One of at least two witnesses (and

thereby accusers) was responsible to make sure the criminal was dead. The aversion to directly taking another's life would motivate having the fall cause the death of the accused. A witness/accuser always had to cast the first stone and then all the others threw stones to cover the body (the burial – without a memorial grave marker). Abandoned quarries, like the “place of a skull” in Jerusalem that may have prompted Isaiah to prophesy “where the “stone was rejected,” would be likely locations for such rare executions. In the Galilee, there is a village called Turan, close to Nazareth and Cana, that is the traditional spot where Jesus was accused of not preventing His disciples from harvesting, threshing, and winnowing grain on the Sabbath day (breaking the Sabbath, a capital offence). They were doing this for their own sustenance, needing to eat. There is still a huge stone quarry at Turan which provides a visual connection to the Pharisees and their “death accusation.” “And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. **(Mark 2:27-28)** “And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” **(Luke 6:5)**

### **What symbolic things were done to keep the Sabbath?**

An integral part of ancient Sabbath observance has been the pouring and blessing of wine, Kiddush, followed by the breaking and blessing of bread, *Motzi*. There is a specific order to dignify the Sabbath and remind us to make it holy. “The table is set for the festive meal, with the Sabbath candles glowing in polished holders. The family stands and the father raises the brimming silver cup to say *Kiddush*, the blessing and sanctification over wine. This age-old ceremony is in fulfillment of the biblical command, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy” **(Exodus 20:8)**. “Remember it,” said the rabbis, “over wine,” for wine is the

symbol of joy.” **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)** Then, the *Motzi*. “Two loaves appear on the Sabbath table. They recall the double portion of manna which the Israelites in the desert gathered on the eve of the Sabbath for the next day.” **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)** Let us also examine three major symbolic reasons and meanings for the Sabbath. **(1)** The Sabbath is to be kept in remembrance of the creation. “Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed. **(Exodus 31:13-17)** **(2)** The Sabbath is to be kept in remembrance of being delivered from bondage in Egypt. “But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.”

**(Deuteronomy 5:14-15) (3)** The Sabbath is to be kept in remembrance of the anticipated atonement.

**What is the reason the Sabbath day was changed from the seventh to the first day of the week?**

“So important is Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) that it is the only fast day which may be observed on the Sabbath and is never postponed until the next day. Moreover, the Torah describes the holiness of Yom Kippur by calling it the “Sabbath of Sabbaths.” **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)** “The Sabbath bears record of Christ: from Adam to Moses it was the 7th day to signify that our Lord rested on that day from his creative labors **(Ex. 20:8-11)**; from Moses to Christ, the Sabbath day was a different day each year (than now) to commemorate our Lord's leading of the children of Israel out of bondage **(Deut. 5:12-15)**; and from the apostolic day until now, the Sabbath has been the first day of the week to point attention to our Lord's resurrection on his holy day.” **(Bruce R.**

**McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, Pg.452)** To the Jews who commemorate the first two reasons for the Sabbath, a sip of wine is partaken, followed by bread. The prayers recited include a recollection of the past, with an eye to the future, the third reason, where an even greater deliverance is anticipated. In this sense, it is a chiasma that focuses on the atonement in the center. The Savior's atonement began with suffering and bleeding from every pore, (symbolized by wine) and then followed by giving his body, (symbolized by broken bread). To those who truly believe in the Messiah, the Sabbath day is commemorated by partaking of a morsel of bread followed by a sip of wine. The prayers are in remembrance of the greatest deliverance eternity will ever know. In Old Testament times, wine and bread (in anticipation) then in New Testament times it was changed to bread and wine (in remembrance); these are the symbols of the Sabbath, a joyful thought of redemption!