

## **“KINGDOM CONSTITUTION” – Lessons in the Sermon on the Mount 9.25.16**

### **Matthew 5-7 “The Constitution of the Kingdom” (Overview) Craig Crawshaw**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Constitution of the United States of America describes the essence of who we are as a nation. It lays down the foundation of this great country of ours so that we may ever look back to see what our nation is to be in the present and in the future. It establishes the basis of law and order for our land. It is, as the word “constitution” indicates, of what our nation constitutes – what we are “made of.” It is who we are. And the “we” are the people. The preamble of the constitution begins “We the people ...” for we are a nation of people. Our constitution tells us who we are, for all time.

I see the sermon of our Lord Jesus which we call “The Sermon on the Mount” in the same regard. It describes who we are as followers of King Jesus. It lays down the foundation of the Kingdom of God – then, now and forever. It establishes the basis of law and order for the Christian. It tells us what we are made of – who we are in Christ Jesus. It’s preamble – the Beatitudes – say “blessed are they ...”, that is, the people of the kingdom, for we are a kingdom of people – those chosen by and redeemed by the blood of our King Jesus.

Thus, I have entitled this sermon series “Kingdom Constitution.” We will find that this sermon teaches us who we are as people of the kingdom. It does not teach us how to become a Christian, any more than the United States Constitution teaches how to become a citizen. Rather, it tells us who we are in Christ and expects us to rise to be that excellent citizen in the power of the King who has called us into His kingdom.

Yet, for those who are not citizens of this Kingdom, the Sermon is nonetheless winsome, for it calls longingly to those who would desire such a Kingdom of love, grace and mercy. Just as the United States of America calls to those outside its borders of freedom and opportunity, so the Sermon on the Mount calls to those yet uncommitted to Christ to a life of spiritual freedom and supernatural opportunity.

So whether you study this great sermon as a citizen or non-citizen, there is great benefit to be derived as you feast on the constitution of God’s Kingdom. May it bless you and draw you to the King!

#### **THE PLACE OF THE SERMON IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST**

This sermon is recorded in two places in the gospels – in Luke, Chapter 6, in an abbreviated version, and in Matthew, Chapter 5 through 7 in its more full version. We will spend most of our time in the text of Matthew because of its more complete nature. Yet the placement of the sermon in Luke is very helpful to determine when the sermon took place in the life of Christ. This is because Luke was clearly concerned with putting everything “in consecutive order” (Luke 1:3), where as Matthew seemed to care more for recording things by subject – for instance miracles together and parables together.

Luke 6 begins in verse one thus: “Now it happened that He was passing through some grainfields on a Sabbath ...” Literally this reads on the “second first Sabbath.” So what, you say. Well, the “First Sabbath” was the first Sabbath after Passover. (Lev. 23:15). Thus the second first Sabbath would be the second time in Jesus’ ministry that there had been a Sabbath following Passover. This marks this chapter 6 of Luke as being at the beginning of Jesus’ 2<sup>nd</sup> year of ministry. And what occurs right after this account? – the choosing of the 12 disciples (Luke 6:12ff). And what follows the choosing of the twelve? – the Sermon on the Mount (Luke 6:20ff).

Thus it appears that this great Constitution of the Kingdom is given directly after the choosing of the 12 disciples, and to the multitudes that followed Him to hear His teachings.

#### **THE RELEVANCE OF THE SERMON**

Some say that the sermon was only meant for the disciples and for their day, whereas others say

that the Kingdom principles given are only for the millennial age to come. If so, there is little compulsion to study this sermon for our use. But we remember that after Jesus was baptized and tempted in the wilderness, he began His earthy ministry. Both Matthew and Mark record Jesus as beginning his ministry by saying “Repent (and believe – Mark), for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15). So clearly the Kingdom of God began when Jesus began His earthly ministry. We can rightly say that the Kingdom is past in that sense. But it is also present, for Peter taught that we are a “kingdom of priests” called out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9). And it is future, for His kingdom continues forever, as John records in Revelation. Thus this sermon is relevant NOW and always as the constitution of the Kingdom of God.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones gives us 4 specific reasons why this sermon is particularly valuable to study (in chapter one of his book, “Studies in the Sermon on the Mount.”

1. Jesus died to enable us to LIVE the principles of this sermon. The principles of this sermon are what WE ARE SAVED FOR in this life.
2. The living out of the sermon is the consequence of the NEW BIRTH we have as believers. As we read of these principles so hard to master, we realize the absolute need of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling presence to make living out these principles possible.
3. This sermon is the “how to” of experiencing BLESSING in life. The more we study and apply, the more BLESSING we receive!
4. This sermon provides the best motivation for EVANGELISM. As we live out these principles we show the world what a true Christian, and that becomes very attractive to those who are being called of God to join His Kingdom.

## A LOGICAL SEQUENCE TO THE SERMON

The teaching of the Bible, especially the New Testament, tends to move from doctrine to practice. We see this is most all of the epistles, where the opening chapter(s) lay out what we are to know, and then subsequent chapters teach how we are to put this knowledge into practice.

The Sermon on the Mount teaches along these same lines. Or perhaps better said, it moves from WHO WE ARE to HOW WE ARE TO LIVE.

The “WHO WE ARE” is in 5:3-16. This is the Beatitudes and our designation as SALT and LIGHT in the world. Understand that this is not what we are SUPPOSED to be, but rather what we ARE as children of the King. This is critical to understand, and we will reiterate it continually as we go through this section. Once we understand WHO we are, then and only then can we properly proceed to see WHAT we are to be as citizens of this kingdom.

The “HOW WE ARE TO LIVE” is in 5:17 through Chapter 7. And this longer section can be helpfully sub-divided into three sections by the three chapters that contain them.

- a. 5:17-48 (the remainder of Chapter 5) speaks of our relation to the **LAW OF GOD**
- b. Chapter 6 speaks of our relation to the **PRESENCE OF GOD**
- c. Chapter 7 speaks of our relation to the **FEAR OF GOD**

Every citizen, whether of the U.S.A. or the Kingdom of God, must learn to follow the LAW of the land, relate healthily to the PRESENCE of the government and FEAR the consequence of being a rebellious citizen, leaning to choose the right path.

### More specifically, as we study we will learn:

1. How to relate to God’s **LAW** – particularly the Old Testament law. Rather than being superceded, it is fulfilled under Kingdom law. This first section begins thus:

**Matthew 5:17** *Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.*

And then Jesus goes on to not change the law, but show that we must obey it even more fully, embracing the spirit of the principle and not just the letter. So murder becomes even speaking angrily with another; adultery becomes looking at another with lust; loving your neighbor becomes even loving your enemy, and so on.

The final statement of this section hits us where it hurts (in the sin nature):

**Matthew 5:48** *Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

Remember this is not what we are SUPPOSED to be (and can never attain) but what we ARE in Christ. Think on that one.

2. How to relate to the **PRESENCE** of God. In other words we are to learn how our thoughts and intentions are to please God in intimate relationship.

Here we will learn about giving, praying (the Lord's Prayer), fasting, handling money and dealing with anxiety. Toward the end of this section we have the consummate summary:

**Matthew 6:33** *But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

3. How to relate to the **FEAR** of God. We must not judge, we must not ask of God inappropriately, we must treat others as we would want to be treated, we must choose our life's path wisely, and assess life's dangers wisely – for

**Matthew 7:21** *Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven ....*

And finally we will learn of the only sure foundation for life and of true wisdom versus folly.

Lloyd-Jones reminds us in his book:

1. The Sermon is a description of CHARACTER, not a code of ethics to follow
2. The Sermon is a set of PRINCIPLES, not a new law to follow
3. The Sermon is not to be argued with. If you find yourself disagreeing with a principle, you must be interpreting it wrongly (we are surely to love our enemies)
4. The Sermon is never ridiculous (we are not to pluck out any eyes or cut off any limbs)
5. The Sermon is never impossible (we CAN be perfectly righteous in God's eyes)

## **A FINAL REITTERATION**

I know I have said it multiple times already, and I will say it many times again: this sermon is not a list of standards to which we are to attain. Rather it is what we are and have attained in Christ. It is the commanding officer's final reminders as he sends us to battle. It is the coach's final "pep talk" to urge you on to victory. It is the parent's final reminders as he sends you out on your first solo drive, or on your honeymoon. It is the Master's statement of the Kingdom Constitution – what you are as a citizen of His Kingdom. "Now go live up to it," He says. And I will always be with you.

Get ready to LEARN and LIVE your Kingdom Constitution.