



“He Opened His Mouth, and Taught Them”

Matthew 5-10

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Introduction

These chapters include two of Matthew’s five ‘books’ or sections of his writing that remind us of Moses’ five books in the Old Testament. The Sermon on the Mount (5-7) is the magnificent sermon of Jesus that concludes the introductory proclamation in chapters 3-4. The second section takes in chapters 8-10, with 8-9 being an account of many great deeds of Jesus, including ten healings, and chapter 10 being the concluding discourse of that section.

Outline of Matthew

Matthew writes to testify that Jesus is the manifestation of God’s love and care for his people. Jesus is *Emmanuel* (God with us) at the beginning (1:23) and likewise promises to be with the disciples always at the end (28:20). This concept brackets the entire structure of the book to remind us what he does for us.

Matthew seems to break his work into seven sections (seven representing perfection): a prologue and climax, with five middle sections, each concluding with a major discourse by Jesus. This makes it similar to the five books of Moses. Thus an overall outline for the book of Matthew is as follows (with the focus of this lesson in bold):

1. Prologue—Birth and Infancy (1-2)
2. Proclamation (3-4); **Sermon on the Mount (5-7)**
3. **Galilean ministry (8-9); Missionary discourse (10)**
4. Opposition (11-12); Parables (13)
5. Christ and the Church (14-17); Church life and order (18)
6. Jerusalem (19-23); Eschatological discourse (24-25)
7. Climax—Passion, Death, and Resurrection (26-28)

Note: In each lesson on the gospels, where there are overlapping or parallel texts, those will be noted in the heading. References in bold are the preferred reading(s) and will be the principal section of analysis, though some unique points in the current gospel will be noted, as well as helpful JST changes.¹

Sermon on the Mount (5-7)

The New Testament records a similar sermon in both Matthew 5-7 and Luke 6 (with pieces in other chapters of Luke). Matthew’s is called “The Sermon on the Mount” because Matthew 5:1 says he delivered it on a mountain. Luke 6:17 says he gave it “in the plain” so it’s usually called the Sermon on the Plain. Luke’s is much shorter and of different content. Though it’s an area of mild disagreement, most believe that these are instances of similar teachings delivered in different circumstances. In fact, some view Matthew’s as given to disciples close to Jesus and Luke’s as given to the public, due to the more personal nature of Matthew and its higher level of commitment. It could also be that Matthew’s sermon is an aggregate of several teachings given on different occasions but organized by Matthew in this manner, according to his theme of Jesus as the new law giver.

Latter-day Saints are fortunate to have yet a third account of this sermon in 3 Nephi 12-14, delivered to the Nephite and Lamanite peoples gathered at the Bountiful temple shortly after Jesus’ resurrection. It is clearly based on Matthew, not Luke, yet with substantial and fascinating differences compared to both texts. This version has been dubbed the Sermon at the Temple. Finally, the JST is, in essence, a fourth version of the sermon, with yet more

¹ Not all JST changes are noted, only those of textual or doctrinal interest. Interested readers are encouraged to see Wayment, *The Complete Joseph Smith Translation of the New Testament* or the manuscripts themselves on the Joseph Smith Papers website (josephsmithpapers.org).

insights into the meaning of Jesus' words; though similar to 3 Nephi 12-14, fifty-eight of the eighty-six verses changed in the JST version are different from those of 3 Nephi, some in small ways and some in significant ones.

Comparison of all four is a valuable endeavor, though well outside the scope of these notes. One scholar notes that the Sermon at the Temple is clearly a covenant-making and temple text, which not only lends strength to the Matthew/Luke contrast, but adds vast amounts of clarity and richness to the Sermon on the Mount.² Some scholars see the Sermon on the Mount as a hodge-podge collection of sayings that don't tie together very well, but seeing it as a temple text unifies it and pulls it together into a single message with one aim—to prepare the listener to enter the presence of God.

Consider this outline of all three chapters as it relates to the Sermon being a temple or covenantal text:

- The Sermon opens with blessings promised to those present if they are obedient to the principles taught.
- He invites them to be like salt and light, setting them apart from the world.
- He shows how he fulfills the Law of Moses and prohibits anger, disagreement, adultery, and evil thoughts, and confirms the sanctity of marriage.
- He counsels them about the seriousness of oath taking.
- He enjoins them to love all, even their enemies.
- He invites them to be like their Father in heaven, to achieve their full potential.
- He advocates private devotion over public display, in three specific activities: alms giving, prayer, and fasting.
- He teaches how to pray in private and leads them in a group prayer.
- He speaks of a consecrated attitude, taking our minds off the things of the world and staying focused on eternal rewards.
- He talks about God providing for us, including clothing.
- He condemns hypocrisy and enjoins them to secrecy about sacred things.
- He advocates asking the Father through prayer for special blessings.
- He counsels against false teachings and teaches how to judge truth.
- He describes an encounter with the Lord with judgment and blessings.

There are more pages of commentary written about the Sermon on the Mount than any other New Testament text, including one article I authored as part of the 2010 (39th) Sperry Symposium (<http://rsc-dev.byu.edu/archived/sermon-mountain-latter-day-scripture-39th-annual-byu-sidney-b-sperry-symposium/17-sermon-mountain>); the whole Symposium is online here: <http://rsc-dev.byu.edu/recent/sermon-mountain-latter-day-scripture-39th-annual-byu-sidney-b-sperry-symposium>).

Some overall insights from these sources are included below, while others will be incorporated into the running commentary.

Amy Hardison³ noted two aspects of Jesus' society that have special relevance to his teachings in the Sermon on the Mount: honor and shame, and patronage. Both of these societal traits are very foreign to modern, western societies (though not in other cultures in the world today), so making an extra effort to understand them yields great benefits in appreciation for Jesus' message. Honor and shame have their root in a culture that values personal honor above all other values. Honor determined social standing, whom one could marry or do business with, and what roles in society one could play. Honor is a group identification as well, both in terms of your family (the most important group) and other groups to whom you belonged, and your honor is determined by the judgment of others.

Shame could be both positive and negative. Positive shame is a meritorious trait, a feminine virtue related to concern for reputation and sensitivity to disgrace. Negative shame is not the act of *having* shame, but *being*

² John W. Welch, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount*.

³ Amy B. Hardison, "The Sociocultural Context of the Sermon on the Mount," in Strathearn, Wayment, and Belnap, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 24-41.

shamed. Honor is attained both by status at birth (ascribed) and acquired or ascribed by the public declaration of an aristocrat, a king, or a god (such as Jesus experienced at his baptism in Matthew and his position on the right hand of God after his resurrection). Honor could also be acquired through publicly known good works, such as public charity, sponsoring festivals or performances, or other gifts to a city. Public recognition of such beneficence was a key to increasing honor.

Honor could be challenged and must be either defended or lost. Such challenges were public and required a response. Some challenges were positive—in the form of compliments or praise—while others were negative—insults, dares, verbal or physical threats, or injury. Wealth didn’t bring honor, though how it was used could. Likewise, poverty didn’t decrease honor, since the majority of people were living at a subsistence level at that time. The poor that had no honor were those who could not provide for themselves and were reduced to begging. In the sermon, “Jesus does not challenge the construct of honor but makes some significant changes in who constitutes the court of opinion. It is God’s assessment, not man’s, that matters.”⁴

Patronage was another critical element in their society that is somewhat foreign to us today, though like with honor and shame, some of the concepts carry over into our world today. In their world, everyone was either a patron or a client, or both. A patron was a person of higher status and a client one of lesser status. The patron enters into a relationship with the client, giving him perhaps land, work, food, a position, protection, or money. In exchange, the client worked hard with the gifts from the patron, and successful clients increased the honor of the patron. Having two patrons was very challenging, as their requests on the client could be competing. Public praise of the patron was also an obligation of the client, with gratitude being the common refrain. Sometimes a patron could present his client to a higher patron, being an advocate for that person so both parties were mutually benefitted.

Sermon on the Mount: Fulfilling the Law (5:1-48)

The Beatitudes (Matt 5:1-12; Luke 17:20-23)

Jesus’ use of the formula found in the Beatitudes was not unique in his day; in fact, examples are found among the Dead Sea Scrolls and apocryphal literature. But Jesus added stylistic elements not found in this other literature, such as including specific blessing with each pronouncement and tying those blessings to a benefit at an “undisclosed future time and linked with salvation and eternal life.”⁵ The Psalms contain many phrases using this same formula: “Blessed is . . .” and are a reflection of the character of God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ.⁶

5:1 **his disciples.** Leaving the huge crowds following him (4:24-25), Jesus “went up into a mountain,” which usually signifies a bit of an escape from the crowds for him. Only his closest disciples were there, and his message was what to say as these disciples went out to teach others about him (JST Matthew 5:2).

5:2 JST

KJV Matt 5:2	JST
And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,	And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are they who shall believe on me; and again, more blessed are they who shall believe on your words when ye shall testify that ye have seen me and that I am. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe on your words and come down into the depth of humility and be baptized in my name; for they shall be visited with fire and the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.

⁴ Hardison, “The Sociocultural Context,” 32.

⁵ Valérie Triplet-Hitoto, “Audience Astonishment at the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple,” in Strathearn, Wayment, and Belnap, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 42-43.

⁶ Andrew C. Skinner, “Israel’s Ancient Psalms: Cornerstone of the Beautitudes,” in Strathearn, Wayment, and Belnap, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 59-66.

“Changes made in the JST version make the audience and purpose of the sermon more apparent. For example, JST Matthew 5:2 clarifies the initial audience of the sermon, speaking of ‘*they who shall believe on your words, when ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that I am.*’ The audience consists of converted disciples being sent out to teach Jesus’ message of salvation to others. This differs from the audience for the initial part in 3 Nephi, where Jesus was speaking to “the multitude” (12:1). The command to those at Bountiful was to heed the words of the chosen twelve disciples, be baptized by them, and receive the Holy Ghost.”⁷

“The sermon begins in KJV Matthew 5 with nine Beatitudes. In the JST, there are three more, making a total of twelve, a significant symbolic number in the New Testament. The first two additions refer to those who believe in Jesus and who believe in the disciples’ testimony of Jesus. The third added beatitude puts the entire sermon in a covenantal orientation: those “*that shall believe on your words, and come down into the depth of humility, and be baptized in my name*” shall receive the Holy Ghost and a remission of their sins. This resembles the opening in 3 Nephi 12 but lacks the more detailed explanation in the Nephite account about the calling of the twelve disciples and Jesus’ endorsement of their teachings; in Matthew, he had not yet called the Twelve, so he could not make similar statements.”⁸

5:3 **Blessed.** These initial pronouncements in the Sermon are the promised blessings of obedience. “Blessed” in the KJV is ‘fortunate’ or ‘well-off,’ often translated ‘happy’ by modern Bibles (also the root meaning of ‘beatitudes,’ which comes from the Latin *beatus*).⁹ Some of the Psalms start with this same formula (e.g., Psalm 1:1; 2:12; 32:1-2; 33:12; 40:4), so it was a familiar way of speaking to Jesus’ audience. If you compare the text of Isaiah 61:1-2 that Jesus read in the synagogue at Nazareth and told them was fulfilled in him (Luke 4:16-21) with the first few beatitudes, there are interesting similarities (e.g., Isaiah said the Messiah would come to preach to the meek and the brokenhearted). “Pronouncing a person ‘blessed’ (*makarios*) is a declaration of honor. What is particularly interesting about these declarations is the great paradox Jesus introduced: those he pronounces as honorable are they who would not rank high on the honor scale of the ancient Mediterranean world.”¹⁰

5:3 **the poor in spirit.** The Book of Mormon and the JST add, “**which cometh unto me,**” signifying that just being humble is insufficient if it doesn’t lead us closer to God. Amy Hardison explained about this beatitude specifically:

The poor (see Luke 6:20; Matthew 5:3) would also not be considered honorable. To understand this we must first know that “the poor” were not those who had few worldly goods. Such was the condition of the vast majority of the people of the ancient Mediterranean world. Although most peasants labored to exhaustion and had barely enough to live, as long as they had enough to survive they were not poor. The truly poor were those who were destitute of all resources and were reduced to begging. Even more to the point, they were poor because in such condition they had lost their honor and had plummeted on the social scale. Thus, the word “poor” is connected with but is not primarily about economics. It is about honor. Christ’s beatitude “blessed be ye poor” (Luke 6:20) is an oxymoron. It says in essence, “How honorable are those who suffer a loss of honour.” Essential to understanding this enigmatic statement is determining why those whom Christ blesses have lost their honor.

She goes on to explain that because family was everything in that time and place, to leave those things to follow Jesus could make a disciple a lost soul to his or her family, which could cause them “a tragic and total loss of honor.” This is reflected in this saying as well as the two of the next three: “Blessed are they that mourn” and “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst.”¹¹

⁷ David A. LeFevre, “The Sermon on the Mount in the Joseph Smith Translation,” in Strathearn, Wayment, and Belnap, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 284.

⁸ LeFevre, “The Sermon on the Mount,” 285-286.

⁹ Skinner, “Israel’s Ancient Psalms,” 65.

¹⁰ Hardison, “The Sociocultural Context,” 30.

¹¹ Hardison, “The Sociocultural Context,” 30-31.

5:6 **for they shall be filled.** Filled with what? we might ask. The Book of Mormon and JST clarify: “**with the Holy Ghost.**” Seeking after righteousness like we would when seeking after a long period of hunger will bring the Holy Ghost into our lives.

5:11 **Blessed are ye.** Most of the beatitudes are given in the third person—words that the disciples can share with others. But one is given in the second person in all accounts: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.” This would happen directly to his disciple-listeners, so Jesus warned them—but also reassured them—that as a result of their service, they would have “**great joy**” and a great reward (JST 5:12).

Salt and light (Matt 5:13-16; Luke 14:34-35; 8:16)

5:13 **Ye are the salt of the earth.** The JST adds at the beginning: “**I give unto you to be** the salt of the earth” (with a similar addition in v. 14, “**I give unto you to be** the light of the world”). Jesus was calling them to become something “of the earth,” meaning in the world in which they live.¹²

Like today, salt had a variety of usages and therefore potential meanings in this context. Salt was considered a necessity of life, which could mean that the disciples are critical to the welfare of the world. Technically salt cannot lose its savor—sodium chloride by itself is a stable compound. So what did Jesus mean? Here are some thoughts.

- Like today, salt’s primary use was flavoring, so the disciples were being called to ‘season’ the words of eternal life throughout the world.
- Salt was also a preservative, which could be likened to the Saints preserving the world by teaching the gospel of repentance to others.
- Salt was sometimes harvested in rock formations then packed around meat and fish to preserve them. Eventually the salt would leach out of the rock and into the meat, thus making the rocks useless.
- Sometimes salt collected from the Dead Sea was also found mixed with other compounds similar in appearance, such as gypsum, thus making it visually similar to pure salt but not usable.
- Some bakers lined their ovens with salt blocks. Over time the intense heat would cause the salt to crystallize and change composition, making them not useful for that function.
- Priests used salt at the temple to put on the ground under the sacrifices to provide traction on the bloody floor. But they wouldn’t use good salt—that was too expensive for such a task. They would only use salt that was not fit for human consumption—was somehow contaminated and had thus ‘lost its savor’—because it would “be trodden under foot of men”—the priests in the temple performing the daily sacrifices to the Lord.
- “Savour” is Greek *mōrainō*, meaning ‘foolish.’ Because the metaphor is spreading the words of Christ, disciples who are foolish in their stewardship are useless to the Lord.
- Salt was associated with sacrifice because sacrifices to the Lord were heavily salted as part of the ritual. That’s what created “a sweet savour” (Leviticus 2:13; Genesis 8:21)—it was the salt cooking with the meat. In that sense, salt can represent covenant which when presented to the Lord, should cause him to smell a sweet savour.

With these many options, one additional consideration is Luke’s version of this teaching. In the JST, an addition there gives Jesus the opportunity to teach about the scriptures testifying of him, then ties the metaphor of salt to the scriptures being fulfilled (JST Luke 14:33-35). This makes good salt represent those who believe in Jesus’ words and mission, which ties back to the invitation in JST Matthew 5:13. “The commandment is to believe on Jesus’ words and “salt” the world by sharing them. If the disciples do not do that, they are salt without savor (Greek *mōrainō*, “foolish”) and of no use to the Lord. This ties directly back to the opening words of the Beatitudes just preceding this teaching in Matthew, the charge to the disciples to teach the message to the world.”¹³

¹² For this section, see Matthew O. Richardson, “Salt and Light: Being in the World but Not of the World,” in Strathearn, Wayment, and Belnap, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 76-92.

¹³ LeFevre, “The Sermon on the Mount,” 287.

5:14 **A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.** The city set on a hill likely refers to Jerusalem, which sits on a hill or ridge and is visible for many miles in some directions. Another possibility is a town in Galilee, such as Hippos, situated on a rounded hill and easily visible from Capernaum during the day or at night when torches and lights were burning.

5:15 **light a candle.** There were no candles in Jesus' day. The word here is *luchnos* or lamp, usually made of clay with holes for adding oil and holding a wick. Since the light was dim, it would be set on a lampstand or shelf so as to maximize its benefit. "Bushel" is *modios* or bowl, which would be placed inverted on the lamp to extinguish it.

5:16 **they may see your good works.** To be a light is to do good works, but not with the goal of making ourselves look good. Rather, our works cause the light to be seen from its true source, which is Father in heaven.

The law and the prophets (Matt 5:17-20; Luke 16:16-17)

5:17 **I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.** Jesus' role was not to overthrow or destroy the law of Moses that he, himself, gave to Moses, as the pre-existent Jehovah. The law was supposed to point men to Christ

5:18 **not jot or one tittle.** "jot" is *iota*, the letter 'i' in Greek (*ι*); it could also refer to the letter *yod* ך in Hebrew.

"Tittle" is *keraiā*, the small 'horn' that makes the difference between the squarer Hebrew letter *dalet* ד and it's rounded counterpart, *resh* ר. These are respectively the smallest letter and stroke that Jesus could select.

5:19 **whosoever shall do and teach them.** "Them" is italicized in the KJV, meaning it's not in the Greek. The JST changes it to, "**these commandments of the law until it be fulfilled.**" The greatest in the kingdom would continue to teach obedience to the law of Moses until Jesus' had fulfilled it, which means that at that point, they would of necessity teach something else, which is what Jesus' explains next through illustrations from the law.

Six antitheses (Matt 5:21-48)

Eric Huntsman¹⁴ wrote of this next section, capturing the purpose and meaning of the six statements Jesus gave his disciples about fulfilling the law of Moses. With each, Jesus gave a Mosaic thesis and then a gospel antitheses from his own teaching. Jesus 'fulfilled' the law of Moses not by doing away with it, but by being the sacrifice that it all pointed to. His sacrifice thus ended the physical sacrificial acts but not the principles on which the law was based, which are eternal.

The six statements are often divided into two groups of three; in the first three, Jesus responds with a similar set of words, while in the last three, he uses different constructions. There may even be some chiasmus involved, with the first one speaking of hate and the last of love.¹⁵

(1) Murder and anger (Matt 5:21-26)

5:21 **Thou shalt not kill.** From Exodus 20:13.

5:22 **angry with his brother without a cause.** In the JST, "without a cause" is deleted, which is in line with the oldest Greek New Testament manuscripts, which don't have this phrase either. This means that Jesus condemns anger of any level, which makes him unique among the teachers of his day.

5:23 **JST**

KJV Matt 5:23	JST
Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;	Therefore, if ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, or if thou bring thy gift to the altar,

¹⁴ Eric D. Huntsman, "The Six Antitheses: Attaining the Purpose of the Law through the Teachings of Jesus," in Strathearn, Wayment, and Belnap, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 93-109.

¹⁵ Huntsman identifies other structural elements that support the three-three symmetry, "The Six Antitheses," 96-99.

and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee;

JST Matthew expands the example not just to someone at the altar but to those who even desire to come to Jesus. This clarifies that this example applies to disciples who have committed to follow Jesus, or have a desire to do so.

5:24 **Leave there thy gift before the altar.** Jesus gave an example of a person who was about to offer a gift (sacrifice) at the altar and remembered he needed to reconcile with another, so left the altar and went back to take care of that first. This is not a trivial effort: Jesus was speaking to a group in Galilee, and the “altar” mentioned is in Jerusalem. To stop in the middle of the offering, return to Galilee, then return to Jerusalem to finish the sacrifice is a delay of several days.¹⁶ Like other things in the sermon, it is an intentionally extreme example. Speaking of a ‘worst case’ situation lets Jesus emphasize the importance of it in daily life.

5:25 **the adversary deliver thee to the judge.** In an honor society, there were many adversaries who attacked your honor on a regular basis (see introduction above). Jesus advocated not resisting such attacks and potentially surrendering your honor to the attacker, but resisting the greater shame of being taken before a judge (typically the city elders) and having more honor be stripped publicly.

5:26 **farthing.** A “farthing” is *kodrantēs* or Roman *quadrans*, worth 1/64 of a denarius (a denarius is one day’s wage for many workers). It was the smallest Roman coin, with a Jewish *lepta* (‘small’) coin being the only smaller amount, worth one-half *kodrantēs*. We might say, ‘until you have paid every last penny.’

(2) Adultery and lust (Matt 5:27-30; Mark 9:43-48)

5:27 **Thou shalt not commit adultery.** From Exodus 20:14; see also Deuteronomy 5:18.

5:28 **to lust after her hath committed adultery.** Jesus taught that adultery was not just an act but also a thought, one that turned women into objects to take and possess. Note that the word used for “lust” does not mean a passing thought but a deliberate act of “continuing to look in order to arouse further lust.”¹⁷ See also D&C 63:16.

5:28-30 **JST**

KJV Matt 5:28-30	JST
But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.	But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart already. Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that ye suffer none of these things to enter into your heart, for it is better that ye should deny yourselves of these things, wherein ye will take up your cross, than that ye should be cast into hell.
And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not <i>that</i> thy whole body should be cast into hell.	Wherefore, if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast <i>it</i> from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not <i>that</i> thy whole body should be cast into hell.
And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not <i>that</i> thy whole body should be cast into hell.	Or if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast <i>it</i> from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not <i>that</i> thy whole body should be cast into hell. And now this I speak, a parable concerning your sins; wherefore, cast them from you, that ye may not be hewn down and cast into the fire.

¹⁶ Hardison, “The Sociocultural Context,” 37.

¹⁷ Huntsman, “The Six Antitheses,” 100.

In Mark, when Jesus talked about plucking out the eye or cutting off the hand or foot (Mark 9:43-48), the JST added text to turn the metaphor towards a church member or leader in sin, who might need to be cut off. Here (which chronologically in the translation effort came first), the meaning is about individual sins because cast away (or as the JST says, are “**a parable concerning your sins.**” Since the context is adultery in the previous verses, these verses appear to speak of that type of sin. We are to remove sin from our lives (“**deny yourselves of these things**”), even if such a sacrifice may seem as painful as losing an eye or a hand, otherwise we will be “**cast into the fire.**” (See JST Matthew 18:8-9 where the same metaphor has yet another meaning.)

(3) Divorce (Matt 5:31-32; Luke 16:18)

5:31 **a writing of divorcement.** The law of Moses permitted divorce (from Deuteronomy 24:1) if a husband “found some uncleanness” in his wife. Though the original intent was likely adultery or other sexual sins only, some Jews of Jesus’ day had interpreted that quite broadly and allowed for divorce if a woman did not please her husband in some way, including being a poor cook.¹⁸

5:32 **causeth her to commit adultery.** While Jesus’ declaration that Moses’ intent was only to allow divorce in cases of immoral behavior (“fornication”), he also teaches a higher law of marriage that respects the covenant and declares that a husband who divorces for lesser things is essentially forcing her to commit adultery when she remarries. In other words, divorce is a result of a hard heart and disobedience (cf. Matt 19:8)

(4) Oaths (Matt 5:33-37)

5:33 **Thou shalt not forswear thyself.** From Leviticus 19:12; also Deuteronomy 5:11, 10; 23:22. “You shall not make false vows” (NASB). Said one scholar of this passage:

Old Testament law did not prohibit the swearing of oaths but did require that a person fulfill the oaths he had taken. By the time of Christ, there was a concern “about the devaluation of oaths through their indiscriminate use and a growing tendency to ‘weasel out’ of oaths by swearing by less sacred things.” Christ categorically denounced all such loopholes. He declared that a person’s word—a plain yes or no—should be so reliable that no oath was necessary. This is the heart of the matter. However, it is worth noting that swearing an oath is equivalent to giving a word of honor. Thus, even though integrity is the core issue, honor is involved.

In an honor-shame society, oaths are important because telling the truth is not an absolute virtue. Lying and deception can be honorable and legitimate if the person lied to is an outsider, one who has no right to the truth. “The right to the truth only exists where respect [honor] is due (in the family, to superiors, and not necessarily to equals with whom [one] compete[s] or to inferiors).” To be misleadingly ambiguous, to hedge the truth, and even to brazenly lie to a member of an outgroup is to dishonor and humiliate him, but it is not morally wrong. In a society where lying is not categorically wrong, an oath would be an important attestation.¹⁹

5:34 **swear not at all.** Jesus is saying, ‘Quit pretending to make a promise when you don’t really mean it.’ In terms of their day, it means to make each thing you say so honest that you don’t need an oath to confirm it.

5:36 **canst not make one hair white or black.** An interesting indication of the range of hair colors in Jesus’ world—no blondes, redheads, or people with brown hair, just white (gray) and black.

5:37 **Yea, yea; nay, nay.** Instead of intricate oaths designed to leave open the possibility of getting out of it, Jesus called for straight communication—just say yes or no, then mean it and stick with your commitment.

¹⁸ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 1:117.

¹⁹ Hardison, “The Sociocultural Context,” 29-30.

(5) Retaliation (Matt 5:38-42; Luke 6:29-30)

5:38 **An eye for an eye.** From Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21. Though harsh sounding to our ears, the point of this law was to limit retribution after damages; the injured person could not extract any more from the person that injured him than the law allowed. It was supposed to halt the escalation of a revenge cycle.

5:39 **smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.** “A physical assault is a most serious challenge to one’s honor. Unless the assaulted person publicly retaliates, his honor is permanently lost. Even the slightest injury must be avenged or honor is severely impugned. Once again, Jesus’ directives in the Sermon on the Mount would be astounding to a person in an agonistic society. If someone smites a person on the right cheek, which would require a doubly insulting backhanded slap, the aggrieved person is to offer the left cheek for another blow (see Matthew 5:39). To understand the enormity of Christ’s directive, we must remember that challenges are ‘never, ever, under any circumstances, run from or ignored.’ Thus the assaulted disciple is not simply to return hostility with humility; he is to willingly capitulate in the honor game. He is to forfeit his honor, his most important asset, for the sake of peace.”²⁰

5:40 **take away thy coat, let me have thy cloke also.** KJV “coat” is a tunic, the dress-like garment that typically came down to the knees and was the main form of clothing, under other layers. “Clove” is an outer coat, worn in cold weather. Quoting again from Hardison:

It was highly dishonorable to go to court for it was a tacit admission that the persons could not deal with the situation through the normal channels of challenge-riposte and were thus lacking in honor. This was especially the case when the two parties were of the same social status. Thus, legal procedures were primarily used to dishonor someone perceived to be of higher, more powerful status. Jesus told those who were sued at the law (presumably someone of higher status) to willingly give the plaintiff (presumably someone of lower status) his coat and his cloak, indicating he has lost the honor challenge. This concession would be almost unimaginable to a New Testament audience.²¹

(6) Love your enemies (Matt 5:43-48; Luke 6:27-28, 32-36)

5:43 **Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.** The first part is from Leviticus 19:18 (also Deuteronomy 7:2; 20:16; 23:4, 7). The second part is not found in scripture and was likely just a proverbial saying or oral interpretation.

5:44 **Love your enemies.** Jesus’ final counter-cultural, superseding command of the law of Moses was to love everyone, including people who might attack, plunder, rape, or even kill you. God loves each of us (v. 45) and asks that we do no less.

5:48 **Be ye therefore perfect.** God is indeed perfect in the way we understand the word today (“morally flawless”), but the Greek word here is *teleios* meaning ‘complete’ or ‘fully developed.’ It has the sense of something that has reached its full end, is full-grown, or mature, and is the model after which we strive. (The Hebrew term translated ‘perfect’ in the OT has a similar meaning.)

We do need to keep all of God’s requirements to achieve perfection someday, but the focus of this commandment is to recognize our eternal nature and heritage as children of God and strive to reach that full potential in all that we do so that one day we will be fully developed offspring of God. We are to be perfect in the intents of our hearts—our own offerings to the Lord. Then, through repentance and the atonement of Christ, by his grace and love, he will take our perfect hearts and render us guiltless before the Father, making us whole and complete. See Psalm 18:30; 3 Nephi 27:16; 3 Nephi 12:29-30; D&C 67:13. The next chapter in Matthew goes on to outline some of the things that we have to give up to have a perfect heart.²²

²⁰ Hardison, “The Sociocultural Context,” 29.

²¹ Hardison, “The Sociocultural Context,” 29.

²² Frank F. Judd, Jr., “Be Ye Therefore Perfect’: The Elusive Quest for Perfection,” in Strathearn, Wayment, and Belnap, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 123-139; also Huntsman, “The Six Antitheses,” 104-106.

Sermon on the Mount: Discipleship (Matt 6:1-34)

Matthew 5 shows that to be a disciple of Christ, we first have to give up anger, lust, vengeance, and glory seeking; it speaks to acts of faith and their true purpose. Matthew 6 continues that with examples relating to public and private worship. He taught that if we make God's will the primary force in our lives and can set aside concerns and fears about things over which we have no real control, then God's blessings will be given to us in abundance.

Three public indications of righteousness (Matt 6:1-18)

The Jews had three public indications of righteousness: the giving of alms, prayer, and fasting. Jesus addressed all three in these verses.

Almsgiving (Matt 6:1-4)

6:1 **do not your alms before men.** In an honor society their Jesus', a way to gain honor was to do good works in the community, such as giving money for buildings or public events. "In response to municipal endowments, cities would show their gratitude through public recognition: through proclamations of gratitude, seats of honor at a theater, public inscriptions, or in exceptional cases a statue of the giver. Even with smaller, personal gifts, public acknowledgment was an essential element of a grateful response. In this context, Christ's statement in the Sermon on the Mount, "Do not your alms before men, to be seen of them . . ." (Matthew 6:1), would have been shocking. Christ negated the very reason for giving alms and challenged the conventional expression of a core value."²³

6:4 **reward thee openly.** In a paradox of the honor society, Jesus taught that giving in secret, with no one knowing but God, which would normally result in a loss of honor, will still result in great honor to the person because God would reward them in a public way.

The Lord's prayer (Matt 6:5-15; Luke 11:1-4)

6:5 **the hypocrites.** The Greek *hypokrites* means an actor or pretender, one who plays a part on a stage. Using this term, Jesus declared that their prayers were just pretend, acts for show.

6:7 **use not vain repetitions.** The practice to which Jesus referred is not that of repeating the same prayer day after day, as we might see this, but rather the pagan ritual of going from temple to temple belonging to the different gods and offering up the same prayer to each one, because they were never quite sure which god would respond to their request. By contrast, heavenly Father knows our needs even before we ask him, and a prayer of faith is sufficient for an abundance of blessings (v. 8).

6:9 **Our Father which art in heaven.** "The organization into six petitions reflects Matt's love of order. The first three, 'May your name be hallowed, may your kingdom come, may your will come about on earth as in heaven' are different ways of asking God to bring about the kingdom definitively. . . . The second three deal with the fate of the petitioners as they anticipate the future moment. The coming of the kingdom will involve the heavenly banquet, and so they ask a share of its food (bread); it will involve judgment, and so they ask forgiveness on the criterion of forgiving others that Matt emphasizes (25:45); it will involve a dangerous struggle with Satan, and so they ask to be delivered from the apocalyptic trial and the Evil One."²⁴

Fasting (Matt 6:16-18)

6:16 **of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces.** Fasting in their day and ours differs in some aspects, but 'playing up' the suffering of a fast seems to be universal, especially among the younger crowd.

6:17 **anoint thine head, and wash thy face.** "put oil on your head and wash your face" (NIV). We wash our hair often with soap and water, but in the ancient world, that happened rarely. Anointing your head with oil was a way to cleanse the hair and be ready for a public appearance. Jesus' point was to go about your day as if everything was normal and not to make a scene about your fasting.

²³ Hardison, "The Sociocultural Context," 27.

²⁴ Brown, *An Introduction*, 180.

The discipline of discipleship (Matt 6:19-34)

With the groundwork of a discussion about public religious practices laid, Jesus can venture into the private practices, beliefs, and inner feelings of being a disciple. Being a follower of Jesus is work—there is a price to be paid.

Treasures (Matt 6:19-21; Luke 12:33-34)

6:19 **Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.** Wealth in that day was not something one sought just for the sake of the power to acquire ‘things.’ Rather, it was a means of demonstrating your own honor, both as a symbol of God’s blessings and as something you could use to attribute more honor to yourself by public giving. Jesus taught that such an effort was a waste of time and energy, because it could all be lost in a moment to corruption or theft.

The eye and light (Matt 6:22-23; Luke 11:34-36)

6:22-23 **eye be single . . . eye be evil.** The ancient world saw the eye as a lamp that could reflect out and make visible the nature of the person’s soul. Jesus also made the eye the portal back in. The ‘evil eye’ was covetous and greedy. The ‘good eye’ was loyal, with a singleness of purpose that let into the body whatever it was fixed upon.²⁵ The JST adds here, “if therefore thine eye be single **to the glory of God**, thy whole body shall be full of light.”

6:22-23 **full of light . . . full of darkness.** These are indeed opposite terms, but in Greek they mean ‘transparent’ and ‘opaque’. The righteous have nothing to hide, while sinners constantly fear their deeds will be exposed.

Serving two masters (Matt 6:24; Luke 16:13)

6:24 **mammon.** An Aramaic term meaning ‘money, wealth, or property.’ You cannot spend your time serving God and also seeking after the things of the world—there are not enough hours in a day, nor will your eye be single to God’s glory. See also Luke 16:9.

Consider the lilies (Matt 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-32)

6:25 **JST**

KJV Matt 6:25	JST
Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body , what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?	And again, I say unto you, go ye into the world and care not for the world; for the world will hate you, and will persecute you, and will turn you out of their synagogues; nevertheless, ye shall go forth from house to house, teaching the people; and I will go before you; and your heavenly Father will provide for you, whatsoever things ye need for food, and what you shall eat; and for raiment, what ye shall wear or put on. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your bodies , what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

This substantial addition clarifies the intended audience of these words, though not as directly as 3 Nephi 13:25, which states he was speaking only to the Twelve for the following verses. Jesus’ teachings in the rest of chapter six were directed at those who would be out preaching his message “house to house” in full-time missionary service.

6:25 **Take no thought for your life.** When you are focused on doing the Lord’s errand, don’t let worries about daily living slow you down or get in your way.

²⁵ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 1:47.

6:26 *JST*

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? **How much more will he not feed you? Wherefore take no thought for these things, but keep my commandments wherewith I have commanded you.**

This anticipates the final thought in v. 33, that the point Jesus was making was that those who do the things God asks of them need not worry about their mortal needs. Taking the two verses together, we see that to build up the kingdom of God is to keep God’s commandments.

6:27 **add one cubit unto his stature.** While this is a fairly good literal translation, the phrase has a metaphorical meaning: ‘add one hour to your life’ might thus be a better representation.

6:32 *JST*

KJV Matt 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:} for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.	JST Why is it that ye murmur among yourselves, saying, We cannot obey thy word; because ye have not all these things; and seek to excuse yourselves, saying that, After all these things do the Gentiles seek:? Behold, I say unto you, that your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.
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Perceiving his disciples’ doubts at this challenging commandment that took much faith, Jesus corrected their murmuring because they didn’t have “all these things,” referring to the physical needs of all humans (food, clothing, etc.). Jesus reassured them that their Father in heaven would take care of their needs, as v. 26 promised and v. 33 will reiterate.

6:33 *JST*

Wherefore, seek not the things of this world, but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and **to establish** his righteousness.

Seeking after something is a rather vague request; what happens when you find it? The JST makes it clear that the purpose of this seeking is to “**build up**” and “**establish**” God’s kingdom on earth. Once that is the primary goal of those called to labor, “all these things” will be supplied as they are needed.

[Sermon on the Mount: Teaching Others \(Matt 7:1-29\)](#)

The JST (but not 3 Nephi) version of Matthew 7 has more changes than the other two Sermon on the Mount chapters. Both texts clarify that these instructions were given to the disciples, not the world at large, and much of it is counsel to those disciples about teaching the gospel to the world.

[Judging \(Matt 7:1-6; Mark 4:24-25; Luke 6:37-42\)](#)

7:1 *JST*

KJV Matt 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.	JST Now these are the words which Jesus taught his disciples that they should say unto the people. Judge not unrighteously , that ye be not judged; but judge righteous judgment.
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This verse has been used to condemn those who judge another’s life in any way. The JST clarifies that judgment is needed and even required by Church leaders (Jesus’ audience) but that it should be just and fair, in other words, “**righteous judgment.**”

7:3 **mote . . . beam.** A “mote” is a tiny sliver; a “beam” is a huge board or bundle of boards. The image is sarcastic, absurd, even comic. His ludicrous point struck at the heart of hypocrisy.

7:4 **JST**

Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and **canst not** behold a beam in thine own eye? **And Jesus said unto his disciples, beholdest thou the scribes, and the Pharisees, and the priests, and the Levites? They teach in their synagogues but do not observe the law; nor the commandments, and all have gone out of the way, and are under sin. Go thou and say unto them, Why teach ye men the law and the commandments, when ye yourselves are the children of corruption?**

Matthew Grey wrote a whole chapter on this one JST change.²⁶ The whole chapter is well worth reading but the summary is that there are many instances in the NT where Jesus has a clear (often adversarial) relationship with scribes and Pharisees, but very little with “the priests, and the Levites,” as is added in JST Matthew here. Jesus’ disciples were instructed in this change to call out the sin and hypocrisy of all four groups and challenge them with a question that asked why they teach the law but do not obey it? The metaphor of the mote and beam, Jesus said (JST Matthew 7:5) directly applied to these four hypocritical groups. This JST change fits well with the events of that day: many believed the temple was sacred but that the priests and Levites who ran it were corrupt. Additionally, the principles at the end of Matthew 6 and the beginning of Matthew 7, just around this addition in v. 1, pertain best to priests and Levites, of all the issues Jesus raised. This includes the pursuit of wealth (a common effort among the wealthier and worldly Sadducees, who were priests, and were known to use temple funds to support their lifestyles); judgment, teaching, and hypocrisy (priests were judges, serving on the Sanhedrin and other councils, and often teachers in the synagogues); not respecting holy things (food dedicated for priests or for sacrifices); false prophets and professing the Lord’s name (priests were considered prophetic, at least in some settings, and the ones allowed to speak God’s name in the temple).

7:6 **Give not that which is holy unto the dogs.** Another absurd image—who would give something holy to a [wild] dog or something expensive to a pig? This speaks to when it is appropriate to share sacred and precious things.

7:6 **JST**

KJV Matt 7:6	JST
Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.	Go ye into the world, saying unto all, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come nigh unto you. And the mysteries of the kingdom ye shall keep within yourselves; for it is not meet to give that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls unto swine, lest they trample them under their feet; for the world cannot receive that which ye yourselves are not able to bear; wherefore ye shall not give your pearls unto them, lest they turn again and rend you.

Continuing the admonition to declare things to others, Jesus told them nevertheless to resist sharing “the mysteries of the kingdom” with those not ready to receive them. Framing this in the context of the metaphors about giving holy things to dogs or expensive things to pigs, JST Matthew shows that teaching doctrines beyond basic principles like repentance is not a blessing but a potential stumbling block to the uninitiated.

²⁶ Matthew J. Grey, “Beholdest Thou . . . the Priests and the Levites’ (JST, Matthew 7:4),” in Strathearn, Wayment, and Belnap, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 173-201.

Answering prayers (Matt 7:7-11; Luke 11:9-13)

7:7 **Ask, and it shall be given you.** Tying back to the things holy and precious in the previous verse, Jesus taught them to seek those things in prayer and God would grant them. The JST simply adds at the beginning of the verse a continuation of the commandment to teach this to others: “**Say unto them, Ask of God.**”

7:9 JST

KJV Matthew 7:9	JST
Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?	And then said his disciples unto him, They will say unto us, We ourselves are righteous and need not that any man should teach us; God, we know, heard Moses, and some [of] the prophets; but us he will not hear. And they will say, We have the law for our salvation, and that is sufficient for us. Then Jesus answered, and said unto his disciples, Thus shall ye say unto them, What man among you, having a son, and he shall be standing out, and shall say, Father, open thy house that I may come in and sup with thee; will he not say, Come in, my son; for mine is thine, and thine is mine? Or what man is there among you, who if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

In JST Matthew, the disciples push back a bit with Jesus, following his request to go say harsh words to groups of Jews. The disciples note that the reaction will likely be that these Jews consider themselves “righteous” and don’t need “that any man should teach us” (a fascinating reference back to JST Matthew 2:23, which said that Jesus “needed not that any man should teach him”). They will proclaim, the disciples say, that they only need the law. Jesus instructed them how to handle this objection to his message, using the KJV metaphor of a father giving a stone to his son asking for bread, expanding it to add a son asking for a meal and his father reminding him that he may not only have a meal but everything, “for mine is thine, and thine is mine.”

7:11 **your Father which is in heaven give good things.** Jesus concluded this section on praying for good things with the promise God desires to give good things to his children, just as earthly fathers do, and will bless us if we just ask him.

The golden rule (Matt 7:12; Luke 6:31)

7:12 **do ye even so to them.** This is the origin of the ‘golden rule.’ It is not stated in a negative way as some teachers of Jesus’ day did but with a positive outlook on how to bless others’ lives. See Eric Marlowe’s chapter on this one verse.²⁷

The strait gate (Matt 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-24)

7:13 **strait is the gate.** “Strait” is ‘narrow’ or ‘small.’ It contrasts with the wide gate which allows anyone in, but the narrow gate forces you to lighten your load of worldly pursuits and interests and focus on just what you need to return to the presence of God. The JST starts this verse, saying, “**Repent therefore, and enter ye in...**”

Prophets (Matt 7:15-20; Luke 6:43-45)

7:15 **come to you in sheep’s clothing.** Righteous leaders are often compared to shepherds in the scriptures. Here the false prophet comes dressed as the true shepherd wearing clothing made from his own sheep, but he is secretly a vicious wolf, determined to steal and eat the flock.

²⁷ Eric Marlowe, “The Golden Rule: A Moral Searchlight,” in Strathearn, Wayment, and Belnap, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 202-214.

7:16 **know them by their fruits.** Switching metaphors from sheep to vines and trees, Jesus taught that true prophets would bring forth good and expected fruit—grapes from a grape vine (not a thorn bush) and figs from a fig tree (not a thistle plant).

7:17 **every good tree.** The contrasting images continue, comparing false and true prophets to good and bad trees. You will know if a prophet’s message is true by his fruits, while a corrupt or diseased tree will only provide “evil” fruit (hardship, labors, toils, perils, pain and trouble).

7:19 **hewn down, and cast into the fire.** The fate of evil trees that only bring trouble and pain is to be destroyed—cut down and burned, evoking images of the Second Coming.

Lord, Lord (Matt 7:21-23; Luke 6:46; 13:25-27)

7:21 **Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord.** “It is possible that Jesus’ reference to those who cry “Lord, Lord” (Greek *kurie, kurie*) had relevance for priests, who were among the few who pronounced the divine name in the temple. Such a connection is strengthened by the name being doubled by those being condemned. “Lord, Lord” is a rare phrase in Jewish literature and is likely a reference to Psalm 141:8 (LXX Ps 140:8), in which “Lord, Lord” (Hebrew *YHWH adonai*; Greek *kurie, kurie*) was sung in a hymn that recalled or accompanied the incense offering by temple priests during the evening sacrifice. If these connections were intended, Jesus’ statement may have been another way of indicting the priestly class. In essence, those priests who were divinely appointed to act in God’s name are the very individuals he will not recognize at the Final Judgment because of their neglect of God’s will and their iniquitous works.”²⁸

7:21 **he that doeth the will of my Father.** The “will of the Father” is very clear in Matthew (and the other records of Christ’s life and teachings): with an emphasis on ‘doing’ in his words and example, Jesus taught that the Father wants us all to serve and love each other. Those found so doing “enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

7:22 JST

The JST adds at the beginning of this verse: “**For the day soon cometh, that men shall come before me to judgment, to be judged according to their works.**” Though the context is clearly a judgment scene, this makes explicit that final judgment experience, and Jesus’ role in it.

7:23 **I never knew you.** The JST changes it to, “**Ye never knew me.**” Both are things the Lord can say to us as we try and claim a relationship with him in the judgment day.

A patron would serve as a character witness for the client and also offer his own honor and merits on behalf of the client. This may well be the background of Matthew 7:22, which begins, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Hans Deter Betz suggests that in this scene large groups of people are appearing before the throne of God. One group has already been rejected by the divine judge. They turn to Jesus, believing him to be their broker. They plead, “Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” (Matthew 7:22). By citing the good words they have done (the appropriate response of honorable clients), they are claiming that they are the Lord’s legitimate clients. Jesus says that He “will profess [declare publicly] unto them, I never knew you” (Matthew 7:23). “I never knew you” is a renunciation formula and “belongs to the context of legal representation. An advocate cannot represent a client whom he or she does not know personally.” With this renunciation, Christ not only denies knowing the persons but also denies having any responsibility for them. He is not their patron and will not plead for them or vouch for their character in this court. He will not seek favor for them based on his honor or merits. He will not facilitate an association with the heavenly Patron.²⁹

²⁸ Grey, “Beholdest Thou,” 189.

²⁹ Hardison, “The Sociocultural Context,” 35.

Houses on rock and sand (Matt 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-49)

7:24 **built his house upon a rock.** If the houses are symbols of the type of lives we live and rain is the judgment of God raining down upon us, the foundation is him in whom we ultimately trust. If we have repented and made Jesus our advocate with the Father, we are built on a solid foundation that can withstand the storm. Compare Helaman 5:12.

Daniel Belnap wrote of these verses, tying them to the power of discernment required by disciples:

In this analogy, the wise man is contrasted with the foolish in the building of their respective houses. The wise man builds his on a solid foundation. Luke's version describes in detail the proactive nature of the wise man as he digs deep until he finds the stone necessary for the foundation. The foolish man, on the other hand, does not dig for a foundation but instead places his house directly on the surface of the earth. As with the earlier contrast between the hypocrite and the believer, the wise man and the foolish man differ primarily in their ability to discern between the way things appear to be and the way things really are.

Yet there is also a notable difference. Whereas the hypocrisy in the earlier examples is easily evident, the building of the house either on sand or on rock has no immediately discernible effect. In fact, the distinction does not really matter on days when the weather is fair. It only becomes a problem when the weather turns and the rain saturates the ground, loosening the soil and collapsing the house. At this point, however, the contrast is evident. Because the difference between the wise man and the foolish man is not immediately apparent, building on a solid foundation, like the need to discern the false prophet who looks like a disciple, or the corrupt fruit which may appear like the good, requires knowledge of what is truth, that which *really* is. In this case, it is the knowledge that regardless of how things appear now, the house built on sand has no real foundation and will collapse with the storm.³⁰

Sermon's end and impact (Matt 7:28-29; Mark 1:21-22)

7:28 **when Jesus had ended these sayings.** The first of five such pronouncements in Matthew, this is the phrase that divides it into five sections of deeds and words (see the outline above).

7:29 **as one having authority.** Scribes would interpret the scriptures and the Law, citing precedent and other scribes and sages to justify their positions. Jesus cited scripture only and declared what it meant by no more authority than his own words, then extended it to apply directly to his audience. He thus spoke authoritatively, without the need to support his words with the teachings of some other mortal teacher.

Galilean Ministry (8-9)

In this, Matthew's second of five sections outlining events and teachings of Jesus' ministry, he presents nine miracles and a few brief teachings on discipleship. These actions shift Jesus from a teacher (Matthew 3-7) to a Messiah of action. The text can be grouped into: Three healings (8:1-17); Requirements of discipleship (8:18-22); Three miracles (8:23 – 9:8); More discipleship discussion (9:9-17); Three healings (9:18-34); Laborers needed (9:35-38). This all leads into the commissioning and sending of the Twelve in chapter 10.³¹

Three Healings (Matthew 8:1-17)

This first section shows Jesus offering healing blessings to three individuals at the edges of society, as it were: a leper, a Gentile, and a woman.

³⁰ Daniel L. Belnap, "A Wise Man Built His House upon a Rock': The Doctrine of Discernment," in Strathearn, Wayment, and Belnap, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 277-278.

³¹ Brown, *An Introduction*, 180-181.

[A leper cleansed \(Matt 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16\)](#)

See Mark.

[Centurion's servant \(Matt 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10\)](#)

Matthew's and Luke's versions are substantially the same, except for a very interesting detail: in Luke, the centurion never speaks to Jesus directly, but through the elders of the Jews (who favor him because he built them their black basalt synagogue, discovered in excavations in Capernaum under the so-called "white" synagogue made of limestone and built in the 3rd century on the same location). Both writers likely include this as evidence of Jesus reaching beyond the Jews to the Gentile world. Luke may even be thinking ahead to Cornelius in Acts who will be the first recorded Gentile convert after Jesus' resurrection.

8:5 **Jesus was entered into Capernaum.** For many years, critics thought this story might be fictional. After all, there was no evidence of a Roman army at little Capernaum. But in recent years, excavations east of the town uncovered not only a Roman outpost, but all the makings of a Roman mini-city, complete with baths. Why would they be there? Capernaum sat at the border between the kingdoms of Herod Antipus and his brother, Philip, so there needed to be the collection of taxes (hence Matthew's presence) and the requisite Roman soldiers to enforce the collection of taxes.³²

8:5 **a centurion.** A century (*centuria*) was the smallest unit of the Roman army, and consisted of 100 or fewer men, commanded by a centurion who was usually promoted from within the ranks and received higher pay and a greater share of the spoils. Six centuries made one cohort (600 men or less), and ten cohorts made a legion (about 5,300 infantry and 700 cavalry; these last were referred to as 'most excellent' men). There were twenty-five legions in the Roman army in Jesus' day, scattered around the Roman Empire.

This particular centurion appears to have been there for several years, based on the dating of the remains of the basalt synagogue that Luke says he built for the Jews there. He was perhaps a 'god-fearer,' meaning a Gentile who believed in the Jewish faith but has not undergone full conversion (especially circumcision).

8:6 **servant.** The normal word translated "servant" in the New Testament is *doulos*, which means 'slave,' but the word here is *pais*, which primarily refers to a young son or daughter, depending on the gender. The word is used nine times in the NT, and every time except here and in a quotation of Isaiah it is translated child (or a related term). Thus it's very likely that it was the centurion's son, not his slave.

8:8 **I am not worthy.** While there was clearly humility at work here, he was also no doubt sensitive to the Jewish custom that if Jesus (or any other Jew) entered into his home, they would be rendered unclean.

8:9 **I am a man under authority.** The centurion's point was that he merely speaks, and the Roman army obeyed. Thus he believed that if Jesus spoke, the armies of heaven would obey him and bless his child.

8:10 **When Jesus heard it, he marvelled.** The JST changes it in Matthew so it isn't Jesus that marveled at the man's faith—after all, he was God—but his disciples. Interestingly, Joseph Smith didn't make the same change in the equivalent Luke passage.

[Healing Peter's Mother-in-Law and Others \(Matt 8:14-17; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39\)](#)

8:14 **come into Peter's house.** We already learned from Matthew 4:13 that Jesus had moved to Capernaum (see also Matthew 9:1 below). This verse hints that Jesus might well have lived in Peter's house while there.

8:15 **he touched her hand.** It was socially inappropriate for Jesus to touch a woman not related to him; it was also a Sabbath (according to Mark's account), compounding his offense. However, Jesus routinely touched those he healed and often did so on the Sabbath quite intentionally.

³² Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 1:55; this text notes that the Roman influence may be dated to A.D. 44, just after Jesus, but excavations reveal a substantial presence there by that time, so the earliest date for Romans in Capernaum is unknown.

8:15 **she arose, and ministered unto them.** A traditional view might see her arising and resuming household duties, which would include serving her guests. But the term used for “ministering” can also mean to serve in Jesus’ kingdom, meaning she became a disciple.

8:16 **with his word.** Or, “with a word” (NASB). No incantations or evoking of formulas; Jesus commanded and the devils left the afflicted persons.

8:17 **took our infirmities.** Matthew saw a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:4. In the KJV, this verse speaks more of sadness than illness, but the Greek terms have the sense of ‘sickness’ and ‘pain’ more than sorrow.

Requirements of Discipleship (Matthew 8:18-22)

What will it cost to choose to follow Jesus? What do we have to give up? The scriptures tell us to serve him with our heart, might, mind, and strength (D&C 4:2).³³ But making that specific can be more challenging than the concept might at first seem. Jesus here informed some would-be disciples of the potential cost. How did they react? Interestingly, we do not know. Perhaps they embraced the truth and made the requisite sacrifices. Or perhaps they were like the rich young man who went away sorrowing. What is our reaction to similar calls today?

Being a disciple (Matt 8:18-22; Luke 9:57-62)

8:18 **gave commandment to depart.** In an apparent attempt to get away from the crowds for a while (or get them to disperse and go home), Jesus told his disciples (likely James and John) to ready their ships for a trip to the other side of the lake. The next few verses picture people coming to him as the ships are getting ready but before he left.

8:19 **a certain scribe.** Many Jews had some basic abilities to read, but a certain class had extensive training in reading, writing, and copying. They were called scribes (Hebrew *copherim*, Greek *grammateus*), also called ‘lawyers’ and ‘doctors of the law’ in the New Testament. The first scribe in the scriptures was Ezra, who interpreted the scriptures for the Jews returning to Jerusalem who no longer spoke Hebrew, the language in which the scrolls were written. In an apocryphal story, Ezra, discovering that all copies of the scriptures were lost, re-dictated them from memory. Ezra was also a priest, but by Jesus’ day the scribes were separate from the priests.

8:19 **I will follow thee.** The scribe had looked around at the various rabbis of the day and decided that Jesus offered him the best opportunity as a disciple. He saw this as his next career move.

8:20 **the Son of man.** This is the first time this phrase is used in Matthew. It became Jesus’ trademark self-designation, especially in Matthew, where it is used thirty-two times and differently than in Mark; in many cases in Matthew, Jesus’ use of it is more clearly pointing to himself than in Mark

8:20 **hath not where to lay his head.** Jesus taught that discipleship to him was different than to other rabbis. While following others might offer prestige and high status within society and a prominent place at the synagogue or school, Jesus didn’t even have a place to call his own. Discipleship to him meant giving up the comforts of the world in order to serve others.

8:22 **let the dead bury their dead.** This seemingly harsh reply is in line with Jewish law, which restricted priests during their term of service from this kind of activity. Jesus was saying, ‘If you’ve been called to the ministry, stay the course and let others take care of family matters.’ This is further exemplified in the third disciple, mentioned in Luke but not Matthew, who asked to first go say goodbye to his family. But Jesus told him that if he’d already committed to service, then he needed to keep his commitment.

I had a missionary companion in France whose father passed away while we were together. The mission president came and told him, and it was obviously a very hard time for him. When he was trying to decide if he was going to go home and be with his family, our mission president shared these scriptures with him, and counseled him to stay and finish his mission. He called his mother and they determined that staying was the right thing to do. After a few days of reflection and prayer, he and I got back to our work, and he proved to be a marvelous companion and a

³³ The New Testament uses the words “heart,” “soul,” and “mind” (e.g., Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27, who adds “strength” to his list).

successful elder. He embraced the Savior's admonition that once he had accepted the call to serve, he would not be caught looking back, but would serve with all his heart, might, mind, and strength.

Three Miracles (8:23 – 9:8)

Calming the storm (Matt 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25)

That Jesus could control the elements seemed stunning to the disciples. Even the wind and waves obeyed him! Yet in reality how much more powerful is his calming influence through the atonement as we weather the storms of our daily lives, toiling at the sails and sometimes fearing for our survival.

8:24 **there arose a great tempest.** Because of its geography—below sea level and surrounded by high mountains—wind and storms can suddenly arise on the Sea of Galilee. Sometimes waves can reach a height of seven feet—quite enough to swamp ships in use during that time.

8:24 **he was asleep.** See Psalm 127:2: "So he giveth his beloved sleep." Based on a fishing boat from this period excavated underwater in the Sea of Galilee a few years ago, the boat likely had a deck at the aft and stern. Jesus was in the back asleep, probably under the deck which would keep him shielded from the storm and the running around of the disciples working the ship. His pillow (mentioned in Mark) was probably a sandbag, used for ballast.

8:26 **rebuked the winds and the sea.** In Mark and Luke's accounts, he rebuked the elements first, then asked the disciples why they were so fearful, whereas in Matthew's version those actions are reversed. Mark's version is the only one that records Jesus' famous words, "Peace, be still," which in Greek has the sense, "Be quiet, close your mouth." (Interestingly, the French translation there actually says, "Silence! Shut up!" [Silence ! Tais-toi !])

8:27 **What manner of man is this.** The text following this question answers it, especially in Matthew. More miracles and signs demonstrate that Jesus has power over the elements, evil spirits, illness, and even death, and the reaction in each instance adds to his identity—terror from the devils, rejection by some, and increased discipleship by others. We, too, must ask the question, search for and get a testimony of the answer, and conform our lives to his word, that we might have his atoning power in our lives.

Casting evil spirits into the swine (Matt 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39)

See also Luke. There are several examples of exorcism in ancient literature, several from Jesus' time. In every case, they relied on some form of magic to make it happen—potions, incantations, magic rings, or other objects. The words spoken were important—secret words said just right. Jesus' example here is vastly different and completely unique: he commanded the devilish forces by his own authority and they immediately submitted. These actions confirmed his eternal power and were signs of his messiahship.

8:28 **come to the other side.** The town is somewhat uncertain (various ancient texts use different terms, and Matthew, Mark, and Luke differ in the KJV) but was on the other side of the lake from Capernaum, so somewhere on the eastern shore. It was definitely a Gentile city because of the swine and the town's reaction.

8:28 **two possessed with devils.** Luke and Mark only mention one man, while Matthew cites two men, which also happens with the healing of the two blind men near Jericho (Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43). The JST corrects Matthew to be one man only here. However, Matthew's decision to portray it with two may be related to the idea of having two witnesses to bear legal testimony.

8:29 **torment us before the time.** The devils knew their day of judgment was coming, but not yet.

8:34 **they besought him that he would depart.** Perhaps frustrated that his actions had resulted in the death of so many of their pigs, perhaps out of fear of his control over devils, they simply dismissed him.

Healing a man with palsy (Matt 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26)

See also Luke.

9:1 **came into his own city.** Jesus returned to Capernaum, which was now his home.

9:2 **sick of the palsy**. “Palsy” is a form of paralysis, perhaps brought on by a stroke or a brain tumor, or even a fall or other injury.

9:2 **thy sins be forgiven**. Jesus did many things to make a point. It ultimately didn’t matter if he healed the man first and then forgave his sincere repentance, or did it in reverse order. But because he had an audience of scribes and he wanted to teach them something, he elected to publicly state the forgiveness first, knowing what the reaction would be.

9:3 **This man blasphemeth**. It is only blasphemy if he does not have the authority to do what he declared. Believing him to be a man, the scribes thus charged him with blasphemy—meaning to inappropriately assume the authority or act in the name of God (see Isaiah 43:25). Jesus’ clear goal was to prove by his next act that he was doing so with proper and divine authority.

9:6 **that ye may know**. This shows the deliberate nature of his action; he was determined to teach them about himself.

9:7 **departed to his house**. Probably Peter’s house (see 8:14-17 above).

9:8 **they marvelled**. This miracle was witnessed by a large crowd who acted as Jesus’ witnesses and which engendered marvel in them. It was astonishing to them that God “had given such power unto men.”

More Discipleship Discussion (9:9-17)

Matthew called, gives a feast (Matt 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32)

See Luke also, which has a parallel account (5:27-32) of this feast at Matthew’s house which curiously provides more details—even though Matthew is the author of this gospel. Humility on his part?

9:9 **Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom**. The Romans imposed various taxes on their people, using local authorities to collect them. The taxes included poll and land taxes as well as customs on goods in transit. The local tax collectors were allowed to collect whatever amount they wanted, leading to abuse. Tax collectors were despised, therefore, both because of their reputation for corruption, and because they collaborated with the hated Roman government.

There were tax collectors and chief tax collectors, who supervised the first. Matthew/Levi was the former (he was sitting in a booth collecting them) while Zacchaeus was the latter (see Luke 19:2).

9:13 **go ye and learn**. Chastising the Pharisees, Jesus invited them to read and ponder a scripture (from Hosea 6:6, which echoes 1 Samuel 15:22), an obvious chastisement as the ones who were supposed to know the scriptures.

Jesus and the Law (Matt 9:14-17; Mark 2:18-22; Luke 5:33-39)

Asked why his disciples did not fast as others did who followed the Pharisaic additions to the Law of Moses, Jesus offered short parables or metaphors to demonstrate the difference between his kingdom and that of the Jews.

These verses make the transition between the comments about fasting and prayer to the metaphors. The Pharisees want Jesus to explain why he has a new baptism (immersion) but doesn’t accept theirs (the ritual washings in pools of living water, or *mikva’ot*).

9:15 **Can the children of the bridechamber mourn**. Comparing his own coming to a wedding with him as the bridegroom, Jesus alludes to his pre-earth existence as Jehovah (see Isaiah 62:5; Hosea 2:19-20). During the wedding, it is a time for celebration, with normal life (“then shall they fast”) returning after the conclusion.

9:16 **new cloth**. Greek ‘unwashed,’ and therefore not yet shrunken. If you patch old clothes with unwashed material, the first time you wash them, they will pucker up and look and fit poorly, “and the rent is made worse.”

9:17 **new wine into old bottles**. Wine was stored in bags made of skins (KJV “bottles” is Greek ‘wineskins’). As the wine fermented, it stretched out the bags. As the bags got older, they also hardened. If you took an stiff, old bag and put new wine in it, it would stretch the bag to bursting.

Three Healings (9:18-34)

This second account of three healings in this section could be considered four healings, though the way Matthew used Mark’s intercalated story of two women healed indicates he intended to count that as one. The second is the story of two blind men, and later a mute possessed man.

Ruler’s daughter raised; woman healed (Matt 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56)

See Mark, which has the fullest picture of this nested or bracketed story. Matthew edited the account to remove details about the woman’s suffering, the discussion of “power” leading Jesus and him wondering who touched him, as well as her fear before him. Instead, in Matthew’s version, as soon as she touched Jesus’ garment, he turned and spoke to her.

With Jairus’ daughter, Matthew removed the messenger arriving telling him the girl was already dead and the bringing of Peter, James, and John alone into the house. He doesn’t give Jesus’ actions or words in the same detail, nor her age. The shortened version simply indicates that Jesus came and raised her from the dead.

Two blind and one mute one healed (Matt 9:27-38; Mark 10:46-52; 3:22; 6:6, 34; Luke 18:35-43; 11:14-15; 8:1; 10:2)

See also Mark.

9:27 **Thou Son of David, have mercy on us**. The scriptures taught that the coming of the Messiah would include giving sight to the blind (Isaiah 29:18; 35:5; 42:7). The blind men were invoking those prophecies by the title they used for Jesus, son of David, since the Messiah was to come from the line of David. This is the same title used by Bartimaeus when Jesus healed him in Jericho (Mark 10:46-48).

9:30 **See that no man know it**. The KJV almost sounds like the men ignored Jesus’ request (v. 31), but the JST clarifies what happened: “And their eyes were opened; and straightly **he** charged them, saying, **Keep my commandments and see thou tell no man in this place**, that no man know it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.” The restriction on them telling their story was just to the immediate area. This matches the honor society pattern of publicly recognizing someone who has done you good, as part of increasing your own and his honor.

9:32 **a dumb man possessed with a devil**. Unnamed persons brought this man to Jesus, who couldn’t ask for anything or express faith—he was just a person in need of healing. Jesus cast out the devil which allowed him to speak, and all marveled: “It was never so seen in Israel” (v. 33).

Laborers Needed (9:35-38)

9:35 **teaching . . . preaching . . . healing**. This verse echoes Matthew 4:23, repeating the threefold effort Jesus did to substantiate his identity as the Messiah and Son of God—teaching and preaching and healing, all with authority not from other men, but from God alone.

9:36 **fainted, and were scattered abroad**. Better translated, ‘troubled, and thrown down’ or ‘harassed and helpless.’

9:37 **the labourers are few**. Verses 37 and 38 set up chapter 10; Jesus, who has been working alone, declares that the harvest is too great for his own efforts, so he asks them all to pray that God will send more workers. That’s exactly what happened next.

Missionary Discourse (10)

This whole chapter is instructions to the Twelve before they were sent out.

Commissioning the Twelve (**Matt 10:1-16**; Mark 6:7; 3:13-19a; 6:8-11; Luke 9:1; 6:12-16; 9:2-5; 10:3)

10:2 **The names of the twelve.** There are four lists of the Twelve which seem to naturally cluster them into three groups of four, even if the order within each sub-group differs slightly from list to list:

Matthew 10:2-4	Mark 3:16-19	Luke 6:14-16	Acts 1:13
Simon Peter Andrew James John	Simon Peter James John Andrew	Simon Peter Andrew James John	Peter James John Andrew
Philip Bartholomew Thomas Matthew	Philip Bartholomew Matthew Thomas	Philip Bartholomew Matthew Thomas	Philip Thomas Bartholomew Matthew
James ben Alphaeus Lebbaeus surnamed Thaddaeus Simon Judas Iscariot	James ben Alphaeus Thaddaeus Simon Judas Iscariot	James ben Alphaeus Simon Judas of James Judas Iscariot	James ben Alphaeus Simon Judas of James -----

10:5 **Go not into the way of the Gentiles . . . Samaritans.** This was a temporary restriction; for this particular mission they were to focus only on the house of Israel (v. 6). Later the gospel will be preached and accepted among the Samaritans and many Gentile nations.

10:8 **Heal the sick . . . cast out devils.** These men were Jesus' *shaliah*, Aramaic for his 'sent ones', his apostles (Greek *apostolos* means a similar thing). They go with his authority, in his name, and will do the works that he would do if he were there.

10:9 **purses.** Greek *zōnē*, a 'girdle' or 'belt' that served to both wrap around and hold the garment, but also as a storage place since folding it formed a pocket of sorts.

10:10 **scrip.** Greek *pēra*, a leather sack, somewhat like a backpack today, used by travelers to carry their provisions.

10:10 **two coats.** Greek *chitōn*; two 'tunics' or basic garments worn by all men and women. One was necessary, two was extra.

10:10 **staves.** Walking sticks. They were to leave everything behind that might represent their relying on the arm of flesh.

These conditions are similar to those imposed on everyone as they entered the temple precincts. They were to go in stripped of worldly possessions, focused solely on serving God, avoiding even the appearance of being engaged in other business, when their whole being should be absorbed in the service of the Lord. In other words, Jesus was evoking covenantal language with the Twelve even as he sent them out in his name.

These conditions—to travel without money or provisions—were also temporary. Later, in Luke 22:35-36, the Lord told them to take these things.

10:14 **shake off the dust of your feet.** According to the Talmud, Jews did this when leaving a Gentile city to signify that they were cleansed from the unclean elements of the city. Jesus applies it to Jewish cities, too, when they reject the words of his 'sent ones' and thus his words.

Suffering for testimony (Matt 10:17-25; Mark 13:9-13; Luke 12:11-12; 6:40; 21:12-19)

10:17 **deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you.** Each Jewish town had a council of elders. The one in Jerusalem is often referred to in scriptures as the Sanhedrin, which is merely the Greek word for ‘council.’ If three elders on a council determined that you had committed certain offenses, such as slandering a woman or entering the temple unworthily, the punishment was thirty-nine strokes (so as not to accidentally break the command in Deuteronomy 25:3 that it not be more than forty), administered in the synagogue while tied to a ‘lashing post’, clothing stripped off the chest and back. Paul received this at least five times (2 Corinthians 11:24). This is not the flesh-tearing Roman *flagellum* that Jesus received prior to his crucifixion, but a leather strap with four thongs that still did much damage, including occasionally killing people. One-third of the ‘stripes’ were on the chest and two-thirds on the back. The records indicate that both men and women received the same treatment.

10:18 **before governors and kings.** Meaning probably Roman governors and Herodian kings. We have no record of any apostle except Paul speaking before governors and kings (James was killed by Herod Antipus in Acts 12, so he could possibly have spoken before him first), but there are many traditions about the apostles as they took the gospel throughout the world that has them interacting with, preaching to, and converting leaders in several nations. Of course, Jesus could also be alluding to his own future experience where prior to his crucifixion he was brought before both a governor and a king.

10:22 **for my name’s sake.** Literally, ‘because of my name’, meaning that because they are ‘sent ones’ of Jesus and act in his name, they shall be hated, just as he was hated in many places.

10:24-25 **disciple . . . master . . . servant . . . lord.** A better translation might be: ‘The disciple (or student) is not greater than the teacher, nor is the slave better than his master. It is enough for the disciple to become like the teacher, and the slave like the master.’ In other words, ‘As disciples and slaves (of God), don’t expect to be treated any better than they have treated me.’ They could expect harsh treatment, just as Jesus was experiencing and would yet know.

Have no fear (Matt 10:26-33; Luke 12:2-9)

10:26 **Fear them not therefore.** The apostles were not to fear any of these difficulties Jesus warned them about. Covered things will be revealed; hidden things made known; things spoken in darkness (privacy) shall be brought into the light; whispers will be preached from housetops (vv. 26-27).

10:28 **fear not them which kill the body.** While physical death is a very hard thing for mortals to experience, Jesus taught that the greater fear was to lose the soul.

10:31 **Fear ye not therefore.** The third injunction against fear is matched with a declaration that the Twelve were more valuable “than many sparrows.” This somewhat ironic statement reminded them of the teaching from the Sermon on the Mount that God cares for grass, flowers, and small birds with tenderness and concern, so surely they did not need to fear man, since God would more readily look out for them.

10:32 **confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father.** Jesus promised to be their broker or advocate with the Father, speaking in their behalf because they have spoken of him before others. He is their character witness and offers his own honor and merits as he speaks in their behalf.³⁴

Discipleship (Matt 10:34-39; Luke 12:51-53; 14:25-27; 17:33)

10:34 **came not to send peace, but a sword.** It’s not that Jesus’ message wasn’t one of peace, but he was warning his apostles that divisions and strife were likely as a result of the message. The sword was a symbol for violent war and death, showing that those who accepted the gospel might even be faced with that harsh reality. But only those who were willing to give up all, to love God more than anything, and to take up the cross of persecution and ridicule would be accepted into the kingdom.

³⁴ Hardison, “The Sociocultural Context,” 34-35.

10:40 **He that receive you receiveth me.** As the ‘sent ones’ of Jesus, the Twelve would be received by anyone who embraced the message he taught. Likewise, receiving Jesus’ message led one to the Father, who sent Jesus, just as he sent the Twelve. Such a kind reception, represented by the giving of a drink to “one of these little ones” (v. 42), would set the giver up for an eternal reward.

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- JST – Joseph Smith Translation
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