

Sermon on Mount : Entry into Kingdom of God.

In short, we have the guidelines in Sermon to live on earth to attain Kingdom of God.

Date and Structure of the Gospel of Matthew

Date of Matthean Gospel is in dispute. The spectrum of opinion about the dating of Matthew's Gospel are begins from AD 40 to after AD100.¹ The date of Matthean Gospel is highly suggested by scholars as in between AD 75-AD 100.

B. W. Bacon's Pentateuchal theory is more appealing to me and it is the best-known modern hypothesis about Matthew's arrangement of text. He divided the Gospel as a counterpart to Mosaic Torah. As Torah consists of five books the Matthean Gospel is also divided into five:²

Preamble or Prologue: 1-2 (The birth narrative)

Book I

- a) 3,1-4,25: Narrative material
- b) 5,1-7,27: The Sermon on the Mount
- c) 7,28&29: Formula (*and when Jesus had finished these sayings...*)

Book II

- a) 8,1-9,35: Narrative material
- b) 9,36-10,42: Discourse on mission and martyrdom
- c) 11,1: Formula (*and when Jesus had finished instructing...*)

Book III

- a) 11,2-12,50: Narrative and debate material
- b) 13,1-25: Teaching on the Kingdom of Heaven
- c) 13,53: Formula (*and when Jesus had finished these parables...*)

Book IV

- a) 13,54-17,21: Narrative and debate material
- b) 17,22-18,35: Discourse on Church administration
- c) 19,1: Formula (*Now when Jesus finished these sayings...*)

Book V

- a) 19,2-22,46: Narrative and debate material
- b) 23,1-25,46: Discourse on eschatology: farewell address
- c) 26,1: Formula (*when Jesus finished all these sayings...*)

Epilogue: 26,3-28,20: From the last supper to the resurrection

In the first Book, we find the Lord's Prayer under the title Sermon on the Mount. Now let us study on the structure of the Sermon and then the position of Lord's Prayer in it.

¹ There are about twenty suggestions by different scholars. Majority of the scholars placed the date of the Gospel of Mathew in the final quarter of the first century. There are some patristic testimonies of Eusebius and Papias also. They can be found and analyzed from W. D. DAVIES- DALE C. ALLISON, ed., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Mathew*, Vol I, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1988, 127-128.

² W. D. DAVIES- DALE C. ALLISON, ed., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Mathew*, 59.

Structure of the Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount has been divided into triads by Allison³ but it will not be more helpful for our structural understanding of the Sermon. We can find a better structural study in the *International Critical Commentary*. The Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7) is divided into three major sections. The first is related to Torah (5,17-48), the second with Christian cult (6,1-18), and the third with social attitudes and obligations (6,19-7,12).⁴

Comprehensively, Mt 6,1-18 treats with three subjects: almsgiving (6,2-4), prayer (6,5-15), and fasting (6,16-18). Mt 6,1-6 and 16-18 have no parallel in Mark and Luke.

We see, C. H. Lohr's Chiastic outline differentiating the whole Gospel into narrative and discourse. And the Lord's prayer is in discourse section (Mt 5-7: Blessings, entering the kingdom).⁵

Sub- divisions

Introduction: the setting of the sermon (5:1-2)

1. The blessedness of disciples (5:3-12)
2. The character of disciples (5:13-16)
3. The new law for disciples (5:17-48)

Introduction: Jesus' attitude toward the law (5:17-20)

- (1) About murder (5:21-26)
 - (2) About adultery (5:27-30)
 - (3) About divorce (5:31-32)
 - (4) About oaths (5:33-37)
 - (5) About retaliation (5:38-42)
 - (6) About love of enemies (5:43-48)
4. The practice of piety by disciples (6:1-18)

Introduction: the evil of ostentation (6:1)

- (1) By almsgiving (6:2-4)
 - (2) By prayer (6:5-15)
 - (3) By fasting (6:16-18)
5. The avoidance of materialism by disciples (6:19-34)
 6. Warnings to disciples (7:1-27)

- (1) Against judging (7:1-5)

³ Allison has done it wonderfully. 5,21-48 is divided into two groups having three members each, etc. *International Critical Commentary* 64. There are many triads outside Sermon on the Mount as Mt 1,1- three names, 1,2-17- three fourteens, 1,8-2,23- three stories and so on more than 40 triads prepared by Allen, Moffat and Luz found.

⁴ This scheme is found in rabbinic discussions, W. D. DAVIES- DALE C. ALLISON, ed., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*.

⁵ Lohr divided the Matthean Gospel into eleven, W.D. DAVIES- DALE C. ALLISON, ed., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*.

- (2) Against sacrilege (7:6)
- (3) Against failure to pray (7:7-12)
- (4) Against worldliness (7:13-14)
- (5) Against false teachers (7:15-23)
- (6) Against hearing but not acting upon the word (7:24-27)

Conclusion: the effect upon the hearers (7:28-29)

Delimitation: Here we are delimiting the larger section in which the particular pericope is located in order to find out the exact boundaries of the text. Mt 5:1a Ἰδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος is a new beginning. The scene changes with δὲ, and there is a change of place from plane to mountain (ὄρος). The conclusion of it is found in Mt 7:27 and the following pericope begins at Mt 7:28, Καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοὺς λόγους τούτους, ἐξεπλήσσοντο οἱ ὄχλοι ἐπὶ τῇ διδαχῇ αὐτοῦ. Here, ὅτε has the function of a temporal conjunction subordinating the principal clause. This second clause can be translated as ‘when Jesus finished these words, the crowds were astonished at his teaching.’ There is a thematic conclusion in it as Jesus finished his teachings the crowds were astonished here. In Mt 8:1 we see the coming down of Jesus from the mountain that is of the change of location. Καταβάντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄρους (8:1a). The genitive absolute in the beginning of dependent clause can be translated as ‘when he came down from the mountain’. The wider delimitation of the pericope would be done with the contrasting verbs ἀνέβη (5:1a) and Καταβάντος (8:1a). Here we find the change of location clearly as in the beginning Jesus moves up to the mountain and at the end he comes down.

The pericope can be delimited in between 5:1 and 7:27 because as the previous pericope (4:23-25) is a summary statement and following pericope (7:28-29) can be considered as the summary statement of the previous teachings including the reaction of the crowds. By analyzing the literary and thematic features we can delimit the text 5:1-7:27 as a separate unit and it can be also entitled the Sermon on the Mount. Division of the Sermon on the Mount

Division of Sermon :The text (Mt 5:1-7:27) can also be divided into three major sections. The first is related to Torah (5:17-48), the second with Christian cult (6:1-18), and the third with social attitudes and obligations (6:19-7:12). Comprehensively, the second section of Christian cult treats with three subjects: almsgiving (6:1-4), prayer (6:5-15), and fasting (6:16-18). However, Mt 6:1-6 and 16-18 have no parallel in Mark and Luke.⁶

Kingdom in the Matthean Gospel: With this petition, we are acknowledging first and foremost the primacy of God. Where God is absent, nothing can be good. This is what the Lord means when he says to “seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well” (Mt 6:33). These words establish an order of priorities for human action, for how we approach everyday life.⁷ For ‘Kingdom of God’ means ‘dominion of God,’ and this means that his will is accepted as the true criterion.⁸ It can be understood as fulfilling the will of God and it is also meaningful to say the Kingdom of God comes by way of a listening heart of God.⁹

It is an important thing that the term ‘kingdom of God’ is less used (12:28; 21:43) by Mathew, but instead the ‘kingdom of heaven’ is used in the Matthean Gospel and we understand it is the major topic in the Gospel of Mathew as the term was used many times (Mt 3:2; 5:3; 5:10; 5:19; 8:11; 10:7; 11:11,12;

⁶ W.D. DAVIES- DALE C. ALLISON, ed., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Mathew*,

⁷ JOSEPH RATZINGER, *Jesus of Nazareth: from Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, 145.

⁸ JOSEPH RATZINGER, *Jesus of Nazareth: from Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, 146

⁹ JOSEPH RATZINGER, *Jesus of Nazareth: from Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, 146.

13:24,31,33,43,44,45,47,52 etc.). And the whole theology of the Gospel is centered upon the realization of kingdom of heaven. The key statement of the New Testament study on kingdom of God is that Jesus is the Kingdom of God in person. Cyprian exhorts Christ is the kingdom of God (*Treaties, On the Lord's Prayer* 13).¹⁰ The Kingdom of God is present wherever he is present.¹¹ And the eschatological hope in coming of the kingdom means the second coming of Jesus Christ in power and glory.

We cannot neglect the human cooperation in the kingdom of God. Augustine says that the kingdom of God is already on earth but due to ignorance of it we cannot recognize it (*Sermon on the Mount* 2.6.20). It calls for the human cooperation to be aware of the kingdom of God. Our ignorance of Jesus and his kingdom should be uncovered so that we can experience his kingdom on earth as heaven on earth. It is a personal experience and Origen teaches that when we pray for the coming of the kingdom of God and we should also pray that his kingdom must be established in ourselves and it might bear fruits and be perfected in ourselves (*On Prayer* 25.1).¹² It means God reigns in us. We surrender ourselves to the will of God so that his kingdom will be within us. He will be king of our hearts. Then we will be more fruitful in virtues and goodness.

Unity in the Sermon

If, however, the word "unity" may be applied to a carefully arranged and edited compilation of Jesus' teaching on a particular subject, the Sermon on the Mount is a unity. The only problem is to determine a dominating theme and a clear structure which constitute unity. Theme is tied up with purpose. What purpose did Matthew have in bringing together various sayings of Jesus in his first discourse section? Lutheran interpreters have tended to understand the sermon as an exposition of the law to show people their need of grace. Classical liberalism saw in the sermon an ethic for all people of all ages. Many contemporary liberals see in the sermon nothing more than the ethical standards of Matthew's own church. Existentialism finds in the sermon as well as the Bible generally merely a summons to "authentic" existence. Albert Schweitzer described the sermon as an interim ethic for the brief period between its proclamation and the expected end of the world. However, that the sermon does have lasting validity.

Kingdom of heavens: 5:3,5:10, 5:19; 5:20; 7:21;

5:3: for Luke reports Jesus as saying: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20). This could be material poverty, but it is not; for Matthew rules out this meaning by quoting Christ's full saying. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." To be poor in spirit is to be poor in the inward man, not in outward circumstances. Consequently, to be poor in spirit is to recognize one's poverty spiritually before God.¹³

5:10: Jesus said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."¹⁴

5:19 : Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:19 NRS)

5:20: For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:20 NRS)

¹⁰ MANLIO SIMONETTI, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament Ia Matthew 1-13*, 130.

¹¹ JOSEPH RATZINGER, *Jesus of Nazareth: from Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, 146.

¹² MANLIO SIMONETTI, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament Ia Matthew 1-13*, 133.

¹³Boice, J. M. (2002). *The Sermon on the Mount* :

¹⁴Boice, J. M. (2002). *The Sermon on the Mount : An expositional commentary*.

7:21: Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. (Matt. 7:21 NRS)

Only Kingdom is found : 6:10; Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Matt. 6:10 NRS)

6:33; But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matt. 6:33 NRS).

One should note that it follows closely after the programmatic statements that Jesus went about proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of heaven (4:17, 23). The sermon is therefore a description of the virtues which should characterize those who belong to the kingdom of heaven. This kingdom is the reign of God in the lives of people in Jesus' day, during the apostolic era, and in every age since those times. The sermon deals with the personal life of those who belong to the kingdom. Other aspects of their life are dealt with in other discourses, e.g., mission in chapter 10. Those who belong to the kingdom could be described simply as disciples—a term which appears at the beginning of the sermon (5:1). Therefore, the sermon has a consistent theme, and this theme constitutes part of its unity. Another part is supplied by its structure.

Reading Matthew Based on Kingdom of God

Then beginning in Matthew chapter three and four it is recorded that Jesus is baptized by His cousin John the Baptist and then tempted by Satan to establish the Davidic Kingdom expediently (cf. Matthew 4:8-9). Jesus then began to publicly announce that fulfillment of the Davidic Kingdom was at hand (cf. Matthew 4:17). Matthew then records that crowds began to follow Jesus and He then went up on the Mount of Olives and gave His famous Sermon on the Mount. That Christ was intending to fulfill the Covenants God made with Israel is the first key in understanding the Sermon on the Mount.

When we read the phrase “kingdom of heaven” in the Mathew, they take it to mean “heaven” in the non-physical sense of the transcendent abode of God. Since there is no change of Kingdom meaning between the Old and New Testament, the Kingdom referred to in the Sermon on the Mount is understood to be the fulfillment of Old Testament Covenant God made with Israel for a physical Kingdom (2 Samuel 7:8-17). With this in view it becomes apparent why Matthew began his writing with an emphasis on the genealogy of Jesus (cf. Matthew 1:1).

He also uses the word “heaven” to express the transcendent abode of God (cf. Matthew 5:16, 45, 6:1, 9, 7:11, 21b). In the ancient world it was not uncommon to use the word “heaven” as an indirect reference to God. 5 It is in this sense that Matthew uses the phrase “kingdom of heaven” (cf. Matthew 4:17, 5:3, 10, 19, 7:21a). It is clear that when Matthew uses the phrase “kingdom of heaven” he means to say “kingdom of God” and is distinguishable from God’s transcendent abode (cf. Matthew 7:21). That Matthew uses the phrase “kingdom of heaven” as a synonym for the Davidic Kingdom is the second key in understanding the Sermon on the Mount.

After teaching the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus went around Judea performing signs for the people to get them ready for the Kingdom. At the end of Matthew chapter nine, after seeing that the people were distressed, Jesus felt strongly that it was time for the Davidic Kingdom to be established.

Beginning in Matthew chapter thirteen, Jesus started speaking about Davidic Kingdom preparations symbolically. After being questioned by His disciples as to why Jesus told them it was because He had additional revelation about invisible “mysteries of the kingdom” only for those who believed in Jesus as Messiah. The Davidic Kingdom was to be delayed and He told them that preparation had become like certain things. Kingdom preparation had become like a man who sowed good seed, tares among wheat, a

mustard seed, leaven, hidden treasure, a merchant seeking fine pearls, a dragnet, a head of a household, and a great treasure.

Later on, by Jesus' own admittance He told His disciples that He did not know when the Kingdom would appear (cf. Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32).

Kingdom of God in Jesus of Nazareth: Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the Gospel'" (Mk 1:14–15). With these words, the Evangelist Mark describes the beginning of Jesus' public activity and at the same time specifies the essential content of his preaching. (Mt 4:23, 9:35).

The core content of the Gospel is this: The Kingdom of God is at hand. And an answer to this gift is demanded of man: conversion and faith. The center of this announcement is the message that God's Kingdom is at hand. This announcement is the actual core of Jesus' words and works.

saying of the Catholic modernist Alfred Loisy: Jesus preached the Kingdom of God, and what came was the Church.

We can identify three dimensions in the Church Fathers' interpretation of this key term.

1. The first dimension is the Christological one. Origen, basing himself on a reading of Jesus' words, called Jesus the *autobasileia*, that is, the Kingdom in person. Jesus himself is the Kingdom; On this interpretation, the term "Kingdom of God" is itself a veiled Christology.
2. There is a second way of looking at the significance of the "Kingdom of God," which we could call the idealistic or mystical interpretation. It sees man's interiority as the essential location of the Kingdom of God. This approach was also inaugurated by Origen in *On Prayer*. It is located in man's inner being. It grows and radiates outward from that inner space.
3. The third dimension of the interpretation of the Kingdom of God we could call the ecclesiastical: the Kingdom of God and the Church are related in different ways and brought into more or less close proximity.

Other opinions; The individual's moral action, his works of love, will decide whether he enters into the Kingdom or is shut out of it. It was not the individual as such who stands under the promise, but the community, and that it is as a member of this community that the individual attains salvation.

Jesus' message, it was now claimed, was radically "eschatological"; his proclamation of the imminent Kingdom of God was a proclamation of the imminent end of the world, of the inbreaking of a new world where, as the term kingdom suggests, God would reign. A secularist reinterpretation of the idea of the Kingdom has gained considerable ground. "Kingdom," on this interpretation, is simply the name for a world governed by peace, justice, and the conservation of creation. It means no more than this. This "Kingdom" is said to be the goal of history that has to be attained. This is supposedly the real task of religions: to work together for the coming of the "Kingdom."

In Matthew: It is true that Matthew speaks of the "Kingdom of the heavens," but the word heavens is an alternative expression for the word God, which the Jews, with an eye to the second commandment, largely avoided out of reverence for the mystery of God. When Jesus speaks of the Kingdom of God, he is quite simply proclaiming God, and proclaiming him to be the living God, who is able to act concretely in the world and in history and is even now so acting. He is telling us: "God exists" and "God is really God." "Kingdom of God" is therefore an inadequate translation. It would be better to speak of God's being-Lord, of his lordship.

General idea : such statements as “the Kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk 1:15), it “has already come upon you” (Mt 12:28), it is “in the midst of you” (Lk 17:21). He, who is in our midst, is the “Kingdom of God,” only we do not know him (cf. Jn 1:30). Another saying of Jesus points in the same direction, although with a somewhat different nuance: “But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you” (Lk 11:20).

The “Kingdom of God” is a theme that runs through the whole of Jesus’ preaching. We can therefore understand it only in light of that preaching as a whole. one of the core elements of Jesus’ preaching—the Sermon on the Mount—we will find there a deeper development of the themes.

Beatitudes : Thus far, we have considered only the first half of the first Beatitude, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” In both Matthew and Luke the promise assigned to them is as follows: “Theirs [yours] is the Kingdom of God [the Kingdom of heaven]” (Mt 5:3; Lk 6:20). “Kingdom of God” is the basic category of Jesus’ message; here it becomes part of the Beatitudes. it is the real high road of life; it is only on the way of love, whose paths are described in the Sermon on the Mount, that the richness of life and the greatness of man’s calling are opened up.

In Lord’s Prayer: In connection with the petition for God’s Kingdom, we recall all our earlier considerations concerning the term “Kingdom of God.” With this petition, we are acknowledging first and foremost the primacy of God. Where God is absent, nothing can be good. Where God is not seen, man and the world fall to ruin. This is what the Lord means when he says to “seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well” (Mt 6:33). These words establish an order of priorities for human action, for how we approach everyday life. “Kingdom of God” means “dominion of God,” and this means that his will is accepted as the true criterion. His will establishes justice, and part of justice is that we give God his just due and, in so doing, discover the criterion for what is justly due among men.

The encounter with Christ makes this petition even deeper and more concrete. We have seen that Jesus is the Kingdom of God in person. The Kingdom of God is present wherever he is present. To pray for the Kingdom of God is to say to Jesus: Let us be yours, Lord! Pervade us, live in us; gather scattered humanity in your body, so that in you everything may be subordinated to God and you can then hand over the universe to the Father, in order that “God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28).