

Lesson One:
INTRODUCTION

LESSON OBJECTIVE:

The student demonstrates understanding of the historical and literary setting of the Sermon on the Mount.

LESSON INDICATORS:

Upon successful completion of this lesson the student:

1. **Recognizes** the key trends and their advocates in the history of the interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount.
2. **Recognizes** the key critical issues present in the interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount.
3. **Recognizes** the central theological themes present in the interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount.
4. **Recognizes** the details of the literary structure of the Sermon on the Mount.

EXEGETICAL ISSUES:

1. Summarize briefly the interpretative approach to the Sermon on the Mount by the following interpreters.

Augustine:

Summary:

Kissinger, Sermon, 12-16:

“Augustine, born in 354, is without doubt one of the greatest and most influential Christian theologians. His influence was deeply impressed upon the medieval period, and his thought lay behind many of the motifs which came to the fore during the Reformation. Even today he remains an intellectual power and an acknowledged spiritual father. Paul Tillich said that Augustine’s influence not only overshadowed the next thousand years but all periods ever since. He also acknowledged his own dependence upon Augustine, say that his own theology was more Augustinian than Thomistic [Tillich, A History of Christian Thought, ed. Carl E. Braaten (NT: Harper & Row, 1968), pp. 103-4]...[p. 13]

From this opening passage [in The Lord’s Sermon on the Mount] and what follows, it is evident that Augustine is convinced that the ethical content of the Sermon on the Mount was not a moral code for a select few but was rather a perfect rule and pattern for each Christian life. It was a standard for every follower of Christ and in it one could find solutions to the problems relating to human life and conduct.

In his discussion of the Beatitudes and the Lord’s Prayer, Augustine is intrigued by the symbolism of numbers, especially the number seven which was regarded as a symbol of perfection and [p.14] wholeness. In 3.10 Augustine suggests that the very number of the Beatitudes should be carefully considered. He then elaborates on the seven stages found in the seven Beatitudes. There are eight Beatitudes, however, and Augustine’s explanation of this is as follows:...

Though Augustine’s sevenfold typology and his symbolism of numbers appears strained and unduly superimposed upon the biblical texts, nevertheless, this pattern affords him a method of relating various parts of the Sermon on the Mount to each other and to correlate command and promise as expressed in the Old Law and the New....[p. 15]

Another area which needs to be discussed is Augustine’s understanding of the relationship between the Old Law and the New in the Sermon on the Mount. The most extensive treatment of this problem is in Augustine’s Reply to Faustus. Faustus was a renowned Manichaean leader who affirmed that acceptance of the New Testament necessitated a repudiation of the Old Testament and its God. he maintained that there was a break between the Old and the New Law because Christ did not fulfill the Old Law but rather destroyed it. The ‘dialogues’ between Augustine and Faustus on this issue is in Books XVII-XIX of the Reply to Faustus.”

Guelich, 15:

“He not only wrote in two volumes what may have been the first complete commentary on the Sermon as such (*De Sermone Domini in Monte*), but he may also have been the first to refer to Matthew 5-7 as the “Sermon on the Mount.” As did his predecessors, Augustine viewed the Sermon to be “the perfect measure of the Christian life” and “filled with all the precepts by which the Christian life is formed.” For him the Sermon applied to all Christians and was without question applicable to life. But Augustine’s treatment also exposes one of the major theological tensions of the Sermon: Jesus’ demands as compared to those of the Law. He begins his commentary by noting the significance of the “mountain” in terms of Jesus giving “the greater precepts of righteousness” in contrast to the “lesser” which God had “given to the Jews.” Yet in his *Reply to Faustus* (a leading Manichaean), Augustine counters with six different ways in which Jesus “fulfills” the Law and thus demonstrates that the old and new are integrally related. This difference in emphasis within Augustine’s writings has led to differences of opinion regarding his understanding of how Jesus’ teaching related to the Mosaic Law and once again poses one of the fundamental theological questions of the Sermon itself.”

Aquinas:

Guelich, 15:

“The most significant development in the interpretation of the Sermon in the years between Augustine and the Reformation falls into the more practical category of how the Sermon’s demands apply to the believer. *Aquinas* set the tone which is still heard in some circles today by distinguishing between “precepts” and “evangelical counsels.” In his *Summa* (part 2.1, quest. 108, art. 4) Aquinas stated unequivocally: “The difference between a counsel and a commandment is that a commandment implies obligation, whereas a counsel is left to the option of the one to whom it is given.” He added, “In the New Law, which is the law of liberty, counsels are added to the commandments.... We must understand the commandments of the New Law to have been given about matters that are necessary to gain the end of eternal bliss, to which the New Law brings us forthwith: but that the counsels are about matters that render the gaining of this end more assured and expeditious....” This bifurcation between precepts or commandments and evangelical counsels has provided the moral theological basis for applying the Sermon in Roman Catholic theology. Theologically, the demands of the New Law have clearly become “necessary” for gaining the “end of eternal bliss” while the “counsels” only provide optional aids in gaining that end.”

Martin Luther:

Guelich, 16:

“*Martin Luther’s* primary work on the Sermon consisted of a series of sermons that later became a commentary. Much of his thought took shape in the polemics against the “papists” on the one side and the “enthusiasts” or Anabaptists on the other. In countering the “enthusiasts,” Luther dealt with the practical aspects of the Sermon’s application to everyday life. He charged the “schismatics” with confusing the “secular” and the “spiritual,” the “kingdom of Christ” and the “kingdom of the world,” by seeking to implement the Sermon’s demands so rigorously that they had to withdraw from worldly affairs. In his “two-kingdom” approach, Luther further distinguished between one’s “office” and one’s “person.” The former represents the God-ordained order for the kingdom of this world, the latter one’s “heart” or “spiritual” relationship to God and others. Thus, the Sermon’s demands are to be carried out continually within the Christian’s “heart” even if the “office” demands conduct to the contrary. For example, as a soldier, lawyer, or businessman, one must carry out the duties commensurate with one’s “office”; while not desiring to do anyone harm, one may suffer and grieve for others in one’s heart. Furthermore, apart from one’s “office,” the Christian must follow Jesus’ teaching in personal relationships. Thus the Sermon’s demands apply to all Christians in all of life.

In his Postscript to the Sermon, Luther addressed the theological question raised by the “papists,” who saw the obedience of the Sermon as part of a pattern of “works of righteousness.” Since, for Luther, grace and works were antithetical, he insisted that the Sermon addressed those who were already Christians and in whose lives grace was at work producing the fruits of the Sermon. Recognizing the obvious presence of merit-and-reward motifs within the Sermon, he designated these passages as promises intended to “console” the believer in a life of suffering rather than as “the foundation” for one’s salvation. Thus, the theological issue for Luther consisted above all in the conflict of the doctrine of works and the doctrine of justification by faith alone. For him the Sermon did not instruct one on becoming a Christian through “works of righteousness” [p. 17] but on being a Christian whose life produced by God’s grace the corresponding works and fruit.”

Guelich [summary] 18:

“For some, this meant perceiving life as being divided into two compartments, in only one of which could and must one carry out the Sermon’s demands. This alternative runs the risk of “compartmentalization” and cultural compromise.”

John Calvin:

Guelich, 17:

“For *John Calvin*, whose treatment of the Sermon must be extrapolated from his theological compendium of the *Institutes* and his exegetical *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke*, the theological question had largely to do with the relationship of Jesus’ demands to the Law in particular and the Old Testament in general. In the *Institutes* he went to considerable lengths to deny that Christ was another Moses or even added to the Law. Rather, as the Law’s “expounder,” Jesus freed it (e.g., Matt 5:21-48) from the falsehoods of the Pharisees “who focused on the external obedience to the Law.” For Calvin, the Law--meaning the Old Testament with its commandments and promises--and the Gospel--meaning the New Testament message of salvation and its demands--were integrally bound by an “inviolable . . . sacred tie” seen in the confirmation of the “gospel’s authority” by the “fulfillment of the Law.”

Consequently, Calvin held no brief for the “schoolmen” of the Roman Catholic interpretations, who distinguished between “optional counsels” and necessary commandments, since all of Christ’s demands applied to all believers. But he also took issue with the Anabaptists because of their rigorous application of the Sermon without regard to its larger context of Scripture. Using his hermeneutical method of *analogia fidei*, Calvin argued that the prohibition of all oaths, judging, and nonresistance represented a failure to perceive the intent behind these particular demands as determined by the larger Scriptural context. For example, in his *Commentary* on Matt 5:33-37 he noted that the prohibition of oaths “meant nothing more than this, that all oaths are unlawful, which in any way abuse or profane the sacred name of God...” He then supported his conclusion by the positive use and teaching of Scripture elsewhere regarding oaths. Thus, for Calvin, the applicability of the Sermon’s demands involved a hermeneutical concern stemming from the fundamental, theological question regarding Jesus’ demand and its relationship to the Law and the Old Testament promise.”

Guelich [summary] 18:

“For others, the secular and the sacred were continuous, and the Sermon’s demands understood against the whole of Scripture applied to all believers and for all areas of life. This alternative runs the risk of casuistry and avoidance of the “impractical.” “

Anabaptists:

Guelich, 17-18:

“The *Anabaptists* represented a complex mixture of various radical groups whose common denominator included, above all, believer’s baptism and a rigorous attempt to follow Jesus’ teaching, especially as found in the Sermon. This led to the avoidance of the use of oaths, personal or military force, legal justice, and even at times the possession of personal property. Such a posture caused them inevitably to withdraw from political and social life and led to the strict separation of church and state. [p.18] The Anabaptists recognized the state as such to be a God-ordained order within the world, but they left its administration to those of this world. For the Christians, the Sermon on the Mount was the Magna Charta.”

Guelich, 18 [summary]:

“For still others, the secular and the sacred were separate because of the radical nature of discipleship and the evil character of the world, with discipleship meaning the ordering of all life according to the Sermon’s demands. This alternative runs the risk of “isolationism” and utopian irrelevancy.”

Wilhelm Herrmann:

Guelich, 19:

“In the midst of the nineteenth-century, Liberal quest for the historical Jesus, the Sermon survived fairly intact as a central part of Jesus’ ethical teaching. Yet these demands, while containing the epitome of Christian ethics in the love commandment (Harnack, *What is Christianity?*), confronted one on the basis of a supposedly outmoded world-view. This situation, according to one of Liberalism’s most influential voices, *Wilhelm Herrmann (Ethik and Essays on the Social Gospel)*, left the alternatives of disregarding the demands as being irrelevant, of following them blindly and distorting Jesus’ intention, or of understanding them to be a calling for a proper inner “attitude” or “disposition” (**Gesinnung**) in keeping with the “effulgence of Jesus’ mind” that frees one to serve rather than binding one to legal maxims. In this way one sought even with the Sermon to remove the “husk” to get at the “kernel.” “

Hunter, Pattern, 96-97:

“Neither Tolstoy nor Schweitzer made many converts to their extremist views. A much more popular approach to the Sermon was to see in what the Germans call a **Gesinnungs-ethik**--’an ethic of intention’. As representative of this view may be taken Johannes Müller who wrote a book on the Sermon which had a wide circulation in Germany. Jesus was not laying down laws either for the Church or the world. Rather, he was indicating attitudes and suggesting the essential *inward disposition* which ought [p. 97] to belong to his followers. ‘The last thing that Jesus intended, so it was held, was to put a new yoke on his followers, only just emancipated from the yoke of the Jewish law. He was concerned with spiritual freedom and personality come with freedom. His teachings bear, therefore, upon what we should **be** rather than on what we should **do**’ [Amos Wilder, The Interpreter’s Bible, 3:161]. From this it follows that we should make plenty of allowance for Jesus’ use of paradox, hyperbole and picturesque language. The danger, of course, is that we may be tempted to water down our Lord’s teaching; but this view has at any rate the merit (which Schweitzer’s had not) that it makes Christ’s words usable by the modern Christian.”

Albert Schweitzer:

Guelich, 19:

“With the works of *Albert Schweitzer* came not only the demise of the old Liberal quest for the historical Jesus but also a different approach to Gospel studies based on the history of religions. By viewing Jesus through the lenses of the first century rather than the philosophical prism of the nineteenth century, one could see that the Liberal’s “hustk” of the supposedly out-moded world-view contained part of the “kernel” of Jesus’ eschatological perspective of history’s imminent apocalyptic end. The Sermon expresses demands for the “new moral conduct” from the disciples during the interim in preparation for and commensurate with the coming of the Kingdom. In other words, the “ethics of the Sermon on the Mount is [sic] interim ethics” that “make one meet for the kingdom of God” (*The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*, 97). By confronting them during his ministry with radical moral demands, Jesus sought to lead his disciples to “repentance unto the kingdom of God” and “possession of a character morally renovated.” Thus while Schweitzer demonstrated the fallacy of the Liberal interpretation that had ignored the essential eschatological ingredient, he himself was left with an ethic based on Jesus’ culturally conditioned misconception of history, “interim ethics” without an “interim.” “

Hunter, Pattern, 96:

“For Tolstoy the Kingdom was some sort of earthly Utopia to be founded on literal obedience to the moral laws of Jesus. How differently it appeared at the start of this century to Albert Schweitzer of Alsace! For him the kingdom of God in the gospels was completely eschatological, to be understood only in terms of pre-Christian Messianism and apocalyptic. So far from being any sort of man-made Paradise on earth, it meant the catastrophic irruption of God into history, bringing with it the Day of Judgment and an abrupt end to this world as we know it. The imminence of this Kingdom was the burden of Jesus’ preaching. What then are we to make of the ethic of Jesus in general and of the Sermon in particular? Schweitzer’s answer was that it was an ethic for an interim. Just as in war-time exceptional laws are promulgated to cover the time of emergency, so Jesus’ ethic was an emergency ethic for his disciples’ use during the brief interval between his preaching and the cataclysmic coming of the supernatural Kingdom of God. But since in fact the world did not come to an abrupt end in A.D. 30, the ethical teaching of Jesus can have little obvious application to Christians in the twentieth century. (Schweitzer’s own career since then, we must add, is a living and glorious refutation of what seems the logic of this theory.)”

Martin Dibelius:

Guelich, 19-20:

“*Martin Dibelius*, in a series of lectures at Yale University that were later published as *The Sermon on the Mount*, introduced yet another exegetical method into the study of the Sermon by applying his pioneering work in New Testament form criticism to this material. [p.20] Recognizing the eschatological element in Jesus’ ministry, as Schweitzer and others had noted, Dibelius explained the Sermon’s radical demands in terms of Jesus’ own disregard for the “circumstances of our life and the conditions of the world” in his anticipation of the “coming world, the Kingdom of Heaven.” Jesus set forth in his teaching the “absolute will of God” that intended to transform humanity for the coming of the Kingdom. The Sermon’s demands were not intended to become a new law or to offer a new ethic for an “interim” or any other period, but to reveal “God’s will” as “signs of the Kingdom of Heaven” in Jesus’ earthly ministry.

After Easter, however, the Church collected and shaped Jesus’ sayings and made them into a “rule of conduct for the Christian community.” The “will of God” thus became “ethicized” through the community’s needs for parnetic, or ethical, instruction and its use of the sayings as ethical standards. The “Sermon,” never preached as such by Jesus, became the “Sermon” when the various units of tradition stemming from Jesus’ ministry were so arranged by the Church as to address their needs as the “law which the heavenly Lord has given.” Recognizing that development, one can and must hear the Sermon’s demand for what it was in Jesus’ ministry, namely, a revelation of God’s will for us to “be” rather than to “do.” By hearing the will of God and being “transformed,” each is then to live responsibly before God and thus be a “sign of the Kingdom” in the world. Thus in Dibelius we discover the tension between Jesus’ demand and that of the reworked tradition. This tension become even more intense when one adds the redaction input of the evangelist as found in most treatments of Matthew’s Sermon today.”

Gerhard Kittel:

Kissinger, Sermon, 69-70:

“Gerhard Kittel (1888-1948) was a professor of New Testament at Kiel, Leipzig, Greifswald, Tübingen, and Vienna. He concentrated on the Jewish background of the New Testament and concluded that the Jewish element prevailed over the Hellenistic in the composition of the New Testament books. He is perhaps best known as the editor of the voluminous and monumental Theologische Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament (1926)....

As the title of Kittel’s essay suggests, he explores the relationship between the Sermon on the Mount and the ethics of Judaism. He is convinced that the ethics of Jesus have their roots in Judaism and Old Testament piety. Kittel proposes the thesis that there is not a single one of Jesus’ ethical teachings of which it could be said, a priori, that it has any claim, as an individual precept, to absolute originality (p 577). The basic difference between Jesus and the rabbis is not in the novelty of the former’s demands, but in the absolute intensity of Jesus’ ethics and in his concentration upon the religious dimensions of morality in contradistinction to ritualism and an ethic tied to nationalism. The demand of Jesus is an absolute one. what he commands, he does so unqualifiedly (pp 579-82).”

Guelich, 20-21:

“Dibelius’s work postdated the works of his contemporaries Caral Stange, Gerhard Kittel, and Hans Windisch. Yet significant parallels exist between his work and their quite diverse interpretations. *Carl Stange’s* “Zur Ethik der Bergpredigt” (ZST 2 [1924-25] 37-74), and *Gerhard Kittel’s* “Die Bergpredigt und die Ethik des Judentums” (ZST 2 [1924-25] 555-94), concur with Dibelius in perceiving Jesus’ demands to set forth God’s will that was not expected to be literally fulfilled. In fact, these demands cannot be fulfilled, according to Stange and Kittel. Such absolute and radical demands lie beyond human capabilities, leaving one helpless before the impracticable. Since these commands, however, impose obligation as expressions of God’s will and yet remain beyond one’s capacity to obey, one responds according to the Sermon’s intent by becoming aware of sin and failure and turning to God in repentance [p. 21] and confession (Stange) and thereby experiencing the paradox of God’s judgment and acceptance through the cross of Christ (Kittel). In contrast to Dibelius’ later work, however, both Stange and Kittel considered the Sermon’s demands and Jesus’ demands to be one and the same. The Sermon was never intended, therefore, to supply a Christian “ethic” of obedience for the Church post-Easter.”

Hunter, Pattern, 97:

“The next view, which we may call the **dogmatic** approach, recognizes the rigour of Jesus’ demands in the Sermon and proposes a theological way out. It is exemplified in the late Gerhard Kittel [Die Probleme des palästinischen Judentums und das Urchristentum (1926)], first editor of the now famous *Theologisches Wörterbuch*. Kittel thinks it would be hard to prove that any particular precept of the Sermon was quite new. What is new is ‘the new concentration on the religio-moral element, the absolute intensity of the ethic of Jesus’. The ethic’s absoluteness springs from the absoluteness of Jesus’ own person, and we shall only understand it as we remember the unique place Jesus knew himself to hold in the Kingdom of God. Now, it is of the very essence of Jesus’ demand in the Sermon that we can never fulfil it. So long as we are sinners in a fallen world, we can never rise to its heights. The purpose of the Sermon is to show man the futility of all his moral striving and his need for repentance. So he is prepared to receive the Gospel of God’s forgiveness declared in the Cross.”

Hans Windisch:

Guelich, 21:

“By contrast, *Hans Windisch*, in his pivotal work on *The Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount*, took most of his predecessors, including Stange and Kittel, to task for presupposing a “spiritual orientation” that predetermined the ultimate judgment each passed on the Gospel sayings. He sought to distinguish, therefore, between a “theological exegesis” and a “historical exegesis,” with the latter supplying the basis for the former. He then called for a more consistent historical exegesis that recognized the Sermon to be a collection of commandments given by Jesus, the obedience to which as the basis for salvation. In this regard Windisch agreed with Dibelius’ later view that the Sermon’s commandments, as understood by the Church, were intended and understood to be practicable as conditions for salvation. Thus, while Stange and Kittel stood closer to Dibelius’s understanding of the sayings in Jesus’ ministry, Windisch concurred with Dibelius’s view of the Church’s usage of the Sermon. Although Windisch’s interpretation has not held for Jesus as much as for the community, his distinction between theological exegesis and historical exegesis has become so complete that, with few exceptions, all subsequent works on the Sermon have fallen into the latter category.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

Guelich, 21-22:

“One of the better-known treatments of the Sermon stems from the same period of time as that of Dibelius and Windisch, but it stands apart from them in approach as well as conclusions. Its popularity, and thus significance, doubtless owes much to the character and times of the writer. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Cost of Discipleship* contains three works on the nature of disciples, the second being his exposition on the Sermon on the Mount. Dispensing with the critical discussions that had preoccupied other interpretations, Bonhoeffer approached the Sermon as a concrete expression of discipleship that required “doing” rather than interpreting. Thus, in contrast to his times and since, his primary concern was the “practical” rather than the “theological” dimension of the Sermon studies. His exposition so strongly emphasizes the life and conduct of the Christian as set forth in the Sermon by Jesus that he could, in a manner somewhat related to Windisch’s view of Jesus’ [p. 22] demands, be accused of surrendering his Lutheran heritage of *sola fide* for salvation by works of obedience. But one can only charge Bonhoeffer with such an understanding by ignoring the underlying christological basis of the Sermon and the balanced tension between faith and works throughout his treatment of the text.”

Reinhold Niebuhr:

Hunter, Pattern, 97-98:

“In our list of interpreters of the Sermon a place must [p. 98] be found for a representative of the Barthian school. Both Barth and Brunner refer to the Sermon in their writings, but only incidentally. Perhaps, therefore, it will be best to choose Reinhold Niebuhr who has written a *New Interpretation of Christian Ethics*.

For Niebuhr [chap. 2], the Sermon represents the prophetic ethic in its perfection. Let us stop regarding it (he says) as either an ascetic morality--Jesus was not ascetic--or as a prudential ethic designed to show good people how to make a success of their lives. Jesus has no interest in the relativities of politics or economics. His ethic is simply not applicable to the problems of contemporary society. First, it is an absolute ethic, with one vertical reference--the pure will of God. If we call it an ethic of love, let us recall that Jesus defines love in terms of the will of God. The Sermon calls for absolute obedience to God, irrespective of all social consequences. Second, it is an eschatological ethic, but not in Schweitzer's sense. The commands of Jesus cannot be fulfilled in this world. One day, however, God is going to wind up history and usher in his supernatural Kingdom. Then, and then only, will it be possible to live as Jesus bids us in the Sermon.”

T.W. Manson:

Hunter, Pattern, 98-99:

“For our final interpretation, let us go to a New Testament scholar who has no obvious theological axe to grind. In his book, **The Teaching of Jesus** [cf. chap. 9], T. W. Manson has set down his views on the Sermon and the ethic of Jesus in general. The ethic of Jesus springs from his Gospel. What the Sermon supplies is an ideal picture of life in the Kingdom of God on earth. Its tone is prophetic, not legal. The moral demands of Jesus in the Sermon imply that those who accept them shall have undergone a change of heart--a conversion. What we have in the Sermon is a number of illustrations of the way in which such a transformed [p. 99] man will behave. Jesus was no legislator. For him, the twin command of love to God and to neighbour, with the Golden Rule added as a simple rule of thumb, is the pith of man’s duty here below. The moral ideal for Christians lies not in a code or in a social order, but in a life where love to God and man is the spring of every thought and word and action; and for the Christian the sum of all morality is to have the same mind which was also in Christ Jesus.”

Kissinger, Sermon, 97-98:

“T.W. Manson’s most sustained discussion of the Sermon on the Mount is in his Ethics and the Gospel [NY: Scribner’s, 1960] in the chapter, ‘Jesus and the Law of Moses.’ As the context suggests, he is interested in Jesus’ understanding of the Jewish Law of his day, and Manson believes that there is no better focusing point for such a study than the Sermon on the Mount.... [p. 98]

Manson suggests that the new life described in the Sermon on the Mount is divided into three main sections, and that this division is based upon an ancient maxim in the Pirke Aboth, the Sayings of the Fathers, which is a popular part of rabbinic literature. There we are told that the world rests upon three pillars: the Law, the worship, and the ‘imparting of kindnesses.’

The Sermon on the Mount takes these fundamentals of Judaism and restates them as fundamentals of the New Israel living under the New Covenant. According to Manson the basic divisions of the Sermon are: the New Law (5:17-48), the New Standard of Worship (6:1-34), and the New Standard of Corporate Solidarity (7:1-12) [Ethics..., p 52].”

2. Summarize briefly the basic methodological approaches inherent in the above interpretative processes.

Summary:

Certain tensions repeatedly surface in the history of interpretation:

1. Law and Counsel / Command and Advice
2. Individual and Collective Application, especially extent of collective application: community of faith vs. society at large.
3. Soteriological Concerns: Means of salvation vs. guidelines for discipleship presupposing salvation.
4. Degree of relevancy to Christians today.

Hunter, Pattern, 99:

“None of these six interpretations is devoid of its element of truth. Tolstoy’s literal-legalism is badly overdone, no doubt; but he has at least tried seriously to hearken to Jesus’ word, ‘Why do ye call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?’ If the Sermon is not an interim ethic in Schweitzer’s sense, it is the moral ideal for Christians who live ‘between the times’--between the coming of God in Christ and the final consummation. There is a sense too in which it is a *Gesinnungs-ethik*, in that the Sermon gives ‘direction, rather than directions’, showing us also the way in which the new man in Christ will behave. Again, though we cannot admit that Jesus made his moral demands merely to ‘knock us down’--to drive us to despair and so to repentance--the Sermon does, in fact, by its revelation of the will of God, move us to confess our sin and seek forgiveness from God whose mercy meets us in the Cross of Christ. And, of course, the Sermon is prophetic in its tone and temper, as it is rooted in eschatology and, in places, makes absolute demands.

Berner, Bergpredigt, 106:

“Für die Bergpredigt heißt das: seit der Zeit, da sie vom Evangelisten Matthäus als wesentlicher Bestandteil seines Evangeliums komponiert wurde, war sie immer von einer festen hermeneutischen Basis her verstanden worden - so problematisch diese auch im einzelnen gewesen sine mag, wie man etwa an der Aneignung der Bergpredigt für eine bürgerliche Moral sehen kann.

Ibid., 108:

“Ein »Christentum der Bergpredigt« kann es heute - aus historischen Einsicht - nicht mehr geben, wohl aber wird es immer einen »Weg der Gerechtigkeit« geben; diesen Weg nicht ausschließlich, aber auch, als der Bergpredigt zu erheben und diese nicht im Gehäuse einer christlichen Theologie zu domestizieren - etwa durch nicht angemessene paulinische Eintragungen in den matthäischen Text - bleibt eine stets neu zu leistende Aufgabe jeder theologischen Arbeit, die sich dem ethischen Anspruch des christlichen Glaubens verpflichtet weiß.”

3. Briefly summarize the issue of the gospels as a literary genre.

Guelich, 24-25:

“The Gospels as a literary genre present their own set of questions today. Perhaps an analogy drawn from another medium will illustrate and explain the options. Historically and for a significant number of contemporaries--not least of whom is the majority of lay readers--the Gospels approximate a **snapshot**, an untouched photographlike reproduction of things as they were, with a direct correspondence between what one sees and what actually was. For such, the Gospel in general and the Sermon in particular simply reproduce word for word (thus the red-letter editions of the Gospels) and deed for deed Jesus’ ministry. The difference in the multiple accounts merely indicates a difference in location and/or camera angle.

A more radical form of Gospel studies in recent decades offers the opposite alternative. This approach has treated the Gospels as bearing [p. 25] a resemblance to **abstract paintings** that depict the artist’s perceptions more than the events themselves and actively involve the reader’s or observer’s contribution in understanding the final product. The correspondence between the product and the original object depicted remains oblique, making a reconstruction of the underlying object all but impossible historically and illegitimate artistically, in view of the artist’s intention. For such writers, the Gospel and the Sermon, consequently, bear little resemblance to Jesus’ earthly ministry, since they express and intended to express the more immediate needs and perceptions of the early community and the evangelists.

The common designation of the former as the uncritical and the latter as the critical approach to Gospel studies implies an either/or situation. Fortunately, there is a third option that strikes a medium between the two alternatives and more adequately accounts for the evidence. Rather than providing us a snapshot or an abstract painting, the Gospels as a genre come much closer to serving as a **portrait** of Jesus and his ministry. A portrait can vary between very precise reproduction that closely corresponds with the object as seen and a very vague reproduction that seeks to convey more an impression than a direct image. Consequently, by designating the Gospel as portraits of Jesus and his ministry, we must seek to determine the degree of correspondence between Jesus’ ministry and each Gospel’s portrait. This is essentially a historical question.

Matthew’s Gospel and the Sermon in particular reflect the portrait artist’s freedom to modulate, modify, relocate, rearrange, restructure, and restate as exercised by the community in the traditional process and by the evangelist’s redaction. Yet despite the first evangelist’s lack of concern for the finer details such as the precise place, time, and verbatim quotation of the tradition, his portrait does closely correspond to Jesus’ ministry, particularly as seen in the Sermon. Indeed, as we shall see, the evangelist’s primary intention was to portray who Jesus was as seen in his early ministry and in his message as expressed in the Sermon. Therefore, the Sermon on the Mount must be understood and interpreted, above all, in terms of its role in Matthew’s christological portrait, a theme to which we shall return below.”

4. Briefly summarize the Sitz im Leben Kirche¹ of Matthew's Gospel.

Guelich, 26:

“As to the audience, numerous indications within the Sermon point to a community of believers with a strong Jewish background and setting. Yet the references to persecution and suffering, the deliberate contrast with the ‘scribes and Pharisees’ and ‘hypocrites,’ and the use of the Old Testament passages and types suggest an apologetic and polemical tone commensurate with a community that found itself separated from and at odds with a Jewish community that now stood under the judgment of having rejected Jesus Messiah and his followers. This break had left its wounds that were still open and vulnerable.

A second front also appears within the Sermon that was related to the first but claiming to be one with Matthew's community. This threat consisted of a strict Jewish-Christian attempt to maintain the Law of Moses by using the Jesus tradition as its basis and doubtless raised questions anew regarding the nature of the gospel and the Gentile mission. This impulse may have resulted from the flight of the Jewish-Christians from Jerusalem after the fall of that city in A.D. 67-70, a flight that took the Jerusalem Christians into the surrounding environs of Syria where their presence in a community such as Matthew's created a renaissance of earlier questions not unlike those of the Pauline mission. Their influence came most of all from their Jesus tradition, and their impact can be seen in the rigor of the Didache. Matthew saw their presence as a threat so serious that he reshaped their Jesus tradition (e.g., 5:17-19) to counter and warn his community about these “false prophets” (7:15-23). Thus the Sermon must be read with a dual context of Judaism and a rigorous Jewish-Christianity.

At the same time, no signs of any particularism appear within the Sermon to indicate a community close to a Gentile mission. Rather, [p. 27] the Gospel addresses a community that doubtless consisted of Gentiles as well as of Jews. The Sermon, therefore, could and did address both as the new people of God for whom, since Easter, the distinction of Jew and Gentile had no more relevance (e.g., 28:18-20). The Sermon portrayed Jesus as the Messiah and the presence of the age of salvation when God's will would be revealed to all nations (e.g., 4:12-17).”

Kümmel, Introduction, 116-17:

“The evangelist could not carry out this objective free from [p. 117] contradictions, and these contradictions are the source of the contradictory interpretations of which we have been speaking. But if the aim of the evangelist is clearly discerned and the probability is taken seriously that the sayings of Jesus in 10:5, 23; 15:24 (see above p. 113) go back to Jesus himself and so belong to the oldest Palestinian tradition, then it follows that Mt does not belong to a Jewish Christianity that--in spite of its general recognition of the universal validity of Jesus' mission--weakened his radical criticism of the Law, as it was expressed in the antitheses partly taken over by Mt and partly formulated by him (5:21-48), and that did so by stressing the enduring validity of the Law (cf. 5:18f; 23:3, 23b). Yet Mt presents this interpretation of Jesus' stance toward the Law as being nearer the traditional Jewish understanding of the Law, not because he is battling Palestinian-Christian enthusiasm or Gentile-Christian antinomianism--for this there is not adequate evidence; rather his opposition is to unbelieving Judaism, viewed as a unity and with its pharisaic interpretation of the Law (15:3 ff, 13 f; 23:3 f, 13, 23 f). ‘Mt feels that the Pharisees have altogether missed the true meaning of the Scriptures.’² Obviously the real interest of Mt lies not in his relationship to Judaism or to Jewish Christianity or to Gentile Christianity, but on the one hand in the proof that Jesus is the ‘Messiah’ long promised by God, ‘the Son of the living God (16:16), who ‘will save his people from their sins’ [p. 118] (1:21), and on the other hand in his ever-repeated stress on the fact that such salvation is to be gained only in the *ἐκκλησία* of Christ (16:18 f; 18:17 f) and as a member of the people that bring forth the fruits of the kingdom of God (21:43). It was a mistake to dispute about the **Sitz im Leben** of Mt and to try to comprehend its origin in relation to liturgical reading, or catechetical instruction, or scribal exegesis of Scripture. None of these theses can adduce more than a part of the material in their own support. Trilling was quite right when he declared ‘that a totally satisfactory answer to the question of the ‘Sitz im

¹That is, the historical setting in which Matthew's Gospel was written in terms of a profile of the author and his initial readership.

²Blair, 141. Similarly Hummel, 12 ff; Hare, 96; Tagawa, 161; Sand, 124. Hummel shows that Mt makes no clear distinction between different groups within pharisaic Judaism; but it cannot be concluded from this that for Mt the Pharisees are only a literary ‘topos’ (so Strecker, *EvTh* 1966, 68; Walker, 16, 20).

Leben' has not been found to this day.³ Mt writes an expanded form of Mk as a 'community book' which is to provide for the needs of a particular Christian community as follows: for its debate with contemporary Judaism, strength in its knowledge of Jesus as the Christ (10:17); for the realities of community life and ethical decisions (18:15 ff; 19:1 ff), advice conveyed through the sayings of Jesus. The assumption is not true that Mt has abandoned the near expectation of the parousia, as the uncorrected use of such texts as 4:17; 10:23; 16:28; 24:33 f shows. But unremitting expectancy (24:42 ff) demands, in view of the uncertainty of the time, advice for the church and for the individual Christians in the interim *ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος* (28:20). Mt offers to the church these counsels by pointing back to the OT predictions, which for the church of the present find their complete fulfillment in the authoritative history and teaching of Jesus. But the history and teaching of Jesus are authoritative not because Jesus as a 'New Moses' has proclaimed a 'New Law,' but because the risen Lord has commanded that [p. 119] 'all that I have commanded you' is to be taught to all people, and this teaching has promised his help until the end of the age (28:20). This is the teaching that Mt presents in his community book; it remains to ask what community Mt has written it for."

³Trilling, *Das wahre Israel*, 220.

5. Briefly summarize the issue of the sources used in the writing of the Sermon on the Mount.

Guelich, 33:

“Yet the evangelist himself did not ‘write’ the Sermon as such but composed it by combining various traditional units, the largest of which provided the basic framework and outline of the Sermon in Matthew 5-7 and Luke 6:20-49. Furthermore, as the table below indicates, the majority of the traditional units came from the Q materials common to Matthew and Luke. But combined with this Q material, we also find sayings and units that are distinctive to Matthew and most likely stem from the evangelist’s own source....

Based on the parallels shown in the table, we can make the following observations regarding the Sermon’s composition. First, with the exception of the Woes in Luke 6:24-26, all of Luke’s Sermon has a direct parallel in Matthew’s. Second, with the exception of the Golden Rule (Luke 6:31, par. Matt 7:12), both Sermons follow the same order of material in their parallels. The difference in order within the Beatitudes (Luke 6:21; cf. Matt 5:4,6) and the Love Your Enemies section (Luke 6:27-36; cf. Matt 5:38-48) simply reflects the internal rearrangement by the evangelist. Third, the additional Q material in Matthew’s Sermon [p. 35] for the most part occurs in four blocks of Q tradition in Luke: (1) Luke 11:2-4, 9-13, 33, 34-36, with Luke 11:14-34 appearing in Matt 12:22-42; (2) Luke 12:33-34, 34-36, 57-59 with Luke 12:37-53 divided between Matt 24:43-51 and 10:34-36; (3) Luke 13:23-24, 25-29, with Luke 13:18-21 parallel to Matt 13:31-33, Luke 13:34-35 parallel to Matt 23:37-39; and (4) Luke 14:34-35 with Luke 14:15-24 comparable to Matt 22:1-14. One might also note that the Q materials just cited not occurring in Matthew’s Sermon frequently occur in his other discourse setting. Finally, most of the non-Q material appears in 5:17-6:18, a section dealing with Jesus and the Law and traditional Jewish piety.”

[pp. 35-36 detail other significant issues as well as define the above material in more detail.]

Kümmel, Introduction, 106 [organization of book generally]:

“There is really no foundation for the notion that Mt tries to portray Jesus as the ‘New Moses,’ quite apart from the fact that the reader is never notified that Mt is using five similar endings for the discourses, or that the narratives that precede the discourses in each case belong with them. It must suffice us to state that Mt has essentially taken over the Markan framework and has employed it as the base for his own expanded presentation, since it obviously seemed to him best suited for achieving his goal....[p. 108]

The distinctive theological aim of Mt in his reworking of the Markan material is discernible if we focus attention on the extensive expansion of Mk by Mt.”

6. Briefly summarize the central theological themes present in the Sermon on the Mount.

Christology:

Guelich, 27:

“Above all else, the Sermon on the Mount makes a **christological** statement. Support for such a bold assertion must and will follow in the commentary. But this primary motif stands out first in the general setting of the Sermon within the complex of Matthew 5-9 that sets forth Jesus as the Messiah. The introduction of 4:23-25 and the transitional conclusion of 9:35, each being clearly redactional, enclose Jesus’ ministry of word and deed in capsule form. This christological motif stands out secondly in the redactional alignment of the initial Beatitudes with Isaiah 61, the explicit redactional statement regarding Jesus’ coming and the Scriptures in Matt 5:17-18, the very nature of the demands in 5:21-7:12 predicated on the person and word of Jesus, and the redactional response by the crowds in the epilogue of 7:28-29 (cf. 9:33). The basic content of the Sermon’s christological statement consists in Jesus Messiah as the one whose coming fulfills the Old Testament promise for the coming of the age of salvation, the coming into history of the Kingdom of Heaven. In short, the Sermon’s christology corresponds to the Gospel’s christology, which is primarily a ‘fulfillment christology’.”

[pp. 27-29 amplify this discussion.]

Ecclesiology:

Guelich, 29:

“Since for Matthew Jesus came as the Messiah who fulfilled the prophet’s expectation through his ministry, the corresponding gathering of a ‘messianic community’ took shape in the persons of those who responded in faith and followed Jesus. Under **ecclesiology** we include the community that formed the people of God, its signs and conduct. The coming of Jesus Messiah meant reconciliation and salvation for God’s people (e.g., Isa 61; Jer 31:31; Ezek 36:24-28). Therefore the very existence of the community around Jesus and its style of life bore witness to Jesus as the Messiah (5:13-16). In Jesus’ earthly ministry, the twelve disciples formed the nucleus of this new people of the end times and included those who came to Jesus recognizing that God was at work in him on their behalf and willing to entrust themselves to him for his acceptance and help. Matthew never ‘labels the community of believers as the ‘new’ or ‘true Israel.’ Rather, he permits them to gain their profile in contrast to the uncommitted crowds and the self-righteous religious leaders called the ‘scribes and Pharisees,’ and ‘hypocrites.’”

[pp. 29-30 continue this discussion.]

Eschatology:

Guelich, 32:

“To a considerable extent this tension relates directly to the evangelist’s **eschatology**. As noted under *christology* and *ecclesiology*, Jesus’ coming and the implications for his disciples indicate the dawn of the age of salvation, the fulfillment of the ‘Law and the Prophets’ and the ‘coming to pass of all things’ (5:17-18). Thus Jesus could declare, ‘Blessed *are*’ the subjects of the Beatitudes even now, and at the same time he could demand conduct corresponding to the new relationships characteristic of the presence now of the Kingdom of Heaven. In other words, the Sermon expresses a ‘realized eschatology’ that has too often been overlooked in the failure to perceive the evangelist’s primary christological focus. Yet the Sermon’s thrust extends beyond that of ‘realized eschatology’ to speak explicitly of a future time when the Kingdom of Heaven will be consummated at the accompanying final judgment. Since Schweitzer, this eschatological perspective has dominated the Sermon discussions. The future orientation of the Beatitudes, 5:19-20, 29-30; 6:2-6, 16-18, 10-11, 14-15; 7:1-5, 13-14, 19, 21-23, 24-27, material consisting of both tradition and redaction, without doubt supports a ‘consistent eschatology.’ How can these apparently mutually exclusive elements coexist except in the inconsistency of the evangelist?

This tension arises neither from the needs of the community who shaped the tradition nor from the evangelist’s inconsistency but from Jesus’ own ministry which the evangelist has sought to capture in his portrait. The Sermon’s content and function merely underscore this tension between the present and the future. On the one hand, Jesus comes as the fulfillment of the promises for the age of salvation; on the other hand, the consummation of these promises lies in the future manifestation of the Kingdom of Heaven in history. The present directly relates to the future, since one’s response to God’s activity through Jesus Messiah determines one’s ‘entrance’ into the future Kingdom, one’s standing at the final judgment. Therefore, the disciple finds himself living in this evil age but called to live a life corresponding with the age of salvation in which evil has been defeated through the person and ministry of Jesus Messiah. The dangers of succumbing to the pressures of this age rather than remaining faithful to Jesus Messiah lead to the warnings of 5:13, 7:6, and 13-27.”

7. Briefly summarize the literary structure of the Sermon on the Mount. Use appendices 9 and 12.

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW
Outline
Jesus, the Messiah of God⁴

- I. Jesus has messianic credentials. 1:1-4:11
- A. He descended from David and Abraham. 1:1-17
 - B. He was miraculously conceived and born. 1:18-25
 - C. He was visited by wise men. 2:1-12
 - D. He lived in Egypt. 2:13-23
 - E. He was heralded by John the Baptist. 3:1-12
 - F. He was baptized. 3:13-17
 - G. He was tempted. 4:1-11
- II. Jesus ministered and taught in Galilee. 4:12-14:12
- A. Jesus began his ministry in Galilee. 4:12-25
 - 1. Prophetic preaching (vv. 12-17)
 - 2. Four fishermen called (vv. 18-22)
 - 3. **Preaching and healing tour in Galilee (vv. 23-25)**
 - B. **Jesus taught about the kingdom (First Discourse). 5:1-7:29**
 - 1. **Beatitudes of the Sermon (5:3-12)**
 - 2. **The kingdom and the world (5:13-16)**
 - 3. **Righteousness in the kingdom (5:17-6:18)**
 - 4. **Obligations to the kingdom (6:19-7:12)**
 - 5. **Conclusion: Warnings from the kingdom (7:13-27)**
 - C. Jesus ministered with authority. 8:1-9:34
 - 1. Leper cleansed (8:1-4)
 - 2. Centurion's servant healed (8:5-13)
 - 3. Peter's mother-in-law healed (8:14-17)
 - 4. Conversation with would-be follower (8:18-22)
 - 5. Calming the storm (8:23-27)
 - 6. Gadarene demoniacs healed (8:28-34)
 - 7. Paralytic healed and forgiven (9:1-8)
 - 8. Calling of Matthew (9:9-13)
 - 9. Question about fasting (9:14-17)
 - 10. Ruler's daughter and a woman healed (9:18-26)
 - 11. Two blind men healed (9:27-31)
 - 12. Mute demoniac healed (9:32-34)
 - D. Jesus taught the Twelve with authority (**Second Discourse**).
9:35-11:1

⁴Taken from Lorin L. Cranford, A Study Manual of the New Testament, 2 vols. (Fort Worth: AlphaGraphics: 1981), 1:21-25.

E. Jesus responded to questions and controversy. 11:2-12:50

1. The question from John the Baptist (11:2-15)
2. Unrepentance condemned (11:16-24)
3. Praise and an invitation (11:25-30)
4. Plucking grain on the Sabbath (12:1-8)
5. Man with withered hand healed (12:9-14)
6. Withdrawal and more healings (12:15-21)
7. Beelzebub accusation (12:22-37)
8. Demand for a sign (12:38-42)
9. Return of unclean spirit (12:43-45)
10. True kinship (12:46-50)

F. Jesus taught about the kingdom in parables (**Third Discourse**). 13:1-52

G. Jesus was rejected at Nazareth. 13:53-58

H. John's death signaled new hostility. 14:1-12

III. Jesus ministered and taught outside Galilee. 14:13-17:27

A. Jesus miraculously fed 5,000. 14:13-21

B. Jesus miraculously walked on water. 14:22-33

C. Jesus healed the sick in Gennesaret. 14:34-36

D. Jesus taught about true cleanness. 15:1-20

E. Jesus healed a Canaanite woman's daughter. 15:21-28

F. Jesus miraculously fed 4,000. 15:29-39

G. Jesus refused to give a sign. 16:1-4

H. Jesus warned about the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. 16:5-12

I. Jesus sought a confession of his messiahship. 16:13-20

J. Jesus foretold his death (First). 16:21-28

K. Jesus was transfigured. 17:1-13

L. Jesus healed a demoniac boy. 17:14-20

M. Jesus foretold his death (Second). 17:22-23

N. Jesus instructed Peter to pay the temple tax. 17:24-27

IV. Jesus taught about kingdom duties (**Fourth Discourse**). 18:1-35

A. Greatness is childlikeness. 18:1-5

B. Resist the temptation to offend. 18:6-9

- C. Love all God's sheep (parable). 18:10-14
 - D. Correct a problem with an offending brother. 18:15-20
 - E. Show mercy (parable). 18:21-35
- V. Jesus moved toward his Passion. 19:1-25:46
- A. Jesus ministered and taught while journeying to Jerusalem. 19:1-20:34
 - B. Jesus presented his messianic claim in Jerusalem. 21:1-25:46
 - 1. Triumphal entry into Jerusalem (21:1-11)
 - 2. Cleansing the temple (21:12-17)
 - 3. Cursing the fig tree (21:18-22)
 - 4. His authority questioned (21:23-22:14)
 - a) Objections raised by Sanhedrin (21:23)
 - b) Dilemma of John's authority (21:24-27)
 - c) Parable of the two sons (21:28-32)
 - d) Parable of the wicked tenants (21:33-46)
 - e) Parable of the great supper (22:1-14)
 - 5. Paying taxes to Caesar (22:15-22)
 - 6. Question about the resurrection (22:23-33)
 - 7. The greatest commandment (22:34-40)
 - 8. David's son (22:41-46)
 - 9. Denouncing the scribes and Pharisees (**Fifth Discourse**) (23:1-36)
 - 10. Lament over Jerusalem (23:37-39)
 - C. Jesus taught his disciples (**Sixth Discourse**). 24:1-25:46
- VI. Jesus was crucified and resurrected. 26:1-28:20
- A. Jesus prepared for his departure. 26:1-46
 - 1. Prediction of his death (Fourth) (vv. 1-2)
 - 2. Plot of the Sanhedrin (vv. 3-5)
 - 3. Anointing at Bethany (vv. 6-13)
 - 4. Betrayal agreement (vv. 14-16)
 - 5. Last Supper (vv. 17-30)
 - 6. Prediction of Peter's denial (vv. 31-35)
 - 7. Gethsemane (vv. 36-46)
 - B. Jesus was arrested and brought to trial. 26:47-27:31
 - 1. Arrest in the garden (26:47-56)
 - 2. Trial before Caiaphas (26:57-68)
 - 3. Peter's denial (26:69-75)
 - 4. Trial before Sanhedrin (27:1-2)
 - 5. Judas' death (27:3-10)
 - 6. Trial before Pilate (27:11-26)
 - 7. Mockery of the soldiers (27:27-31)
 - C. Jesus was crucified and buried. 27:32-66

1. Simon of Cyrene (v. 32)
2. Vinegar refused (vv. 33-34)
3. Parting his garments (v. 35)
4. His accusation (vv. 36-37)
5. Two thieves (v. 38)
6. Mockery (vv. 39-44)
7. Death (vv. 45-50)
8. Temple veil torn (v. 51)
9. Resurrection of saints (vv. 52-53)
10. Centurion's declaration (v. 54)
11. Women watched (vv. 55-56)
12. Burial (vv. 57-61)
13. Guard at the tomb (vv. 62-66)

D. Jesus was resurrected and appeared to many. 28:1-20

1. To Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (vv. 1-10)
2. Report of the guard (vv. 11-15)
3. To the eleven in Galilee (vv. 16-20)

