

The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount Compared to the Upper Room Discourse

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The order of the New Testament books as we have them¹ places Matthew first and John last among the gospels.² Some have calculated that close to ninety percent of John is unique, not recorded by Matthew, Mark or Luke. Both Matthew and John include extensive talks by Jesus. Matthew includes the Sermon on the Mount (chps. 5-7), His commission to the disciples (10), the parables regarding the mystery of the kingdom from the heavens (13), His woes regarding Jerusalem and her religious leaders (23), the talk on the Mount of Olives (24-25). John includes Jesus' talk with Nicodemus (chp. 3), with the people the day after he fed over five thousand (6), an extensive talk on His identity (8), about the Shepherd and His sheep (10), and His private talk with the eleven disciples in an upstairs room (13-16/17). While God did not direct us as to the order in which these books should be placed, the sermon on the mount and the upper room discourse form interesting bookends for the ministry of Jesus Christ. The former introduces the platform of the King to His people Israel. After His rejection by His people and probably only twelve hours prior to His crucifixion, the latter anticipates a change for His new people, the Church, though He never uses that specific term in that talk. Regardless of the order in which the books may be placed in any copy of Scripture, these two talks clearly occur at opposite ends of Jesus' earthly ministry and so bookend His earthly ministry.

When we read Scripture, we see this orderliness in the structure of the text. God is a God of order. The Scriptures have dual authorship: God and man. Jude planned to write on one matter but a pressing matter of Christian living moved him to address another. Certainly God the Spirit was behind this. David acknowledged God's Spirit putting God's words in his mouth (2 Samuel 23:2). Peter recognized God's Spirit carrying along the prophets (2 Peter 1:20-21). Paul knew that the words he spoke (and presumably wrote) did not merely originate with his own ingenuity but with the Spirit choosing the right word to communicate each thing God wanted to reveal (1 Corinthians 2:13). These human authors used structure. Sometimes an initial reading of Scripture may give the impression that the writers ramble, meander down rabbit trails and such. However, beyond the structure the human writers intended is the structure God intended. The humanly intended structure is not in conflict with God's intended structure, as the above mentioned passages illustrate, ultimately God is in charge and David, Peter and Paul all recognized that work within themselves.

As dispensationalists, we can sometimes lazily tell fellow believers, "O, that Scripture is not for us. Its for people in another dispensation." While this may be true, for many believers this answer is not always helpful. Especially if they have not been exposed to the importance of recognizing distinctions.³ These believers will benefit more from a demonstration of what the

¹ God never specifies a specific order. Henry Thiessen notes, "The Gospel of John appears in all four possible positions." *Introduction to the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1943) p. 162. Thiessen notes that our present order is based on the chronology of the books' writing according to early understanding, with which I agree. Even the order of the Old Testament books is different in the Hebrew Bible from that of our English Bibles.

² Scripture never identifies these books as "gospels." They are divinely produced records of some of Jesus' earthly ministry, identifying who He is, what He did and what He taught.

³ In my first year of seminary, David Spurbeck stated that our theology could be called a theology of distinctives.

text of Scripture says. Many believers confronted with Romans 6:14, “We are not under law but under grace” conclude that we must not understand what Paul meant. One doesn’t have to look far to find teachers who will explain away that statement. Several years ago, I undertook a study of Leviticus with a group of believers to demonstrate that we do not live by/under law. It did not take long for those who had questions about our claim that we are not under law to see that we indeed are not. Most believers have no idea what life under the law looked like. They think the law is the ten commands, or our 21 Century reinterpretation of those ten commands. Among the requirements for elders/bishops, he/they must have a firm grasp on the faithful word tied to that teaching which governs the conduct of New Testament believers, so that he can encourage and convince those who oppose by the use of healthy doctrine which does not govern the practice of New Testament believers (Tit. 1:9).⁴ God requires this of the elder. Such an elder can properly use the Old Testament Scriptures so that believers can see what God actually said as opposed to what we often think He said. When believers see what God did say, what the text means, and this often requires very little interpretive finesse, they recognize it can’t be for them.

When attempting to demonstrate that a particular text has no application to the grace believer, it is easy to run to another passage on the other side of our Bible. This may be necessary, but should not always be our first step. We should begin with the immediate context of the passage, and allow it to speak for itself. The immediate context consists of the paragraph or section in which the passage in question occurs. We then branch out into the larger context of the book in which the passage occurs and from there into the rest of Scripture. Beginning with both the immediate context and that of the book, recognizing the structure becomes helpful. Recognizing the ties and connections the Holy Spirit intends brings clarity to the meaning, application or recognition that a text is not applicable.

In this paper I intend to demonstrate two structures which I have found helpful in studying and teaching God’s Word. The first is the structure of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) and the second the structure of the book of John.⁵ The Sermon on the Mount begins with an introduction or overview commonly known as the beatitudes or blessings. The balance of Jesus’ message elaborates on each of the blessings. The book of John begins with a series of signs Jesus performed and then moves to a lengthy talk Jesus had with eleven of His disciples in an upstairs meeting room (Jh. 13-17). In His talk, Jesus elaborates on the truths to which the signs pointed. The paper will conclude with a comparison of these two messages, given at opposite ends of Jesus’ earthly ministry. Jesus directed each message to a distinct audience. He also had distinct purposes in mind. From a dispensational point of view⁶ Jesus directed the first message to Israelis regarding the kingdom promised from the Old Testament and its entrance requirements. The Sermon on the Mount does not address the life of New Testament

⁴ The two key words are *didache* [διδάχη] which governs our practice and *didaskalia* [διδασκαλία] which does not. *Didache* is the measure [kata κατα] of the faithful word. It is a faithful word because it is intended for New Testament believers. They can depend upon it. If one depends upon an Old Testament promise or instruction, that word is not faithful for him and he will find himself disappointed. For example, God has not promised prosperity for New Testament believers if we obey (the law) as he did for those under the law.

⁵ For a more detailed development of themes in John, see [The Uniqueness of the Gospel of John](#), by Don Hewitt presented at the 2012 Theological Forum on Contemporary Issues.

⁶ Not a dispensational interpretation, because a dispensation is a way of life, not a method of interpretation. A recognition of distinct ways of life rests on a consistent normal (literal) interpretation and a normal application of God’s Word in keeping with the normal interpretation.

believers.⁷ The talk in John 13-17 lays out several new truths which form the basis of New Testament living. Recognizing the contrasts between these two messages helps believers avoid confusion regarding the Christian life.

The Sermon on the Mount - The Proclamation of the Kingdom - The Beatitudes

A proper understanding of this sermon requires the interpreter to recognize the context of Matthew. Matthew tells us that after Jesus heard John was taken into custody, He moved to Capernaum and began to herald that the people (Israelis) were to change their minds⁸ for the kingdom from the heavens is at hand (Matt. 4:12-13, 17). Many people had given up hope that the kingdom would come, and the absence of hope negatively affected them, so that they acted unrighteously and sinned. Those who changed their minds and recognized that the kingdom was near, also confessed the sins they had done thinking the kingdom would never come (Matt. 3:6).

Matthew also tells us that Jesus was heralding the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23). What did His message about the kingdom look like? It looked like this sermon. The sermon on the Mount is one example of Jesus' gospel of the kingdom. This message is not collated from several of Jesus' messages, though Scripture indicates He taught this good news repeatedly.⁹ The Spirit bore Matthew along to record this message, so his readers could know what this gospel was.

The first part of the message consists of nine statements of good news - "Happy is..." These verbless clauses give stronger emphasis to each promise. Since the kingdom was near, the following types of individuals could be happy. For each, Jesus stated why such individuals could be happy. This was the good news.¹⁰ The second part of the message elaborates on these nine promises of happiness. However, rather than starting with the first point, Jesus takes the last point and works backwards.¹¹ Therefore, in the following section, I'll summarize the nature of the blessing and then tie it to Jesus' later expansion of the point. It is not my purpose to provide a detailed exposition of each point.

I'll treat each of the blessings in the present tense, though these were promises made to God's people Israel not to His people¹² the Church. Therefore, do not misunderstand these as addressing us. The sermon including the beatitudes are not intended for the lives of Church saints, though some parallels exist.

⁷ For more contrasts of the sermon to grace living, see The Proofs that the Gospels Are Doctrine for Believe but not Practice, a paper presented by Kevin Jeffrey at 1998 the Theological Forum on Contemporary Issues.

⁸ "Repent" μετανοεω.

⁹ The main verb "was going throughout" [περιηγεν] is in the Imperfect tense emphasizing continuing or ongoing activity in the past. The Present participles "teaching," "proclaiming," and "healing" emphasize regular ongoing activity at the time of the main verb.

¹⁰ In a similar way, the good news about Christ's death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection will make happy the one who by the convincing work of the Spirit knows he has not believed in Christ, knows he does not have Christ's kind of righteousness that allows Him into heaven, and knows he will be judged like the ruler.

¹¹ Interpreters call this structure a chiasmus based on the Greek letter χ. Whether Jesus had such a structure in mind is irrelevant.

¹² The Church is God's present people and not to be confused with Israel. Some have claimed that the Church is not called God's people, but see (Acts 15:14; 2 Cor. 6:16; Tit. 2:14; Heb. 10:30; 1 Pet. 2:9-10).

The Poor in Spirit v. 3

These can be presently happy by knowing that the Kingdom is theirs. Poor in spirit does not refer to financial poverty or to grief, which would be tied to the soul. The spirit is the center of rationale, of objective thinking. Why would they be happy because they were poor in the realm of their rationale? The Pharisees and Sadducees wrestled the scriptures to their own destruction. They reasoned to the point that they could turn almost anything to their favor. They used their intelligence to cheat others. These Israelis who had not engaged in these mental gymnastics should be happy because the kingdom was theirs.

Jesus elaborated on the poor in spirit in Matthew 7:13-27. He first told His hearers to enter through the narrow gate, and contrasted it to the many who enter by the broad way (v. 13). The religious leaders berated people as when some of their servants returned without Jesus in custody. “The officers answered, ‘Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks.’ The Pharisees then answered them, ‘You have not also been led astray, have you? No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed’” (John 7:46-49). Clearly, they give the impression that they alone know the law. So He told them they could judge false prophets by the fruit they produce (Matt. 7:15-20). Later Jesus would curse a fig tree for producing no fruit which lead to a parable in which the kingdom is taken from the religious leaders and given to another nation (Matt. 21:19, 33-45). Jesus contrasted the religious leaders to the tax collectors and prostitutes who believed John’s message (Matt. 21:32). Jesus then spoke of the judgment when people would point to their good works as evidence that they should be allowed into His kingdom, though He had never known¹³ them (Matt. 7:21-23). Finally Jesus compared those who heard His words and did them to a prudent¹⁴ person building a house on bedrock (Matt. 7:24-26). The poor in spirit are not wise in their own eyes, are not intellectuals debating issues but never pointing anyone to the kingdom from the heavens. The poor in spirit do not rationalize unrighteousness and rejection of Christ. The poor in spirit are those who listen to and do what Jesus said about the kingdom.

The Ones Who Mourn v. 4

These are experiencing some form of grief. The New Testament word *pantheuo* refers to mourning over death, over something removed or lost. It is stronger than *lupeō* [λυπεω] which expresses an inner grief, while this present term is a noisy “external manifestation of grief.”¹⁵ This mourning is tied to the dispersion of Israel and their desire for Messiah (Isa. 32:12). Isaiah called them to be troubled, tremble, beat their breasts (Isa. 32:10-13). They mourned over their nation being in ruins, longing for the day the nation would be restored (Isa. 32:12-14; 61:2-3; Lk 4:19). That restoration will include the Spirit being poured¹⁶ out upon them (Isa. 32:15). That restoration will be a time when Jehovah God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before the nations (Isa. 61:11). This indicates that they wanted more than the kingdom but also the righteousness and praise of God which accompanies the kingdom.

Jesus elaborates on this statement in 7:7-11. With the kingdom so near, rather than mourning, they could ask, seek and knock (7:7). God knows how to give good things to those who ask

¹³ He had no relationship with them, no experientially knowledge of them, Aorist of γινωσκω.

¹⁴ *Phronémos* [φρονημος] one who acts with a proper frame of mind, often translated “wise.”

¹⁵ W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co., nd) p. 769.

¹⁶ Isaiah used the verb ערה *arah* “to flow” hence “to empty” or pour out. Alexander Harkvay, *Student’s Hebrew and Chaldean Dictionary to the Old Testament*, (NY: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1914) p. 547.

(7:11). In Luke 11:8 they ask for the Spirit, which God promised to pour out on them in the kingdom (Isa. 32:15). In the kingdom they would also get a new heart, have the Spirit, dwell in the land, know the Lord, have the law written in their hearts, and forgiveness (Ezk. 36:26, 27, 28; 39:28; Jer. 31:33, 34). They mourn over the state of their nation and when the kingdom is established they will be encouraged by God's provisions for the kingdom, provisions for which they could ask.

The Meek v. 5

The meek are those who are tame of mind. Many modern English Bibles translate this word "gentle"¹⁷ which can express the idea of tameness as opposed to being wild, out of control and even threatening. They are not ruled by their passions but by their minds. They maintain objectivity. Jesus' statement appears a reference to Psalm 37:11 "The meek¹⁸ shall inherit the earth." In that same Psalm, people are charged to rest or be silent for the sake¹⁹ of Lord, to not become angry for one's self (fret)²⁰ over one prospering." The psalmist reminds his readers that becoming angry (same verb as in verse seven) only leads to doing evil. He encourages his readers to not give up on righteousness. Despite the prosperity of the wicked they will be cut off and will not inherit the land (v. 9). The righteous have fixed their hope²¹ on the Lord, presumably His coming (v. 9) and they, not the wicked who oppress them, will inherit the earth [eretz] (v. 18, 22, 29, 34) when the wicked are cut off.

Jesus elaborates on this in Matthew 6:19-7:6. The first part of this (6:19-34) addresses people attempting to store up riches on earth, and worrying about material substance: will I have enough to survive? As in Psalm 37, the meek do struggle with the success of the unrighteous, forgetting that it is very temporary, and are tempted to follow the same course of action which would be hoarding for one's self. Psalm 37:21 states that the righteous is gracious and gives, and in verse 25 the Psalmist had not witnessed the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging bread. So Jesus encouraged His hearers to not worry but to seek first God's kingdom (Matt. 6:33). That meaning is twofold depending on the hearer. If an Israeli were unsaved, he needed to seek the kingdom where he would experience salvation. If he were an Old Testament believer, he was to continue to anticipate that future form of the kingdom of God.

Finally, in 7:1-6, parallel to the Psalms' charge to not become hot or angry, Jesus charged people not to become judges of others. They were to examine themselves first. One can easily become consumed in anger with the actions of another, and fail to realize that he has become guilty of the same or worse. The Holy things given to dogs (Matt. 7:6), would involve misusing one's treasures among the Gentiles rather than bringing them to the location God appointed, which in the kingdom will be the New Jerusalem. The Gentiles will eventually turn on him. Their holy things, their possessions are to be taken to the New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:24).

The Ones Hungering and Thirsting after Righteousness v. 6

¹⁷ Even the English word "meek" originally meant soft or gentle.

¹⁸ The adjective *anah* [ענה] means one who is low, also one who is not arrogant because of that position.

¹⁹ I understand the lamed preposition [ל] as "22. introduces cause or reason: for, because of." William Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) p. 169.

²⁰ This is a Hithpael of *charah* [חרה] "to be hot or angry," where the Hithpael is intensive reflexive, hence "for one's self." Getting angry will really not help one in the circumstance.

²¹ This is a Qal participle of the verb "hope" *gawah* [קוה].

Is Jesus addressing those who hunger and thirst to personally be righteous or hunger and thirst to live in a righteous environment? Consistent with the previous blessings they hunger and thirst after the righteousness which will exist in that kingdom. They want to see righteousness in the government and religion of Israel as opposed to the abuse they witnessed.

Isaiah tells us that Jehovah came to His vineyard Israel hoping²² for justice and righteousness, but found oppression and a cry (Isa. 5:7). Isaiah then pronounced five woes upon Israel for their unrighteous activities (5:8-24). This was not the exception but common during Old Testament times. But, when Christ reigns, He will judge in righteousness (Isa. 11:1-5). When God brings (marries) Israel to her land, her righteousness will go forth as brightness, and He will cover His people with righteousness like a robe, and cause His righteousness to sprout (Isa. 61:10, 11; 61:1-2). Their craving was for a righteous government, but it would also involve their own personal righteousness.

Jesus elaborates on this blessing in Matthew 6:1-18. He begins by warning His hearers against doing their righteousness before men with the goal of being seen (v. 1). These acts of righteousness involved giving, praying, and fasting. Jesus contrasted how they should do these versus the manner in which the religious leaders performed these, always with the intent of being noticed by others. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled because their Father will reward them appropriately (v. 18). They will see genuine righteousness.

The Merciful

With what we have already seen, it is easy to see that the Scribes and Pharisees were not merciful. While Jesus is not addressing them. He is preaching a good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind, to send release for those being oppressed (Luke 4:18f). This blessing is addressed to those who are doing the same, in contrast to those who cause the oppression. When Judah returned from the Babylonian captivity, God charged them to “Dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother; and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another” (Zech. 7:9, 10). Jesus later addressed the Jew’s religious leaders, reminding them that they had neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy and faith” (Matt. 23:23). In Matthew, nearly every time Jesus addresses the matter of mercy, He addresses the lack of mercy on the part of the religious leaders (Matt. 9:10-13, 12:2, 7; 23:23).

When God restores Israel, He will have mercy on the house of Israel (Ezk. 39:25ff). He promised to bring the nation back to their land and establish a new covenant with them (Jer. 31:20ff). God will extend mercy to His people when the kingdom from the heavens is established.

Jesus elaborates on this blessing in Matthew 5:38-58. They would show mercy by not requiring eye for eye and tooth for tooth (v. 38), by not resisting if one strikes them (v. 39), giving to another what one might sue you to get (v. 40), going the extra mile (v. 41), giving and loaning what another asks (v. 42) and finally, loving one’s enemies (vv. 43-58). These form the content of mercy which one is to show to others. Such individuals will also receive mercy from God in the kingdom.

The Pure in Heart

The heart is the location from which individuals make decisions. The heart is the union of man’s spirit and soul and involves his will or volition. It is where man plans (Gen. 6:5; 1 Chr.

²² The AV, ESV, NASB, NIV, NKJV all translate this verb “looked” but it is the same verb as in note 13.

28:9). Jesus explained to the religious leaders that what comes out of their mouth comes out of the heart and those are the things which defile man (Matt. 15:18; 23:26). Jesus was pointing out that they could observe the ritual of the Law and avoid touching or doing anything to make one's self unclean, but still be defiled due to decisions made within an individual's heart.

Psalm 24 refers to Messiah entering Jerusalem (v. 7). Two times the gates are told to lift up that the King of glory might enter in (vv. 7-10). In this context the one with clean [innocent] hands and a pure²³ heart is able to ascend into the hill of the Lord and stand in the holy place. This innocence and purity are explained further in the last half of the verse, as one who has not lifted his soul to falsehood²⁴ and has not sworn deceitfully. In the kingdom the Jews will be living on the earth but they will periodically go up to Jerusalem to see their King (Zech. 8:23). They must be pure in order to go before their King at that time.

Jesus elaborates on this blessing in Matthew 5:27-37. Jesus addresses those who look at a woman with the intent of lust (v. 28). Though such individuals had not committed physical adultery, Jesus states they have in their heart, and according to the principles of the kingdom, they will be held liable for looking. Jesus addressed those who divorced their wives for reasons other than sexual immorality. In so doing, they cause their wives to commit adultery. Malachi spoke against this problem over four hundred years earlier (Mal. 2:13-16).

Note if one does not deal with this problem, "Your whole body will be depart into gehenna" (i.e. the lake of fire; Matt. 5:30). Believers are not in danger of being thrown into the lake of fire. Such an application does harm to the truth of the believer's security. Because some teachers recognize this, they have claimed Jesus was speaking in hyperbole. This undermines a consistent literal interpretation and application of the passage. If we allegorize the punishment or claim it is hyperbole, it is one short step to allegorizing or treating the lake of fire as hyperbole.²⁵

The Peacemakers

In the kingdom the work of righteousness will be peace (Isa. 32:17-18). Those who bring the good news of the kingdom, announce peace (Isa. 52:7). The word "peacemaker" occurs only here in the New Testament. When the angels announced Jesus' birth to the shepherds, the work of peace would come to earth among men of good will (Lk. 2:14). Those of good will have no evil intentions and will receive the peace which the Messiah brings in His kingdom. When Jesus sent His disciples to proclaim the message about the kingdom, they were to speak peace to the house and determine if those within were sons of peace. Matthew clarifies that the sons of peace would provide for these messengers (Lk. 10:5, 6; Mt. 10:5, 6). Knowing the kingdom was coming that the King would bring peace and those who were not peaceful in their life would not enter that kingdom would be an impetus to living at peace.

Jesus elaborated on this blessing in Matthew 5:17-26. Unlike the Pharisees and Scribes who cared more about the ritual, those wishing to enter the kingdom were to be concerned about peace. Jesus hadn't come to destroy the law but fulfill it (v. 17). The Jew's religious leaders could see no more than the letter of the law, missing the sense of the law. The letter of the law said don't murder, while the nature of peace in the kingdom makes anger and insults

²³ The adjective "pure" *bar* [בָּר] is also used to describe **clean** grain, having been winnowed and sifted.

²⁴ The noun *shawe* [שׂוּא] is vanity, emptiness, hence falsehood when claims remain empty.

²⁵ I met a woman once who claimed that heaven and hell are really the same place, but that those who never learned to share with others in this life will be in of heaven, but feel alone.

inappropriate. While the religious leaders were more concerned with someone giving their gift, Jesus said one should be reconciled to his brother (fellow Jew) first. Agreeing rather than winning an argument is more important, even if two are traveling together. As I noted above, we must take seriously the warning of punishment in gehenna, as well as being subjected to the judgment and the council (Matt. 5:22). Each of these make sense in the context of the kingdom. Individuals who announce and encourage peace will be called sons of God, those privileged as representing the kingdom.

The Ones being persecuted

The next two verses form one full statement of happiness. In verse 11, the verb “you are” [*este*] sets this off as different from the rest and I take it a further statement of verse 10. Therefore, Jesus clarifies the nature of persecution to include being reviled or insulted. Persecution is one meaning for the verb *diōkō*,²⁶ the base meaning being to pursue. Negatively it means to chase down for the intent of doing harm.

These individuals are persecuted because of righteousness. This righteousness was to exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees²⁷ (Matt. 5:20). This distinctive righteousness would bring persecution. These leaders appeared righteous but within were full of hypocrisy and lawlessness (Matt. 23:28). The Jewish leadership persecuted Jesus Christ for pointing out their lack of righteousness. Sometimes He did this only by exhibiting His genuine righteousness (John 15:20-24).

Two similar groups at two different times comprise the persecuted. The immediate disciples, the twelve and likely the Seventy, form the initial group. Jesus commissioned these to announce the kingdom (Matt. 10:5-6). Jesus warns them that they would be persecuted. Christ extends this to those who will be on the earth during the Tribulation. Therefore, it refers to the second group being those witnesses during Daniel’s 70th week. Those people will carry the message throughout the whole earth, something Jesus’ disciples did not do. Jesus states that this persecution would extend even to family relationships (Matt. 10:21-22). Verse 23 clarifies the time frame. They will be trying to go throughout all the cities of Israel but will not do so before the Son of Man comes.

Jesus said they would be happy because the kingdom from the heavens is theirs (Matt. 5:10). In verse 12 He further promises them that their reward is much [*πολυς/πολυς*] in the heavens. They will be among those who have access to the New Jerusalem during the promised kingdom from the heavens (cp. Revelation 22).

Jesus elaborates on this blessing in 5:13-20 overlapping with the last blessing.²⁸ Though persecuted, they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Jesus encouraged these who would be persecuted to not hide their light, consisting of good works (v. 16). Persecution could become the basis of a temptation to keep their good works hidden, or to not do good works. Jesus would later tell parables about servants in Matthew 24-25. The servants are not New Testament believers but Jews. The parables address how they live in light of their King’s return. The first illustration in 24:45-51 contrasts two servants, the faithful and sensible slave

²⁶ *διώκω* in 5:10 it is a Perfect passive participle and in 5:11 an Aorist active Subjunctive.

²⁷ In the Greek the nouns Scribes and Pharisees are joined by the conjunction *καί* and share one article, comprising a Granville Sharp construction. They share identity in the sphere of righteousness.

²⁸ These divisions and connections can generally be seen, but are not hard and fast. Jesus did not say, “And now as to those mentioned in blessing number...”

doing his master's will, and the second the evil slave who mistreats his fellow slaves. The second illustration in 25:1-13 contrasts virgins awaiting the bridegroom coming. They are not marrying Him (that would be the Church)²⁹ but are witnesses to the marriage. Some are sensible and prepared (vv. 9, 10), while others are not, and are attending to other matters (buying oil). The third illustration involves the three slaves each given an amount of money.³⁰ The first two use theirs as intended, while the last has hidden his for fear of the master (v. 25). So, some while having an opportunity to do good, will hide it.

A summary of the Blessings and sermon connections

The Poor in Spirit - the narrow gate, fruits and prophets, claims and truth (7:13-27).

The mourning - asking, seeking, knocking - the comfort of the Spirit (7:7-12; Lk 11:8).

The meek - storing up treasure, seeking the kingdom, the speck in one's eye (6:19-7:6).

The hungering and thirsting - doing one's righteousness, praying (6:1-18).

The merciful - not retaliating, giving, loving enemies (5:38-48).

The pure in heart - adultery, divorce, vows (5:27-37).

The peacemakers - anger, insults, reconciling (5:21-26).

The persecuted - reproached, being salt and light (5:11-19).

The Ties (Structure) in John

John demonstrates that while Jesus was presenting Himself as king to Israel, He also performed a series of signs which He often connected with instruction. All of them looked forward to a distinct ministry, specifically the Body of Christ living by grace, though Jesus never used those terms. We know this by comparison of later revelation.

John presents Jesus as the Word, eternally God, now also in flesh (Jh. 1:1, 14). John demonstrates that by means of the signs and instruction, Jesus was introducing the foundations of the grace and the truth (Jh. 1:17). Grace and truth existed during the Old Testament, but John writes of **the** grace and **the** truth, distinct aspects of both. The grace refers to our present life under grace (cf. Eph. 3:2; Rm. 6:14). The truth is a perspective on God's character and work and the believer's personal inability to do anything worthy apart from God. These truths enable a believer living by grace to experience God doing a work through him (cf. Jh. 3:21; 8:31-34). John also records a number of Jesus' "I AM" statements, in which He identifies Himself as the "I AM" or "Jehovah" of the Old Testament. Each of these is foundational to **the Truth**.

John introduces his account by explaining that the Word is God, He became flesh and we saw His glory, one from the Father, full of grace and truth (Jh. 1:1, 14). When we read John, he expects us to remember, we are reading an account of God in flesh demonstrating by His actions grace and truth. Whereas Matthew presented Christ as King with emphasis on the good news about the kingdom, John presents the character of God the Son in anticipation of this present dispensation.

Towards the conclusion of his book, John explains his purpose: that his readers might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and by believing have life in His name (John 20:30-31). This is why he recorded these specific signs from among the many Jesus performed. The words

²⁹ The Church being the bride which is a great mystery is not mentioned.

³⁰ A talent by Jewish reckoning was equivalent to 114 pounds silver or 3,000 shekels. The Roman measure was closer to 70. Either way, a sizable amount of money.

“that you might believe” [‘ἵνα πιστεύσητε- Pres. Subj] involves a textual problem of whether verb tense of “believe” is Aorist [πιστεύητε] or Present πιστεύετε.³¹ The former would be translated “You should believe” as an Ingressive Aorist. The latter would be translated “Go on believing” as a Progressive Present. The difference is whether John wanted the Christians to start believing this or continue to believe it. The evidence favors the Aorist, so John wanted his readers to begin believing.³²

Defined Biblically, faith makes substantial a hope which is based on a promise from God (Hebrews 11:1). Therefore, the very nature of believing indicates the presence of a promise. The book of John includes many promises.³³ Some promises were for Jesus’ immediate audience and are no longer valid for New Testament believers, while others looked beyond His earthly ministry to the present.

The content of the faith is “that Jesus is the Christ” [ὅτι ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ χριστός]. The name Jesus emphasizes His humanity. These believers needed to believe this Jesus is the Christ. Christ is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Messiah [מָשִׁיחַ] meaning an anointed one. The Spirit anointed the individual for a service, such as David being anointed to be king of Israel. First, Jesus was anointed to be Israel’s king. It was why He was born and had come (Jh. 18:37). But Israel rejected Him as King (Jh. 19:15; Lk. 19:14). Since they rejected and crucified Him, God made Him Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). So “Christ” now has a new emphasis. While He will one day be king, that is not the present emphasis. Christ now means He is resurrected and glorified, and the basis of our position. These Christians needed to believe in promises tied to His being alive and our position!

Further, they had to believe that He is the Son of God [ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ]. “Son of God” means He is God. By calling the Father “His Father” the Jews knew “He made Himself equal things with God” (John 5:18). The Jews also accused Him of blasphemy for claiming that He and the Father are one (Jh. 10:30) and claiming to be the Son of God (Jh. 10:36). Therefore, the title “Son of God” means He is God and not a created or generated being. As the Son He indwells believers and in this way the believer has eternal life, His kind of life, God’s kind of life (1 Jh. 5:11-12).

Jesus emphasizes the Son’s humanity and in that human nature, He possessed eternal life and made that life visible in human terms. He lived it out within the limitations of humanity. Hence John 17:3 states that eternal life involves experientially knowing God and **Jesus** Christ. John uses the name Jesus 244 times, nearly twice as often as the other gospels, while he employs Christ only nineteen times, and Lord fifty-two times. His emphasis is on what He lived out through His human nature, because we believers can also live out that same kind of life.

³¹ The evidence for the Present includes the following mss (number in parentheses indicates date/century) - 66 (200), \mathcal{N} (fourth), B (4), Θ (90, 0205 (8), 892 (9). Evidence for the Aorist includes the following mss - A (5), C (5), D (5), L (8), W (5), Ψ (8/9), f^1 (12), f^{13} (13)

³² This is for Christians. It does not take twenty chapters to evangelize and individual.

³³ A set of promises from John: 3:16 don’t perish; 3:18 not judged; 3:21 live out works worked by God; 4:14 have a spring of water; 5:24 won’t come into judgment; 8:11 forgiveness illustrated; 8:32 know the truth, be free; 10:28-29 cannot be snatched out of their hands; 14:3 He will come for us; 14:12 can do greater works (in number); 14:13-14 as whatever one desires; 14:16 receive a new Helper; 18 not left orphan; 19 see Him; 20; will know...; 21 will be loved, have Him manifested to us; 23 Father and Son make their dwelling with us; 26 Spirit teaches; 15:4-5 He can be at ease in us; 7 ask whatever...; 20-21 They will do to you...; 16:7 have the Spirit sent to us; 13 Spirit will guide; 23 will ask in His name (character, 26); 33 have peace in Him.

John 20:30-31 is not God's promise of how one can come to possess eternal life, but how the believer may have life like Christ. Eternal life is not about living forever, but about the quality or kind of life one can live. It is a life to be exercised, to be laid hold of and lived out through good works (1 Tim. 6:12, 18-19). This too is one of several new truths introduced in John. Old Testament saints did not possess eternal life during their earthly existence, therefore they could not use that eternal life. They lived in anticipation of receiving eternal life when they would be resurrected (Dan. 12:2). John, writing approximately sixty years after Jesus ascended to heaven, looks back at these signs which specially looked forward to a new way of life. When Jesus performed these signs, this way of life was unrevealed for it was still a mystery (Eph. 3:9). This promise is then about living eternal life.

Each sign John records points the believer to a reality and a promise which can affect the believer's life. They all tie to the promise regarding living out eternal life. When the believer recognizes those promises and believes them, the believer is able to live out eternal life, life in His name.

In the upper room, Jesus introduced several lines of new truth.

1. A new kind of command - love like Christ loved us (13:34-35).
2. A new way to God - I AM the Way (14:6)
3. Another Helper - the Holy Spirit (14:16-17).
4. A new relationship to Christ and the Father (14:20).
5. A new teacher - the Holy Spirit (14:26).
6. A new peace, unlike the world's (14:27).
7. A new ability to abide and bear fruit (15:1-8).
8. A new testimony about Christ by the Spirit (15:26-27).
9. A new work of convincing the unsaved (16:8-11).
10. A new guide - the Holy Spirit (16:13).
11. A new ability to communicate (16:23ff).

Leading up to the upper room, John records a series of signs. Each sign is tied to a line of truth, and supports the new teaching for Christ's future body (at that time). Many of these signs are tied to Jesus "I AM" statements. It is helpful to develop each sign

Water to Wine

Jesus performed His first sign by causing over one hundred twenty gallons of water to become wine, not cheap watered down wine but good wine (2:6, 9-11). John introduced this book by attributing the existence of everything that has had a beginning to Jesus (John 1:3). The verb *ginomai* is used in both passages. In John 2:9 the verb is Perfect passive participle, meaning it had already become wine and remained wine when the headwaiter tasted it. The passive indicates that it did not do this of itself. Jesus performed this sign.

Water became something else. In John 7:37-38, Jesus promised a river of living water would flow out of those who believed in Him. John explains that Jesus was referring to the Holy Spirit who those who believed were about to receive (v. 39). Following Jesus' sign, John includes His

talk with Nicodemus addressing the future possession of eternal life and this caused by the Spirit (Jh. 3:3-6, 15, 16). Then when speaking with the Samaritan woman, Jesus spoke of “living water” (Jh. 4:10, 11). He uses this same expression in John 7. Jesus then explained that the water He would give will become [Future middle of *ginomai*] a spring of water springing into eternal life (Jh. 4:14). Not only does causing the water to become wine demonstrate Jesus’ ability to create, but it points to how He will cause believers to have eternal life. The Spirit will indwell the believer and He will join Christ to the individual to give eternal life (1 Jh. 5:11-13). The indwelling Spirit initiates Christ’s indwelling of the believer.³⁴ Similar to the water becoming wine and the water becoming a spring of water resulting in eternal life, so the coming of the Spirit (water) will result in the believer having eternal life because the Spirit joins us to the Lord. Jesus indicated this in John 14:17-20, where He would send the Spirit and when the Spirit would indwell them, they would know that “I am in you.”

Healing the Royal Official’s Son

Upon returning to Cana, Jesus was met by a royal official who asked Jesus to come and heal His son (Jh. 4:46-47). Jesus healed many people during His earthly ministry, but this sign demonstrates the change from the faith under law to the faith in this present life by grace. This comparison is supported by His words, “Unless you all see signs and wonders, you absolutely will not believe (Jh. 4:48). New Testament faith involves a promise and hope which the one believing does not see (Heb. 11:1; Rom. 8:24). Jesus did not have to accompany the man to heal his son, He could tell the man, “Your son lives” (Jh. 4:50).

John uses the verb “believe” ninety-eight times, compared to thirty-four total for the other three gospels. John does not use the noun “faith.” He is concerned with individuals recognizing God’s promises, believing those promises, and so acting upon those substantized promises. When this man believed Jesus’ promise that “your son lives” he acted on it by beginning his trip home (Jh. 4:50). He did not remain to persuade or cajole Jesus into coming with him. However, because this man was still operating on Old Testament ground in which faith was often supported by visible things: signs and wonders, the man again believes when his servants report to him that his son became well at the very moment Jesus told him his son lives (vv. 51-53).

Many of Jesus’s statements in the upper room reference believing. His first in 13:19 is that they might “believe that I AM.” Jesus foretold His betrayal by one of His own disciples. He told them this ahead of time so that when this happened they would believe that Jesus is God, the I AM. Though eleven of His disciples did believe in Him, they still did not fully grasp His identity. A short while later, He tells them, “You believe in God, also believe in Me” (Jh. 14:1). The form of the verb “believe” [πιστευετε] can be either Present indicative or Present imperative. It appears that the first occurrence is indicative³⁵ and the second is imperative. Jesus is not assuring them that they do believe in Him as deity in the same way they believe in the God, rather He was telling them **to** believe in Him in that same way, hence the imperative. Because believing requires a promise, this charge by Jesus connects a promise to His being absolutely God, the I AM, in the same way as the Father. What is this promise?

³⁴ The Spirit does not represent Christ in the believer. All three persons indwell the believer.

³⁵ So indicating the reality of their situation.

Jesus' disciples were still operating on Old Testament ground, therefore, their faith rested on sight and signs. When Jesus told His disciples that they know³⁶ the Father and have seen³⁷ Him, Philip strongly requested³⁸ that Jesus display the Father (Jh. 14:7-8). Jesus explained that if they had seen Him, they had seen the Father (v. 9). In both verses seven and nine, Jesus used the Perfect tense to indicate that they had seen and were continuing to see. He questions whether they believe that He and the Father really share this oneness (v. 10). Their oneness is expressed as a mutual abiding. They are so at ease in one another as persons, that Jesus' words were from the Father, and likewise His works (Jh. 14:10). All this involves believing that Jesus is fully God.

Jesus then gave the disciples one of the promises attached to this reality in 14:12; they would do greater (in number) works than He Himself because He was going to the Father. He did works for about three years. Peter would have the opportunity to continue doing these works for almost 37 more years, and John over 60 more years. He added to this promise in 14:21. He told them that the world would not see Him but they (the disciples) would see Him. He ties this to their living because He Lives (v. 19). He is not speaking about His post resurrection appearance. This is in the context of giving the Spirit (v. 17). In the day that the Spirit comes, they would know that "I am in My Father, and you are in Me, and I in you" (v. 20). Believers benefit from the oneness which the Father and Son share, and get to share in a quality of that themselves. As a result, when they guard His command to love (v. 21), that one is loved by the Father and the Son also loves Him and makes Himself plainly visible to that believer. He does not appear in some apparition, but is living out His life and love through the believer, and so the believer sees plainly in and by himself, the living Christ. This ties to the promise of life in His name because faith based on a promise with no visible proof is necessary. It is also necessary to believe that this life is possible because He is God.

Healing the Lame Man

Jesus' healing this man expressed God's grace. Remember we are seeing Jesus full of grace and truth. Jesus knew the man had been lame a long time (Jh. 5:6). Further, Jesus' words to the man, "Sin no longer, that nothing worse happens to you" implies the man was lame due to his own sin (v. 14). We're safe to assume that others lay nearby with maladies not due to their own immediate sin. For Jesus to chose this man, in fact a man who demonstrates no gratitude, testifies to this example of God's grace.

This sign also provided Jesus an opportunity to point to His equality with the Father (Jh. 5:18). Like the Father, the Son also works on the Sabbath (v. 17). He saw the Father's work, and did the same (vv. 19-20). The Father committed all judgment to the Son (v. 22), so that all would honor the Son as they honor the Father (v. 23). The Father and Son are equal.

How this sign ties to the promise of "life in His name" comes together in John 5:24ff. Jesus promised eternal life to those who believe in the Father. Those who have life will not come into judgment, whether the judgment which the Son just said He would exercise, or judgment for breaking a Sabbath as the Jews charged Jesus. The Father gave the Son to have this same kind of life in Himself (v. 26). As the Son, He always possessed this life, but in the realm of His human nature, the Father gave Him to have this life. So, in verse 29, He claimed He could do

³⁶ Present Active Indicative of γινωσκω *ginōskō*

³⁷ Perfect Active Indicative of ὀραω *horaō*

³⁸ Aorist Active Imperative.

nothing from Himself. This is an expression of the Truth, the acknowledgement that in His human nature, He depended upon the Father. This is also true of the New Testament believer who in dependence upon God is able to do works like the Son did.

Feeding the Five Thousand

Feeding the five thousand involved more than a work of power, but became the basis of Jesus explaining a necessary relationship between Himself and those who believe in Him. All four gospels record this sign, only John includes the explanation. Jesus identified Himself as the bread of life (Jh. 6:34). This again ties to individuals having eternal life (v. 40, 47). Jesus explained that one gets eternal life by “coming” and “believing” which Jesus then expressed as “eating” the bread of life (v. 40, 47, 50-51). The Jews wanted a free meal but refused to believe in Jesus. So, Jesus raised His requirement of believing and eating to a level which expressed how repulsive these Jews viewed believing in Jesus to be; He required them to eat His flesh and drink His blood (vv. 53-54). Though like these Jews, some interpreters have misunderstood Jesus’ words to refer to communion, in verse 63 He explained that He didn’t mean His literal flesh and blood, for that would profit nothing. The Spirit causes the life. This harkens back to Jesus’ talk with Nicodemus in John 3 (vv. 3-6). Jesus’ utterances have the quality of spirit and life. Had Jesus meant the literal eating of His flesh and blood, there would not have been enough for all who believe. Because Jesus meant the partaking of Him in the sphere of spirit, of sharing in His divine essence, His infinite essence is sufficient for all who believe to have eternal life. Feeding over five thousand with that which appeared to be insufficient pointed to this truth. They ate as much as they wanted³⁹ and were filled⁴⁰ and even then there was an abundance left over (Jh. 6:11-12). Eternal life is of a spiritual character-not physical. Jesus developed this when He promised that He would be in His disciples and that He could abide in them (Jh. 14:20; 15:4-5). All this explains how believers can have the eternal life which is necessary to “have life in His name.”

Walking on the Water

Like the last sign, Matthew and Mark also record this but John presents a fact omitted in the other accounts, that the boat immediately arrived at its intended destination (Jh. 6:21). The other accounts emphasize Jesus’ walking on the water, Peter walking to Him, the wind being calmed when Jesus stepped into the boat (Matt. 14:22-32). All three accounts indicate that the disciples feared. Interestingly, Matthew and Mark use the verb *tarassō* [ταρασσω], to be troubled, disquieted⁴¹ or agitated while John used *phobeō* [φοβew]. Jesus used *tarassō* in John 14:1, telling His disciples, “Do not let your hearts be agitated, believe in the God [the Father], believe also in Me.” So, in all three accounts of Jesus walking on the water, He both tells His disciples to “not fear” and identifies Himself as “I AM” His title by which He identified Himself to Israel (Exodus 3:14). As God, He is capable of what no other is. This is part of the Truth.

John does not mention Peter walking on the water or the sea becoming calm, but that the boat arrived immediately at its destination (Jh. 6:21). The disciples met a powerful head wind as they attempted to across the lake. When Jesus saw the disciples, they were only half way to their destination (v. 19). Tied to John 14:3, it is not we who make our way to the place He prepares for us, but Jesus who comes for us and takes us to be where He is. As the I AM, He does

³⁹ John used *thelō* of their desire, or what they wanted.

⁴⁰ The verb *empimplēmi* from *pimplēmi* strengthens the idea of being full.

⁴¹ Abbott-Smith, op cit., p. 440.

what we cannot possibly do. He alone is able to take us to be with Him, we cannot go to Him by any effort on our part. We are to live in hope of that coming.

Healing the Blind Man

Unlike the lame man in John five, Jesus explained that the blind man was not blind due to his own sin. He was blind so Jesus could do a work (Jh. 9:1-3). It was necessary to do the works while it was day, while He shone as the light of the world in the world (vv. 4-5). They were to do works from the Father, the One sending Jesus. When the blind man was taken before the Pharisees, without yet knowing Jesus' identity, he said of the man who healed him, "If this man were not from God, He could do nothing" (v. 33). Some of the religious leaders rejected the man also (v. 34). Upon meeting and believing in Jesus, Jesus then replied, "For judgment I came into this world, that those not seeing might see, and those seeing might become blind" (v. 39). Some of the Pharisees heard this and asked Jesus if they were blind, thinking that they were not.⁴² Jesus meant spiritual blindness, and because the leaders refused to see their own guilt, their sin remained.

When speaking to the eleven believing disciples, Jesus referenced the Spirit as the One whom the world could not see with mental comprehension [*theōreō*] (Jh. 14:17). He also viewed a time in which the world could no longer see Jesus so as to comprehend Him [*theōreō* again], though the disciples would (v. 19). The disciples' "seeing" likely references any connection they would have with Jesus: His post-resurrection appearances, His coming for them, His indwelling. The latter of these is especially in view in His words "Because I live, you also will live." Jesus also references seeing Him in 16:17, 19, 22. Therefore, part of the point of this sign is the divinely given ability to see God through His work, while the world cannot.

Raising Lazarus

Like the other signs, Lazarus' illness and death were for the purpose of "God's glory" (Jh. 11:4). Jesus again refers to the day and the light of the world (11:9). The day is that time when Jesus operated in the world manifesting God's life as light (cp 1:4). When Jesus later explained to His disciples that Lazarus had died, He stated that because of this they might believe (11:14-15). Jesus identified Himself as the resurrection and the life (v. 25). He will be the one to raise believers, but is also the source of their life both eternal life and resurrection life (cp 14:6).

During this event, Jesus has two reactions which many do not understand. First, when He saw all the people weeping, He expressed indignation⁴³ (Jh. 11:33). English Bibles translate this "troubled in spirit" but rather Jesus expressed His disgust with these people. Likewise, when He wept, while those around thought it was due to His love, He expresses disappointment (vv. 35, 38). These people who believed in Him on one level, failed to believe in Him, for they did not think He could raise the dead. This probably relates best to John's purpose statement in chapter twenty. How often do New Testament believers fail to believe in God's promises for us now? While we believe in Jesus for our initial and eternal salvation, like those at Lazarus' tomb, we might fail to know and believe that we can live out eternal life right now, because He is the

⁴² They asked the question with the negative *mé* [μη] particle, which in a questions expects an answer of, No.

⁴³ *Embrimaomai* - εμβριμαομαι - " (*brimaomai*, from *brimeō*, to be moved with anger); to snort in (of horses; German *darein schnauben*): Aeschylus sept. 461; to be very angry, to be moved with indignation:" Joseph Henry Thayer Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Formatted and hypertexted by OakTree Software, Inc. Version 1.6

life; He is our eternal life and our resurrection life. He raised Lazarus to prove this very point (11:41-42, 45).

Summary of signs and their point

Water to wine - Jesus as God can provide for regeneration by sending the Spirit

Healing the Nobleman's son - the nature of faith from OT to NT changes, no sight.

Healing the lame man - God's grace is demonstrated, and His glory to work on the Sabbath anticipating when the Sabbath would be ended

Feeding five thousand - Christ's indwelling in regeneration is sufficient for all to be full.

Walking on water and the boat arriving - Christ alone can come to us and get us to where He is.

Healing the blind man - Christ gives sight which the world while rejecting Him does not have.

Raising Lazarus - Christ has the ability to give life: eternal and resurrection

Contrasts between the Sermon on the Mount and the Gospel of John

The sermon on the mount does not present truth which is authoritative for the grace believer's practice. However, the Upper Room talk records instruction which are authoritative for New Testament believers, because they are the grounds for their life. For example, Jesus promised to send the Spirit (Jh. 14:17). Prior the time He sent the Spirit, believers did not have the Spirit in them. His teachings in the upper room are related to those in whom the Spirit is present. Most all those teachings are impossible apart from the ministry of the Spirit and the new relationship to the Son and Father. It is beneficial to present some contrasts between what Jesus taught in the sermon nearly three years earlier, and what He taught in anticipation of His presence with the Father and the coming of the Spirit. Though Jesus spoke to His disciples in the upper room and some of the promises and statements are not true for us (e.g. the Spirit is "along side/with you") Jesus' prayer to the Father, spoken while still in the room with His eleven disciples expresses an extension to those of us who have believed through the word of those disciples (Jh. 17:20). We have no perfect contrasts of this-for-that between the sermon and the talk, but contrasts exist. Having already developed briefly the blessings from the sermon on the mount, I will limit myself in this section to a single summary sentence.

The Poor in Spirit Contrasted to Regenerated New Testament Believers

The poor in spirit were not the intellectually savvy of Judaism, able to rationalize the unlawful and unrighteous behavior and choices. They did not have the Holy Spirit as every New Testament believer now does. Jesus promised the indwelling Spirit, the Helper⁴⁴ (Jh. 14:17). Speaking with Nicodemus, Jesus twice spoke of regeneration (Jh. 3:3, 5). Though future at the time Jesus spoke, He spoke with such assurance of its reality that He used the present tense. Regeneration as Jesus described it could not have been happening at that time because He had not yet sent the Spirit to accomplish regeneration. Jesus further explained that regeneration would be enacted by the Holy Spirit and would affect the individual's human spirit. This would not leave the individual poor in spirit. Though simultaneous in time, regeneration logically follows the Spirit placing [baptizing] believers into Christ. Again, though simultaneous in time, logically, the Spirit indwells the believer first and then joins the believer's spirit to that of the

⁴⁴ I prefer to translate παρακλητος "Helper" in this context. The Spirit does not help by assisting but working out and making possible what would otherwise be impossible for the New Testament believer.

Father and Son (Tit. 3:5-7; 1 Jh. 5:1). When the Spirit indwells, He both teaches and guides believers (Jh. 14:26; 16:13). This does not result in intellectual savviness, but the ability to know and appreciate God's truth (1 Cor. 2:15).

Those who Mourn Contrasted to Encouraged New Testament Believers

In the sermon on the mount, those mourning lamented over the absence of their kingdom, and awaited the pouring out of the Spirit and restoration. Jesus never uses the verb *pentheō* in the upper room, though He spoke of a time when His disciples would weep and lament (Jh. 16:20).⁴⁵ In this same chapter, Jesus used the milder *lupé* [λυπη] indicating an inner grief. He used the noun four times and the verb once. The disciples' grief was over Jesus' prediction of His departure to be with the Father (Jh. 16:5-6). In 16:20, however, they are caused to grieve while the world rejoices. Both of these verbs are Future passive, because both are caused by Christ's death. Because of His resurrection, their grief becomes joy. He compares their grief to the temporary grief of a woman giving birth to a child, who forgets it because of the joy over her child (v. 21). So, while these have grief, Jesus would see them and this would cause their hearts to rejoice⁴⁶ with a joy that no one could take away from them (v. 22). The first phrase in verse twenty-two states, "you have grief," it was already present with the disciples because He has told them of His departure.

Despite their grief over His departure, He assured them that it was beneficial for Him to leave so that He would send them the Helper, the Holy Spirit (16:7). He expands on a benefit they would receive in the day the Spirit came, "Whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give to you" (16:23). The next verse is as important, because Jesus explained that they had not yet asked in this manner (v. 24). Again, they were operating on Old Testament ground. Under the Law, for 1,500 years, Jews spoke to God through priests.⁴⁷ Jesus was revealing a new means of talking to God, a new privilege. While we know that some of this rests upon Christ's present position at the Father's right hand, the Spirit, the Helper also makes it possible for us to ask in the name or character of Christ (cp v. 7; Eph. 2:18). The ability to ask in Christ's character/name does not give them joy but causes their joy to be filled full⁴⁸ (Jh. 16:24). Those mourning are made joyful by the work of the Spirit present with believers because the Son has gone to the Father and sent Him. We have the Spirit, while those Jesus addressed in Matthew were to ask for the Spirit. For those in Matthew, the gift of the Spirit involved ministries related to the law, not ministries promised in the upper room (cp Jer. 31:33; Ezekiel 36:26-27).

The Meek Contrasted to the Joyful with a Different Prospect for the Future

In the sermon on the mount, the meek remain calm rather than growing hot with anger over the success of the wicked. Believers are not of this world (Jh. 15:19; 17:14). It is not our home and we are to live in anticipation of leaving this world when Jesus comes for us. But we live in the world and it marginalizes and hates believers because it did so to our Lord (vv. 18-19). The world does not like the works of Christ's character because such works show the world's works

⁴⁵ The verb *κλαιω* [*klaio*] and *θρηνηω* [*thrāneō*]. In John 16:20, both are Future active.

⁴⁶ Future passive.

⁴⁷ I'm convinced that some of the psalms were written, perhaps as home, so that the psalmist could express to the priest precisely what he wished to say to God.

⁴⁸ The verb "to be" is Present subjunctive and the participle "filled" is Perfect passive. These form a Perfect periphrastic but in the future from the time Jesus was speaking. See, Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) p. 649.

to be evil and worthless (15:20-21). It becomes very easy to stress and be angry over the world and how it treats us. Yet because the Spirit has been sent to testify of the Son, He has made witnesses of His disciples (15:26-27). By abiding in Christ, and guarding His commands, the believer has Christ's joy in him and his joy is filled full (15:10-11). Living these commands will comprise part of the testimony concerning Christ for which the world hates believers.⁴⁹

Joy as part of the fruit of the Spirit is appropriate to many situations. Joy is the appreciation of God's work and plan regardless of circumstances. Therefore, New Testament believers are to rejoice always (1 Thess. 5:16). Believers are to rejoice in the Lord always (Php. 4:4). The believer is even to consider it joy when he comes into various temptations (Jas. 1:2). He is to rejoice in hope (Rom. 12:12). As the believer looks forward beyond his present circumstances, the believer appropriately can rejoice always.

The Hungry and Thirsty for Righteousness Contrasted to those in Christ

Jesus' good news about the kingdom promised satisfaction in that kingdom for those who longed to see righteousness. John records very little of Jesus' instructions regarding righteousness, if we are looking for words which directly express righteousness.⁵⁰ In the upper room, Jesus speaks of righteousness twice (16:8, 10). He states that the Spirit would convince the world concerning righteousness because He goes to the Father, and they do not see Him any longer. He means that the world lacks the righteousness which He has, righteousness which allows Him to go to the Father and remain there. For the unsaved, the Spirit convinces them that they need this righteousness. Though Jesus does not develop this truth, He has revealed that those who believe in Him will be in Him. God reveals through Paul that believers are righteous by being in Christ, not with just any kind of righteousness, but with God's kind of righteousness, which is the righteousness which allowed Jesus to go to His Father (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21).

The apostle John (one of the eleven in the upper room) authored both the book of John and 1 John. Twice in 1 John, he writes of "the one doing the righteousness" (1 Jh. 2:29; 3:7). By contrast, John explains the nature of that righteousness, "Everyone not doing righteousness is not from God, even the one not loving His brother" (1 Jh. 3:10). Jesus had given His disciples the new command to love one another like He had loved them (Jh. 13:34). This is the chief command for believers for the last two thousands years.⁵¹ This being the chief command, it also constitutes the Church's practical righteousness. So, when we read of Jesus' words about keep or guarding His commands, we are reading about practical righteousness. When we see that love manifest through us, it sates our craving for righteousness. In the present, we will not see righteousness in the world, and so to apply the kingdom gospel today will leave us greatly hungry and thirsty.

The Merciful Contrasted to those Loving Like Christ

⁴⁹ According to Romans 2:8 the world's works are from "selfish ambition" and "disobedience to the Truth" while the believer's would be done while seeking God's glory, honor, and incorruptibility (v. 7).

⁵⁰ Matthew and Luke use forms of the root *dikē* [δικη] 32 and 37 times respectively, Mark two times, and John six. Jesus assured the Jews that His judgment is righteous, and encouraged the leadership to judge righteously (Jh. 5:30, 7:24). In 17:25 He calls the Father righteous.

⁵¹ Sadly, many still cite Jesus' references to loving God with all one has and one's neighbor as one's self. This was the highest command of the Law, but it is not the highest command. The command to love with Christ's kind of love is infinitely beyond loving with everything one has. The Church's failure will ultimately involve its failure to guard this command. Similarly, churches often put their love for the lost ahead of their love for one another.

John does not use the word mercy in any form, though it occurs thirty times total in the other three gospels. Mercy is an attitude which seeks to alleviate suffering so one may have a sense of well being.⁵² Paul stated that God's mercy is because of⁵³ God's love. Jesus' upper room talk began with His washing the feet of His disciples in John 13. This act illustrated what Jesus meant about His kind of love and loving one another by laying down one's life. Therefore, this comparison also involves love.

The blessing to the merciful was that they would receive mercy. In the dispensation of grace, we do not earn God's love or mercy. However, Christ did make a conditional promise to His disciples and New Testament believers by extension.

21 "The one who has My commands and guards them is the one who loves Me; and the one loving Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to/by him." **22** Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are about to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?" **23** Jesus replied and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will guard My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him." (John 14:21-22)

Christ's commands begin with the command to love one another as He loved and then continue in variations on the command (Jh. 13:34). In 14:19, Jesus explained that in a short time the world would not see Him but His disciples would see Him. Jesus used the verb *theōreō* [θεωρεω] rather than *horaō* [οραω]. Though some treat these words as identical,⁵⁴ the use of both in 1 John 1:1 indicate a distinction, the latter emphasizing simply seeing with the eyes, and the former mental attention associated with a fixed gaze which may involve the eyes. In verse 21 this involves Jesus' promise to "disclose" Himself to or by the one who is loving Him. The verb disclose is not the causative verb *phaneroō* but *emphanidzō* [εμφανιζω] an intensive form of a verb meaning to shine. Between these passages, commentators largely come to one of three interpretations: post-resurrection appearances, the second coming, Christ present in the Holy Spirit. While Jesus may have intended all three, the third is especially important and is the result of a work of the Spirit involving Christ's indwelling. The indwelling Christ promises a special manifestation of His love to the believer who loves. Such love is the outworking of eternal life in and through the believer. When the believer uses eternal life he or she experientially knows God the Father and Jesus Christ (Jh. 17:3). In this way the Son discloses Himself by the believer and so also to the believer. Whereas the merciful in anticipation of the kingdom receive mercy, those who love Christ are loved by Christ as they see Christ shining by means of them.

The Pure in Heart Contrasted to those Guided in the Truth by the Spirit

When Jesus promised happiness to the pure in heart, He addressed those who followed the letter of the law but excused their sexually motivated glances. Inappropriate sexual thoughts and reactions are classified as uncleanness and lewdness which are works of the flesh, the

⁵² ελεος has special and immediate regard to the misery which is the consequence of these sins, being the tender sense of this misery displaying itself in the effort, which only the continued perverseness of man can hinder or defeat, to assuage and entirely remove it." Richard Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*
Trench: *Synonyms of NT*, Digitized by Ted Hildebrandt, Gordon College, Wenham, MA, Electronic text hypertexted and prepared by OakTree Software, Inc., Version 1.4

⁵³ δια with the Accusative case.

⁵⁴ See G. Abbott-Smith, op cit. p. 206.

location of the sin nature (Gal. 5:19). Old Testament saints had no provision for responding to the sin nature apart from sheer will and motivated by fear of God under the Law.

God has provided the New Testament believer a means of experiencing freedom from his or her sin nature as part of the larger doctrine known as the Truth.⁵⁵ Jesus promised that if one knew the Truth it would free him from sin (Jh. 8:32). Jesus revealed that He is the Truth; the believer has freedom from his sin nature as he counts himself to be a dead one to the sin nature but a living one to God **in Christ Jesus** (Rom. 6:11). In the upper room, Jesus described the Spirit as “the Spirit of the Truth” three times (Jh. 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). The Spirit directs the believer to set his mind on his crucified and raised position in Christ (Rom. 8:2, 4-5). The Spirit then affects this freedom for the believer (Rom. 8:13). The Spirit then makes it possible for the believer, being free from the sin nature (in that moment) to do works which are worked by God (Jh. 3:21).

God’s provision for freedom was a new truth. Paul later stated that he learned he had a sin nature when he attempted to live his Christian life by law only to be thwarted by his indwelling sin nature (Rom. 7:7, 17). We open our Bible and learn of the sin nature and how to experience freedom. How did First Century believers learn this? Jesus did not elaborate upon this, but He promised that the Spirit would guide them into **all** the Truth (Jh. 16:13). Contrasted to those Jesus addressed in the sermon on the mount, New Testament believers can purify themselves even as He is pure (1 Jh. 3:3).

The Peacemakers Contrasted to those Made One

If Jews truly anticipated their promised kingdom, they would have encouraged fellow Jews to live by the law so that they could live at peace. In the upper room, having again promised to send them the Holy Spirit, Jesus assured them that the Spirit would teach them all things and remind them of all the things Jesus told them (Jh. 14:25-26).⁵⁶ He immediately reveals that, “I am leaving peace with you. My peace I am giving you, not according to the world’s standard do I give to you. Do not let your heart be agitated neither be cowardly” (Jh. 14:27). Jesus only used the word “peace” three times in John: once in 16:33 and twice here. While it is His peace, that peace is part of the fruit from the Spirit (cf Galatians 5:22). His peace is the Father’s peace is the Spirit’s peace, for they are all one God. He contrasts His peace to that of the world. Though not expressed in this context, the world’s peace is circumstance related; if the world is calm, people have peace; if it is in turmoil, they have no peace. Jesus’ peace rises above such circumstances.

As He will promise in John 16:33, they may have peace “in Me.” Beginning in John 14:20 and mixed throughout this talk, Jesus reveals that believers are in Him. Later revelation will explain how this is accomplished, but believers first need to know simply that we are in Him. The believer needs to know who he or she is in Christ and then relate to that truth to experience the peace which the Spirit provides. Jesus will charge them to “abide” in just a

⁵⁵ I addressed this in more detail in a paper [The Truth-Necessity of God](#).

⁵⁶ It isn’t certain whether this teaching ministry extends to all believers, or whether this promise was limited to the eleven disciples. Certainly the second promised or remembrance applies only to the eleven because it involves what He said to them. He has not spoken to us directly but through them (Heb. 2:3; Eph. 4:20-21). Hebrews 2:2 refers to the upper room. Paul wrote Hebrews and did see the Lord, but he was not present in the upper room. Therefore, what the Lord said to the eleven in the upper room was the beginning of this great salvation. It laid the foundational truth of being in Christ, a key truth to the believer’s access to the Father apart from an earthly priesthood and temple.

couple minutes in the first verses of John 15. In the present text, this follows on the promise of the Spirit's teaching them (14:26). Similar to the peacemakers of the kingdom, who encourage people to live by the instruction God had given them, so the disciples have peace in connection with the instruction the Spirit gives them. Tie this to Jesus' prayer in John 17:20 and this promise of peace extends to those who believe through their word, that's every other believer in the Church. That means our experience of peace also depends upon accurate teaching and our relating properly to that teaching.

The Persecuted for Righteousness Contrasted to the Persecuted for Righteousness

The sermon addressed those Jews who lived righteously because they anticipated the coming kingdom. In the upper room, twice Jesus addressed the hate the world would have for His disciples. The world hated Jesus and they hate His disciples (Jh. 15:18). The believers in Jesus Christ are not from this world, therefore the world doesn't even have a fondness for them (v. 19). In the Matthew five, Jesus encouraged the Jews to let their light shine before men so that others would see their good works and glorify God. In the upper room, He claimed that they did not glorify God over His good works but they saw and hated Him and the Father (Jh. 15:24-25). His good works expressed God's life as light and exposed their works for what they are, works of darkness (cp Jh. 3:19-20). That hatred for these disciples would be expressed in overt persecution. They would make the disciples outcasts from the synagogues, and even think they were doing a religious, priestly service to God by killing them (Jh. 16:2) - think about Saul's (Paul) persecution of the Church following the death of Steven.

With the prospect of the coming kingdom, the Jews were salt of the earth having a positive influence upon the people. At the close of His earthly ministry, nowhere does Jesus tell His disciples that they would positively influence the world, rather He promised them adversity in the world. Jesus warned them so they would not be scandalized (Jh. 16:1). The verb "stumble" is *skandalidzō* meaning to interfere so as to impede progress. If New Testament believers attempt to live by the Sermon on the Mount, they may be scandalized, they may stop doing what Christ told them to do, because they find their activities are not appreciated by the world. Jesus closed this talk with the reminder that they would have peace in Him but adversity in the world (Jh. 16:33). "In Me" refers to the position the believer has in Christ, which was yet future when Jesus spoke. Nowhere are New Testament believers told that our righteous living will free us from adversity.

Concluding Thoughts

To say that believers are in the present dispensation of grace is to say that they live in and by God's grace. Many have misunderstood the sermon on the mount to teach Christian living. It has not been in the scope of this paper to examine the many ways in which this is inaccurate. However, it is hoped that by outlining the structure of the sermon I have demonstrated some inconsistencies in applying the sermon to grace believers. Further, since Jesus also spoke in the upper room to only his eleven believing disciples, that talk, given at the other end of Jesus' earthly ministry, presents a nice contrast. Though no this-truth-instead-of-that-truth can perfectly be arranged, I hope the comparisons and contrasts have been helpful.

Finally, I'd like to comment on teaching both. Believers need to learn to live in God's grace. Someone must teach them, and normally that falls on pastor-teachers, teachers and those with the gift of helps. If someone has been a believer for very long at all, we can safely assume that he or she has been trained to apply all Scripture to him or herself with little discernment. When we come along and present distinctions, some or many believers react negatively. As I stated in the introduction, simply telling a believer that the sermon is not for them can seem

sloppy and may not receive the desired response. Rather, we need to demonstrate what the text means. We need to let them see what they are attempting to apply, and to recognize that it really doesn't fit, because what it says is not what they have taken it to say. We will need to incorporate other Scriptures in the process, but context, in this case Matthew five through seven, helps tremendously.

On the other end of His earthly ministry, Jesus' talk with His believing disciples introduces many truths foundational to the Christian way of life. The presence of the Spirit, the Church's marching orders (new command) and the believer's position in Christ, are each basic Christian truths which, by my experience, few Christians know, or at the least fail to recognize how foundational they are to our life. This talk in John 13-17 provides a beautiful presentation of those foundational truths. I've watched believers, initially resistant to distinctions, amazed as Jesus' Himself introduces changes. Studying along, they come to see the newness and importance of truths upon which the dispensation of grace rests.