

THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

The King's Arrival: A Study of Matthew 1–7

STUDY TEN

The Sermon of All Sermons

Selections from Matthew 5–7

Of the millions of sermons preached through the centuries, none is more famous, more convincing, or more enduring than the one Jesus preached shortly after beginning His ministry. We know it as the Sermon on the Mount.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IN the first four chapters of his gospel, Matthew laid the groundwork for the life and ministry of Jesus. In the *book chart* from our first study, we titled this section, “Announcement and Arrival of the King,” and the emphasis was Jesus’ messianic credentials.

- The genealogy of Jesus traced Jesus’ lineage to Abraham and David (Matthew 1:1–17).
- Jesus fulfilled Scripture from His divine conception through His birth and childhood (1:18–2:23).
- John the Baptizer prepared the way for Jesus (3:1–12), who was consecrated for ministry at His baptism (3:13–17) and tested for ministry in the wilderness (4:1–11).
- Finally, after all this preparation, Jesus launched His ministry in Galilee (4:12–25)—just as the Scriptures foretold.

To Matthew’s Jewish readers, Jesus could be none other than David’s rightful heir, the King whose “kingdom will endure as the sun” (Psalm 89:36). Jesus was the long-awaited King . . . and more. He was the Savior from heaven, Immanuel, who would “save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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With this foundation in place, Matthew guides us into the next part, “Proclamation and Reception of the King” (chapters 5–15). In the opening scene of this section, we find ourselves elbow-to-elbow with other eager followers who have thronged a hillside to hear Jesus preach. What was Jesus’ message that day? The Sermon on the Mount.

Of all the sermons in history, this address by Jesus is the most famous, convincing, and enduring. In his commentary, Pastor Chuck Swindoll helps us understand the reason no other sermon touches our souls like Jesus’ sermon:

Through these words, Jesus—with penetrating insight—exposed the brittle veneer of all self-righteousness prevalent in His day . . . and in ours. He explained the essence of true righteousness, which leads to a deep-seated joy. . . .

Jesus preached this sermon to bring about permanent life change, and His concern was (and still is) that we live in stark contrast to the world’s system. He desires that His followers be Christlike to the core—a divine minority who live differently from the rest of the world.¹

In this study, we’ll overview Jesus’ message in four parts:

- Out with Hypocrisy! (5:1–48)
- Down with Performance! (6:1–34)
- Up with Acceptance! (7:1–5)
- On with Commitment! (7:6–29)

Now take a seat on a patch of grass among the people who have gathered by the beautiful Sea of Galilee on that warm, breezy day, and let’s listen to Jesus deliver His sermon of all sermons.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Open your heart to the words of Jesus as you pray.

Father, like the people who heard Jesus speak that day long ago, I too seek Your kingdom and Your righteousness. Silence the noise and chatter of the voices that fill my world so that I can hear Your Son’s words, grasp their meaning, and apply their truth, amen.



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TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The Sermon the Mount can be read in about fifteen minutes. Set aside some time to read Matthew 5–7 and try to capture the flow of the sermon as Jesus moves from topic to topic. Look for recurring themes, such as true righteousness, hypocrisy, Jesus' explanation of the law, judging others, prayer, and the kingdom of God. Write down a few lines from the sermon that stand out to you as central ideas.



Observation: A Strong Plea for Authentic Righteousness

In the observation phase of *Searching the Scriptures*, we try to see the action from the viewpoint of those who were there.² As we “listen” along with the crowd, we can feel Jesus' heartfelt concern for His listeners who had been misled by their self-righteous religious leaders. The average Jew could only see his or her leaders' righteous façade, but Jesus could see behind the masks to the wickedness sheltered in these leaders' hearts.

What does Jesus say about the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees in the following verses from Matthew's gospel? And what warnings does Jesus give?

5:20 _____

6:2 _____

6:5 _____

6:8 _____

7:15 _____



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Can you imagine how these lines shocked Jesus' audience? The Jews admired their religious leaders as experts in right behavior and considered their teaching as authoritative as Scripture. By exposing the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus opened people's eyes to what righteousness truly was. Let's follow the outline of Jesus' sermon and observe the flow of His ideas.

The worst kind of hypocrisy in my opinion is religious hypocrisy. So-called spiritual leaders present themselves one way, but in reality they do not live that way. The Lord doesn't expect perfection, but He does expect authenticity. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Out with Hypocrisy! Matthew 5

In His opening lines known as the Beatitudes, Jesus got right to the heart of the matter: inner character. What personal qualities do you see in Jesus' list of those who are blessed ([Matthew 5:1–12](#))?

What happens when we put these qualities into action so everyone can see them, according to [5:16](#)?



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Jesus taught that true righteousness comes from the inside out, and He illustrated this point by explaining the true meaning of the Mosaic law. List the subjects that Jesus touched on in *Matthew 5:17–48*.

Down with Performance! Matthew 6:1–34

According to Jesus, hypocrisy causes the most problems when it turns our sacred religious activities into a performance. What issues does Jesus address in *Matthew 6:1–18*?

What does a genuine relationship with God look like? Sum up Jesus' answer from *6:31–33*?



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Up with Acceptance! Matthew 7:1–5

Jesus pinpointed the core issue in the hearts of hypocrites in [Matthew 7:1–5](#). What was it?

On with Commitment! Matthew 7:6–29

Jesus wrapped up His message emphasizing true commitment to the gospel (Matthew 7:6), prayer (7:7–11), truth, and, most importantly, Himself (7:13–27). In a crescendo conclusion, He challenged His audience to take His narrow way—not the world's wide way, to be true believers, and to put His words into action.

How did His audience respond, according to [7:28–29](#)? What was it about Jesus' teaching that set Him apart?

No one dozed through Jesus' sermon! The Greek tense Matthew used suggests that the people were amazed all the way through the message—or, as we might say, *blown away*!



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Interpretation: The Meaning of Hypocrite

How might Jesus' audience have understood the term *hypocrite*? Consider the following explanation.

The term *hypocrite* is taken from the ancient Greek stage. Often, an actor would have to perform several parts through the course of a play, the different roles signaled by various masks. He might place a humorous mask in front of him and rattle off a few sidesplitting lines of comedy. Then he would go to the side of the stage and get another mask, perhaps one of sorrow or sadness, and pour out some heart-wrenching lines of tragedy.

The actor was called a *hupocrites*, which is transliterated into the English word *hypocrite*. As time passed, the etymology of the word evolved to become a synonym for three things. First, it was used to describe someone who participated in an artificial role, one who lived an unreal life behind a mask. Second, it came to be used to describe someone who concealed true motives under a cloak of pretense. Third, it came to mean an individual who hid a hideous heart beneath a righteous exterior.³

Based on this explanation, why do you think Jesus so strongly denounced hypocrisy? What dangers did it pose then . . . and today?

Jesus' concern is that those who follow Him will continue to follow the Pharisees and the scribes, to live like and sound like and ultimately look like hypocrites.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: The Roots of Hypocrisy

In the correlation phase of *Searching the Scriptures*, we survey Scripture for added insight in our understanding of the passage. What did the Lord tell Isaiah is the root sin that leads to hypocrisy, according to [Isaiah 29:13](#)?

How did Jesus apply this passage from Isaiah to His rebuke of the Pharisees and scribes ([Matthew 15:7–14](#))?

The poisonous roots of hypocrisy grow out of a heart of rebellion against God, the original sin that leads to all other sins. Let's conclude our study with a look into our hearts as we lay ourselves open before the Lord.



Application: Vulnerable Confessions before God

We must admit a few things to God before we can begin to make changes in our lives. Let's start by being honest with ourselves and then confessing:

- *I am not completely free of hypocrisy.* Like the Pharisees, I can play a part, act out a role, and wear a religious mask.
- *I do not always search my motives.* Lord, reveal to me any hidden desire that leads me away from You.



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- *I have not stopped judging others.* It's in my nature to tolerate logs of sin in my own eyes as I complain about specks of fault in others.
- *I dare not continue to ignore Jesus' words.* I come to Jesus with a longing for authenticity. I invite Him to guide me in His way, no matter how narrow and different than the way of the world.

Form your own prayer of confession and petition from your heart and write down your prayer in the space below.

The Sermon on the Mount convicts but also comforts. Our Savior longs for us to put His words into action, and His Spirit fills us with the grace we need to be authentic followers of Christ.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the map of righteousness that Jesus unfolded in His Sermon on the Mount. Help me to follow His way and stay true to His commands. Fill me with Your grace and empower me, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 1–15*, vol. 1A (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2020), 85, 86.
2. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
3. Insight for Living Ministries, *Simple Faith Bible Study Guide* (Anaheim, CA: IFL Publishing House, 1991), 1.

