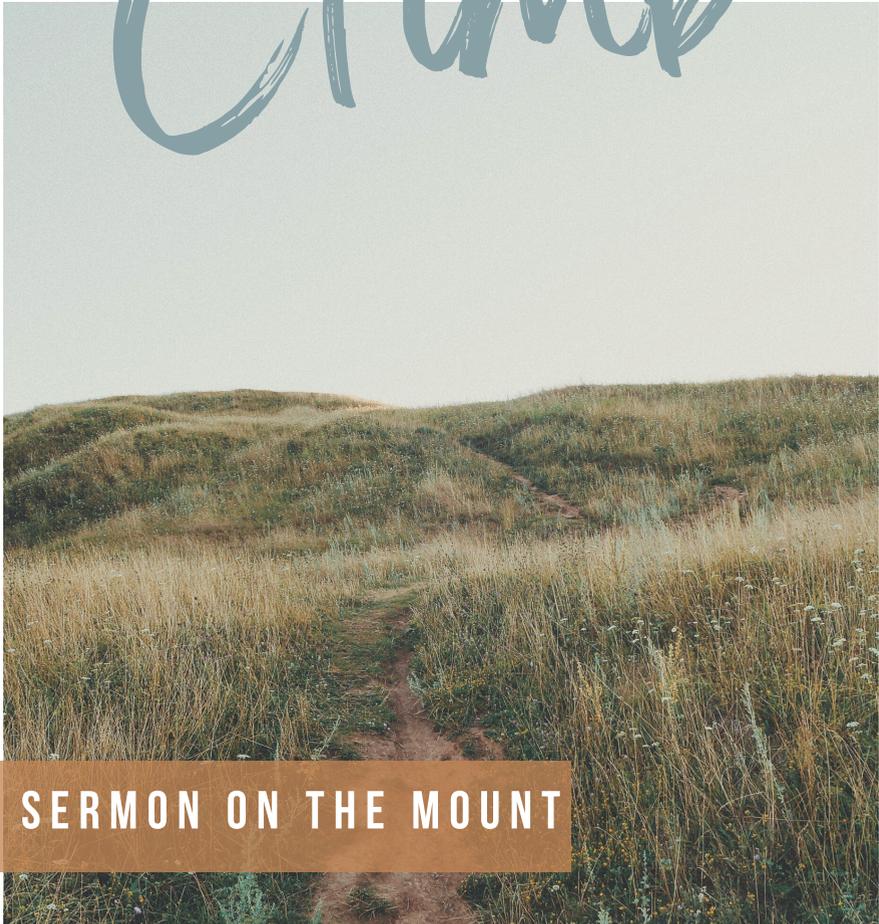


Climb

WHO SHALL ASCEND THE HILL OF THE LORD?... PSA 24:3



THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Insight: Life in the times of Jesus
Climbing the Mountain
You have heard; but I say...
Be Attitudes

10 Reasons not to worry
Judging in context
Alms, prayer and fasting



Climb

“

Your Word
is a lamp
to my feet
and a light
to my path

”



setting the scene

LIFE IN THE TIME OF JESUS' MINISTRY

Introduction

Jesus was not born into a nice comfortable, free society like we find ourselves in...

When Jesus was born in Israel, the Jewish people were under Roman occupation. The Emperor in Rome was top dog, and at the time of Christ this was Tiberius Caesar. The Roman empire was huge and so to 'control' it all and make sure the tax money was flowing back to Rome nicely, the Emperor selected a local King to oversee the different realms.

Aureus (gold coin)



Denarius (silver coin)



Sestertius (brass coin)

'Herods'

This role fell to the 'Herods', beginning with Herod the Great who was ruling when Jesus was born (see Matt 2 where he decrees all boys under 2 years old to be killed... nice guy?!). He was paranoid about being assassinated and so he killed many people... including some of his own wives and children, lovely! When he died (firstly, no one mourned but rather there was rejoicing!!!), the land was split between 3 of his sons - Antipas, Philip and Archelaus. Antipas inherited the region of Galilee and Perea, and so it is Herod Antipas who Christ appears before at his trial (Lk 23:6-11). He is also the one who killed John the Baptist (Matt 14:1-12). Jesus referred to him in Luke 13:32 as "that fox"!!

So, society was structured with these guys at the top. Below them were those such as soldiers, tax collectors (publicans), land owners etc - all competing for Rome's favour, recognition and friendship (and money!)

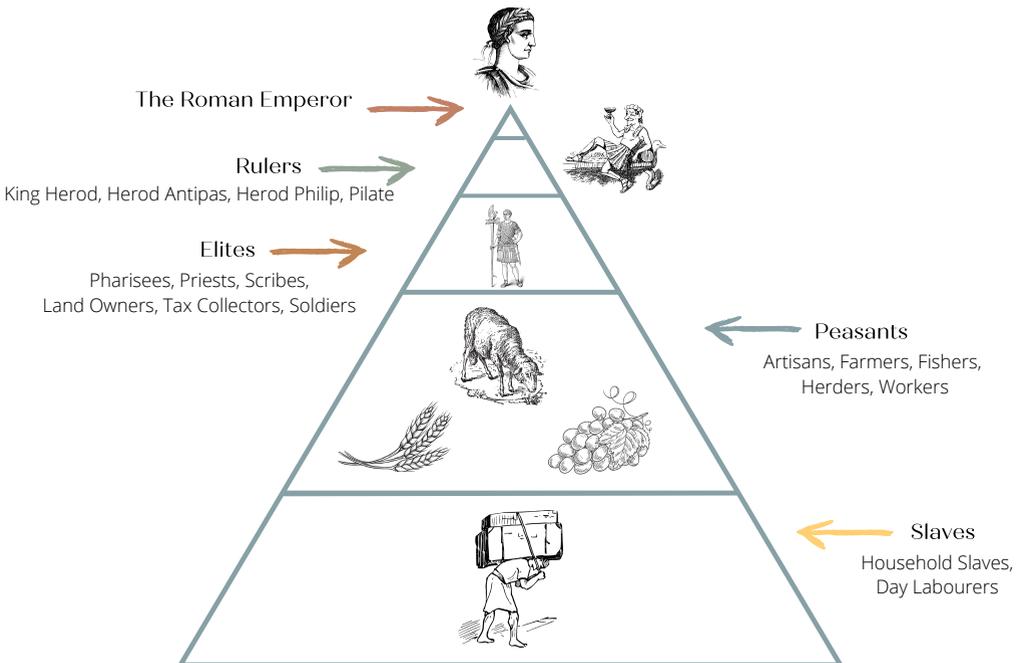
Peasant workers

by far the largest category came next, and this included Jesus and his disciples - the peasant worker. They were the farmers, fishermen, tradesmen, etc. Whatever they earned was mostly divided between taxation, tolls and rent to the class in the rung above. Whatever minuscule amount was left, they lived on and tried to feed their families. You see this class ver clearly in the accounts of feeding the 5,000 and then the 7,000. You can see why Jesus had multitudes following him everywhere. The bottom of the societal ladder were the slaves. Some were owned by others and earned nothing. Some were day labourers who were working to pay off debt. This group owned little to nothing. Also, down ere in the dirt, you have the beggars - those unable to work due to sickness or disability.

Religious groups

Now, add to that scene, the 'religious' groups of the time.

You have the **Pharisees**. They were scholars of the Torah (the first 5 books of the Bible) and zealous for religion. They acted under the guidance of the Scribes (aka lawyers; doctors of law), who were the ones who wrote out the Torah scrolls and counted every word. Pharisees taught and argued about the Torah in the synagogues They had their own hierarchy system of teachers called 'Rabbis', you could work your way up that ladder. They were focussed on careful, formal and mechanical living according to the Law. They came up with and verbally handed down loads of extra-biblical customs and traditions (eventually written down and called the Talmud). They held sway over the common people. *Remember: there were no books. If you wanted to know what scripture said, then you went to these guys at your local synagogue.* Two Pharisees that we know of who ended up following Jesus were Nicodemus and the apostle Paul.



Religious groups (cont.)

You have the **Sadducees**. They were from upper-class families, the aristocracy and were the chief priests and judges. They were a powerful minority. They were keen to move Judaism on a bit from its strictness and dabble in the life and culture they saw displayed by the Greeks and Romans. They didn't accept oral (or spoken) traditions. They didn't believe in a resurrection or after-life - they were all about the "here and now". At his trial, Jesus appeared before both Annas and Caiaphas, both labeled as High Priest (Jn 18). Annas was the equivalent of a Jewish mafia boss and Rome deposed him because he held too much power. He appointed his sons as a dynasty of priests, and his son-in-law Caiaphas as the 'new' High Priest in his place. It was all for show though. He was still kingpin. The Jews considered Annas as their High Priest and Rome considered Caiaphas as the High Priest. When Jesus cleaned out the Temple, throwing all the traders out, it was known as the 'Markets of Annas' and was held in the area of the Temple called the Court of the Gentiles (only there was no room left for the Gentiles to worship here!!!). These guys grew fat on all the money pouring into the temple treasury. As well as the sacrifices there were Temple taxes - each male had to pay a half-shekel Temple tax each year. The Temple had its own currency and so you had to convert your 'normal' money into the 'half-shekel of the sanctuary' and there was, of course, a high exchange rate and currency conversion charge. The Sanhedrin (basically the Jewish supreme court) was made up of 70 elders, primarily from Sadducean aristocracy. Jesus appeared before these guys as well at his trial (Lk 22:66). The Sadducees held swap over the Temple and its working but were too far removed from the common people (which is how they liked it!) When you read accounts of the trial of Jesus and the cord being whipped up into a frenzy and chanting Crucify him! Crucify him! It's these guys - the chief priests - chanting the loudest. [Flick through Matt 26-28 and highlight the words 'chief priests' and 'elders']

Political Groups

There are two more groups mentioned, and they have more of a political bent. The first group was known as Herodians - basically, these were Jews who supported the Herod dynasty of Kings. Most people hated the Herods as they came from Idumea aka Moab and these were historically arch-enemies of Israel (think big fat Eglon). Herodians pop up in opposition to Jesus in Mark 3:6; 12:13; and Matthew 22:16.

The other political group were called Zealots. They were Jews who wanted to free all Jews from Roman occupation. They were often violent and ruthless in trying to achieve this goal. They were like rogue military men without all the military gear unfortunately... think ninja! Of the 12 disciples, Simon Zelotes (aka Simon the Zealot) had belonged to this group (Lk 6:15).



Where is Messiah?



In this environment and amongst these groups, the Jewish people were looking for their Messiah. They wanted saving from Roman oppression and from their primarily peasant existence. The Pharisees were also looking for Messiah but their expectation of what he would be was so far removed from what he was. They wanted a powerful, conquering king who would most likely be a great Rabbi educated through one of their schools, who would come and evict the Romans and commend them for their extraneous law-abiding, and applaud them for keeping the sinners, the poor, the sick and disabled away from their 'holy' synagogues.

Take a look at Romans 1:20. Paul gives two examples of God's invisible qualities. We see these two divine qualities in creation... what are they?

His role was to represent who?

His gown was "all of blue". What does blue represent? See Numbers 15:38-39.

*We live under a dome of blue every day.
Every time you look up at the blue sky -
remember God's commandments AND do them.*

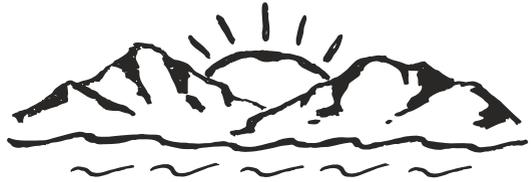


"So teach us to
number our
days that we
may get a heart
of wisdom".

PSALM 90:12

Climb the Mountain

"... and when he was set, his disciples came unto him".



Gospel of the Kingdom

The Gospel of Matthew is the Gospel of the Kingdom. It has a focus on Messiah as the coming King to sit on the throne of David. The phrase the **"kingdom of heaven"** is exclusive to Matthew and is used 32 times! It is a major theme so go colour it in!

Genealogy

The book opens with a kingly genealogy. Genealogies can be so boring to read! Not to mention tricky pronunciations. Why does God take up space, as it were, with genealogies? Well this one in Matthew comes after 400 years of divine silence - there was no prophet of God to the people, no Godly king leading them. We've seen in the previous section what the leaders of the day looked like. The last chronological scene of the Old Testament is Nehemiah 13, and he is concurrent with the prophet Malachi, so the last prophetic scene of the Old Testament is Malachi 4. Then there's 400 years of nothing, as it were. The Jewish people have been waiting and waiting for their Messiah King.

The Promised Seed

Matthew 1:1 "The book of the genesis [Gk] of Jesus Christ (he is the promised seed of Gen 3:15, he would come to save from sin), **the son of David** (he is the promised King to David's throne - 2 Sam 7:12-14), **the son of Abraham** (he is the promised heir to the father of the faithful, all families of the earth will be blessed through him - Gen 12:1-3; Gal 3:16,29)...".

The opening sentence of Matthew contains all 3 major promises of the Old Testament, and the answer to all of those promises is: the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the promised seed of all these promises and it's like Matthew is breaking the 400-year silence with "Hey, look everyone! Here is the seed, the one, the Messiah, the King we've been waiting for... I'll prove it..." and off he goes with the rest of his genealogy.

So, as we look at the Sermon on the Mount in this study, remember that Matthew is writing with a focus on the Lord Jesus Christ as King. He is writing to Jews and he is writing to them about their promised King and Kingdom.

The first recorded words of Jesus' ministry:

★
REPENT.

FOR THE KINGDOM OF
HEAVEN IS AT HAND...



Repent

Let's skip forward to the first verse of Jesus' ministry, **Matthew 4:17 "From that time** (what time? See v12 - from when he heard that John was in prison) **Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand [draws nigh, comes near]"**. Jesus' first word as he sets out on his mission is REPENT. It means to change, to turn around and it's a verb - a doing word. So right from the outset, Jesus is very clear about what he wants from people. He wants them to do something - to turn around and go in a completely different direction.

What direction are people (including you and me) going in before they hear the gospel message? Find some Bible quotes to support your answer:

Climb

Jesus sets about teaching and preaching and healing (v23) and he becomes famous (v24-25). He has a gazillion people following him around! He has told everyone what he wants - he wants you to turn around. And he has shown everyone a little glimpse of the Kingdom - healing everyone and everything that came to him. Now he wants to find out who is sincere. Who really wants this Kingdom. The first thing he does in this sorting process is to CLIMB up a mountain!! (5:1) Why would he do that? To see who follows... to see who's willing to endure a bit of discomfort, pain, blisters and sweat. To see who's really interested, to see who really wants to hear what he has to say.

Matthew tells us in 5:1 who climbed the mountain with Jesus... **"and when he was set, his disciples came unto him..."**. Look up in your concordance the meaning of the word **'disciples'** in this verse and note it in your margin.

Disciple

Have a look at Isaiah 50:4 "The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth me by morning, He wakeneth my ear to hear as the learned".

Based on what you found out the word 'disciple' means in Matt 5:1, can you spot the equivalent Hebrew word to 'disciple' in Isaiah 50:4? (Hint: it appears twice). It's a good idea to cross-reference these 2 quotes to each other in your margins.

Jesus was a disciple of his Father and he learned how to make disciples of others. He did that by listening to God's Word morning after morning after morning etc. The word 'hear' in this verse means 'to listen' but it has an added emphasis of listening intelligently, carefully, with the intention of being obedient. Not an "I-wish-he'd-hurry-up-I-really-want-to-get-back-down-this-mountain" type of hearing. Listening attentively to learn.

Go to www.biblehub.com and type in Isaiah 50:4 and look at how other Bible versions translate this verse. Choose your favourite and stick it beside your bed where you'll see it first thing every morning.

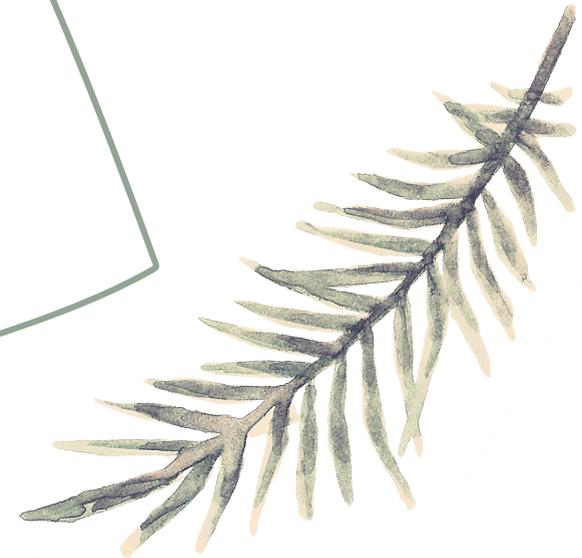
Before we get into the Sermon itself, it's interesting to peek ahead to the end and look at Matthew 8:1 "When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him...". They had all waited. The multitudes had waited! Many, many people display an interest in Jesus Christ. Many people confess Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. But few actually **put in effort (climb) to listen to what he says with the intention to do what he says** (Matt 7:21).

Will YOU climb the mountain?



Why do you think Matthew call it "the kingdom of heaven"? (Jesus gives us a clue in Matt 6:10)

What Bible verses can you think of that give us information about where the "the kingdom of heaven" will be?



The BE ATTITUDES beatitudes

At the summit...

So, we've climbed the mountain and we're sitting at the feet of Jesus. He is about to tell us the kind of people he wants for His Kingdom. **Matthew 5-7 is the Lord Jesus Christ's policy speech for his Kingdom.** Gathered around him are his disciples, mostly from the working peasant or lower tiers of society. The needy and desperate, the hungry and sick, the fatherless and widows. Imagine their eyes wide open and their joyful wonder as they hear words like poor... sad... hungry... persecuted. "This is me... that's me... I can be a part of this" they'd be thinking!!! Never before would they have heard a teacher like this, speaking to them. This was revolutionary! The Sermon on the Mount, his 'manifesto' you might call it, is completely unlike any manmade speech ever known. It is completely revolutionary. In human terms, it's all upside-down and back-to-front, topsy-turvy to anything man has ever pronounced when taking charge of a Kingdom or a government or political party. It's outrageous!

