

Sermon on the Mount

He Taught with Authority

(Matthew 7:28-29)

Part 19

22 August 2010, St. Francis Church

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[Matthew speaking:] ²⁸ And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, ²⁹ for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Introduction¹

In seminary we took preaching classes called homiletics. Once a student thought he had a very good sermon because he quoted so many authorities. After the sermon the professor asked which authority was correct. Why had the student not distilled the information?

In a subsequent class, another student had taken to heart this exhortation, and he been overly dogmatic, proclaiming emphatically what the truth was, not using authorities. After the sermon, the professor asked how his sermon was derived from the assigned passage, to which the student had to admit that he had not understood the passage.

What would we think of a preacher, who in his first sermon, stated that the audience had heard it said from old what

¹ Some of the thoughts of this sermon come from these men who have written on the Sermon on the Mount: John Stott, James M. Boice, and Martin Lloyd-Jones. I used underlining and bold print to help me preach.

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the Old Testament meant, but that they had it wrong. Not only did he have the true understanding, but that he had come to fulfill it, and anyone who disagreed with Him would find his life built on sand and rejected by Him at the Last Day!

Get the picture here. He had already begun doing some miracles, and His disciples were aware of them. However, the crowds were generally not aware, though some surely were. Here is a great crowd of people on a mountain. Here is a young man from the insignificant town called Nazareth that was in Galilee (Nathanael said: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" John 1:46). This young man was a carpenter (Mark 6:3) who had never sat at the feet of any great rabbi or scribe, and had never traveled over a few miles from home, and that by foot. He appeared to be just an ordinary man who had lived an ordinary life in less than an ordinary town, but now He suddenly bursts onto the scene like a lightning bolt out of a clear, blue sky and that with extraordinary words and works. How would you respond to Him?

We do know that at the age of twelve He astonished the sages in the temple:

⁴⁶ Now so it was *that* after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

⁴⁷ And all who heard Him **were astonished** at His understanding and answers (Luke 2:46-47).

On this occasion of the Sermon on the Mount, the crowd was impressed with His words and teaching, and He did no miracle. It was His words that reached into their hearts, no doubt by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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Jesus preached this sermon with conviction and presented not only the words but we see that He **IS** the Sermon on the Mount.

Christ always taught with authority, not from authority.
He never said to the twelve:

Now listen guys, I have an idea, and I want to run it by you to see what you think. Let's go aside and discuss it. If you don't think it is right, we can scrap it or modify it in some way. Just to give you a hint, I have an idea that perhaps, just maybe, I've been sent by God on a mission, which I'll discuss with you when we can get together. How about tomorrow at 10 A.M.?

Moreover, He never asked for prayer for Himself, but represented Himself as the Mediator for others: "If you ask anything in **MY** name, **I** will do it" (John 14:14). In the garden before His crucifixion, He asked three disciples to "watch with Me" (Matthew 26:38-40), not pray for Him.

Moreover, throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus presented Himself as the authoritative expounder of the Old Testament law. For example, in chapter five He repeatedly said, "You have heard it said by them of old," and then He gave some distortion of the law, which He followed with "**BUT I** say to you," correcting the distortion of the scribes' interpretation of the Old Testament law. He said that He came to fulfill the Old Testament, not to destroy it or to lay it aside (Matthew 5:17-18).

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Then in chapter six He instructs how to give alms, how to pray (Lord's prayer), how to fast, how to avoid materialism, how to avoid anxiety, and was very authoritative. How did He know the answers to these things? He spoke as if He were absolutely sure of the mind of God.

In chapter seven He instructed how to judge others by first judging ourselves, gave the Golden Rule, warned about false prophets, saying how to recognize them, which meant He was not one, and then said that He was the only sure foundation on which to build our lives, both in this life but especially for the life to come.

Others pointed away from themselves and said that is the truth, but Jesus pointed to Himself and said **I AM** the truth.

²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ He who hates Me hates My Father also. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father (John 15:22-24).

Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28).

The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!" (John 7:46).

In this sermon, He also proclaimed who would enter the kingdom of God, who would inherit the earth (the meek), who would obtain mercy, who would be turned away, and who would see God.

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He claimed immediate authority to bind men's conscience. Scribes did not claim such authority, but He did, though here subtly, yet in other places in the Gospels rather boldly and emphatically.

Jesus did not ever say "The word of the Lord came to Me," "Thus says the Lord," for He was the Lord!! In other words, He stood forth as legislator, not commentator. He was so certain of His teaching that He said human wisdom and folly were to be assessed by people's reaction to it (Stott), especially at the Last Day. He did not think of Himself as a prophet so much as the fulfillment of prophecy. Indeed, He claimed not only the kingdom of God had come but that He had inaugurated it and had the power to admit people into it!

He saw Himself as more than a teacher and issued warnings to those who would not obey Him as in danger of the judgment. In the parallel passage in Luke we hear Him saying very similar things:

[Jesus speaking] ⁴⁶ "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?
⁴⁷ Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: ⁴⁸ He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock.
⁴⁹ But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great" (Luke 6:46-49).

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The double “Lord, Lord” was a common address of rabbis in that day, and at this early part of His ministry, it probably did not mean to the audience a divine title, though it certainly did to Christ! In time, He and they would use the single word LORD for Him as the divine majesty, but His point is that either way, as their teacher or as their divine Lord, they should obey Him. If they did not, they would not be prepared for the Last Day judgment.

Here He presented Himself as **the object of faith**. Therefore, His disciples did not become rabbis to pass on **truth** so much as **to pass on Him!** They were witnesses to Him! He did not just teach about salvation—He bestowed it—as we see two chapters later when He claimed the authority to forgive sins (Matthew 9:1ff).

And in this Sermon on the Mount He said that **HE** would pronounce final judgment:

²² “Many will say to **ME** in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ ²³ And then **I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you.’** depart from ME, you who practice lawlessness!” (Matthew 7:22-23).

Jesus equates doing the will of His Father with doing His will:

Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does the will of My Father in heaven** (Matthew 7:21).

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Whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock (Matthew 7:24).

Everyone knew that God was the judge, but here Jesus is claiming that prerogative at the Last Day, that He would judge, and that people would stand or fall to God conditioned on how they responded to Him, to Jesus Himself! Either Jesus was telling the truth, or He was suffering from the worst case of arrogance in Israel's history.

Thus, in these last two verses, which are not part of the sermon Jesus preached, Matthew directs the attention of his readers to Jesus, not just to His teaching, and confronts us all with HIM, causing us to make a decision about HIM.

Considering these things, is it any wonder that His hearers marveled that He spoke with authority, not like the scribes?

Today, people still don't want to have anything to do with this Jesus of Nazareth. If we would just say that He was one among many with good ideas, they would be okay with that, but we can't. We can't because He would not say that about Himself.

And as we read this Sermon on the Mount preached by Jesus, we are hardly aware of His claims, for they are part of the sermon in a seamless manner. He is not audacious, braggart, arrogant, or in your face with these claims, but just presents them as part of His sermon. Yet the people did not miss them, and at the end, it is His authority, His claims, and He Himself that confronts them.

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In Matthew 7:28 we read “the crowds (plural, a considerable multitude) were astonished at His teaching.” The standard Greek lexicon gives us the emphasis of the Greek: “**to cause to be filled with amazement to the point of being overwhelmed, amaze, astound, overwhelm.**” **To use our vernacular, “They were absolutely blown away.”**

Conclusion

With this sermon, we see that Jesus is not only the infallible interpreter of the Old Testament, not only the fulfillment of the Old Testament, but also the revelation of God incarnate. Yet He is such as a Man, using human words and human vocal cords. **The idea is clear: the one who encountered Him, encountered God.**

AMEN.