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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The study of Christ has been a much-saturated field of study. He has been taken apart analytically by hundreds of theologians, philosophers, and psychologists. The words of Christ have been separated, unified, and classified in many ways. For the most part, he has been built up to be a great teacher, great man and even considered a prophet by most world religions. Few men have considered him a detriment to mankind. Most writings of a cynical nature have pretty well stayed in the background with, perhaps, the exception of Friedrich Nietzsche's work called the Antichrist. The multitude of works have basically deemed Christ as a contribution to mankind.

The only area of research which has not been developed to any great extent about Christ has been the area of rhetorical criticism in respect to Jesus as an effective speaker. The main direction of any research done on Christ has been in the things he claimed and the things he did. The way he expressed his views has more or less fallen in the background of most studies.

The nature and procedure of Christ's verbal expressions to the masses or to his twelve disciples have been overshadowed by the theological meaning connoted. The emphasis of most writers has been concerned with the personage of Christ rather than of his methodology. The meaning of personage in this usage indicates a total identification with what Jesus presented to people. Evidently, Christ's claims were so controversial that anyone studying him has tended to be involved in the things Christ said rather than the how behind these words.

### **Previous Research**

Previous research in regard to a rhetorical answer to Christ's effectiveness has not been attempted by critics in the field of speech. His sermons have been examined for content analysis, but mainly by theologians and historians. W.D. Davies, in his book The Sermon on the Mount, describes accurately the setting during this particular address, but no significant mention of rhetorical techniques appear in the foreground of his analysis. Another author and professor, Dr. Vincent Taylor, in his book The Life and Ministry of Jesus, writes a detailed description of the historical events surrounding Jesus and his ministry. He mentions some of the different characteristic traits of Jesus, along with examples of some of Jesus' sermons, but all these facts are not brought into the light of rhetorical review. James S. Stewart, a theologian from Scotland, wrote a book titled The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ. In this survey of Jesus, he does a study on the timeliness in which Jesus arrived into the world. This has added undoubtedly to the historical background that is needed to present Jesus in a rhetorical situation. He also goes through an intricate event-by-event account of Jesus' ministry, but does not attempt a rhetorical study of Jesus. His emphasis, like that of many other authors who have written on Christ, lay in the principles Jesus presented.

Another perhaps more intricate study of Jesus and his work has been done by a well-known scholar in the field of New Testament study, Rudolf Bultman. In his book, Jesus and the Word, he does more on the influences facing Jesus before and during his ministry. He also touches upon the purpose behind each message given by Christ, but in this review, Jesus as a rhetorical person has been less emphasized than even those done by James S. Stewart, and Dr. Vincent Taylor. In view of studies made on Christ, a rhetorical study has not been attempted.

### **Justification of the Study**

The main justification, then, for studying Christ in a rhetorical light, is simply that no such study has yet been made. This type of study may fill an academic gap that has not been considered by most writers who have analyzed Christ. Since Christ probably has had a greater influence on the thinking of man in the Western world than any other individual, a rhetorical study of his utterances within context of his times should yield new insights both into the nature of his speaking and also into the nature of persuasion.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study will be to make a rhetorical analysis of Christ's Sermon on the Mount. Particular emphasis will be given to the analysis of the rhetorical style, which Christ used in the Sermon. The study, however, will focus not upon a literary analysis but mainly upon rhetorical factors relevant to the Sermon at the time it was given.

In this study, no attempt will be made to prove or disprove theological question concerning the personality or divinity of Christ. For the purpose and scope of this study, the personality of Christ will be considered as that of a living man influencing the people of his own time by the influence of his character and by the power of speech.

Rhetoric at this point should be defined for a clearer understanding of the rhetorical analysis that will be attempted in this thesis. According to Aristotle, "rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion."<sup>1</sup> Dennis Day, who has done an article on the rhetoric of Kenneth Burke, quotes his definition as "rhetoric is the art of persuasion." Day, in this article, differentiates between Aristolic and Burke in that Burke believed that the key term to persuasion was identification. That is, rhetoric is more effective when a speaker is able to identify with his audience, and vice versa. This process is an essential part of what Burke termed consubstantiation.<sup>2</sup> In the context of the review of the rhetorical style of Jesus Christ, this concept given by Burke will be used, in conjunction with Aristotle's basic definition, as the guideline for this rhetorical analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle's Rhetoric and Poetic, trans. by Rhys Roberts (New York: Random House, Inc., 1954), p.24.

<sup>2</sup> Dennis Day, "Persuasion and the Concept of Identification," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XLVI (October, 1960), 270-273.

### **Authenticity of Texts**

One of the main problems that has prevailed in any type of study of Christ has been that of authenticity. These problems, however, have been largely overcome. Unlike a study on Christ twenty of thirty years ago which had to depend on biased theologians for a source of information, today there are many reliable historians and theologians who have made honest attempts to present the events of Christ in the most objective sense possible. Their arguments for the validity of the New Testament are as logically justified as any other work that has been translated. W.D. Davies, in his study The Sermon on the Mount, has brought out some of the strongest facts on the authenticity of the Synoptic Gospels, which are Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These gospels are considered authentic for the following reasons; the early church had a great value in keeping the words of Jesus for catechetical reasons. That is, converts to Christianity needed to know what the teachings of Christ were, and so it was important to the church to keep those words intact.<sup>3</sup> Jesus also had twelve disciples that stayed with him throughout this entire ministry. This, of course, led to a clearer description of what Jesus meant in many of his messages. The disciples were always there to catch any misunderstanding, and often Jesus sat down to explain the meaning of his words to his disciples after the crowds had left.<sup>4</sup> The words of Jesus were again kept for the simple reason of exhortation by those that helped start the early church. The early church had many reasons for keeping the words of Christ, one of which was for the purpose of combating a Jewish backlash. Christians for many years after the death of Christ were persecuted by the Jews. One of the biggest arguments that has been brought to the foreground of criticism toward the New Testament has been the possibility of loss in translation amongst the early Christians which were the authors of the New Testament. Jesus, being a Hebrew, spoke in the Hebraic language, but the New Testament was written in the Greek. W.D. Davies points out in his view of this criticism that the disciples and early followers of Christ were all basically bilingual due to the influence of the Greek influence surrounding Palestine.<sup>5</sup> Of course, their native language was Hebrew and if there was any difficulty in translation, then most of the sixteen authors of the New Testament made the same mistakes because in the first four gospels, there are almost identical stories.

### **Methodology**

The principal method that will be used in this rhetorical analysis will be Burke's pentad. The pentad method of criticism consists of five elements. The first element is the act, or simply what took place in thought or deed. The second element is the scene, in which a background analysis is made of the surrounding act. The third element is the agent or the speaker.

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3 W.D. Davies, The Sermon on the Mount (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 103.

4 Ibid., p. 137

5 Ibid., p. 128.

The fourth element is agency, which includes consideration of all the rhetorical instruments used in the act. The fifth element is the purpose or the motive behind the act.<sup>6</sup> A method that will be used to supplement Burke's pentad in order to analyze more specifically the style of the Sermon, is the microscopic method developed and used by Hermann G. Stelzner.<sup>7</sup> This method will be used in the chapter on the agency.

### **The Primary Quoted Source**

The New Testament version that will be used in this study is the New American Standard. This version puts the original New Testament writings, which were based in Hebrew and Greek, in the contemporary language of the Twentieth Century. This version has been acclaimed by many academic theologians like Dr. William Culbertson of Moody Bible Institute, as one of the most accurate translations made on the New Testament writings. The Old Testament scriptures that will be referred to come from the Amplified Bible which is another modern version that has been translated from the original Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic by a group of Bible scholars. This version, by many renowned religious leaders such as Billy Graham, has been considered the best study Testament on the market.

### **Divisions of the Study**

Chapter two of the paper will deal with the scene. The background that will be covered will involve a description of the social, political, and religious issues and circumstances that surrounded the life of Jesus Christ. This portion of the analysis will also describe the attitudes of the possible audience, which Jesus might have faced when the Sermon on the Mount was given.

Chapter Three of this paper will deal with the agent or speaker. A chronological description of the life of Jesus Christ will be included along with a character analysis. The purpose of this portion will be to describe some of the main influences that shaped the life of Jesus. Also, in this part of the analysis, portions of some of his discourses will be used as examples to show the character of Jesus.

Chapter Four will deal with the remaining three areas of Burke's pentad. A description of the act, or in this study the Sermon on the Mount, will constitute the first part of this chapter. The purpose, that is, Christ's purpose in the Sermon on the Mount, will be the second part of the chapter. The analysis of the agency or a description of the instruments used by Christ as revealed by a study of the Sermon will make up the third part. This final part of the chapter will consist of an application of Stelzner's method in a microscopic statement-by-statement analysis.

Chapter Five of this paper will include the conclusions that have been drawn from this rhetorical analysis.

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<sup>6</sup> Day, "Persuasion and the Concept of Identification," p. 271.

<sup>7</sup> Hermann G. Stelzner, "War Message," Speech Monographs, XXXIII (November, 1966), 419-437.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SCENE

#### An Historical Description of Palestine during the Time of Christ

Before discussing Christ in the rhetorical sense, the historical scene should be set. A short synopsis of a Roman world versus a Jewish world will help bring to the surface the attitudes, conflicts, and circumstances that influenced rhetorical discourse during that era of time, and thus provide a better understanding of the world which Jesus stepped into, and the problems he might have faced which would have influenced his discourse.

Palestine was the center of all the events that surround the life of Jesus Christ. Unlike today, all of Palestine was under the domination and rule of the Jewish people; that is, until the Romans took over Palestine in their quest for world domination. The ever spreading empire of Rome made Palestine one of its protectorates thirty years before the birth of Christ.<sup>8</sup> The Romans felt no great threat at first from the Jewish people, and so only a few legions comprised mostly of Gauls and Spaniards were stationed in Syria, which was next door to Palestine.<sup>9</sup>

The population of Palestine during this era of history was about two-million.<sup>10</sup> Jerusalem, the capital of Palestine, was the real center of activity in Palestine. The city had a population of about one hundred and fifty thousand people.<sup>11</sup>

The Jew was quite unlike the Roman, Greek, or even the Asiatic. The Jew could not take his God with him in worship. He was obligated to his local synagogue or to Jerusalem, the central city of the Jewish religion.<sup>12</sup>

There never was a more devoted people than the Jew when it came to religious matters. In their worship, the various religious priests did not present sermons in the didactical sense, but the worship consisted of the making of blood sacrifices, prayer, and music.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, the purpose of the ritual worship which was greatly emphasized by the Jew was not for the instruction of its worshipers, but actually only to aid the people to religious aspirations and meditative prayer. Evidently it had quite an attraction for the Jews, since thousands of them came to Jerusalem every year due to religious fervor from all parts of the world.

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8 Henri Daniel-Rops, Daily Life in the Times of Jesus, trans. by Patrick O'Brian (New York: Hawthorn Books Inc., 1962) p. 75.

9 Ibid., p. 89

10 Ibid., p.55.

11 Ibid., p. 104.

12 Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, II (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1910), p. 3.

13 Ernest Dewitt Burton and Shailer Mathews, The Life of Christ (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1931), p. 14.

Then, devotion of such an annual trip meant quite a sacrifice in that particular time of history, since travel was hard and dangerous.<sup>14</sup> But the Jew was a dedicated religious human being, which sometimes alienated him from what he considered to be a heathen world. To be a heathen was to be a nonbeliever of the Jewish God, Jehovah.

The Roman officials who came to Palestine in order to set up a Roman government were well aware of the strict beliefs of the Jews. During the conquests of Palestine, many Jews were taken as slaves to Rome.<sup>15</sup> While in Rome, the character of the Jew was rather aloof.<sup>16</sup> The reason stemmed from his strict monotheistic belief compared to the liberal politically oriented religion of the Roman. To the Jew, any Roman that did not believe in the Jewish God was a heathen, and according to the Jewish law, unclean.<sup>17</sup>

Probably the most irritating element to the Jew about the Roman religion was the development of Emperor Worship. This type of worship was the belief that the Caesar or ruler of Rome was divine or was to be treated as such. Emperor Worship began during the reign of Augustus, which was right before the maturing years of Jesus.<sup>18</sup> Augustus was not eager to claim this divine honor due to political reasons. The fall to the Republic had just brought him into power, thus causing him to be cautious in claiming to be the God of Rome so soon. He claimed dictatorship, but taking on divine authority would have been premature.<sup>19</sup> Tiberius, his successor, also restrained himself from claiming deity openly, but he, like Augustus, did not discourage it from developing amongst the people.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, in view of the Roman religious state of mind, religion, as such, was only recognized insofar as it was an instrument of the government of Rome. Religious worship was set down by the state, and it was a citizen's civic duty to observe any practices that were to be observed.

In the Jewish religion, their worship was an unchanging doctrine formed around an ancestral document, namely the Bible. The Jew was dedicated to his religion, and it was his belief that he was God's chosen people. Because of this, the Jew had had a tendency to be quite cliquish even in his subservient position to the Roman. He stuck together with his fellow Jews as much as possible. They would not eat nor drink with strangers unless they professed to be of the Jewish faith.<sup>21</sup> As a result, the Roman regarded the Jew with a mixture of contempt and anger.<sup>22</sup> Basically, though, there was no Roman law to interfere with one's personal belief in a God or Gods, with the exception of one period of time during Tiberius' reign.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 67.

<sup>16</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Times* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), p. 124.

<sup>17</sup> Daniel-Rops, *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*, p. 91.

<sup>18</sup> Tenney, *New Testament Times*, p. 113.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>21</sup> Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 67.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

The Romans had hoped to Romanize the world, and they felt their best approach was not through force of ideas but through their gradual influence.<sup>24</sup>

The method of ruling Palestine by the Romans took much consideration and thought. In order to avoid possible conflicts with such a strong-minded nation, the early procurators lived outside of Jerusalem in order to spare the Jews the sight of a pagan living in their holy city.<sup>25</sup> As can be observed, the Romans perhaps were wiser in their occupational tactics in keeping the empire in order than her predecessors—the Assyrian Empire, the Babylonian Empire, and the Empires of Persia and Greece. Rome was not a hard mistress upon her subjects as long as the people kept the laws Rome set down. Rome, more so than these earlier empires, encouraged local culture, customs, and religion as long as there was peace and profit for the Roman Empire.<sup>26</sup>

Peace in Palestine was of special significance to the Roman Empire. The Jewish nation stood geographically in the middle of where the rivals of this new empire waged their battles against Rome. Thus, because of the centrality of her location, the tranquility that could be obtained in Palestine would, in the long run, help keep the Roman Empire intact. As long as the Romans could dominate Palestine, there would always be an advantage geographically in the favor of Rome when fighting with these Eastern powers.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, after Rome had taken Palestine; to destroy it was the farthest thing from the Roman mind. Instead, the Jewish nation was recognized as a province and it was given a de facto official existence.<sup>28</sup>

The de facto government that was delegated to Palestine was a coexistence.<sup>29</sup> The Roman Emperor at the beginning of this political unity was Caesar Augustus. His successor was Tiberius, whose reign covered the entire life of Jesus Christ. The procurator that was assigned to Palestine was Pontius Pilate.<sup>30</sup> The Jewish side of this coexistence was ruled by Herod the Great. He kept perhaps a stronger hand on Palestine than the Romans would have done had they accepted the full role of ruling the Jewish nation. The procurator, Pontius Pilate, did not enter the scene until the death of Herod the Great.<sup>31</sup> Evidently Augustus had trusted the province to the strong arm of Herod the Great. The procurator before Pontius Pilate evidently did not play any significant role in the government set up in the province of Palestine. If so, he was overshadowed in history by the rule of Herod.

Herod the great was not an orthodox Jew with respect to religious convictions. He was an unscrupulous man, and he was probably the most capable ruler of Palestine during its occupation by Rome. He was able to maintain peace on the wild frontiers of Palestine as well as to keep the peace within the kingdom. The Jews in general disliked

24 Tenney, New Testament Times, p. 132.

25 Daniel-Rops, Daily Life in the Times of Jesus, p. 89.

26 C. Milo Connick, Build on the Rock You and the Sermon on the Mount (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1960), p. 13.

27 Burton and Mathews, The Life of Christ, p. 3.

28 Daniel-Rops, Daily Life in the Time of Jesus, p. 69.

29 Rudolf Bultman, Jesus and the Word, trans. by Louise Pettibone Smith and Ermine Huntress Lantero (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 26.

30 Tenney, New Testament Times, p. 129

31 Daniel Rops, Daily Life in the Time of Jesus, p. 79



him as much as they despised the Romans, but they never rebelled in great force against him.<sup>32</sup> When there were any disorders, he put them down perhaps too cruelly, but in time of famine he helped out his people by remitting taxes and selling his own possessions in order to buy food for the people.

A great change occurred when Herod the Great died which was about two years after Christ was born. No longer had Rome the strength of a Herod the Great to run the Palestine province. With this dilemma facing Rome, Augustus decided to follow up with Herod's suggestions by splitting up Palestine amongst Herod's three sons. The areas of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea were given to Archelaus, Herod Antipas received the tetrarchy of Galilee and Perea, and Herod Philip was left with the tetrarchy of a number of smaller territories east of Galilee.

Herod Antipas who was the direct descendant of his father, Herod the Great, probably stood out from the other two sons. Certainly more than Archelaus who through bad government was relieved of his position only a few years after he had been in power.<sup>33</sup> Pontius Pilate, a Roman, was chosen to rule Archelaus' territory of Judea in which Jerusalem was its center. Essentially then, Herod Antipas and Pontius Pilate ruled the major portion of Palestine during the lifetime of Jesus Christ. Herod Philip stayed mostly in the background of events due to the location of his obscure territories.

Politically, the common Jew had few rights and basically no power.<sup>34</sup> The power of government lay with the dictation of appointed protectorates, whether they were Jewish or Roman. In either case, the Jew had no say and no representation.

The Jewish view of politics probably differed from most cultures. Before their fall to the Roman Empire, the political attitude had been intermixed with their religion. The Jewish religion was run by a theocracy, which meant a divine rule of the high priests over the affairs of the state. Even when the Romans took over the control of the government, the theocracy still survived in a sense, but with no direct power, but probably with a great deal of indirect influence on both the people and with the Roman protectorate.

The now acting theocracy or the Jewish ecclesiastical reign in the life of Jesus started with Emeritus who was a Sadducee, the name of a political-religious sect. He was the high priest from six A.D. to fifteen A.D. Valerious Gratus followed him and served only three years. Caiaphas, who was a Pharisee which was another political-religious sect, served as high priest from eighteen A.D. to thirty-six A.D.<sup>35</sup>

Thus far, the differences between the Jew and Roman have been discussed along with the Roman political set up that governed Palestine. The next section of background analysis will deal more specifically with the Jew and the influences that affected him.

The Jewish religious sects of which two have already been mentioned were divided into four political-religious parties. The Sadducees were aristocratic, wealthy, and they usually filled the job of the priesthood, along with the Pharisees. The Sadducees were considered the compromisers and although they despised the rule of the Roman, their attitude was that of acceptance and coexistence. The Pharisees, who usually shared the rule of the theocracy with the Sadducees, by no means tried to get along with the Romans.

32 Burton and Mathews, The Life of Christ, p. 10.

33 Ibid., p.11.

34 Ibid., p. 11

35 Tenney, New Testament Times, p. 129.

They prided themselves in being zealous believers and perfectionist in interpreting the religious law of their God, Jehovah. <sup>36</sup>

Unlike the Sadducees who would have been considered liberals on the acceptance of Roman rule, the Pharisees would probably have been considered the conservative party, that is, advocating only Jewish rule. The Pharisees were considered the most popular amongst the religious leaders. This was due to their insistence on rigid observance of the law together with the traditions of their forefathers. This attitude kept them totally separated from the so-called heathen Roman toward which the common people had the strongest negative feelings.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, with respect to their attitude toward the Romans, the Pharisees and the common Jew got along quite well. In many other aspects, though, the common people were alienated from their religious leaders. They did not respect the Sadducees for their liberal attitude toward the Roman and they were often disgusted with the way the Pharisees treated them. According to the Pharisees, the laws that were set down in the Bible had to be observed to the letter. If they were not, this would prolong the coming of the kingdom of God, which would free them from the Romans. The common people were constantly despised when they fell short of this goal of religious observance. To the common Jew, his religion became to him a series of negative laws. No matter how he tried to keep the religious laws, he seemingly always fell short according to the standards of the Pharisees. The Pharisee, in character then, was a prideful religious man who had a strict devotion toward God in the sense of keeping the laws, but it divorced him from loving his fellow man which was heavily felt by the common Jew.<sup>38</sup>

The third sects, the Zealots, were perhaps devoid of any religious aspirations. They were more militarily inclined, with the goal in mind to defeat the Romans, and eventually return Palestine to a national existence. They actually originated as a party after an incident in the city of Sepphoris, which was the largest town in Galilee, and second only to Jerusalem. According to the record, there was a revolt in this city against the Romans, and after much resistance the Romans not only wiped out the revolutionaries, but over two thousand Jews were crucified and the city was burned to the ground. <sup>39</sup> This all happened when Jesus was about ten years of age. The Romans' purpose for this action was to break the spirit of the Jew for any further reprisals. But the only thing that it did was to intensify the determination of the Jew to defeat Rome. The Zealots came to the foreground after this massacre, fighting the Romans on a guerrilla war basis. Thereafter, this particular group appealed to the young men who craved action and to the peasants who had little to lose except their lives. <sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Daniel-Rops, Daily Life in the Time of Jesus, p. 93

<sup>37</sup> Ernest Trice Thompson, The Sermon on the Mount and Its Meaning for Today (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press. 1961), p. 13.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 14

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 10

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 11

Four times in Jesus' lifetime there were major revolts against the Romans. Not a year passed after the slaughter at Sepphoris without blood being shed by there revolutionists.  
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The fourth sects were a good deal different then the militant Zealots. They were a peaceful withdrawn group of escapists. The Essene felt the situation with the Roman domination was hopeless, so they moved into the desert in order to avoid any conflicts with their conquerors. To the Essene there was absolutely nothing that could be done to rescue the nations from its degradation, so they resultantly tuned their minds in on themselves, and became ascetics and quietists. 42

The common Jew, therefore, was essentially caught up in about four different waves of attitudes, each of which out pressure on the Jew to perform in one sense or another. The Sadducees wanted him to cooperate with the Roman, the Pharisee wanted him to live up to the law of the Bible, the Zealot wanted him to join in a military resistance, the Essene advocated the escape from reality into a world of ascetism. Clearly, then, the major portion of the common Jew's problems came from his own chosen leaders.

The Roman did not help matters, but probably increased the peril of the Jew. At the beginning when Herod the Great was in power, there was basically no real problem to contend with except the presence of the Romans. As long as the Romans received their tributary taxes from Palestine, they were content to let them alone. There was no doubt that Rome had a totally materialistic outlook on Palestine as well as the rest of the Empire. Palestine was exploited for the initial benefit of making the Roman ruling class richer. Of course, its strategic location was important, but the prime Roman interest was centered on riches that could be obtained from Palestine. The method employed was a strict system of taxation which consumed over one-third of the total income of each Jew. These taxes became so staggering that the extinction to the middle class became an eventual reality. This fact left Palestine with only two classes of people, the very rich and the very poor. 43 Although Palestine was considered a prosperous Roman protectorate, the conditions that lay within did not represent this prosperity. It can be concluded that the common Jew went through a great deal of hardship during the first part of the first century.

They were overburdened with taxes from a conqueror they despised, they were harassed by the Pharisees to live perfectly according to their religious law, they were pushed by the Sadducees, on the other hand, to cooperate with the Roman who had been the cause of all their troubles. If this was not enough pressure, then the last choice was to join a band of Zealot resistants which proved unprofitable to the family man. Put all together with the fact that outside the city the land lacked natural resources and was greatly overpopulated, brings about a conclusion that the Jews were a downtrodden and dejected people. Their consolation, however, was their belief in a rescuing God.

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41 *Ibid.*, p. 16

42 Daniel-Rops, *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*, p. 50

43 Connick, *Build on the Rock You and the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 13.

The Jews believed that God belonged only to them. 44 The only way to experience a relationship with this God was to become a Jew, for it was not enough just to believe in the Jewish God. An example of this came from the attitude portrayed toward an ethnic group called the Samaritan who believed in the same God as the Jew and even the same scriptures that came out of their Bible. The Jew, though, treated the Samaritan with great contempt and prejudice. 45 The Jew would not accept the Samaritan because he was not the chosen people like the Jews considered themselves to be. The Jew felt that he was a descendant of the direct bloodline that God chose thousands of years before, to be his people. That line came from Abraham who was chosen by God to accomplish the tasks of God. The Jews were the descendants of Abraham, and therefore, God's elect in the world. 46 They believed in the Law of Moses which was set down in the Ten Commandments in the Bible. Moses was supposed also to fall within the bloodline of Abraham. He was supposedly chosen by God to present these certain laws which would tell the chosen people how to live in favor with God. To the Jew, by obeying these laws he would experience the blessings of God, if he did not, he would be punished by hardship. 47 The Pharisees ceased to emphasize this daily with the Jew. In fact, the reason why things were so bad in Palestine was a result of not keeping this law perfectly according to the Pharisee. Only until the people began to live in total accordance with the law would there ever be a kingdom of God set up in the world. 48 This unconditional obedience came hard for the Jew. Life was barely on subsistence level, and the Jew was concerned with being able to stay alive rather than spending a great deal of time in the temple praying like the Pharisees.

The temple was the only acceptable place to relate to God. But, as mentioned earlier, temple worship was not instructional, and this was because teaching about the religious matters came from the Jewish home. This parental obligation had evolved out of Jewish traditional religious history. The responsibility of religious teaching in the family fell mostly upon the mother. According to the great Jewish historian, Josephus, this instruction was so well doctrinated that the statutes of the law were known better by the Jewish child than the child knew his own name. 49

The obedience to the Law of Moses was far too ingrained for it to have ever been rooted out. Although the common Jew had knowledge of this law and its importance, it was not always easy to follow. The legalism that was put behind the following the law served as both a strength and weakness for the Jew. On the one hand, it made him conscientious and excessively careful to obey the work of God in every situation of life. It had greater moral implications than did the flexible Roman religion. It demanded men to be honest and unscrupulous toward others.

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44 Ibid., p. 16

45 Daniel-Rops, Daily Life in the Time of Jesus, p. 50

46 Thompson, The Sermon on the Mount and Its Meaning for Today, p. 9

47 Burton and Matthews, The Life of Christ, p. 15

48 Bultman, Jesus and the Word, p. 18

49 Burton and Matthews, The Life of Christ, p. 13

Its high moral demands, though, made its followers casuistical, stern, fault-finding, and un-loving. 50 Many of the common Jews found themselves frustrated when they could not live up to every letter of the law which the Pharisees pressured them to do. Any hope that was bound up in the Jew came from the belief that he was God's chosen race and that God would soon come down and rescue him from all of his trials and tribulations.

The hopes of the populace of Jews, then, depend on two things: (1) that the kingdom of God would soon come to set up a region on earth with the Jews as his ruling class, and (2) the coming of the Messiah would initiate this hope toward a reality. To the Jews, the Messiah varied somewhat in interpretation. 51 Some Jews expected the Messiah to be military or political leader especially provided by God for the precise purpose of delivering His chosen people from the Romans by the sword. Other Jews expected the Messiah to be the mystical heavenly being who would come down out of the clouds to restore the Jewish nation. 52 Still others believed that the Messiah would resemble Moses and that he would be sent by God to be a teacher and interpreter of the Law. 53 The general feelings, though, were that the Messianic coming was imminent and that the Jewish people would be rescued from the Romans and restored as the chosen nation.

This belief in a Messiah was a definite part of the strength of their religion. The common Jew, especially, put hope in this promise from God which derived from the Old Testament. The fulfillment of this prophecy would not only free him from the Roman but on a practical level, he believed that as a result, his fields would bring forth crops, that justice would be established, that the rich would no longer be able to take advantage of the poor, and that all nations would no longer take up arms for wars again. 54 This Messianic hope was the key faith that sustained the common Jew. The conditions in which he was faced warranted his hope of the Messiah which would meet his immediate needs: peace, food, and justice.

Messianic movements of one sort or another were greatly a part of the historical scene during the Roman takeover. False Messiahs arose frequently from the time of Herod the Great to seventy A.D. The crowds that supported these false Messiahs were non-violently expecting a miracle to bring on the kingdom of God. The Romans at first regarded these as threats and thus sought to squelch them as soon as they developed. 55 But as the Romans became more observant, they realized that there was no real fear in them unless an individual claiming this title advocated a military overthrow.

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50 Ibid., p. 17

51 Thompson, The Sermon on the Mount and Its Meaning for Today, p. 14

52 Ibid., p. 15

53 Davies, The Sermon on the Mount, p. 137.

54 Thompson, The Sermon on the Mount and Its Meaning for Today, p. 14

55 Bultman, Jesus and the Word, p. 22

The rhetorical atmosphere during these times could be termed as dangerous and hostile. On the one hand, there was the watchful eye of the Roman who feared the possibility of revolt. Unlike the first thirty years of Roman rule in Palestine, the second thirty years were filled with rebellion. This second thirty-year period was the time in which Jesus lived and spoke. Jesus spoke to an audience that hated the Roman. Consequently, the Roman was keenly aware of any would-be leaders that would move the Jews against them. The Roman outlook of any of Jesus' discourses would have been in regard to what he said directly about the Romans and what he might have said indirectly to incite any adverse reaction to Roman rule and policy.

Discourse, especially of Jesus' religious teachings, had to be concerned with the hierarchy of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The religious interpretation of the law had always befallen upon them. It was their strength and security with the Jewish people. Any new interpretations that did not come from their councils were not of God and could only be considered heretical. And so, Jesus was faced with religious jealousies from this group in his general audience.

The major portion of the audience consisted of an economically poor and frustrated people. The common Jew was suppressed by Roman taxes and spiritually by the condemnation of their religious leaders. Their only strength was the hope of God to eventually save them from their trials and tribulations.

The common Jew also was at a disadvantage in regard to the practicalities of life, like education. They had no basic education except that of their Bible which was ingrained within them from early childhood by their parents. They were a prideful people, who felt that they were God's chosen race. It can be concluded that they were perhaps narrow-minded in their beliefs. Their only religious training had come from their own Bible. Prejudice was also part of their character, due to their attitude toward the Samaritan. But they were also a people of stamina and hope. They had withstood the tyranny of Rome as well as the pressure put on them by their religious leaders. Their hope lay in the coming of an appointed Messiah from God and they would be likely to follow men who claimed this authority.

In conclusion, the audience in which Jesus faced was quite varied in background. It included the suspicious Roman, the jealous Pharisee and Sadducee, the frustrated but hopeful common Jew. All these, together with a few Hellenistic Greeks and militant Zealots, comprised the speaking audience in which Jesus faced.

## CHAPTER III

### THE AGENT

#### An Analysis of the Speaker

Jesus Christ was born in the town of Bethlehem which was geographically situated in the province of Judea in Palestine.<sup>56</sup> He was born around five or six B.C. during the closing years of the reign of Herod the Great. <sup>57</sup> Immediately following Christ's birth, Joseph and Mary, his parents, moved to Egypt. There had been a rumor that Herod, being of questionable sanity, was going to kill all the new born male babies in the area in which Jesus was born. <sup>58</sup> It was not inconceivable for Herod to initiate such an action due to his state of mind and his jealousy of any new born kings which were constantly prophesied. This rumor and the knowledge of Herod's character prompted Joseph and Mary to move to Egypt until Herod died. After the death of Herod, Joseph moved his family back to Palestine in the province of Galilee. Nazareth which was 20 miles west of the Sea of Galilee was their final place of residence, and it was there that Jesus spent his youth.<sup>59</sup>

Joseph and Mary were very religious people, and every year they attended the Passover feast in Jerusalem. This was the annual religious ceremony to which the Jews traveled once a year from all over Palestine.<sup>60</sup>

Joseph, like many of the Jews in Palestine, had to work hard in order to make a subsistence living for his family. He was an ordinary craftsman in the town of Nazareth. It has been assumed that Joseph owned land, since he was obligated to report to Bethlehem for the census.<sup>61</sup> The purpose of the Roman census was to evaluate according to one's possessions and lands the amount of taxes to be charged. This explains why Jesus was born in Bethlehem instead of Nazareth, the home town of Joseph and Mary. Joseph seems to have died early, possibly right after the teenage years of Jesus. Joseph's name, unlike Mary's disappears from the Gospels during the ministry of Jesus.

Mary was an influence on the life of Jesus. In her role as a Jewish mother, she was primarily concerned with religious instruction. She must have been very conscientious in this task, since Jesus in his sermons was exact in quoting scripture. He had no record of formal schooling, and yet he was able to match his knowledge of Scripture with that of the Pharisees and Scribes.

<sup>56</sup> Lockman Foundation, New American Standard Bible (La Habra, California: The Foundation Press, 1963), Matthew 2:1, henceforth, all Biblical references will be from the New American Standard Bible accept when stated otherwise.

<sup>57</sup> Tenney, New Testament Times, p. 164

<sup>58</sup> William Pittenger, The Interwoven Gospels and Gospel Harmony (Boston and Chicago: The Pilgrim Press, 1888), p. 16.

<sup>59</sup> Tenney, New Testament Times, p. 132

<sup>60</sup> Luke 2:41.

<sup>61</sup> Tenney, New Testament Times, p. 133.

Jesus was the first-born which made him the eldest son of Joseph. The eldest son in the family was usually the one on which the burden of responsibility fell when the father was away. It was the eldest who was trained to follow in the trade and footsteps of the father. As a result, Jesus probably spent a great deal of time working at hard labor for his father in the craft shop. The other brothers of Jesus were James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. Jesus also had a couple of sisters, but their names are not specifically mentioned in any of the written accounts of the life of Jesus. 62

Jesus' ancestry, according to Matthew in the New Testament, was traceable to Abraham, one of the founding fathers of the Jewish race. A few times during his ministry Jesus was referred to as the Son of David which implied a kingly line of ancestry, 63 for David also was a descendant of Abraham.

The early life of Jesus was scarcely mentioned in the New Testament. At the age of twelve, he visited the Holy Temple in Jerusalem with his parents. The account of this event described an inquisitive and independent Jesus. According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus wandered away from Joseph and Mary during the Passover feast. When they found him, after two days, he was in the temple questioning and listening to the high priests. Evidently the priests were astonished at the wisdom of Jesus at such a young age. 64

The wisdom of Jesus can be attributed largely to his environmental influences. Jesus probably was well acquainted largely to his environmental influences. Jesus probably was well acquainted with the Hebrew language which, although it had ceased to be the spoken tongue, was the native and historic language of the Jew. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and for anyone to have known the scripture as well as Jesus did, indicates that he knew Hebrew. 65

Nazareth also had an influence on the thinking Jesus. It was not a thriving or a prominent city in Galilee, but its people were in easy distance of the bustling life of the Lake cities, and the Lake cities were in the full swing of contemporary and social movements and changes. 66 Although situated in the middle of a desolate hilly type of hot countryside, 67 Nazareth was also a stopping-off place for the flow of pilgrims, military personnel, and trade caravans. 68 The province Galilee itself was situated in the proximity of the Greek cities of the Decapolis.

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62 Vincent Taylor, The Life and Ministry of Jesus (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1952), p. 53.

63 Matt. 21:9

64 Luke 2:46-47.

65 James S. Stewart, The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 29

66 Tenney, New Testament Times, p. 147

67 Taylor, The Life and Ministry of Jesus, p. 53.

68 Tenney, New Testament Times, p. 148



Consequently, the Roman legions that marched through the streets of Nazareth on the way to and from their posts, the peddlers and agents who traveled for business and trade, and the surrounding Greeks, all had an effect on the life and thinking of Jesus. 69 The fact that Jesus made good use of anecdote in his sermons proved that he observed the world around him. 70

Thus, the influences that might have shaped the total character of Jesus before he started his ministry came from the religious instruction received from his mother, the experience of being a craftsman's son which probably taught him the value of hard work, the passing of merchants and soldiers which gave him a contact with the outer world, and the nature of the geographical location in which he grew up. All these influences also had an effect of the imagery he used in his sermons.

Before the actual beginning of Jesus' ministry, an itinerate preacher called John the Baptist had been stirring up the Jewish people with his prophetic teachings. John's message was centered around the soon coming of the Messiah. He never claimed to be that Messiah and because of this factor and his confidence and strength, many followed him until Jesus started his preaching.

When Jesus came on to the scene, John's following began to subside because many believed that Jesus might be the coming Messiah that John was preaching about. 71 The opening of the ministry of Jesus was between twenty-six and twenty-eight A.D. 72 He was about the age of thirty when he gave his first sermons in Judea. 73 The first year of his ministry in Judea is considered the most obscure in comparison to the rest of his ministry. He taught mainly in synagogues or in the wide open spaces near the hills, or by the sea. 74 Also during this first year Jesus began to pick up the group of twelve men who followed him throughout his ministry. 75 Eleven of these twelve intimate followers came also from Galilee, like Jesus. 76 For the first eight months Jesus spoke in various places throughout Judea while the last months of his first year's ministry were spent in privacy with his twelve followers or disciples. 77

69 Ibid., p. 148

70 Mary C. Morrison, Jesus: Man and Master (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1968), p. 34.

71 Pittenger, The Interwoven Gospels and Gospel Harmony, p.23

72 Tenney, New Testament Times, p. 164

73 Luke 3:23.

74 Davies, The Sermon on the Mount, p. 132

75 Mark 3:14.

76 Tenney, New Testament Times, p. 73.

77 Augustus H. Strong, Popular Lectures on the Books of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: The Griffith and Rowland Press, 1914), p. 27

The actual rise in the ministry of Jesus really began, however, after John the Baptist was imprisoned which was right before the Sermon on the Mount in the second year of Christ's ministry. 78

The second year of his ministry could be described as the year of public favor. Many Jews had heard a great deal about the teachings of Jesus, consequently bringing crowds of listeners to hear him. 79 This year was spent in Galilee and his appeal was basically centered to the common people at large in Galilee. 80 This sudden rise in popularity also caused the Romans and the Pharisee to have cause for alarm. The Romans were interested in Jesus because of a possible rebellion threat. The Pharisees were concerned because such a following took away from their religious influence.

The third and last year of the ministry of Christ has been considered the year of opposition. 81 During last year, the public favor turned against him. The Pharisees and Scribes were eventually able to turn the people against Christ. Consequently, he spent most of his time with the disciples in an esoteric type of instruction. 82 The only close following that Jesus ended up with were the devout followers and disciples who had collected around him during his first two years. 83 One reason for his small immediate following was perhaps the disappointment over Jesus not being the Messiah that would free the Jews from the domination of the Romans. The Pharisees probably encouraged the idea that Jesus was not the Messiah, since he had become a detriment to their influence on the people. The end result was death for Jesus on the Cross, which was the common execution of the day. The charge was blasphemy, a strictly religious crime. 84

The many accounts of Jesus vary as to what Jesus was like or who he really was. Some have considered him a misty-eyed visionary, others have branded him as a narrow-minded fanatic, and still others have envisioned him as a weak dying figure whom man was supposed to love. Another possibility was that he was a supernatural being with divinity and no humanity. 85 All of these projections do not really describe what Jesus was like.

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78 Matt. 4:17-25.

79 James Stalker, The Life of Jesus Christ (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1909), p. 46.

80 Strong, Popular Lectures on the Books of the Old Testament, p. 28.

81 Stalker, The Life of Jesus Christ, p. 36.

82 Strong, Popular Lectures on the Books of the Old Testament

83 Davies, The Sermon on the Mount, p. 132.

84 Mark 14:64.

85 Morrison, Jesus: Man and Master, p. 1.

Jesus was, by no means, a physically weak figure. He had a great deal of endurance for he could walk miles across the rough terrain of Palestine. He was lean and tough and he often slept in the open air on his long journeys. 86 Jesus was, by no means, a supernatural, mystical visionary. He walked and needed rest and he suffered hunger pangs just like any other human. In the Gospel of Mark, an incident describing Jesus' hunger shows the humanity of Christ. The pronoun "they" refers to Jesus and his disciples.

And He came home and the multitude gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal.

And when His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His sense."87

Christ was no superman by any means, for the constant pressure of the crowds not only exhausted him at times, but made him retreat sometimes to the countryside for a complete psychological break from the people.88 He was not always cognizant of all the things that went on about him. In Mark's account, a woman was evidently healed because she believed Jesus to be the Messiah. Jesus' reaction was very questioning to the particular incident.

For she thought, "If I just touch His garments, I shall get well.

And immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.

And immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My garments?" 89

An omniscient being in an incident of this nature would have had full knowledge of the coming of the event as well as of the details.

The emotional nature of Jesus was very human. He experienced anger, for example, when he entered Jerusalem during the height of his ministry.

And they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to cast out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; 90

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86 Ibid., p. 2

87 Mark 3:20-21

88 Morrison, Jesus: Man and Master, p. 2

89 Mark 5:28-30.

90 Mark 11:15.

Jesus also showed his anger in bold refutation. An example of this was when speaking in reply to the Pharisees' questioning attacks.

"...Truly I say to you that the tax-gathers and harlots will get into the kingdom of God before you." 91

Others emotions like rejoicing and gratitude occur in Jesus' exclamation in the Gospel of Luke.

At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth..." 92

Although Jesus showed the same human traits that were present in every human being, what type of man was Jesus?

His nature was for one part filled with the quality of being a humble person. His message was always filled with de-emphasis on self. In one of Matthew's accounts, Jesus stated in the following words:

"And whoever exalts himself will be humbled; and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."93

He was also a man of confidence. His confidence came from what he was preaching about. He took the Jewish law which was unchangeable to the Jew and he claimed not only to fulfill it but to give it wider and fuller meaning. This appeared early in the introduction of His Sermon on the Mount.94

Jesus was also a very religious man. The Jewish law to him meant more than just following it to the letter. He attacked the Pharisees and Scribes for interpreting it that way.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others."95

The major part of Jesus' dialogue with the Scribes and Pharisees proved he took the law seriously. He used it as his primary source when he referred to any questions on religious issues.

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91 Matt. 21:31.

92 Luke 10:21.

93 Matt. 23:12.

94 Matt. 5:17.

95 Matt. 23:23

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and put him to the test, saying,  
 “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?”

And he answered and said, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL OF YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”

And He said to him, “You have answered correctly, DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE.”<sup>96</sup>

Although Jesus had a great respect for the law, he did not always convince all people of this fact about himself. The Pharisees were constantly confronting him with difficult questions in regard to the breaking of the law. Jesus was not always too responsive, for often he was very defensive though always quite logical. An example of dialogue between the Pharisees and Jesus come from an account that Matthew has recorded:

Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem saying,  
 “Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.”

And He answered and said to them, “And why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?”

“For God said, ‘HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,’ and, BE PUT TO DEATH.”

“But you say, ‘Whoever shall say to his father or mother, “Anything of mine you might have been helped by has been given to God.” He is not to honor his father or his mother.’ And thus you invalidated the word of God for the sake of tradition.”<sup>97</sup>

As can be seen in this dialogue, that Jesus presented his message in a rather provoking manner. Not only did he present a logical argument to his attackers, but he completely evaded the whole question that was presented to him in the first place. Jesus was under constant attack by the Pharisees, which led him to develop a sharp tone in answering their questions. He did not always evade the questions though, and for the most part he attempted to answer the question he was asked. An example of his direct answering was recorded in the Gospel of Matthew. The Pharisees had heard that Jesus had cured a man of demon-possession, and in response, they accused Jesus of doing this in the name of Beelzebul, the supposed ruler of the demons, according to the Jewish religion. Jesus’ reply to them was unequivocal, but he explained logically:

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<sup>96</sup> Luke 10:25-28.

<sup>97</sup> Matt. 15:1-6.

“...Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself shall not stand.

“And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?”<sup>98</sup>

Thus, Jesus by nature was sharp in his replies when challenged on his philosophy of religion. He used logic, he evaded questions effectively, and his source, the Old Testament, was clearly presented to fit the right situation at the right moment.

When presenting his message to people, without the pressure of the Pharisees' accusations and questions, Jesus communicated in a different tone. At times he was almost humorous with his use of illustrations. An example of one of his hyperbolic illustrations comes from him trying to explain the possibility of a rich man getting to heaven.

And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, “How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!”

And the disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!” It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God!”<sup>99</sup>

Jesus used a style that made people look into themselves.<sup>100</sup> He used the law when giving addresses and when confronted with accusations, but when people came to him with honest questions, he usually tossed them back with a deeper meaning.<sup>101</sup>

Jesus was not always able to answer all questions. He admitted that he did not know the answers to some questions, as evidenced by his reply to the question concerning the coming of the kingdom of God.

“But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.<sup>102</sup>

Jesus was not the type to always say what people wanted to hear. He simply presented the truth the way he saw it. His technique was usually one of indirectness, causing his audience to think out what he had said. The only time he used a direct approach was in his replies to questions of the Pharisees and Scribes. He tried to shake the foundations of the rigid measures that the Pharisees tried to put on the law. This so alienated the people from their religious leaders that when a man like Christ came and challenged them with a positive nature on their own law, people naturally wanted to listen. Besides that factor, Christ was hoped to be their Messiah, which would free them from the Romans.

<sup>98</sup> Matt. 12:25-26.

<sup>99</sup> Mark 10:23-25.

<sup>100</sup> Harvey Cox, “For Christ Sake,” Playboy Magazine (January, 1970), p. 238.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>102</sup> Mark 13:32.

Christ was a simple man with a strong character and style. He never owned anything except the clothes on his back.<sup>103</sup> He never supported an idea of military takeover in his movement. In fact, he detested violence and bloodshed.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.’ “But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn him the other also.<sup>104</sup>

Jesus had various other characteristics that should be mentioned in explaining the kind of person he was. He seemed well versed in the Old Testament that was attributable to the religious training instigated by his mother. He was usually quite logical in his discourse, which was the result of his knowledge of the bible which he constantly quoted. Confidence and independence were also part of his nature. The confidence can be illustrated when he was able to come back with a Bible verse or two in answer to the Pharisees attacks. The independence came from his total lack of material responsibilities. He had nothing and he did not stay in the craftsman trade, but decided instead to travel throughout the country preaching. Jesus was also a humble and clever person. His following was usually great and it would have been easy for him to exalt himself but instead he preached that a person would only be exalted if he humbled himself before others. He was clever in repartee, often not giving a direct answer for the Pharisees to hold him too.

The message that Jesus preached also gave further understanding to what type of man he was. The subject he spoke on never changed, which could lead to the conclusion that he might have been a narrow-minded fanatic. But his message was that God loved all men and the way to God was to change one’s heart and mind toward life, and respond to the will of God.<sup>105</sup> In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described exactly his philosophy of life.

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<sup>103</sup> Morrison, Jesus: Man and Master, p. 6.

<sup>104</sup> Matt. 5:38-39.

<sup>105</sup> Thompson, The Sermon on the Mount and Its Meaning for Today, P. 19

## Chapter IV

### THE ACT, THE PURPOSE, THE AGENCY

#### The Speech, The Motive, The Rhetorical Instruments

##### The Act

##### The Setting of The Act

The actual Sermon appears in two accounts in history, the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. Luke's Gospel presents the Sermon as a synopsis of some of the sayings of Christ. His account does not go into the detailed description that Matthew's account does. Luke took the purpose of the Sermon and put down those scriptures that best supported what Christ was trying to say in this particular address. He does not treat it as a sermon, but Matthew does in his account. Due to the fact that Matthew's account is more descriptive, and that he treats the account as a sermon, it will be used for this analysis.

The book of Matthew was written in about sixty-eight A.D.<sup>106</sup> In fact, most of the Gospels were not written until about twenty or thirty years after Christ died. Most of what Christ said was passed on by word of mouth by his followers. As they began to die off, written accounts were needed in order to preserve the tradition of his following. Many things instigated these accounts, one of which was a Jewish backlash toward the Christian movement that developed after Christ's death.<sup>107</sup> Because of this anti-movement, new converts to Christianity needed to know exactly what Christ said during his ministry. The Jewish religion was thrown into quite an uproar of conflicting opinions and debates because of the things Christ advocated in his ministry. He used the Jewish law, but his unequivocal interpretations cause a movement either to be for him or against him.

Jesus gave this address toward the end of the first year of his ministry. At this time, Jesus had gathered twelve followers or disciples who were in constant fellowship with him. They were with him when he gave the Sermon near the town of Capernaum, which lay near the Sea of Galilee in the province of Galilee. The region in which the Sermon was believed to have been given was called the "Horns of Hattin."<sup>108</sup> Jesus gave the address on the side of a mountain which acoustically was an excellent place from which to address a large crowd. Since there was no amplifying system at this time in history, it can be assumed that Jesus had a strong voice that could be heard by a large crowd. There was a multitude of people, probably around a few thousand, who heard the Sermon on the Mount. At the end of his Sermon, they were amazed by his teaching according to Matthew's account, which indicates also that he communicated well to the large crowd.

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<sup>106</sup> Davies, The Sermon on the Mount, p. 76

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>108</sup> Pittenger, The Interwoven Gospels and Gospel Harmony, P. 39.



The result was that when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were amazed at His teaching.<sup>109</sup>

The setting surrounding the Sermon was rather a casual one. Jesus' approach to the situation indicates this assumption. He merely walked to the place where he intended to deliver the Sermon, and began by sitting down which was conducive to a relaxed atmosphere. The audience probably followed his example, since it would have been difficult to have seen him if everyone had remained standing.<sup>110</sup>

The audience was comprised of many different groups of individuals, all with varied backgrounds and reasons for attending the Sermon. There was the Pharisee group whose backgrounds dealt with the strict instruction of the oral and written religious law of the Jews. They were the initiators of this strict observance and their appearance at the Sermon was one suspicion and jealousy. Jesus had become quite a popular figure among the Jewish world, and his teachings had been the direct reverse of their teachings toward the law and God. Jesus was interested in the individual and his relationship with man and God, but the Pharisee, on the other hand, stuck to the impersonal aspects of the law which caused him to be accusing of his own people, yet claiming righteousness from God for his acts. They were listening to Jesus in order to catch him for false teaching against the religion of the Jewish God, Jehovah. This group, however, was small in comparison to the major part of the audience which was the common Jew.

The common Jew, unlike the Pharisee, did not enjoy the advantages of the priestly life. The common Jew was not educated beyond his religious home training. He was generally a farmer, fisherman, or shepherd. His vocabulary and understanding was limited to an environment of toil, sweat, and hardship. Nature was his backyard and he spent most of his life working to stay alive. The common Jew was also a very pressured man, stripped of his profits by the Roman, socially unacceptable due to his financial status, and the high priests were always accusing him for the prolongation of the kingdom of God. According to the Pharisee, the observance toward their religious law was being neglected by the common Jew, which added to the time in which God would send his kingdom on earth.

Another group that attended the Sermon were the Gentiles, or the non-Jews. Included in this group were the Greeks who came from the outlying areas of Palestine. They were a more prosperous and educated people, and their view of life was not centered around a religion strict as that of the Jews. Their purpose for coming was curiosity over the new teaching that Jesus was spreading. The Samaritans, too, would have to be classed in this group, although they actually believed in the same God and Bible as did the Jew. They were there to hear the teaching of Jesus which had been widely spread by rumor. The Gentiles were a small representation like the Pharisees.

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<sup>109</sup> Matt. 7:28.

<sup>110</sup> Pittenger, The Interwoven Gospels and Gospel Harmony., p. 39.

The last three groups, few in number, were the Essenes, the Romans, and the Zealots. The Essene were a withdrawn people whose answer to the Roman problem and life in general was to withdraw from life until the kingdom of God came. They were devout Jews, but in the monastic sense. They came probably because of the rumored miracles that Christ had supposedly performed. The Roman or the occupier of the Jewish people was there for military security. The Roman always believed in keeping a tight reign over the government, and any rumor of a rising leader would indicate rebellion against the Romans. They came to see if Christ would lead the Jews to revolution against the Roman.

The audience that Christ faced, then, was a conglomeration of people of various backgrounds. The Pharisees were the religious intellectuals, who regarded Jesus with suspicion and jealousy. The common Jew, on the other hand, had little education and was poor and distraught by the overwhelming circumstances of the times. They came because Christ might be the saving Messiah that would rescue them from their hard times.

The Gentiles or non-Jews perhaps had the most objective motives for being there; they had been drawn simply by the rumored teachings of Christ. The Essene of the religious hermits came to hear Christ because of the rumored miracles. The Romans came to hear Christ to see if he was inciting rebellion. And the Zealots came to see if Christ was leading a military revolution. The major portion of the audience was made up of the common Jew, with the other groups rather small in comparison.

### The Purpose

The Sermon on the Mount describes exactly how Jesus interpreted the Jewish religion, and how he viewed life and man's relation and obligation to life, in regards to his fellow man and God. Jesus' total theme in the Sermon on the Mount was love, that is love for one's fellow man. In the first section of the main theme, he teaches about following the old law, but he tried to revive the meaning that the whole law was based on, that being love. In the last part of this section of the Sermon, he unfolded this theme quite directly.

“You have heard it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR, AND HATE YOUR ENEMY.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.” 111

In the last two sections, Jesus goes into a more intricate study of where the Jews have missed the point of love within the Jewish religion. The second part is concerned with practicing righteousness, and the third part is on judging others. Both parts illustrate the false motivations that have derived from the Jewish teachings, and both sections give answers to the criticisms. The answers are based on treating other men with love.

The entire Sermon contains about one-hundred and six verses, which fit into five main sections. The introduction, the main theme which includes three of the sections, and the summary. In the remainder of this chapter, the introduction and each of the three main lines of argument and appeal are analyzed under the sub-headings: (1) relating the message to the audience, and (2) stylistic devices. According to Burke, style is a mode of identification and figurative language, especially, is strong in identifying features. Hence, special emphasis will be given to the style of the Sermon.

The method of writing in verses was the common style of the early Christian writers, and their reason for this method was probably due to the ease with which the words of Christ could be memorized. The Sermon, for the most part, is basically a didactical presentation with a deductive type of logic.

### The Agency

#### Introduction

Relating message to the audience. The introduction to the Sermon was rather lengthy with the purpose of catching the audience attention. Christ did this by reversing many standards of thought commonly believed by both the Jew and the non-Jew. He encompassed the whole audience, because what he started with could apply to all groups at one time or another. The introduction starts out with a series of beatitudes, which means “happy are those who...” Although he might have done so unconsciously, he did not single out any single group, but used the pronoun “they” to establish common ground with everyone. The mood set is rather an encouraging one.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

“Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.”

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

“Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me.” 112

In the first beatitude:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” 113

Jesus established a feeling of hope and confidence for those that have been burdened down with life’s experiences. The reversal of the whole idea of common assumptions and standards are presented early throughout the beatitudes. This beatitude stressed that the kingdom of heaven belonged to those who were suffering under the domination and repression of other men, and those who had lost hope in a Messiah. Jesus was most likely talking to the common Jew and those non-Jews in similar circumstances. This beatitude probably alienated the Romans who were usually the dominators and the Pharisees who were the repressors.

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112 Matt. 5:3-11.

113 Matt. 5:3.

“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” 114

Again, Jesus in this beatitude offers comfort to those Jews and non-Jews in mournful circumstances. He reiterates the fact that happiness will come to those in this state of circumstances. There is no direct explanation to the why of these assumptions, which causes a feeling of curiosity and interest.

“Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.” 115

The emphasis here is not on strength and might, but an opposite qualities when man seeks to rule over others. Jesus strikes out against the theory that might well dominate other men’s minds. The example obviously implied was Rome’s inability to change the minds of the Jews in regard to the values and life of the Roman. Jesus does not explain this but leaves the listener still in the air.

“Blessed are those who seek after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” 116

The statement here can be understood as common ground established with the Pharisees. The Pharisees prided themselves in this practice in life by spending their time constantly in the temple for righteousness’ sake. However, the righteousness that Christ means is completely different, which he supports through the main portion of his Sermon. It can be assumed, though, at this point, that the Pharisees felt good about what Jesus had just said here.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” 117

Mercy was seemingly a forgotten attribute during this historical era of Palestine. The Pharisees showed no mercy for the common people in accordance with their interpretation of the Old Testament law, and the Romans by no means showed mercy to the conquered Jew. Taxes were high, and reprisals were met sometimes with the slaughter of many innocent lives. The Zealots certainly did not advocate mercy, and their tactics were much like those of the Romans. The common Jew found mercy difficult to accept since their hatred of the Roman was built in by the treatment the Romans initiated toward them. Consequently, this statement might have been passed over in the minds of the major part of the Jews that were listening to the Sermon.

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114 Matt. 5:4

115 Matt. 5:5.

116 Matt. 5:6.

117 Matt. 5:7.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” 118

The Pharisees probably gloated upon the delivery of this statement. The Pharisees thought that the pure in heart were those that sacrificed by spending long hours in prayer, those that made animal sacrifices to God and those that attended all the religious ceremonies, especially the once-a-year Passover ceremony at Jerusalem. The other non-Jewish groups, like the Gentiles and the Romans, could hardly identify with what Christ said here, for Jesus does not yet explain his interpretation. As a result, the only answer that could be derived was the example of the Pharisees as to what constituted being pure in heart. The Essenes related to this in a sense, for they spent their time in solitude of prayer and fasting. There was also a mood of less optimism communicated to the common Jew here, especially in comparison to what the other beatitudes have described, with the exception of the one on righteousness.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” 119

The Roman portion of the audience was probably well pleased to hear this, since his rule advocated for the Jew a peaceful subservient role. As long as there was peace, Palestine would be a prosperous and valuable province. The Zealots were the disappointed ones, since they wanted a military revolution. Jesus probably destroyed their hopes for himself becoming their military leader. The common Jew probably regarded his rulers as being active peacemakers, and therefore, would have had little feeling of involvement with peacemaking; however, since the common Jews were primarily a peaceful, workaday people, they could have conceived of themselves as peacemakers.

“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” 120

Jesus attracted two groups in this statement, the Pharisees and the common Jews. The Pharisee could relate in the sense that he felt persecuted by the Roman's takeover of the government, which eliminated the rule of the theocracy. The theocracy, according to the Pharisee, was the established rule of God for the Jewish people. Consequently, this Roman takeover put the high priest in a subservient role.

The common Jew also felt persecuted, for him the Jewish race was the chosen race of God, and it was this fact that held him to his hopes and beliefs, regardless of the hardships and trials inflicted upon him by the Romans. Had he been more pliable in his beliefs and tolerant of the Roman, taxes and persecution might have been eased a great deal. During Herod the Great's term of leadership, Palestine was left alone due to his strong and prosperous methods. The conquering Roman was not as oppressive then as he was in the years that followed Herod's death.

118 Matt. 5:8

119 Matt. 5:9.

120 Matt. 5:10.

But after Herod's death, Rome's rule dealt directly with the occupation of Palestine. The Romans tried to incorporate Emperor worship which caused much bloodshed and reaction from the Jews. The Jews would not tolerate any belief but their own, and thusly, were punished many times by the Romans in different ways, as for example, by the payment of high taxes. Jesus' appeal in this statement, then, was for the common Jew, and he also reaffirmed his belief and a support for the Jewish God.

“Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” 121

This statement transcends into the nature in which his message might be taken. Jesus used the verb “persecute” again which leads to a unity with the last statement, but this time with a different purpose. Jesus evidently was informing his already persecuted audience that his message would not free them anymore than their recent past had freed them. Jesus does not indicate that the response will be from the same people, the non-Jews, but only that the response will be on the same scale. He follows this with a religious comparison of his words with those of the prophets. The prophets were highly sacred men to the Jews, and yet Jesus indirectly compares his message with that of the ancient prophets. The Pharisees probably became very alarmed at this comparison, but to the common Jew this bold speaking probably had a strong appeal, since they had preconceived notions that he might be the Messiah.

Before moving into the polemic part of his Sermon, Jesus continues to draw interest through the usage of allegorical similitude and metonymy, which will be explained more fully in the later study of stylistic devices on this section. In these following illustrations, Jesus explains what he expects a Jew to be like in relation to the world, and the importance he attached to this relationship.

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing any more, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck measure, but on the lamp stand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before man in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” 122

Jesus referred to these people as being salt, which was a preservative and a spice used to flavor food. The people, who were the peacemakers, the gentle, the merciful, the pure in heart, etc., would be the preservative factors that would keep the world intact. It would be through their lives that others would be flavored with a degree of concern of for their fellow man. But Jesus goes on to mention what happens to the salt if it loses its flavor.

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121 Matt. 5:11-12.

122 Matt. 5:13-16.

Most likely Jesus was referring to the Jews here, because through their religion and law they were supposed to be concerned about man, but due to the emphasis on keeping minor abstract laws, which in the final process made them alienated from those who were not Jews, they lost their savor. He also referred to “your Father who is in heaven,”<sup>123</sup> which referred directly to the Jewish religion.

In using the term “light,” the same purpose is reiterated as was used with the term “salt.” The use of the word “peck measure” was a method of measuring farm products, and Jesus emphasizes how this light cannot be put under a measurement or under a law. The light that the Jews supposedly claimed to have from God became humanized into a system of “do’s” and “don’ts” with a righteousness value put on by the Pharisees. Jesus explained how this covers light rather than shows it.

Stylistic devices. In this introduction, Jesus must have established an instant identify with the major portion of the audience, most of whom were “have-nots” rather than “haves.” By claiming that the “poor in spirit” and “those that mourn” would be the happiest, certainly enhanced the attention and interest of the downtrodden common Jew.<sup>124</sup> In character, the so-called “haves” would not have to be convinced of happiness, but Jesus presents happiness for those who have not the riches and securities of life. In a sense, if there were any “haves” attending the Sermon, they might have been disturbed by these views. The Pharisees and the more well-off Greeks would best represent those who had the conveniences which classes them as the “haves.”

Jesus appealed to hope and confidence in his first two statements to the “poor in spirit,” and to “those that mourn.” The optimism engendered by his words probably was great relief to them in contrast to the negative preaching by the Pharisees to which they were accustomed. The tone of optimism seemed to be evident especially when he claimed that they would be comforted.

The appeal that Jesus used in the introduction is an emotional one. He did not support many of the statements that he made, but he did build up his audience by reversing the commonly accepted standards of riches and prosperity to happiness and the good life. He promised the “have-nots” all the things that the Pharisees had regarded as their heritage, like the kingdom of God, heaven, righteousness, etc. Jesus sought to build upon the ethos of his audience, especially when he went into his series of metaphors, which made these dejected people the salt of the earth.

Considering language as an appeal factor, Jesus used imagery that was well known to the life of the common Jew. The terms “thirst,” “hunger,” “salt” and “light” exemplify this common language. Jesus did not merely use these terms independent within themselves, he used them allegorically in a similitude. That is, when Jesus was communicating his message in one allegory on the Jew being the salt of the earth, he then followed it with another on the Jew being the light of earth which illustrated the same through but with two allegories of different imagery. This was good language usage, because the point that Jesus was making was re-emphasized in two successive illustrations. Another form of language that Jesus incorporated within the introduction was the device of metonymy. An example of this followed Jesus’ allegorical similitude on the Jew being the salt and light of the earth.

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<sup>123</sup> Matt. 5:16.

<sup>124</sup> Roger L. Shinn, The Sermon on the Mount (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), pg. 13.

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” 125

Metonymy is the use of one term for that of another to which some logical relation has already been indicated. The main portion of the syntax used in this section was basically simple and short, with no real complexity. The beatitudes exemplify this type of plain and uncomplicated structure.

The transitions that were used could follow a parallel structure as the beatitudes were given. Each sentence started with the epanaphoraic method of repetitiveness like, “Blessed are,” etc. The best transition came when Jesus talked about those who would be “persecuted for righteousness sake” to the following statement with the emphasis on persecution of what Jesus was going to teach. The transition is good since these two statements are linked with the parallel beginnings and with the term “persecute.”

“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me.” 126

The resource material that Jesus used was not entirely his own. As described earlier, Jesus had a great knowledge of the Old Testament. In the portion on “those that mourn,” his source came from one of his most quoted books, the book of Isaiah.

...He sent me to bind up and heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the physical and spiritual captives, and the opening of the prison and of the eyes to those who are bound! To proclaim the acceptance year of the Lord—the year for His favor—and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; 127

When Jesus mentioned the gentle and their inheritance of the earth, he was not only giving expression to his own feeling of humility. His reference came from the book of Psalms.

But the meek in the end shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. 128

A couple of the other beatitudes also had their origin in the Old Testament. A primary reason why Jesus’ teaching could not be disproved by the Pharisees was because most of his ideas came from the Old Testament. He simply put them in context with the message.

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125 Matt. 5:16.

126 Matt. 5:10-11.

127 Lockman Foundation, The Amplified Bible (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965), Isaiah 61:1-2.

128 Psalms 37:11. (The Amplified Bible)



The overall effect of the introduction on the audience probably led to the general feeling of optimism due to common language, use of scripture, and emphasis of message centered toward the “have-nots.” On the other hand, although it was not designed to be provocative, it stirred mixed feelings in the audience. The Pharisees and Essenes were in anticipation of how Jesus would back many of the beatitudes. The Romans were probably well pleased, since Christ seemingly was not strumming up military revolution. The Zealots were probably disappointed due to Christ’s statement on peace. The non-Jews or Gentiles were probably amazed at how Christ reversed the common standards for happiness.

Throughout the introduction, Jesus presented a reversal of commonly accepted standards for happiness in life as well as to those who would experience God. Jesus also talked about righteousness in the introduction, which relates to the first topic of the main theme. In the transition between the introduction and the main theme, Jesus explains this more accurately when he mentions that the law of the Jew was true and good, but he is exposing the false motivation sometimes put behind following it. His language is strong and accusative, especially when he criticizes the righteousness of the Pharisees and Scribes. The transition very effectively sets up what Jesus means by his interpretation of following the law.

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. “Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.” 129

### First Main Theme

Relating message to the audience. Jesus begins his first arguments with the use of Old Testament scripture, and he takes his source here from one of the Ten Commandments which were the foundation of the whole Jewish law. 130

“You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder;’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court;’ but I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, ‘Raca,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the hell of fire.” 131

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129 Matt. 5:17-20.

130 Exodus 20:13. (The Amplified Bible)

131 Matt. 5:21-22.

Jesus takes the old commandment law, but in context to its possible root meaning. Jesus emphasized the comparative anger that is present in a man's mind whether or not he commits an act responsive to that anger. The real problem is the anger, and the answer was not just repression of doing some overt act in order to stay within the righteousness of God. Jesus does not leave this merely as a good point to ponder. He uses an example of what one should do in a similar situation:

“If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way, first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

“Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way; in order that your opponent may not deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.

“Truly I say to you, you shall not come out of there, until you have paid up the last cent.” 132

Jesus, in this illustration, suggests a great deal of good psychology. Instead of holding anger in one's heart for another, it would be best to absolve it instead of letting it well up internally. By letting it go, the actual act of murder may occur due to the repression. The Pharisees did not advocate this, for all that counted was whether a person committed the act of murder. They took the law literally, which sometimes made the law unbearable. To the common Jew, this advice probably had good appeal, since his problems were numerous especially with his fellow Jew, who was going through the same pressures and frustrating experiences. Tempers were most likely short, and to hide behind a literal interpretation of the law on murder did not always suffice under the circumstances. The Zealots in the audience would have found it hard to follow this example, since they did not even follow the Commandment. The non-Jewish portion including the Romans could have related to what Jesus said here, since actual murder was not lawful in their culture.

After Jesus finished with this point, he moved directly into the next point with the same beginning and structure.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY;’ but I say to you, that every one who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.” 133

Jesus mentions another one of the Ten Commandments, and he again goes to the root, but this time his application of the old law includes fornication due to the implications of the world “lust.” His instruction, which is metaphorical in form, explains what one must do in order to conquer the true meaning of this law.

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132 Matt. 5:23-26.

133 Matt. 5:27-28.

“And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. “And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell.” 134

Through these two metaphors, Christ tried to illustrate the importance of what one must do in order to live without lust or promiscuity for any person other than one's own marriage partner, which according to Jesus is just as bad as the actual act of adultery. In order to live without such a temptation, the only answer would be the actual removal of the temptation regardless of the sacrifice, which again follows his theory of anti-repression. The general audience reaction to this statement might not have been favorable. Whether the individual in the audience was a Jew or not, lust could be a convicting flaw applied to everyone.

“And it was said, ‘WHOEVER DIVORCES HIS WIFE, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DISMISSAL;’ but I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except for the cause of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” 135

The transition to this statement is linked with the term “adultery.” Except in this usage, Jesus describes a higher degree of morals than was practiced by the Jews. According to the history of the Jew, more than one wife was allowed, but as times progressed, one wife was the law. However, this did not evidently affect the laxity toward legal divorce, which in a sense, made it legal to gradually have more than one wife, but only one at a time.

Jesus does not follow up with any illustration, but leaves this statement to support itself. The general reaction again would not be too optimistic. Jesus seems to be binding his audience to an even harsher set of rules in context with what has been presented thus far.

The transition to his next statement of advice does not really relate with the last. Jesus talks about the validity and trust of one's word. According to Jesus' observance, men should not have to convince others of the truth and honesty which their lives should openly characterize. A person's word should be sufficient proof, in accordance with his values, and if he has to prove it by making oaths, then there is something wrong with his character:

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134 Matt. 5:29-30.

135 Matt. 5:31-32.

“Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.’ “But I say to you, make no oath at all; either by heaven for it is THE THRONE OF GOD; or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. “Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. “But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no;’ and anything beyond these is of evil.” 136

In the next topic, Jesus brings about some advice that is even harder to apply for the Jews than those teachings previously advocated about lust and divorce. The hatred toward the Romans was bitter and not without cause, and yet Jesus advocates the opposite response. Again, he uses a “reversal philosophy” as exemplified in the beatitudes. He first brings out what was given in the book of Exodus “about an eye for an eye” but he rejects this idea; 137 instead he believes one should return hatred with love. He further illustrated this by an example which directly followed his opening statement on this idea.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.’ “But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. “And if any one wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. “And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two. “Give to him who asks of you and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.” 138

Although this advice may have been difficult to accept, Jesus does not leave it alone even at this point. He has started something here, which makes the next statements the crux of the first portion of this Sermon.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR, AND HATE YOUR ENEMY.’ “But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you; in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. “For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same? “And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” 139

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136 Matt. 5:33-37.

137 Exodus 21:24.

138 Matt. 5:38-42.

139 Matt. 5:43-48.

The real polemic portion of the Sermon is centered in these verses. Jesus advocates not only loving one's friends, for that is what every man can easily do, but to love one's enemies. He went on to explain how God does not overtly show goodness to the righteous, because they are dedicated to God, and so they should not be motivated by an immediate, earthly reward for their righteousness. Jesus really seems to try and communicate a de-emphasis on the self here, and a concern for others, even one's enemies. The man who could accomplish this task in his life, would indeed be unique, and as Christ put it:

"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." 140

Stylistic devices. The tone of the address in this first section of Jesus' Sermon differed a great deal from the introduction. There was much less optimism, and a more serious, didactical tone. His presentation was direct and to the point, and as in the introduction, he probably kept the attention of his audience due to his interpretation of the Jewish law. An example of this was when Jesus referred to the "eye for an eye" concept with love as revenge to one's enemies.

The appeals that Jesus used were instructional for the most part. He would give his interpretation of an accepted law, followed by an example of this was when Jesus was explaining the meaning of the commandment on murder, which was followed by the incident of the man at the altar. The only other appeal was the logical appeal that Jesus used when he was trying to emphasize standard of love as the answer to hatred.

"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 141

The language that Jesus used was a consistent appeal and a common ground factor, which he used throughout each statement. In the first statement, for example, the terms "ancients" and "Raca" were in good usage. "Ancients" referred to the makers of the law, the forefathers of the Jewish people. "Raca" was an Aramaic term which meant "good-for-nothing." Aramaic was not an uncommon tongue to the Jews; in fact, it is believed that Jesus spoke in this tongue while delivering this speech. 142 In this first statement, Jesus used strong language along with the common ground terms. He referred to a person as a "fool" and that his reward would be a "hell of fire" for the penalty of his anger toward "his brother." Another common ground factor was Christ's example of the man at the altar with an offering. This was easy to relate to the Jew since his entire religious life was centered around this type of religious activity.

In the second statement, when Jesus was trying to illustrate how one must deal with lust, terms like "eye" and "hand" were used, which could easily be identified since they were members of the anatomy. Further vivid language was communicated with Jesus explaining about the making of vows.

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140 Matt. 5:48.

141 Matt. 5:46-47.

142 Davies, The Sermon on the Mount, p. 128.

“But I say to you, make no oath at all; either by heaven, for it is THE THRONE OF GOD; or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet...”<sup>143</sup>

“Footstool of His feet” was certainly a well used metaphor since furniture was not an uncommon feature to those who lived in the villages in Palestine. Jesus’ usage of this particular metaphoric item probably came from the influence of his life as a craftsman’s son. Immediately following this metaphor, an allegory was used to establish the futile attempts to cover up one’s nature with promises of new oaths.

“Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair black or white.” <sup>144</sup>

In reference to Jesus’ reaction to the Old Testament idea of “an eye for an eye,” the rejection of this revengeful attitude is countered the allegorical statement:

...whoever slaps you on your right cheek; turn to him the other also. <sup>145</sup>

Two more allegorical statements immediately follow, which illustrates even more what Jesus was trying to get across in reference to turning the other cheek.

“And if any one wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two.”  
<sup>146</sup>

Jesus also sticks with his common, practical, everyday imagery like shirt, coat, and mile. The usage of the term “miles” was especially good since the mode of transportation was walking for most of the Jews in Palestine.

The last part of this first portion of the Sermon is represented by one last metaphor and a few terms like “sun” and “rain” which have definite characteristic tones. In describing the attitude of God and his view of the unrighteous and the righteous, he uses the following metaphor:

...for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the righteous. <sup>147</sup>

The characteristic terms used in this last section were “tax-gatherers” and “Gentiles,” and in both instances these terms were used to illustrate the fact that love should not be categorized:

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<sup>143</sup> Matt. 5:34-35.

<sup>144</sup> Matt. 5:36.

<sup>145</sup> Matt. 5:39.

<sup>146</sup> Matt. 5:40-41.

<sup>147</sup> Matt. 5:45.

“For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?” 148

The Jews hated the tax-gatherers because of the demand they made on their livelihood. The Gentile was looked down upon because the Jew considered him to be a pagan. Consequently, these terms were quite relevant for stressing the negative.

The structure of this first part followed a form of parallel construction, which makes the transition from point to point a clear-cut method of presenting a series of different thoughts.

“You have heard that the ancients were told...but I say to you...149

“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY;’ but I say to you...” 150

“And it was said, ‘WHOEVER DIVORCES HIS WIFE...but I say to you...” 151

This type of construction continues throughout, and the progression of thought is in a topical presentation.

Jesus’ use of resource material came basically from the Old Testament. When he talked about murder and adultery, his source was the Ten Commandments which came out of the book of Exodus.<sup>152</sup> He did not reject these Jewish laws, he simply took them to their root of meaning. The only place where he rejected a scripture out of the Old Testament was when he stated:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.’ “But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.”  
153

But his teaching was not entirely devoid of the old teachings. The source that served as Christ’s support for his reversal came from the book of Leviticus.

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148 Matt. 5:46-57.

149 Matt. 5:21.

150 Matt. 5:27.

151 Matt. 5:31.

152 Exodus 20:12-23. (The Amplified Bible)

153 Matt. 5:38-39.

You shall not take revenge or bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself...154

The overall picture that Christ tried to convey in this first section of teaching was the falsity of following only the letter of the Old Testament law. He advocated to the Jew that the root of the law was just as binding as the law itself. Jesus more or less attacked the motivations of the Pharisees and those who believed that living the law literally would make them righteous unto God, or loving to their fellow man. After Jesus commented on these commandments of the law, he illustrated indirectly that love and concern for mankind were the attributes which would ultimately lead to righteousness in the eyes of God.

### Second Main Theme

Relating message to the audience. The next section of Christ's Sermon deals more specifically with this false righteousness that was derived from taking the law literally.

"BEWARE of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. "When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. "But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing; that your alms may be secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you." "And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

"But you, when you pray, GO INTO YOUR INNER ROOM, AND WHEN YOU HAVE SHUT YOUR DOOR, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.

"Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him.155

When Jesus began by criticizing the Jews for practicing their righteousness before other men, this seemingly might have been contradictory to what he advocated in the introduction concerning being the "light of the world." But Jesus, once again, offers a deeper interpretation by qualifying the real motivation that should be present when doing a good work. Jesus was involved in attacking the wrong motivations behind being the "light of the world" in this section, whereas, in the introduction, he simply stated that men's good works should glorify God and exemplify selflessness in one's good works.

In this section, Jesus does not use an optimistic tone, for his tone is rather stern, but his emphasis is still on love. The beginning word "BEWARE," indicated the attitude evoked. He backed up his opening statement by an example of a situation involving alms-giving. Almsgiving was one method of offering which was delegated to the poor.

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154 Leviticus 19:18.

155 Matt. 6:1-8.



As a Jew gave alms, he demonstrated his care for his fellow man. Another example that followed alms-giving was that of one's demonstration of Prayer. Prayer was another way of showing one's closeness to God. The Pharisees prided themselves in the many hours they spent in the temple in prayer. Jesus criticized each of these practices if they were done openly for the praise from men. The best example of this came in the second verse of alms-giving.

“When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men...”<sup>156</sup>

The point that Jesus was trying to make was that righteousness should not be motivated toward the praise of other men. Acts like alms-giving and prayer should be a response to God alone. And if the Jew was concerned with his own self motivations, he would lose the meaning of love, which this act was supposed to display.

The Pharisees most likely disclaimed this part of Jesus' teaching, since much of the righteousness that they prided themselves with came from their long hours spent in the temple. The common Jew was probably amazed due to the emphasis not made on works, but rather with one's true motivation behind doing an act considered righteous. The non-Jew and Roman were also likely to be taken aback by this motivational message since their attitudes toward goodness were built on a system of performing acts to prove one's character and worth. The Zealots were probably unconcerned here as well as throughout the rest of the speech. Jesus alienated their hopes and interest when he mentioned his positive attitude toward peacemakers in the introduction, and his emphasis on love toward one's enemies in the last part of the first section.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” <sup>157</sup>

“But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you; <sup>158</sup>

After Jesus commented on the sometimes meaningless repetition of prayer in the last illustration pointed mainly at the Pharisees, Jesus gave an example of a prayer.

“Pray, then, in this way:

‘Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done. On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.’ <sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Matt. 6:2.

<sup>157</sup> Matt. 5:9.

<sup>158</sup> Matt. 5:44.

<sup>159</sup> Matt. 6:9-13.

He made it plain in the prayer that the kingdom of God would come, and because of this God's will would be accomplished. Also, mentioning that God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven draws attention to life improvement in the present world. Asking for daily bread represented a tone that was consistent throughout the whole Sermon, that being a de-emphasis on material values. The beatitudes exemplified this in explaining what constituted a real inner happiness. By praying only for daily bread, one was not to be concerned with anything more than needed to sustain life. Jesus explains what he means by forgiving one's debts in the verses that follow the prayer:

“For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. “But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” 160

Not only does this explain what Jesus meant in reference to forgiving one's debts, but it also is consistent with the beatitude on mercy.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” 161

Jesus continued his attacks on falsely motivated righteousness right after he gave his prayer.

“And whenever you fast, do not put a gloomy face as the hypocrites do; for they neglect their appearance in order to be seen fasting by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face; so that you may not be seen fasting by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.” 162

Fasting was another religious act that was correlated with praying. To fast in the religious sense, one would go without food for a period of time order to make his praying of the most serious nature. Of course, a person who had not eaten for a few days would show signs of his sacrifice for God, but Jesus disturbed by the fact that many Jews went around making their fast known so that they would be praised by men.

Jesus next mentioned two short allegorical stories showing where man's values should lie.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your

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160 Matt. 6:14-15.

161 Matt. 5:7.

162 Matt. 6:16-18.

heart be also. The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! 163

By mentioning treasures, Christ was not only referring to money, but to the acts that would take the Jews away from their self-centered relationship with God and man. Living by the letter of the law and doing religious acts for the wrong reasons were two of those acts.

In the next statement, Jesus points out this fact more clearly.

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon.”<sup>164</sup>

Jesus does not offer a compromise between the two, it is an either/or situation. He goes on to explain that man’s anxious thoughts and motivations should first and only be in regard to God. All this is in context with what has already been brought out in the Sermon about being one with God, and that is having love for one’s fellow man instead of keeping the letter of the law.

“For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing? “Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? “And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life’s span? “And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. “But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith? “Do not be anxious then, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or, ‘What shall we drink?’ or, ‘With what shall we clothe ourselves?’ “For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. “But seek first His kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. “Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”<sup>165</sup>

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163 Matt. 6:19-23.

164 Matt. 6:24.

165 Matt. 6:25-34.

There is a relaxing and freeing tone in these last few statements especially aimed at the common Jew and at those who were poor. The emphasis was directed toward independence of the material things in life. The audience reaction to this probably stayed consistently the same, with the positive response coming for the common Jew.

The Pharisees probably resented Christ's fasting example, since they were the principle people about whom he was talking. When Jesus commented on the idea of storing treasures on earth, this could have related to the Romans negatively, since their lives were built around monetary values. It was the poor, common Jew who had none of the material luxuries or the time to spend in prayer, as opposed to the Pharisees who had them. And because of this, the true relationship between the Jew and the Pharisee could be seen most positively.

Stylistic devices. When Jesus began with his words "BEWARE of practicing your righteousness... 166 at the beginning of this last section, a definite tone was set. The tone was a rather cautious one, but also an instructional one. Many of his statements sought to gain immediate attention, for example: "But you, when you pray..." 167 Jesus did not waste time with indirect wording, and his presentation always seemed serious and to the point. He often backed up statements with allegories and metaphoric language, but he never relied solely upon them except in the end when he was speaking of laying up one's treasures on earth.

The appeals that Jesus used in this last section were logical, but also emotional, especially in the portion where he talked about being anxious over nothing except for the kingdom of God. The logical appeal was used in a deductive manner. He would make a statement such as the following:

"BEWARE of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven."  
168

He would then support his statement with an example of a situation such as the giving of alms, as he did in the foregoing example. After presenting his prayer, he explained the part about forgiving one's debtors, directly following the end of the prayer. When giving his allegorical story on laying up one's treasures on earth, he used the rest of the section to describe why this was not acceptable or wise. The emotional appeal occurred when Jesus began to promise them that their needs would be taken care of by God, and that there was no longer anything to be anxious or concerned about in regard to this matter.

Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or, 'What shall we drink?' or, 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' "For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. "But seek first His kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." 169

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166 Matt. 6:1.

167 Matt. 6:6.

168 Matt. 6:1.

169 Matt. 6:31-33.

The only possible answer that Jesus gave to support this promise, was his examples concerning the way God has taken care of the birds, and the natural way God clothed the lilies. There is no possible logic in these examples from an objective point of view, but Jesus was not trying to use a logical appeal. The inspirational appeal seems to be his purpose; that is, if it is assumed that one believed that God created the earth, as the Jew did, and that God took care of its elements, man naturally would be included.

The language that Christ used was another appeal and through Jesus' effective use of common terms he was able to get much of his message across vividly in this section to his basically uneducated audience. The words "trumpet" and "alms" were the first two words that appeared. Trumpet was a musical instrument that was used many times as a signal to start a battle. In the perilous days in which Jesus preached, this instrument was probably heard quite often. Alms were tribute given to the poor and the Jews were classified as poor for the most part. Both terms were common to the whole audience. Symbolism was very much a part of Jesus' presentation.

"But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing;" 170

In this portion, Jesus refers to the human anatomy to express the meaning he intended.

In the prayer, Jesus used a term that might have been misinterpreted had he not explained his meaning. The term "debts" which Jesus meant as moral transgressions referred to borrowed money which probably had more vivid appeal than transgressions to the poor Jew who had many debts.

When Jesus began to bring out his answer about what real righteousness demanded, he used a short allegorical example filled with plain imagery.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; "The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon." 171

Treasures meant in this case worldly possession, which according to the following usage of the terms, "moth," "rust," and "thieves" would only be temporal. All three terms carried with them a negative meaning in response to their usage in this short allegory. Each term suggested its own form of destruction and could easily be identified with by the entire audience, because all three were commonly understood words. Jesus also used, for symbolic effect, the words "eye" and "body." "Mammon" was another symbolic term commonly used in those days to refer to riches.

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170 Matt. 6:3.

171 Matt. 6:19-24.

Jesus continued in his usage of vivid language by the use of analogy. He compared the care that God had taken of birds and lilies with the care he would take of the Jew.

“Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? “And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life’s span? “And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. “But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith?” 172

The terms “birds,” “lilies,” “barns,” and “grass” were all part of the outdoors which related well with the common Jew, since his livelihood came from the land. The term “cubit” was a well-recognized term, for this was an ancient way of measurement which was based on the length of the forearm. The poor Jew probably used this system of measurement quite often, since his ways were more primitive than the city dweller or the advanced Roman and Greek. Solomon was a Biblical figure with which all the Jews were religiously and historically acquainted. He was one of the more outstanding Kings in Jewish history.

The structure of this section does not follow parallel form as did the previous section. The topical sequence disappears, and the transitions ink illustration to illustration. This is due to Christ’s teaching on the ramification of one theme, that theme being the motivations underlying religious acts.

### Third Main Theme and Summary

Relating message to the audience. The third main theme, like the first two, illustrates further the need for a good motivation, but it deal instructionally with the formation of judgments. The following section deals with relating to others and making value judgments, accordingly. The beginning of the section starts off with the negative which sets off the tonal mood.

“Do not judge lest you be judged yourselves. “For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it shall be measured to you. “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? “Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye; and then you will see clearly enough to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.” 173

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172 Matt. 6:26-30.

173 Matt. 7:1-5.

As can be concluded, Jesus used illustration to show that hypocrisy occurs when the Jew finds faults in others, while having an abundance of his own faults. Jesus was particularly referring to the Pharisees in this beginning statement. It was their nature to always look at the faults in the common Jew, while in effect their lives were really no better. Jesus brought out this fact early in the Sermon, during the transition from the introduction to the main theme.

“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.” 174

Due to the teaching and example of the Pharisee, judging others could not help but influence the attitude of the common Jew toward his brother. Consequently, to a lesser degree this judging also applied to them. The audience response at this point probably remained consistent. The Pharisees reacted negatively in accordance with what had already been said about them. The common Jew had the most positive attitude, since he did not relish the judgmental criticism put upon him by the Pharisees.

After Jesus finished the log-speck illustration, he went on to warn the potentially righteous person against giving his valuable advice to those unable to receive it and to utilize it:

“Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.” 175

Jesus follows this with some more advice with regard to the Jew who has no more logs with which to contend in his life. The advice advocates an attitude of faith toward God who will take care of one's needs.

“Ask and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. “For every one who asks receives; and he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks it shall be opened. “Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone? “Or is he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!” 176

With an understanding of God's care for each individual follower, the Jew would certainly acquire the attitude that God calls for. This is why Jesus concluded with the following:

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174 Matt. 5:20.

175 Matt. 7:6.

176 Matt. 7:7-11.

“Therefore whatever you want others to do for you, do so for them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.” 177

Jesus’ statement at this point is consistent with the beginning statement of the Sermon.

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophet; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.” 178

The next statement deals with false teachings and their advocates. Jesus begins with a short allegory with the symbolism of the narrow and wide way which shows a comparison between their way and the way of truth, which Jesus advocates as love and brotherhood. He then makes his accusation to these false prophets and continues with the use of further allegory to support his statement:

“Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it.” For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that lead to life, and few are those who find it. “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. “You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? “Even so every good tree bears good fruit; but the rotten tree bears bad fruit. “A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree produce good fruit. “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down, and thrown into the fire. “So then, you will know them by their fruits.” 179

In the Sermon’s summary, Jesus did not bring out all the high points of his Sermon, but he seemed to be more concerned with building up the authority of himself and the validity of his advice. He draws a close identity with himself and God and he directly points out that his words are from God:

“Not every one who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father, who is in heaven. “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’ “Therefore every one who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall; for it had been founded upon the rock;

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177 Matt. 7:12.

178 Matt. 5:17.

179 Matt. 7:13-20.



“And every one who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. “And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall.” 180

Parts of the audience reaction to the entire third section, including the summary, are easy to conclude. It is obvious that the Pharisee and those who supported the high priests reacted negatively as they did throughout the entire Sermon. When Jesus dwelled on the teachings of the false-prophets and their bad fruits, this was a final clincher. And the summary, in which Christ claimed his word as being authority, definitely disturbed the ego of the Pharisee. The common Jew did not respond negatively to the words of Christ, mainly because they were in support of him. If the common Jew accepted the words as he did in the first, second and third portions of the Sermon, then he would be swayed to accept Christ as an authority as he presented himself in the summary. If there was any hesitancy, the claims of Christ in the summary would definitely cause a reaction one way or another. The non-Jew probably was amazed at the wisdom and boldness of Christ. The use of the pronoun “they” and “you” was good in the sense that everyone could feel included. The non-Jew probably related to Jesus’ teaching, because of its common sense. The only place where a certain part of the audience might not have agreed was when Jesus negatively used the term “Gentile,” and in the summary where he claimed his words to be in identity with God.

Stylistic devices. The tone of this third section was a serious one, as were the preceding two sections. With every serious question that Jesus raised, there was an answer which kept this section, as the others, in a balance.

The appeals that Jesus used in this last section were twofold: the ethos appeal which was a character build-up, and the logical appeal. The ethos appeal entered the Sermon at the very end. Jesus, in this approach, tried to build up his words as authority.

“Therefore every one who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock; “ 181

The logical followed the deductive approach, when Jesus started out with his general statement:

“Do not judge lest you be judged yourselves. “For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it shall be measured to you.” 182

He then proceeded to back up this statement with a short hyperbolic allegory filled with symbolic imagery. The terms “speck” and “log” in regard to blocking one’s vision on the righteous life were good because they related well to the Jewish people, as well a to the non-Jews. Traveling across Palestine was neither an easy nor an unweathered task. Sand storms were frequent, and so the phrase” speck in one’s eye” had a great deal of

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180 Matt. 7:21-27.

181 Matt. 7:24.

182 Matt. 7:1-2.

relevance. Log, on the other hand, was timber, with which the farmers build their houses, or furniture, and in which the fishermen built their ships. Logs were used to make fires in the open air during one's travels. Consequently, the term "log" had a high degree of relevance and identity.

"And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" 183

The rest of Jesus' supporting statements follow the structure of one allegory after another. The next one in sequence came as Jesus related his warning to the Jew pertaining to the departure of his new-found truths:

"Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces." 184

The term "dogs" was certainly common to the farmer and the shepherd. These people needed dogs to protect their livestock and yet to be called a dog had a negative connotation. Swine related more closely to the farmer, for it was a domestic hog. A swine was a sloppy animal, and the negative connotation used here is quite emphatic. Pearls, of course, were rare gems, which were valued as costly possessions. The transport of these gems by camel caravans was common throughout Palestine.

The next allegory in this section was used by Jesus as he tried to visualize to the Jew the absurdity of God not taking care of his own.

"Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" 185

Loaf, meaning bread, certainly was relevant to the Jew, since this was sometimes his only food. Stone was a common part of Palestine's landscape, and it was out of stone that the Jews built walls, wells, and even their houses and furniture, when wood was scarce. The use of the term "fish" probably related to the poor Jewish fisherman in the audience. All three terms had practical appeal since they dwelt with the Jews' common language.

In relating the inconveniences that sometimes accompanies Jesus' message on love, he uses the term "gate" which again related to the language of the poor Jew who used fences and gates in order to protect his livestock.

"Enter by the narrow gate for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it.

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183 Matt. 7:3.

184 Matt. 7:6.

185 Matt. 7:9-11.

“For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.” 186

In trying to communicate being led astray from the true teachings of God, Jesus again used allegory and imagery that was palatable to the common Jew.

“Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. “You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? “Even so every good tree bears good fruit; but the rotten tree bears bad fruit.” 187

“Sheep’s clothing” and “ravenous wolves” were terms that applied to the shepherd. The biggest problem to his trade was keeping the wolves from taking his sheep. To the farmer, the terms “fruits”—grapes, thorn bushes, figs and thistles—applied. Grapes and figs were fruits which he worked to produce. Thorn bushes and thistles were unproductive farm growths; these plants had no value and sometimes hampered the growth of the good fruit vines. For the Jewish shepherd and farmer, these terms were easy to understand.

The last short allegory that Jesus used came during the summary. Jesus tried to communicate through this short symbolic statement the concreteness of his word through all manner of test.

and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall; for it had been founded upon the rock. 188

The terms “rain,” “floods,” “winds,” all refer to weather conditions with which the common Jew would be more concerned than anyone else. Bad weather, which is represented in these terms, would definitely affect the farmer, the shepherd, or the fisherman. These were constant problems that faced his livelihood along with all the others he was faced with like the Roman question and the judgment from the high priests.

The structure of this last section does not follow the parallel form as Jesus displayed through the first portion of his Sermon. This last section is filled with a series of allegories and metaphors which usually support one direct statement.

The transitions are clear-cut in this section. After a general statement and a series of examples, then there is another general statement and another series of examples. An example of this is Jesus’ general statement about practicing righteousness, followed by illustrations on alms-giving and prayer. After this, Jesus returned to another general statement on building up treasures on earth which was again backed up by symbolic illustrations.

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186 Matt. 7:13-14.

187 Matt. 7:15-17.

188 Matt. 7:25.

Jesus used only two sources in this part of the Sermon, one was the Law and Prophets at the end of his teaching and the other was the book of Psalms. 189

### Summary

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount was pervaded by the theme of love-motivation. This theme was delivered in three main divisions which were marked by three sub-themes: literal translation of the old laws; false righteousness; and judgment of others. These three themes were exposed and clarified through allegory and figurative language.

The audience, although it was comprised of both upper and lower socio-religious class, was approached by Christ on one level only. This level was a human one, completely devoid of class implication. The purpose behind his approach was to emphasize the fact that all human beings are given an equal chance to fulfill themselves in the eyes of God. His purpose was achieved as a result of the audience reaction: the upper classes were lowered by Christ's appraisal of their failures with regard to the valid execution of religious laws while the lower classes were elevated by Christ's encouragement. Hence, the members of the audience, whether consciously or not, in terms of reaction, all placed themselves on an equal level as receptors of Christ's works.

## Chapter V

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This analysis has been structured so as to emphasize three topical sections. The first section contains a descriptive analysis of the historical events which formed the scene of the times surrounding the life of Jesus. Political, social, and religious events have been discussed in relationship with Christ's life. At the end of this section, the attitudes of five different modes of people were covered in order to describe the audience which influences Jesus before the tie of his delivery of the Sermon on the Mount, and the possible audience which received that Sermon.

The second section includes a background study of the life of Christ. In this study, Christ's environmental influences were presented. These influences include his family life, a short synopsis of his ministry, and a conceptual analysis of the human, and rhetorical character he might have been.

The third section was the culmination of the first two sections. Here, a careful analysis of the actual audience-speaker situation was made utilizing the reactions affected by all factors of both Christ and his audience.

The conclusions drawn from this rhetorical analysis are as follows: Jesus accomplished an admirable and completely effective identity with this audience, although the audience consisted of several groups typifying differing life views. This accomplishment was made through the use of common language, the dealing with common problems, and approaching the audience on one level readily understandable to every individual within that audience.

The underlying message within the Sermon's structure called for constant love for one's fellow man. This love, in turn, provided the appeal for a worthy motivation for all acts of men. The motivation of love justified man's human being as he strove to fulfill himself in his earthly endeavors.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. illustrated this theme of Christ's even more so when addressed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, on August 16, 1967.

If you will let one be a preacher just a little bit: One night, a juror came to Jesus and he wanted to know what he could do to be saved. Jesus didn't get bogged down in the kind of isolated approach of what he shouldn't do. Jesus didn't say, "Now Nicodemus, you must stop lying." He didn't say, "Nicodemus, you must stop cheating, if you are doing that." He didn't say, "Nicodemus, you must not commit adultery." He didn't say, "Nicodemus, now you must stop drinking liquor, if you are doing that excessively." He said something altogether different, because Jesus realized something basic—that if a man will lie, he will steal. And if a man will steal, he will kill. So instead of just getting bogged down in one thing, Jesus looked at him and said, "Nicodemus, you must be born again." He said, in other words, "Your whole structure must be changed." 190

Through this message Jesus motivated the common Jew and those like him with encouragement and hope. The ultimate effect of Christ's approach equalized the audience in terms of reaction resulting from the one basic and universal aim of Christ, that being love.

The scene of the delivery and the manner of delivery were also decisive factors in the audience-Sermon identity. These factors were natural and relaxed. The Sermon called for a relaxation of binding laws and patterns of living. Presented to a temporarily relaxed audience, the Sermon was given in the context of rigorous sociological patterns which enabled it to achieve a full and forceful impact.

Thusly, Christ was able to transfer the focal point from himself as the speaker, to the inner selves of his audience. In so doing, he maintained a personal level of effectiveness throughout the entire Sermon on the Mount.

Because Jesus' theme of love was a universal one, applicable to all of mankind, and because his audience at the time of the Sermon was representative of certain types of people which can be found in any society at any time in history, leads to the work-ability of his theme for an audience of today. There are militants like the Zealot; there are escapists like the Essene; the ruling classes and the intelligentsia of our society can easily be equated with the Greeks and Romans; the Pharisee still exists today as the church-hypocrite; and the common Jew is the representative of the bulk of people who are frustratedly being pulled between the standards and pressures imposed on them by the previously mentioned groups.

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