



THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Prelude to Pentecost: God's Plan for a Transformed Heart and Life

Almighty God and Father,

You have given us every perfect gift. You have given us Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer, as the living manifestation of Your love, and You have given us the Holy Spirit as our constant friend and guide. Human words cannot express the love and blessings that You have showered on us, Your children. Send the Holy Spirit to lead us now, Father, as we study the Law of the New Covenant as Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount. We pray in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

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The words of the Prophet Jeremiah, 6th century BC:

"Look, the days are coming, Yahweh declares, when I shall make a New Covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah, but not like the Covenant I made with their ancestors the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of Egypt, a covenant which they broke, even though I was their Master, Yahweh declares. No, this is the covenant I shall make with the House of Israel when those days have come, Yahweh declares. Within them I shall plant my Law, writing it on their hearts. Then I shall be their God and they will be my people. There will be no further need for everyone to teach neighbor or brother, saying, 'Learn to know Yahweh!' No, they will all know me, from the least to the greatest, Yahweh declares, since I shall forgive their guilt and never more call their sin to mind."

[Jeremiah 31:31-34](#) [New Jerusalem Bible translation]

Note: Unless otherwise noted all Scripture passages used in this study will be from the New American Bible translation.

Jesus the Messiah's great homily, known as the Sermon on the Mount, lays the framework for the perfect precepts of the New Covenant Law written on the hearts of New Covenant believers that was promised by the Prophet Jeremiah in the 6th century BC. His sermon will set the standards by which Christian life and character is molded. The Son of God's sermon on the "holy mountain" in the Galilee will mark a rendezvous in time every bit as significant as God's first great rendezvous with Israel at the "holy mountain" in the desert of the Sinai in which God formed Israel into the holy people of the Old Covenant Church—an event the Old Covenant people celebrated each year as the Feast of Pentecost.

PREPARATION: THE FIRST GREAT PENTECOST

Mentally take a journey back in time approximately 3,500 years ago to the assembly of the Children of Israel at the foot of the mountain of God known by the Old Covenant Church as Mt. Sinai or Mt. Horeb. Yahweh-God came down from heaven to the top of the mountain in fierce fire, in violent thunder and lightning, and in the powerful trumpeting of the shofar (ram's horn). The terrified people were warned not to approach God lest their sins condemn them to death in the presence of a pure and holy God. At that great rendezvous at Sinai Yahweh told the 12 tribes of Israel through His prophet Moses that He had chosen her from all the nations of the earth to be His holy people, His very own possession: *"Therefore, if you hearken to my voice and keep my covenant, you, shall be my special possession, dearer to me than all other people, though all the earth is mine. You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation."* [\[Exodus 19:5\].](#)



Please read [Exodus 19:1-20:21](#)

Question: Out of all the nations of the earth, why did Yahweh choose the 12 tribes of Israel to be His Covenant people?

Answer: It wasn't because of their honesty, or their faithfulness, or their intelligence, or even for their beauty that Yahweh chose the children of Israel. God chose Israel because of the promise He made of a future redeemer when He cursed the serpent in the Garden of Eden after our first parents fell from grace. In [Genesis 3:14-15](#) Yahweh cursed the serpent and gave the hope of future redemption and restoration to mankind:

"Then the LORD God said to the serpent: Because you have done this, you shall be banned from all the animals and from all the wild creatures; on your belly shall you crawl, and dirt shall you eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring [seed] and hers *[seed]; he will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel."*

[*Note: in Hebrew this word is *zera*, which means "seed"; in the Greek translation of the Old Testament this word is *sperma*, meaning "seed" or "sperm"].

The serpent is identified by the inspired writers of Sacred Scripture and by Biblical scholars both ancient and modern as the enemy of the entire human race, the "Adversary"—Satan:

"How have you fallen from the heavens, O morning star, son of the dawn!" [Isaiah 14:12](#)*
[*the Vulgate translates the Hebrew word as "*Lucifer*", a name applied by the Church Fathers to Satan]

"You were stamped with the seal of perfection, of complete wisdom and perfect beauty. In Eden, the garden of God, you were, and every precious stone was your covering;... [..]. With the Cherub I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God, walking among the fiery stones. Blameless you were in your conduct from the day you were created, until evil was found in you."

[Ezekiel 28:12c-13a, 14-16](#)

"Then another sign appeared in the sky: it was a huge red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and on its heads were seven diadems. [..]. The huge dragon, the ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who deceived the whole world, was thrown down to earth and its angels were thrown down with it."

[Revelation 12:3, 9](#)

[for other Scripture references see [Job 1:6](#); [Wisdom 2:24](#); [2 Samuel 19:23](#); [1 Kings 5:18](#); [11:14](#), [23](#), [25](#); [1 Chronicles 21:1](#); [Psalms 109:6](#); [Isaiah 14:12-15](#); [Ezekiel 28:12-19](#); [Zechariah 3:1-2](#); [Matthew 4:1-11](#); [John 8:44](#); [1 John 3:8](#); [Revelation 12:3, 9](#); [20:2](#). For Catechism references see CCC# 391, 414, 392, 394-95, 397-8, 407, 538-40].

Satan and the angel-spirits who joined him exercised through their free will the irrevocable rejection of God and His sovereignty. The Catechism teaches that *"it is the irrevocable character of their choice, and not a defect in the infinite divine mercy that makes the angel's sin unforgivable. 'There is no repentance for the angels after their fall, just as there is no repentance for men after death.'"* CCC# 393 (quoting St. John Damascene, *De Fide orth.* 2,4).

Like the angels Adam and Eve also faced a Covenant Ordeal through the exercise of free will put to the test. They fail in their Covenant obligations to guard the Garden and to refrain from eating from the forbidden tree—desiring to be like God [*"you will be like gods who know what is good and what is bad"*, [Genesis 2:5](#)] but without God—no longer recognizing God's power and authority in choosing for them good over evil [see CCC# 397-98]. After the Fall of our original parents in [Genesis 3:15](#) God curses the serpent and announces that this encounter between mankind and Satan is the opening battle in what will



become a world war between the offspring of the Serpent and the offspring of “the Woman” which will continue throughout Salvation History. But the announcement of this great struggle also hints at an ultimate victory and a future salvation. It is for this reason the Fathers of the Church referred to this passage as the *proto-evangelium*, Greek for the “first good news”—the promise of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the first translation of the Hebrew books of Sacred Scripture, which we call the Old Testament, into Greek in circa 250BC, the Jewish scholars translated the [Genesis 3:15](#) passage using the masculine pronoun “he”, rendering the phrase cursing the serpent “*he will bruise your head..*”. This interpretation of the indefinite Hebrew pronoun as masculine then ascribes the promised victory not only to the “Woman’s” descendants collectively, but also to one son in particular who will “crush or bruise the head of the serpent”. St. John’s statement that God the Father sent the Son to destroy the works of Satan in [1 John 3:8](#) serves to further cement the concept that this passage can be understood as the first promise of Jesus as the future Redeemer for a fallen humanity: “*Whoever sins belongs to the devil, because the devil has sinned from the beginning. Indeed, the Son of God was revealed to destroy the works of the devil.*” With the messianic interpretation of [Genesis 3:15](#), the offspring of the woman aren’t just the collective generations of those faithful to God who oppose the devil but one particular son and “the Woman” becomes the title for one particular human woman who will bear this promised son without the “seed” of a man.

This promise would require the selection of a certain human woman from a particular family or tribe and of a particular nation of people at a certain time in history. That woman would have to be set apart in virtue and purity. The people from whom she would come would have to be purified from the influence of false gods, to be properly instructed in holiness, and to be prepared through God’s holy Prophets to be able to recognize the promised “seed” when the time was fulfilled. It was a period of preparation that would stretch from the revelation at Sinai to circa the winter of 3/2BC when the “promised One” was born without the seed of a man to a pure and holy Israelite virgin who had been preserved from sin from the moment of her conception [CCC# 491-92].

Question: Who is the only woman born in history who fulfills this prophecy of bearing a son without the “seed” of a man? How does St John identify this woman in his Gospel? Hint: see [John 2:4](#) and [18:26](#).

Answer: There is only one woman in Salvation history who fits this description—“the Woman” is Mary, who in St. John’s Gospel is addressed by Jesus as “Woman”, identifying her as the promised “Woman” of [Genesis 3:15](#) [see [John 2:4](#) and [18:26](#)]. Although Mary is only identified by this title in these 2 verses in John’s Gospel, it is significant that both passages concern a form of adoption or family formation. In [John 2:4](#) Mary is interceding at the wedding that will create a new human family and in [John 18:26](#) she is the central figure when a new spiritual family is formed.

It is curious that in John’s Gospel two of the most important people in Jesus’ life are unnamed: His mother and His “Beloved Disciple”. Unnamed central characters in a story take on an allegorical significance, symbolizing more than the literal action which the story relates—for example the unnamed persons in Jesus’ parables. John’s Gospel reflects this same tradition in the “Beloved Disciple” who is not only John the Apostle but every “disciple” who loves and follows Jesus just as “the Woman” who is the mother of Jesus is not only Mary of Nazareth but Mary the spiritual Mother of the New Covenant Church. With His last breath from the Cross Jesus gives His mother into the care of the only authority of the New Covenant Church present at the Cross making His mother the mother of generations of New Covenant children reborn through their baptism into the family of God. This daughter of Adam, whose family has been preserved down through history to bear the “promised seed” of [Genesis 3:15](#), is “The Woman” Mary, our inheritance from the Cross to be the spiritual mother of a family who through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus will be raised to new life, no longer the children of a fallen Adam but reborn as the divine sons and daughters of an eternal God. [CCC# 485-93, 50, 721-26].

But the question remains why Israel? What is the reason that Israel is singled out from all the tribes of the earth as the people from whom God would Incarnate Himself? Yahweh reveals His reason for



choosing Israel in [Deuteronomy 10:15](#) where Moses tells the Covenant People, “Yet in his love for your fathers the LORD was so attached to them as to choose you, their descendants, in preference to all other peoples, as indeed he has now done.”

Question: This passage identifies the core of the covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel. What are the two reasons God chose the Children of Israel? Hint: who is the grandfather of the man Israel for whom this nation is named, and what was his relationship to God?

Answer:

1. **It is because of their ancestors:** Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob [renamed Israel] and the 3-fold covenant of Genesis 12- 22 which is the foundation of all the other Biblical covenants formed by Yahweh that will come afterward.
2. **It is because of love--**the mysterious and seemingly unexplained love of God for Israel as His choice and the less surprising love of Israel for God, her liberator, benefactor and protector.

Question: What were the 3 promises that Yahweh made to Abraham in [Genesis 12:1-3](#) that became the three parts of the Abrahamic Covenant that Yahweh formed with Abraham and his family in Genesis chapters 15-22?

Answer: Yahweh promised Abraham a nation [land], numerous descendants, and a world-wide blessing: “all the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you” [[Genesis 12:2-3](#)].

Question: Were these covenant blessings fulfilled in Abraham’s lifetime?

Answer: No. Abraham did not see the fulfillment of these covenant promises in his lifetime. The selection of Abraham’s descendants, the Children of Israel, to be the bearer of the “promised seed” of [Genesis 3:15](#) was the beginning of the fulfillment of these covenant blessings but these blessings would not be completely fulfilled until the Resurrection of Jesus Christ with the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth—the Universal Church, and spiritual sons and daughters, blessed by the Holy Spirit from every nation under heaven.

Question: In the Sinai Covenant the betrothal of Israel to Yahweh was based on a stipulation that was not negotiable. According to [Exodus 19:5a](#) what is that non-negotiable stipulation?

Answer: That stipulation was that Israel must be prepared to obey God and keep His holy Covenant: “Therefore, **if you hearken to my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my special possession...**” [[Exodus 19:5a](#)]. To “keep” Yahweh’s covenant is to be faithfully to the Law of the Covenant, and to obediently follow every precept of the Law.

Please read [Exodus 24:1-18](#)

With the creation of the holy Covenant at Mount Sinai Israel became the *kahal*, Hebrew for the “called out ones”; *ekklesia* in Greek, *ecclesia* in Latin. Israel became the Church expressed as the Bride of Yahweh, and the Law of the 10 Commandments and the other articles of the Law became the betrothal band that bound the Covenant people to Yahweh the Bridegroom [Exodus chapters 20-23]. Thus the Law was conceived in love; a love built on faith, obedience and trust. Israel accepted as the marriage contract the conditions of the Law of the Covenant with Yahweh. A blood sacrifice was made and the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on the people and on the altar which represented God, creating a family bond in the “**blood of the covenant**” [[Exodus 24:3-8](#)]**—**covenants create families. Next a sacrificial meal was eaten by the representatives of the people—a sacrificial “wedding feast” sealing the Covenant oath and the sacred family bond with Yahweh the Bridegroom and Israel the Bride [see [Exodus 24:9-11](#)]. Then Moses ascended the mountain and after 40 days in fasting and prayer he received the Law and the other ordinances of God’s Covenant with Israel [Exodus chapters 25-31]. With the keeping of the Sinai Covenant came temporal blessings like fertility of the land and the people, prosperity and dominion over Israel’s enemies, but there were also temporal curses as the penalty for disobedience to God in breaking the Law of the Covenant [see [Leviticus 26:3-46](#) and [Deuteronomy 28:1-69](#)]. This was the **imperfect**



Covenant under which Israel would be instructed in sacrifice and holiness until the promised coming of the Messiah. If the Old Testament Law of the Sinai Covenant was the betrothal band that bound Yahweh to His Bride Israel, then the New Covenant Law of the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount was the marriage band that bound the Bride—the New Covenant Church—to Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom!

Question: Why was the Law of the Sinai Covenant imperfect? How was atonement offered for sins under the Sinai Covenant just as it had been since the time of Adam and his children and afterward in the Covenants Yahweh formed with Noah, with Abraham and his son Isaac and Isaac's sons? See [Genesis 3:21; 4:3-8; 8:20; 22:2-13; 31:54; 46:1; Job 1:5; 42:8; Exodus 3:18; 5:3, 8, 17; 8:26-29; 10:25; 12:27; Leviticus 17:11.](#)

Answer: Forgiveness and atonement for sin was based on animal sacrifice. The repentant sinner brought an animal to be offered in sacrifice. He/she would place his/her hands on the animal and confess his /her sins or the leader or father of the family, representing the people would place his hands on the animal and repent the sins of the people as a whole. The animal would assume the curse of sin and would suffer the death that the offender—or the people, rightly deserved before communion with God could be restored. This was an imperfect means of forgiveness of sin because no animal was perfect enough to completely remove sin. The blood of the animal could only cover sins as a temporary measure until a "perfect" sacrifice could be made.

Question: Was it possible for any sin to be atoned for by the blood of animal sacrifice? Why? Hint: see [Numbers 15:22-31](#)

Answer: No. Only unintentional or venial sin could be atoned for under the Sinai Covenant. The blood of an animal was not perfect enough to totally remove sins; it was also not perfect enough to cover mortal sin.

Question: Jesus' first statement from the Cross reflects this imperfection in the Old Covenant Law. What does He say in order to save those who condemned Him from the penalty of mortal sin under the Sinai Covenant? Hint: see [Luke 23:33-34a.](#)

Answer: *"When they reached the place called The Skull [Golgotha], there they crucified him and the two criminals, one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.'" Jesus declared the sin of those in authority over the Old Covenant Church, those who bore false witness against Him at his trial before the Sanhedrin [Jewish Law court], and all those who rejected Him as Messiah as unintentional sin*

The binding of Israel to Yahweh was a defining moment in history for the Old Covenant Church but for the Children of Israel it was a terrifying experience when God came to betroth Himself to His Bride, Israel.

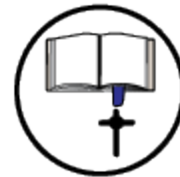
Question: Why was the experience terrifying for the people? What request did the people beg Moses to make to God on their behalf? Hint: see [Exodus 20:18-19.](#)

Answer: They were terrified by the awesome acoustical display which accompanied the presence of God and therefore petitioned Moses, *"You speak to us, and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we shall die."*

Question: From that time until his death, what position does Moses assume between God and the People of the Covenant? Hint: see [Deuteronomy 5:24-31](#) (5: 20-28 in some translations).

Answer: Moses becomes the Covenant Mediator and Prophet of Yahweh, speaking for God to the people.

Question: God understands our fears and our limitations. What provision did He make for the people of the Sinai Covenant in the future after Moses' time on earth has ended? [Deuteronomy 18:14-19](#), [Moses speaking] *"A prophet like me will the LORD, your God, raise up for you from among your own kinsmen; to*



him you shall listen. This is exactly what you requested of the LORD, your God, at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, 'Let us not again hear the voice of the LORD, our God, nor see this great fire any more, lest we die.' And the LORD said to me, 'This was well said. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kinsmen, and will put my words into his mouth; he shall tell them all that I command him. If any man will not listen to my words which he speaks in my name, I myself will make him answer for it.'"

Answer: Yahweh will promise to provide future covenant mediators who will succeed Moses as God's holy Prophet to the people. However in the generations of prophets who succeeded Moses, none were equal to the great Lawgiver. The covenant people began to see in this passage the promise of the coming of "The Prophet" like Moses, a single individual to take God's place in the presence of the people.

Question: How will the people recognize this supreme Prophet of Yahweh?

Answer:

Identifying Feature	Scripture Reference
1. He will come from the bloodline of Jacob/Israel, the physical father of the 12 tribes of Israel	Deuteronomy 18:14, 18
2. He will be a prophet like Moses	Deuteronomy 18:15, 18
3. He will speak directly what Yahweh commands	Deuteronomy 18:19
4. Anyone who refuses to listen to the Prophet like Moses will be accountable to Yahweh	Deuteronomy 18:19b

Question: Yahweh also sets a penalty for the false prophet. How is it that the people are to identify a true prophet of Yahweh and what is the penalty for being a false prophet? See Deuteronomy 18:20-22.

Answer: His prophetic success rate must be 100%; for anything less the penalty is death.

Question: In [Matthew 7:15-20](#) Jesus also warned of false prophets. How did Jesus tell the people to discern between a false and a true prophet?

Answer:

- You will perceive them as false when they lie to the people; pretending to be full of piety while pursuing their own selfish ends.
- You will be able to perceive them as false by the "fruit" or works that they bear. Godly men unselfishly serving God yield the good works of God working through their lives, while the selfish servant yields discord and works that bring disunity to the Church.

The Islamic prophet Mohammed claimed that the prophecy of the coming of "the Prophet" in [Deuteronomy 18:14-20](#) for himself in the 7th century AD when he founded the religion of Islam.

Question: Does Mohammed fulfill the requirements to be identified as "The Prophet" of Yahweh? Hint: see [Deuteronomy 18:14-20](#).

Answer: No, he may be of the bloodline of Abraham descended through Ishmael [[Genesis 16:1-4, 15-16](#)] or through one of the other 6 sons born from Keturah, the woman Abraham married after Sarah's death [see [Genesis 25:1-6](#)], but he does not fulfill the prophecy because he is not a descendant of the



“promised heir” [[Genesis 15:17-22](#)] Isaac, born from Abraham’s legal wife Sarah, nor is he a descendant of Isaac’s son Jacob/Israel the father of the 12 tribes that formed the nation of Old Covenant Israel.

A prophet served as Covenant Mediator and was the voice of God to the people, but “The Prophet” of [Deuteronomy 18:18](#) is promised to be the supreme prophet of Yahweh.

Question: In whom is the prophecy of “The Prophet” of Yahweh in [Deuteronomy 18:14-20](#) perfectly fulfilled? See [John 1:25](#) and [4:19](#).

Answer: This prophecy is perfectly fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary, a daughter of the Covenant people of Israel, a descendant of King David of the tribe founded by his ancestor Judah, who was the 4th son of Jacob/Israel. Her son will be the promised Prophet who is not only the “new” Moses but who is the “greater than Moses”! Jesus of Nazareth, the giver of the Law of the New Covenant will lead His people on the “new exodus” out of sin and death and into eternal life.

Question: The holy office of “prophet” was one of 3 holy offices. What became the 3 offices of God’s holy representatives? Hint: Moses, Miriam, and Aaron fulfill two of these offices, while the 3rd office will not be instituted until some years after taking possession of the Promised Land.

Answer: These are the offices of Prophet, High Priest, and King. Both Moses and Miriam [[Exodus 15:20](#)] were prophets while Aaron was the first High Priest. The representative of all 3 offices must be anointed as God’s representatives.

Compare the two men connected with the Sinai Covenant with the giving of the New Covenant Law in the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew chapter 5. In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus is presented as the “new Moses” promised in the prophecy of [Deuteronomy 18:15-19](#). St. Augustine taught that “*The New [Testament] is hidden in the Old and the Old is fulfilled in the New.*” The Magisterium of the Catholic Church in the Vatican II document *Dei Verbum* affirmed St. Augustine’s teaching and encourages us to study the relationship between the Old and New Testaments through the study of the covenants, promises, prophecies and types found in Sacred Scripture. A Scriptural type is: “*A biblical person, thing, action, or event that foreshadows new truths, new actions, or new events. In the Old Testament, Melchizedech and Jonah are types of Jesus Christ. A likeness must exist between the type and the archetype, but the latter is always greater. Both are independent of each other.*” [*Catholic Dictionary*, John A. Hardon, S.J.]

Question: How is Moses a “type” of Christ? How many points of comparison can you make between Moses and Jesus?

Answer:

Typology of Moses and Jesus

MOSES	JESUS
An evil king tried to kill him as a baby: Exodus 1:22	King Herod tried to kill baby Jesus: Matthew 2:16
He was hidden from the evil king Exodus 2:2	An angel said to hide the child Matthew 2:13
Moses was sent into Egypt to preserve his life Exodus 2:3-4	Jesus was taken into Egypt to preserve His life Matthew 2:13-15



He was saved by women his mother: Exodus 2:3 Miriam: Exodus 2:4 Pharaoh's daughter: Exodus 2:5-10	Mary saved and helped Jesus Matthew 2:14
Pharaoh's daughter adopted him Exodus 2:10	Joseph adopted Jesus Matthew 1:25
Moses became a prince of Egypt Exodus 2:10	Jesus is the Prince of Peace Isaiah 9:5 Matthew 28:18 Luke 2:14
Long period of silence from childhood to adulthood	Long period of silence from childhood to adulthood
He had a secret identity	Messianic secret = Jesus the Son of God
He tried to save a Hebrew kinsman Exodus 2:11-12	Jesus came to save His Hebrew kinsman first Mark 7:26-28
Went from being a prince to a pauper Exodus 2:15-19	Went from being God to being man John 1:1-3 Mark 6:3
Saved women at a well Exodus 2:15-19	Saved a woman at a well John chapter 4
Became a shepherd Exodus 3:1	He is the Good Shepherd John 10:11
Moses' mission was to redeem Israel from slavery to Egypt	Jesus' mission is to redeem mankind from slavery to sin
Moses was loved and supported in his ministry by his sister Miriam [in Hebrew, Miryam]	Jesus was loved and supported in His ministry by His mother Mary [in Hebrew, Miryam]
He was often rejected by his own people	Jesus was rejected by His own people
Moses will give God's law on the mountain of Sinai Exodus 20:1-31:18 ; 34:1-35	Jesus will give the new law from the Mt. of Beatitudes Matthew chapter 5
Moses spent 40 days fasting on the mountain Exodus 24:18;34:28	Jesus spent 40 days fasting in the desert wilderness: Matthew 4:2
Moses performs signs/miracles	Jesus performs signs/miracles
Moses offers his life for the salvation of his people after the sin of the Golden Calf Exodus 32:33-34	Jesus offered His life for the salvation of the world Isaiah 53:12 Romans 5:12 ; 6:10



	2 Corinthians 5:15-21 Colossians 1:19-20; 2:14-15 1 John 1:7; 2:2 ; etc
Moses is the prophet of the Old Covenant Church	Jesus is the prophet, priest, and King of a New and everlasting Covenant = the universal Catholic Church [note: "catholic" means universal]

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 See CCC# 129-130; 606-617

Jesus, the new Moses: Moses is saved from death ordered by the Egyptian Pharaoh, and is raised in Egypt: *"I have called my son out of Egypt..."* [[Matthew 2:15](#); [Exodus 4:23](#); [Numbers 23:22](#); [Hosea 11:1](#)]. Jesus will be saved from a death planned by King Herod and will escape with His family to spend his early years in Egypt. Moses is sent by God to redeem Israel from the bondage of slavery while Jesus is sent by God to redeem Israel from slavery to sin; both men perform miracles. Moses passes through the water of Sea of Reeds to free his people while Jesus passes through the water of Baptism to deliver us from slavery to sin. Moses fasted on Mt. Sinai 40 days and Jesus after 40 days of fasting and temptation answers Satan by quoting from Moses' homily in Deuteronomy chapters 6-7. Moses offered his own life in exchange for the lives of his people when God threatened to destroy Israel after the sin of the Golden Calf which foreshadows Jesus' self sacrificial love in laying down His life for the sins of the world. God came down on to Mt. Sinai in a terrifying visual and acoustical display of thunder and lightening to give His people the first great Pentecost while God the Son quietly goes up to the mountain to give the new Law and prepare the New Covenant people for the second great Pentecost.

In summarizing God's plan for humanity the Vatican II document *Dei Verbum* records that after the Fall of our original parents, "...his promise of redemption aroused in them the hope of being saved (cf. [Gn 3:15](#)) and from that time on he ceaselessly kept the human race in his care, to give eternal life to those who perseveringly do good in search of salvation (cf. [Rm 2:6-7](#)). Then, at the time he had appointed, he called Abraham in order to make of him a great nation (cf. [Gn 12:12](#)). Through the patriarchs and after them through Moses and the prophets, he taught this people to acknowledge himself the one living and true God, provident Father and just judge, and to wait for the Savior promised by him, and in this manner prepared the way for the Gospel down through the centuries." [*The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II, Dei Verbum, 1.3*]

Please turn to Matthew chapter 5 in your Bible.
 In Matthew's Gospel the Apostle builds his account of the mission of the Messiah through 5 "books" centered on Jesus' 5 major discourses. The Sermon on the Mount is the first of the five major homilies by the Master which appear in Matthew's Gospel:

DISCOURSE	REFERENCE
1. The Sermon on the Mount	Matthew 5:1-7:29
2. The Missionary Discourse	Matthew 10:5-11:1
3. The Parables Discourse	Matthew 13:1-53



4. The Homily to the Church	Matthew 18:1-19:1
5. The Eschatological* Discourse	Matthew 24:1-26:1

*eschatology = etymology from the Greek *eschatos* = uttermost + *logos* = word or discourse; usually interpreted as meaning the “last things”; dealing with death, particular and general judgments, heaven, hell and purgatory.

In Matthew’s Gospel the Sermon on the Mount is revealed in three chapters, from [chapters 5-7](#), and the discourse of the Sermon on the Mount can be divided into 5 major sections:

SECTION	REFERENCE
1. The Beatitudes	Matthew 5:3-12
2. The Christian and the world	Matthew 5:12-16
3. The Law of the Old Covenant and the 6 examples of Christian conduct	Matthew 5:21-48
4. Teaching on the private and public lives of Christians and the practice of righteousness	Matthew 6:19-34
5. A Christian’s relationships, commitments, and the importance of works	Matthew 7:1-29

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St. Luke’s Gospel also records a Beatitude teaching. Please read [Matthew 4:18-5:1-12](#) and compare the Matthew discourse to [Luke 6:12-23-6](#).

There are three major theories that Bible scholars have developed to account for the differences between Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount and Luke’s Sermon on the Plain:

1. Both Gospels give accounts of the same discourse.
2. The Gospels reflect two different homilies spoken at different times during Jesus’ teaching ministry.
3. The Gospels present two homilies delivered in close succession: one on the summit of the mountain to the disciples and then a second homily on the plain to the multitude.

Question: What differences do you notice between the events concerning Jesus’ teaching in Matthew and His teaching in Luke? Hint: Notice location, audience, and content of the teaching.

Answer:

- The teaching in Matthew’s Gospel takes place on a mountain side [\[Matthew 5:1\]](#) while the teaching in Luke takes place on a plain after descending from a height: *“Now it happened in those days that he*



went onto the mountain to pray;...[...]. He then came down with them and stopped at a piece of level ground where there was a large gathering of his disciples, with a great crowd of people from all parts of Judea and Jerusalem..." [Luke 6:12, 17](#).

- In Matthew's Gospel the Beatitudes teaching is directed to His disciples [[Matthew 5:1-2](#)], some of whom will be chosen as His Apostles: "Now it happened in those days that he went onto the mountain to pray; and he spent the whole night in prayer to God. When day came he summoned his disciples and picked out twelve of them; he called them apostles..." [[Luke 6:12-13](#)]. In Luke's Gospel Jesus descends the mountain with His disciples after a night of teaching and prayer and then He seems to be teaching to the crowds of people as well as a larger group of disciples who have come to hear Him preach: "He then came down with them and stopped at a piece of level ground where there was a large gathering of his disciples, with a great crowd of people from all parts of Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon who had come to hear him and to be cured of their diseases." [[Luke 6:17-18a](#)]
- In Matthew's Gospel the message is a spiritual message composed of 7 blessings and resulting in 7 promises while in Luke Jesus is addressing 4 social justice issues which are followed by 4 curses directed against those who perpetuate the injustice.

It may be an important distinction that the teaching in Matthew's Gospel was given to Jesus' disciples—to believers who had already come to acknowledge His authority [[Matthew 5:1](#)]. They were ready to receive a "spiritual" teaching on how Jesus had come to transform the Old Covenant by intensifying, internalizing, and fulfilling the Law of the Old Covenant. The multitude [[Matthew 5:1](#); [Luke 6:17-18](#)]: the poor people and the crowds who came from near and far, could not have understood or accepted such a teaching. They were far more concerning with the temporal blessings and justice that was promised them through obedience to the Old Covenant Law.

Question: In the Sermon on the Plain in [Luke 6:20-26](#) Jesus gives His teaching in the Old Covenant style of [Leviticus 26:3-46](#) and [Deuteronomy 28:1-46](#). What pattern do you see Jesus repeating from those passages?

Answer: He is giving a series of blessings and curses. Jesus gives 4 blessings followed by 4 curses.

Question: What issues of social justice does Jesus address to the crowds in Luke's Gospel? What are the "blessings" He promises to those who have suffered in this life?

Answer:

1. He promises the poor that they will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven
2. He promises the hungry that they will be filled
3. He promises the sorrowful that they will become joyful
4. He promises those who are persecuted for following Him that they will be rewarded in heaven just as the prophets of God will be rewarded

Question: What are the four curses that He pronounces? What will be the ultimate consequence of the curses?

Answer: He pronounces curses on the rich who allow poverty to increase without using the blessings of their material wealth to comfort the poor and suffering; the rich who do not share their wealth will only receive a temporal blessing but will remain spiritually impoverished in the next life:

1. They will have no "wealth" in the next life
2. They may be full now but they will be hungry in the next life
3. They may experience joy now but they will suffer later in the next life
4. They are compared to those who persecuted God's holy prophets



Question: Are these curses relevant to us today? See [Matthew 25:31-46](#); [Luke 12:15-20](#), 48

Answer: Absolutely. In one's participation in the Sacrament of Penance these concerns should be a part of one's examination of conscience.

The slope of the land from the site of the Beatitudes hill to the Sea of Galilee presents a spectacular natural amphitheater. If Jesus stood on the level plain below the Mount of Beatitudes He could speak and be easily heard by a multitude of people ranged up along the hillside. Tradition also identifies this site as the place where Jesus chose the twelve Apostles [[Luke 6:12-12](#)]. Today pilgrims can visit a lovely domed Church (built in 1936) and peaceful gardens on the Mount of the Beatitudes maintained by the Franciscan sisters, who also operate a hospice on the grounds.

In each discourse, on the Mount and on the plain, Jesus centers His teaching on the giving of "blessings."

Question: Look up the word "happiness" in the dictionary. What is the general meaning of this word? How does it differ from the way in which the word "blessing" is used in the Old and New Testaments?

Answer: The Hebrew and Greek words for "blessing" in the Old and New Testaments do not equate to our English word "happiness"—a feeling of general well-being. A "blessing" in Sacred Scripture evokes the **supernatural creative power of God** and can only come from God—either directly from God or through the mediation of His priestly representative who requests on behalf of the people, God's divine blessing. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word *barak* expresses this supernatural creative power but in the New Testament the word used for "blessing" is the Greek word *makarios* (ma-car'-e-os), which means *"the state of bliss experienced by the Greek gods or upon the mortals who receive their special favor becoming themselves semi-divine."* Like other Greek words the Christian community will transform this Greek word into one which carries a distinctive Hebrew-Christian meaning. In this case the "blessings" of the Beatitudes will give us the unique divine vitality, the bliss of God living in us!

THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD

"All nations shall stream toward it; many peoples shall come and say: 'Come, let us climb the LORDS' mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths.'"

[Isaiah 2:2c-3d](#)

If you visit the Mt. of Beatitudes in Israel today you will be surprised to discover it is hardly more than a gentle hillside overlooking the Sea of Galilee.

Question: [Matthew 5:1](#) identifies the site of the teaching by using the definite article "the". What is the significance of identifying the site as "**the mountain**" as opposed to "a mountain?" What is the significance of "God's mountain" in Sacred Scripture? What was the first "Holy Mountain" in the Bible where man entered into fellowship with God?

Answer: Mountain imagery in the Bible is a reference to the original "Holy Mountain"—Eden the first Holy Mountain of God: Genesis 2:10 "A river flowed from Eden..." [also see Ezekiel 28:13-14].

That Eden was the original "Holy Mountain" explains the significance of the other mountains that will become important in the history of God's Covenant people as sites for God's redemptive acts and revelations [see Genesis 22:2; Exodus 19:16-19; 2 Chronicles 3:1; Matthew 28:16-20]. God's holy prophets promised the restoration of "the Mountain" to the earth [see Isaiah 2:2-4; Daniel 2:32-35, 44-45 and in Micah 4:1-4], and taught that the "holy mountain" signified the fulfillment and consummation of



restoration to God through the Messiah's atonement when the Kingdom of God would fill the earth [see Isaiah 11:9]. In this passage in Matthew 5:1, that Jesus called His disciples up "the Mountain" is theologically significant to God's Covenant people.

Question: In addition to Eden, how many such "holy mountain" sites can you think of in Scripture?

Answer:

HOLY MOUNTAINS OF GOD

MOUNTAIN	REFERENCE
1. The Garden of Eden	Genesis 2:10; Ezekiel 28:12-14
2. Noah's Ark rests on Mt. Ararat after the Great Flood	Genesis 8:4
3. The substitutionary atonement of the ram in place of the sacrifice of Abraham's son Isaac on Mt. Moriah	Genesis 22:2
4. Sinai Covenant on Mt. Sinai/Horeb	Exodus 19:12
5. The site of Solomon's Temple on Mt. Moriah	2 Chronicles 3:1
6. Elijah's defeat of the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel [carmel is a Hebrew word for "garden"]	1 Kings 18
7. Jesus and the giving of the New Covenant law on the Mt. of Beatitudes	Matthew 5
8. Jesus' official appointment of Peter as Vicar of the Church on the mountain at Caesarea Philippi	Matthew 16:13-19; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21;
9. Jesus prevailed over temptation on a mountain	Matthew 4:8-11; Luke 4:1-13
10. The Mt. of Transfiguration when Jesus appeared in His glory	Matthew 17 [Peter refers to this place as "the holy mountain" in 2 Peter 1:16-18]
11. Jesus prophesizes the judgment of Jerusalem on the Mt. of Olives and spent the last nights of His life sleeping there; Jesus is arrested in a garden on the Mt. of Olives; and Jesus ascends to the Father from the Mt. of Olives	Mark 13:3-37; Luke 21:37; Matthew 26:47ff; Mark 14:43ff; Luke 22:47ff; John 18:3ff; Acts 1:1-19
12. Golgotha, where Jesus was crucified was	Matthew 27:32-36; Mark 15:21-27; Luke 23:26-



a lower elevation of Mt. Moriah	34; John 19:17-24
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[For more references to the "mountain of God" see Ezekiel 28:13-14; Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:9; 25:6-9; 56:3-8; 65:25; Daniel 2:34-35, 44-45; Micah 4:1-4; Matthew 5:14]

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Approximately 3,500 years before the Sermon on the Mount and **fifty days** after escaping from Egypt by crossing the Sea of Reeds [Red Sea], Yahweh called the Children of Israel to the foot of the "holy mountain" to establish His covenant with Israel. He came down in fire to give them His **word** embodied in the Law of the Covenant written on tablets of stone. When the people submitted to the oath of the covenant they were promised blessings for obedience to the Law, but they were also promised that they would be placed under a curse as a consequence of the failure to keep the covenant of the Law. By Christ's death we are redeemed from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13) "*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by being cursed for our sake...*" In 30AD, **fifty days** after the Ascension of the **Living Word**, the Jews were celebrating the Old Covenant Feast of Pentecost. In Hebrew, this feast was known as the Feast of Weeks or *Shavuot* because it commemorated the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai seven weeks and a day after crossing the Red Sea [7days x7weeks = 49days + 1= 50 days]. But in Jesus' day this feast was known in the Greek language as *he pentekoste*, "the 50th day". It was one of the three "pilgrim feasts" in which every man of the Covenant must present himself before God at the Temple in Jerusalem. Jews from all over the known world had come to the holy city to celebrate this great feast. It was during the celebration of this Old Covenant feast which looked back to the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai, that the spirit of the Law would be written on our hearts with the descent of God the Holy Spirit in tongues of fire to fill and indwell the 120 members of the New Covenant Church praying with the Virgin Mary in the Upper Room in Jerusalem [see Acts 1:13-15; 2:11]. On the day three years earlier when Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount He was preparing his Church for that second great Pentecost. The first part of Jesus' great homily in the Sermon on the Mount, known as the Beatitudes, is the declaration of the New Covenant Law. In announcing the new covenant promised by the prophet Jeremiah [Jeremiah 31:31-34] Jesus, as "the prophet greater than Moses" [Deuteronomy 18:18] came to transform and fulfill the Old Covenant Law of Moses. He will accomplish this transformation through His death, burial and resurrection and through the transformed hearts of Yahweh's faithful remnant of covenant people who will be empowered at Pentecost to be sent out to heal and transform the world in His name. Instead of the negative commands of the Ten Commandments, the positive blessings of the Beatitudes are His promise that that the curse of the Law would be replaced by God's blessings. The day was coming when we would obey the demands of the Law, not as a condition of salvation, but as the fruit of a transformed heart and life. The blessings or Beatitudes Jesus taught in the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount are a plan for that transformed life. We accept the commitment to live this transformed life **not** in order to be redeemed but **because** we are redeemed. However, we cannot achieve this blessedness on our own; it is only through Christ that we can live the blessings and reap the promises of the Beatitudes.

Separate yourselves from the cares and concerns of this world. Travel mentally back in time 2,000 years and place yourself on that hillside overlooking the Sea of Galilee. Picture in your mind a muscular, tanned 30 year old Jewish rabbi standing on the slope of the hill. Preserved in the ancient monastery of Monte Casino, Italy is a copy of an ancient letter from a Roman official to the Emperor Tiberius which was discovered to contain a description of a Jewish rabbi from Nazareth who had been condemned by the Roman authority. The Emperor Tiberius was interested in the stories about this miracle worker especially after the news had come to him concerning the rumors that this Jewish teacher had actually been resurrected from the dead. Some scholars dispute the letter's authenticity but history does confirm that there was a Roman named Lentulus who was named Consul in the 12th year of Tiberius' reign and who was in the Roman province of Judah during the time of Jesus' trial and crucifixion. The letter is believed



to be an official report from Lentulus to the Roman Emperor Tiberius; such a letter is mentioned in the writings of Flavius Josephus, the first century Jewish historian [37AD – c. 100AD]. This letter is the only description of Jesus of Nazareth known to exist. In the letter of the Roman Consul Lentulus to the Emperor Tiberius, Lentulus described Jesus as having: *“a noble and lively face, with fair and slightly wavy hair; black and strongly curving eyebrows, intense penetrating blue eyes and an expression of wondrous grace. His nose is rather long. His beard is almost blonde, although not very long. His hair is quite long, and has never seen a pair of scissors...His neck is slightly inclined, so that he never appears to be bitter or arrogant. His tanned face is the color of ripe corn and well proportioned. It gives the impression of gravity and wisdom, sweetness and good, and is completely lacking in any sign of anger.”* [Holy Land Magazine, Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, vol. XVIII, #1 Spring, 1998, page 20].

Jesus turns to you and to His other disciples as He ascends the slope gesturing to you to come up the “holy mountain”—to come to Him. He speaks in a gentle voice. You feel that something momentous is about to happen but you cannot understand that you and He are beginning a journey that will change the entire world. Unlike the revelation of God at Mt. Sinai, instead of being ordered to keep a distance from God, now you and the others are invited to draw near to God the Son. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus will be preparing the shepherds of His Church for the transformation of New Covenant believers from the sons and daughters of Adam to the adopted sons and daughters of God and for the revelation of the second great Pentecost when God the Holy Spirit will come down on the New Covenant Church in tongues of holy fire, filling and indwelling the New Israel—the Universal, Catholic Church. Jesus of Nazareth, the Word of God enfleshed, is taking you and His disciples up on to the sacred ground of the mountain. He is taking you away from the crowds that had come to hear the teachings and witness the healing miracles of this new rabbi. He is calling you to receive not words written on stone but to witness the miracle of God the Living Word transforming hearts of stone into living Temples of the Holy Spirit. He has come to take you away from the world and its mundane, temporal kingdoms and cares. He takes you to the holy mountain on this earth to begin to teach you that one day you will be able to reach the holy summit on the next....the heavenly Kingdom of God.

Questions for group discussion:

Question: Read the promised blessings of obedience to the Old Covenant Law of Moses in Leviticus 26:3-13 and Deuteronomy 28:1-14 and the curses or judgments/ punishments for disobedience to the Law of the Covenant in Leviticus 26:14-46 and Deuteronomy 28:15-46. What do you notice concerning the classification of blessings and the punishments/ judgments? Were the blessings and curses temporal or eternal under to Old Covenant?

Answer: Under the Old Covenant both blessings and curses were temporal. The blessings included fertility and prosperity while the curses were judgments brought through external forces like foreign armies and sickness.

Question: Why were blessings for obedience to the covenant only temporal under the Old Covenant and why were the curses or punishments only temporal?

Question: How do the Old Covenant blessings and curses compare to the New Covenant blessings and curses or punishments? Why is there a difference? See the Catechism of the Catholic Church # 1020-1060 and #633 to help you with your answers.