

URANTIA BROTHERHOOD SCHOOL  
4th Summer Study Session  
August 1 - 2, 1969

The Ordination Sermon and Subsequent Discourses  
Prepared and Presented by Kenton E. Stephens

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The public ministry of Jesus was inaugurated with his baptism by John the Baptist on January 14, A.D. 26. A year of preparation, decision-making, and the training of the Apostles went by before Jesus delivered the ordination sermon and the related discourses which are the subject of this presentation. Beginning with the great decisions made during the forty days in the hills of Perea, continuing through the period when the apostles were selected and trained, and ending with the ordination of the twelve on January 12, A.D. 2, the period was one of relative quietude for Jesus and was obviously intended to set the stage for the culminating events of the next few years. Jesus undoubtedly could have begun his public ministry entirely on his own resources, but it is clear that he wanted the twelve Apostles to understand and be prepared for the work of the Kingdom. Only the wedding at Cana and an occasional public appearance at the synagogue, including the one where he delivered the great sermon on the Kingdom, interrupted this deliberate process of training and work.

The sermon on the Kingdom occurring about half way through this year was Jesus' public declaration of the purpose of his work on Urantia. While this sermon was only partially understood and accepted, it sketched in broad and indeed simple terms the program whereby human beings could enter this "everlasting dominion." Jesus concluded with these words, "John came preaching repentance to prepare you for the Kingdom; now have I come proclaiming forth the gift of God as the price of entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. If you would but believe that my Father loves you with an infinite love, then you are in the Kingdom of God." (P. 1537) These words constituted a simple and direct manifesto of personal salvation for all those who elected to do the will of the Father. The remainder of Jesus' earth ministry was intended to define and amplify the process by which the God-seeking mortal could make this choice. "There was just one motive in Jesus' postbaptismal life on Urantia and that was a better and truer revelation of his Paradise Father; he was the pioneer of the new and better way to God, the way of faith and love." (P. 1543)

The ordination sermon for the Apostles or the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7 and Luke 6:20-49) was a message of a far different sort with a different purpose. It is generally believed in the Christian religion that this sermon was Jesus'



definitive statement on the nature of this Kingdom and the means by which entry could be achieved, and that it was delivered to the multitudes. It was definitive but it was not for the masses. Rather, it was a profound explanation of how the twelve Apostles should conduct their lives and ministries and how they should teach the peoples of the world. Certainly the lofty ideals and revelations of this sermon contain as comprehensive a view of Jesus' teaching as can be found, but we err if we take the rigorous behavioral prescriptions to be the heart of his message. These were intended for the Apostles and, as befits an occasion of ordination, the prescription was complete and demanding. They were the ideals to which the twelve men were to aspire. Of course, in the final analysis these ideals are suitable for the conduct of all mankind if supreme strength and courage can be mustered, but the standards which Jesus set were specifically for those who ministered in his name and not necessarily for all peoples whose conditions, attitudes and abilities are so diverse. As Jesus said, "Some of the things which I am about to say to you may seem hard, but you have elected to represent me in the world as I now represent the Father." These words were for the Apostles.

The ordination presentation by Jesus consists of a set of preliminary instructions and the message which was delivered formally as the ordination sermon. They can be considered part of the same discourse and, indeed, the Sermon on the Mount does not distinguish between the two parts and contains elements from both.

We might ask, however, if there is a difference in purpose or substance between the two parts. The instructions were quite simple and direct. Jesus first indicated that his Kingdom was a spiritual one and not a material kingdom; that it was for all men "who desire to do the divine will." At this time and on many other occasions Jesus rejected the notion that he would re-establish the Jewish nation as its Messiah. Secondly, he described the beginning role that these twelve men were to have in establishing this spiritual kingdom in the hearts of their fellow men. He was affirming with these final words his selection of these apostles as his ambassadors.

While the instructions contain a statement of Jesus' faith in the twelve, the ordination sermon itself is a lofty outpouring of the spiritual attitude and the behavioral imperative required of the Apostles. Jesus told them how to teach and act in their ministry. There were admonitions not to do certain things, as well as positive requirements. The twelve were "to save men, not to judge them." They were not to be swayed by "false prophets." They were to love their enemies and "live the righteous life fearlessly." His words were stern even to the extent that he promised rejection of those who taught in his name but who had not fully accepted the Father's will. Indeed, more was expected of the teachers than of the students.

The first four beatitudes are described as four faith attitudes, and the second four as four supreme reactions of fatherly love. They are to be the comforting message that these Apostles will bring to the peoples of the world. God's love is the essential element of the beatitudes. This was a new concept, a revelation of father love "as it is related to certain emotional attitudes concerned in



making numerous environmental social adjustments." Jesus demonstrated how the love of God could be used to change our attitudes and subsequently our lives. These words should not be interpreted as a justification for passive forbearance, for simply accepting one's fate. Each one requires spiritual action. For example, the reference to peacemakers in the seventh beatitude is not a call for pacifism but for active social and political cooperation.

Jesus undoubtedly was aware that he was speaking to untold numbers of people as he spoke to the few men kneeling about him. Through them, he was reaching for potential reactions to the appeal of the Kingdom in terms of the then extant human condition. Poverty of spirit and possessions was widespread and Jesus wanted to kindle an active, creative spiritual longing from these meager resources. His apostles in carrying this message of humble action and attitudes would relate most effectively to the majority of people, even though their particular biases and lack of understanding were impediments to their work. Thus, the message rather than the messengers was the most potent aspect of the coming ministry. In these and other teachings, Jesus' purpose was to change his Apostles so that they could minister with fewer crippling misconceptions and purposes. In this, he was largely successful, though none of the apostles achieved a perfect intellectual perception of his message. They, as we are, were handicapped by their personality traits and cultural biases. But changes did occur. We are told that Simon Zelotes gradually changed from a rabid revolutionist to a "powerful and effective preacher of 'Peace on earth and good will among men.'" Even John Zebedee's inordinate conceit was subdued as "his long association with Jesus made many and great changes in his character." We, too, have this opportunity to change.

It is likely that the words but not the purpose of the beatitudes would be different if they were uttered today. Our enlarged and more systematic understanding of human anxiety, our unbalanced materialism, and perhaps our keener sense of justice, equality, and equity, would require some revision of this spiritual commentary. Jesus would put his messages in terms that would be familiar and acceptable to us. The essential message is the same in that the active subjugation of human effort and attitudes to the will of God through faith is required for salvation.