



The Anti-Church

by Roger Hertzler

In the early days of Christianity, there was one passage of the Bible which held special significance for Christ's followers. This was Matthew chapters 5 through 7, which is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon was used as a catechism for new believers, and it formed much of the foundation for early Christian doctrine and practice. These first Christians believed that this sermon was meant to be taken literally and obeyed explicitly, and it became a defining factor of the very essence of Christianity.

But if you could imagine with me for a moment, I'd like to ask you a question which may shock you at first. What do you think would happen if we would form a church which, rather than trying to *follow* the Sermon on the Mount, purposed instead to *violate* it? What would happen if we would look at each major issue dis-

cussed in this sermon and then do the exact *opposite* of what it teaches? How would such a church look?

Let us take a brief look at just a few of the topics discussed in the Sermon on the Mount and try to imagine what a deliberate violation would look like. Then let us, in light of this list, take an honest assessment of our own Christian lives, of our church, and of American Christianity as a whole.

- * When the Sermon on the Mount says that God's blessings belong to those who are poor in spirit, meek, and hungry after righteousness, we would fill our pews with proud, self-satisfied members.
- * When the Sermon on the Mount says we should be salt and light in this world, we would do our best to

“fit in” with the unbelievers around us so as not to offend them.

- ✳ When the Sermon on the Mount says that “he who looks at a woman lustfully commits adultery”, we would put up with a high percentage of our church’s leaders being addicted to pornography.
- ✳ When the Sermon on the Mount condemns divorce as evil, the divorce rate in our church would be as high or higher than that of the non-Christians around us.
- ✳ When the Sermon on the Mount forbids the remarriage of divorced persons, our church would both perform marriages of those who were previously divorced and also receive into membership remarried individuals with former spouses still living.
- ✳ When the Sermon on the Mount says we should “swear not at all,” we would willingly take oaths without a twinge of conscience.
- ✳ When the Sermon on the Mount says “let your yes be yes and your no be no”, we would tolerate blatant dishonesty whenever that was the most convenient path.
- ✳ When the Sermon on the Mount commands us to love our enemies, our church would be among the strongest supporters of our nation’s military power.
- ✳ When the Sermon on the Mount commands us to “resist not evil”, we would encourage our members to keep weapons in their homes for use in self-defense.
- ✳ When the Sermon on the Mount says “when (not if) ye fast”, members of our church would almost never practice fasting.
- ✳ When the Sermon on the Mount forbids us to lay up treasures on earth, we would encourage our members to accumulate wealth in savings accounts, retirement plans, and other investments.
- ✳ When the Sermon on the Mount commands us to lay up treasures in Heaven (by giving to the needy), we would deny or ignore the fact that helping the poor is an integral part of true Christian faith.

✳ When the Sermon on the Mount says that we cannot serve God and mammon (wealth), we would teach that God expects His children to be rich in earthly possessions.

✳ When the Sermon on the Mount speaks of the road to Heaven being strait and narrow, our church would teach that anyone who has ever prayed a sinner’s prayer will certainly make it into Heaven.

✳ When the Sermon on the Mount says that the difference between building on the rock and building on sand is *obedience* to Christ’s commands, our church would teach that mental assent and verbal profession to a creed (with no real change in our life) would be all that was needed to be “on the Rock”.

As you meditate on these thoughts and allow God to speak to you through them, please consider these words from His Holy Word:

Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? (Luke 6:46)

Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (1 John 2:3-4)

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write . . . because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. (Revelation 3:14-17)

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (2 Corinthians 6:17-18)

