
THE BEATITUDES

QUESTIONS:

- 1) When Jesus taught the “*Sermon on the Mount*,” whose doctrine did He teach?
- 2) What is the purpose of an inaugural address?
- 3) What does the word “*blessed*” mean in the Bible?
- 4) Why is it difficult to convert people today?
- 5) When people lose weight, what do they never have?
- 6) What is the Bible way of describing people who are “*thick-skinned*”?
- 7) Why did the woman in 2 Kings 6 get upset when her neighbor hid her son?
- 8) When a student finally understands an algebra problem, what does he say?

INTRODUCTION

The beatitudes are found in Matthew 5:3-12. They each begin with: “*Blessed are the ...*”

- Poor in spirit
- Those who mourn
- The meek

The name **beatitude** suggests “**beautiful attitudes**” which men must possess to go to heaven.

THE SETTING

What caused Jesus to preach these things?

After being baptized by John, Jesus began preaching the *“Gospel of the kingdom.”*

Matthew 4:23

23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching **the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.

Because He was preaching the *“Gospel of the kingdom”* and healing people, great multitudes began to follow Him:

Matthew 5:1-2

1 And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him.

2 Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

This sermon stretches through chapters 5, 6 and 7. At the end of this discourse it is recorded:

Matthew 7:28-29

28 And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at **His teaching**,

29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

“His teaching” – not Moses’ doctrine, but Jesus’ own teachings.

Thus, at the beginning of the sermon on the mount it was called:

- **“The Gospel of the kingdom”**

And at the end of the sermon:

- **“His doctrine”**

This sermon, then, is an explanation of NT doctrine, not OT doctrine.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Since the time was fulfilled and the *“kingdom of heaven”* was at hand, the *“sermon on the mount”* becomes sort of an inaugural address.

ILL: A newly elected president gives an inaugural address to explain what you can expect during his term in office.

Jesus is then explaining what things will be like in His kingdom and in the process:

He attacks the Jewish misconceptions of the Messianic kingdom!

“BLESSED”

Each beatitude is introduced with *“blessed.”* This is usually defined as *“happy.”* In fact, Robert Shuller wrote a book entitled, *“The Be-Happy Attitudes.”*

- I object to this definition! It leaves the impression that these beatitudes are optional and should be practiced only if you want to be happy!
- But they are more than attitudes that make men happy. They are attitudes which men **must have** to be saved.

blessed – *“God approved”*

- The first time it is used is Gen 1:28, “**God blessed them,**” meaning, they were approved by God.
- When we bless God (e.g. Gen 24:27), we do not mean He is happy. We approve of God and His ways.

Thus, the blessed man is the one that is approved by God. In order to have God’s approval, he must let his life be molded by the principles that are found in these beatitudes.

POOR IN SPIRIT

Matthew 5:3

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The Jews (premillennialists) thought the “*kingdom*” would be ***a time of great prosperity!*** NO!

Jesus: “Blessed are the poor in spirit!”

Someone “*poor in spirit*” is someone who realizes they are spiritually bankrupt.

- I've got nothing to pay for my sins.
- If I obey every single command God gives from this day forward, I am still saved by grace.

Luke 17:10

10 So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, '**We are unprofitable servants.** We have done what was our duty to do.'

Psychologists today would argue with Christ on this point. They are busy trying to convince us that we are valuable and worth more than we think we are:

- Don't feel guilty.
- Don't belittle yourself.
- Don't blame yourself.
- You are valuable.
- You are the most important person in your life.

It gets confusing because we have school teachers and scientists trying to convince us that we aren't much more than an intelligent animal:

- You evolved from an ape.
- Your cousin was a chimp.
- **Environmentalists:** The eggs of a Bald Eagle are more valuable than the fetus of a human mother.
- The dolphins of the sea are more valuable than the unborn child.

The Biblical response to these two schools of thought is this:

1) Man is superior to and more valuable than any animal.

Genesis 1:26

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

No animal was created in the image of God. We are at least more valuable than any beast.

2) Although more valuable than a beast, we are worthless without Christ.

John 14:6

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through Me.**

Man's greatest problem is not that he is too hard on himself. Man's greatest problem is **pride!** Man tends to think of himself as being better than he really is and deserving better than he gets.

This is why it's difficult to convert people today:

- They don't think they've been that bad. (Certainly not bad enough to deserve hell.)
- They don't think they're at fault when they did wrong.

It was the way they were raised.

It was their environment.

It was their circumstances.

It wasn't their fault when they did wrong.

- Someone else drove them to do what they did.
- Someone else is to blame for their misdeeds.
- Anyone else in the same circumstances would have done the same.

It's time for us to see ourselves as we really are:

- Sinners!
- Deserving of hell!
- Worthless and helpless without Christ!
- Responsible for our actions – not victims

THEY THAT MOURN

Matthew 5:4

4 Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.

The Jews (premillennialists) thought the “kingdom” would be *a time of great rejoicing!*

Jesus: “Blessed are those that mourn!”

In context, the mourning and weeping is because we have finally realized how poor we are without Christ! These people are blessed because only when men realize their lost condition will they be moved to do something about it!

2 Corinthians 7:10

10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, **not to be regretted ...**

You will never regret repentance.

ILL: It’s like losing weight – did you ever meet someone who was fat, lost weight and regretted it? Never! Even if they have to spend money to buy a whole new wardrobe, they’re happy. They don’t care the budget was busted buying new clothes, they’re thankful to get into a smaller size. There’s no regrets!

That’s the way repentance is. “*Godly sorrow*” moves people to repentance, and there are no regrets for a move like that!

The problem in our society is that too many people are proud of their sins. They ought to be ashamed and humiliated, but they are brazenly bold in their sinfulness:

- Gay rights
- Pro-choice
- Women’s rights
- Civil rights
- Children’s rights
- Animal rights

On and on we go. Everyone brazenly committing sin in the name of “*rights.*” If you dare suggest that some of these things are wrong ... well ...

- Outrage
- “Homo-phobe”
- “Sexist”
- “Radical, right-wing fanatic”
- “Narrow-minded bigot”
- “Un-American”

Man called in to **“Bible Talk” (March 6, 1993)** when the subject was, ***“Should we be intolerant over religious matters?”***

(We had thumbtacked an announcement for Bible Talk onto this fellow's mailbox post. We had been told by a clerk at the post office this was acceptable. The clerk was misinformed, but that's what he told us and that's what we did.)

Here's what he said:

“First Amendment of the constitution of the United States says, “... Congress shall pass no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” So therefore you are un-American.

Secondly, you have nailed this thing to my post office box ... that is in clear violation of Federal laws. You cannot do that. The mailbox is owned by the Post Office Department and you violated my Federal Laws by messing with my post office box. My name is (_____). My number is (_____) and I'm turning you in to the Post Office.”

Everyone has their “rights” you see!

What ever happened to shame?

Jeremiah 6:15

15 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; Nor did they know how to blush. ...

This is our society today. This was the society of the first century too. But when men are converted to Christ, they mourn and are ashamed of their past.

THE MEEK

Matthew 5:5

5 Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.

The Jews (premillennialists) thought the “*kingdom*” would be ***a time of aggression and military offensiveness!***

Jesus: “Blessed are the meek.”

Meekness is sometimes thought of as “*weakness*.” The general idea is a coward. This is wrong.

Numbers 12:1-3

- 1 Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman.
- 2 So they said, “Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?” And the LORD heard it.
- 3 (Now the man Moses was very **humble** (meek - KJV), more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)

Moses was a meek man, but he was not a coward.

- He killed an Egyptian for beating a fellow Hebrew.
- While most men would have ran from the burning bush, he turned aside to see it closer.
- He and Aaron stood before Pharaoh alone to demand the release of Israel.
- While the Israelites were begging that God not speak to them directly, Moses had to ascend the mountain into the smoke, lightning and thundering to receive the law.

So meekness is not cowardice.

Meekness ⇔ humility.

Meekness is the opposite of pride.

When someone is proud:

- **There's a limit of what they will obey.** They might obey some commands (confessing christ), but there's a limit of how humiliated they will allow themselves to become (worshiping with other races).
- **There's a limit of what they will admit to when they do wrong.** Proud people won't admit they sinned. They might admit to "indiscretion" or "unwise judgment," but not sin.
- **There's a limit of what they will put up with.** Proud people are easily offended. They think they deserve better treatment than what they get sometimes.

It's hard to insult a humble person.

- "You're the worst excuse I've ever seen for a human being!" ⇒ I know it.
- "Your sermon was boring!" ⇒ I know it.
- "You're a terrible speaker!" ⇒ I know it.
- "You're not much of a song leader either!" ⇒ I know it.

- The reason you can't insult them is because they're humble.
- The reason they're humble is because they know they're spiritually bankrupt (poor in spirit).

Let me tell you a secret about disciples who are always getting their feelings hurt: ***They may not be disciples!***

NOTE: This tells us something about the Lord's kingdom. Citizens of the kingdom are commanded to do things which cannot be done by proud people.

If you can't humble yourself and take criticism and admit when you're wrong, there's no need to apply for entrance into this kingdom!

"They shall inherit the earth" – Does this support the claims of the Watchtower Society that the earth will be a permanent paradise after Judgment Day?

Notice the following passages within this same sermon:

Matthew 5:12

12 “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward **in heaven** ...

Matthew 6:19-20

19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

20 “but lay up for yourselves treasures **in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

“*Earth*” can be translated “*land*.”

The “*land*” of the OT promise referred to the “*Promised Land*.” – the Land of Canaan. The Land of Canaan was ***a type of heaven itself***.

Hebrews 11:16

16 But now **they desire a better**, that is, **a heavenly country**. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Hence, Mt 5:5 means simply that the meek (those who submit to heaven’s authority) will “*inherit the promised land*” – or the meek will go to heaven.

HUNGERING AND THIRSTING

Matthew 5:6

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled.

The Jews (premillennialists) thought the “*kingdom*” would be ***a time of great feasting and plenty!***

Jesus: “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst.”

righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) – “justification”

Notice the progression:

- 1) *The poor in spirit*
- 2) *Those mourning over their poverty*
- 3) *Those willing to humble themselves*
- 4) *Those hungering and thirsting to be justified*

These who “*hunger and thirst*” are blessed because they are so starved they would do anything necessary to satisfy their appetites! No matter what God says, they would gladly do it because they’re hungry and thirsty.

We have a hard time understanding this – because we’re all overweight!

Perhaps no desires are so strong as eating and drinking. When people get hungry enough they are willing to do anything for food.

ILL: When Syria was besieging Samaria the people walled up in the city began to starve to death:

2 Kings 6:26-29

26 Then, as the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried out to him, saying, “Help, my lord, O king!”

27 And he said, “If the LORD does not help you, where can I find help for you? From the threshing floor or from the winepress?”

28 Then the king said to her, “What is troubling you?” And she answered, “This woman said to me, ‘Give your son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.’”

29 “So we boiled my son, and ate him. And I said to her on the next day, ‘Give your son, that we may eat him’; but she has hidden her son.”

It is hard to say why the second woman was hiding her son.

- He may have still been alive and she was concerned for his life.
- She may have been saving him so she could eat him all by herself; she probably didn’t want to share him.

One reason some people are not converted, and stay converted is they are not yet hungry and thirsty enough. They are not hungry and thirsty because they do not see their poverty without Christ.

THE MERCIFUL

Matthew 5:7

7 Blessed are the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.

To **the Jews** (premillennialists) the “*kingdom*” meant ***a time when Jews would finally take revenge on the Gentiles!*** NO!

Jesus: “**Blessed are the merciful.**”

Q: What is mercy?

mercy – ***not*** giving people what they deserve

Being merciful does not mean “*easy going.*” Isn’t that sort of what we think of?

- To many, mercy is seeing sin and looking the other way. He’s the guy that says, “We all sin from time to time, so I’m not going to say anything.”
- He’s easy going, easy to get along with and cares not whether laws are broken.

Remember, God is merciful, but He does not ignore law breaking! If I think of mercy at the expense of truth and law, then I have the wrong concept.

Luke 6:36

36 “Therefore be merciful, just **as your Father** also is merciful.

Well ... if we are to be merciful like God, we must ask: How does God show mercy?

Exodus 20:6

6 [I show] mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

Proverbs 28:13

13 He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

God does not show mercy to men who blatantly and rebelliously sin. But if men will forsake their evil ways and seek forgiveness, there is **abundance** of mercy ... there is no limit to the mercy then!

That's how God is and we are to be like God in showing mercy!

- We will be abundantly patient and merciful toward those who are receptive to the truth and seeking forgiveness, but
- Our patience and mercy are limited toward those who rebel against the truth!

“They shall obtain mercy” – and we need all we can get on Judgment Day (cf. 2 Tim 1:16-18).

James 2:13

13 For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

PURE IN HEART

Matthew 5:8

8 Blessed are the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.

The Jews (premillennialists) thought the “*kingdom*” would mean, “***Blessed is the pure bloodline***” – the pure 100% Jew.

Jesus: “Blessed are the PURE in heart!”

Can you see that Jesus is emphasizing the spiritual nature of His kingdom???

“pure in heart” – those whose minds, motives and principles are pure. Those who are holy inside as well as outside.

- No ulterior motives!
- They’re seeking after God because they want to – not because of mom & dad.

The “*pure in heart*” are those who have received forgiveness.

Although Jesus does not specify here how the heart is purified, we discover in other verses it is by faith and obedience.

Acts 15:9

9 “and made no distinction between us and them, **purifying their hearts by faith.**”

1 Peter 1:22

22 Since **you have purified your souls in obeying the truth ...**

“They shall see God”

- No man has seen God at any time (Jn 1:18).
- No man can see God’s face and live (Ex 33:20).

What then does Jesus mean here?

1 John 3:6

6 Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither **seen** Him nor known Him.

The one who *keeps on sinning* has not “seen” God and does not know Him.

3 John 11

11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not **seen** God.

If one who habitually sins has not **seen** God, this implies that one who habitually does good has seen God!

ILL: Sometimes we say, “Oh, I see ...” By this we mean we *understand*.

To see God is to understand Him. Those who sin cannot understand what God is all about! He doesn’t make sense to them. They ask things like:

- “If there is a God, why does He allow **wars, suffering, injustices ...?**”

Those who are “*pure in heart*” understand what God is all about.

PEACEMAKERS

Matthew 5:9

9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.

The Jews (premillennialists) were expecting the kingdom to be *a time of world-wide peace after they had conquered their enemies.*

Jesus: “Blessed are the peacemakers.”

NOTE: A peacemaker is only needed when fighting exists! This implies that the “*kingdom*” would exist in the midst of fightings and war!

The time of the “*kingdom*” would not be a time of worldwide peace!

John 18:36

36 Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, ...”

Now ... there are two kinds of “*peacemakers*”:

- **piece-makers**
- **peace-makers** (these are the ones approved of God!)

To truly be peacemakers, we must change our views:

1) Must have a new view of self

When I think only of myself, there is going to be war!

1 Corinthians 10:24

24 Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being.

2) Must learn to view things in light of the Gospel

Instead of asking: “*How will this affect ME?*” ask, “How will this affect:

- the church?
- the cause?
- outsiders?
- babes in Christ?

Philippians 2:4

4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

To be peacemakers we cannot be seeking our own welfare first!

“They shall be called children of God” – these are the ones *“approved of God”*!

THE PERSECUTED

Matthew 5:10-12

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil
against you falsely **for My sake**.

12 “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so
they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Let me tell you, there’s more in these verses than meets the eye!

It is saying that a disciple persecuted for Jesus is equal to a prophet persecuted for God!

This could only be true if Jesus = God.

Now **the Jews** (premillennialists) thought *persecution would cease* when the Messiah would come and set up His kingdom! NO!

Jesus: “That’s when persecution begins ... Blessed are the persecuted.”

Jesus is not saying that everyone who suffers is blessed. There are certain attributes which must be present before suffering can be a blessing:

- **It must be undeserved** (1 Pet 4:15-16)
- **It must be for “righteousness’ sake”**
- **It must be viewed as a blessing**

Our **attitude** plays a major role in whether we receive a blessing from persecution! We will either:

- **Get discouraged and give up, or**
- **Become more determined to live for Jesus!**

CONCLUSION

People today are searching for approval. *“Peer pressure”* causes kids to do things for approval.

- Earrings
- Nose rings
- Other rings
- Baggy pants

But we must seek **God’s approval** and Jesus is showing us how to be *“approved of God”* – blessed.

Jesus is here giving the essential characteristics one must possess to be a citizen in His kingdom.