

BEATITUDES



When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled. - Matthew 5:1-6

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INTRODUCTION

Several years ago my thinking changed about being a disciple of Jesus. I began to see how my faith was mostly creed and concept oriented. I decided to put myself in the sandals of those early disciples who followed Jesus. They did not have the letters of the New Testament but they had Jesus. What were the first lessons he taught them?

Jesus not only demonstrated the lifestyle of the kingdom but he also taught it to his first apprentices. This course is the first part of his teaching from the Sermon on the Mount. **God is not just interested in right doctrine but also in right attitudes, relationships and lifestyles.** In 1994 I was asked to write a correspondence course on the Beatitudes by a Bible School in London, England. They were surprised when I gave them this material, for they expected a basic and simple course rather than this more advanced one. My research and writing had taken me over 200 hours! I do pray that your spiritual life will be greatly enhanced by going slowly through this teaching. Thanks to the Holy Spirit for the many insights and also to many teachers who provided additional ideas. Credits are given to them at the end of this course in the bibliography. Thanks for joining us.

- John Beckerink

Note: in recent years I have enhanced this course with new insights

On November 19, 1853, two men came to Pennsylvania to dedicate a Union cemetery, the patriotic orator Edward Everett and Abraham Lincoln, the President of the United States. Everett spoke first and was impressively eloquent for one hour and 57 minutes. Lincoln spoke for two minutes. History does not remember Everett's speech, but it will never forget Lincoln's Gettysburg address. Many powerful and eloquent sermons have been preached in the past 2000 years, but most of them are forgotten. History will not forget Jesus' 20 minute Sermon on the Mount. Jesus took on many roles. **Preachers proclaim** a message and **teachers explain** it. Jesus

did both, and before the sermon he gave **demonstrations of kingdom** compassion, power, authority, healing and deliverance - Matthew 4:12-25. This is the example of Jesus. He lived a message before he spoke it.

..... I wrote about all that Jesus began to Do and to Teach. - Acts 1:1

The large crowds then and now follow miracles, but they are often only superficial believers - John 2:23-25. **Jesus looks for those who will follow him for who he is, not for what he can do for them.** (see our message: **2 Ducks and a Chicken** in the **Following Jesus** section)

TRAINING FOR REIGNING

Prince Charles visited the USA in 1979. A reporter asked him what it was like to know that he would one day wear the crown of England. Without hesitation he answered 'Rough!' He went on to describe the discipline of being groomed for the royal throne. He had to learn several languages, master history, math, sciences, become expert in heraldry, diplomacy, protocol and serve in the military. At the end of the interview he said it was still rough, as he did not have a life of his own. Prince Charles was being trained every waking hour to reign on the throne.

Something similar is being required of the **true disciples of Jesus Christ.** They are **being trained to reign in this life and in the future kingdom that Jesus will set up.** When we think of a king who reigns, we might picture him on a mighty throne and giving orders to his servants, subjects and citizens throughout a vast empire. He lives a life of ease, luxury, self-indulgence with many properties and possessions. We see many examples of this throughout the Bible but this aspect of kingship is only about external things. Many of the kings in the Bible and throughout history had personal lives that were out of control and very undisciplined. Jesus has something better for us.

Our conquest as disciples begins from the inside out, for it is not external but internal. **The internal conquest** must precede **the external conquest.** The Sermon on the Mount is our kingdom constitution. It describes the kingdom attitudes and lifestyle of kingdom citizens who are under the control of King Jesus via the Holy Spirit. In fact, the word **disciple** can refer to one who is a **'disciplined learner.'** Much like Prince Charles, a Christian does not have a life of his own while he is being trained to reign.

*Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? **You are not your own, you were bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your body.** - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NIV*

The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. - Romans 5:17 NIV

*For the kingdom of God consists of and is based on not talk but power - **moral power** and excellence of soul. - 1 Corinthians 4:20 Amplified*

*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty. And he who **rules his spirit** than he who takes a city. - Proverbs 16:32 NKJV*

For disciples of Jesus, school is always in session. Jesus walked around Israel with his disciples and used the world around them to illustrate lessons about the kingdom of God. He talked about sheep, goats, vineyards, fishing, weather, camels, birds, flowers, wheat, water, weddings, money etc. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus uses about 50 figures of speech. His sermon also addressed the contrast between the views of the religious leaders and political activists of the day with those of His kingdom. Note: kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God are the same - Matthew 19:23-24. Matthew was written for Jews in that day. They were careful about the overuse of God's name, so it refers to the kingdom as of heaven instead of God.

Persons **Characteristics and Attitudes**

Pharisees Jesus	Pietistic proud traditionalists who wanted to Go Back to external legalism Don't do your acts of righteousness to be seen by men - Matthew 6:1
Sadducees Jesus	Skeptical and rich priestly party who wanted to Go Ahead in money and power. Don't store up earthly treasures nor serve money as a master - Matthew 6:19,24
Zealots Jesus	Violent political activists who sought to Go Against Israel's enemies (Romans) Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you - Matthew 5:43-44
Essenes Jesus	Escapists and isolationists who desired to Go Away from the world. You are to be salt and light in the world that they may see. - Matthew 5:15-16 Man looks at outward things, but God looks at the heart. True change is an inside job that comes from a kingdom not of this world.

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come visibly, nor will people say, 'Here it is' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." - Luke 17:20-21 NIV

Before we explore the Beatitudes, let's take a quick overview of the whole Sermon on the Mount in order to get some context. The first part of the sermon deals with the 'internal conquest' over: * **desires** / 5:6 * **emotions** / 5:22 * **thoughts** / 5:28
 * **unfaithfulness** / 5:32 * **words** / 5:37 * **revenge** / 5:38-44

God has called us to be Sons / 5:45. The word Son there is Greek/ huiois which is not so much a reference to birth but **growth and maturity**. We become a child /teknon through spiritual birth from above - John 1:12, 3:3-8. However, Son/ huiois stresses the **dignity and character** of the relationship. Sons are those children who matured to adults and thus are like their parent in character. When I was a boy, I did not look much like my father, but as I got older, people could see the physical resemblance. The same should be true in the spiritual realm, as our character becomes more like our Heavenly Father. The **key verse** of the whole sermon is this:

Be perfect, therefore as your Heavenly Father is perfect. -Matthew 5:48 NIV

But you must always act like your Father in heaven. -Contemporary English Version

**You however are to be complete in goodness, as your Heavenly Father is complete.
- Weymouth New Testament**

**You therefore, will be perfect [growing into spiritual maturity both in mind and character, actively integrating godly values into your daily life], as your Heavenly Father is perfect.
- Amplified Version**

**‘I am the embryo of the man who is to be perfect as the Father is perfect.’
-E. Stanley Jones**

A SON IN HEBREW LIFE

A son is not a son in Hebrew life until he has willfully chosen to be completely identified with the purposes of the father, and he does so, knowing that he will no longer have any right to his own self-serving purposes and will. It is a radical crossing over and a resting in the father and his purposes. When the father recognizes that consecration, he ‘adopts’ or ‘approves’ the son and says: ‘This day I have begotten you.’ Until then, the son was treated as a servant, and his actual sonship waited on a **total consecration to the purposes and will of his father.**
- Simon Hensman

Three Dimensions of Perfection

I. Positional Perfection / Justification / spirit 1 Corinthians 2:6, Colossians 2:10,
Hebrews 10:14

‘God did not overlook your sins, lest he endorse them. He did not punish you lest he destroy you. He instead found a way to punish the sin and preserve the sinner. Jesus took your punishment, and God gave you credit for Jesus’ perfection. - Max Lucado

II. Practical Perfection / Sanctification / soul / Present Process

- * Be transformed by the renewing of your mind - Romans 12:1-2
- * Maturing process Colossians 4:12, Ephesians 4:11-13, 5:25-27, Revelation 19:7

God’s Means or Agents of Perfection

- * **The Word of God** 1 Peter 2:22, 2 Timothy 3:16, Colossians 3:16, Psalm 119
You can read through the whole Bible in 80 hours (see our message:
Around the Word in 80 hours in the Word of God section)
- * **The Holy Spirit** Galatians 3:3, 5:16,25 Ephesians 5:18
Be filled and under the influence of the Holy Spirit
- * **Five Fold Ministry** Ephesians 4:11 Sit under the influence of Apostles, Prophets,
Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers who are to be equippers.
- * **Trials and Sufferings** Acts 14:22, James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 5:9-10, Daniel 12:9-10
Gold is purified through heat and fire, so are God’s people

III. Ultimate Perfection / Glorification / body / Future Philippians 3:12, Hebrews 12:23, 1 John 3:2, 1 Corinthians 15:42-44

Matthew 6 deals with good things that are done in a wrong manner. God is interested in **motives**, not just actions. The rest of the sermon deals with the priorities and provisions in God's kingdom. It is a kingdom that turns the world upside down with its life giving counter culture. Acts 17:6. We have the advantage of hindsight of history and time to reflect and meditate on God's Word. It's only been in the last few years that I have discovered an important lesson of how to interpret Scripture.

We need to remember that much of Scripture was not written to us but for us. First we must seek to understand to whom the message was directed and how they would have understood it in their cultural context.

This is a mistake often made in understanding the parables of Jesus. We look for hidden meanings in all the illustrations, whereas Jesus mainly wants the listeners to take heed to the important point at the end. Now we will try to put ourselves in the place of those first listeners to Jesus on that hill in Israel for the greatest teaching by the greatest teacher.

The Sermon on the Mount:

- The King's Proclamation and Manifesto - The King's New Way of Living
- Jesus' School for Servant Kings - Kingdom Constitution - The Christian's Counterculture
- Training for Reigning - A Portrait of a Christ Filled Life

Christians could call the Beatitudes:

THE DECLARATION OF DEPENDENCE

Blessed = Happy, to be envied and spiritually prosperous [that is with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions.] - Amplified translation

You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. **Jesus cast a big vision.** Those early disciples could not have imagined how much their lives would be changed over the next few years and how much their influence would transform the world for generations to come. Jesus taught and lived the message of the Sermon on the Mount. The world would never be the same. Are you ready to be a world-changer? It starts in you...from the inside out.

jesusreigns.net

Note: You may notice in my teachings, that I like to use charts of comparisons and also to use contrasts and opposites. eg. when I first wrote the beatitudes I felt it was good to also give the opposite traits of woes to provide better understanding. When I began to meditate on Matthew 3, I was struck by the concept of the 'ax is at the root of trees'. Then I saw how the focus was all about the HEART. God wants to change our hearts. - John B