

TRUTH

“... Your word is truth” (John 17:17)

March 2025

“BLESSED ARE THE MEEK”

Likely the most familiar of all the teaching Jesus did is found in Matthew 5-7. Matthew 4:23 tells us that Jesus preached “*the gospel of the kingdom.*” The Sermon on the Mount has been called “the constitution of the kingdom.” The beginning of this sermon is made up of the beatitudes — principles of character that must be developed by all who follow Jesus and would be in His kingdom. I believe that none of the beatitudes are less appealing to our culture than the third, in which Jesus said, “*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth*” (Matthew 5:5).

Meekness often is associated with timidity. In several dictionaries, online and in print, meekness is defined as being “overly submissive or compliant.” The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines “meek” as being “deficient in spirit and courage.” So, when we hear the word “meek,” we may tend to associate it with one who is a pushover, one who lacks courage, or one who does not know how to stand up for himself.

The word “meek” seldom appears in English translations, except in the KJV. In fact, “meek” or “meekness” only appears ten times in the NKJV, ten times in the ESV, and three times in the NASB. But it appears thirty times in the KJV. The one passage where the term “meek” is consistently retained is in the third beatitude of Matthew 5:5.

In Greek word translated “meekness” is defined as “mildness of disposition [or] gentleness of spirit.” When this term appears elsewhere in the New Testament, it is typically translated as “gentleness.” In Galatians 5:23, “gentleness” is identified as one trait of the fruit of the Spirit, and in 1 Timothy 6:11, Timothy is instructed to “pursue” certain characteristics, including “gentleness.”

In Jesus’ day, meekness was associated with surrender. Look at what Jesus said regarding Himself: “*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle (‘meek,’ KJV) and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light*” (Matthew 11:28-30).

Two things stand out in this passage. First, Jesus connected meekness with a yoke. The Greek word from which we get the term “meek” was used in the days of Jesus to refer to the taming of an animal. When a strong animal, like a horse or an ox, was tamed so that it would follow orders, one would say that the animal has become meek.

So, the original idea of the word “meek” was “strength under control.” Meekness did not refer to one who was weak or cowardly. It referred to a person who had yielded his strength to God’s control. In the words of one preacher, “Meekness is the abdication of self-rule.”

The second thing to notice from this passage is that Jesus identified Himself as meek. When you reflect on the character and nature of Jesus, do you think He was a weakling or a coward? What about Moses, who was called “*very humble*” (“meek,” KJV), *more than all men who were on the face of the earth*” (Numbers 12:3)?

Consider the time in John 2:13-17 when Jesus entered the temple and discovered a marketplace where people should have been worshipping. He was so zealous at this blatant disregard for the sanctity of the Lord’s house that He made a whip, drove the people and the livestock away, overturned the tables, and scattered the proceeds of the moneychangers. Such a story is a clear indication that Jesus was not a weakling.

So, when Jesus said, “*Blessed are the meek,*” He was, in effect, saying, “Blessed are those who imitate Me because I am meek.”

Meekness results from a deliberate decision to relinquish power or control of self to God. That is what disciples were called to do when Jesus said, “*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me*” (Luke 9:23). So, this beatitude, which says “*Blessed are the meek,*” is not calling the timid blessed. Instead, it is pronouncing a blessing on those who, in their strengths, are willing to be yoked and guided by the Lord.

-- Dave Leonard

TAKEAWAYS FROM 2 SAMUEL 5-6

In these two chapters, we read that David began to reign over all of God's chosen people. David shifted his residence to Jerusalem, and he brought the ark of the covenant to that city as well.

5:1-9 – David began to reign over all Israel in Jerusalem. The elders of Israel made a covenant with David, reminding him that Jehovah had told him, “*You shall shepherd My people Israel, and be ruler over Israel*” (5:2). David began to reign at the age of thirty and ruled for forty years (5:4). David's reign as king can be broken down into two phases: (1) in Hebron over Judah for seven years and six months and (2) in Jerusalem over all Israel for thirty-three years (5:5).

It was not until David's reign that Jerusalem became “the center” of Israel's activities. That was about four hundred years after Israel entered Canaan. When David and his men conquered Jerusalem, his stronghold there was Zion, which became known as “*the city of David*” (5:6,7). Context is so important when studying the Bible. In the New Testament, “*the city of David*” refers to a different place — Bethlehem (Luke 2:4), which was David's hometown.

5:10 – At this stage of David's life, Jehovah was with him. It is written, “*So David went on and became great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him.*”

5:12 – David realized that the Lord had put him in the position of king and had blessed him for a reason: “*He had exalted His kingdom for the sake of His people Israel*” (5:12). Those who serve in the church today always need to remember that all we do is for the Lord and His people, not for our personal glory.

5:13-16 – In Jerusalem, David had sons from several different wives and concubines. These women were in addition to the multiple wives the king already had in Hebron (3:2-5). This was despite God's clear instruction in the Law of Moses about any king over the Israelites: “*Neither shall he multiply wives for himself*” (Deuteronomy 17:17).

5:17-25 – David's encounters with the Philistines. As he did on previous occasions, when David faced battles with the Philistines, he inquired of Jehovah whether or not he should go fight against them. After he received God's answers (and the answers were not always the same), he complied with what the Lord told him to do: “*And David did so, as the LORD commanded him*” (5:25). It is never an insignificant thing to submit to what the Lord has commanded!

6:1-10 – David's initial attempt to bring the ark of the covenant to the city of David did not go well. What happened? The Israelites transported the ark on a new cart (6:3). You might recall that the Philistines had used the same method when they sent the ark

back to Israel in Samuel's day (1 Samuel 6:7-11). According to the law of Moses, the ark was supposed to be moved by putting poles through the rings on the sides of it and then carried by Levites (Exodus 25:10,14). The Israelites got “off track” when they tried to transport the ark in the way that seemed best to them. We must learn to do things God's way and not according to our own reasoning.

As Israel transported the ark, Uzzah made a fatal mistake when he touched the ark. Here is the Bible's record of what transpired: “. . . *Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God*” (6:6,7). What Uzzah did was wrong — it was an “error” (6:7), a violation of God's law. No one was permitted to touch the ark (Numbers 4:5,6,15).

God's response to what Uzzah did reminds us that: (1) Disobeying God is never a small matter; (2) good intentions do not compensate for or remove the guilt of not obeying God; (3) God's wrath can be poured out not only on those outside His family, but even on those who are part of His chosen people.

What was David's response to what happened with Uzzah? At first, he was angry (6:8). Then, he was afraid of the Lord (6:9). David wondered, “*How can the ark of the LORD come to me?*” (6:9). He left the ark in Obed-Edom's house for three months (6:11).

6:12-19 – David's second effort to bring the ark to the city of David was successful. Israel brought the ark of God and placed it in a tabernacle which he had erected for it (6:17). It was a joyous occasion, as the Israelites made offerings, David danced, and there was shouting accompanied by instruments of music (6:13-15). Not everyone was elated, though. Michal, David's wife, despised David in her heart and rebuked him for what she considered to be shameless conduct (6:16,20-23).

In order to get a more complete picture of why the second attempt to move the ark was successful, we need to consider the record found in First Chronicles 15:11-29. The Israelites took the task seriously, as “*the priests and Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark*” (15:14). It also is stated that, in this case, “*God helped the Levites who bore the ark of the covenant*” (15:26). How had David and Israel failed on their first attempt to relocate the ark? They “*did not consult Him about the proper order*” (15:13). They failed to seek for and heed what God wanted and did it their own way — that is *always* a recipe for disaster!

-- Roger D. Campbell

Practical Suggestions for Christians Who Are Grieving

Some things that we experience in life are quite unpleasant, even painful. Losing a special person is like that. When Jesus' disciples are grieving the loss of someone, what suggestions could we offer?

- Embrace the notion that it is not wrong to grieve. Grieving is part of the human experience, and that holds true for Christians as well as those who are not. First-century saints grieved when they lost a person who was special to them (Mark 16:10; Acts 8:2).

- Take your heart's burden to the Lord. He tells us to come to His throne of grace to receive mercy, grace, and help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16). He wants us to cast our care on Him (1 Peter 5:7).

- Acknowledge that the one about whom you cared so much has died and will not return. When Abraham lost his beloved Sarah, he openly referred to her as "dead" multiple times (Genesis 23:4,8,12).

- Read and meditate on the Scriptures. They can help provide perspective and comfort. "*I have remembered Your judgments of old, O LORD, and have comforted myself*" (Psalm 119:52).

- God made us with the capacity to remember (2 Timothy 1:5). Hang on to your precious memories.

- Guard your heart from anger/bitterness with God (Ephesians 4:31). Yes, you lost a special person, and your pain is real. But, no, the Lord is not unloving or unfair. Being upset with Him is never appropriate.

- Rather than focus on what is missing in your life, thank God for His ongoing blessings (Colossians 3:15).

- When possible, accept the kindness of others. When others see you grieving, they may pay special attention to you. They have good intentions. Do not unconditionally reject their offer to help you and their efforts to comfort/encourage you. At times, we are a blessing to others when we allow them to serve us.

- Try not to "beat yourself up" over missed opportunities or mistakes you made that now are impossible to undo. We may have regrets for things we failed to do or say, but we cannot change the past. Let us strive to press onward (Philippians 3:13,14).

- If the one whom we lost was a loyal servant of Jesus, take comfort in knowing he/she will be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:17,18).

- The thought of moving on with our life can feel overwhelming. Rather than worry about what lies ahead, try to take it one day at a time (Matthew 6:34).

For some people, their grieving may never cease as long as they are living on the earth. The sorrow, however, may become less intense with the passing of time and other changes which occur in life.

-- Roger D. Campbell

When will Jesus return to set up His kingdom?

When it comes to the Christ's return, our question involves (1) the *timing* and (2) the *purpose* of His coming. Many people are interested in these matters. What do the Scriptures teach?

Fact: Jesus will return. He told His apostles, "*I will come again*" (John 14:3). When those men saw their Lord ascend to heaven, two of God's messengers informed them, "*This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven*" (Acts 1:11). It is incontrovertible: Jesus will come again!

Fact: In the Bible, the Christ is pictured as a King Who would have a kingdom. According to Old Testament prophecies, the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem and be known as "*the One to be Ruler in Israel*" (Micah 5:2). The BRANCH "*shall sit and rule on His throne*" (Zechariah 6:12,13). The angel Gabriel predicted that Jesus would be given David's throne, reign over Jacob's house, and of His kingdom there will be no end (Luke 1:32,33). Look again at what the Christ would have: a throne, a reign, and a kingdom.

Fact: The Messiah has already established His kingdom. In about A.D. 61-63, Paul reminded the saints that God had conveyed them "*into the kingdom of the Son of His love*" (Colossians 1:13). Those Christians were in Jesus' kingdom. That could be true only if His kingdom already existed! The apostle John declared that he, too, was in the kingdom in the first century (Revelation 1:9). Jesus now has preeminence in all things: He rules as Head of His church, which is His spiritual kingdom among men (Colossians 1:18).

What about the *timing* of our Lord's return? The Lord God knows everything: He has revealed part of what He knows to mankind, but other things He has kept to Himself (Deuteronomy 29:29). God has not revealed when Jesus will come again. The Christ said, "*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only*" (Matthew 24:36). Thus, it is folly for humans to attempt to identify exactly when Jesus will return. His coming, called "*the day of the Lord,*" is compared to a thief coming in the night (2 Peter 3:10), which points to our Lord coming at an unexpected time. The emphasis in the Bible is not on *when* Jesus will come again, but on our need to *be prepared* for that glorious occasion.

"When will Jesus return to set up His kingdom?" Friend, He is not coming to set up a kingdom. As we noted, He established His kingdom in the first century. His purpose in coming is to "*judge the world*" (Acts 17:31). The day of His coming is called "*the last day*" (John 12:48) and "*the day of judgment*" (2 Peter 3:7).

-- Roger D. Campbell

JESUS' CONVERSATION WITH NICODEMUS (John 3:1-12)

Only John's gospel account tells us of Jesus' conversation with a Jewish leader named Nicodemus. In fact, only John records any information about Nicodemus at all. Nicodemus' conversation with Jesus is found in John 3:1-12. What do we find in this brief—but profound—exchange?

- **Nicodemus comes to Jesus** (verses 1,2). What do we know about Nicodemus? We know he was a Pharisee. This sect of the Jews was more conservative than others, yet they were infamous for their traditions, which they often bound more strictly than the actual law of God. Among this group of Jews—generally radically opposed to Jesus—Nicodemus is a notable exception. We also are told Nicodemus was “*a ruler of the Jews*,” meaning he was a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin, to the Jews, was their high court. Clearly, Nicodemus was a man of considerable power and influence.

There are things we do not know about Nicodemus, however. Why did he come to Jesus at night? Some are determined to place Nicodemus in a negative light, claiming he was afraid of being seen talking to Jesus. Others have pointed out that a night meeting, away from all the crowds, might offer more privacy and “one-on-one” time with Jesus. Either answer is possible, but neither can be confirmed, for the Bible just does not give the actual reason. It does seem, from other accounts John gives of Nicodemus, that he came to Jesus because he was honestly seeking answers about just who Jesus was.

Nicodemus notably addressed Jesus as “*Rabbi*,” (meaning “master” or, by implication, “great teacher”) a title not used lightly among the Jews. He acknowledged Jesus' miracles as evidence that He was a teacher from God. Nicodemus, a great teacher himself, saw evidence, and it appears he was honest enough to realize he had come to One who was a far greater teacher than he was.

- **Jesus redirects the conversation** (verse 3). Jesus' response to Nicodemus is rather unexpected, as He changes the subject altogether to discuss the new birth. Perhaps this was related to what Nicodemus wanted to talk to Jesus about, or perhaps Jesus just knew it was what he needed to hear and learn about.

- **Nicodemus strives to understand** (verse 4). Nicodemus takes Jesus' statement very literally, which leads to obvious confusion and his follow-up question about a literal second birth. This theme occurs numerous times in John's gospel account, where people miss Jesus' point when He uses a physical illustration for some spiritual truth.

- **Jesus explains the new birth** (verses 5-8). First, Jesus reiterates the necessity of one's being “*born again*,” describing it as consisting of two elements: water and Spirit. He distinguishes the new birth from physical birth and compares it to the wind, which is unseen, yet discernable by its effects. Further discussion of these elements is available elsewhere (see *TRUTH* – March 2024, p. 3), but, put succinctly, to be born again is to be born of water and the Spirit, which means to be baptized into Christ according to the Spirit's teaching (compare John 1:13).

In the phrase “*born again*” (3,7), Jesus seems to use a bit of a play on words with the Greek word *anōthen*, which means “again” or “from above.” Both meanings accurately convey Jesus' teaching (and that of the entire New Testament). Salvation is so radical a change that it is a kind of *rebirth*, yet, at the same time, something that can only be effected *from above*.

- **Nicodemus again is confused** (verses 9-12). Nicodemus still struggles to understand and asks, essentially, “How is this possible?” Jesus responds with a mild rebuke toward this man who should have had a better perception of spiritual matters. Still, Jesus' compassion and patience are seen as He continues to help Nicodemus to grow in faith. It seems Nicodemus did grow, for he later defended Jesus against unjust criticism (John 7:50,51) and also helped Joseph bury Jesus after His death (John 19:38-42).

It is noteworthy that Jesus calls Nicodemus “*the teacher of Israel*” (verse 10, emphasis added). This tells the reader that Nicodemus was exceptionally well-known and perhaps even the top-ranking teacher in the Jewish community. The statement of verse 3, from one of the greatest scholars among the Jews, is compelling testimony regarding the powerful evidence that Jesus is, as He claimed, God in the flesh, the Messiah, and the only Savior for mankind.

From his conversation with Jesus, to his defense of Jesus, to his openly helping to bury Him, Nicodemus is truly a remarkable exception among the mostly unbelieving Pharisees. Though there is much not revealed about him, this is certain: when one of the great teachers of Israel came to **the** Teacher, we see the kind of faith development that John's gospel account was written to produce (see John 20:30,31). Are we listening and learning like Nicodemus?

-- Chad Dollahite

[Unless stated otherwise, all quotes in all articles of *TRUTH* come from the New King James Version; ©1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.]

TRUTH is published each month in order to help educate, edify, encourage, and equip the saints of God.