

# Christ's Beatitudes

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Who are the privileged people in this world? The world has its answers, but Christ gives the true answer in these beatitudes spoken in what has been called: "the Sermon on the Mount." There is great admiration for this sermon and people may claim to live by the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:12). If anything shows us our need for the grace of God, the necessity of the new birth, it is the Sermon on the Mount. Someone has said: "Show me a man who claims that he is living up to the standards of the Sermon on the Mount, and I will show you a man who either has never read it, does not understand what he is teaching, or is lying."

## Overview of the sermon on the Mount

**The setting in which he preached.** The beginning ministry of the Lord Jesus has evoked quite a response. It would have been easy to capitalize on his popularity and enlist 1000s of supporters for his cause; but He wants to make it crystal clear what being a disciple is all about. It is not easy-believism that promises peace, joy and happiness, without demanding anything in the way of repentance, the mortification of sin and holiness. Christ spells it out here.

**The sermon which he preached.** He climbs a mountain. This should remind us of what years before Moses did with the people of Israel encamped around that mountain. Here, the Prophet like unto Moses (Deut. 18:15) climbs the mountain and sets forth the Christian life. His people are different (Matt. 6:8), just as Israel was to be (Ex. 19:5-6). The theme for His sermon is the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 4:23). The points of His sermon

1. *The citizens of the kingdom (chap. 5:1-12)*
2. *The commandments of the kingdom (chap. 5:13-48)*
3. *The communion in the kingdom (chap. 6)*
4. *The challenge of the kingdom (chap. 7)*

When He preaches this sermon, He speaks with **authority**. To that end He sat down (vs. 1), and opened His mouth (Ps. 78:2), and the multitude is convinced of His authority (Matt. 7:29). This is especially clear when He says: "but I say unto you" (5:21-22; 27-28; 31-32; 33-34; 38-39; 43-44) He is contrasting the interpretation of the Jewish rabbis with his own, and making clear He has the exclusive right to interpret what the Word of God said and to do so infallibly. Lloyd Jones: "He was not a mere man; he was not a mere expounder of the law or just another scribe or Pharisee, or prophet. He was infinitely more than that, He was God the Son in the flesh presenting the truth of God." He also speaks **graciously** (Ps. 45:2)

**The students who came under His preaching.** Matthew tells us that after the Lord Jesus sat down "his disciples came unto him... and he taught them." At the end of the sermon we read that the people were astonished at his doctrine (7:28). For whom was the sermon intended then? The word "disciple" means pupil or learner and is not limited to the twelve (Jn. 6:66). It is clear the Lord Jesus has something to say to all of them. Therefore, it is not enough to hear His word; there must come a bond to the Saviour and

Teacher of this Word, confessing our ignorance, folly, slowness to learn, and He can make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15; Matt. 11:29).

## **Overview of the beatitudes**

**Pronouncement of blessing.** There are many beatitudes in the scriptures (Ps. 1:1; 32:1-2; Js. 1:12; 19:9). But there is no greater concentration of beatitudes as in Matthew 5:1-12. The first word of his sermon is blessed. We might have expected a series of curses. That is how the Old Testament ends (Mal. 4:6); and the Lord Jesus will pronounce curses too (Mt. 23). But here is the first word of the gospel: blessed. What is this blessedness about? Is it happiness? This is something that people seek for. Someone has said: "prosperity, success, popularity and good health are hopeless substitutes for a heart at rest in God." Thomas Watson: "A man may as well think to extract oil out of a flint, or fire out of water, as blessedness out of these terrestrial things." The Lord Jesus is not speaking of a subjective reality (not necessary the feeling of happiness), but an objective reality (the fact of blessedness). Blessedness is to know God's gracious favour (Lk. 1:48, 30). God is the only Giver of this blessing (Gen. 1:28-28; Num. 6:24-26). While His people do not always feel blessed, His verdict and His pronouncement are what matters. That is why Paul and Silas could sing in the middle of the night (Acts 16:25).

### **People described as blessed**

1. It gives a well-rounded description of a true Christian.
2. There is a logical sequence to these descriptions.
3. It describes a Spirit-worked character. Here are the birth-marks of the people of God.

### **Promise of blessing**

The second part of each beatitude contains a rich promise. The "shall" does not only speak of futurity but certainty. Already here and now, there is a partial fulfillment of the promise now in the gospel; but there also awaits the full experience of blessedness.