

## THE BEATITUDES – THE PRINCIPLES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The word *Beatitudes* is not in scripture, but what it defines is. The Beatitudes are the declarations of blessedness upon Christians in Christ's opening sentences in His Sermon on the Mount (CP Mt 5:1-11). These are the Beatitudes, they define the characteristics of Christians as expressed by Christ. When citing the Beatitudes Christ was laying down the principles of the Kingdom of God. They are a code of ethics and a standard of conduct for all professing Christians. They contrast Kingdom values with worldly values, contrast superficial faith with the faith by which Christ expects Christians to walk. The Beatitudes are not multiple choices. Christians cannot choose to regard some and disregard others – they must be conformed to as a whole for Christians to inherit the Kingdom of God. They set forth qualities and experiences that are combined in the ideal character of Christians. They show what Christians should be like as followers of Christ. Each Beatitude tells Christians how to be blessed, but here the word *blessed* means more than just being happy, its normal meaning. In the Beatitudes it implies the enviable state of those who have inherited God's Kingdom, "... for great is your reward in heaven" (CP V12). This of course only applies to those who conform to all the conditions of salvation laid down by Christ.

(CP V3, also Lu 6:20). This is the first Beatitude and the first principle Christ has laid down for the Kingdom of God, "... *blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*" Kingdom of Heaven and Kingdom of God are inter-changeable terms – they mean the same (CP Mt 19:23-24). *Poor in spirit* in the context of Mt 5:3 is the opposite of self-sufficiency (CP Mt 9:10-13; Lu 18:9-14). The poor in spirit recognize their spiritual helplessness without Christ, and God's saving grace (CP Ps 34:18; 51:16-17; Isa 57:15-16; 66:2). What pleases God more than any sacrifice is a penitent heart and a humble spirit that looks to Him for mercy when they sin. Christians in whom these principles manifest forego their own identities as individuals in order to possess the Kingdom. They see the Kingdom as the ultimate to be possessed (CP Mt 11:12). The *violent* here are those Christians who vigorously seek the Kingdom in all its power, no matter what it costs them. It is the responsibility of every professing Christian to seek unceasingly, in all its manifestations, the Kingdom of God.

(CP Mt 5:4). This is the second principle of the Kingdom of God – the second Beatitude: "*blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.*" This is not speaking of bereaving Christians, but of Christians who are grieved over their own weaknesses in relation to God's righteousness and Kingdom power (CP Lu 18:13-14), and are grieved in their spirit over the sin and immorality manifested in the world. They take upon themselves the burden for the souls of sinners and cry out to God for their salvation (CP Ro 9:1-3; 10:1-3; 2Cor 7:9-10; Ga 6:1-2; Jas 4:7-10; 2Pe 2:4-8). *They shall be comforted* means that they that mourn will be comforted by being saved – by inheriting the Kingdom of God and receiving from God righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (CP Isa 61:1-3; Ro 14:7).

(CP Mt 5:5). This is the third Beatitude and the third principle of the Kingdom of God. The *meek* here are

those who find their refuge in God and commit their way entirely to Him. They have a humble, mild, gentle, forbearing disposition. Meek is not weak as many think, but controlled strength in gentleness and forbearance; restraint coupled with strength and courage, although one can be meek but actively angry at evil (CP Mt 11:29; Ga 6:1; 2Ti 2:24-26 with Mt 21:12-13; 23:13-33; Mk 3:5; Ac 13:6-12; 1Cor 4:21). Paul's purpose in making Elymas blind in Ac 13:6-12 was to punish him for a time for resisting the gospel, and he had the backing of God in this (CP Mt 18:18; Jn 20:23). Jesus in Mt 21:12-13, and Paul in Ac 13:6-12, were both meek in their own cause, but actively angry in God's cause. In the second part of Mt 5:5 Jesus declared that the meek shall inherit the earth. They will literally inherit it when they rule and reign with Christ in eternity.

(CP Mt 5:6, also Lu 6:21). This is the fourth Beatitude and also the fourth principle of the Kingdom of God: "*blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.*" The spiritual condition of Christians right throughout their lives will depend on how much they hunger and thirst after righteousness. They must not allow that hunger and thirst to be destroyed by worldly anxiety and deceitfulness of riches (CP Mt 13:22), desire for things (CP Mk 4:19), worldly pleasures (CP Lu 8:14), and failure to abide in Christ (CP Jn 15:4). When the hunger for God and His righteousness is destroyed, those affected will forfeit their salvation, whereas those who continually hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled. They will rule and reign with Christ throughout eternity (CP Isa 55:1-3; Jn 4:14; 6:27,35). Mt 5:6 is one of the most important verses in scripture, for the foundational requirement for all Godly living is to hunger and thirst after righteousness. That is the only way one can be assured of being filled with the good things of God and inheriting His eternal Kingdom.

(CP Mt 5:7). This is the fifth Beatitude and the fifth principle of the Kingdom of God: "*blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.*" The merciful are Christians who are not simply possessed of pity but are actively compassionate toward those who are suffering from sin or sorrow. They mercifully desire to make such suffering less by bringing those people to the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ (CP Mt 18:21-35; Lu 10:30-37; He 2:17; 1Pe 3:8-9). 1Pe 3:9 here teaches that Christians in whom active compassion is manifested ensure their place in the eternal Kingdom of God. This is the blessing Peter said they are to inherit. They reflect the love of God for others, and their own love for God (CP Col 3:12-14; 1Jn3:16-19).

(CP Mt 5:8). This is the sixth beatitude and sixth principle of the Kingdom of God laid down by Jesus: "*blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.*" The pure in heart are those who have been cleansed from the pollution and the guilt of sin by the grace of God and now strive to please and glorify Him. They seek to have the same attitude of heart that God has – a love for righteousness and a hatred of evil (CP Ps 15:1-5; 24:3-5; Ro 6:17-22; He 12:14). In Ro 6:17-22 Paul is contrasting Christians' old relationship to sin and their new relationship to God. He exhorts them to continue

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yielding their bodily members to righteousness and holiness even as they previously yielded them to sin and unrighteousness. The same parts of their body once used for impurity, are now to be used for holiness. Christians must follow after holiness or forfeit their place in God's future eternal Kingdom (CP 2Cor 7:1; Col 3:1-7). If God's people were not capable of living pure, holy lives, neither God, Jesus, nor Paul would have commanded it (CP Lev 11:45; Mt 5:48; Eph 1:3-4). Only the pure in heart will see God. To see God means to be His child and to dwell in His presence, now and in eternity (CP 1Cor 13:12; Rev 21:7; 22:4).

(CP Mt 5:9). This is the seventh Beatitude and the seventh principle of the Kingdom of God: "*blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.*" Peacemakers are those who strive by their witness and life to bring lost sinners to be reconciled to God. Peacemakers are not simply ones who make peace between two parties, who have peaceful dispositions, or who love peace. They spread the good news of the peace of God which they themselves have experienced in His salvation (CP Isa 52:7; Ac 10:36; Ro 5:1-2; 2Cor 5:17-20; Eph 2:13-16). The clear teaching here is that only Christians who share the gospel of peace with the lost are designated by Christ children of God. Sadly, many Christians in the professing church do not see that it is incumbent upon them personally to share the gospel with the lost and reconcile sinners to God. Yet Jesus has commanded it (CP Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16; Ac 1:6-8; 10:42-43; 1Cor 9:16-17). Clearly, the onus is on every Christian to share the gospel with the lost and reconcile as many as possible to God, and if we say we love Christ, then we will obey His Commands and ensure our place in the future eternal Kingdom of God, as the

children of God (CP Mt 19:16-17; Jn 14:15,21,24; 15:10; 1Cor 7:19; 1Jn 2:3-5; 3:22-24; 5: 2-3; Rev 22:14).

(CP Mt 5:10). This is the eighth Beatitude and the eighth principle of the Kingdom of God: "*blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven,*" Christians are appointed to suffer persecution in the world for both righteousness' and Christ's sake (CP Mt 5:11 and Lu 6:22-23 with Mk 10:29-30; 2Ti 3:12). Mt 5:11 is the ninth and last Beatitude and principle of the Kingdom of God. We will deal with both the eighth and ninth Beatitudes here because they refer essentially to the same thing, Christians will suffer unpopularity, rejection and criticism in the world for their witness to Christ and the truth of God's word, but they are to rejoice when they do (CP Jas 1:2-4; 5:10-14; 1Pe 4:12-13), Christians must beware the temptation to compromise God's word in order to avoid these experiences, for the principles of God's Kingdom never change (CP Ac 4:13-20; 5:12-29,40-42). All that live Godly in Christ will suffer, but only those who endure to the end will inherit the Kingdom of God (CP Mt 5:12; 10:22; 2Cor 1:5; 4:7-11; 2Ti 2:12).

In closing this study, it needs to be restated that Christians cannot choose to regard some of the Beatitudes and disregard the others. They are not a multiple choice. They must be conformed to as a whole by Christians to inherit the Kingdom of God. The clear teaching throughout the study is that only those Christians in whom all the principles of the Kingdom of God are manifest, will inherit the Kingdom.