

The preceding the beatitudes theology religion essay



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Preceding The Beatitudes is the beginning of chapter 5 in the Gospel of Matthew. This is also the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5 starts off with Jesus going up on the mountain. Matthew 5: 1 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. When you first read this text you think that he was being overcrowded and simply went up on the mountain for more space. However, is that the only reason Jesus went up on the mountain? When we look at other verses in the Bible such as Luke 6: 12 In these days he went out into the hills to pray; and all night he continued in prayer to God. Perhaps Jesus felt closer and more alone with God by being on the hills or mountain. Perhaps it made him feel closer to God. Or another reason may be that he was interacting and teaching his disciples on the mountain while the crowds surrounded them to listen down low.

Look at the second part of this verse, when he sat down his disciples came to him, whenever Jesus sat down somewhere it was usually a good indication that he would be teaching so his disciples automatically came over to him. Matt 13: 2, Mark 4: 1, and Luke 5: 3 are all other examples of when he sat down and taught as well. Matthew 5: 2 And he opened his mouth and taught them by saying: This is where the teaching, otherwise known as The Beatitudes begins. In this part of the Bible Matthew seems to be portraying Jesus as the new Moses.

The term Beatitude comes from the Latin word *Beatus*. It means happy, fortunate or blissful. Each beatitude has two phrases, kind of like a cause and an effect. Each beatitude also starts off with the word "blessed." To be blessed is to be happy and filled with the Holy Spirit.

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The eight beatitudes in Matthew 5: 3-12

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (5: 3)

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (5: 4)

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth (5: 5)

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied (5: 6)

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy (5: 7)

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (5: 8)

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called Sons of God (5: 9)

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (5: 10)

(5: 11 & 12) Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter evil against you. To rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.

Now let us take a deeper look at each beatitude individually. Matthew 5: 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." This is the opening verse to the Sermon on the Mount. At that time, the word "Blessed" was a common word for describing someone who is happy. That meaning of the word has been lost in the present day interpretation, but that seems to be the original intent of the Gospel writer. "Blessed" also means to

be made holy, so when someone is “blessed” it means they are experiencing a life changing, spiritual transformation. Whoever goes by these rules will lead a happy life and a step closer into getting into Heaven. This could also be the interpretation of the word “Blessed” used. In my opinion, it means both. “The poor in spirit,” I think this means actual poor people, people who are destitute. Like the woman who gave everything she had, and was commended by Christ for doing so. It means they have spirit, yet little else, so they are blessed with spirit or in spirit, and theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They may not have anything on earth, but they can be assured of the afterlife.

Matthew 5: 4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” We already know that “Blessed” means to be made holy and to be happy. But what shall we mourn over? This can be having many meanings. A person can mourn over the loss of a loved one or friend, or even the loss of possessions. A person can also mourn over sin. Everyone mourns someone or something at sometime in their lives. In time, we laugh and are happy again. I think that is God’s way of seeing us grieve and in pain and He puts happiness back into our lives.

When I was a little boy my dog got ran over by a car and I cried for two weeks straight and wouldn’t talk to anyone. I am an only child and that dog was my best friend. The dog would wait for me at the bus stop and walk me home even. After about 2 weeks over hell, I got off the school bus and found a puppy hiding under some bushes. I didn’t really want the puppy at first, but knew it was alone like me so I took it home. I think God put that puppy in my

path because he seen I was sad and lonely. God and the puppy (Cuervo) healed me.

Matthew 5: 5 “ Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” In Greek literature, the meaning of the word “ meek” means gentle or soft. So to be meek you should be gentle and not strong. You should be gentle in a disposition that you do not fight God’s will. Also, if you compare Mathew 5: 5 in different Bibles, you get the same translation as well;

The King James Version

“ Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

World English Bible

“ Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.”

As you can see, they have been translated even further and shows that meek means gentle. The phrase “ inherit the earth” could mean that in time God will come down to earth and choose these “ gentle” people to rule over the entire world. Or it could be that these gentle people will get their every need provided by God.

Matthew 5: 6 “ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” Hunger and thirst here could be an expression for a strong desire. Since hunger and thirst are something EVERYONE needs in order to have nourishment to live, so does their soul need nourishment in faith. The soul needs nourishment as well in the need or desire of forgiveness of sins and to want to do the right things on Earth to go to

Heaven. Those who have a great desire for righteousness will be satisfied in Heaven.

Matthew 5: 7 “ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” Those who have mercy on others shall get mercy from God. People can show mercy to others in numerous ways. By sympathizing with them, showing them affection and tenderness. In return, when the believers ask God for mercy for certain reasons, they will receive it. Mercy is God’s gift for mercy.

Matthew 5: 8 “ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” To be pure means to be clean and in the New Testament the heart is believed to be the center of one’s essence or being. When I read this I think of small children for they are “ pure in heart” and are said to have a guardian angel following them around to see that no harm comes to them. So maybe that is it. If we cleanse ourselves of bad thoughts and nastiness to make ourselves “ pure” we shall see God by being under his protection until the day we actually see Him standing at the gates of Heaven.

Matthew 5: 9 “ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” These peacemakers can be individuals that will go out of their way to make others happy or to help others in their time of need and the result being in that some way peace was made or kept. These are the ones that put themselves at risk in order to prevent arguments or wars. The phrase “ sons of God” is a common Hebrew expression that means someone who has the quality and characteristic of God, someone who is Godlike.

Matthew 5: 10 “ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Blessed are those who are
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persecuted, not for any crimes they have done, but for unrighteousness. In other words, by living saintly and living righteously, you will separate yourself from the unrighteous people and be permitted into heaven.

Now let us take a look at some similar passages in the Bible. Four similar blessings appear in the Gospel of Luke and are followed by four woes that mirror the blessings. This passage in Luke is also known as the Sermon on the Plain;

Luke 6: 20-22

Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God

Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied

Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh

Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account as the Son of man!

Luke 6: 24-26

But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation

Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger

Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep

Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

There being a difference in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke's version of the Beatitudes shouldn't surprise us really. Think about it. This is two different people's version of what was said. Of course it would be recorded differently, because everyone is different and interprets things differently in their mind.

What does The Beatitudes say about the relationship with God? Basically through The Beatitudes God is giving us a pathway to follow to find happiness with God in our lives. By centering our lives on God, we become transformed. I think the whole message of The Beatitudes is if we center our life on God, we will find peace in our lives.

What follows after The Beatitudes is the rest of chapter 5 in The Gospel of Matthew and also the continuation of the Sermon on the Mount. Chapter 6 in the Gospel of Matthew is also a continuation of the Sermon on the Mount. Here Jesus tells the disciples to be discrete in several areas of their lives versus showing off with pride. Doing these things in secret will result in rewards from the Father in secret. Give to the needy, pray in your home with the door closed, fast in private, and not to worry about earthly treasures, but instead worry about treasures you can store in heaven by keeping your heart on God.

I think the main question this passage may have addressed in the community for which it was originally written was "What about the ten commandments?" Think about it. At the time Jesus was giving these new rules from God, everyone was honoring the ten commandments as the law. I'm sure Jesus had to explain that the ten commandments ARE the law, but

The Beatitudes are kind of a modification to the laws. The ten commandments were the laws of the Old Testament and, yes, they are still the laws, but times were changing and new modifications were needed in the New Testament time.