

Joy or Woe? – Part One: The Blessedness of Christ's Kingdom

Read Matthew 5:1-20 – There are eight blessings pronounced in Matthew 5:3-12. By contrast, there are eight woes pronounced in Matthew 23:13-36. Part One will focus on the first twenty verses of what is commonly called “The Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew 5:1 – 7:29).

- Some see this sermon as a plan for becoming righteous and working our way to heaven.
- Some see it as merely a way to make the world a better place.
- Some say that it has no purpose today and is for use in a future setting with Israel.

Here, Christ is not showing how to obtain salvation. His teaching of the law leaves a standard that no one can keep perfectly. The cross is the only way to salvation (John 3:14-18; 12:32-33; 14:1-6; Romans 3:19-26; Galatians 2:16,21; 3:21-24; 6:14; Colossians 1:12-14; 2:8-10,13-14).

Rather, this sermon is showing the ethical values of the saved. Those who have been reconciled to God by the blood of the cross will strive for these values (Ephesians 1:12-14). This sermon reveals what a righteous person looks like. It reveals the underlying character of a person who has been changed by the grace of Christ (I Corinthians 6:9-11; II Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:8-10). The sermon on the mount was delivered to Jewish people. Therefore, it explains some aspects of the law with which Jewish people would be familiar (Matthew 5:23-24,33-37). However, there is a gospel application for all of us (I Timothy 1:5-11 cp. Galatians 3:24).

Christ's kingdom is not identified by showing a geographical location on the world map. Christ's kingdom is identified by seeing people who know the Lord, who worship and serve Him (John 3:3; 4:23-24 cp. Isaiah 9:6-7). The Sermon on the Mount was not a general sermon to the world, merely trying to improve it. This message was to the followers of Christ, revealing His authority / lordship, revealing true Christian character and behavior. First delivered to Jewish believers, it is also for the Gentiles today (Romans 1:16; 2:1-16). This sermon is a constitution / a manifesto for the members of Christ's kingdom. Perhaps Matthew 5:20 is the best summary of Christ's intentions for preaching this sermon (cp. Matthew 7:21-29).

Matthew 5:1-12 is commonly called “*The Beatitudes*.” This means “*supreme blessedness*.” Jesus starts each statement with the word “*blessed*.” The Greek word for “*blessed*” means more than just “*happy*.” It describes a joy that is not expected for humans in this life. The Greeks used the word to describe the ecstasy of their gods. It was attributed to what people might experience after they are dead. So, Jesus is offering a heavenly bliss to us, while we are alive, here on earth! See John 15:11; I Peter 1:3-9; Philippians 3:1-3; 4:1,4 cp. Ephesians 3:14-19.

Matthew 5:13-16 shows us what to do with this blessedness – show it / share it with others.

Matthew 5:17-20 shows our need of Christ – He must fulfill all things and then be followed.

The Blessedness of Christ's Kingdom - Matthew 5:1-20

Matthew 5:1-2 – *“His disciples came unto Him... He taught them...”*

– The people for this message.

Matthew 5:3 – *“Blessed are the poor in spirit...”* – The practice of His presence.

Matthew 5:4 – *“Blessed are they that mourn...”* – The pursuit of Christ's heart.

Matthew 5:5 – *“Blessed are the meek...”* – The pleasure of submitting to God.

Matthew 5:6 – *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst for righteousness...”*

– The pursuit of God and His values.

Matthew 5:7 – *“Blessed are the merciful...”* – The practice of mercy.

Matthew 5:8 – *“Blessed are the pure in heart...”* – The place of undivided love.

Matthew 5:9 – *“Blessed are the peacemakers...”* – The practice of peacemaking.

Matthew 5:10-12 – *“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake...for My sake”*

– The price of spiritual warfare.

Matthew 5:13-16 – *“Ye are the salt of the earth...the light of the world...”*

– The power of a changed life.

Matthew 5:17-20 – *“...Your righteousness [must] exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees”*

– The plan of God's grace.

Godly Joy / Blessedness – Jesus began His Sermon with a clear picture of what righteous and godly people are like inwardly – their effect on the world and the world's response to them:

- ***“Poor in spirit”*** – As a beggar, they are humble before God, not proud. – (Matthew 5:3)
- ***“They that mourn”*** – They are sensitive to God's heart, sorrowing for sin in themselves and in others. They grieve with God about things that displease and dishonor Him – (Matthew 5:4)
- ***“The meek”*** – They are submissive servants of God, not self-serving opportunists. – (Matthew 5:5)
- ***“They which do hunger and thirst for righteousness”*** – They have strong desires to be righteous and to dwell in an environment of righteousness. – (Matthew 5:6)
- ***“The merciful”*** – Their desire for God's mercy causes them to be merciful to others. When a person has experienced God's mercy and understands their constant need of God's mercy, they will want others to also experience mercy. – (Matthew 5:7)

- ***“The pure in heart”*** – They have a heart with a pure, unmixed agenda: to know God and to be in harmony with Him. *“It is not that the pure in heart have no impure thoughts / desires, but that they are at war with them.”* (Alistair Begg) – (Matthew 5:8)
- ***“The peacemakers”*** – They seek for all men to know God and to be in harmony with Him by promoting God’s peace and reconciliation based on grace and truth (*“Grace, mercy, and Peace”* is motivated by *“the Gospel of peace”* – Romans 1:7; Titus 1:4; II Peter 1:2; John 1:14-18; Romans 5:1-11; 10:9-15; II Corinthians 5:18-21). By contrast, “Peacekeepers” do not work towards reconciliation. Their “peace” is to simply avoid conflict. – (Matthew 5:9)
- ***“They which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake / My sake”*** – They endure suffering and persecution for the sake of Christ and His righteousness. – (Matthew 5:10-12)
- ***“The salt of the earth...the light of the world”*** – Their lives are a public demonstration of godliness and righteousness. This serves as a recommendation for others to know, love and serve God. Salt and light have a powerful impact on the environment around them. – (Matthew 5:13-16)

In Matthew 5:17-20, Jesus made it very clear that he was promoting the moral law of the Old Testament. He was not promoting lawlessness. He was confirming the Scriptures as our moral compass. However, Jesus was going to challenge the handlers of God’s law among Israel. The religious leaders and teachers had established themselves as arbitrary authorities. People were expected to follow them, without question. In the rest of this great sermon (Matthew chapters 5 – 7) Jesus will interpret the true spirit of the law and establish godly principles for worshipping and serving God. Jesus will teach with the authority of the Father – not of men (Matthew 7:13-29 cp. 16:5-12; 23:1-39; John 4:23-24; 5:16-24,30-47; 6:27-45,63; 7:12-18; 14:1-11). In Matthew 23:13-36, Jesus will pronounce eight “woes” to the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees.

Jesus warns us not to be lawless, immoral rebels, and neither to be proud religious hypocrites. As He warns us, Jesus also reveals to us the secret of God’s grace. Matthew 5:17-18 shows us that all Scripture requirements **must** be fulfilled and that they all **will** be fulfilled. **Jesus came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil the law!** Jesus will obey and fulfill all the righteous demands of the Father. Jesus will pay the price for those who fail to keep all the law but turn to Him in faith and repentance. Jesus will not only pay their debt, but He will come unto those who trust Him and will dwell in them – guiding and empowering them to fulfil the spirit of the law (Matthew 11:28-30; Romans 2:28-29; 3:19-26; 7:4-6; 8:1-9; II Corinthians 3:5-6; Galatians 3:24; 2:16,20; Philippians 4:13).

Conclusion of Part One:

We have been challenged / encouraged to pursue the joys of knowing Christ. Part two of this series will warn us the consequences of not pursuing these joys – of not pursuing Christ. Religious or not, people will experience woes in this life and in the next life if they do not choose Christ. See John 3:18,36; 8:23-24; 15:4-8; I John 5:10-13.