

Authentic Christians

Lesson 2 – Matthew 5:4-5

1. Initial Observations:

- Kingdom of Heaven

“This is an expression unique to Matthew’s gospel. Matthew uses the word “heaven” as a euphemism for God’s name ... Throughout the rest of Scripture, the kingdom is called “the kingdom of God.” Both expressions refer to the sphere of God’s dominion over those who belong to Him. The kingdom is now manifest in heaven’s spiritual rule over the hearts of believers (Lk 17:21) ...” (John MacArthur, NASB Study Bible, Mt. 3:2)

- The idea behind “kingdom of heaven” is *dominion* or *reign*; although there will be a real, physical kingdom of God in the future for Israel and all true believers, this dispensation of grace is allowed to “taste” the dominion of God or the reign of God in the heart of believers.
- The future kingdom will be a literal kingdom, physically present on the earth, in which righteousness will rule – it’s this future dominion or reign of God that will ultimately fulfill the promises of the Beatitudes. (See Isa. 49:8-13, Rev. 7:9-17, Rev. 21:1-8)
- For now, we “taste” the kingdom, i.e. the Spirit of God rules in the heart of every believer (See Mt. 12:25-29)

- Beatitudes (5:3-12)

- The word “blessed” has the idea of **divine approval** and because of that divine approval, the person is content, happy, satisfied. (See Psalm 1)
- *Makarios* (“blessed”) has the idea of “enjoying favorable circumstances, especially from God; happy or fortunate” – this is an adjective (not a verb), meaning that the source of blessing must be determined by the context. (See Luke 14:12-15 & 1Pt. 4:14)
- *Oti* (“for”) has the idea of “because – an event, state, or fact is true due to the reality of a second event, state or fact”. (E.g. the “poor in spirit” enjoy favorable circumstances from God due to the fact that they will populate or make up the kingdom of God)
- These beatitudes are in two groups of four verses (vv. 3-6 & vv. 7-10), and both groups end with a discussion of righteousness (vs. 6 – “hunger and thirst for righteousness” & vs. 10 – “persecuted for righteousness sake”) – the first group is characterized by deprivation (poor, mourn, meek, hunger & thirst) and internal filling & the second by overflow and external behavior (merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, righteous activity)
- There seems to be an interdependence of the 8 beatitudes – they are linked, dependent on each other, essential characteristics of a citizen of the kingdom (absence of one would fundamentally alter the nature of the person, thus preventing their inclusion in the kingdom).

“The qualities Jesus mentioned in this list, “the poor in spirit,” “those who mourn,” “the meek,” etc., obviously could not be products of Pharisaic righteousness. The Pharisees were concerned primarily with external qualities, but the qualities Jesus mentioned are internal.” (The Bible Knowledge Commentary)

2. The Second & Third Beatitude (5:4-5)

- **“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” (5:4)**

- This verse follows naturally from spiritual poverty – recognition of spiritual impotence and bankruptcy leads to spiritual grief. (See James 4:9)
- The best illustrations are Isaiah when he faced the holiness of God (Isa. 6:1-5) and Paul when confronted with his inability to eliminate sin from his thoughts and behavior (Rom. 7:14-24).

There is a connection between the first two beatitudes and Isa. 61:1-3 – what is the connection, and why didn’t Jesus finish his quotation of this passage in Lk. 4:16-21?

What is the opposite of mourning over sin? What does a lack of mourning signify?

A mournful attitude toward sin is a true characteristic of repentance (2 Cor. 7:9-10); since it is, what can be done to increase our own sorrow over sin and the sorrow over sin we strive to produce in our children?

- The focus of this beatitude is on the hope provided (“they shall be comforted”) – in essence, we are free to mourn over spiritual bankruptcy because (“for”) comfort will come in the future.

For whom does God provide/promise spiritual comfort? (See John 14:23-27 and Rom. 8 – comfort could come through a sanctified heart that is evidenced in godly obedience)

What comfort is sufficient and available for those who mourn over their spiritual bankruptcy? (comfort could also come through contemplating the cross, the Gospel, God’s grace, heaven)

- See Philippians 1:6 & 2:13 – God works to rectify our sinful heart, thus providing comfort to the believer who mourns over his/her sin.

- **“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” (5:5)**

- Some translations use the word “gentle” (NASB) or “humble” (CEV, NCV, NLT) – it’s a Greek word that is difficult to find an equivalent in English.

*“(The meaning of prautes) is not readily expressed in English, for the terms meekness, mildness, commonly used, suggest weakness ... to a greater or less extent, whereas prautes does nothing of the kind. Nevertheless, it is difficult to find a rendering less open to objection than ‘meekness’; ‘gentleness’ has been suggested, but as prautes describes a condition of mind and heart, and as ‘gentleness’ is appropriate rather to actions, this word is no better than that used in both English Versions. It must be clearly understood, therefore, that the meekness ... commended to the believer is **the fruit of power**. The common assumption is that when a man is meek it is because he cannot help himself; but the Lord was ‘meek’ because he had the infinite resources of God at His command. Described negatively, meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest; it is equanimity of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because it is not occupied with self at all. (Hogg & Vine, Notes on Galatians, pg. 294)*

“Meekness toward God is that disposition of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting. In the OT, the meek are those wholly relying on God rather than their own strength to defend them against injustice. Thus, meekness toward evil people means knowing God is permitting the injuries they inflict, that He is using them to purify His elect, and that He will deliver His elect in His time. (Is. 41:17, Lu. 18:1-8) Gentleness or meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest. It stems from trust in God’s goodness and control over the situation. The gentle person is not occupied with self at all. This is a work of the Holy Spirit, not of the human will. (Gal. 5:23).” (Strong, Enhanced Lexicon)

- Meekness (gentleness) is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) – the rule of the Spirit in the heart; it must be since we have no power or favorable condition on our own, and since the corruption of our heart bends us toward usurping God’s power and authority.
- Those who are meek refuse to justify themselves, preferring rather to have other people or other events justify their behavior, beliefs, or attitudes; they appear powerless, but are not.

This beatitude is a quotation from Ps. 37:11 – after analyzing the entire section of that psalm (37:1-11), what personal character qualities show themselves in the life of a meek or gentle person?

“Flying off the handle” or “Giving them a piece of my mind” or “venting” or “lashing out” is inappropriate for the meek person – why? (think of Hogg & Vine’s definition)

If Jesus was meek (Zech. 9:9, Mt. 11:29, Mt. 21:5), how then do we explain his outbursts in the Temple (Mt. 21:12-13 and previously Jn. 2:13-16)?

How can we develop meekness in our own heart and teach our children to be meek?