

The Beatitudes

A Background and Overview

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Article #1

INTRODUCTION:

What are The Beatitudes? How important are they? Do they spell out conditions we must meet in order to inherit eternal life? Do they celebrate the power of God in the life of the disciples? Could it be both? How do we know? This article aims to answer these questions while also providing a brief background as well as a general overview of their application to our lives. One would be served well to look at things from a wider perspective first before narrowing the focus to the specific verses that detail each beatitude. Therefore, let us look to understand the context and narrative style of the book of Matthew which the beatitudes are found in.

CONSIDER THIS:

Let us carefully examine [Matthew 4:23](#) and then [Matthew 9:35](#). What should stand out is the similarity of what each verse is jointly communicating. Notice that each structure communicates that Jesus' ministry in virtually every location was primarily to accomplish these three things:

1- Preaching: The gospel of the kingdom of heaven is coming.

2- Teaching: In the synagogues He taught the way/heart of the kingdom.

3- Healing: A demonstration of the purpose and power of the kingdom by healing every disease and every infirmity. We are instructed to live our lives holy because Jesus is holy. He is holy because He lived a perfect life when He was on this earth. He was spotless in all of His ways, and had no mark of impurity.

So what subject/issues does Matthew cover in between these two verses?

Matthew chapters 5-7 serves as a collection of Jesus's teachings referred to as the "Sermon on the Mount." The beatitudes are a significant portion of this sermon.

Matthew chapters 8 and 9 are a collection of historical accounts that depict Jesus performing miracles of healing and redeeming across the land.

QUICK FACTS:

- ✓ *The Beatitudes are composed of **6 promises and 2 assurances** God gives His children.*
- ✓ ***Each** of the beatitudes illustrate different concepts yet are one unit in how they are worded.*
- ✓ *Some view Matthew 5:11 as the ninth promise; however, it also can be viewed as an expansion of verse 10 considering how it is worded differently.*
- ✓ *Another clue that The Beatitudes should be viewed as eight promises/assurances instead of nine is shown in how the first beatitude and the eighth beatitude conclude. Notice each end with the closing statements, "**for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**"*
- ✓ *The Beatitudes are words of invitation to unbelievers who have ears to hear the **Good News**.*
- ✓ *The Beatitudes are words of **celebratory hope** for all God's children*



BELIEVE IT OR NOT:

Believe it or not, the location of The Beatitudes sandwiched in between Matthew 4:23 and Matthew 9:35 is MASSIVELY important for us to consider when preparing our hearts to properly understand the context of The Beatitudes. **Why?** Because the apostle Matthew went to great lengths to show us that the teaching ministry and the healing ministry of Jesus must be viewed together and not in isolation. This is precisely why the apostle Matthew starts off by providing a brief summary of the three aspects of Jesus' ministry altogether in Matthew 4:23...divides them into two separate sections to cover more robustly...and then follows up again reminding us that they are all connected in Matthew 9:35. **In other words**, the apostle Matthew is going to great lengths to position readers to avoid interpretations of both Jesus' teaching ministry and healing ministry as wholly different categories. [Bible Believing Christians](#) need to keep in the forefront of their mind that Jesus was simultaneously a teacher and a healer. Both man and God. **Natural and divine.**

GOING DEEPER:

Matthew's primary aim when he wrote his gospel account was to provide evidence that Jesus was the Christ...The Messiah spoken of throughout the Old Testament. His aim was to convince all Jews that Jesus was who they had been waiting for. Believe it or not, there is a great danger in viewing Jesus' teachings as simply wise and elegant. **Jesus is more than a great teacher.** Why is this so important to make much of? Because many religious groups seek to re-present Jesus as a man who solely provided amazing wisdom that has remained relevant throughout history and continues to be relevant today. This type of thinking plays itself out as self help based churches who fillet the word of God for their purposes while teaching the Word of God out of context. **This also facilitates the insufficient methodology of self-determination as our means to sanctification.** If you approach The Beatitudes under such pretenses, you wrong-headedly place a weight on your shoulders you were never created to carry. Throughout the Old and New Testament; God providentially echoes: "You Can't, But I Will"

1. **Therefore**, don't engage The Beatitudes as a rubric of standards you must meet to become blessed; but rather take heart as you read The Beatitudes as Jesus' proclamation that indeed we are blessed because The Kingdom is here. For we are now able to receive mercy because He (The Kingdom) has extended mercy. We are now able to be peacemakers because He (The Kingdom) has reestablish peace
2. **Therefore**, we are not to achieve these attributes, we are to find rest in these attributes. Think of The Beatitudes as future promises (fully manifesting themselves in eternity) sandwiched by present assurances (in the here and now of our lives by way of His blood bought gift of salvation)

DID YOU KNOW:

Did you know there were two distinct audiences listening to The Beatitudes that day? The inner circle was compiled of Jesus' disciples, while the outer circle was a collection or large crowd of people. Carefully review [Matthew 5:1ff](#) now. Notice how Jesus reacted when He saw the crowds? Make no mistake, while Jesus is primarily teaching His disciples; He is very aware of the crowds and desires for them to listen as well. Earlier, it was mentioned the importance of viewing Jesus as both man and God; teacher and Lord. Now take another look at [Matthew 7:28](#). What should stand out to you is the crowd's reaction. They did not view Him as one who was a scribe but as one with authority. And with this authority, we have to remember that He has called us into a life of dependence upon His power.



GOING DEEPER:

Does anything stand out to you when you survey each promise? Do you see that **six** of the promises mentioned point towards the future?

Example: "They shall be comforted . . . They shall inherit the earth . . . They shall be satisfied . . . "-

They Shall- is highlighted in each of these. In contrast, the first and last promise/beatitude located in verse 3 and verse 10 seem to correlate more closely with a present tense promise. See how each of these conclude with the disciples being assured that "theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

So is there any meaning attached to this pattern? Here are two possible reasons:

1- By sandwiching six promises in between two assurances, we should consider the possibility that Jesus is communicating that the six promises are blessings of The Kingdom. In other words, children of God can count on these blessings/attributes to be a part of their lives. It is a gift given... not earned. Therefore, The Kingdom brings God's children: comfort, leadership over the earth, satisfaction in righteousness, mercy, nearness to God, and the blessed title of being a son of God. **Each of these are afforded to you!**

2- Directly considering the first and last assurances which are undoubtedly present tense in nature; I believe Jesus is communicating to His disciples (and us) that in some ways the kingdom of heaven is currently present with them now ("Theirs is the kingdom of heaven") yet the full extent of the blessings of The Kingdom are still promises to be awaited for in the future age to come ("They shall inherit the earth").

Understand The Beatitudes as a combination of what Jesus brought us through His own power and fellowship. We can rely on these assurances and promises now. However, we should remember that what we have is only a shadow of how we will experience these promises in heaven.

MEDITATE:

In conclusion, The Beatitudes are implicitly communicating two overarching themes: **1-**They are words of celebration for the disciples of God (*this includes you if Jesus is your Lord and Savior*). They serve as a reminder to all disciples to walk in these blessed attributes. **2-** They are words of invitation for the crowds (*this includes all people who do not know the Lord Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior*) with the hope that their affections would be stirred up as they desire to possess these blessed gifts as well.

QUIZ TIME:

So now that you have explored The Beatitudes more thoroughly, how will you allow them to transform your life?

How might The Beatitudes help you to aim your affections to value Jesus as supremely valuable above anything and anyone else?

What about The Beatitudes helps your heart feel more safe?

How would you use The Beatitudes in your witness to those who don't know Jesus personally?

Aiming Your Affections to Supremely Value the Supremely Valuable ~ Namely **Jesus Christ**

