

## The BE-attitudes

Do you know how many beatitudes there are in the Bible? Well over 100! There are a lot more than just those in Matthew 5.

“Beatitude” means “blessedness” or “blessing.”

The Bible is a Book of Beatitudes – a Book of Blessing. Some form of the word “bless,” “blessed,” “blessing,” etc occurs over 600 times.

Let’s have a look at some of the beatitudes in other parts of the Bible, before we look at the 8 in the Sermon on the Mount.

The very first thing God did after creating Man was to bless them, to give them a beatitude, you could say!

Genesis 1:27-28 <sup>27</sup>“So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.<sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

In Deuteronomy 28:1-14 there is a whole list of beatitudes or blessings God pronounced on the people if they obeyed Him. In verses 3-6 for example - 6 blessings in these 4 verses:

<sup>3</sup>“You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country.

<sup>4</sup> The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks.

<sup>5</sup> Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed.

<sup>6</sup> You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.”

The book of Psalms begins with a beatitude...Keep away from sinful and scornful people.

Psalm 1:1 “Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers”

Psalm 32:1-2 <sup>1</sup>“Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.” (That is a great blessing!)

<sup>2</sup>“Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.” (That happens to everyone whose sin is forgiven.)

It is a blessing to be in God’s Church – chosen by Him:

Psalm 65:4 “Blessed are those you choose and bring near to live in your courts! We are filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple.”

There are 3 beatitudes in Psalm 84:

Psalm 84:4-5,12:<sup>4</sup> “Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.

<sup>5</sup> Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.

<sup>12</sup> Lord Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you.”

The longest chapter of the Bible begins with 2 beatitudes:

Psalm 119:1-2:<sup>1</sup> "Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. <sup>2</sup> Blessed are those who keep His statutes and seek Him with all their heart—"

Psalm 146:5 "Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God."

Let's look at a couple in Matthew that aren't in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matt.13:16 "But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear."

Matt.24:46 "It will be good for that servant whose Master finds him doing so when He returns."

John 13:17 "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

John 20:29 "Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Acts 20:35 "In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus Himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

This is at the basis of Christian life and character. There are 2 ways of life: the way of giving and the way of getting. Simple but true. The Christian life is a life of giving of self to the Work of Christ. That is another beatitude Jesus gave. It has been called "the lost beatitude."

There are 7 beatitudes in the book of Revelation!

1. Rev.1:3 "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near."

2. Rev.14:13 "Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labour, for their deeds will follow them."

3. Rev.16:15 "Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed."

4. Rev.19:9 "Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

5. Rev.20:6 "Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years."

6. Rev.22:7 “Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll.”

7. Rev.22:14 “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”

But of course when we think of Beatitudes, we generally think of the 8 of them listed in Matthew 5. They were the basis of the Sermon on the Mount, and therefore very core fundamental values of Christian character, so I want to spend some time on them today, seeing how wonderful they truly are!

Matt.5:3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit.”

The grammatical form of the beatitudes is that they are exclamations, so would be better translated: “Oh, the blessedness of those who are poor in spirit.”

It’s not talking about something that is going to happen in the future – it is talking of people being blessed right now, although it will find its fullness in the Kingdom in the future.

They could be translated: “Oh, the bliss of being a Christian,” – “Oh, the joy of following Jesus Christ,” – “Oh, the happiness of knowing Jesus as Lord.”

The word translated “blessed” is the Greek word “Makarios.” It is a word that describes the gods – talking about a divine and God-like joy. Sometimes it is translated :”happy” but it means actually a lot deeper than that.

The English word “happiness: comes from the root “hap” meaning chance” (e.g. “If I should hap to come upon this.”) Human happiness depends on the chances and opportunities of life, a bit of a gamble.

Christian blessedness, on the other hand, is permanent and unassailable by the circumstances of life. It is a joy which shines through tears and sufferings and problems. It doesn’t depend on physical things going well. Jesus said “Your joy no man takes from you.” (John 16:22).

It is an internal joy, peace, tranquility related to the word “bliss” – something that is unaffected by physical external circumstances.

John MacArthur said: “To be blessed isn’t a superficial feeling of well-being based on circumstances, but a deep supernatural experience of contentedness based on the fact that one’s life is right with God.”

Jesus is declaring not what people might feel like (happy), but what God thinks of them and what they are spiritually (blessed).

And actually, the things Jesus says will give this blessedness are the opposite of what the world thinks and says lead to happiness!

The world thinks happiness consists of what you possess – land, houses, yachts, social status etc – but in the beatitudes Jesus says godly happiness is a matter of inward things – attitudes, moral character of the inner person.

What attitudes is He talking about? The poor, the mourners, the meek, the persecuted! Actually these are the opposite of the attitudes the world would think brings happiness. The world says “assert yourself, stand up for your rights, get as much as you can, be rich and powerful, famous and gifted.”

People who are poor in spirit, mourners, meek, persecuted, etc, are usually thought of as being unfortunate. So the teachings of Jesus turn the ideas of men upside down.

Another interesting thing about the beatitudes is that they are not something you do, but something you are.

Take for instance, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” What is this telling us to do? What can you do to obey this law?

Nothing. It isn't something you do, but a way of being. If you are that way, there are certain things you will do, but they will come automatically, because that is the way you are.

I think a good word for them is BE-attitudes, because they are attitudes rather than actions, and they are what we “BE” rather than what we “DO.” They are things we should “BE” like, how we should be inside.

They are not produced by the Christian, but in the Christian. They come from the Holy Spirit being in us, Jesus Christ being in us, because they are the very way Jesus Christ was, and is.

One Sunday as they drove home from church, a little girl turned to her mother and said, “Mommy, there’s something about the preacher’s message this morning that I don’t understand.” The mother said, “Oh? What is it?” The little girl replied, “Well, he said that God is bigger than we are. He said God is so big that He could hold the world in His hand. Is that true?” The mother replied, “Yes, that’s true, honey.” “But Mommy, he also said that God comes to live inside of us when we believe in Jesus as our Saviour. Is that true, too?: Again the mother assured the little girl that what the pastor had said was true. With a puzzled look on her face the little girl then asked, “If God is bigger than us and He lives in us, wouldn’t He show through?”

That is what the Beatitudes are about – God showing through. Because they are a self-portrait of Christ. “The character of God put in words.”

A little boy was asked “What is a Saint?” He had seen the sun shine through the stained glass windows of his church, illuminating the pictures of the prophets and heroes of God illustrated there, so he said “A Saint is a person who lets the light shine through.”

That’s what should happen in our lives – the light of Jesus Christ shines through us, and these are the attitudes we will “be.”

It’s interesting to compare the beatitudes with the 10 Commandments.

The basic law at the foundation of the Old Covenant was the 10 Commandments. The basic law at the foundation of the New Covenant is the Sermon on the Mount, and the beatitudes.

Both laws were given on mountains. The first 4 Commandments describe our relationship with God, the other 6 Commandments have to do with fellow man.

The first 4 beatitudes describe the Christian's relationship with God, the second 4 are relationship and duties to fellow man.

It has also been said that the first Commandment is the greatest : "Love God" and the first beatitude is the greatest – all others flow from it.

But there is a striking difference between the two codes of law. The 10 Commandments are a law of actions: don't steal, don't kill, honour your mother and father, don't take God's name in vain, etc. Things to do or not to do.

The beatitudes, on the other hand, are a law of attitude or dispositions, rather than actions.

The difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is that in the Old Covenant, Israel had to obey certain laws in the letter and they couldn't do it!

In the New Covenant, the laws are written on our minds and hearts, because we have the Holy Spirit, so we can do it!

Heb.8:10 "This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Instead of describing actions to be followed in the letter, the New Covenant outlines attitudes to have in our hearts. They are the attitudes that stand at the back of the 10 Commandments – if we be this way, or are this way, we will keep all of the 10 Commandments.

And we can be this way because the Holy Spirit is in us. The beatitudes are the way Jesus Christ is, and because He is in us, we can have all these attitudes in us.

The beatitudes proclaim salvation by grace, not works, because we can't do these things and therefore gain salvation. Rather, these are things we are, because we are saved.

In the next verses of Matthew 5, Jesus directly compared the Old Covenant law with His new approach to the law. In verse 21, He says it was said in the Old Covenant, "You shall not murder," but I say "You shall not be angry with someone."

In the Old Covenant it was an action, in the New Covenant it is the attitude behind the action. So in the Old Covenant we have the list of actions – the 10 Commandments – and in the New Covenant we have the list of internal attitudes.

So the beautiful attitudes were listed by Jesus in Matthew 5:3-10 – the good attitudes we should live by – our way of BEING inside.

Let's be sure these attitudes are deep down inside us, evident in our lives through the Holy Spirit of God in us, and we will be greatly BLESSED.