

THE BEATITUDES...THE HEART OF A CHRISTIAN LESSON 1

Mathew 5:1-12

Welcome to the beginning of another on-line study of scripture. We are all familiar with the Sermon on the Mount contained in Mathew 5-7. These are the words of Jesus given to us as a guidepost of how we are to live as Christians. Jesus is most concerned with who we are as people...for who we are determines what we do. Therefore, it's no surprise that he begins with a description of character. Character always comes before conduct and the Beatitudes describe the attributes of character that must be present in the follower of Christ. Therefore, they are worth a closer look, don't you think?

"BLESSED ARE..." is the beginning of each Beatitude. In other words, the one who displays this inward quality is BLESSED. The word "beatitude" literally means "supreme blessedness". What then is meant by the word "blessed". "Blessed" is translated "happy" and is the same word used by Jesus in other places in scripture. Jesus is telling us that true "happiness" comes from within...from a heart that displays certain inner qualities. Martin Lloyd Jones, when commenting on the Beatitudes, wrote this: "This is the sort of man to be congratulated: this is the sort of man to be envied, for he alone is truly happy".

Happiness is the great question confronting mankind. Unfortunately, the vast majority of the world is seeking happiness in a way that is bound to produce misery. The world says that happiness is found in the physical and material world...in the gratification of self. How's that going? It leads only to strife, dissatisfaction, loneliness and despair. There is no happiness apart from Christ. PERIOD. Jesus wants us to be happy and lays out the formula in these first few words of His sermon.

There are certain principles that we need to understand before we begin our trek through the Beatitudes. First, the Beatitudes apply to ALL who proclaim the name of Christ. They are what every Christian is meant to be, not just the exceptional few. We are ALL meant to display these inner qualities.

Second, we are all to display ALL. In other words, each one of the Beatitudes should be on display in every believer. They are a complete whole and cannot be divided. We cannot be satisfied with part. We must be ALL.

Third, none of the Beatitudes are natural qualities. Again, Dr. Jones wrote: "Nobody by birth or by nature is like this". Some may have a natural temperament toward some of these qualities, but to be always on display is impossible. Equally impossible is to display all at once. No, these qualities can only be produced by the power of the Holy Spirit...by an act of divine grace.

Fourth, the Beatitudes reflect the difference between the Christian and non-Christian. Our ambition as a Christian is to be like Christ and the more like Him we become, the more we shall be unlike the world. Our ambition is to be different from the world...different by what we admire...different by what we seek...different by what we do. The Beatitudes make us different.

One last point: notice how the first (v3) and the last Beatitude (v10) end with the same words, i.e. "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". We are citizens of God's kingdom and as citizens we must reflect the KING. That's what the Beatitudes are all about. They are the HEART of the Christian!

Are you excited to dig deeper? I am. Next lesson we'll begin. God bless!!