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The Beatitudes

Last week we looked at a variety of approaches to the Sermon on the Mount. The purpose of going through the approaches was to try and conceive of the Sermon as a whole and not simply as parts. It's critical that we decide on an approach to the whole that makes sense of all the parts; otherwise we might significantly misunderstand the parts. Achieving a unified approach has proved to be extremely difficult. After 1900 years of interpreters trying to get it all together there are still difficulties. Translated that means I am skeptical of my ability to get it all together. Kissinger pointed out that there are at least 33 schools of interpretation that tried to get it all together and that fact alone is a terrifying one for any bible student hoping to do so.

What were some of the approaches we looked at? The soteriological approach. What does this approach say the Sermon is? The way to personal salvation. Pope John Paul said it was "pure gospel." What's the problem with that? It's all works. So if the Sermon on the Mount is the way to personal salvation then salvation is by works. What's another approach? The believer's ethic approach. What does this approach say the Sermon is? A presentation of the ethics by which men of any age should live. What's the problem with that? It doesn't give due attention to the Jewish focus and the kingdom being 'at hand.' What else? Any other approach you can remember? The kingdom approach. What does this approach say? The Sermon is giving the ethics or constitution of the kingdom itself. What's the problem with this one? It fails to account for the applicability of the Sermon to the immediate audience who lived before the kingdom. There's also the interim ethic approach. What did it say? That Jesus was giving an interim ethic to His disciples prior to the arrival of the kingdom. Why did we struggle to accept this approach? Because Jesus isn't giving a new ethic but He's giving the true intent of the ethic of the OT Law. What was another approach? The penitential or repentance

approach. What does this approach say about the Sermon? That Jesus is giving an exposition of the necessity of repentance in order to enter the kingdom. What's the problem with that? The Sermon is primarily addressed to those who are already believers, not unbelievers. These are some of the approaches good men have taken in order to make sense of all the parts. What was my approach? The covenant approach. What is this approach saying about the Sermon? That Jesus is presenting the need for His disciples to obey the true intent of the Mosaic covenant in order to enter into the enjoyment of the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant in the coming kingdom. And if you think about it, wouldn't a believer in the OT want to obey the Mosaic covenant? That was the way of life God revealed for him. And I think we find in Ps 119 a good example of an OT believer who delighted in the Law of God. He loved the Law. I don't see how an OT unbeliever can do that.

Alright, what was unique about the time this sermon or discourse was given? The kingdom was 'at hand.' That's a key to Matthew. Uniquely the kingdom was 'at hand.' What does it mean to say the kingdom is 'at hand?' That the kingdom covenanted to Abraham and David was near to arriving. It was not here but it was near. How was it near? In that the King of that kingdom had come, John had pointed Him out; He had been baptized, He had started His public ministry in the Galilee; He had called some of His disciples; He was teaching, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing a variety of afflictions. So it was a unique time and a unique generation was being given a unique offer, if they would repent of the system of the scribes and Pharisees and order their lives after the true intent of the Mosaic covenant then the nation would be in the position to enthrone the King and the kingdom would come with all its attendant blessings.

Someone drew this image last week in response to the teaching. You've got the outer circle depicting the Abrahamic Covenant and the inner circle depicting the Mosaic Covenant. Now, how did you enter into the Abrahamic Covenant such that you would enjoy the ultimate blessing? Faith, obviously faith. Abraham believed and it was credited to Him as righteousness. That put you in the outer circle as a Jew who would ultimately be the recipient of the Abrahamic blessings. Then you had the inner circle and this was the Mosaic Covenant and what was the Jews relationship to the Mosaic Covenant? He was supposed to obey. To get what? To get to the enjoyment of

the ultimate blessing. And until there is a generation of Israel that is walking in obedience to the Mosaic Covenant you're not going to have final enjoyment of the blessing under the Abrahamic Covenant. You have individual Jews here and there and they will ultimately be resurrected in the kingdom, but you can't have the kingdom come until a generation of Israel is walking in obedience to the Mosaic Covenant and if they are they will be welcoming the Messiah, calling on Him. So this is the exact picture I am seeing in my mind and this is all about the King and His offer of the kingdom to that generation. You have to think of the sermon with respect to that generation and the kingdom offer.

Hold your place in Matt 5-7 and turn to Luke 6:17-7:1. One of the debates is whether Matt 5-7 is the same occasion recorded in Luke 6:17-7:1. What have you been taught? Why do some conclude they are the same? Because they include similar teaching. So the question really is, how does one account for the similarities of teaching as recorded by Matthew and Luke? There are two possibilities; either Matthew or Luke are recording the same occasion and present it slightly differently or they are recording different occasions. Obviously the Luke passage is much abbreviated if they are the same. What does the evidence say? The evidence says that Matthew and Luke are recording different occasions. Why? First, in Luke 6:12 the immediately preceding context is Jesus calling the twelve disciples to Himself whereas in Matthew 4:18-22 Jesus had only chosen four of His disciples. Matthew himself is not chosen until Matt 9. So they appear to be two different occasions, the Matthew occasion being earlier than the Luke occasion. Second, in Luke 6:12 Jesus was on a mountain and in verse 17 came down with His disciples for the sermon whereas in Matt 5:1 Jesus went up on a mountain and His disciples came to Him. This seems to point to two different occasions. Third, in Luke 6:17 Jesus stood on a level place in order to speak to a large crowd whereas in Matthew 5:1 He sat down on the mountain to teach His disciples. This too seems to argue for two different occasions. There are additional differences but these three are sufficient to show that the two occasions are different. How then do we explain that similarity in teaching? By explaining that Jesus taught this material on two or more occasions. This was standard material and it is not at all unexpected that He would teach it on various occasions and to various audiences. If I went around teaching I'd teach them the same things I teach you.

Let's look at His audience in 5:1. This is not all-determinative of the nature of the message but who is he teaching? **When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.** What's the impression you get from those words? That He's trying to get away from **the crowds**. I think one of the common misconceptions is that Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount was teaching a large crowd. He was doing that in Luke but it's probably better to understand that **He went up on the mountain** to avoid the crowds on this occasion and while he was **up on the mountain** there **His disciples came to Him**. Now Dr Pentecost disagrees and he identifies the crowds with the disciples. He says **crowds = disciples**. I'm not sure if he does that on the basis of Luke 6:17 or not. Luke 6:17 says "*there was a large crowd of His disciples*" and if he's interpreting Luke as recording the same occasion as Matthew then I can see how he's identifying in Matt 1 the crowds with the disciples. But he has to make the **crowds = disciples** because he holds to the penitential view of the Sermon which means Jesus is pressing on unbelievers the need for repentance. I don't see that as the main intent of the sermon at all. Mainly Jesus has in view believing Jews and the crowds will filter in over the course of the sermon but his main intent is to address His disciples, the one's He chose, which I see as believers. They already had faith. Anyone want to argue that Peter and Andrew and James and John didn't have faith? In the OT sense they had faith like Abraham. Okay, so I can see why Pentecost goes that direction but it seems a stretch to me in the Matthew context. It seems much more likely that Jesus in 5:1 is trying to get away from **the crowds**. He **saw the crowds** and what did He do? He didn't go to the crowds; **He went up on the mountain**. He's escaping. Then what? **He sat down** and **His disciples came to Him**. What's the significance of the statement that **He sat down**? What was the posture a rabbi would take when he was ready to teach? He would stand to read the Scripture but then he would sit down to teach (Luke 4:16-30). So Jesus is preparing as a rabbi to teach. Toussaint says, "...and sitting in the manner of rabbinical teachers, He begins to instruct them."ⁱ The question is who is He instructing? I'm saying **His disciples** and I'm identifying these disciples as believers. Not all disciples are believers because remember, disciple just means what? "A student, a learner, a pupil." It doesn't identify the person as a believer necessarily; some of the disciples were simply *curious* about Jesus and His teachings; others were *convinced* of His person and teachings; and still others were *committed* to Him and His teachings. The term itself is not perfectly clear but the context is clear. Note

the possessive. These are **His disciples** showing possession and contextually in Matthew how many disciples did Jesus have at this time? Four. Matt 4:18-22; Peter, Andrew, James and John. So it's those four disciples, who when He went up on the mountain followed Him and when they saw **He sat down** as a rabbi, that was their cue that He was going to do what? Teach. This is a teaching session. It's not really a sermon, it's teaching.

Verse 2, **He opened His mouth**. What did it mean when the rabbi opened His mouth? It meant the teacher was ready to begin. I am the master, my mouth is opening, that means I have something to say so every student was to do what? Shut their mouth. And then it says He **began to teach them**, inceptive imperfect, meaning he started a lengthy teaching session.

Verse 3 begins what are known the world over as “the Beatitudes.” Let's make several points upfront before delving in. First, why are they called “the Beatitudes?” They are called “the Beatitudes” because in the Latin translation verses 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 begin with “*beati*,” a word that means “blessing.” That shows you the extensive influence of Latin. For a thousand years the Western church focused on the Latin Vulgate that stemmed from the time of Jerome. It wasn't until the time of the Reformation that the Western church started translating the Bible into other languages. So “the Beatitudes” is Latin for “the Blessings,” and we might refer to them as “the Blessings” because that gives us a better understanding of what they really are. They are pronouncements of blessing upon those Jewish believers who manifest certain spiritual qualities prior to the kingdom's arrival. Second, observe that within the Blessings there is an *inclusio* between verses 3 and 10, verses 11-12 are really distinct. What is an *inclusio*? An *inclusio* is a literary device that book-ends a section by using a similar structure or words in order to isolate a unit of thought. In other words, there is really but one key thought in verses 3-10. Constable says, “Speakers and writers used it, and still use it, to indicate that everything within the two uses...refer to the entity mentioned. Here that entity is the kingdom of heaven. In other words, this literary form shows that all the beatitudes deal with the kingdom of heaven.”ⁱⁱ To see the *inclusio* both verse 3 and 10 proclaim the reason for blessing being that “the kingdom of heaven” belongs to them. Verse 3 says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” and verse 10 says, “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Since both verse 3 and 10

conclude with the expression “kingdom of heaven” then the subject of all the verses in between is what? The blessings in the “the kingdom of heaven” for those believers who manifest certain spiritual qualities. So they are to continue to mourn, be gentle, hunger for righteousness, et. al because when they are in the kingdom of heaven things will be greatly reversed and their longings will be satisfied. Another evidence of the *inclusio* is that verses 3-10 use the third person plural theirs, they and those whereas verses 11 and following use you and yours. So the Blessings seem to refer generally to the remnant of Jews past, present and future who will enjoy these blessings in the kingdom whereas vv 11ff refer specifically to that generation of Jews who were being offered the kingdom. Third, what is meant by the expression “kingdom of heaven?” We want to make sure we understand this expression. This term is used uniquely by Matthew but in parallel contexts in Mark and Luke is referred to by the expression “kingdom of God.” Most agree the two expressions are synonymous. Why then did Matthew almost always use “kingdom of heaven?” Because he was writing primarily to Jews who used the name of God very sparingly. He’s not trying to step on their toes over little issues. He’s accommodating in this usage. Further, the book of Daniel used the expression “kingdom of heaven” to communicate the idea of a kingdom that the God of heaven would establish on earth in order to replace the kingdoms of this world (e.g. Dan 2:44). Therefore its meaning was readily known by 1st century Jews from the book of Daniel and it was known to be synonymous with the kingdom of God that was to come upon earth. So, though the word “heaven” often draws Gentiles to think of this kingdom as being located in heaven, it is not in Jewish thinking. The kingdom is not the kingdom *in* heaven but the kingdom *of* heaven, meaning that it is the kingdom that is established by the God of heaven and is therefore characterized as righteous. As Alva McClain says, “read in the light of its evident Old Testament context, the phrase “kingdom of heaven” does not refer to a kingdom *located* in heaven as opposed to earth, but rather to the coming to earth of a kingdom which is heavenly as to its origin and character.”ⁱⁱⁱ So the expression “kingdom of heaven” refers to the coming earthly kingdom. It’s the same OT kingdom that was predicted by the prophets. This is confirmed in 5:5 by Jesus’ statement that the gentle will inherit what? The earth. And it is confirmed later in 6:10 when Jesus instructed them to pray what? “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,” where? “on earth as” where? “as it is in heaven.” So the “kingdom of heaven” is a coming to earth of a kingdom which is established by the God of heaven and

characterized by a righteousness of heaven. Fourth, what then is Jesus doing in the Blessings? He is pronouncing a series of blessings to be enjoyed in the future earthly kingdom by those believing Jews who possess certain spiritual qualities. These individuals we might say make up the believing remnant of Israel in contrast to the unbelieving element. The Bible Knowledge Commentary states, "The Pharisees were concerned primarily with external qualities, but the qualities Jesus mentioned are internal. These come only when one is properly related to God through faith..."^{iv} The Sermon is directed toward those who are already Jewish believers though there may and probably were Jewish unbelievers present among the crowds. Am I saying that all believers are perfectly characterized by these spiritual qualities? No. That is not the point. The point is that only believers can manifest these spiritual qualities and if they do they will be rewarded with blessing in the kingdom. Now I'm taking it that Jesus is contrasting His spiritual characteristics and that of His disciples with the scribes and Pharisees. Dr Pentecost seems to agree. Dr P taught the Life of Christ for many years at Dallas Theological Seminary and he made the interesting observation that when he went through all of Jesus' condemnations of the Pharisees in the Gospels he discovered that Christ was condemning them "because of the lack of these very things."^v So the contrast is between the spiritual qualities that mark Jesus and His followers and those who lack these qualities as epitomized by the scribes and the Pharisees. Fifth, what is Jesus' essential message in the Blessings? Essentially that the kingdom to come is a righteous kingdom inhabited by a spiritual people. The scribes and the Pharisees were looking for a kingdom but their view of the kingdom was political and material only. Jesus was not denying it was political and material. He was simply emphasizing that it was also spiritual. Walvoord says, "It is quite evident that the Jews, while they wanted deliverance from the Romans and fulfillment of the material blessings promised in the millennium, were quite unprepared to accept the view that the millennial kingdom has spiritual implications. It was to be a rule of righteousness as well as a rule of peace. It demanded much of subjects as well as providing much for them. The political character of the kingdom was not seriously questioned by the Jews, who anticipated that their Messiah would bring deliverance to them. Because of their neglect of the spiritual and moral principles involved, Christ necessarily emphasized these in the Sermon on the Mount."^{vi} The kind of person who will possess that kingdom will thus be a spiritual person. Since only believers can be spiritual then it is obvious that

only believers will enter the kingdom. Toussaint says, “The ordinary Jew of Christ’s day looked only at the physical benefits of the kingdom which he thought would naturally be bestowed upon every Israelite...The beatitudes of the King indicate that...the kingdom includes *both* physical *and* spiritual blessings. A careful study of the beatitudes displays the fact that the kingdom is a physical earthly kingdom with spiritual blessings founded on divine principles.”^{vii} The kingdom is a spiritual place and the most righteous and just and peaceful period of human history. It should therefore be desired, longed for and sought after.

There are eight characteristics of the spiritual Israel who will inherit the kingdom to come. Let’s look at the first one. **Blessed are the poor in spirit.** What does **blessed** mean? The Greek word *μακαριος* means “fortunate.” I wouldn’t translate this “happy” though many people do. They are fortunate because they are heirs of the righteous kingdom to come. Their treasure is laid up in the kingdom. Toussaint says, “Those who are to inherit the kingdom are called blessed *now* because all these things shall be theirs. All of the verbs are future in verses three through ten except two.” The two are found in verses 3 and 10, the very verses that form the *inclusio*. In those two verses the tense is present, “for theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven,” not shall be. Some, notably Progressive Dispensationalists, have seized the present tense in order to support their thesis that a spiritual form of the kingdom was already present. However, as previously argued this requires a new meaning of the kingdom never before predicted by the OT prophets and never defined by Jesus or the apostles. It also requires that they view either John’s, Jesus’ or both of their proclaiming of the kingdom being ‘at hand’ to mean that the kingdom is “here” rather than merely “near” when the word simply cannot mean that. Further, later in Matt 10:7 when Jesus sends out the twelve He instructs them to preach the message that “the kingdom of heaven is ‘at hand.’” If the kingdom was still ‘at hand’ later then how could the kingdom already be present? The truth is that the present tense in verses 3 and 10 should be M’Neile says, “As a potential right, the kingdom is theirs now and always: as an actual possession it is still future, as is shown by the verbs in *vv.* 4-9, which describe various aspects of its bliss.”^{viii}

Who are the **poor in spirit**? The *πτωχοι* are the Jews who realized their lack of righteousness! At the heart of this word is one who recognizes his total lack of spiritual worth before God. And therefore his desperate need for God’s

mercy and grace to supply righteousness. He is totally spiritually bankrupt. He has nothing at all to offer to God. He is therefore totally dependent upon God's mercy. He's not arrogant and many think that the essence of the poor in spirit is someone who is spiritually humble. Was this the attitude of the scribes and the Pharisees? Not at all. They interpreted their material wealth as an indication that they were approved by God. They were spiritually arrogant. And if what Jesus is doing here what I think He is, He's making a kind of contrast between Himself as the King and His disciples as the heirs of the kingdom to come over and against the scribes and the Pharisees, then what Jesus is saying is that He and His followers are heirs of the kingdom but the scribes and the Pharisees, no! It's a radical contrast and the people in the main saw the contrast. They saw the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. They were hardly **poor in spirit**. They thought they were establishing their righteousness with God (Rom 10:4); but the poor in spirit realized they had no righteousness with God. It's that attitude of total lack of anything good in self and therefore total dependence upon God and His righteousness that epitomizes the **poor in spirit**. They are super humble. And how many people have that today? I realize this doesn't directly apply to the Church but how many people really believe there is nothing in themselves that pleases God; that they are totally spiritual bankrupt? Not many. Most Christians think they have something to offer God. That's not being poor in spirit; that's being arrogant. The kingdom belongs to such as those that realize they are the filth of the earth, totally lacking self and totally dependent upon God. As Constable says, "The poor in spirit acknowledges his or her lack of personal righteousness. This condition, as all the others the Beatitudes identify, describes those who have repented (3:2; 4:17)."^{ix} Not only will they enter the kingdom but they will possess it; the kingdom belongs to them.

What's the second blessing? **Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted**. Who are **those who mourn**? Yes, mourn over their own personal sin and sense of spiritual bankruptcy, that is entirely appropriate here, they **mourn** because they realize their spiritual poverty, but it is bigger than that. It's the mourning over the nation's sin of Israel that kept them from enjoying the blessing of God. But it's even bigger than that. It's the mourning over the universal sin that produces this terrible world in comparison to the coming kingdom. The coming kingdom is envisioned as a place full of righteousness and joy and peace. In opposition the present world

is full of evil and depression and war. This is a Jew who is mourning because the state of the sin-filled world is so strongly characterized by a permeating evil. They are tired of this. They long strongly for the kingdom of this world to be judged and replaced by the kingdom of God and His Christ (Rev 11:15ff). What blessing does Jesus pronounce on the one who mourns over his personal sin, his nation's sin and universal sin? **Comfort.** He is blessed now because he is properly spiritually calibrated; he is sensitive to sin and its deleterious effects; in the kingdom he will be comforted. The OT prophets "connected Messiah's appearing with the comfort of His people (Isa 40:1)..." Jesus is the comforter and when He comes in His kingdom all who mourned over sin will be comforted because the Comforter par excellence will have arrived and His kingdom is a joyful one.

What's the third blessing? **Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.** Older versions translate **meek.** Who are **the meek?** Difficult word because not held in high esteem among Gentiles. This word has two sides. On one side, when attacked by others the meek person is not vengeful. He has a genuineness about him that enables him to be self-controlled and free from malice in the face of an abuser. On the other side when others are attacked the meek person is able to stand up and defend those who are being abused. This is an astounding quality. It is one who is able to moderate his emotions in the face of turmoil. Moses is said to have been the meekest man on the face of the earth. Jesus Himself was said to be meek. Constable says, "A person might acknowledge his or her spiritual bankruptcy and mourn because of sin, but to respond meekly when other people regard us as sinful is something else."^x Try it sometime. Try to deal gently with those who are attacking you and try to deal gracefully with those who are attacking others. Were the scribes and Pharisees meek? Hardly. They were arrogant and vindictive. But those who are will receive what blessing? **They shall inherit the earth.** This shows once more that the kingdom to come is located on **the earth**, though the origin and character of the kingdom are heaven, thus the "kingdom of heaven." To inherit the kingdom is to have possession in the kingdom consistent with verse 3. It is something more than simply entering the kingdom. Entrance, according to Jesus in His discussion with Nicodemus, is conditioned on one being born of God, regenerated by faith. That is all that is necessary to enter the kingdom. Yet Jesus here is relating to those who already have faith and are born again how to inherit the kingdom, that is, to

have possession in it. Those who are meek will enter the kingdom to possess a portion of the Promised Land throughout His Davidic reign.

What's the fourth blessing? **Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.** For people in the West who have never truly hungered or thirsted this expression loses much of the force it would have for its original hearers. Lang says, "Hunger and thirst would be understood figuratively as a mode of desire so intense as to be painful." These people are desperate for righteousness both in themselves and in the world. Matthew never uses righteousness for imputed righteousness, as in justification. He always uses it in the sense of personal fidelity to God and His will. "Therefore the righteousness that the blessed hunger and thirst for is not salvation."^{xi}They already have that. They are longing for personal fidelity to God and for all men to live in fidelity to God. The real essence of their hunger and thirst then, is for the kingdom to come because it is characterized by righteousness as the King will exercise a righteous rule as He reigns from the throne of David. Later Jesus says they should seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. It was to be the preeminent priority. Seeking the kingdom and His righteousness. The two go together like hand and glove. Is this at all the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? Not at all. They sought to establish their own righteousness. But the righteousness that is hungered and thirsted for is a righteousness which comes only from God. Only He can meet our need. Those who desire it intensely will **be satisfied** in the sense that someone who is in the pain of hunger and thirst is satisfied when they get some food and drink to relieve their condition. The time of their satisfaction will be when the kingdom comes because the King and His kingdom is a pure manifestation of the righteousness of God in the earth. Isaiah 45:8 said, "Drip down, O heavens, from above, And let the clouds pour down righteousness; Let the earth open up and salvation bear fruit, And righteousness spring up with it. I, the LORD, have created it." He is the author of righteousness. And Jeremiah 33:15, "In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth." That is when they will be satisfied, and not until. But when it is satisfied it will remain an eternal satisfaction as Dan 9:24 characterizes it as "everlasting righteousness."

What's the fifth blessing? Verse 7, **Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.** The Greek word here for **mercy** means someone who

is compassionate toward others who are sinful. It is very easy to show no mercy and instead give people what they deserve. But the quality of mercy forbids a person from doing this. He is very ready to forgive and realizes the severe problem that we all have with sin. He therefore is very compassionate toward them and their sinful situation. God is merciful. He allows us to have a fresh start. He would rather Israel have shown mercy than strict observance of the sacrifices (Matt 9:13). What is the reward for being **merciful? They shall receive mercy.** Throughout the OT and the NT the merciful person who is merciful will be judged with mercy. Prior to the kingdom the Jews will be judged. Those who were merciful will receive mercy at their judgment.

What's the sixth blessing? Verse 8, **Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.** This blessing is considered by some the climax of the beatitudes. Toussaint says, "Verse eight sets the keynote for the entire sermon. The pure *in heart* shall see God...Seeing God, being manifested as the sons of God, and possessing the kingdom are accounted among the highest possible blessings." Someone who is **pure in heart** is someone who is single-minded in their devotion to God. They can't wait to see and be with God. Their entire outlook is one of looking forward to seeing God. This attitude is a prerequisite to moral purity because one who wants to see God also wants to be seen by God. He has nothing to hide. When he sins he comes out in the open about it. He is not faking it. His true and utmost desire is to see God. Of course, "It is impossible for anyone to see God in His pure essence without some kind of filter."^{xii} The shielding of Moses in the cleft of the rock was a kind of filter that enabled Moses to get a glimpse of what God was like. The physical body of Jesus was also a kind of filter. The expression **they shall see God** is an idiom for closeness of fellowship and knowledge of God. Those who are **the pure in heart** shall have close fellowship and knowledge of God in the kingdom. Of course, they will see God as the Messiah who rules over the kingdom.

What's the seventh blessing? Verse 9, **Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.** Note that it does not say we are to be peace-keepers. A peace-keeper is a compromiser. They do anything to keep the peace. But a peacemaker is one who brings peace. Isaiah says, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news..." A **peacemaker** is one who brings the good news so that those who are at enmity with one another

can be reconciled. The fundamental problem is that God and man are at enmity with one another. Jesus Christ came to reconcile God and man. He is the peacemaker, and indeed is called The Prince of Peace. A **peacemaker** then is one who comes with this message seeking to bring men to reconcile with God. Once that is accomplished then men can be reconciled with one another. As long as a man remains at enmity with God he will remain at enmity with his fellow man. Therefore a peacemaker sees through the surface issues to the deeper problem of man's enmity with God and seeks to demonstrate to Him Jesus Christ. They will therefore **be called sons of God** because they are doing what their Father did in sending His Son; seeking to make peace! The Jews were to be a light to all nations by communicating the message of the Jewish Messiah who would bring them into a peaceful relationship with God. Israel as a whole failed to do this but Jesus, the Son of God Himself, was very successful, paving the way for Gentiles to be reconciled to God. Those who would be His disciples would do the same. They are the **peacemakers** and in the kingdom **they shall be called sons of God**. The kingdom is a kingdom of peace. Those who enter it will have already found peace with God. It can be no other way.

What's the eighth blessing in the *inclusio*? Verse 10, **Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven**. Here alone we have the verb in the perfect tense, **those who have been persecuted**. The perfect tense means that the persecution had already begun in the past and continued until the present. Jesus' disciples were already facing persecution for identifying with Him and His message of the 'at hand kingdom.' There were many, particularly among the scribes and Pharisees who were opposed to Jesus and His message of repentance. They didn't think they needed repentance. John suffered at the hands of these persecutors. He was already thrown in the prison at Machaerus. This is not persecution for any reason. It is persecution **for the sake of righteousness**. John, Jesus and His disciples were standing up for **righteousness**, for what was right according to the word of God, and because of that they were already being **persecuted**. Upon them he pronounces blessing because **theirs is the kingdom of heaven**. Closing as He began with a statement of their possession of the kingdom to come we come to the end of the *inclusio*.

Keep in mind that Jesus is presenting the characteristics of those who are already regenerate and will thus enter the kingdom. He is not telling them how to enter the kingdom. He told Nicodemus how to enter the kingdom, you must be born again. So what Jesus is doing is teaching the regenerate about the kinds of spiritual qualities that result in God's blessing now because of what they shall enjoy in the future. The kind of spiritual qualities God desired to see were poverty of spirit, a keen awareness of nothing good in themselves, mourning, an acute awareness of sin and its devastating consequences, meekness, a gentle way of dealing with those in opposition, a hunger and thirst for righteousness, the intense desire to see righteousness both in themselves and in the kingdom to come, mercy, a compassion and kindness toward others who face sinful plights, purity of heart, the quality of single-minded devotion to God, peacemakers, those with an intense interest in bringing men to reconciliation with God and persecuted for righteousness, those who would not compromise righteousness for the sake of an easy passage. These are the qualities Jesus Himself embodied and which He expected to see in His followers. Belonging to such are many rewards in the kingdom of heaven. So they would be quite challenged to not maintain the difficult path because of the blessing in the future kingdom to come. They were not things that were seen then but they were things that were near on the horizon, if the nation Israel repented and crowned Jesus as their King they would have enjoyed it then. Since they did not they will enjoy it in the future when they do repent. In the meantime we live in the Church and are in preparation for the kingdom. These qualities should be striven for by us as well.

ⁱ Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 94.

ⁱⁱ Tom Constable, *Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Alva McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, p 280.

^{iv} Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., "Matthew," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 29.

^v J. Dwight Pentecost, lecture notes from *Dispensational Problems in Matthew*.

^{vi} John Walvoord, *Thy Kingdom Come*, p 45.

^{vii} Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 97.

^{viii} Quoted from Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 96.

^{ix} Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 5:3.

^x Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 5:5.

^{xi} Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 5:6.

^{xii} Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 5:8.

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