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The New Testament begins with Matthew's Gospel, written by a Jewish follower of Christ to a primary audience of other Jewish followers of Christ. For centuries, Jewish prophets had prophesied of the coming Messiah.

However, the Jews were expecting a king that would deliver them from their earthly enemies. Jesus Christ is still rejected by most because at His first coming, he was not at all what they expected.

Throughout the NT, and Matthew's gospel in particular, we read that Christ's kingdom is different than worldly kingdoms. Even the disciples were very often perplexed, because apart from the Holy Spirit they could not understand. Likewise, we cannot discern spiritual truths utilizing worldly thinking (*1Cor. 2:14; James 3:13-15*).

In the Beatitudes, throughout the Sermon on the Mount, and throughout his earthly ministry, Christ teaches a very different way of thinking and living than what the world teaches. The New Testament Epistles often reinforce this.

As we study the Beatitudes, we are really studying a self-portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our perfect example in all things. The Beatitudes describe the 'attitudes' that ought to 'be' in the believer's life! As believers and disciples of Christ, it should always be our goal to emulate Him.

Goals are important if we are to achieve anything. To have no goals results in aimless drifting. The athlete does not refuse to set goals just because the ideal of perfection is impossible. Striving to make goals make us better, not perfect. Don't be deceived by the extremes of indifference and perfectionism.

Every "beatitude" begins with the word, "blessed". So, we must understand what Christ means by "blessing" if we are to understand these statements at all. The translation of "happy" is deceptive if we apply the typical worldly meaning of happiness (based on what "happens"). A statement like "happy are those who mourn (are sad)" is confusing at best.

Rather than "happy", blessing (*Gr. "makarios"*) is much better understood as "approval". Understanding the biblical meaning is important – "bless, blessed or blessing" is used almost 500 times in the Bible. When Jacob blessed his sons (*Genesis 50*), he was showing them his approval. We can bless God by expressing to him our approval of Him (*Psalms 104:1*). When we give our blessing, we are expressing our approval.

People want approval, and may seek it in ways that are good or bad. Some are more interested in the approval of others than the approval of God. The believer should take note of the words of the hymnwriter of "Be Thou My Vision": "riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise".

The Pharisee in Luke 18 received approval (respect) from many people, himself in particular. He was self-righteous and did not believe he needed to repent before God. On the other hand, the tax collector was not approved of, and was actually despised by most. People knew many of these tax collectors were dishonest, and furthermore they worked for the Roman government. But this tax collector was humble and repented, and Christ declared that therefore he, and not the self-righteous Pharisee, was justified (declared righteous).

So, when seen in their proper context, we see that God approves of the attitudes revealed in the Beatitudes – attitudes of the heart, not just the externals as the proud Pharisees taught. Not only does He approve, but He will richly reward the citizens of His kingdom beyond what we can ask or think. God is never anyone's debtor.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit" is one of Christ's statements that seem upside down to the worldly observer. How many people would view "poor in spirit" as a compliment?! Poor interpretation of this verse has fueled plenty of false teaching.

The Greek "*ptochos*" translated "poor" here would describe a beggar in those days, someone completely dependent upon someone else for everything. But "poor in spirit" has nothing to do with material wealth. It is a self-awareness that we are entirely dependent on God.

Poverty of spirit means true humility. It is the opposite of pride. Pride is an abomination to the Lord (*Proverbs 6:16, 16:5*). God will humble those who exalt themselves, and He will exalt those that humble themselves (*Prov. 3:36, Matt. 23:12, James 4:6, 1Peter 5:5*). The Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect example of this (*Phil. 2:5-11*).

Pride will keep many out of the kingdom of Heaven. Many reject God's free gift, salvation by His grace, because they don't think they need it. They feel good and self-sufficient. They see God as a crutch for some that they don't need.

But Christ says that God approves of those who recognize they are sinners that need a Savior. They see themselves as God sees them, as they really are. Thus, the "poor in spirit"... the spiritual beggars... are blessed.

Matthew 5

The Sermon on the Mount

5 Seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him.

The Beatitudes

2 And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you on My account. **12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Salt and Light

13 "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

God's ways not our ways

Be ye transformed

Set mind on thing above not earthly

Memory Verse for the Week

Matt. 5:14 – You are the light of the world.
A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.