

Rightly Dividing the Gospels

—Installment 27—

The Sermon on the Mount

—Part 1—

Overview

The Beatitudes

~ 28 A.D., after Passover

Near Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee

Albuquerque 14 November 2010
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I. Background

- A. Jesus has returned home to Galilee following the events of the second Passover, in which he had contended with the Pharisees regarding Sabbath law
- B. He has healed multitudes by the sea, and, having come into considerable fame, is about to redouble his preaching
- C. He has selected his apostles whom he will apprentice to learn his doctrines so that they can transmit them to the world.....(Luke 6: 12–16)

II. Overview of the Sermon on the Mount

- A. Comparison with the Sermon on the Plain
 - 1. Matthew and Luke each describe a sermon in Galilee connected with the calling of his apostles and with large multitudes coming to him for healing
 - a. Sermon on the Mount(Matt. 5–7)
 - i. Introduction..... Matt. 4: 23–5: 2
 - b. Sermon on the Plain(Luke 6: 17–49)
 - i. Introduction..... Luke 6: 17–20
 - 2. Commentators disagree as to whether the two sermons are the same
 - a. Much overlap in content suggests that they may be the same
 - b. Matthew’s is considerably longer and more complete, but Luke supplies some additional detail
 - c. Whether they are the same event, or similar sermons in different locations, matters little
 - i. We will treat them together for efficiency
 - d. Superficially, a *mount* and a *plain* (as translated in the KJV) are obviously different; however

- i. No true mountains lie on the northern coast of Galilee—only low hills
- ii. *Plain* is translated from a phrase that means *level place*
 - (i) If the evangelists describe the same event, it would mean he preached from a level place on a hillside
 - (ii) Some references point to a natural amphitheater near the top of a hill not far from Capernaum
 - 1. And claim that a voice may carry for hundreds of yards there

B. Audience

- 1. His disciples, whom he particularly addressed in a public setting among multitudes
 - a. That is, those whom he was preparing to receive and enter his kingdom

C. Theme

- 1. The kingdom and its distinctive qualities
 - a. The kingdom is shown to be composed of his (Messiah's) subjects
 - i. Its distinctive traits derive from his character
 - b. The kingdom is distinguished by contrast to three things
 - i. The Mosaic system
 - ii. Popular expectation
 - iii. Pharisaic hypocrisy
 - c. This forward-looking teaching is grounded in its context: the closing years of the Mosaic covenant
 - i. It teaches what will shortly be, and how men should prepare themselves for it
 - ii. While recognizing certain OT features of the day

D. Outline of the sermon

- 1. Promises to subjects of his kingdom
 - a. Traditionally these promises are called the Beatitudes
 - b. Contrasted with woes for false subjects
- 2. The influence and duty of his subjects
- 3. His distinctive doctrine
 - a. Contrasted with OT and traditional doctrine
 - b. Delivered so as to draw his disciples toward the higher calling of his imminent kingdom
 - i. Without subverting the current godly practice of Mosaic Law
 - ii. But correcting and rebuking errors in its teaching and practice
 - (i) As he had done with Sabbath law
 - (ii) And as he will continue to do in forthcoming teaching
 - c. His doctrine is what he sent his apostles into the world to confirm
 - i. They knew what parts of his teaching pertained to the OT

- ii. And so should we; this is our prayerful aim in this serial study
 - d. This doctrine is terrible and awesome, beyond that of any of God's lesser prophets
 - i. Inspiring both great fear and surpassing joy
 - 4. Simplicity and purity in service
 - a. Almsgiving, prayer and fasting
 - b. As contrasted with the hypocrisy of Jewish leaders
 - 5. Heavenly treasures
 - a. Contrasted with insecure earthly treasures
 - 6. Judgment
 - 7. Prayer
 - 8. The "Golden Rule"
 - a. Given as the fulfillment of law and prophecy in a single, profound rule
 - 9. Two ways and two kinds of servants
 - 10. Metaphor of two builders

III. Blessing and Woes: the Beatitudes

- A. Promises given to the subjects of his kingdom (i.e. Christians)
- B. "Beatitudes" comes from the word *beati* in the Latin Vulgate, with which each (good) promise begins
 - 1. It means *blessed* or *happy*, like the Greek word μακαριος *makarios* from which it is translated
- C. These blessings are generally paradoxical
 - 1. Attributing strength and happiness to what seems weak and unhappy
 - 2. Thus surprising to a carnal mind
 - a. But not to the spiritual mind
- D. Matthew gives nine blessings
 - 1. Seven connected with characteristics of kingdom subjects
 - 2. Two connected with their circumstances
- E. Luke gives three blessings, connected to circumstances
 - 1. Which may correspond to three of Matthew's characteristic blessings
 - 2. I'll present them as corresponding

IV. Blessed are the poor in spirit...

- A. For theirs is the kingdom of heavenMatt. 5: 3; Luke 6: 20b
 - 1. The poor in spirit are those without pride and trust in themselves
 - a. As contrasted with the Jewish leaders of the day Luke 18: 10-14
 - b. They recognize their condition of destitution and nothingness before God

2. Emptiness of spirit must precede fullness in Christ
3. Poverty of spirit must precede riches in his kingdom

V. Blessed are they that mourn...

- A. For they shall be comforted.....Matt. 5: 4; Luke 6: 21b
 1. This blessing is for sorrow unto repentance..... II Cor. 7: 10
 - a. Not the sorrow of unrepented sin Luke 13: 27–28
 - b. (This reasoning is an example of the use of remote context in scripture interpretation)
 - c. This may be sorrow for one’s own sin, or that of others Matt. 23: 37–38
 2. Broadly applies to those with a discernment of sin, an appreciation of its deadly consequences, and a desire for deliverance in Christ
 3. Simeon awaited Israel’s consolation..... Luke 2: 25
 4. Christ’s kingship is gentle to the bruised..... Isa. 42: 3
 5. Joy springs from godly sorrow as a harvest from the seed Psa. 126: 5–6

VI. Blessed are the meek...

- A. For they shall inherit the earth..... Matt. 5: 5
 1. Carnal expectation gives reward to strength
 - a. But wisdom expects otherwiseEcc. 9: 11
 2. The Jews expected their Messiah to give them deliverance from Rome and dominance over their enemies
 - a. And struggled to recognize true deliverance in God’s sacrificial lamb..... Matt. 27: 41–42
 3. “Inherit the earth” may mean any or all of the following:
 - a. Receipt of great material blessing by Christians, but not from force or conquest
 - b. Prophecy regarding the dominion of Christianity in the physical world
 - c. Dominion in the new earth II Pet. 3: 13 (Isa. 65, 66; Rev. 21)
 - i. Prophesied..... Dan. 7: 27; Rev. 5: 8–10

VII. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness...

- A. For they shall be filled.....Matt. 5: 6; Luke 6: 21a
 1. Righteousness is fulfilled in us, not earned..... Rom. 8: 3–4
 2. The blessing follows the desiring
 - a. And the pursuit, however imperfect II Pet. 3: 11–15a

VIII. Blessed are the merciful...

- A. For they shall obtain mercy Matt. 5: 7
 1. Where meekness is passive, mercy is active

- a. The meek bear (injury, insult, judgment)
- b. The merciful forbear
 - i. And thereby receive the same Matt. 6: 14–15

IX. Blessed are the pure in heart...

- A. For they shall see God Matt. 5: 8
 - 1. This blessing is for those who are free of evil desires and purposes
 - a. Likeness to God is both cause and effect of seeing him..... I John 3: 1–3
 - b. Which enables comprehension of God and his motives and deeds Eph 1: 17–23
 - 2. The Jews, filled with carnal hopes and self-righteousness, could not “see” their Messiah

X. Blessed are the peacemakers...

- A. For they shall be called the children of God..... Matt. 5: 9
 - 1. God is the God of peace..... (Rom. 15: 33; 16: 20; II Cor. 13: 11)
 - 2. The Son is the Prince of Peace..... Isa. 9: 6–7
 - a. Sent to promote peace on earth Luke 2: 13–14
 - 3. The Jews expected a military savior
 - a. And so could not recognize a savior who brought peace by dying Col. 1: 19–22; Eph. 2: 13–17
 - 4. His subjects must resemble him

XI. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake...

- A. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven Matt. 5: 10
 - 1. This is the second beatitude with the same promise
 - 2. This one is given for a condition which follows from the characteristics..... John 15: 20

XII. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad...

- A. For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.....Matt. 5: 11–12; Luke 6: 22
 - 1. Here Jesus catalogues the forms of suffering to be visited on his disciples
 - a. Hatred
 - b. Reviling
 - c. Casting out
 - d. Persecution
 - e. False accusation
 - 2. We will not take time to catalogue their fulfillment in the NT church
 - 3. We must expect to partake of these sorrows

- a. And in them find “exceeding joy” Heb. 11: 36–12: 2

XIII. But woe unto you that are rich (and are full, and that laugh)...

- A. For you have received your consolation (shall hunger, shall mourn and weep) Luke 6: 24–25
 - 1. These woes are converse to blessings given earlier
 - 2. They apply to them who seek and find satisfaction in carnal pleasures
 - a. Not to Christians who can enjoy what carnal pleasures God may supply in spiritual purity

XIV. Woe unto you, when mall men shall speak well of you...

- A. For so did their fathers to the false prophets Luke 6: 26
 - 1. This, too, is converse to a blessing given earlier
 - 2. A good name is highly to be prized Prov. 22: 1
 - 3. But not among the wicked
 - a. “If we adhere strictly to the virtues which Christ enjoined, we shall find that the world has an evil name for every one of them.”
 - i. Those who suffer wrong in meekness are “weak” and “cowardly”
 - ii. Those who would lead sinners to repentance are “intolerant” and “judgmental”