

The 9 Blessings of Matthew Chapter 5

The inspired narrative of Matthew chapter 5 records how that the Lord Jesus Christ “went up into a mountain” and taught his disciples concerning certain particulars of the blessings to come. In this, he enacted a fulfilment of Isaiah 52:7:

“how beautiful **upon the mountains** are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God Reigneth” (Isa. 52:7).

Here, the “good tidings” comprised the promise of certain blessings which will be granted to those who meet particular criteria. Since we desire to inherit the blessings of the coming Age, we must give diligent heed to this chapter, treating it with the utmost importance. In this short essay, we can only but touch upon each of the 9 blessings, but it is hoped that this overview will help facilitate further study on the matter.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”

According to the Proverb, “there is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches” (Prov. 13:7). It is quite possible to be rich in this world’s good, yet be spiritually destitute – as per the ecclesia at Laodicea. But contriwise, it is also possible to have an abundance of material possessions, and yet be “poor in spirit”: “to this man will I look, even to him that is **poor and of a contrite spirit**, and trembleth at my word” (Isa. 66:2) are the words of Yahweh through the prophet Isaiah. Having a “poor spirit” is a state of mind. It is an attitude towards Divine things, trembling at the Word of Almighty God. Those who recognise His Power, Greatness and Majesty are those who will be granted the kingdom. Even Messiah himself – the Son of the Most High God - was “meek and lowly in heart” (Mat. 11:29). How much more then, must we humble ourselves before the presence of Almighty Power.

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted”

Whilst we may miss the presence and company of our loved ones, there is much comfort in the Gospel Message. We “sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1 Thes. 4:13-14). The comfort is that the Lord is Righteous, and will not permit his holy ones to sleep in the dust of the earth for ever. That is the hope of the Gospel:

“the spirit of the Lord Yahweh is upon me; because Yahweh hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ... **to comfort all that mourn**; to appoint unto **them that mourn in Zion**, to give unto them the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness ...” (Isa. 61:1-3).

But those that mourn do so not only for the loss of a loved one: they are also affected by the prevalence of wickedness – even in the Household of Faith, which ought to be the centre of holiness. These are those who are deeply distressed at those things: “that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (Ezek. 9:4). The Lord spoke to his disciples concerning his coming departure: “Verily Verily I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful but your sorrow shall be turned into joy” (Jno. 16:20). This is the day when the “oil of joy” will be poured out in abundance upon those

who seek the comforts of the Truth, when they will be given the garments of salvation, and their troubles will become but a fading memory.

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth”

This clause is a quotation from Psalm 37, which reads:

“... those that wait upon Yahweh, **they shall inherit the earth**. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But **the meek shall inherit the earth**, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” (Psa. 37:9-11).

Here, the contrast is with the wicked who shall be cut off, and the righteous who are the “heirs of the world” with faithful Abraham (Cp. Rom. 4:13). They shall delight themselves in the reign of the Prince of Peace, with the centre of the world’s administration being Jerusalem, which name means “city of peace”. By contrast, the wicked shall not be, “for this ye know that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Eph. 5:5).

This aspect of “inheriting the earth” is not simply something we can use to refute the doctrine of heaven-going, but is a very real hope for those who look to the future reign of Messiah. Sitting upon the throne of David, his kingdom will be upon the earth, and the extent of his empire shall know no bounds. That is the Hope of Israel – and the hope of all who trust in Him.

“blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled”

Notice here, that after speaking of inheriting the earth, the Master describes those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. In other words, there are 2 aspects of the desire of the faithful: the Kingdom and also the Righteousness that shall reign therein. So our Lord speaks in chapter 6 of Matthew: “seek ye **first** the kingdom of God **and his righteousness ...**” (Mat. 6:33). It is not enough to seek the future blessings of the Kingdom: we must also seek those principles of righteousness that will characterise the reign of King Jesus. To truly desire the kingdom is to want it to the same extent as we desire and need food and drink. The Master himself said that: “my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (Jno. 4:34). And of those who are blessed to be in that age to come, they shall have their spiritual appetite quenched eternally: “they shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them ...” (Isa. 49:10). This is the time that we so earnestly long for: the spiritual feast of sumptuous things. As it is written: “In this mountain shall Yahweh of Armies make unto all people **A feast of fat things**, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined” (Isa. 25:6).

“Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy”

In order to be recipients of the mercy of God, we need to be merciful to those around us. James expressed the Divine Principle:

“So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the Law of Liberty. For **he shall have judgement without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy**; and mercy rejoiceth against judgement” (Jas. 2:12-13).

Notice here, that we need to be merciful in both word and deed: “so speak ye, and so do ...”. We must take special care in what we say and do in relation towards each other. When we are speaking about someone, we need to ask ourselves: is it merciful? When we do things to each other, we need to ask ourselves: is it a merciful thing to do? We need to be merciful in order to obtain mercy. As it is written elsewhere: “with the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright” (Psa. 18:25).

Interestingly, Judas the betrayer was condemned for not showing mercy to our Master:

“ ... he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man” (Psa, 109:15).

Rather than to hinder one another in our journey to the Kingdom, there is a need to exercise mercy and help one another notwithstanding our personal failings. Then it will be that we will be treated in the way we have treated others.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”

The language here is again derived from the Old Testament scriptures, particularly Psalm 24:

“Who shall ascend into the hill of Yahweh? And who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and **a pure heart**; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive a blessing from Yahweh, And righteousness from the God of his salvation” (Psa.24:3-5).

Notice the allusions here in Matthew 5: “ascend into the Hill of Yahweh” = Messiah ascending up the mountain; “clean hands and a pure heart” = pure heart. “he shall receive a blessing” = Blessed are the pure in heart ...”.

Putting these things together, we find that receiving the blessing is again associated with *doing* i.e. “clean hands” and *thinking* i.e. “a pure heart”. The promise in this clause is being able to “see God”. We read elsewhere of the Presence of the Almighty:

“who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; **whom no man hath seen, nor can see**: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen” (1 Tim. 6:16).

No man has seen God, for mortal man cannot approach his presence – but we know that the Angels behold the Face of our Father (see Matt. 18:10), and the glorified saints will be like the angels in substance (Luk. 20:36). We would not rule out therefore the possibility that the Immortal Saints will also behold the Father in glory. But we shall certainly behold God in the presence of our Master: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jno. 3:2).

Blessed are the Peace Makers, for they shall be called the children of God

Considering the testimony of James again, we read that:

“the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace” (Jas. 3:18).

Notice the “fruit of righteousness” is associated with those who make peace. This fruit is “sown” by those who sow to the spirit, and who will reap incorruption (Gal. 6:8). They will be “called the children of God”, being raised from the dead, and granted to sit with his Only Begotten Son in his throne. As we cited above, Messiah describes the saints: “neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the Angels, and **are the children of God**, being the children of the resurrection” (Luk 20:36).

The greatest example of a peacemaker is that of Messiah himself:

“... for he is **our peace**, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, **so making peace**; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and **preached peace** to you which were far off ...” (Eph. 2:14-17).

Ultimately the true peace we seek after is peace with our Maker, and this is made possible by the offering up of His son, and his subsequent resurrection.

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”

It is another Divine Principle that “if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us” (2 Tim. 2:12). In times past, the disciples of Christ had to contend with outright persecution for holding fast to the testimony of God. But paradoxically, in our age and circumstance in the western world, there is very little persecution, yet there are so few who are Truthholders. In our age of apathy, indifference and humanism, there are few who are men of zeal, whose prime focus is upholding the Righteousness of Yahweh. All seek their own, not the things pertaining to Christ Crucified, and the associated doctrines that focus around his offering.

“Blessed are they when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake”

This final blessing is akin to the previous one. Associated with persecution is what we might describe as character assassination. Instead of addressing the points of Scripture we present to them, our adversaries – both in the household, and out – speak evil against us personally, and revile us in the presence of all. Isaiah also describes this situation, but in so doing gives us hope:

“Hear the word of Yahweh, ye that tremble at his word: Your brethren that hated you, **that cast you out for my name’s sake**, said, Let Yahweh be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed” (Isa. 66:5).

The apostles provide a pertinent example of this: “being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day” (1 Cor. 4:13). It is the lot of those who hold fast to the Gospel Truth to experience the reviling of men: but the day is near when they shall be ashamed, and the faithful will be glorified.

The prominent feature of each of these blessings, is that all of them relate to the Kingdom to come. This coming Age of righteousness is the final consolation for those who endure affliction for Christ’s sake – whatever form that affliction might take. And it is interesting to note that in the kingdom, the nations shall climb up a mountain to hear the words spoken by Messiah and his immortalised brethren:

“It shall come to pass in the latter days, that **the mountain** of Yahweh’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the God of Jacob; and **he will teach us of his ways**, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem ...” (Isa. 2:2-3).

May the glories of that Kingdom soon come!

Christopher Maddocks