

I. Review

- A. Beatitudes - Eight aspects of His bridegroom heart that He longs to impart, in order that we would enter into the fullness of love and life He has predestined us to experience. (Jhn 10:10; Rom. 8:28-30; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 3:17-19)
1. Blessed are the Poor in Spirit – Desire for intimacy with God compels us to choose to empty ourselves of our strength and vision and only rely upon what He has empowered us to do and say.
 2. Blessed are those who Mourn for the Kingdom – Experiencing the Kingdom causes us to carry a constant dissatisfaction and mourning in our soul until the fullness of the Kingdom comes.
 3. Blessed are the Meek – Meekness is the restraint of power or strength for the higher purposes of righteousness.
 4. Blessed are those who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness – Endeavoring to walk in righteousness that brings life and nourishment to your inner man and grow you up into the maturity of fullness.
 5. Blessed are the Merciful – Having a sense of compassion over the fallen state of an individual and a desire to free them from that state.
 6. Blessed are the Pure in Heart – The quality of loving with total sincerity and an undivided heart without reservation or expectation.
 7. Blessed are the Peacemakers – Contending for the total elimination of contention and war between man and God and man and men, in your heart and in the hearts of others.

***“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake. For theirs is the kingdom of Heaven”
(Mat. 5:10)***

- B. The previous beatitudes speak of internal or direct aspects of the heart of love that Jesus walks in. This beatitude stands apart from the others as an external or indirect aspect of the Kingdom in our lives. As we explore this beatitude let us first look at both the divine order and the repeated promise of the beatitudes.
1. The bookend – Jesus begins the beatitudes and ends the beatitudes with the same promise of obtaining the kingdom, as a result of these beatitudes being formed in us. I believe we can understand the first beatitude as the entrance to the kingdom, and the last as the world’s response to the kingdom being formed in us.

2. The resulting proof – This beatitude is given as a statement of what the response to those walking in “righteousness” will be from those who do not walk in the same. The nature and character of Jesus is offensive to the world at large. The world that is in deception and darkness, and therefore hates the light. (Jhn 15:18-25; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; Eph. 2:1-3; 1 Jhn 5:19)
 - a. “Righteousness” - It is very important we understand the context of the persecuted “righteousness” one can consider themselves blessed to receive. There are many reasons for persecution but Jesus is not referring to all persecution. Instead to a specific reason for persecution. He is saying very clearly, there is blessedness to the individual who is persecuted for walking in the same heart aspects (the beatitudes) Jesus himself walks in.
3. The blessing – Through this study of the beatitudes it is clear that it is impossible to walk in any of these beatitudes without having our heart transformed from its natural state of human character and love into the supernatural state of God’s character and love. It is with this truth in mind that we can understand the blessedness of an individual who is persecuted for walking in the beatitudes. We can understand why the writers of the New Testament rejoiced when they received persecution. Their response of joy was at the realization that they had been so transformed even the outside world recognized it. (Jhn 7:1-9; 1 Jhn 2:28-3:1-3; 1 Pet. 4:12-19)

Let us ask ourselves this question: Do we know what it is to be persecuted for righteousness sake? To become like Him we have to be transformed into light; light always expels darkness, and the darkness therefore hates the light. We are not to be persecuted because we purposely offend. We are not called to parade the Christian faith in the face of non-Christians. We are simply called to be transformed into the image of Christ, and when that happens persecution becomes inevitable. If you ever find yourself persecuted for righteousness sake, you have in a sense the proof that you are truly a Christian. That you are truly a son or daughter of God and a citizen of His kingdom. – Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

- C. Special consideration must be given to the fact that Jesus is very concerned about our attitude when faced with persecution. So concerned in fact, He repeats the idea of rejoicing in persecution multiple times throughout His ministry. Out of all the beatitudes this is the only one He immediately reinforces in His sermon. He knows that without proper perspective we will respond to persecution in retaliation, resentment, and depression. (Mat. 5:11-12)

II. Conclusions that search the Heart

- A. The truths within this beatitude bring out some conclusions that are near opposite and potentially offensive to some of widely held opinions in Christianity today

Common Opinion - If we all were more like Jesus then the non-Christians of the world would applaud and approve of Christianity.

The Truth - The overall response Jesus received from the people around Him was rejection. We must remember thousands interacted with Him, heard His messaging, saw His miracles, and witnessed perfect righteousness. After 3 ½ years of flawless righteousness only 120 adults ultimately chose to follow Him. The rest rejected him and many took part in the murderous mob that called for His death. Undoubtedly there will be people who respond rightly to the righteousness displayed by you when you walk in the beatitudes, but for the most part you will be misunderstood and rejected by men. (Acts 2:22-23, 3:36)

Common Opinion - Good Christians should be nice, popular people who get along with everyone and they should be well thought of by all.

The Truth - This beatitude tests our ideas as to what the Christian looks like to non-Christians. It is very clear that those who walk in the 8 heart aspects that lead to the fullness of life will not be praised by everyone. Jesus told us Himself that if they did not praise and love Him they would not praise and love us. We are actually warned by Jesus to be aware that if all men speak well of us, we are walking in some false or distorted form of Christianity. (Lk. 6:26; 1 Pet. 4:14-16; 1 Jhn 4:5-6)

Common Opinion - When Persecution comes, all Christians will automatically respond with the same rejoicing as the Christians in the bible did.

The Truth - I personally have assumed when persecution comes upon me, I will simply respond supernaturally with rejoicing and joy. However, if we apply this beatitude the same way as the rest, we can come to the conclusion rejoicing in persecution is something that is available through Jesus and must be cultivated through intentional pursuit. If this was not the case then the multitude of exhortations in the scriptures to rejoice in persecution would be pointless. (Mat. 13:21; Jhn 16:2; Acts 14:22; 1 Thes. 3:3-4; Heb. 11:36-38)

Common Opinion - Eventually persecution will happen to more Christians, but only as we draw near to the return of the Lord.

The Truth - This beatitude, along with many other scriptures, tells us persecution will happen to all Christians, everywhere and at all times. Yes, it will reach fullness in the last days but persecution is not only an end time's reality. Persecution is simply the reality of how the natural human heart responds to righteousness. (Rom. 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Tim. 3:12)