

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-3

I. Beginning the Beatitudes

A. Context of the Sermon

1. Location

a) Mountainside or plain

(1) Matthew puts this sermon on a mountainside while Luke puts it on a plain (Luke 6:17)

(a) Not incompatible with each other

b) Matthew's imagery

(1) Matthew was big into prophecy and imagery for his Jewish audience

(2) Jesus on the side of a mountain proclaiming God's message to God's people parallels Moses on a mountainside giving the Law to God's people

2. Listeners

a) Crowd

(1) Jesus' ministry was already attracting crowds

b) Disciples

(1) However, it is the disciples (not just the 12) to whom he was preaching this message

(a) This rules out an interpretation that makes the sermon a call to governments or nations

(2) They came to him

(a) All blessings come from God but we must come to him through Christ

B. Crux of the Beatitudes

1. Blessed

a) "Happy" or "Fortunate"

2. Poor in spirit

a) "Poor" does not refer to the quality of one's faith

b) "Poor" may refer to the economically poor but that neither exclusive nor the focus

c) "Poor in spirit" refers to those who recognize their spiritual poverty apart from God

(1) It all begins here.

(2) Without this "spiritual awareness" there can be no "spiritual awakening"

(3) When we break the Gospel down to its simplest core elements, the first is the realization that we are hopelessly lost and need a Savior

(4) All who come to Christ must come as "poor in spirit" because they are "poor in spirit"

3. Kingdom of Heaven

a) Everlasting Life

(1) The Kingdom of Heaven entails everlasting life with God in heaven

b) Inaugurated Eschatology

(1) The teaching that the Kingdom of God has begun but will not be fully realized until the return of Christ

4. Is

a) Only one other Beatitude uses the present tense

(1) V. 10 - those persecuted for righteousness

(a) The blessing is the same

b) The other Beatitudes use a future tense ("will be")

(1) In light of inaugurated eschatology this may mean that the blessings of the other Beatitudes will occur in this life or the next or both

This is one of the keys that lets us know that the Sermon on the Mount is intended for Jesus' followers