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The Beatitudes: Matthew 5:1-12 - The Character of the Kingdom
Part One: Introduction - "Blessed are..." Matthew 5:1-2

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Historic Christianity consists of two kinds of orthodoxy. The first type is theological. That is to say, there are certain doctrinal tenets that are essential and common for any person or group to be regarded as authentically Christian. They can be summarized by the ancient statement called the Apostles Creed. Here is an example of a modern English translation. Texts in parentheses are explanatory additions.

*I believe in God the Father Almighty (First Eternal Person of the Holy Trinity),
maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ his only (Divine) Son our Lord (Second Eternal Person of the Trinity):
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Third Eternal Person of the Trinity),
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried; (Note: Some denominational versions of the Creed insert the following at this point: "He descended into hell" or "He descended to the dead." Our view is that the line should not be included.)
the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from there he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church (universal body of saved believers),
the communion of saints (believers),
the forgiveness of sins,*

*the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen*

Any person or organization denying or redefining any of these points cannot be regarded as within the boundaries of orthodox Christian theology. That being said, it is not our purpose in this study to analyze these essential theological precepts. Rather it is to say that Christianity also has a second focus of orthodoxy that is not theological but moral and ethical. In other words there are certain principles that any person or group asserting to be Christian should preach and practice.

At the close of last year in this column, in ten installments, we studied and analyzed the Ten Commandments. Those ten statements given by God to Moses remain the foundational moral principles for all people (see those articles on our website at <http://www.marketfaith.org/2018/11/the-10-commandments>). As we saw in that previous study, Jesus never negated any of the Old Testament Law (Matt. 5:17-19). Nonetheless, He expanded those moral principles to a deeper level and expectation for His followers. The most important of Jesus' moral teachings were given in what is usually called the Sermon on the Mount, found in chapters five, six, and seven of Matthew's Gospel.

Matthew places Jesus' delivery of this great message in the days following His baptism, time of temptation in the wilderness, and the recruitment of his first disciples (Matt. 3-4:22). He says Jesus was teaching, preaching, and healing in the synagogues of Galilee. Consequently the word of His ministry spread rapidly, attracting great crowds, not only from Galilee, but also

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Syria, the Decapolis, Jerusalem and Judea, and even from beyond the Jordan River (Matt. 4:23-25).

When Jesus saw the great multitudes, He went up on a hill where He could sit down and speak to them all. *5 When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. 2 He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying... (Matthew 5:1-2 NASB)*

Matthew, who wrote this Gospel, was not yet a disciple of Jesus (Matt. 9:9). Apparently he later discussed with his colleagues who had been present and collected the records others had made of Jesus' talks. He then placed them in this strategic part of his book.

The first section of that compilation of Jesus' discourses (Matthew 5:3-12 NASB) is generally known as The Beatitudes.

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 gentle, 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 have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

It is those nine statements that we will examine in depth in the this ten part series. They define what Jesus regarded as what should characterize the attitude and behavior of those in His Kingdom. The term "Beatitude" in Greek is *makarios* which means "happy," "blessed," or, as a noun, it can depict someone who receives divine favor. The point is that those who practice the principles Jesus espouses will be blessed. This does not mean he or she will never have problems or will always be ecstatically happy. It means that he or she will have a deep sense of joy and satisfaction in life that transcends circumstances.

That being established, before we examine the nine beatitudes we need to consider three introductory observations.

First, the Sermon on the Mount, including the Beatitudes, is meant to apply to all believers in all times and places. It is not just meant for the Twelve Apostles in their time or, as some assert, only for the future millennial kingdom. They are intended to be relevant in every generation. All followers of Christ should strive to incorporate these indispensable teachings of Jesus into their daily lives. None of us is excused from His principles of life.

Second, Christians are meant to exhibit all the characteristics. There is no indication that believers are to only apply some of the principles to their lives while ignoring others. Every point is meant for every Christian to express in his or her life. Christians are expected to incorporate them all into their lifestyles.

Third, none of the characteristics Jesus expounds is natural. They are from the Holy Spirit. No human in his or her own power can hope to display these qualities adequately. Only through the supernatural filling of the Holy Spirit and His power can Christians successfully live the Christian life.

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So, in the coming nine installments we will examine each of the Beatitudes. We will analyze what Jesus' truths intended to convey, and address how they apply to us today. In Part Two we will study the First Beatitude:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"
(Matthew 5:3).

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