

# Matthew 5-7

## Matthew 5-7

### Overview<sup>1</sup>

This sermon is a carefully structured chiasm that echoes the main issues of Deuteronomy: the ten **commandments** (Deut 5, 12-26), and the **consequences** associated with our response to them (Deut 6-11, 27-28).

Each of these themes has two parts.

- The ten **commandments**, according to our Lord's summary in 22:37-40, it can be summarized as uncompromised devotion to God and equitable treatment of our neighbor.
- Moses himself distinguishes the **consequences** as blessings (Deut 11:27; 28:1-14) and curses (11:28; 28:15-68).

The structure of the Sermon reflects both of these distinctions. The corresponding members are (chart):

Setting	4:25-5:2	7:28-8:1
Blessings and Warnings	5:3-12, Blessings	7:13-27, Warnings
Law and Prophets	5:17-19	7:12b
Manward Responsibilities	5:20-48 (contrasts with "them of old time")	7:1-12a (absolute)
Godward Responsibilities	6:1-18 (contrasts with "the hypocrites")	6:19-34 (absolute)

### Setting

The repetition of "multitudes-mountain-teaching" (chart) marks this as an internal inclusion with 7:28-8:1. When we examine the text in detail, we will see that Matthew's references to things that happen in a mountain strongly recall the experiences of Moses at Mount Sinai, a theme that is reinforced elsewhere in the Sermon.

### Blessings and Warnings

We are all familiar with the Beatitudes, the "blessings" that immediately follow the opening setting. Ch. 7 ends with a series of warnings (the broad gate, the false prophets, rejection at the last judgment, the house on the sand). The "blessings" of the beatitudes and the warnings of ch. 7 at first seem very different from one another, but recall at that the end of Deuteronomy, in ch. 27-28, Moses caps his summary of the law with blessings and curses (chart).<sup>2</sup>

1 This analysis draws extensively on Dale C. Allison, "The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount," *JBL* 106:3 (1987) 423-445, who gives an excellent summary of earlier analyses. However, Allison, like many others (see notes), ends up with the Lord's Prayer at the center, and misses the fundamental alignment of the central section with the two great commandments of "the law and the prophets."

2 So Allison. Luz also aligns the Beatitudes with the final warnings, but the summary available to me ([http://www.sermononthemount.org.uk/SermonOnTheMount/OtherOutlines/U\\_Luz\\_Outline.html](http://www.sermononthemount.org.uk/SermonOnTheMount/OtherOutlines/U_Luz_Outline.html)) does not give the Deuteronomic blessings and curses as a motivation. The correspondence is semantic, not verbal, and is confirmed by Luke's additional material in the woes; see notes.

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Deu 27:11 And Moses charged the people the same day, saying, 12 These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to **bless** the people, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin: 13 And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to **curse**; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. (fulfilled in Josh 8:33-34)

Deu 28:1 And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe *and* to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, ... 2 ... all these **blessings** shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. 3 **Blessed shalt thou be** in the city, and **blessed shalt thou be** in the field. 4 **Blessed shall be** the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. 5 **Blessed shall be** thy basket and thy store. 6 **Blessed shalt thou be** when thou comest in, and **blessed shalt thou be** when thou goest out. (+ long narrative of blessing)

Deu 28:15 But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these **curse**s shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: 16 **Cursed shalt thou be** in the city, and **cursed shalt thou be** in the field. 17 **Cursed shall be** thy basket and thy store. 18 **Cursed shall be** the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. 19 **Cursed shalt thou be** when thou comest in, and **cursed shalt thou be** when thou goest out. (+ even longer narrative of cursing)

This association of blessings and curses allows us to see the opening beatitudes and the closing warnings as corresponding closely to one another in Matt 5-7.<sup>3</sup>

*Application:* Like the Israelites on Ebal and Gerizim, we who follow Jesus are promised great blessings, but if we depart from him, we will suffer great loss.

### Summary of Obligations

5:13-16, believers as light and salt, is not paired with anything. This section appears to be a summary for the entire central section of the sermon.

*Application:* The moral injunctions that follow are not to be understood as *conditions* of salvation. Indeed the Lord has already blessed those who “hunger and thirst for righteousness,” who recognize their need. Rather, these injunctions describe the *result* of true salvation, which are to shine out to a needy world and offer it the only hope of escaping corruption. The purpose of our righteousness is not only to please God, but also so that we can be effective in bringing others to him.

### The Law and the Prophets

The next pair of elements both mention “the law and the prophets,” and assure us that they remain relevant under the new order that the Lord is establishing.

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<sup>3</sup> Luke’s report of the Sermon shows that the Lord made the alignment with Deut 28 even stronger, by following the blessings (Lk 6:20-23) immediately with a series of corresponding woes (Lk 6:24-26), just as the blessings of Deut 28:3-6 are paralleled in the curses of 28:16-19.

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It is important that we see the parallel between 5:17-19 and 7:12b. Usually, 7:12b is seen as more closely linked to 7:12a than to 5:17-19, but this leads to an anomaly. Compare 7:12 with our Lord's later summary of "the law and the prophets" (chart):

7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is **the law and the prophets**.

22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang **all the law and the prophets**.

Our Lord's later summary says that the law and the prophets comprise *two* great commandments. The lesser is to "love thy neighbor as thyself." Yet, on the conventional reading of 7:12, this is the entire summary of "the law and the prophets," and the Lord has omitted "the first and great commandment."

There is another solution. Recognizing the parallel between 7:12b and 5:17-19, we can leave 7:12a as part of what these statements surround, where we will see that it is structurally parallel to 6:31-34. Thus recognizing the structure shows us that 7:12a and 7:12b are separate statements.

When we look more closely at what the verses about "the law and the prophets" enclose, we find two major sections, each with two parts. One part of each section deals with the first commandment, to love God, and one part deals with the second commandment, to love man. These in turn are the two great divisions of the ten commandments, which describe our duty Godward (1-4) and manward (5-10). Just as the blessings and warnings remind us of the end of Deuteronomy, the central section reminds us of the ten commandments, which are summarized at the beginning of Deuteronomy, in chapter 5.

### **The Contrasts**

The first statement of the two great commands takes the form of two series of contrasts, introduced by a contrast (v. 20) between the followers of the Lord Jesus and "the scribes and the Pharisees" (chart).

The first series of contrasts is against "them of old time" (in MT, only at 5:21, 33), that is, the Jewish teachers who emphasized the traditions of the elders. This series deals with many of the items in the second half of the ten commandments: murder, adultery, theft, love of others. The command about oaths is not godward; "them of old time" taught that only oaths toward God were binding, but here the Lord emphasizes that our bare word should be sufficient in our dealings with others.

The second set of contrasts is against "the hypocrites" (6:2, 5, 16) and "the heathen" (6:7), and deals with sacrifice, prayer, and fasting, which reflect the first four commandments. The first commandment, about giving alms, is not primarily manward; the Lord teaches that our purpose should be to be seen of God, and to that end we should seek to hide our identify from men.

### **The Absolute Instructions**

6:19-7:12 is the most confusing portion of the sermon, but when we study it, we will find that, like the previous section, it falls into two highly parallel parts (chart). The themes of these two sections are captured in their initial words. The first focuses on our godward duty (not worshipping mammon, but

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having a single eye toward the Lord), while the second deals with our manward responsibilities (not judging others). The “golden rule” of 7:12a, introduced by “therefore,” concludes this second, manward section, in parallel with the “therefore” conclusion of the first section in 6:31, 33.

### **Summary of the Summary**

Note how strongly this is aligned with the book of Deuteronomy (chart). Most of Deuteronomy is a series of final sermons from Moses to the children of Israel while they were gathered on the plains of Moab before entering the land. It would not be surprising if our Lord took it as the pattern for his introductory sermon as the prophet greater than Moses.

- Our Lord begins with blessings on those who obey him, and ends with warnings to those who disobey. Deuteronomy culminates in ch. 27-28 with a series of blessings and curses, which the nation is to recite at Shechem when they enter into the land.
- The large central section, bracketed by references to the law and the prophets, expounds the two great commandments to love God and love man. This is a summary of the ten commandments, which Moses gives in Deuteronomy 5, and then amplifies in ch. 12-26.<sup>4</sup>

Deuteronomy appears to have been much on our Lord’s mind. All three of the verses with which he fought Satan’s temptation in ch. 4 came from Deuteronomy, and here he appears to have the framework of Moses’ last great sermons in mind as he presents his great sermon.

Thus the Sermon on the Mount recalls God’s covenant with Israel as summarized in the book of Deuteronomy. Our Lord, as the new Moses, is bringing God’s people into a new covenant, and yet one that stands in continuity with the old. Both promise blessings to God’s people, but warn of judgment on the rebellious, and both are centered around our obligations to God and man.

*Application:* The relation between the believer and the law of God is a perennial subject for discussion. Our Lord was a devoted student of the law, and based his own teaching to his disciples on it. And when he sent them out into the world, it was to “teach[] them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (28:20). The law of God is our best guide to his unchanging will for how we should conduct our lives, and our Savior’s example and command both urge us to give it our careful attention.

## Exposition

### **4:25-5:2, Setting**

The repetition of “multitudes-mountain-teaching” marks this as an internal inclusion with 7:28-8:1.

**4:25 And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.**--We saw previously that these regions included gentiles as well as Jews. It is sometimes asserted that the intended audience of the Sermon is Jewish, but Matthew’s reference to Gentile followers in the frame of the Sermon shows that he

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4 According to the analysis of Stephan A. Kaufman, “The Structure of the Deuteronomic Law,” *Maarav* 1:2 (April 1979), 105-158.

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understands the Sermon to be for Gentiles as well.

**5:1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain:**--Mountains are important to Matthew (see note). He uses the term 16x, more than any other book in the NT. Two activities in particular repeatedly take place on mountains (chart):

- Teaching, 5:1; 8:1 (marking the beginning and end of the Sermon on the Mount); 24:3 (the Olivet Discourse)
- Prayer, 14:23; 17:1, 9 (transfiguration); 26:30 (agony in garden)

This setting may be another way to remind us of the parallel between our Lord and Moses. In Exodus, Moses repeatedly went up into Mount Sinai to meet with God:

- Exo 19:3, when the children of Israel first arrive at the mountain, “Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain” (a time of prayer, direct communion of Moses with God)
- Exo 20:21, after the giving of the Ten Commandments, “the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was,” and received an expansion of the ten commandments, commonly called “the book of the covenant. God is providing teaching for his people.
- Exo 24:9, for the covenant meal, “then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel” to commune with God, an instance of prayer.
- Exo 24:13ff, after the covenant meal, “Moses went up into the mount of God,” where he received instruction for building the tabernacle, and the two tables of the law (teaching). This was his first “forty day” fast.
- Exo 34:4, after the episode of the golden calf, “he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai,” where the Lord declares his name, describes the worship that is to take place in the tabernacle, and rewrites the law on the tablets (again, teaching). This was his second “forty day” fast.

Once again, our Lord is the prophet like Moses, retiring to mountains to pray to God, and to withdraw with his disciples for focused times of instruction.

*Application:* The examples of both our Lord and Moses remind us of the importance of these two activities, prayer and teaching. In one sense, both should be continual activities: we are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thes 5:17), and “talk of [God’s word] when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deu 6:7). But these examples show us that there is also a need to withdraw and devote ourselves to these activities, without the distractions of daily life.

**and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: 2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,**--Matthew presents this sermon as an example of our Lord’s teaching ministry, when those already committed to him gather together for instruction.

The situation of this sermon “in a mountain” is sometimes cited as a contradiction with Luke 6:17, which reports that the Lord “came down with [the disciples], and stood in the plain.” Luke goes on to

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report what is almost certainly the same sermon. However, close attention to the flow of events in both contexts shows that Luke and Matthew are focusing on different aspects of the same sequence (chart):

	Matthew	Luke
Calling of the four	4:18-22	5:1-11
Teach, preach, heal in Galilee	4:23	5:12-6:11
Appointment of the Twelve	(Lacking)	6:12 he went out <b>into a mountain</b> to pray 6:13-16 called the disciples and appointed twelve
Healing for Jews and Gentiles	4:24 And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.	6:17 And he came down with them, and stood <b>in the plain</b> , and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; 18 And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. 19 And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed <i>them</i> all.
Intro to sermon	4:25-5:2 he went up <b>into a mountain</b>	6:20 (lacks reference to going back up into the mountain)

Luke 6:17, “in the plain,” does not describe the location of the sermon. It describes the location of the healing ministry that Matthew also describes in 4:24. Matthew doesn’t say in 4:24 that the Lord did this “in the plain,” but Luke’s parallel makes clear that he did. Similarly, we should accept Matthew’s testimony, unchallenged by Luke’s silence, that the Sermon took place in “a mountain,” probably the same one where he went to pray and call the disciples in Luke 6:12-16, and from which he descended with them for a time of healing ministry before again withdrawing to instruct them.

### **5:3-12, Promises of Blessing**

#### **General Observations**

Before studying the individual beatitudes, notice how they are arranged (chart). The first eight are set apart from the ninth.

- The Eight are in the third person (“blessed are they”), while the ninth is in the second person (“blessed are ye,” like Luke).
- The ninth is not a new thought, but amplifies the eighth.
- The first and eighth appear to start and end the series:
  - They offer the same promise, the kingdom of heaven;
  - The promise is in the present tense, not the future as are the others.

Each of these beatitudes echoes Old Testament promises, some in the very words of the OT. We will consider these as we review the individual beatitudes. By bringing them together, the Lord is claiming to be the fulfillment of all those promises, the culmination of Israel’s hope.



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In particular, the first three beatitudes are all derived from Isa 61 (chart).

- The word “meek” in Isa 61:1 is interesting. The Hebrew word is the one usually translated in the LXX by *πραυς* “meek,” so it anticipates the blessing on the meek in v. 5. But in Isa 61:1, the LXX renders it with *πτωχος* “poor,” leading to the first beatitude. The Lord knows the underlying Hebrew, and “poor in spirit” captures both the literal Hebrew and the LXX rendering that was widely known among Greek-speaking Jews.
- The needs of “they that mourn” pervade Isaiah’s words, in vv. 1, 2, 3.
- The Lord’s offer of “comfort” to the mourners echoes the prophetic offer in Isa 61:2.
- The promise of inheriting the earth recalls Isa 61:7, which in the LXX contains exactly this phrase. The word *γη* is both dominant and dedicated in the LXX for the Hebrew word *ארץ*, which can mean not only the physical earth (as in Gen 1:1), but also the land of Israel. In fact, the book that uses the phrase “inherit the earth/land” the most in the OT is Deuteronomy (19x)<sup>5</sup>, in its frequent encouragement to the people on the eve of the conquest. In the context of Isa 61:1, the promise to “inherit the earth” is an instance of Isaiah’s common theme of the restoration of captive Israel to the land of promise.

This is the passage from which our Lord introduced his ministry at the synagogue in Nazareth. He has this same text in mind here as he proclaims the blessings that he has come to bring.

The repetition of this portion from Isaiah, both here and in Nazareth, suggests that it was central in our Lord’s conception of who he was and what he had come to do. He will quote it again in 11:5. We might even say that it was his “life verse.” All of Scripture was his authority, but he identified in a special way with this verse, and it focused his ministry.

*Application:* Is there a verse that the Lord has laid on your heart as particularly characterizing your life and ministry? The point is not to choose one verse to the neglect of others, but to be so immersed in the Word of God that it is the means by which you define yourself and your life.

### 3, The Poor in Spirit

**3 Blessed are the poor in spirit:**--We have already noted that this expression captures the interesting combination of “poverty” and “meekness” reflected in the LXX translation of the Hebrew of Isa 61:1. We will say more about meekness when we discuss the third beatitude.

Our Lord no doubt has in mind another verse from Isaiah as well (chart):

Isa 66:2 to this *man* will I look, *even to him that is poor* and of a contrite spirit [or: **poor and contrite in spirit**], and trembleth at my word.

Compare the sense of an earlier passage,<sup>6</sup>

Isa 57:15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

<sup>5</sup> Counting both *κληρονομεω την γην* and the less common *κατακληρονομεω την γην*

<sup>6</sup> See notes on Isa 66:2 for discussion of the various expressions in these verses.

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The parallelism with “contrite” shows the nature of the poverty that is here blessed. It is a sense of unworthiness before God. The first blessing falls on those who have filed for spiritual bankruptcy.

This opening beatitude shows an important contrast between these blessings and those of Deuteronomy 28. There, blessings fall on those who keep God’s law. Here, they come to those who know that they are condemned by the law.

The two attitudes are not entirely different. Outward obedience should be motivated by an inward sense of need to obey, and honesty before the law’s demands should lead to a continuous sense of inadequacy, rather than the pride in checking all the boxes that characterized the Pharisees. But the focus is different, just as it is in the Antitheses section. Deuteronomy focuses on the outward actions of obedience, blessing those who “observe to do” what God has commanded. Here we see the heart attitude of the obedient person (which Deuteronomy enjoins as well, in the *Shema* of 6:5).

*Application:* We all need to cultivate this recognition of our unworthiness. Repentance is the first step in our coming to the Lord. We deserve nothing, so we have nothing to complain about. Everything we have is a blessing from the Lord, and we should continually give thanks for it.

Consider Luke’s parallel version of the proverb (chart):

Luk 6:20 Blessed *be ye* poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

“Poor” follows the LXX without taking into account the underlying Hebrew, something that is understandable for a gospel addressed to a Gentile audience. But it reminds us of our Lord’s frequent ministry to the poor, and his warnings to the rich. As we will see in Matt 6:19-34, the comfort brought by “treasures upon earth” can turn one’s heart away from the Lord. Poverty in itself does not guarantee righteousness, but when all other resources are gone, the heart sometimes turns more easily toward the Lord. James, who often quotes the Sermon, no doubt has these expressions in mind when he writes,

Jam 2:5 Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

Luke’s “secularization,” seen also in the blessing on the hungry, reflects a broader emphasis in his report of the Sermon. Not all of the material in Matthew’s report has parallels in Luke; much of what is omitted (such as the Lord’s prayer) appears elsewhere in Luke’s gospel. His omissions are not random. Recall our analysis of Matthew’s version (chart):

Setting	Mt 4:25-5:2: <b>L 6:20</b>	Mt 7:28-8:1
Blessings & Warnings	Mt 5:3-12: <b>L 6:20-23; matching woes L 6:24-26;</b>	Mt 7:13-27: <b>L 6:43-49</b>
Our Mission	Mt 5:13-16	
Law & Prophets	Mt 5:17-19	Mt 7:12b
Toward Man	Mt 5:20-48: <b>L 6:27-30, 32-36 (no contrast)</b>	Mt 7:1-12a: <b>L 6:31, 37-42</b>
Toward God	Mt 6:1-18	Mt 6:19-34

Luke’s omissions are in the summary that sets off the “law and prophets” section, the corresponding elements about the law and the prophets, and most extensively, the central sections dealing with the first commandment. Luke does not omit this teaching. He reports the Lord’s Prayer (from the second



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part of the Antitheses) in 11:2-4, and the bulk of the first part of the absolute section in 12:22-34. But his emphasis in the Sermon is on the physical side of the Lord's message. Understanding the motive for his emphasis will have to wait further study on Luke.<sup>7</sup>

**for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**--This is the only one of the promises that is given in the present tense, and it brackets the main body of eight beatitudes.

We have frequently noted the phenomenon of "manifold fulfillment" in relation to the kingdom. John and our Lord declared that "the kingdom of God is at hand," and many aspects of it were demonstrated at our Lord's first advent, but many others remain to be realized. In the same way, some of the blessings promised here are available now (citizenship in the kingdom), while others await future realization.

*Application:* Our knowledge of the future blessings encourages us in our present pilgrim walk. We can bear with the snow and ice because we know that July will come. Knowing that we are citizens of the kingdom, we can bear with the difficulties of this life, because we know that the future blessings of the middle six beatitudes will certainly come.

### 4, They that Mourn

**4 Blessed are they that mourn:**--In the most general sense possible, God comforts his children who mourn. Twice in the Revelation, we read (chart),

Rev 7:17; 21:4 God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

But the emphasis of the Sermon on the kingdom of heaven, the link of this beatitude to Isaiah 61, and the historical context of Isaiah all suggest that a more specific mourning may be in view here.

Isaiah is anticipating the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of her people to Babylon, which brought to an end the earthly rule of God from Zion. The promise of comfort is substantiated by a promise that they will rebuild:

Isa 61:2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to **comfort** all that **mourn**; 3 To appoint unto them that **mourn** in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for **mourning**, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; ... 4 And they shall **build** the old wastes, they shall **raise up** the former desolations, and they shall **repair** the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

When the blow finally fell, Jeremiah made it the leading note of his lamentation:

Lam 1:1 How doth the city sit solitary, *that was* full of people! *how* is she become as a widow! she *that was* great among the nations, *and* princess among the provinces, *how* is she become tributary!

Given this context, our Lord has in mind those who mourn that God's rule from Zion has been interrupted and unbelievers govern the world. We share this mourning when we weep over the godlessness that we see in the world today. The attitude commended in the first beatitude (to the "poor in spirit") is a recognition that we ourselves fall short of God's requirements; the attitude commended

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<sup>7</sup> See notes for some preliminary discussion.

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in the second is a recognition that the world falls short.

*Application:* It's one thing to complain about corrupt government, but do we truly mourn over the pagan powers that rule the world? Too often we think that electing a different party will help. That badly underestimates the problem. True kingdom citizens realize that nothing short of the return of Christ will fix the problem, and mourn over the current state.

**for they shall be comforted.**--God has made us, now and immediately, citizens of the kingdom of heaven. But much waits to be realized. We must continue to mourn over the earth's fallen condition until the future time when the Lord Jesus returns.

*Application:* The Lord teaches us the correct response to our mourning over ungodliness: not complaining to one another, but confidence in his promise of a future restoration.

### 5, The Meek

**5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.**--Like the first two beatitudes, the third is inspired by Isa 61, where the Hebrew word that the LXX translates "poor" in v. 1 is more commonly rendered "meek," and the LXX in Isa 61:7 promises that the captives shall one day again "inherit the land" of Israel (chart). The poor in spirit, who already carry passports for the kingdom, are still in exile, but one day shall return home.

We have already noted that the phrase "inherit the earth/land" draws its meaning from its 19 uses in Deuteronomy<sup>8</sup> to describe the conquest of the promised land. For example:

Deu 1:8 Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and **possess the land** which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.

Deu 3:28 But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to **inherit the land** which thou shalt see.

Deu 6:18 And thou shalt do *that which is* right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and **possess the good land** which the LORD sware unto thy fathers,

This beatitude is not a general promise of present prosperity to the meek. Indeed, many meek people never "inherit the earth" in this age. But that's not the point. The promised blessing is the land of Canaan. The Lord is describing those who will participate in the earthly kingdom of our Lord Jesus when he returns from heaven.

*Application:* Understanding the kingdom focus of this verse is essential in having a right attitude toward poor believers. If we think the promise has to do with this life, then those who are not prosperous must not be meek and righteous, and we should have nothing to do with them. James 2 show this attitude, inviting the rich man to sit in the best seat, but putting the poor folk at the back.

What does it mean to be "meek"? Before Isaiah, another OT writer promised that the meek shall inherit

<sup>8</sup> Including two instances of κατακληρονομεω: 1:8; 2:31; 3:28; 4:1, 22, 47; 6:18; 8:1; 9:4-5, 23; 10:11; 11:8, 11, 31; 12:29; 16:20; 19:14; 20:16

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the earth, and it will help us understand more clearly what is meant by meekness (chart). David was the first one to record this promise:

Psa 37:11 But **the meek shall inherit the earth**; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

This is more than just a single verse in the Psalm. Psalm 37 is an acrostic Psalm: each set of verses begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. One purpose of such Psalms is to stimulate meditation on a theme, and the theme in Psalm 37 that God's people will inherit the land in spite of the opposition of the wicked. The phrase "inherit the land" appears five times in all, more than any other chapter in the OT. (The next three are all in Deuteronomy: chapters 4, 9, and 11 have three instances each.) Each of these verses gives a different description of those who will inherit the land.

Psa 37:9 For evildoers shall be cut off: but **those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.** (Compare v. 3, "trust in the Lord")

Psa 37:22 For **such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth**; and *they that be* cursed of him shall be cut off.

Psa 37:29 **The righteous shall inherit the land**, and dwell therein for ever.

So the meek are those who wait on the Lord, rather than relying on their own initiative (v. 9). They are those who righteously obey him (v. 29), who receive the land as his blessing, not as the result of human effort (v. 22).

v. 34 sums up these three characteristics:

Psa 37:34 **Wait on the LORD** (v. 9), **and keep his way** (v. 29), and **he shall exalt thee** (v. 22) **to inherit the land:**<sup>9</sup> when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see *it*.

And if we return to the start of the Psalm, we find another, very similar summary:

Psa 37:1 Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. 2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. 3 **Trust in the LORD** (v. 9), and **do good** (v. 29); **so shalt thou dwell in the land**, and verily thou shalt be fed.

"So shalt thou dwell in the land." David was the anointed king, but his authority over the promised land was challenged repeatedly: by Saul, by the Philistines, by Absalom. He learned that the promise of the kingdom could only be claimed by those who would trust in the Lord and do good.

*Application:* The meek are those who do not take matters into their own hands, but instead obey the Lord and wait on him, trusting in him to give them what he sees fit in his time. Is this our attitude to the problems we face?

## 6, The Hungry and Thirsty

**6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.**--We consider first that for which we hunger and thirst, then the OT allusions in the verbs, and finally the

<sup>9</sup> In the LXX, this instance uses κατακληρονομεω instead of the more common κληρονομεω.

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relation to Luke's version (6:21), "ye that hunger now."

### **Three Kinds of Righteousness**

The basic idea of *righteousness* is conformity to a standard, but who conforms, and how that conformity is realized, differ (chart).

First of all, *earned* righteousness is achieved by someone who keeps the law of God. God himself is quintessentially righteous, acting always in accordance with his own character. Moses says:

Deu 32:4 *He is* the Rock, his work *is* perfect: for all his ways *are* judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just [**"righteous"** צַדִּיק] and right *is* he.

Nehemiah says of God, because he has kept his promises to Abraham,

Neh 9:8 hast performed thy words; for thou *art* **righteous**:

For us, this kind of righteousness comes from obedience:

Rom 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto **righteousness**?

Second, in contrast to this *earned* righteousness, the NT looks forward to a righteousness that is not earned by obedience, but received as a gift. Theologians call it *imputed* righteousness.

Rom 3:21 But now the **righteousness** of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the **righteousness** of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

Paul says that this righteousness is "witnessed by the law and the prophets," and elsewhere he cites as an example of it Abraham's experience:

Gen 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for **righteousness**.

The core idea here is that righteousness is the result of a judicial statement, declaring someone to be righteous. God is pleased to proclaim us righteous when we repent and trust in the Lord Jesus.

Many times in the Psalms and in the latter part of Isaiah, God's "righteousness" and his "salvation" are mentioned in parallel. Note how he repeatedly calls on the people to pay attention to this in Isa 51:

Isa 51:4 Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people.

5 **My righteousness** *is* near; **my salvation** is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.

6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner:

but **my salvation** shall be for ever, and **my righteousness** shall not be abolished.

7 Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart *is* my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. 8 For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool:

but **my righteousness** shall be for ever, and **my salvation** from generation to generation.

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What is this “righteousness”? The parallel with “salvation” suggests that it might be imputed righteousness, but the reference in 5:1 to judgment suggests a third sense to the term, which we might call *vindictive* righteousness, when God brings judgment on the unrighteous. Compare Ps 98:

Psa 98:1 O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory. 2 The LORD hath made known his salvation: **his righteousness** hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.

This righteousness is a form of God’s earned righteousness. He acts in consistency with his purposes when he punishes the unrighteous and deliver his people, something that we are not to do (Jas 1:20).

So righteousness can be earned (based on one’s own works), imputed (given as a gift by God), or vindictive (the execution of God’s judgments on the unrighteous). For which are we to hunger and thirst?

### ***Hungering and Thirsting***

As with the promise to the mourners, we can understand this promise at two levels.

In general, the godly person, frustrated with the constraints of the flesh, does long for earned righteousness. We love God, we want to keep his word, yet we find ourselves falling into sin. Paul captures this sense vividly in Romans 7.

Rom 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

The answer to Romans 7 is not imputed righteousness. Paul writes from the perspective of one who has already received the imputed righteousness of God, as described in chapters 4-5. The answer to Romans 7 is the work of the Spirit in Romans 8. The New Covenant promises,

Eze 36:27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.

So Paul in Romans 7-8 shows how those who long for righteousness will be satisfied. This is a true assurance, and one that is worthy of our attention.

*Application:* Righteousness is rejected by unbelievers, and by many believers as well. The world thinks of righteousness as something burdensome, a threat to their “fun.” Many who name the name of Christ focus on Paul’s statement, “We are not under the law, but under grace,” and similarly reject God’s moral standards. Do we wish that we didn’t have to be good? Or do we, with Paul, delight in the law of God inwardly, and long that we could do a better job of keeping it?

But is earned righteousness what the Lord Jesus had in mind when he spoke this beatitude?

Paul doesn’t use the idioms of “hunger and thirst” to describe his longing for righteousness. Those terms come from the OT.

Psa 42:1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. 2 My

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soul **thirsteth** for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

Isa 55:1 Ho, every one that **thirsteth**, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2 Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which is* not bread? and your labour for *that which* satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye *that which is* good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

The hunger and thirst in both cases is for God himself, and his rule. Psalm 43 is structurally the continuation of Psalm 42; note how it begins, with a plea for God's vindication against the wicked.

Psa 43:1 Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.

Similarly, Isa 55:1 is preceded by a promise of God's judgment:

Isa 54:17 No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.

This OT echo leads us to understand that the Lord's main emphasis is on a hunger for God's vindictive righteousness, his enforcement of his law. Every true believer laments the corruption of a fallen world. As Satan told the Lord in the temptations, the world's power "is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it" (Luk 4:6). But God promises to bring his righteousness and judge the wicked. We hunger and thirst for his coming, and the Lord promises that we shall be filled.

*Application:* If the righteousness for which we hunger and thirst is our Savior's rule, we will be much less likely to divert our energies into political solutions to the world's problems. The greatest contribution we can make is to reach out to the lost, to bring in the full number of God's elect and thus "hasten the coming" of our Lord (2 Pet 3:12).

### Luke's Version

Once again, Luke records a very similar beatitude, but without the spiritual twist (chart):

Luke 6:21 Blessed *are ye* that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.

Luke focuses on physical hunger, just as Luke 6:20 talked about the physically poor where Matt 5:3 talked about the poor in spirit. There, we found a close relation between the two, captured by James 2:5. Similarly, there is a relation here, and this time it is right in the Sermon, at the end of Matthew 6.

Mat 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

There, he promises that if we "seek first ... his righteousness" (hunger and thirst after righteousness), "all these things" (food, drink, clothing) "shall be added."

*Application:* Making righteousness our priority may seem to put us at risk of hunger, but it ensures God's provision of our physical need.



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### 7, The Merciful

**7 Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.**--To understand the emphasis of this verse, we must first discuss the concept of “mercy” and related words in the Bible.

#### ***Kinds of Mercy***

There are two main concepts involved in this group of words, one of which is further divided.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, the English words sometimes overlap, leading to confusion.

The main division is between a reciprocal relation, reflecting a relationship between the parties, and a one-way one, which is unexpected and unreciprocated (chart).

The reciprocal relation is marked with the Hebrew word **חסד**, sometimes translated “loyal love,” and the noun derived from it, **חסיד** “holy one” or “saint,” sometimes rendered “merciful.” It is common to associate this term with covenants, although there are cases where it is applied to people who are not in covenant, but the idea of relationship and reciprocity seems to be pervasive. Here are some examples:

Psa 50:5 Gather my **saints** together unto me; **those that have made a covenant** with me by sacrifice.

Psa 79:2 The dead bodies of **thy servants** have they given *to be* meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy **saints** unto the beasts of the earth.

Psa 85:8 I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto **his people**, and to his **saints**: but let them not turn again to folly.

Psa 86:2 Preserve my soul; for I *am* **holy**: O thou my God, save **thy servant** that trusteth in thee.

Psa 148:14 He also exalteth the horn of **his people**, the praise of all his **saints**; *even* of the children of Israel, a people near unto him.

*Application:* We should thank the Lord that he allows us to participate in such a relation with himself. In Eden, God communed with Adam. “The LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” (Exo 33:11). This relation is open to us. Let us treasure it and seek after it in regular prayer and meditation on God’s word.

The one-way relation, which is unexpected and unreciprocated, is further distinguished by two different NT words, commonly translated “mercy” **ελεεω** and “grace” **χαρις**. These come from different forms of the same Hebrew root **חן**, which emphasizes that something is free, not paid for, not reciprocated. Compare the use of this root when Laban speaks to Jacob:

Gen 29:15 And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou *art* my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me **for nought** **חנם**? tell me, what *shall* thy wages *be*?

But the two Greek words, from different forms of this root, take on distinct notions of why the attitude is undeserved. “Mercy” emphasizes that the object of our attitude is miserable and weak, unable to help himself, much less someone else. “Grace” emphasizes that it is sinful and rebellious. We have **mercy**

<sup>10</sup> See notes for more discussion and statistics.

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on a poor beggar. We show **grace** to someone who has offended us. Mercy is measured by the need of the recipient. Grace is measured by the recipient's unworthiness.

Mercy is what the sick people asked of the Lord Jesus:

Mat 9:27 And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, *Thou* Son of David, have **mercy** on us.

They were miserable, and asked for him to have pity on them.

Grace is illustrated in our attitude toward an unjust ruler or employer: it is "favor given where wrath is deserved."

1Pe 2:18 Servants, *be* subject to *your* masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. 19 For this *is* **thankworthy**, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* **acceptable** with God.

God's attitude in saving sinners is both grace and mercy. It is grace in view of our rebellion against him; it is mercy because disobedience to the creator can only result in misery to the creature.

People can show loyal love toward one another in reciprocal relations such as family ties or covenants. And they can show loyal love to God, as he does to them. But while people can show mercy and grace to other people, and while God can show mercy and grace to people, we can never show mercy or grace to God. We cannot be gracious to him, because he has not sinned against us. We cannot be merciful to him, because he is not miserable.

*Application:* Understanding the fundamental asymmetry between us and the Lord is essential to our right relation with him. We need his mercy and grace. He needs neither from us. We are dependent on him; he is completely self-sufficient. Whatever our circumstances, we can always rejoice that the Lord has been merciful and gracious to us in bringing us into a relationship with himself, within which we can participate in the reciprocal relation of being his people.

### ***Understanding the Beatitude***

As with the other beatitudes, the Lord is not inventing the idea, but deriving it from the OT. It is common in expounding this verse to reference Psalm 18 (chart):

Psa 18:25 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful<sup>11</sup>

But the vocabulary is different. The two instances of "merciful" in Psa 18:25 are different forms of the root **חסד**, describing a relation of reciprocal, loyal love. In Matt 5:7, our Lord uses the word that refers to one-way care for someone who is miserable. He more likely is drawing on Psalm 41.

Psa 41:1 Blessed אֲשֶׁר יַאֲמַר אֱלֹהִים *is* he that **considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him** in time of trouble. 2 The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; *and* he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. 3 The LORD will

11 חסד Dt, the only verbal use of the root in the OT. This is probably the estimative-declarative use of Dt (Waltke-O'Connor 26.2 f), to present oneself in a certain character.

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strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness. 4 I said, LORD, **be merciful unto me**: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.

David, like his descendant, is pronouncing a beatitude on one who “considereth the poor,” that is, who shows favor to someone with no claim on his favor. While the word “mercy” does not appear in v. 1, the concept certainly does. And the verse goes on to assure such a person of God’s favor, which David implores in v. 4, “Lord, be merciful unto me.” This Psalm assumes the principle that our Lord articulates, that it is the one who is merciful to his fellows who can expect God’s mercy.

We are likely to shy away from this idea as implying some kind of works salvation. But this is hardly the only place it appears.<sup>12</sup> The Lord describes the principle as lying at the basis of the final judgment:

Mat 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Paul seems to present events in a different order, emphasizing that in showing mercy, we imitate God.

Eph 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Col 3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* ye.

Some would make this contrast a “dispensational distinction.” But as we read on in Matthew, we realize that each of these is only one side of the picture. The Lord outlines the complete process in the parable of the ungrateful debtor (chart):

Mat 18:23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. 24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. 25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and **forgave him the debt**. 28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. 29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 30 And he would not: but went and **cast him into prison**, till he should pay the debt. 31 So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. 32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: 33 **Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant [had mercy ελεεω], even as I had pity [had mercy ελεεω] on thee?** 34 And his lord was wroth, and **delivered him to the tormentors**, till he should pay

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12 Jean Carmignac, *Recherches sur le “Notre Pere”* (Paris: Letouzey, 1969) 226-227 cites numerous parallels in the gospels and epistles.

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all that was due unto him. 35 **So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.**

The sequence here begins with mercy from the king to his subject (vv. 27, 33b). Then the subject is tested with an opportunity to show mercy to his fellow, and when he fails that test (vv. 30, 33a), the Lord withdraws his mercy (v. 34). Paul's teaching in Ephesians and Colossians is just an application of v. 33, while our Beatitude is a summary of v. 35 (chart).

The full picture, spelled out in the parable of Matt 18, has three steps.

1. The initial mercy is from God. We are so miserable, so lost, that we are incapable of doing any good thing, but God graciously and mercifully attends to us.
2. He expects that we, having experienced his mercy, will show mercy to others.
3. If we do not show mercy, it is evidence that we have not really received the mercy that he initially offered us, and in the last day, he will show us no mercy.

David in Psalm 41 calls on the Lord for mercy in his illness, and relates it to his mercy on the poor, but he does so on the basis of an existing relation with God. The description of the last judgment in Matthew 18 concerns two groups of people, both of whom call Jesus "Lord" and consider themselves to be rightly related to him. So in Matthew 5, the Lord is instructing his disciples, those who recognize already that they are "poor in spirit." Indeed, God's salvation is "by grace, through faith, apart from works," but those whom he thus saves are "created unto good works" and will be known by the fruit that he produces in them.

*Application:* We must avoid two errors. The first is assuming that we can earn God's mercy by our mercy. On the contrary, the process starts with him. But the second is that those who have received God's mercy can live to please themselves. True salvation changes us. As believers, we will sense the Spirit's urgings to show mercy. We must not quench them, but seek more and more to manifest the godlike character of showing mercy to others.

### ***What Mercy will we Receive?***

Like the other beatitudes, the principle can be applied very generally. But we have repeatedly seen that the promised blessings anticipate the coming kingdom. Is a similar emphasis in view here?

The verb used twice in this verse, "to be merciful," appears 92 times in the LXX (chart), but it is very unevenly distributed. More than half of the instances (48) appear in Isaiah or later (Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Zechariah). Most of these instances report one of two things.

Many anticipate the lack of mercy under God's judgment:

[Lord against the Northern Kingdom:] Isa 9:17 Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, **neither shall have mercy** on their fatherless and widows: for every one *is* an hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is* stretched out still.

[Medes against Babylon:] Isa 13:18 *Their* bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they **shall have no pity** on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children.

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Others describe the mercy that the Lord shows in bringing Israel back to the land:

Isa 49:10 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. ... 13 Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will **have mercy** upon his afflicted.

Jer 12:15 And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will return, and **have compassion** on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land.

In other words, from the time of Isaiah on, the idea that the Lord will “have mercy” is closely tied to the return of Israel to the land and the restoration of the kingdom.

Against this background, the fifth beatitude joins the previous three in promising, not just a general assurance of God’s blessing, but a specific reference to the coming kingdom.

### 8, The Pure in Heart

**8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.**--Again, our Lord is drawing on the Psalms. His promise corresponds closely with David’s observation (chart),

Psa 24:3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall **stand in his holy place**? 4 He that hath clean hands, and a **pure heart**; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. ... 6 This *is* the generation of them that seek him, **that seek thy face**, ~~Ø~~ even Jacob. Selah.

A pure heart is a prerequisite to ascending into the hill of the Lord, being in his presence (מקום קדשו) “the place of his holiness”), and seeking his face (v. 6).

Let’s consider further both the nature of a pure heart, and the promise of seeing the Lord.

#### ***The Pure in Heart***

Jeremiah recognized the central nature of the heart in human sin:

Jer 17:9 **The heart** *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Later, our Lord will teach that the heart is the source of all wickedness.

Mat 15:18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19 For **out of the heart** proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

An unclean heart leads to wicked actions, and having a “pure heart” is a prelude, as David realized, to “clean hands.” In fact, the first instance of the Greek phrase in the LXX is in Abimelech’s protest when God warned him about taking Abraham’s wife:

Gen 20:4 But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? 5 Said he not unto me, She *is* my sister? and she, even she herself said, He *is*

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my brother: in the **integrity of my heart** [LXX with a **pure heart**] and innocency of my hands have I done this.

While Abimelech, a pagan, might claim a pure heart, David and Solomon realized that true purity of heart must come from God.

Pro 20:9 Who can say, I have made my **heart clean**, I am pure from my sin?

Psa 51:10 Create in me a **clean heart**, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

A person with a desire for a pure heart will cultivate and encourage that purity. There are two main principles in the way of purity.

1. We should not expose ourselves to things that would lead our heart astray. Solomon again:

Pro 4:23 **Keep [guard] thy heart** with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life.

2. We should fill our heart with the Word of God, which is able to purify us.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and **cleanse it with the washing of water by the word**,

Psa 119:11 **Thy word have I hid in mine heart**, that I might not sin against thee.

*Application:* If we would be godly, we must understand the nature of the pure heart: it comes from God, is cultivated or hindered by where we direct our attention, and is a prerequisite to righteous living. Outward conformity to God's law without a pure heart is not pleasing to God. It is simply a fleshly effort. Let us each one desire, and diligently pursue, purity of heart.

### Seeing God

David's exhortation to "clean hands and a pure heart" (Psa 24:4) is motivated by the desire to "ascend into the hill of the LORD" and "stand in his holy place" (v. 3). Those who pursue this agenda are described as "the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face" (v. 6). The great, aching desire of every human soul is to see God. Adam was created to dwell in the garden and commune with the Lord. We all know how overpoweringly attractive a beautiful mountain landscape or sunset can be. Our attraction to these works of creation is a faint echo of the attraction our souls feel for the creator. Well did the Westminster divines teach, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever."

But because he sinned, Adam was cast out of the garden, and out of the presence of God. Isaiah captured the diagnosis:

Isa 59:1 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear.

The great tragedy of sin is that it cuts us off from God, the one thing that we desire above all else. All the positive pain that sin brings on us is nothing, compared with the deprivation of God's face.

David eloquently expresses his longing for God while he was fleeing from Absalom. As in Psalm 24, the place where he hopes to see God is in his sanctuary:



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Psa 63:1 O God, thou *art* my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; 2 To see thy power and thy glory, so *as* I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

It's against this background, and no doubt with Psalm 24 in mind, that Isaiah and Micah set forth his great vision of the day of the Lord:

Isa 2:2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD'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. 3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and **let us go up** to the mountain of the LORD, **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 the LORD from Jerusalem. (~ Micah 4:1-2)

When we arrive at the new heavens and the new earth, this is the distinctive feature of the New Jerusalem:

Rev 22:3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: 4 And **they shall see his face**;

Again, the promise in the beatitude leads us directly to the ancient promises of the coming kingdom of God on earth.

*Application:* Do you desire to see God? What is the objective of our lives? All of the world's glitter is Satan's way of distracting us from the most beautiful, the most captivating, the most attractive vision in the world, the presence of God. Sometimes we think of the value of the future state in terms of seeing our departed loved ones. But our real preoccupation will be with seeing God.

## 9, The Peacemakers

**9 Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.**--Again, we consider first the description of the blessed ones, then the promise.

### ***Peacemakers***

Many of the characteristics that the Lord blesses in this section have clear OT antecedents: mourning over God's judgment, meekness, hungering and thirsting for God's righteous judgment, showing mercy. It's harder to find OT exhortations to peacemaking. The noun here appears nowhere else in the Greek Bible. The verb form appears elsewhere only in Col 1:20 "having made peace through the blood of his cross" and in the LXX to Pr 10:10, which departs from the Hebrew: "he that reproves boldly is a peacemaker" (Hebrew: "a prating fool shall fall").

Perhaps the best antecedent (chart) is Psa 34:14, "Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it." That exhortation would certainly be consistent with our Lord's words here. But its context makes it puzzling. The Psalm is by David, "when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed." The episode is reported in 1 Sam 21:10-15.

Throughout David's flight from Saul, he seeks refuge with a Philistine king named Achish

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(“Abimelech,” like “Pharaoh,” is a title rather than a proper name) (chart). In 1 Sam 21, he first goes to Achish, who fears that he may prove disloyal, and David feigns madness to escape. In 1 Sam 27, he succeeds in attaching himself to Achish, who gives him Ziklag, but David’s relation is marked by deception; he raids remnants of the people of the land (Geshurites, Gezrites, Amalekites), but tells Achish that he has been raiding Judah and its allies. When the Philistines mass their forces to attack Saul, Achish is sufficiently persuaded of David’s loyalty to appoint him his bodyguard (1 Sam 28), but the lords of the Philistines recognize this as a ploy, and refuse to go to war with David (1 Sam 29).

Against this history, Psalm 34 is striking. It is an acrostic psalm, the result of meditating on the events that stimulated it. This deliberateness suggests<sup>13</sup> that David wrote it long after the events, perhaps toward the end of his life. Note in particular our verse and the one before it:

Psa 34:13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. 14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

These verses advocate values that David violated while he was with Achish. His lips did speak guile, when he lied to Achish about his raids in ch. 27. A strong case can be made that his whole engagement with Achish was a grand deception, an attempt to turn against the Philistines in the final war with Israel, and thus establish himself as a great Israelite hero.<sup>14</sup> And throughout this period of his life, far from pursuing peace, he was a warrior, a circumstance that blocked him from building the temple:

1Ch 28:3 But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou *hast been* a man of war, and hast shed blood.

Against this background, Psalm 34 appears to be a confession by David that the manner of life he exhibited during his time with Achish was in fact displeasing to God. Guile and conflict do not please God. The godly person speaks truth, and seeks peace. And our Lord endorses this insight from the Psalm.

*Application:* The world looks up to people like the brash, combative, cunning David we see at the end of 1 Samuel. God values the guileless, peace-pursuing David of Psalm 34. Let’s learn from David’s reflective experience, and seek to be peacemakers who please God, even if the world thinks we are wimps.

There is a deeper meaning as well. David’s life was one of war, in contrast with physical peace, but Isaiah is preoccupied with spiritual peace (chart):

Isa 48:22 *There is no peace*, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.

Isa 57:19 I create the fruit of the lips; **Peace, peace** to *him that is far off*, and to *him that is near*, saith the LORD; and I will heal him. 20 But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. 21 *There is no peace*, saith my God, to the wicked.

Isaiah characterizes the coming Messiah as one who brings this peace with God:

Isa 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his

<sup>13</sup> The argument is from Hengstenberg

<sup>14</sup> Yael Shemesh, “David in the Service of King Achish of Gath: Renegade to His People or a Fifth Column in the Philistine Army?” *VT* 57 (2007) 73-90.

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shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, **The Prince of Peace**.

Isa 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!

Peter summarized the Messiah's mission to Cornelius,

Act 10:36 The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, **preaching peace** by Jesus Christ

And Paul tells the Ephesians,

Eph 2:17 [**Jesus**] **came and preached peace** to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18 For through him we both [Jew and Gentile] have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

In fact, this is one name for the good news that we preach:

Eph 6:15 And your feet shod with the preparation of **the gospel of peace**;

*Application:* It is a noble work to seek to bring peace among men, but our calling is even higher, to make peace between sinful people and a holy God, by pointing them to the Lord Jesus, the prince of peace. These are the true "peacemakers" whom the Lord declares blessed.

### ***The Children [Sons] of God***

This promise is a direct reference to an OT text. To see this, we need to recall Israel's status as God's son (chart):

Exo 4:22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, **Israel is my son**, *even* my firstborn:

But the nation, by its conduct, strained this relation.

Isa 1:2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. ... 4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, **children that are corrupters**: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

Isaiah is drawing his language about "children that are corrupters" from Moses:

Deu 32:5 They have **corrupted** themselves, their spot *is not ~~the spot~~* of his **children**: *they are* a perverse and crooked generation.

Hosea, a contemporary of Isaiah, declares the consequences of Israel's sin:

Hos 1:8 Now when she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. 9 Then said *God*, Call his name **Loammi**: for **ye are not my people**, and I will not be your *God*.

But he goes on to promise that the time will come when this problem will be removed.

Hos 1:10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto

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them, *Ye are* not my people, *there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.*

This last clause in the LXX is exactly what our Lord promises, “they shall be called the sons/children of God.” Once again, the promise in the beatitude takes us ahead to the millennial kingdom.

*Application:* Young children have an instinctive desire to be like their parents, like the little boy at the barber who wanted his hair cut “just like Daddy’s, and be sure to leave the place on the top where his head shows through.” This should be our desire toward our heavenly Father. The sonship that counts is not just one of descent, but one of honor, as in the fifth commandment, and we honor God by living in submission to him.

### 10, They which are Persecuted for Righteousness’ Sake

**10 Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**--From future promises, we now return to present ones.

Our Lord’s attention may be drawn to the persecution of the righteous by his cousin’s recent experience. Matthew begins his account of our Lord’s ministry with the arrest of John the Baptist:

Mat 4:12 Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;

We have seen evidence that Jesus was one of John’s disciples. The persecution of his master anticipates his own suffering, and he must prepare his disciples in turn for this dynamic.

#### ***Other warnings of the fact***

Again, the principle that the Lord is expounding is not new to the NT. Earlier, we saw that Psalm 37 was central to understanding who the meek were and what it meant to “inherit the earth.” This same Psalm has a good deal to say about persecution (chart):

Psa 37:12 **The wicked plotteth against the just**, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. ... 14 **The wicked** have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, **and to slay such as be of upright conversation.** . . . 32 **The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him.**

David’s son Solomon also understands this principle:

Pro 29:27 An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and **he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.**

And our Lord, with his apostles, regularly alert us that with salvation comes suffering:

Joh 16:33 **In the world ye shall have tribulation:** but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Act 14:21 And when [Paul and Barnabas] had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, 22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that **we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.**

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1Th 3:4 For verily, when we were with you, **we told you before that we should suffer tribulation**; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

2Ti 3:12 Yea, and all that will live **godly** in Christ Jesus **shall suffer persecution**.

*Application:* A great risk for American believers is becoming seduced with our secular prosperity into thinking that our Christianity guarantees comfort. Theologians can debate whether we will be here for “the great tribulation,” but the Scriptures are unmistakably clear that we, like our brothers and sisters in the past, will suffer tribulation. Knowing this now will help us not to feel betrayed when such things happen to us, and will motivate us to pray for, and assist, our brothers and sisters elsewhere who face these challenges now.

### ***Understanding the mechanism***

The Lord’s blessing is not for the persecuted in general, but only for those whose persecution results from their righteousness. Peter makes this distinction clear (chart):

1Pe 4:14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. 16 Yet if *any man suffer as a Christian*, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

The Scriptures reveal to us, not only the fact of persecution, but its underlying motive. The fundamental problem is discrimination. People don’t like other people who are different.

Joh 15:19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because **ye are not of the world**, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

This natural tendency can be provoked by any difference, but in this case it is aggravated by the fact that the difference condemns the world. Our righteousness rebukes the world’s wickedness. By demeaning us they seek to remove the goad to their own defiled conscience.

Our Lord emphasizes this mechanism in the fourth gospel:

Joh 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, **because their deeds were evil**.

To his unbelieving brethren, he says,

Joh 7:7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.

And John reinforces this mechanism in his first epistle:

1Jo 3:11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12 Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And **wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous**.

Peter emphasizes this same insight:

1Pe 4:4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot,

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speaking evil of you:

We distinguished three kinds of righteousness: the righteousness of works that we do, the righteousness of faith that God does to us, and the righteousness of judgment that God brings on unbelievers. The dynamic we see here is that our righteousness of works is a precursor to God's righteousness of judgment. It confronts people with their own wickedness. They can respond in only two ways: by repentance and faith, or by rejection that often leads to persecution. We see this dichotomy in John's persecution by Herod:

Mar 6:17 For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. 18 For John had said unto Herod, **It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.** 19 Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: 20 For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, **he did many things, and heard him gladly.**

Notice the twofold response to John's righteousness: persecution from Herodias, but increased interest and an attempt to reform ("did many things") by Herod.

Part of the ministry of Charles Spurgeon was a Bible school for aspiring preachers, and part of their curriculum consisted of preaching tours. After one such tour, the students are said to have reported, "Nobody got saved, but at least no one was upset." To which Spurgeon is supposed to have responded, "That's why nobody was saved." The insight in this anecdote is that is our preaching is clear and pointed enough to lead some people to repentance, it will lead others to hate and persecute us.

*Application:* This insight should encourage us when we "are persecuted for righteousness' sake." It shows that the message is getting through, that people are being confronted with the gospel and recognizing their need of it. This is why the apostles, beaten by the Sanhedrin, could respond as they did, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Act 5:41).

### ***The Promise of the Kingdom***

As in the first beatitude, the Lord encourages his followers that they are already citizens of the kingdom. The world rejects us just because we are different. In doing so, they are attesting to our heavenly citizenship.

At least in this verse, the causality may flow from the second half of the beatitude to the first (chart). The Lord is saying, in effect, "Persecution is evidence that you are already members of the kingdom. Take it as encouragement."

### **11-12, More on Persecution**

**11 Blessed are ye,**--He now shifts from the third person of the first eight beatitudes to the second person. So far he has been laying down general principles applicable to his disciples through all time, but now he wants to be sure that those with him understand that they are the point of these blessings.

He amplifies the persecution of v. 10 into three kinds of opposition.

**when men shall revile you,**--The verb means to rebuke or scold, and refers to hostile speech addressed



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to the one being abused. We should expect people to tell us to our face that we are wicked, hateful, and despicable.

**and persecute you**,--This is the same verb used in v. 10. Its basic meaning is to “pursue,” as one would hunt prey to harm it, and it focuses on doing physical or economic harm to the object.

**and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely**,--The third category of opposition is again verbal, but this time the speech is “against you” instead of “to you.” The reference may be to bringing false accusations against believers before the authorities. We should expect people to try to turn the tools of justice and public opinion against us.

**for my sake**.--Of course, it is possible for people to revile us, and persecute us, and falsely accuse us, because of bad things that we do. No blessing attaches to such abuse. The Lord’s focus is on the abuse that we receive for his sake, because of our obedience to him.

**12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad**:--The natural response to such abuse, and what the unbelievers hope to accomplish, is our discouragement and silence. But we are commanded to respond in just the opposite way. He gives us *two motives* for this rejoicing, one looking to the future, the other to the past (chart):

**for great is your reward in heaven**:--The *first motive* looks into the future: the Lord will reward us for our faithful service to him. He has left us here as his witnesses. The culmination of this gospel is the great commission, in which the Lord charges his disciples, not to lay low to avoid persecution, but to go into all the world and preach the gospel. He will reward the service we give him.

He describes our reward as being “in heaven.” Later, he will urge his followers,

Mat 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But **lay up** for yourselves **treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Mat 19:21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have **treasure in heaven**: and come and follow me.

There is a widespread sense that the main focus of the believer’s hope is to leave this earthly scene for a life in heaven. There is no question that when we die, we are “absent from the body, and present with the Lord,” and he is now in heaven, so we will be with him there. But is that our ultimate focus? Later, our Lord speaks again of our coming reward:

Mat 16:27 For the Son of man **shall come** in the glory of his Father with his angels; and **then he shall reward** every man according to his works.

This promise suggests that the point of our full reward is not when we go to be with the Lord, but when he comes again to earth. Consider how Paul expounds the believer’s hope in persecution:

2Th 1:4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: 5 *Which is* a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: 6 Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; 7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, **when the Lord Jesus shall be**

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**revealed from heaven** with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; 10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

The main focus of the “treasure in heaven” references is not that heaven is where we will enjoy this treasure, but that the treasure is safely stored against damage or theft, to be given to us when the Lord returns. Paul describes it in the present tense:

Col 1:5 ... the hope which is **laid up for you in heaven**, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

And Peter uses the perfect to emphasize that the deposit is already there, waiting for delivery to us when the Lord returns:

1Pe 1:4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, **reserved in heaven for you**, 5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation **ready to be revealed in the last time**.

1Pe 1:13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you **at the revelation of Jesus Christ**;

1Pe 4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, **when his glory shall be revealed**, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

Application: Our reward is secure in heaven, but we will enjoy it when the Lord comes back to earth and we rule here with him. We are not exchanging earthly pleasures for heavenly insubstantiality when we serve the Lord. The reward he has for us will be both physical and spiritual.

**for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.**--The *second motive* for our rejoicing looks back to the past. Persecution by the unjust has been the portion of God's servants in every generation. We should be thankful to be included in such company.

Here our Lord is addressing those who receive the persecution. Later, he gives the same message to those who deliver it:

Mat 23:34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and *some* of them ye shall kill and crucify; and *some* of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute *them* from city to city: 35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. 36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

Abel is the brother of Cain, who slew him “because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous” (1 John 3:12). The history of Zacharias is in 2 Chr 24:20, the last book in the Hebrew order of the OT. Zacharias, a priest, rebuked the people for their wickedness, and was stoned at the commandment of King Joash.<sup>15</sup> Thus the Lord is saying that persecution of the righteous by the wicked

<sup>15</sup> Carson discusses other possible identifications. One problem with the reference to the Zechariah in 2 Chr 24:20 is that

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extends from the first to the last book of the Bible, or as we would say, “from Genesis to Revelation.”

Stephen observes this same gruesome characteristic of Jewish history when he himself was being attacked for his righteous ministry:

Act 7:52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

Jeremiah’s highly autobiographical book emphasizes the suffering that came on him because he stood up against the ungodly. This passage in particular describes

- the **fact** of the persecution that he received,
- its origin in his **faithfulness** to serve the Lord, and
- his **faithfulness** to his mission, in spite of the opposition.

Jer 20:7 O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one **mocketh me**. 8 For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a **reproach** unto me, and a **derision**, daily. 9 Then I said, I will not **make mention of him**, nor speak any more in his name. But *his word* was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and **I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay**. 10 For I heard the **defaming** of many, fear on every side. Report, *say they*, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, *saying*, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and **we shall take our revenge on him**. 11 But **the LORD is with me as a mighty terrible one**: therefore my **persecutors** shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: *their* everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten.

*Application:* We must neither be naïve in thinking that persecution will not come, nor discouraged when it does. We should remember James’ exhortation,

Jam 5:10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

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the Chronicler names his father as Josiah rather than Berechiah, which was the name of the father of the canonical prophet (Zech 1:1). But the canonical father was also called after his grandfather Iddo (Ezra 6:14), and Carson suggests that 2 Chr 24:20 may be giving Zechariah’s grandfather, and that his father, named by the Lord is an otherwise unknown Berechiah.

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### Notes

#### ***Structure of the Sermon***

Quoted sections are from Allison.

#### **1987 Studies**

1. The Character of the Godly, 5:1-16
  - (a) What the Godly Receive: The Beatitudes, 1-12.
  - (b) What the Godly Give: light to the world, glory to God, 13-16.
2. The Conduct of the Godly, 5:17-7:12

Note inclusio in "the Law and the Prophets." Two halves--works vs. faith. In both, looks at manward vs. Godward.

  - (a) Works, 5:17-6:18
    - i. Intro, 17-20
    - ii. Manward righteousness, 21-48
    - iii. Godward actions, 6:1-18
  - (b) Faith, 6:19-7:12
3. The Contrast of the Godly, 7:13-27
  - (a) Two ways, 13-14
  - (b) Two kinds of teachers, 15-20
  - (c) Two professions, 21-23
  - (d) Obedience vs. disobedience, 24-27

#### **Allison**

- Introduction: the crowds on the mountain, 4:23-5:1  
Nine (= 3x3) beatitudes for the people of God, 5:3-12  
The task of the people of God in the world, 5:13-7:12
- 1) Summary statement: salt and light, 5:13-16
  - 2) The three pillars, 5:17-7:12

Introductory statement—the law and the prophets, 5:17

    - A. Jesus and the Torah, 5:17-48
      1. General principles, 5:17-20
      2. Two triads of specific instruction, 5:21-48
        - a. The first triad, 5:21-32

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- i. On murder, 5:21-26
  - ii. On adultery, 5:27-30
  - iii. On divorce, 5:31-32
  - b. The second triad, 5:33-48
    - i. Do not swear, 5:33-37
    - ii. Turn the other cheek, 5:38-42
    - iii. Love your enemy, 5:43-48
  - B. The Christian cult, 6:1-18
    - 1. General principle, 6:1
    - 2. A triad of specific instruction, 6:2-18
      - a. Almsgiving, 6:2-4
      - b. Prayer, 6:5-15
        - i. How to pray: not as the "hypocrites" in the synagogue, 6:5-6
        - ii. How to pray, continued, 6:7-15
          - a) Not as the Gentiles, 6:7-15
          - b) The Lord's Prayer, 6:9-13
            - i) The address, 6:9b
            - ii) Three "Thou" petitions, 6:9c-10
            - iii) Three "we" petitions, 6:11-13
          - c) On forgiveness, 6:14-15
      - c. Fasting, 6:16-18
  - C. Social issues, 6:19-7:12
    - 1. God and mammon, 6:19-34
      - a. A triad on true treasure, 6:19-24
        - i. Exhortation: store up treasure in heaven, 6:19-21
        - ii. Parable: the good eye, 6:22-23
        - iii. Second parable: the two masters, 6:24
      - b. Encouragement: μή μεριμνάτε, 6:25-34
    - 2. On one's neighbor, 7:1-12
      - a. A triad on attitude toward others, 7:1-6
        - i. Exhortation: do not judge, 7:1-2
        - ii. Parable: the log in the eye, 7:3-5
        - iii. Second parable: pearls and swine, 7:6
      - b. Encouragement: αὐτεῖτε, 7:7-11
- Concluding statement—the golden rule, the law and the prophets, 7:12
- Three warnings, the prospect of eschatological judgment, 7:13-27
- The two ways, 7:13-14
  - Beware of false prophets, 7:15-23
  - The two builders, 7:24-27

Conclusion: the crowds and the mountain, 7:28-8:1

He relates the three central items to the pillars of Simeon the Just: “Simeon the Just, a rabbi of the Maccabean period. He is purported to have declared: "Upon three things the world standeth: upon Torah, upon Temple service and upon *gēmîlût hasâdîm* (*m. Abot* 1.2).”

Note that this structure has the effect of putting the Prayer at the center.

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Kirby, Luz, Harrison and Leithart follow this very closely.

### Brooks

Introduction: the setting of the sermon (5:1-2)

1. The blessedness of disciples (5:3-12)
2. The character of disciples (5:13-16)
3. The new law for disciples (5:17-48)

Introduction: Jesus' attitude toward the law (5:17-20)

- (1) About murder (5:21-26)
- (2) About adultery (5:27-30)
- (3) About divorce (5:31-32)
- (4) About oaths (5:33-37)
- (5) About retaliation (5:38-42)
- (6) About love of enemies (5:43-48)

4. The practice of piety by disciples (6:1-18)

Introduction: the evil of ostentation (6:1)

- (1) By almsgiving (6:2-4)
- (2) By prayer (6:5-15)
- (3) By fasting (6:16-18)

5. The avoidance of materialism by disciples (6:19-34)

6. Warnings to disciples (7:1-27)

- (1) Against judging (7:1-5)
- (2) Against sacrilege (7:6)
- (3) Against failure to pray (7:7-12)
- (4) Against worldliness (7:13-14)
- (5) Against false teachers (7:15-23)
- (6) Against hearing but not acting upon the word (7:24-27)

Conclusion: the effect upon the hearers (7:28-29)

### Allison's Summaries of Others

“In **Bornkamm's** judgment, 6:9-13, the Lord's Prayer, supplies the clue to the ordering of 6:19-7:12, for the latter is a sort of continuation of the former. Thus, 6:19-24 (on treasure in heaven, on the sound eye, and on God and mammon) emphasizes honoring God and putting him first, which corresponds to the three "Thou" petitions of the *Pater Noster*: "Hallowed be Thy name," "Thy kingdom come," "Thy will be done." Furthermore, the contrast between "treasure in heaven" and "treasure on earth" (6:19, 20) may be intended to recall 6:10c, "on earth as it is in heaven." As for 6:25-34, which focuses on the day-to-day material needs of the disciples, it matches 6:11, the petition for bread, while 7:1-5, a paragraph on judging others, lines up well with the prayer for forgiveness, 6:12. Finally, Bornkamm interprets the enigmatic 7:6 ("Do not give to dogs what is holy. . .") in terms of apostasy and thereby connects it with the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer, the request for deliverance from the evil one, 6:13. But what then of 7:7-11 ("Ask and it will be given you ...")? This section nicely follows 6:19-7:6 because with 7:6 the commentary on the Lord's Prayer is concluded, and this naturally leads to a unit of promises about



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God's hearing his children's prayers.”

“According to A. **Farrer**, the order of the Sermon on the Mount corresponds to the beatitudes: 5:17-48 is a commentary on 5:8-9; 6:1-18 is a commentary on 5:4, 6; and 6:19-7:27 is a commentary on 5:3, 5.” The scheme is very loose and does not incorporate vv. 7, 10, 11.

“According to **Davies**, 5:17-7:12 consists of three sections, 5:17-48; 6:1-18; and 6:19-7:12, and these correlate with the three pillars of Simeon the Just: the law, the (Temple) service, and "deeds of loving-kindness" (*m. Abot* 1.2)”

“According to J. **Jeremías**, after the introduction (5:3-19) and a thematic sentence (5:20), 5:21-48 treats of the controversy between Jesus and the theologians concerning the interpretation of scripture; 6:1-18 treats of the controversy with the righteousness of the Pharisees; and 6:19-7:27 develops the new righteousness of the disciples of Jesus.”

Thus these two latter sections amplify 5:20.

“Agreeing in general with Jeremías, **Fitzmyer** divides 5:3-20 into (1) Exordium (5:3-12, 13-16) and (2) Proposition (5:17-20).”

“According to O. **Hanssen**, the first major section of the Sermon on the Mount, 5:21-6:18, has to do with Christianity and Judaism (5:21-48, the new relationship to one's neighbor; 6:1-18, the new relationship to God) while the second major section, 6:19-7:12, concerns Christianity and the Gentile world (6:19-34, the new relationship to God; 7:1-12, the new relationship to one's neighbor)”

“According to C. **Burchard**, the sermon is to be divided thus: (I) Introduction (5:3-16); (II) Body of the Sermon (5:17-7:12), consisting of (A) The will of God (5:17-48) and (B) Guidelines for fulfillment (6:1-18 + 6:19-7:12); and (III) Conclusion (7:13-27)”

“N. J. **McEleney** offers this structural analysis: (1) Introduction (4:23-5:2); (2) The Beatitudes (5:3-12); (3) Salt and Light (5:13-16); (4) The Principles of Christian Action (5:17-7:12), these being two and found in 5:17-19 and 5:20, the former introducing 5:21-48, the second 6:1-7:12; (5) Warnings (7:13-27); (6) Conclusion (7:28-29).”

“J. **Lambrecht** puts forth this proposal: 5:1-2 is the Narrative beginning; 5:3-7:27 the Sermon proper; and 7:28-29 the Narrative ending. The Sermon proper has three sections: 5:3-16 (prologue); 5:17-7:12 (middle part); and 7:13-27 (epilogue). The middle part consists of 5:17-48 (the antitheses), 6:1-18 (not before men), and 6:19-7:12 (unconcern and commitment).”

“**Dupont** himself (p. 181) favors this outline: Exordium: Beatitudes (5:3-12); (I) Perfect justice—general directions (5:17,20) followed by specific illustrations (5:21-48); (II) Good works—general statement (6:1) followed by three illustrations (6:2-4, 5-6, 16-18); (III) Three admonitions: (1) Do not judge (7:1-2); illustrations (7:3-5); (2) Beware of false prophets (7:15); illustrations (7:16-20); (3) Put profession into practice (7:21); illustrations (7:24-27).”

### Parallelism of 6:19-34 and 7:1-11

Allison notes strong structural parallels. The question is, what is the semantic relation of these sections to each other, and together to the rest of the sermon?

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In the overall layout, 7:12 “law and prophets” is parallel to 5:17-21, so this section ought to correspond to 5:21-48, the new law.

Perhaps 6:19ff is meant to correspond to the first table of the law (singleness of the eye toward God), while 7:1-12a goes with the second. Then 7:12a fits well as conclusion to 7:1-11.

The fundamental injunction	19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.	7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged. 2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.
Explanation in terms of the eye	22 The light of the body is the <b>eye</b> : if therefore thine <b>eye</b> be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. 23 But if thine <b>eye</b> be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great <i>is</i> that darkness!	3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's <b>eye</b> , but considerest not the beam that is in thine own <b>eye</b> ? 4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam <i>is</i> in thine own <b>eye</b> ? 5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's <b>eye</b> .
	24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.	6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.
Encouragement that our needs will be met	25 <b>Therefore</b> I say unto you, <b>Take no thought</b> for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?	7 Ask, and it shall be given you; <b>seek</b> , and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.
Supporting parables	26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? 27 Which of you by <b>taking thought</b> can add one cubit unto his stature? 28 And why <b>take ye thought</b> for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: 29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.	9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? 10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?
A fortiori argument	30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, <i>shall he not <b>much more</b> clothe</i> you, O ye of little faith?	11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how <b>much more</b> shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?
Recap of the obligation	31 <b>Therefore</b> $\mu\eta$ ouv <b>take no thought</b> , saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33 But <b>seek ye first</b> the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34 <b>Take therefore</b> $\mu\eta$ ouv <b>no thought</b> for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day <i>is</i> the evil thereof.	12 <b>Therefore</b> ouv all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them:
	for this is the law and the prophets.	

Notes:

- 6:31-34 has no direct parallel with 7:7-11, but appears to be an inclusion with 6:25, so 7:7-11 can be viewed as an unfolding.

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2. “Seek ye first” 6:33 anticipates all of 7:7-11.
3. With 7:12b, cf.

Mat 22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang **all the law and the prophets**.

The reference to the two great commandments suggests that we should seek these same two themes in connection with the Sermon’s references to “the law and the prophets” (5:17; 7:12).

### **Relation to Luke’s Sermon on the Plain, 6:17-49**

Luke reports a sermon that echoes many of the elements of Matt 5-7, but also differs in various ways. Are they the same, or different? Consider the setting in the flow of the book, and also the content.

### **Setting**

Luke’s sermon follows the calling of the twelve. Matthew does not report this calling until ch. 10. At this point in Matthew, we know only the four fishermen as his disciples. However, Matt 10 does not claim to report the appointment of the twelve. It is simply naming them as they are sent out on independent ministry.

The preceding vv in Luke are sometimes taken to parallel the introduction to Matthew’s sermon, and situate Luke’s version of the sermon in a plain:

Luk 6:17 And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; 18 And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. 19 And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed *them* all.

But this is parallel to Matt 4:24, not to 25. The chiasm in Matthew shows that his version starts in 4:25, not with 4:24. The focus of Lk 6:17-19 is on healing, not teaching. So there is no alignment with the setting verses. The ascent to the mountain in Matt 4:25 follows the descent to the plain in Luke 6, which in turn follows a night in prayer on a mountain (Lk 6:12-16), where he appointed the twelve.

Luke follows his sermon with the healing of the servant of the Capernaum centurion (7:1-10), which Matthew also reports (8:5-13) after one intervening healing, a leper (8:1-4). Here’s a diagram:

Matthew	Luke
	6:12-16 Prayer, and calling the 12, in “a mountain” (6:12)
	6:17, descent to the plain
4:24, healing of Gentiles (Jews in v. 23)	6:17-19, healing of Jews and Gentiles
4:25-5:1, ascent to “a mountain” with disciples to escape the crowds	
5:2-7:27, Sermon on the Mount to “his disciples”	6:20-49, Sermon to “his disciples”

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8:1-4, healing a leper	
8:5-13, healing the Centurion's servant	7:1-10, healing the Centurion's servant

Bottom line: the simplest alignment of events between Matthew and Luke would also align these sermons with each other. We should consider them different reports of the same episode of teaching.

### Content

Here is how Luke's version lines up with Matthew's. (Elsewhere, Luke witnesses to much of the material that he leaves out of his sermon.)

Setting	Mt 4:25-5:2: <b>L 6:20</b>	Mt 7:28-8:1
Blessings & Warnings	Mt 5:3-12: <b>L 6:20-23; matching woes L 6:24-26;</b>	Mt 7:13-27: <b>L 6:43-49</b>
Our Mission	Mt 5:13-16	
Law & Prophets	Mt 5:17-19	Mt 7:12b
Toward Man	Mt 5:20-48: <b>L 6:27-30, 32-36 (no contrast)</b>	Mt 7:1-12a: <b>L 6:31, 37-42</b>
Toward God	Mt 6:1-18	Mt 6:19-34

Luke follows the basic order of Matthew (though shifting the context of Mt 7:12a = L 6:31).

Differences:

- His close grouping of the woes with the beatitudes is much closer to Deut 28, and weakens the chiasmic correspondence that Matthew shows between the beatitudes and the warnings.
- He omits the references to the law and the prophets, perhaps because of his focus on a Gentile audience?
- Most notably, he does not include the teachings about the First Commandment elsewhere! This would seem in keeping with his "secularization" of the beatitudes, focusing on the poor instead of the poor in spirit, and on the hungry instead of those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Things to keep in mind here:

- Luke's two different beatitudes may in fact be additional ones not reported by Matthew, rather than alterations of the Lord's words. Luke reports woes that Matthew omits. His three additional beatitudes may also be complementary.
- In turn, Luke omits much that Matthew includes, but reports it elsewhere in the Lord's teaching (see Guelich's table, p. 34). This doesn't require that we take Matthew's version as a later compilation. Our Lord may well have said the same things in multiple contexts.

### Explaining Luke's Differences

It is interesting that Luke leaves out the godward side of the law. (He certainly does not leave out all of the law, as Wallace suggests in <https://bible.org/seriespage/luke-introduction-outline-and-argument>, and

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even much of the godward surfaces in later events.) Here are some thoughts to pursue later.

One possible reason is the Judaism controversy (e.g., Acts 15). As Paul's associate, Luke would be very sensitive to this problem. He and Paul both recognize the moral validity of the content of the law (see my paper on Law and the Christian Life), but the formal correspondence offered in Matthew's report was perhaps too easy to be misunderstood in the climate of this controversy.

There's an interesting contrast between Matthew and Luke with regard to the two great commandments. In Matt 22:36-40, the Lord states these in response to a question. In Luke, they are stated by a questioner:

Luk 10:25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? 27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. 28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

The questioner in Luke falls short on the second point, loving one's neighbor:

Luk 10:29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

In this respect, compare the rich ruler in Matt 19:16-20, whom the Lord calls up on the first point. (Luke 18:18-23 and Mark 10:17-22 also report this incident.)

Luke has a few things not in Matthew. One, of course, is the woes. Another (called to my attention by Francis Quek in a letter in 1993) is this:

Luk 6:39 And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch? 40 The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.

Matthew picks up v. 39 in 15:14, and v. 40 in 10:24-25. So he knows this material, but does not cite it in the Sermon. It actually contrasts with a theme in Matthew's sermon, that the disciples must in fact be above those who had been their masters, the Scribes and Pharisees (Matt 5:20).

In line with this, Luke resumes at least some of the godward material from Matthew in ch. 11, in which the Lord is contending with the Scribes and Pharisees, and in ch. 12, which begins with a warning against hypocrisy. Perhaps the difference in emphasis is related to how each of these gospels handles the opposition with the Jewish leaders.

### ***Mountains in Matthew***

Matthew uses "mountain" ὄρος 16x, more than any other book in the NT (Luke is next with 13; among the gospels, it is denser in Mark, 0.095% vs. 0.085%). What happens on the mountain?

- Temptation, 4:8
- Teaching, 5:1; 8:1; 24:3
- Prayer, 14:23; 17:1, 9 (transfiguration); 26:30 (agony in garden)
- Healing, 15:29

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- Origin of triumphal entry 21:1
- Place of commissioning 28:16

Other uses: city on a hill 5:14; mt into the sea 17:20; 21:21; seeking lost sheep 18:12; place of flight 24:16

The teaching and prayer activities recall Moses' visits to Sinai, to receive the law and commune with God.

- Exo 19:2-3 For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come *to* the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount. 3 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain,
- Exo 20:21 And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.
- Exo 24:9 Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel:
- Exo 24:13 And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God. 14 And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur *are* with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them. 15 And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. 16 And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. 17 And the sight of the glory of the LORD *was* like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. 18 And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.
- Exo 34:4 And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone. 5 And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

### ***Μακαριος and the Deuteronomic Blessings***

I have suggested (following Allison) that the commonality between the beatitudes at the start of the sermon and the warnings at the end reflects the Deuteronomic blessings and curses. However, the Greek word that the AV translates as “blessed” is not necessarily the best pointer to Deut 27-28. Carson notes correctly that εὐλογητος is the usual translation of בָּרַךְ, and the translation used throughout Deut 28, while the word from Matt 5, μακαριος, always translates אֲשֶׁר.

A stronger argument for the link to Deut 27-28 is through Luke, whose close association of the beatitudes with the woes echoes the parallelism of the blessings and curses in Deut. “Woe” in Luke is οὐαι, which is a transliteration of the Hebrew expletives הוי and אוי, neither of which is used in Deut (where “cursed” is אָרַר, which is both dedicated and dominant for ἀραομαι, particularly with pronominal prefixes).



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Though the words are different, they are strongly related. The language of curse and blessing looks to the future. It focuses on the consequences, naming the targets upon which the curse or blessing falls:

Deut 28:4 Blessed *shall be* the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. 5 Blessed *shall be* thy basket and thy store.

The language of makarism and woe looks to the past. It emphasizes the quality of the person upon whom the blessing or curse will fall:

Psa 1:1 Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2 But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Isa 5:8 Woe unto them that join house to house, *that* lay field to field, till *there be* no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!

So while one should not claim a verbal link, it is legitimate to associate these terms. The argument runs like this:

1. Deut 28:3-6 and 16-19 offer strongly parallel blessings and curses, depending on the people's conduct.
2. Luke 6:21-23, 24-26 offer strongly parallel makarisms and woes, depending on the people's conduct. The parallel structure, and the semantics (though not the vocabulary), suggest that the Lord has Deut 28 in mind.
3. Matthew does not report the woes, but does report warnings at the end of the Sermon, and given his other chiasmic features (the framing setting; the "law and the prophets" statements), it makes sense to associate these with one another (and thus with Deut).

### ***The Beatitudes and Isa 61:1***

Guelich suggests that the beatitudes are derived from the message of the Servant in Isa 61:1.

Isa 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD 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*; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that **mourn**; 3 To appoint unto them that **mourn** in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

In particular, the LXX's translation for the first category of people עניים is unusual. The usual translation is πρᾶνς "meek," but here it uses πτωχος "poor."

	ענו	עני	דל	
πτωχος	5 (2 of which are in K/Q with עני)	39	18	רטש x11, אביון x9, דלת x2

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πτωχεια		10		
πραυς	9	4		תנח x1,
ταπεινος	5	10	4	שפל x12
ταπεινωσις	1	18		דכה x2
πενης	5	14		

So “poor” would be the best translation of the LXX, but “meek” of the Hebrew; “poor in spirit” capture both of them.

Isa 61:1-3		Matt 5		
meek	ענו	πτωχος	Poor (in spirit)	πτωχος
		Usually πραυς	meek	πραυς
brokenhearted	נשבֿר־יֵלֵב	συντετριμμένους τῆ καρδία		
captives	שְׁבוּיִם	αἰχμαλώτοις		
bound	אֲסוּרִים	Τυφλοῖς !		
mourn	אבל	πενθεω	mourn	πενθεω

It looks as though the first three beatitudes are derived from Isa 61, in a gesture similar to the Lord’s use of this passage to introduce himself at the synagogue in Nazareth.

### ***The Beatitudes and Luke***

Instead of Matthew’s nine beatitudes, Luke offers four beatitudes and four matched woes. These can be associated more or less with four of Matthew’s beatitudes.

Luke 6		Matt 5	
20 Blessed <i>be</i> ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.	24 But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.	I: 3 Blessed <i>are</i> the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.	
21 Blessed <i>are</i> ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.	25 Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger.	IV: 6 Blessed <i>are</i> they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.	
Blessed <i>are</i> ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.	Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.	II: 4 Blessed <i>are</i> they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.	
22 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you <i>from their company</i> , and shall reproach <i>you</i> , and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. 23 Rejoice ye in	26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.	IX: 11 Blessed are ye, when <i>men</i> shall revile you, and persecute <i>you</i> , and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding	

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<p>that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.</p>		<p>glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.</p>
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Luke's third and fourth are very consistent with Matthew's, but his first two shift the focus from spiritual poverty to a physical condition. This shift is perhaps consistent with his omission of verses in Matthew that fall in the Godward sections.

### OT Roots of the Beatitudes

Many if not all of these contain echoes of the coming earthly rule of the Lord Jesus.

<p>3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.</p>	<p>Isa 61:1 the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the <b>meek (LXX πτωχος)</b>                  Isa 66:2 to this <i>man</i> will I look, <i>even to him that is poor</i> and of a contrite spirit [or: <b>poor and contrite in spirit</b>], and trembleth at my word.</p>	<p>The kingdom culminates in the earthly rule.</p>
<p>4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.</p>	<p>Isa 61:1 he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, ... 2 to comfort all that mourn; 3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion,</p>	<p>Mourning in Isa 61 is for the destruction of the city, cf. Lam</p>
<p>5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.</p>	<p>Isa 61:1 the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the <b>meek (MT ענו)</b>                  Psa 37:11 But the <b>meek</b> shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.                  Isa 61:7 therefore in their land they shall possess the double: οὕτως ἐκ δευτέρας κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν</p>	<p>"Inherit the land" is the persistent Deuteronomic idiom for the settlement in Canaan</p>
<p>6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.</p>	<p>Psa 42:1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. 2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?                  Isa 55:1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2 Wherefore do ye spend money for <i>that which is not bread?</i> and your labour for <i>that which satisfieth not?</i> hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye <i>that which is good</i>, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.</p>	<p>The hunger and thirst in both cases is for God himself, and his rule. Cf. Psa 43:1 Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.                  Isa 55:1 is preceded by:                  Isa 54:17 No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue <i>that</i> shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This <i>is</i> the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness <i>is</i> of me, saith the LORD.                  Righteousness throughout Isa 40-60 as what God brings, in parallel with his salvation</p>
<p>7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.</p>	<p>Psa 18:25 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; (but this is οσιος from חסיד, not ελεημων, which usually reflects חנון).                  Pro 14:21 He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.                  אַשְׁרֵי אַמְאָקִּיּוֹס                  Psa 41:1 Blessed אַשְׁרֵי אַמְאָקִּיּוֹס is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. ... 4 I said, LORD, be merciful unto</p>	<p>Luke 6:36 has οικτιρμος from רחמים                  Regular use of ελεω in Isaiah to refer to the return from captivity and the reestablishment of the kingdom</p>

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	me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.	
8 Blessed <i>are</i> the pure in heart: for they shall see God.	<p>Psa 24:3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall <b>stand in his holy place</b>? 4 He that hath clean hands, and a <b>pure heart</b>; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.</p>	Ps 24 leads to Isa 2:1-4
9 Blessed <i>are</i> the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.	<p>Psa 34:14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. Isa 9:6; 52:7 Children of God: Isa 1:2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. Isa 3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: <i>but</i> Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. 4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, <b>children that are corrupters</b>: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. ← Deu 32:5 They have <b>corrupted</b> themselves, their spot <del>is not the spot of</del> his <b>children</b>: <i>they are</i> a perverse and crooked generation. Isa 46:3 Harken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: 4 And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you. Deu 1:31 And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the LORD thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place. Isa 63:16 Doubtless thou <i>art</i> our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, <i>art</i> our father, our redeemer; thy name <i>is</i> from everlasting. Hos 1:10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, <i>that</i> in the place where it was said unto them, Ye <i>are</i> not my people, <i>there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.</i></p>	
10 Blessed <i>are</i> they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.	<p>Psa 37:12 The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. 13 The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming. 14 The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, <i>and</i> to slay such as be of upright conversation. 15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.</p>	One motive for this persecution is that the righteous will not join with the wicked in their disobedience, and in some cases (Jeremiah) actually rebukes it.

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Psa 37:32 The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. 33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.  
Jer 20:10 For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, *say they*, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, *saying*, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.  
11 But the LORD *is* with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: *their* everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten. 12 But, O LORD of hosts, that triest the righteous, *and* seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I opened my cause.

### 5:6, “Righteousness” in Matthew

God’s promised righteousness, his coming to set things right as in Isa 40-66 and the Pss, fits very well in 5:6, but is usually rejected (Guelich, France, Carson) because it is asserted (based largely on Przybylski’s 1975 McMaster dissertation)<sup>16</sup> that Matthew uses the term only of personal, practical righteousness. Przybylski bases his argument on the use of the  $\rho\tau\chi$  vocabulary in Qumran and the Tannaitic literature, which he then brings to Matthew. But if we focus on usage in Matthew itself, this result is questionable.

1. Matthew only uses  $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\sigma\upsilon\eta$  six times, so the inductive base is very weak. (The critical text adds 6:1, where the term replaces MT’s  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\eta\mu\omicron\sigma\upsilon\eta$ .)
2. 5:10 “persecuted for righteousness’ sake” is often cited to rule out the meaning of God’s vindictive righteousness, but this neglects the fact that the dynamic at play in the persecution of the righteous is very often that the wicked are rebuked by the righteousness of the righteous, so that our righteousness becomes a precursor of God’s promised righteousness. cf. 1Jo 3:12 “Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.”
3. It is not at all clear that 6:33 refers to personal righteousness. The parallel with “the kingdom of God” and the promises in Isaiah make it likely that what we are to seek is indeed the promised judgment of God.
4. 21:32 characterizes John as coming “in the way of righteousness.” The expression appears nowhere else, but it is clear from John’s history that his relationship to righteousness was not just doing it, but urging it upon others, condemning their rejection of it. His death at the hands of Herodias is a prime example of being “persecuted for righteousness’ sake.”

The distinction between our personal righteousness and God’s vindictive righteousness is very slight. Both consist in acting according to God’s word, and the dynamic of persecution for righteousness’ sake

<sup>16</sup> Available online at <http://digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4060&context=opendissertations>

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shows that in fact our personal righteousness serves as a precursor and prototype of God’s coming righteous judgment, in making people aware of their sin.

### 5:7, “Merciful”

Guelich notes that the word can refer either to pardon to an offender, or kindness to the needy, and opts for the former, based on redactorial considerations.

Prov 14:21 suggests a combination:

Pro 14:21 He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.

The contrast with the first half of the verse suggests the judgment motif, but the emphasis on the poor in the second half suggests kindness.

The promise to be merciful recalls the use of ελεεω in Pss and Isa (where it is most common, 20x each out of 92 in the LXX, otherwise no more than 8 in a single book). Here’s an analysis of the uses: \* is negative, “not have mercy”; **Bold** are eschatological; *italics* are noteworthy

Ελεεω in Isa and Pss		Subject	
		Man	God
Topic	Forgiveness		P 26:11; 51:1 I 9:17*, <b>12:1</b> ; <b>44:23</b> (cf. 22); <b>54:7, 8</b> ; 55:7; 59:2*
	Kindness	I 9:19*; 13:18*; 27:11; 49:15* (contrasted with the Lord in 49:10, 13)	P 6:2; 9:13; 25:15; 27:7; 30:10; 41:10 (cf. v. 4); 56:1; 57:1; 86:3, 16; 119:58, 132; 123:3 <b>I 30:18, 19</b> ; 33:2; <b>49:10, 13</b> ; <b>52:8, 9</b>
	Unmarked		P 41:4 has both, cf. v. 1 P 119:29 <b>I 14:1</b>

An important insight here is that suffering and sin are closely tied; for the Lord to have mercy on our suffering, he must have mercy on us as sinners.

Vocabulary of “mercy” in the Bible:

	דסח	ד'סח	נסח	נסח	סח	סח	סח	סח	סח	סח	Total
ελεος	202		1		3				6	1	241
οσιος	1	27									42
ελεεω, -αω			42,3			25,1					92,6
χαρις					61			2		3	78
οικτιρμος, -α	,1		1	1			12	25			25!
ελεημων	2	1		12			1				18
ελεημοσυνη			1								
οικτιρμω			9			13					27



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αγαπαω						4				
κοιλια						4				
δεκτος									22	31
Total	255	34	90	24	70	80		40	56	

Other notes:

In the NT, ελεος is overwhelmingly from God to humans, only a few times from humans to humans. If it does indeed echo דסח, this would be the end of a trajectory that began with a human-human relation, then was extended to God's relation with his people.

Could one perhaps summarize:

- The דסח group emphasizes relationship. Zobel (TDOT, דסח) notes that in secular use, an important feature of the word is reciprocity, but denies that sense in the secular use, though Ringgren (TDOT, דסיד) accepts that emphasis, based on Ps 18, and the use of דסיד in parallel with God's servants (79:2, though sinful, v. 9) and people (Ps 148:14; 85:9) supports this view.
- The חנן group emphasizes freeness, undeservedness (cf. חנמ "freely, for nothing")
- The רחם group emphasizes need and pity
- The strong overlap between the latter two is because someone with no resources has no leverage over us.

Joint references:

Exo 34:6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful רחום and gracious חנון, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness דסח and truth,--*echoed in Num 14:17, 19; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Neh 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; perhaps Ps 106:45; Nah 1:3; Ps 77:7-9*

Psa 51:1 Have mercy חנן upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness דסח: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies רחמים blot out my transgressions.--*Perhaps David is alluding to the promise of forgiveness in Ex 34:7.*

Psa 109:12 Let there be none to extend mercy דסח unto him: neither let there be any to favour חנן his fatherless children.--*By the first curse, he loses his kindred; by the second, no stranger will care for his offspring.*

Gen 19:19 Behold now, thy servant hath found grace חן in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy דסח, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die:--*Curious; needs more attention. Sakenfeld takes דסח here as recognition by Lot that he is dealing with God, because of the shift of pronouns from plural to singular, and "find grace" חן is exceedingly common with men before God as well, but appears to emphasize a different facet of the relation. "Find favor" echoes the related experience of Abraham in 18:3 (which also uses adonay, as Lot does here in v. 18) and Noah (6:8). But LXX here translates the first clause ευρισκω ελεος, the usual translation for דסח, and*

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then renders *חסד* with *δικαιοσύνη*, a minor correspondence appearing only 9x, not infrequently in verses where *חסד* is repeated: Isa 63:7; Pro 20:28; or as an amplification, Ex 34:7, or in “mercy and truth,” Ge 24:27; 32:10

Gen 39:21 But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy *חסד*, and gave him favour *חסד* in the sight of the keeper of the prison.--*Very nice example of the different senses. חסד comes from God to one of his people, but חסד to Joseph from the unrelated warden.*

Est 2:17 And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace *חסד* and favour *חסד* in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.--*Curious combination—Sakenfeld attributes it to loss of distinction between the terms in post-exilic period, and compares Dan 1:9, “Now God had brought Daniel into favour חסד and tender love חסד with the prince of the eunuchs.*

### Vocabulary for Persecution

*διώκω*, *διωγμός* to pursue, persecution. See the merger of the two senses in Act 26:11 I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities. Cf Acts 9:1-2.

*θλιβω*, *θλιψις* to oppress, tribulation

Mat 5:11 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile *ονειδίζω* you, and persecute *διώκω* you, and shall say all manner of evil *λεγω πονηρον* against you falsely, for my sake.

Mat 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse *καταραομαι* you, do good to them that hate *μισεω* you, and pray for them which despitefully use *επηραζω* you, and persecute *διώκω* you;