

Deeper Discoveries

Sermon on the Mount

Lesson 2: Matthew 5: 3-12



Literary Design

Many people have imagined a perfect society by creating better governments, laws, or social systems. Jesus takes a different approach. He says that real change begins in the hearts of people who obey God and live under His blessing. The Beatitudes are one of the most carefully organized sections in the New Testament. They follow a common pattern found in Hebrew poetry. In each Beatitude, Jesus does three things. First, He announces God's blessing on a group of people. Second, He identifies that group by a key character trait. Third, He gives the reason for the blessing, which is also a promise.^[1]

The first and eighth Beatitudes (5:3 and 5:10) act like bookends for the first eight, each of which ends with “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This is done purposely. Matthew’s use of these bookends signals that these eight sayings belong together as a single block of teaching. Rather than presenting eight separate rewards, he says they all point to one great blessing: belonging to God’s kingdom.^[2] By repeating “theirs is the kingdom of heaven” at the end, Matthew reminds readers that these beatitudes describe not merely present blessings but the future redemption/blessing awaiting God’s people.^[3] This is important, because Jesus tells the disciples that suffering for his name *will* come.

Imagine yourself as one of these disciples when Jesus suddenly switches in v. 5:11 from eight “Blessed are *those*” statements to “Blessed are *you*.” The abstract (about others) became quite personal (about me!). Jesus will do the same later in this sermon; look for it.

Old Testament Connections and Themes

Jesus will say in v. 5:17 that he is the fulfillment of “The Law and the Prophets.” That is, all the promises made in the Old Testament find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ, and the Sermon on the Mount is unsurprisingly filled with numerous Old Testament connections and themes. Seeing a few of these connections helps us to better understand Jesus and his mission of salvation as foretold of the Messiah in the OT. One goal of *Deeper Discoveries* is to show how all the books of the Bible fit together, finding their overarching unity in Christ.

Connection 1: Who Does Jesus Claim He Is?

Isaiah 61:1–2 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn...	Matthew 5:3–4 Blessed are the poor in spirit , for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted . (see Luke 4:18–19, where Jesus quotes this same Isaiah passage and calls it fulfilled in himself).
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With these blessings, Jesus proclaims himself to be the anointed one foretold in Isaiah 61:1–2, the promised Messiah, the one who will comfort his poor and mourning people.^[4]

Connection 2: Whom Will the Blessings of Inheritance Flow?

Psalm 37:11 [See vv. 9, 18, 22, 29, and 34.] But the meek will inherit the land [earth] and enjoy peace and prosperity.	Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek , for they will inherit the earth .
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Jesus quotes Psalm 37, which confirms the promise made to Abraham, but Jesus expands the meaning to encompass the New Earth to come for his followers (Jews and Gentiles) ... the idea of an actual location is secondary.^[5] Read Col 1:12–14, inheritance and kingdom. Paul knows.

Connection 3: The World, Including Israel, Always Rejects God and His Prophets

2 Chronicles 36:16 But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused...	Matthew 5:12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you .
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The powers of evil and human sin always persecute God’s sent ones, now Jesus and his faithful ones (see the Parable of the Tenants, Matt 21:33–46). But the reward will be great.

Commentary: *Blessed Are the Pure in Heart?* (Shane Rosenthal)

Too often, I think, we read the Beatitudes as if Jesus had told his followers that they would be blessed if they become meek, humble, or merciful, as they work hard to purify their hearts, etc. But this isn’t what Jesus is saying in this passage. Unlike Moses, Jesus isn’t promising his followers future rewards on the condition of obedience to his commands. In fact, as you study these words closely, you’ll discover that there aren’t any commands in the Beatitudes. Commands lie at the very heart of the Mosaic covenant. Moses, you may recall, told the people they would be blessed if they kept the law, and that they would be cursed if they did not. After hearing the law proclaimed by God himself at Mt. Sinai, the people responded by saying, “All the words Yahweh has spoken we will do” (Ex 24:3). [Yet the story of the Old Testament is that they did not, because of the power sin has over all people. Think about our study of Judges—are we any different? How can we be pure of heart?]

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” If you are in Christ, these are not words of condemnation, since you have been washed and renewed in him. You are now already clean and pure, not because of your own merits, but because of God’s gracious intervention on your behalf. Do you still struggle with sin? So did Peter! In fact, not long after Jesus pronounced him clean and pure, Peter ended up denying Jesus three times. And yet, he was later completely restored. Our right standing before God is found exclusively in Christ. He is the Righteous One—Israel’s true vine—and we are clean and pure, not in ourselves, but only as we are united to him.^[6]

[1] Crossway Bibles, *ESV Literary Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 1517. Edited.

[2] Thomas Tehan and David Abernathy, *An Exegetical Summary of the Sermon on the Mount* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008), 23. Edited.

[3] Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 165–166. Edited.

[4] Michael Daling, “Matthew,” in *Connecting Scripture New Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd, Christian Standard Bible (Brentwood, TN: Holman Bible, 2025), 10–11. Edited.

[5] Thomas Tehan and David Abernathy, *An Exegetical Summary of the Sermon on the Mount*, Second Edition (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008), 18. Edited.

[6] Shane Rosenthal, “Blessed Are the Pure in Heart?” Substack: The Humble Skeptic. <https://www.humbleskeptic.com/p/blessed-are-the-pure-in-heart>, 1/2/2024. Edited.