

BLESSING

01 - SERMON NOTES

Matthew 5:1-2 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: "Blessed..."

The Sermon on the Mount is the first of five major discourses in the Gospel of Matthew. All five follow blocks of narrative material; all five end with the same formula (like *Matthew 7:28-29 And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.*) Jesus' Sermon on the Mount deals with ethical issues of deep rooted importance in every age, this "sermon" has caused thousands of books and articles to be written.

The Sermon on the Mount starts with the "blessed." "Bless" and "blessing" are common in the Old and New Testaments, but these words are not part of ordinary speech today. When we read these words in the Bible, they seem a little strange, almost archaic. When we meet them in passages such as the Beatitudes, we may be puzzled by them. We wonder what all the "blessed are" statements mean.

The word "blessed" in Hebrew is *barak*, it means "to kneel" or "to bless." The root and its derivatives occur 415 times in the Old Testament. According to *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, to bless means "to endue with power for success, prosperity, fecundity, longevity, etc." In essence, the one who is blessed is given a rich and abundant life.

In the Old Testament blessings were pronounced on the children or subordinates by heads of households or others in authority and yet God is recognized as the only source of true blessing; this is why in the Old Testament all blessings were offered in His name.

- "LORD, you bless the righteous," says the psalmist (Psalm 5:12). God not only gives life but also enriches life.
- Even the power to get wealth (Dt 8:18) comes from the Lord.

We are totally dependent on him.

The Old Testament believer saw God as the source of blessing within a unique relationship. The Creator, who gave and sustains life, entered into a covenant relationship with Abraham and his descendants. He committed himself to bless them (Gen. 12, 17). But the covenant had to be accepted by faith by each succeeding generation, and blessing was found in obedience to a way of life that God later laid down.



Who are the blessed?

The Psalms contains a number of descriptions of the blessed.

- The blessed person is the one who "does not walk in the counsel of the wicked" (Psalm 1:1), whose "sins are covered" (32:1), who "takes refuge in [the LORD]" (34:8).
- The blessed one makes the Lord his trust (40:4; 84:12), has regard for the weak (41:1), and possesses the strength of the Lord (84:5).
- The blessed have learned to acclaim the Lord (89:15), are disciplined by the Lord (94:12), maintain justice (106:3), and fear the Lord (112:1; 128:1).
- The ways of the blessed are blameless (119:1), for they keep God's statutes (119:2). The blessed are those whose help and whose hope is in the Lord (146:5).

The blessed in the Beatitudes.

The "blessed are" statements of Jesus in the Beatitudes are not parallels of the "blessed" statements of the Psalms. The Old Testament describes the path that leads to God's blessing, Jesus describes that blessing itself. God's blessing comes to us in all our circumstances and makes us fortunate no matter how others may view our lives.

The "blessing" of the Old Testament was a straightforward blessing; the blessing of the New Testament is a divine paradox: an experience of the kingdom's inner riches amid external poverty and trial.



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