

The Traits of a True Disciple/Believer in the Eyes and mind of Jesus Christ.

(Understanding the Beatitudes as Code of Ethics and Standard of Conduct)

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

Thought 1. Christian leaders are to call together small bands of disciples for special training and preparation. Matthew says only that “His disciples came to Him” (v.1), but Mark and Luke report that Christ called the disciples together for training and preparation (Mk.3:13; Lu.6:13).

Thought 2. Three things are needed for training and preparation: a place, a time, and a message. The words “He went up . . . and when He sat down” seem to be saying that Jesus had deliberately chosen this place and time for this training. All had been planned; Jesus was personally prepared.

*This first blessing is pronounced on **the poor in spirit**. This does not refer to natural disposition, but to one’s deliberate choice & discipline. **The poor in spirit** are those, who acknowledge their own helplessness and rely on God’s omnipotence. They sense their spiritual need and find it supplied in the Lord. **The kingdom of heaven**, where self-sufficiency is no virtue and self-exaltation is a vice, belong to such people.*

2 The poor in spirit: Given the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said, the poor (ptōchoi, ptōh-koi’) in spirit are blessed. They are given the kingdom of heaven. What does “poor in spirit” mean? Being poor in spirit does not mean that a person must be poverty-stricken and financially poor. Hunger, nakedness, and slums are not pleasing to God, especially in a world of plenty. Christ is not talking about material poverty. He means what He says: poor in spirit. He is talking about spiritual poverty. Being “poor in spirit” means the following:

➤ It is acknowledging our utter helplessness before God, our spiritual poverty, our spiritual need. We are spiritually bankrupt, and we are solely dependent on God to help us spiritually.

➤ It is acknowledging our utter deficiency in facing life and eternity apart from God. It is acknowledging that the real blessings of life and eternity come only from a right relationship with God.

> It is acknowledging our utter lack of superiority before all others and our spiritual deadness before God. If we are poor in spirit, we readily admit that we are no better, no richer, no more superior than the next person—no matter what we have achieved in this world (fame, fortune, power). Our attitude toward others is not proud and haughty, not superior and overbearing. To be poor in spirit means acknowledging that every human being is a real person just like everyone else—a person who has a significant contribution to make to society and to the world. Those who are poor in spirit approach life in humility and appreciation, not as though life owes them, but as though they owe life. They view life as a privilege given to them; therefore, they journey through life with a humble attitude and contribute all they can to a needy world out of a spirit of appreciation.

The opposite of being poor in spirit is having a spirit that is full of self. There is a world of difference between these two spirits. There is a stark difference between thinking that we are righteous versus acknowledging that we need the righteousness of Christ. There is a stark difference between being self-righteous versus being given the righteousness of Christ. Self-righteousness goes no farther than self; that is, it goes no farther than death. Self-dies along with everything associated with it, including our self-righteousness. But the righteousness that is of Christ is eternal.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction. (Ro.3:21–22)

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Co.5:21)

And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith. (Ph.3:9)

Those who truly acknowledge their spiritual poverty take two critical steps. First, they turn their primary attention away from the things of this world. They know things can never make them spiritually rich. Second, they turn their primary attention to God and His kingdom. They know God alone can make them spiritually rich (Ep.1:3). The poor in spirit are weary and burdened for the world. They know the truth of this world and of eternity. Therefore, they have set their faces to do their part for both.

➤ They are weary of the deceptive appearances and enticements of this world. They have learned that “all is vanity [empty]” (Ec.1:14) and all is corruptible. Everything wastes away, even human life itself. Therefore, they feel weary and burdened for those who are still lost in the world.

➤ They are weary from having laboured so much to reach their generation. They have laboured to serve and make their contribution as God has called them. They have toiled so laboriously for one reason only: the love of Christ constrained them to reach their generation (2 Co.5:14).

The poor in spirit are those who approach the world as a child (Mt.18:1–2; Mk.10:14; these notes give an excellent description of what it means to be poor in spirit). All children are very, very precious to God and are given angels to look over them (Mt.18:10 see Ps.91:11).

Deeper Study # 2 (5:3) Poor in Spirit—Reward—Kingdom of Heaven:

the “poor in spirit” are blessed with the kingdom of heaven. The “poor in spirit” inherit three significant blessings.

1. The poor in spirit receive forgiveness of sin and God’s continued remembrance: the assurance that God will never forget.

-For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more. (He.8:12)

-He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations. (Ps.105:8)

-And no longer shall each one teaches his neighbour and each his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Je.31:34)

2. The poor in spirit receive a fellowship with other believers who walk as they walk (Ac.2:41–47; Ep.2:19–22).

-And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (Ac.2:42)

-So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Ep.2:19–22)

-That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 Jn.1:3)

3. The poor in spirit receive the gift of eternal life, the life that is forever: the eternal fellowship with both God and the congregation of those who are poor in spirit.

-Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life. (Jn.5:24)

-For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Ro.8:15–17).

Deeper Study # 2 (19:23–24) Kingdom of Heaven:

The kingdom of heaven evidently means the same thing as the kingdom of God, eternal life, and salvation. The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are interchanged when Jesus says that it is hard for a rich person to enter into the kingdom of heaven (Mt.19:23) or kingdom of God (Mt.19:24). Eternal life (Mt.19:26) and salvation (Mt.19:25) belong to the very same concept. Eternity and salvation, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven, is the very subject being discussed in Mt.19:16–30. Having eternal life, being saved, or entering the kingdom of God or of heaven is more difficult for a rich person than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. The kingdom of heaven and of God is revealed in four different stages throughout history.

1. There is the spiritual kingdom that is at hand; it is present right now (Mt.4:17; 12:28).
 - a. The present kingdom refers to God’s rule and reign and authority in the lives of believers.
 - b. The present kingdom is offered to the world and to people in the person of Jesus Christ.
 - c. The present kingdom must be received as a little child.
 - d. The present kingdom is experienced only by the new birth.

Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (Jn.3:3)

- e. The present kingdom is entered now and must be received now.
- f. The present kingdom is a spiritual, life-changing blessing. ***For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Ro.14:17)***
- g. The present kingdom is to be the first thing sought by believers.

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Mt.6:33)

2. There is the professing kingdom that is also in this present age. It refers to people who profess Christianity in every generation. It pictures the imperfect state of the kingdom of heaven or professing Christianity, what professing Christianity is like between Christ’s first coming and His return. This imperfect state is what is called “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Mt.13:1–52, esp.11).

3. There is the millennial kingdom that is future. It is the actual rule of Christ or the government of Christ that is to come to this earth for a thousand years.

- a. The millennial kingdom is the kingdom predicted by Daniel.

And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever. (Da.2:44).

b. The millennial kingdom is the kingdom promised to David.

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. . . . And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever. (2 Sam.7:12, 16)

c. The millennial kingdom is the kingdom pictured by John.

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years. (Re.20:4–6)

4. There is the perfect kingdom of the new heaven and earth that is future.

a. The eternal kingdom is the rule and reign of God in a perfect universe for all eternity.

Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. (Jn.14:1–3)

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. (1 Co.15:24)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. (Re.21:1)

b. The eternal kingdom is the perfect state of being for the believer in the future.

I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. (1 Co.15:50)

"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." (Re.21:4–5)

c. The eternal kingdom is an actual place into which believers are to enter sometime in the future.

I tell you; many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. (Mt.8:11)

d. The eternal kingdom is a gift of God that will be given in the future.

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (Lu.12:32).