

Blessed!

A Study on the *Beatitudes* of Jesus

As of 5/31/20

Part 8 The Exposition of Matthew 5:4- continued

Matthew 5:1-12

1 When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.

2 He opened His mouth and *began* to teach them, saying,

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10 "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

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

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

The Blessedness of True Peace

Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

The Bible reveals that one of the Attributes of the one, true, and living God- is Peace. God is a God of Peace.

Romans 15:33

Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

2Corinthians 13:11

Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:9

The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

And our God has emphasized the cherished, but elusive Reality of Peace- by making it one of the dominant ideas in His Word. Scripture contains four hundred direct references to Peace- along with many more *indirect* ones. The Bible begins with Peace in the Garden of Eden and it ends with Peace in Eternity. And the entire spiritual History of all Mankind can be charted based on the theme of Peace.

Even though the Peace on earth in the Garden was interrupted when Man sinned- at the Cross- Jesus Christ made Peace a Reality once again. And Jesus Himself becomes the Peace of all who place their Faith in Him. And that Peace is both "now" in one sense and "future" in another. Peace can reign right now- in the hearts of those who are His. And, someday, He will come as the "Prince of Peace" and establish a worldwide "Kingdom of Peace", which will result in *ultimate* Peace- an eternal "Age of Peace."

Yet one of the most obvious facts of all History and of all human Experience is that Peace does NOT characterize Man's earthly existence. There is no ultimate Peace now for two reasons:

- The *opposition* of Satan
- The *disobedience* of Man

The fall of the angels and the fall of Man established a world without any permanent Peace. And that is because both Satan and Man now war against the God of Peace in a battle for Sovereignty.

The scarcity of Peace on this earth has prompted someone to suggest that

"Peace is that glorious moment in history when everyone stops to reload."

In 1968, a major newspaper reported that there had been to that date 14,553 known wars since thirty-six years before Christ. Since 1945 there have been some seventy or so wars and nearly two hundred internationally significant outbreaks of violence. Since 1958 nearly one hundred nations have been involved in some form of armed conflict.

Some historians have claimed that the United States has had two generations of Peace:

- From 1815 to 1846
- From 1865 to 1898

.... yet that claim can only be made if you exclude the Indian Wars, during which our land was bathed in Indian blood.

With all the avowed and well-intentioned efforts for Peace in modern times, few people would claim that the world or any significant part of it is more peaceful now than a hundred years ago. We do not have *economic* Peace, *religious* Peace, *racial* Peace, *social* Peace, *family* Peace, or *personal* Peace. There seems to be no end of marches, sit-ins, rallies, protests, demonstrations, riots, and wars. Disagreement and conflict are the order of the day. No day has had more need of Peace than our own.

Nor does the world honor Peace as much by its Standards and Actions as it does by its words. In almost every age of History, the greatest heroes have been the greatest warriors. The world lauds the powerful and often exalts the destructive. The model Man is not Meek but Macho. The model Hero is not Self-giving but Self-seeking; not Generous but Selfish; not Gentle but Cruel; not Submissive but Aggressive; not Meek but Proud.

The popular Philosophy of the world, bolstered by the Teaching of many Psychologists and Counselors, is to put "Self" first. But when "Self" is first, Peace is last. "Self" precipitates Strife, Division, Hatred, Resentment, and War. It is the great ally of Sin and the great enemy of Righteousness and, consequently, of Peace.

This seventh Beatitude calls God's people to be Peacemakers. He has called us to a special Mission to help restore the Peace lost at the Fall.

Yet the Peace of which Christ speaks in this Beatitude, and about which the rest of Scripture speaks, is unlike that which the world knows and strives for. God's Peace has nothing to do with Politics, Armies and Navies, Forums of Nations, or even Councils of Churches. It has nothing to do with Statesmanship, no matter how great, or with Arbitration, Compromise, Negotiated Truces, or Treaties. God's Peace, the Peace of which the Bible speaks, never evades Issues; it knows nothing of "Peace at any Price." It does not gloss or hide, rationalize or excuse. It confronts Problems and seeks to solve them. And after the Problems are solved it builds a Bridge between those who were separated by the Problems. It often brings its own Struggle, Pain, Hardship, and Anguish, because such are often the Price of Healing. It is not a Peace that will be brought by Kings, Presidents, Prime Ministers, Diplomats, or international Humanitarians. It is the inner, *personal* Peace that only Jesus can give to the Soul of Man and that only His children can exemplify.

Four important Realities about God's Peace are revealed:

- Its Meaning
- Its Maker
- Its Messengers
- Its Merit

The Meaning of Peace: Righteousness and Truth

The essential fact to comprehend is that the Peace about which Jesus speaks is more than the absence of Conflict and Strife; it is the presence of Righteousness. Only Righteousness can produce the Relationship that brings two parties together. Men can stop fighting without Righteousness, but they cannot live peaceably without

Righteousness. Righteousness not only puts an end to Harm, but it administers the Healing of Love.

God's Peace not only stops War but replaces it with the Righteousness that brings Harmony and true Well-being. Peace is a creative, aggressive Force for Goodness. The Jewish greeting, 'Shâlôm' wishes "Peace" and expresses the desire that the one who is greeted will have all the Righteousness and Goodness God can give. The deepest meaning of the term is "God's highest Good to you."

The most that Man's Peace can offer is a Truce, the temporary Cessation of Hostilities. But whether on an international scale or an individual scale, a Truce is seldom more than a Cold War. Until disagreements and hatreds are actually resolved- the Conflicts merely go underground- where they tend to fester, grow, and break out again. God's Peace, however, not only stops the Hostilities but settles the Issues and brings the parties together in mutual Love and Harmony.

James confirms the Nature of God's Peace when he writes,

James 3:17

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable.

God's way to Peace is through Purity. Peace cannot be attained at the expense of Righteousness. Two people cannot be at peace until they recognize and resolve the wrong Attitudes and Actions that *caused* the Conflict between them, and then bring themselves to God for cleansing. Peace that ignores the Cleansing that brings Purity- is NOT God's Peace.

The writer of Hebrews linked Peace with Purity when he instructed believers to:

Hebrews 12:14

Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

... so, Peace cannot be divorced from Holiness.

Psalms 85:10

Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Biblically speaking, then, where there is true Peace there is always Righteousness, Holiness, and Purity. Trying to bring Harmony by *compromising* Righteousness- forfeits both.

When Jesus' said,

Matthew 10:34

Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

... it seemed to be the antithesis of the seventh Beatitude. His meaning, however, was

that the Peace He came to bring- is NOT "Peace at any Price." There will be Opposition before there is Harmony; there will be Strife before there is Peace. To be Peacemakers on God's Terms requires being Peacemakers on the Terms of Truth and Righteousness- to which the fallen world is in fierce opposition. When believers bring Truth to bear on a world that loves Falsehood- there will be Strife- NOT Peace. When believers set God's Standards of Righteousness before a world that loves Wickedness- there is an inevitable potential for Conflict. Yet that is the only way Peace can hope to come.

Until Unrighteousness is changed to Righteousness- there CANNOT be godly Peace. And the Process of Resolution is difficult and costly. Truth will produce Anger way before it produces Happiness; Righteousness will produce Antagonism before it produces Harmony. The Gospel brings bad feelings before it can bring good feelings. A person who does not first mourn over his own Sin- will never be satisfied with God's Righteousness. The Sword that Christ brings is the Sword of His Word, which is the Sword of Truth and Righteousness. Like the surgeon's scalpel, it must cut before it heals, because Peace cannot come where Sin reigns.

The great enemy of Peace is Sin. Sin separates men from God and causes Disharmony and Enmity with Him. And Man's lack of Harmony with God causes their lack of Harmony with each other. The world is filled with Strife and War only because it is filled with Sin. Peace does not rule the world because the enemy of Peace rules the world. Jeremiah tells us that

Jeremiah 17:9a

the heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick [or wicked]

... so, Peace CANNOT reign where Wickedness reigns. Wicked hearts CANNOT produce a peaceful Society.

Isaiah 48:22

"There is no peace for the wicked," says the Lord

To talk about Peace without talking about Repentance of Sin is to talk foolishly and vainly. The corrupt religious leaders of ancient Israel proclaimed,

Jeremiah 8:11b&12

11 ...'Peace, peace,' But there is no peace.

12 "Were they ashamed because of the abomination they had done? They certainly were not ashamed, And they did not know how to blush; Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time of their punishment they shall be brought down," Says the Lord.

Jesus said,

Mark 7:18b-23

18 ... "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever

goes into the man from outside cannot defile him,

19 because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (*Thus He declared all foods clean.*)

20 And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.

21 "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,

22 deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness.

23 "All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

Sinful Man CANNOT create Peace- either within themselves or among themselves. Sin can produce nothing but Strife and Conflict.

James 3:13-18

13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and *so* lie against the truth.

15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.

16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Regardless of what the circumstances might be, where there is Conflict it is because of Sin. If you separate the conflicting parties from each other but do not separate them from Sin- at best, you will succeed only in making a Truce. Peacemaking cannot come by circumventing Sin, because Sin is the Source of every Conflict.

The "Bad News" of the Gospel (that we are sinners) comes before the "Good News" (that Jesus came to save us from our Sins). Until a person confronts his Sin, it makes no sense to offer him a Savior. Until a person faces his false notions- it makes no sense to offer him the Truth. Until a person acknowledges his Enmity with God- it makes no sense to offer him Peace with God.

Believers cannot avoid facing Truth, or avoid facing others with the Truth, for the sake of Harmony. If someone is in serious error about a part of God's Truth, he cannot have a right, peaceful Relationship with others until the Error is confronted and corrected. Jesus never evaded the Issue of wrong Doctrine or wrong Behavior. He treated the Samaritan woman from Sychar with great Love and Compassion, but He did not hesitate to confront her godless life. *First*, He confronted her with her immoral living:

John 4:18

... you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband

... then He corrected her false ideas about Worship:

John 4:21-24

21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

22 "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

23 "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.

24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

The person who is not willing to disrupt and disturb in God's Name- CANNOT be a Peacemaker. To come to terms on anything less than God's Truth and Righteousness- is to settle for a mere "Truce"- which only *confirms* sinners in their Sin- and may leave them even *further* from the Kingdom. Those who, in the "name" of Love or Kindness or Compassion, try to witness by Appeasement and Compromise of God's Word- will find that their witness leads people AWAY from Jesus- NOT to Him. God's Peacemakers will not "let a sleeping dog lie" if it is opposed to God's Truth; they will not "protect the status quo" if it is ungodly and unrighteous. They are not willing to make "Peace at any Price." God's Peace comes only in God's Way. So, being a Peacemaker is *essentially* the result of a holy Life and the Call to others to embrace the Gospel of Holiness.

The Maker of Peace: God

People are without Peace because they are without God- the Source of Peace. Both the Old and New Testaments are replete with statements of God's being the God of Peace

Leviticus 26:6

I shall also grant peace in the land, so that you may lie down with no one making *you* tremble. I shall also eliminate harmful beasts from the land, and no sword will pass through your land.

1Kings 2:33

So shall their blood return on the head of Joab and on the head of his descendants forever; but to David and his descendants and his house and his throne, may there be peace from the Lord forever."

Psalms 29:11

The Lord will give strength to His people; The Lord will bless His people with peace.

Isaiah 9:6

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

Ezekiel 34:25

I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.

Romans 15:33

Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

1Corinthians 14:33

for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

2Thessalonians 3:16

Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. \e Lord be with you all!

Since the Fall, the only Peace that men have known is the Peace they have received as the Gift of God. Christ's Coming to earth was the Peace of God coming to earth, because only Jesus Christ could remove Sin- the great *barrier* to Peace.

Ephesians 2:13-16

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,

15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace,

16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

Salvation in Jesus brings God and Man back together- reconciling and bringing Peace.

Colossians 1:19&20

19 For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,

20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the

blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

But how did the Cross bring Peace? At the Cross, all of Man's hatred and anger was vented against God. On the Cross, the Son of God was mocked, cursed, spit upon, pierced, reviled, and killed. Jesus' disciples fled in fear, the sky flashed lightning, the earth shook violently, and the veil of the Temple was torn in two.

Yet through that violence- God brought Peace. God's greatest Righteousness confronted Man's greatest Wickedness- and Righteousness won. And because Righteousness won- Peace was won.

If God the Father is the Source of Peace, and God the Son is the Manifestation of that Peace, then God the Holy Spirit is the Agent of that Peace. One of the most beautiful fruits the Holy Spirit gives to those in whom He resides is the Fruit of Peace (**Galatians 5:22**). The God of Peace sent the Prince of Peace Who sends the Spirit of Peace to give the Fruit of Peace. No wonder the Trinity is called *Yahweh shalom* "The Lord is Peace" (**Judges 6:24**).

The God of Peace intends Peace for His world, and the world that He created in Peace He will, one day, restore to Peace by the Prince of Peace establishing His Kingdom of Peace.

But the person, who does not belong to God through Jesus Christ, can neither have Peace nor be a "Peacemaker". God can work Peace *through* us only if He has worked Peace *in* us.

Some of the earth's most violent weather occurs on the seas. But the deeper one goes the more serene and tranquil the water becomes. Oceanographers report that the deepest parts of the sea are absolutely still. When those areas are dredged they produce remnants of plant and animal life that have remained undisturbed for thousands of years.

That is a picture of the Christian's Peace. The world around him, including his own circumstances, may be in great turmoil and strife, but in his deepest being he has Peace that passes understanding. Yet those, who are in the *best* of circumstances but are without God can *never* find Peace, while those, in the *worst* of circumstances but *with* God need never *lack* Peace.

... to be continued

