

THE BEATITUDES IN CONTEXT

In Matthew’s Gospel the Apostle builds his account of the mission of the Messiah through 5 “books” centered on Jesus’ 5 major discourses. The Sermon on the Mount is the first of the five major homilies by the Master which appear in Matthew’s Gospel. The teaching on the Beatitudes is part of that first homily:

1. The Sermon on the Mount	Matthew 5:1-7:29
2. The Missionary Discourse	Matthew 10:5-11:1
3. The Parables Discourse	Matthew 13:1-53
4. The Homily to the Church	Matthew 18:1-19:1
5. The Eschatological Discourse*	Matthew 24:1-26:1

*the Final Judgment at the end of time

In Matthew’s Gospel the Sermon on the Mount is revealed in three chapters, from chapters 5-7, and the discourse of the Sermon on the Mount can be divided into 5 major sections:

1. The Beatitudes	Matthew 5:3-12
2. The Christian and the world	Matthew 5:12-16
3. The Law of the Old Covenant and the 6 examples of Christian conduct	Matthew 5:21-48
4. Teaching on the private and public lives of Christians and the practice of righteousness	Matthew 6:19-34
5. A Christian’s relationships, commitments, and the importance of works	Matthew 7:1-29
M. Hunt © 2005 www.AgapeBibleStudy.com	

St. Luke’s Gospel also records a Beatitude teaching in Luke 6:12-23-6.

There are three major theories that Bible scholars have developed to account for the differences between Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount and Luke’s Sermon on the Plain:

1. Both Gospels give accounts of the same discourse.
2. The Gospels reflect two different homilies spoken at different times during Jesus’ teaching ministry.
3. The Gospels present two homilies delivered in close succession: one on the summit of the mountain to the disciples and then a second homily on the plain to the multitude.

Questions for group discussion:

In each discourse, on the Mount and on the plain, Jesus centers His teaching on the giving of “blessings.”

Question: Look up the word “happiness” in the dictionary. What is the general meaning of this word? How does it differ from the way in which the word “blessing” is used in the Old and New Testaments? For some examples see Genesis 1:22, 28; 2:3; 12:2-3; Numbers 6:24-26; Psalms 5:12; 29:11; Isaiah 65:16-19; Jeremiah 17:7-8; Daniel 2:19-20; Proverbs 10:6; Ephesians 1:3; Hebrews 7:7; 1 Peter 3:8-9.