

“BLESSED ARE THE MEEK”

Matthew 5:5: *Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.*

The Greek word *praus*, [pronounced prah-ooce’], means mild, humble, or meek. The word *praus* only appears four times in the New Testament: three times in Matthew [5:5; 11:29; 21:5] and once in 1 Peter 3:4. In both Matthew 11:29 and 21:5 Jesus Himself is called “meek” just like the prophet Moses before Him [see Numbers 12:3]. In addition to the passage in Matthew 5:5 “*Blessed are the meek...*” this Greek word for “meek” is used in:

Matthew 11:29	<i>Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves.</i>
Matthew 21:5	<i>Say to daughter Zion, ‘Behold, your king comes to you, meek and riding on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.</i>
1 Peter 3:4	<i>...but rather the hidden character of the heart, expressed in the imperishable beauty of a gentle [meek] and calm disposition, which is precious in the sight of God.</i>

This is another Greek word to which Christians gave a uniquely Christian character, with “meekness” becoming the symbol of a higher Christian virtue as illustrated in these three verses. The pre-Christian Greek culture meaning of this word expressed an outward conduct as relating to only men and not necessarily in a positive light (see Vincent’s Word Studies in the New Testament volume I, page 37).

Christians, however, gave the word a quality expressing an inward virtue that is related primarily to God. Christian “meekness” is based on humility which is expressed in the New Testament as the supernatural quality that is the outgrowth of a renewed nature. This renewal can only come when we surrender our lives to God and seek His divine will in our lives. To the pagan Greeks this word often implied condescension, but to the Christian this word implies submission of the human will to the will of God. This submission is, however, not an indication of weakness. For the Christian, submission to God’s control results in strength—strength that is not our own but the strength that comes from God’s will working through our lives. The Bible is full of stories of God intervening in the lives of men and women who call on Him for His help and of stories of men and women willing to help others, but there are very few examples of God intervening in the lives of those who prefer their own plan and destiny except in cases where His intervention is judgment to bring about redemption.

Handout #2, Lesson 5:

Questions for group discussion:

As mentioned there is another theological and scriptural way to view the promise of “inheriting the land” made to the “blessed meek” who yield their lives as tools in the hands of the Master. In relating this passage to the Old Testament “the land” is probably a more accurate translation than “the earth”, and the New American Bible translation reflects this interpretation [the same Hebrew word is translated as both “land” and “earth”]. In the Old Testament references to “the land” refer to the Promised land of Israel (Numbers 20:12) which became a Biblical “type” for heaven, as the inspired writer of Hebrews relates in Hebrews 11:9-10 speaking of Abraham’s obedient journey from Ur of the Chaldees (Genesis 11:28; 15:7) to Canaan (Genesis 12:4-5): *By faith he sojourned in the Promised Land as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the same promise; for he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and maker is God* (Heb 11:9-10). Also see Revelation 21:10-11.

In Biblical interpretation it is always helpful to start with the literal interpretation as understood by the original recipients of the Biblical teaching.

Question: How did the disciples and Apostles understand this promise of “the land” to the “blessed meek”? Has this prophecy been fulfilled? See 2 Samuel 7:12-17; 23:5; 1 Chronicles 17:16-27; 2 Chronicles 13:5; Sirach 45:25; 47:16; Psalms 89:29; Acts 1:6; Hebrews 12:28; James 2:5; 2 Peter 1:11; Revelation 15:3; 17:14; 19:16.

Question: How is it that the promise and the prophecy of Daniel chapters 2 and 7 have been fulfilled?