

## [Seek First the Kingdom \(Part 2\)](#)

In the first few pages of the New Testament we find one of Christ's first lessons on discipleship. We know it as the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus commences the sermon with the Beatitudes, which are spiritual qualifications for *inheriting* the millennial kingdom. Some have suggested they are the prerequisites for *entering* the kingdom, but that is not correct, for it would imply that one must do good works in order to be saved.

Others have suggested the Beatitudes are evidences of salvation and that those who do not display these evidences are not actually saved. That is nowhere implied in this text and, in fact, is contrary to two key indicators in the context that Jesus is talking with saved people. First, in v. 1, we learn that Jesus is talking with His disciples – saved people that are desirous of progressing in their sanctification. Second, in vs.13-14, Jesus says emphatically, *ye are the salt of the earth ... ye are the light of the world*. He would certainly not have used these terms to refer to unsaved people. He does, however, suggest the possibility that saved people can lose their savor and hide their light.

Thus, we conclude the Beatitudes are the spiritual qualities required for ruling and reigning with Jesus (inheriting) in His millennial kingdom. Those who do not qualify will enter the kingdom but not participate. They will be relegated to a realm that is outside the presence of the Lord and His light. In [Part 1](#), we examined the first four Beatitudes. In this article we will examine the final four – qualifications five through eight.

**5. Showing mercy.** *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy (Matt. 5:7).* Mercy is the deliberate withholding of justice. It is not giving someone what they deserve. God is an inexhaustible wellspring of mercy, for His mercy endures forever. He has showered upon all men His great mercy, for the purpose of leading us to repentance ([Rom. 2:4](#)).

In like manner, we are instructed, as children of God, to be merciful toward others. In [Matt. 18:23-35](#) Jesus likened the kingdom of heaven to a gracious and merciful king who forgave one of his servants an impossible debt. However, that same servant refused to show mercy and grant forgiveness to someone who owed him a tiny debt. He cruelly consigned the man to prison. In the end the king was angry with his servant and showed him no mercy. The parable illustrates the truth that disciples who are merciful toward others will be treated mercifully at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The implication is that those who show mercy in this life will inherit the kingdom in the next.

**6. Purity of heart.** *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God (Matt. 5:8).* The word *pure* in this verse simply means clean. Most commentators recognize the *heart* as figurative of thoughts and feelings. Thus, to be pure in heart is to be clean and untainted in one's thoughts and feelings.

This particular beatitude assures that the righteousness sought after in v. 6

is not merely outward, but also inward righteousness. Jesus emphasizes the importance of inward righteousness later in the chapter. Referring to the seventh commandment, *thou shalt not commit adultery* – to which one could be in outward conformity – Jesus adds, *whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart* ([Matt. 5:28](#)). Purity of heart (thoughts/feelings) must also accompany outward righteousness.

Those who are in pure in heart are promised to see *God*. Like all the Beatitudes, this promise seems to guarantee present spiritual possession as well as actual future kingdom possession, in the sense of millennial inheritance. Sadly, some will not see Christ in the Millennium, for they will be expunged from His presence.

**7. Peacemaking.** *Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God* ([Matt. 5:9](#)). Jesus assured our peace with God through His death on Calvary, *having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself* ([Col. 1:20](#)). Because we have been justified, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ([Rom. 5:1](#)). As children of God, we have a duty to promulgate peace in the world by reconciling men with God through Jesus Christ ([2 Cor. 5:18-21](#)). Indeed, we are His ambassadors of peace! Of course, it should also be characteristic of propagators of peace that they live peaceably with all men.

What is the reward promised to those who are fulfilling their mission of peace in the world (i.e., spreading the gospel and living peaceably)? They will be *called* the children of God. Certainly, they are already God's children by way of their position in Christ, but God will publicly proclaim them as such, granting to them inheritance in His earthly kingdom. Perhaps another way of putting it is that they are children indeed, for they are living like Jesus, the Son of God, the great peacemaker. They are letting their light so shine before men so that others can see their good works and glorify the Father in heaven. The Father is not ashamed of them and is eager to refer to them as "my children."

**8. Persecution.** *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* ([Matt. 5:10](#)). Those who willingly suffer for Jesus in this life will be honored in the next. In fact, Jesus emphasizes the reward twice: *theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (v.10) and *great is your reward in heaven* (v.12). God places a high value on those who endure suffering, whether physical or verbal (*revile you ... and say all manner of evil against you falsely*).

The apostle Paul emphasized the same truth. *If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us* ([2 Tim. 2:12](#)). The passage teaches that those who endure persecution will inherit the kingdom, and will rule with Jesus. Those who melt under pressure will not inherit the kingdom. Christ will deny them the privilege. Paul implies the same in [Rom. 8:17](#) where he identifies all saints as heirs of God but only suffering saints as co-heirs with Christ.

There is only one qualification for *entering* the kingdom: salvation by grace

through faith alone in the finished work of Christ on Calvary. However, there are several qualifications for *inheriting* the kingdom. Jesus gives eight in the Beatitudes. Oh how critical that we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, for that is how we glorify God. There is much at stake!