

Matthew 5:3 Commentary

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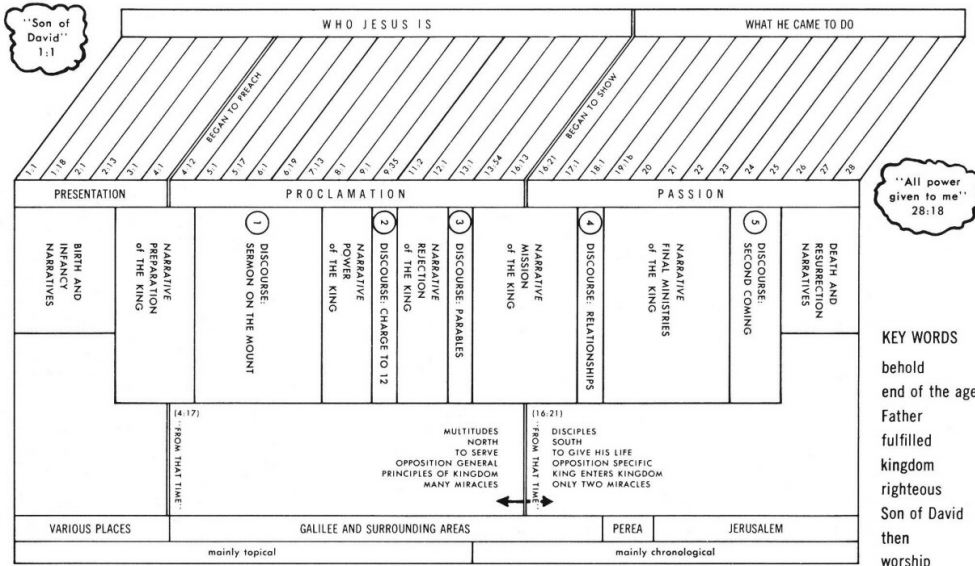
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MATTHEW CONTAINS 15 PARABLES 20 MIRACLES

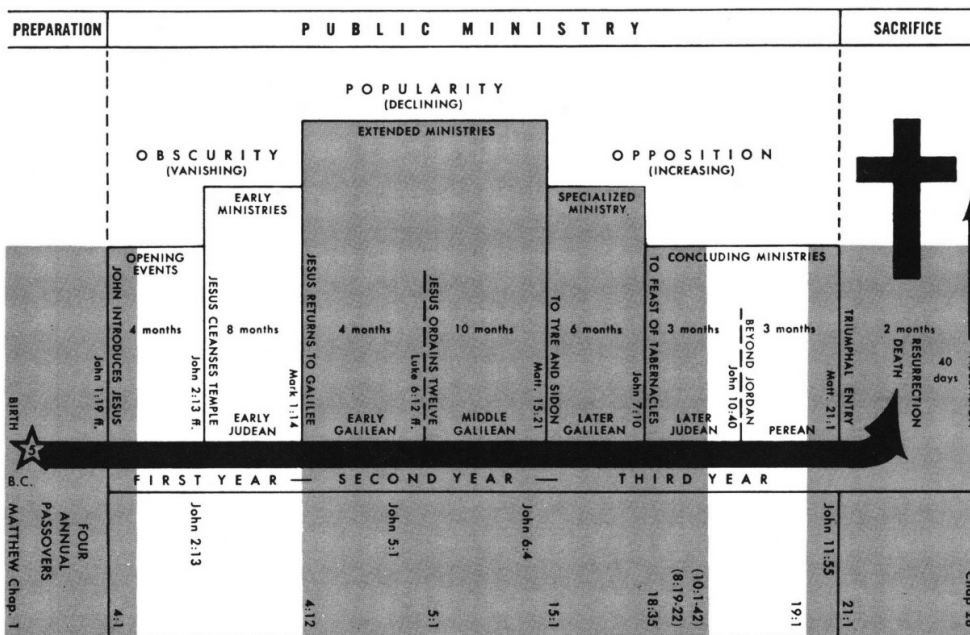
KEY VERSES: 1:1 "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

2:2 "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."



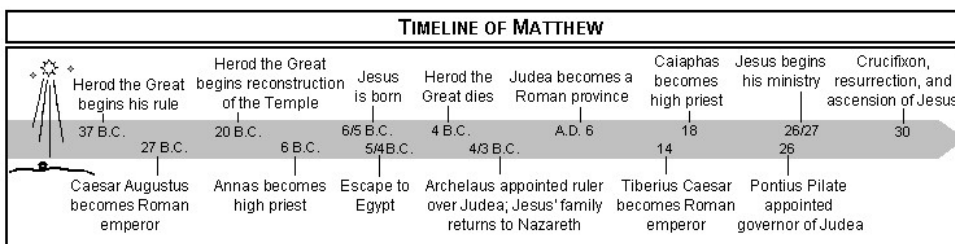
Click chart to enlarge
 Charts from Jensen's Survey of the NT - used by permission
 Another Chart from Charles Swindoll

THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY MATTHEW (shaded area)



Click chart to enlarge

Jesus Birth and Early Years
 Leading up to the Sermon on the Mount
 Matthew 1-7



Source: Ryrie Study Bible

Greek: [Makarioi oi ptochoi to pneumatii, hoti auton estin \(PAI\) e basileia ton ouranon.](#)

Amplified: Blessed (happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous—with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions) are the poor in spirit (the humble, who rate themselves insignificant), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven! ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

NLT: God blesses those who realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is given to them. ([New Living Translation - Tyndale House](#))

Philips: How happy are the humble-minded, for the kingdom of Heaven is theirs! ([New Testament in Modern English](#))

Wuest: Spiritually prosperous are the destitute and helpless in the realm of the spirit, because theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Young's Literal: `Happy the poor in spirit--because theirs is the reign of the heavens.

BLESSED: Makarioi:

- Mt 5:4-11; 11:6; 13:16; 24:46; Ps 1:1; 2:12; 32:1,2; 41:1; 84:12; 112:1; Ps 119:1,2; 128:1; 146:5; Pr 8:32; Isa 30:18; Luke 6:20,21-26; 11:28; John 20:29; Romans 4:6, 7, 8, 9; James 1:12; Rev 19:9; 22:14
- [Matthew 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Matthew 5:3: Happy are the Humble - Study Guide](#) - click dropdown - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:3: Happy are the Humble](#) - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:3: The Only Way to Happiness: Be Poor in Spirit](#) - John MacArthur

"Blessed (happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous—with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions) " (Amplified)

Beatitude is derived from the Latin **beatitudo/beatus**, because the first word of each statement in the Latin Vulgate is **beati**, which translates Matthew's Greek word makarios (traditionally translated "blessed"). As you study the beatitudes, notice that the first three describe Kingdom Citizens as those who recognize that what they are in the presence of God is what they are, no more and no less. Observe also that all eight beatitudes are essentially attitudes each of which has associated promises.

In his introductory sermon on Jesus' sermon **Pastor Brian Bell** has some helpful remarks which can be summarized as follows...

1. These eight qualities can only be lived out by Christians These spiritual standards come about only through surrender to the Savior. Jesus is not saying, "Live like this in order to be saved." He's saying, "Live like this **because** you are saved." Conduct must flow out of character. A Christian is one who embraces and embodies the Beatitudes. Another way to say it is that if you want to spot a **Christ-follower** in a crowd, look for these eight character qualities. (**Ed comment:** And we must say at the outset, don't "try" to keep Jesus' commandments and instructions in your own intrinsic "power", for you are powerless to carry them out. These are "impossible" standards for fleshly men, but are imminently "Him" possible for those who learn to surrender to and engage their indwelling omnipotent "Enabler", their Helper, the Holy Spirit. The Christ follower who successfully lives by the Sermon on the Mount is one who is continually filled with/controlled by the Spirit [Eph 5:18-note] and continually walks by the Spirit [Gal 5:16-note]. The supernatural lifestyle described in Jesus' Sermon can only be lived out by relinquishing self effort and by relying continually on our supernatural Source, the Spirit's **dunamis** His inherent power to accomplish Jesus' commands and instructions. So at the outset, beware of the natural tendency of our fallen **flesh** to deceive us into thinking we can do any of the commands and instructions in our own energy, lest we fall into the subtle trap of legalism!)

2. The Beatitudes are a package deal, not something to pick and choose from. Along with the Fruit of the Spirit that is to ripen in every believer (Gal 5:22-note, Gal 5:23-note), a Christian should, and must, display each of these character traits. They are not just for the "spiritual elite," but are for every believer. In addition, these are not eight separate groups of disciples, some who are meek and others who hunger for God. It's

easy to make the mistake of saying, "I'm just not merciful" or "I'm just not a peacemaker." Oswald Chambers refers to these words as lovely and poetic, yet their impact is that of "spiritual torpedoes." We can't pick the easy ones and ignore the difficult ones like being pure and being prepared for persecution. Incidentally, many of the Beatitudes are the exact opposite of what we want to do. While easy to appreciate, they are difficult to apply (Ed: I'll add "impossible"!)." **John Stott** writes: "*The Sermon on the Mount is probably the best-known part of the teaching of Jesus, though arguably it is the least understood, and certainly the least obeyed*" ("The Message of the Sermon on the Mount," Page 15).

3. Behavior must flow out of belief. Correct doctrine must always lead to Christ like behavior (Ed: Or it least it *should*. If it does not we become modern day "Pharisees!"). We must not only know what to believe; we must understand how to behave. While Jesus teaches content throughout the Sermon on the Mount, these opening words deal with character. Jesus is emphasizing throughout this Sermon that His disciples are to be different. John Stott suggests that Matthew 6:8 is the key text: "*Do not be like them...*" as he writes: "*They were not to take their cue from the people around them, but from Him, and so prove to be genuine children of their heavenly Father*" (cp John 15:8) (Stott, Page 18). As Christians, we are to be stamped by Christ, not by the culture around us, or by our tendencies within us.

A.W. Tozer once wrote: "*There is an evil...glaring disparity between theology and practice among professing Christians...An intelligent observer of our human scene who heard the Sunday morning message and later watched the Sunday afternoon conduct of those who heard it would conclude he had been examining two distinct and contrary religions. It appears to me that too many Christians want to enjoy the thrill of feeling right but are not willing to endure the inconvenience of being right*" (As quoted in a sermon by David Hoke called "Hearing His Voice Today").

4. Jesus wants us to seek the applause of heaven. Some translations have utilized the word "happy" instead of "blessed" to describe those who exhibit these expressions of discipleship. One author even refers to them as the "Be-happy-tudes." This doesn't do justice to the Greek word. While there is a close connection between holiness and happiness, this phrase conveys how God views people who live in a certain way.

Warren Wiersbe points out that "**blessed**" is "*an inner satisfaction and sufficiency that does not depend on outward circumstances for happiness.*" Those who are "blessed" have inner lives that are rightly aligned. The root idea is "approval." When we bless God, we are approving and praising Him; when He blesses us, He is expressing approval of us. In the sight of heaven, those who live out what Jesus is spelling out are "superlatively blessed" because the Almighty is extending His endorsement. Note that this term is used at the beginning of each sentence as if to emphasize its exuberant exclamation of joy...

How much do you crave God clapping for you? Do you want His smile more than your self-centered aspirations? Do you desire His applause more than the approval of your friends? If you want God's blessing more than anything else, you can have it. But first you must want to please Him above everything else. How badly do you want His blessing?

Chuck Swindoll, in commenting on the beauty of the Beatitudes, writes this: "*Most sermons are more negative than positive, more like scathing rebukes than affirmation. Not this one. With beautiful simplicity, using terms any age could understand, Jesus brought blessing rather than condemnation...Having endured a lifetime of verbal assaults by the scribes and Pharisees, the multitude on the mount must have thought they had died and gone to heaven.*"

The **blessed** are those who are allowed fellowship with God (cf Ro 5:1-3), because they have a right relationship with Him and thus are empowered and motivated to enjoy Him as He originally intended. Jesus is the ultimate blessing, beloved. Don't miss that as you study the Beatitudes. So many have lost sight of where true blessing is to be found and Jesus' beatitudes set about to correct that wrong thinking.

Test yourself at this moment -- what is your heart set on as vital for your life and character? What things do you most want to see developed in your life this day, this month, this year? Make a list and then compare it with the list Jesus unfolds in Matthew 5:3-12. Does your list include poverty of spirit, mourning over sin, meekness, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, showing mercy, maintaining a pure heart and a peacemaking spirit, and finally (and because of the former characteristics) a real willingness to be persecuted for Jesus' sake? Or does your list show some other path to supposed blessing?

If so, those blessings will prove to be nothing but mirages in the desert of this dying world, holding forth wonderful promises but dispensing nothing but disappointment. Jesus' list of character traits that are the hallmarks of the true citizens of His Kingdom and represent the **only life** that God will bless, beloved. Do not be deceived or distracted by the passing pleasures of this world,

enticements of your flesh or the temptations of the devil.

Lord, give us ears to hear Your magnificent manifesto afresh as the Great Physician's only prescription for genuine, lasting happiness in this world and the one to come! Amen.

Hear O JEHOVAH, and be gracious to me.

O JEHOVAH, be Thou my **Helper**.

Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing.

Thou hast loosed by sackcloth and girded me with gladness.

(Psalms 30:10-11)

As **Spurgeon** reminds us...

The Old Testament closes with the word "*curse*." (see Malachi 4:6). The New Testament begins here, in the preaching of Christ, with the word "Blessed." He has changed the curse into a blessing: "Blessed"

Nor did he begin in that manner, and then change his strain immediately, for nine times did that charming word fall from his lips in rapid succession. It has been well said that Christ's teaching might be summed up in two words, "Believe" and "Blessed." Mark tells us that he preached, saying, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel;" and Matthew in this passage informs us that he came saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." All his teaching was meant to bless the sons of men; for "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

***"His hand no thunder bears,
No terror clothes his brow
No bolts to drive our guilty souls
To fiercer flames below."***

His lips, like a honeycomb, drop sweetness, promises and blessings are the overflowings of his mouth. "Grace is poured into thy lips," said the psalmist, and consequently grace poured from his lips; he was blessed for ever, and he continued to distribute blessings throughout the whole of his life, till, "as he blessed them, he was taken up into heaven." The law had two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, one for blessing and another for cursing, but the Lord Jesus blesses evermore, and curses not. (Matthew 5.1-12 The Beatitudes)

A number of Bible versions instead of rendering it "blessed" use words such as "happy" or "fortunate," which unfortunately tend to trivialize the meaning by suggesting a temporary emotional or circumstantial state, which is not the actual meaning as discussed below.

Martin Luther commenting on Jesus beginning with "**blessed**" as His very first word wrote...

Now that's a fine, sweet, friendly beginning of his teaching and preaching. For he goes at it, not like Moses or a teacher of the law, with commands and threats, but in the very friendliest way, with nothing but attractions and allurements and lovely promises.

John Broadus adds that **blessed**...

It was also a beautifully natural introduction (Weiss), because he came to preach the 'good news' of the kingdom, {Mt 4:23} the fulfilment of all the Messianic hopes and promises. ([Matthew 5 Commentary](#))

The **Encyclopedia of Christianity** notes that...

The **beatitude**, or "makarism," is a literary form commonly beginning with the word "blessed" (from Greek makarios, see definition below) and constituting some declaration of good fortune for persons. Familiar to Greek literature in both the classical and Hellenistic periods, it is most often used to extol persons considered to be happy according to the ideals of Greek philosophy (e.g., those attaining wealth, honor, wisdom, or virtue). (Fahlbusch, E., & Bromiley, G. W. The Encyclopedia of Christianity Vol. 1, Page 212. Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leiden, Netherlands: Wm. B. Eerdmans)

Blessed are the poor in spirit - In Scripture, there are two words translated "**blessed**", **makarios** (discussed in more detail below) and **eulogetos** (from **eu** = good, well + **logos** = word), the latter meaning that we speak well of someone (as when we hear a eulogy at a funeral, the eulogy speaking well of that person who has passed on from life to death). In contrast, makarios is **not to speak well of** someone, but defines **a condition that exists**. In other words, makarios describes something that **is** true about someone, not something that someone **says** is true about them. Makarios is a reality, an inward state of truth no matter how you actually feel. In other words, to be "blessed" as defined by makarios, one does not have to feel "happy" to be blessed. You can still be blessed

and act as if you are not happy. Makarios defines one's state of being in relation to God, independent of how one feels about it at a given moment in time. There are many times I don't personally feel very "blessed" but the Bible nevertheless declares that irregardless of my untoward circumstances, afflictions, trials, etc, I am still "blessed" by God! The

Price rightly notes that...

Most people are interested in being happy! The pursuit of happiness is the driving force of our affluent western culture. However, when you look at the list of ingredients Jesus gives for happiness, there is a big shock in store! This is a strange list to say the least, and many of these qualities appear the very antithesis of what most of us are looking for. (Ed note: "Happy are the poor", "Happy are the sad", etc)... The major difference in this list is that Jesus is not talking of qualities in the physical realm (the area in which most people look for happiness), but in the realm of the spirit... The myth of our day is that happiness is found in satisfying our physical desires, comforts and appetites. Those desires may be entirely legitimate, but the engine room of each human being is the spirit which is designed to be inhabited and governed by God... Satisfying the body is never the source of true happiness for it is not the seat of our true appetites! Our true appetite is expressed in the famous prayer of Augustine, 'You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you'. The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount works from the spirit to the soul and out to the body. The norm of our day reverses that process, and tries to satisfy the deep needs of the human spirit by focusing on physical satisfaction. In this regard, either Jesus Christ has got it all wrong, or the world at large has it all wrong. You choose! There are nine beatitudes in this passage (statements beginning with 'Blessed are ...'), but as the last is repeated twice, eight different ingredients in Jesus' description of happiness. These are not descriptions of eight different people, one is poor in spirit, another is mourning, another is meek etc, but the description of eight ingredients that will be true of each one person who is happy, 'makarios' style. The list of these eight is progressive. Beginning with the first, the second grows out of it, the third out of the second until the eighth gives the completed picture of the person to whom Jesus then says, 'You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world...' (Price, C. Focus on the Bible: Matthew).

DO YOU DESIRE DIVINE BLESSINGS?

Blessed* (3107) (**makarios** from root **makar**, but others say from **mak** = large or lengthy) means to be divinely favored and is not based on positive circumstances. Some say makarios describes a person as being **happy**, but that is not the best description, because the English word "happy" ([from hap \(n.\) "chance, fortune"](#)) is the favorable state that depends on what happens! **Makarios** means spiritually contented and fulfilled and focuses on the state of happiness (independent of circumstances) experienced by people who have received God's blessings. **Makarios** does not refer to how a person feels (although a blessed person of course may still "feel" blessed), but more importantly to the divinely bestowed inner spiritual condition of those who are the objects of God's supernatural favor. From the Biblical perspective **Makarios** describes the person who is free from daily cares and worries because his every breath and circumstance is in the hands of His Maker Who gives him such an assurance (such a "blessing"). **Kenneth Wuest** adds that when **makarios** is "used of the state or condition of the believer, we would say that it refers to the spiritually prosperous state of that person who is the recipient of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, Who is enabled to minister these blessings to him **when** the believer yields to Him for that ministry and cooperates with Him in it."

THOUGHT - Are you (am I) in such a spiritual state that the Spirit can bestow supernatural blessing on you? (If not see Psalm 1:1-3+ for one "formula" for receiving divine blessing. Ps 1:1 in Hebrew actually begins with same Hebrew word twice = "blessed, blessed" for emphasis! God desires to bless His people!)

See [New International Dictionary of NT Theology](#) from 4 page article - Excerpt - (makarizo), call or consider blessed, happy; (makarismos), blessing.

Classic Literature - 1. makarios, originally a parallel form to makar, is first attested in Pindar and means free from daily cares and worries. In poetic language it describes the condition of the gods and those who share their happy existence. In the 4th cent. B.c. it gradually lost this meaning, and became a word in common use, like our 'happy', and was therefore avoided by poets (cf. Plato, Meno, 71a).

2. It is important to note that it most frequently occurs in the formalized language of makarismos (blessing) in the formula makarios hos(tis)... happy is he who... (e.g. Pindar, Pyth., 5, 46; only rarely in the 2nd person). Hence a person can be congratulated on a happy event. "In content beatitudes, which are common in both poetry and prose throughout the centuries, reflect the sorrows and afflictions, the aspirations and ideals, of the Greeks?" (F. Hauck, TDNT IV 363). Parents are congratulated on their children (Aristoph., Wasps, 1512), the well-to-do on their wealth (Bacchyl., 5, 50), the wise on their knowledge (Plato, Laws, 2, 660e), the pious on

their inward well-being (Eur., Frag. 256, ed. Nauck 434), initiates on their experience of God (Homeric Hymn to Demeter 480) and (in funerary inscriptions) the dead on their escape from the vanity of things (Aesch., Persians 712).

3. The different Gk. concepts of happiness also recur in the use of the vb. makarizé (Homer, Od. onwards) and the sub. makarismos (Plato, Rep. 59le onwards). The latter first occurs as a technical term in the sense of pronouncing blessed in Aristotle (Rhet., A9 1367b 33). (Click [4 page discussion of Makarios](#))

A T Robertson - The word accents the actual inner state rather than the outward appearance as another sees it... It is important to note that in the discussion of righteousness which is to follow Jesus assumes the new heart (**Ed**: Or serves to challenge unbelievers to believe in Jesus and receive a new heart), which alone makes it possible to come up to the lofty ethical standard here set up... The Greek word here ([makarioi]) is an adjective that means "happy" which in English etymology goes back to hap, chance, good-luck as seen in our words haply, hapless, happily, happiness. "Blessedness is, of course, an infinitely higher and better thing than mere happiness" (Weymouth). English has thus ennobled "blessed" to a higher rank than "happy." But "happy" is what Jesus said and the Braid Scots New Testament dares to say "Happy" each time here as does the Improved Edition of the American Bible Union Version. The Greek word is as old as Homer and Pindar and was used of the Greek gods and also of men, but largely of outward prosperity. Then it is applied to the dead who died in the Lord as in Rev. 14:13. Already in the Old Testament the Septuagint uses it of moral quality. "Shaking itself loose from all thoughts of outward good, it becomes the express symbol of a happiness identified with pure character. Behind it lies the clear cognition of sin as the fountain-head of all misery, and of holiness as the final and effectual cure for every woe. For knowledge as the basis of virtue, and therefore of happiness, it substitutes faith and love" (Vincent). Jesus takes this word "happy" and puts it in this rich environment. "This is one of the words which have been transformed and ennobled by New Testament use; by association, as in the Beatitudes, with unusual conditions, accounted by the world miserable, or with rare and difficult" (Bruce). It is a pity that we have not kept the word "happy" to the high and holy plane where Jesus placed it. "If you know these things, happy (μακάριοι [makarioi]) are you if you do them" (John 13:17). "Happy (μακάριοι [makarioi]) are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). And Paul applies this adjective to God, "according to the gospel of the glory of the happy (μακαρίου [makariou]) God" (1 Tim. 1:11. Cf. also Titus 2:13). (Word Pictures in the NT - Matthew)

Rob Morgan - Makarios (blessed) means happy, fortunate, blissful. Homer used the word to describe a wealthy man, and Plato used it of one who is successful in business. Both Homer and Hesiod spoke of the Greek gods as being **happy** (makarios) within themselves, because they were unaffected by the world of men-who were subject to poverty, disease, weakness, misfortune, and death. **The fullest meaning of the term, therefore, had to do with an inward contentedness that is not affected by circumstances.** That is the kind of happiness God desires for His children, a state of joy and well-being that does not depend on physical, temporary circumstances (cf Php 4:11, 12, 13). (From his sermon entitled "Blessed")

Makarios is found 49 times in the NASB NT ([Click](#) all uses at end of this note). The translates **makarios** as blessed, 46; fortunate, 1; happier, 1; happy, 1. ([Click](#) for a devotional on "blessed" or "happy")

Makarios - 42v in the non-apocryphal **Septuagint (LXX)** - Deut. 33:29; 1 Ki. 10:8; 2 Chr. 9:7; Job 5:17; Ps. 1:1; Ps. 2:12; Ps. 32:1; Ps. 32:2; Ps. 33:12; Ps. 34:8; Ps. 40:4; Ps. 41:1; Ps. 65:4; Ps. 84:4; Ps. 84:5; Ps. 84:12; Ps. 89:15; Ps. 94:12; Ps. 106:3; Ps. 112:1; Ps. 119:1; Ps. 119:2; Ps. 127:5; Ps. 128:1; Ps. 128:2; Ps. 137:8; Ps. 137:9; Ps. 144:15; Ps. 146:5; Prov. 3:13; Prov. 8:32; Prov. 8:34; Prov. 14:21; Prov. 16:20; Prov. 20:7; Prov. 28:14; Prov. 29:18; Eccl. 10:17; Isa. 30:18; Isa. 32:20; Isa. 56:2; Dan. 12:12

Question: Do you want to experience God's hand of blessing in your life? Who doesn't?! Suggestion: Hold pointer over the links for the Psalms and Proverbs in the **Lxx** and make a list of what is associated with God's hand of blessing. I think you will be surprised, edified, convicted (rebuked?), and I pray transformed by this simple study that (enabled by the Spirit of Truth) illumines God's truth, His word of grace (Acts 20:32), concerning His blessing on men and women (cp Jn 17:17).

The Greeks used **makarios** to refer to their gods and thus "the blessed ones" were the gods. They were "blessed" because they had achieved a state of happiness and contentment in life that was beyond all cares, labors, and even death. The blessed ones were beings who lived in some other world away from the cares and problems and worries of ordinary people. To be blessed, you had to be a god. Homer used makarios to describe a state unaffected by the world of men, who were subject to poverty, weakness, and death.

The Greeks also used **makarios** in reference to the dead who were "the blessed ones", men and women who, through death, had reached the other world of the gods and so were now beyond the cares and problems and worries of earthly life. To be blessed, you had to be dead, a state many of us have felt like we would just as well experience because of the nature of our manifold troubles and afflictions at the time.

Finally, the Greeks used **makarios** to refer to the socioeconomic elite, the wealthy, the idea being (completely false I might add) that

their riches and power put them above the normal cares and problems and worries of the lower socioeconomic strata, who constantly struggled to make it in life.

In short, the Greeks felt that one had to be either a god, dead or filthy rich to be blessed (*makarios*)! And so we see another one of the words (like *doulos*, *charis*, etc) that the Bible elevated in status and meaning, as described below in a compilation from many different resources.

MacArthur writes that **makarios** "is a divine pronouncement, the assured benefit of those who meet the conditions God requires. ([MacArthur, J: Matthew 1-7 Chicago: Moody Press](#))

Makarios is a state of existence in relationship to God in which a person is "blessed" from God's perspective even when he or she doesn't feel happy or isn't presently experiencing good fortune. This does not mean a conferral of blessing or an exhortation to live a life worthy of blessing; rather, it is an acknowledgment that the ones indicated are blessed. Negative feelings, absence of feelings, or adverse conditions cannot take away the blessedness of those who exist in such a relationship with God!

Makarios ultimately describes the state those who believe in Christ and in so possessing God, possess everything. In addition since they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, they are fully satisfied no matter what their circumstances. It is interesting that Aristotle contrasted *makarios* with the Greek word *endeos* which means "the needy one".

Friedrich Hauck says that the Greek word **Makarios** "refers overwhelmingly to the distinctive religious joy which accrues to man from his share in the salvation of the kingdom of God."

TDNT - The special feature of the group *makarios*, *makarizein*, *makarismos* in the NT is that it refers overwhelmingly to the distinctive religious joy which accrues to man from his share in the salvation of the kingdom of God.

Makarios means possessing the favor of God, experiencing "**spiritual prosperity**". It describes a state of being marked by fullness from God. And so what Jesus is saying in the "Beatitudes" is "**Spiritually prosperous** (blessed) are the poor in spirit... ", etc (Mt 5:3) And thus some of the translators like Wuest pick up this definition "**Spiritually prosperous** are the destitute and helpless in the realm of the spirit." (Wuest)

Some sources record that **makarios** means "to be congratulated." The natural man thinks of the "**poor in spirit**" as the person who mourns over sin and suffering, the meek, the persecuted as groups to be despised or even pitied. However, Jesus says they are fortunate people for God is pleased with them and fittingly He has "blessed" them. They are to be congratulated and after all what fortune is so great as God's blessing? **D Martyn Lloyd-Jones** adds that...

The only man who is at all capable of carrying out the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount is the man who is perfectly clear in his mind with regard to the essential character of the Christian. Our Lord says that this is the only kind of person who is truly 'blessed, that is, 'happy'. Someone has suggested that it might be put like this; **this is the sort of man who is to be congratulated** this is the sort of man to be envied, for he alone is truly happy. (Lloyd-Jones, D. M. [Studies in the Sermon on the Mount](#)) (Bolding added)

One might paraphrase Jesus' first beatitude..

Blessed are the spiritual paupers, the spiritually empty, the spiritually bankrupt who cringe in a corner and cry out to God for mercy.

Why? Because they are the only ones who tap the real resource for happiness independent of what happens. They are the only ones who ever know God. They are the only ones who are allowed entry into the Kingdom of Heaven (God). Theirs is the Kingdom—then and there, here and now and forever. Hallelujah!

Blessed connotes the state of "prosperity" that comes when a superior bestows his favor (blessing) on one.

Expositor's Bible Commentary - Usually *makarios* describes the man who is singularly favored by God and therefore in some sense "happy"... As for "happy" (TEV), it will not do for the Beatitudes, having been devalued in modern usage. ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

Cremer says that **makarios** "is the gracious and saving effect of God's favor ... ,(Ed: Note this condition) **but is enjoyed only when there is a corresponding behavior towards God**; so that it forms the hoped-for good of those who in this life are subject to oppression." (Bolding added)

Cremer goes on to add that in the NT **makarios** "is quite a religiously qualified conception, expressing the life-joy and satisfaction of the man who does or shall experience God's favor and salvation, **his blessedness altogether apart from his outward condition** ... It always signifies a happiness produced by some experience of God's favor, and specially conditioned by the revelation of

grace.” (Bolding added)

Kenneth Wuest says that when **makarios** is "used of the state or condition of the believer, we would say that it refers to the spiritually prosperous state of that person who is the recipient of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, who is enabled to minister these blessings to him when the believer yields to Him for that ministry and cooperates with Him in it. For instance, those who are reproached for the name of Christ, are in a spiritually prosperous condition, for the Holy Spirit is ministering to them with refreshing power (1Pe 4:14-note). ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament](#))

Makarios is used in pagan Greek literature to describe the state of happiness and well-being such as the gods enjoy as distinct from that of men who were subject to poverty and death, denoting a state of being of the gods who were exalted above earthly suffering and the limitations of earthly life. Other secular Greek writers used **makarios** to describe the state of certain men as supremely blest, fortunate, prosperous, wealthy.

Some theological dictionaries define "**blessed**" as a "state of happiness" but this is not completely accurate because **blessed** differs from "**happy**" which describes a person with good "luck". The English word "**Happy**" is from the root **hap** which means luck as a favorable circumstance. What if someone asked you today "Are you happy?" Being the spiritual person you are would you stumble and fumble and hesitate and hem and haw because the question is not an easy question to answer. Isn't it true that for most of us saints still on this earth, our happiness tends to go up or down depending on what "**happens**" or how things are going in our life? How much superior is the condition of the saint who is "**makarios**", a state in which we are still in the world and yet are independent of the world because our satisfaction comes from God and not from favorable circumstances.

Marvin Vincent has a lengthy note dealing with the history of makarios-

As this word and its cognates occur at least fifty-five times in the New Testament, it is important to understand its history, which is interesting because it is one of those numerous words which exhibit the influence of Christian association and usage in enlarging and dignifying their meaning. It is commonly rendered blessed, both in the A. V. and Rev., and that rendering might properly be given it in every instance.

Its root is supposed to be a word meaning **great**, and its earlier meaning appears to be limited to **outward prosperity**; so that it is used at times as synonymous with **rich**. It scarcely varies from this meaning in its frequent applications to the Grecian gods, since **the popular Greek ideal of divine blessedness** was not essentially moral. The gods were blessed because of their power and dignity, not because of their holiness. "In general," says Mr. Gladstone ("Homer and the Homeric Age") "the chief note of deity with Homer is emancipation from the restraints of moral law. Though the Homeric gods have not yet ceased to be the vindicators of morality upon earth, they have personally ceased to observe its rules, either for or among themselves. As compared with men, in conduct they are generally characterized by superior force and intellect, but by inferior morality."

In its peculiar application to the dead, there is indicated the despair of earthly happiness underlying the thought of even the cheerful and mercurial Greek. Hence the word was used as synonymous with dead. Only the dead could be called truly blessed. Thus Sophocles ("Œdipus Tyrannus"):

"From hence the lesson learn ye
To reckon no man happy till ye witness
The closing day; until he pass the border
Which severs life from death, unscathed by sorrow."

And again ("Œdipus at Colonus"):

"Happiest beyond compare,
Never to taste of life:
Happiest in order next,
Being born, with quickest speed
Thither again to turn
From whence we came."

Nevertheless, even in its pagan use, the word was not altogether without a moral background. The Greeks recognized a prosperity which waited on the observance of the laws of natural morality, and an avenging Fate which pursued and punished their violation. This conception appears often in the works of the tragedians; for instance, in the "Œdipus Tyrannus" of Sophocles, where the main motive is the judgment which waits upon even unwitting violations of natural ties. Still, this prosperity is external, consisting either in wealth, or power, or exemption from calamity.

With the philosophers a moral element comes definitely into the word. The conception rises from outward propriety to inward correctness as the essence of happiness. But in all of them, from Socrates onward, virtue depends primarily upon knowledge; so that to be happy is, first of all, to know. It is thus apparent that the Greek philosophy had no conception of sin in the Bible sense. As virtue depended on knowledge, sin was the outcome of ignorance, and virtue and its consequent happiness were therefore the prerogative of the few and the learned.

The biblical use of the word lifted it into the region of the spiritual, as distinguished from the merely intellectual, and besides, intrusted to it alone the task of representing this higher conception. The pagan word for happiness (εὐδαιμονία, under the protection of a good genius or daemon) nowhere occurs in the New Testament nor in the Scriptures, having fallen into disrepute because the word daemon, which originally meant a deity, good or evil, had acquired among the Jews the bad sense which we attach to demon. **Happiness, or better, blessedness**, was therefore represented both in the Old and in the New Testament by this word μακάριος. In the Old Testament the idea involves more of outward prosperity than in the New Testament, yet it almost universally occurs in connections which emphasize, as its principal element, a sense of God's approval founded in righteousness which rests ultimately on love to God.

Thus the word passed up into the higher region of Christian thought, and was stamped with the gospel signet, and laden with all the rich significance of gospel blessedness. It now takes on a group of ideas strange to the best pagan morality, and contradictory of its fundamental positions. Shaking itself loose from all thoughts of outward good, it becomes the express symbol of a happiness identified with pure character. Behind it lies the clear cognition of sin as the fountain-head of all misery, and of holiness as the final and effectual cure for every woe. For knowledge as the basis of virtue, and therefore of happiness, it substitutes faith and love. For the aristocracy of the learned virtuous, it introduces the truth of the Fatherhood of God and the corollary of the family of believers. While the pagan word carries the isolation of the virtuous and the contraction of human sympathy, the Gospel pushes these out with an ideal of a world-wide sympathy and of a happiness realized in ministry. The vague outlines of an abstract good vanish from it, and give place to the pure heart's vision of God, and its personal communion with the Father in heaven. Where it told of the Stoic's self-sufficiency, it now tells of the Christian's poverty of spirit and meekness. Where it hinted at the Stoic's self-repression and strangling of emotion, it now throbs with a holy sensitiveness, and with a monition to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep. From the pagan word the flavor of immortality is absent. No vision of abiding rest imparts patience and courage amid the bitterness and struggle of life; no menace of the destiny of evil imposes a check on human lusts. The Christian word blessed is full of the light of heaven. It sternly throws away from itself every hint of the Stoic's asserted right of suicide as a refuge from human ills, and emphasizes something which thrives on trial and persecution, which glories in tribulation, which not only endures but conquers the world, and expects its crown in heaven.

Ray Pritchard writes that **makarios** "doesn't even apply to human emotions. It's a statement of how God views people who live a certain way. The root idea of blessed is "approved by God." Max Lucado catches the idea beautifully in his book on the Beatitudes called *The Applause of Heaven*.

- God applauds the poor in spirit.
- He cheers the mourners.
- He favors the meek.
- He smiles upon the hungry.
- He honors the merciful.
- He welcomes the pure in heart.
- He claps for the peacemakers.
- He rises to greet the persecuted.

Pritchard goes on to add "As we begin this study of the Beatitudes, let's realize that if we want God's approval more than anything in the world, then these words have the power to change us dramatically. So the real question this morning is, How much do you want God's approval? Do you want it more than the approval of your family and friends? More than the approval of the people where you work? More than the approval of your colleagues? More even than the approval of your closest loved one? If you want God's approval that badly, you can have it. That's what the Beatitudes are all about. They show us what a disciple looks like and they tell us how we can have the applause of heaven. ([Matthew 5:1-3 The Making of a Disciple](#))

Dwight Pentecost explains that "The word **happy**, as used among the Greeks, originally described the condition of the Greek gods who were deemed to be satisfied, or content, because they had everything they desired and were free to enjoy everything they

possessed without restriction. To the Greek mind, happiness had to do with material possessions and the freedom to enjoy them. Their happiness had to do with unrestrained, unlimited gratification of physical desires. Since no limits were ever put upon their deities, the Greeks deemed the gods to be happy. When they lived with the same liberty they ascribed to their gods, they deemed themselves a happy people. Happiness for the Greeks was related to the physical and material world. ([Pentecost, J. D. Design for living: Lessons in Holiness from the Sermon on the Mount](#))

As used in the Bible, **makarios** can rarely convey the nuance of "happy", as in Paul's instructions given to a woman whose husband has died, Paul writing that "she is **happier** (makarios) if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God" (1Cor 7:40)

Paul also uses **makarios** with the nuance of "fortunate" as he speaks with King Agrippa, declaring "In regard to all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, I consider myself **fortunate**, King Agrippa, that I am about to make my defense before you today" (Acts 26:2)

Warren Wiersbe writes...

Imagine how the crowd's attention was riveted on Jesus when He uttered His first word: "**Blessed**." (The Latin word for blessed is *beatus*, and from this comes the word *beatitude*.) This was a powerful word to those who heard Jesus that day. To them it meant "divine joy and perfect happiness." The word was not used for humans; it described the kind of joy experienced only by the gods or the dead. "**Blessed**" implied an inner satisfaction and sufficiency that did not depend on outward circumstances for happiness. This is what the Lord offers those who trust Him! The **Beatitudes** describe the **attitudes** that ought to be in our lives today. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

The **Bible Knowledge Key Word Study** writes that in Matthew 5:3 **makarios**...

describes the state of someone privileged to experience God's grace in a special way. "Blessed," therefore, describes most importantly those who have a relationship with God (cf. Job 5:17; Ps. 1:1, 2-note) so that secondarily they experience his gracious provision and care in their life. ([Bock, Darrell L, Editor: The Bible Knowledge Key Word Study: The Gospels Cook Communications](#))

Blessed is the state of the individual who is the recipient of the God's grace (favor) and blessing.

The **psalms** begin with a "**beatitude**" proclaiming...

1 How **blessed** is the man
Who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! (note)
2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night. (note)
3 And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season,
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers. (note)

In both Psalm 1:1 and **Psalm 32:1-2** below, the Hebrew word for **blessed** is '**esher** ('**eser**) which describes good fortune, a state of joyous mind or a state of **bliss** (complete happiness, the ecstatic joy of heaven, perfect happiness, serene joy). The Hebrew word for "**blessed**" is translated by the **Septuagint or LXX** with our Greek word *makarios*. Note that in both of these psalms (as is true of its use elsewhere) to be "blessed", a man or woman has to do something. Of the 45 uses of '*esher* in the Old Testament, 25 are found in Psalms. [Click here](#) and take a moment to **meditate** on "blessed" in the Psalms (you will be *blessed!*), writing down what an individual has to do to be in the blissful state of blessedness (you will be surprised at one of things that bring blessing!).

In the Old Testament this state of **blessedness** may involve material things, but David who had been guilty of such great against His God by committing adultery with Bathsheba and then plotting the murder of her husband Uriah, describes blessedness not in a material but a spiritual sense of the man or woman who has experienced the gracious, merciful gift of the Father's **forgiveness** (Ps 32:1, 2-[note](#)).

1 (A Psalm of David. A Maskil.)

How **blessed** is he whose transgression is forgiven,

Whose sin is covered! ([Spurgeon's note](#))

2 How **blessed** is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity,

And in whose spirit there is no deceit! ([Spurgeon's note](#))

In the original Hebrew "blessed" is in the **plural** implying the multiplicity of blessings upon the man whom God justifies. One might translate it "*Oh the **blessednesses!***"

One can be "**makarios**" and yet be in miserable circumstances. "Blessed (makarios) are you," Jesus said, "when they insult you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven" (Mt 5:11, 12-see **notes** Matthew 5:11; 5:12). So "blessed are you" does not mean "untroubled are you" or "healthy are you" or "admired are you" or "prosperous are you." It means "between you and God all is well." You are deeply secure, profoundly content, happy in God - even if you are weeping over the pain of a struck body, a perplexed mind, or a heartbreaking relationship.

Whatever the **makarios** state is, it is true of God. Whatever it means to be blest and blessed, it is true of God and of Jesus Christ. For example, Paul describes God as "He who is the **blessed** and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords." (1 Ti 6:15). Thus it stands to reason that the only people who will ever experience **makarios** fully are those who partake of God and of Christ. There can be no biblical blessedness or happiness apart from Jesus. Only for those who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, who by faith have become partakers in the divine nature (2Pe 1:4-note), the same bliss, the same contentment, the same happiness, the same sense of **makarios** that is fundamentally an element of the character of God and Christ, is ours. So, when the Scripture speaks of blessedness, it is from a biblical context and does not refer to a superficial attitude based on circumstance.

David's psalm of thanksgiving after his repentance over his sin of adultery w Bathsheba & murder of her husband Uriah (2Sa 11:16,17) which by contrast left him "spiritually destitute" (Read Ps 32). Paul thus notes that justification by faith was true both before and after Moses--before, in Abraham, Israel's great patriarch, and after, in David, Israel's greatest king & was always apart from works.

Barclay has this note on **makarios** writing that

"**Makarios** is the word which specially describes the gods. In Christianity there is a godlike joy. The meaning of makarios can best be seen from one particular usage of it. The Greeks always called Cyprus *hē makaria* (the feminine form of the adjective), which means The Happy Isle, and they did so because they believed that Cyprus was so lovely, so rich, and so fertile an island that a man would never need to go beyond its coastline to find the perfectly happy life. It had such a climate, such flowers and fruits and trees, such minerals, such natural resources that it contained within itself all the materials for perfect happiness.

Makarios then describes that joy which has its secret within itself, that joy which is serene and untouchable, and self-contained, that joy which is completely independent of all the chances and the changes of life. The English word happiness gives its own case away. It contains the root hap which means chance. **Human happiness is something which is dependent on the chances and the changes of life, something which life may give and which life may also destroy. The Christian blessedness is completely untouchable and unassailable.** "No one," said Jesus, "will take your joy from you" (John 16:22). (Ed note:**Makarios** is an inner peace, an inner bliss, an inner happiness. Such inner joy is not produced by circumstance. It is a word that indicates character, touching man at the very base of his existence) The beatitudes speak of that joy which seeks us through our pain, that joy which sorrow and loss, and pain and grief, are powerless to touch, that joy which shines through tears, and which nothing in life or death can take away.

The world can win its joys, and the world can equally well lose its joys. A change in fortune, a collapse in health, the failure of a plan, the disappointment of an ambition, even a change in the weather, can take away the fickle joy the world can give. But the Christian has the serene and untouchable joy which comes from walking for ever in the company and in the presence of Jesus Christ. The greatness of the beatitudes is that they are not wistful glimpses of some future beauty; they are not even golden promises of some distant glory; they are triumphant shouts of bliss for a permanent joy that nothing in the world can ever take away." ([Matthew 5 Commentary - Daily Study Bible online](#))

Lloyd-Jones comments that...

There is, beyond any question, a **very definite order in these Beatitudes**. Our Lord does not place them in

their respective positions haphazardly or accidentally; there is what we may describe as a spiritual logical sequence to be found here. This, of necessity, is the one which must come at the beginning for the good reason that there is no entry into the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God, apart from it. There is no one in the kingdom of God who is not poor in spirit. It is the fundamental characteristic of the Christian and of the citizen of the kingdom of heaven, and all the other characteristics are in a sense the result of this one... It is obviously, therefore, a very searching test for every one of us, not only as we face ourselves, but especially as we come to face the whole message of the Sermon on the Mount. You see, it at once condemns every idea of the Sermon on the Mount which thinks of it in terms of something that you and I can do ourselves, something that you and I can carry out. It negatives that at the very beginning... The Sermon on the Mount, in other words, comes to us and says, 'There is the mountain that you have to scale, the heights you have to climb; and the first thing you must realize, as you look at that mountain which you are told you must ascend, is that you cannot do it, that you are utterly incapable in and of yourself, and that any attempt to do it in your own strength is proof positive that you have not understood it.' It condemns at the very outset the view which regards it as a programme for man to put into operation immediately, just as he is. (Lloyd-Jones, D. M. [Studies in the Sermon on the Mount](#))

Related Resources:

- [Vernon Grounds - Mountain Manifesto - BSAC 128:510 \(Apr 1971\)](#) (\$5/month)
- [What is the Sermon on the Mount?](#)
- [What are the beatitudes?](#)
- [What does it mean to be poor in spirit?](#)
- [What does 'blessed are the meek' mean?](#)
- [What does 'blessed are the peacemakers' mean?](#)
- [What does it mean to be poor in spirit?](#)
- [What does it mean to be pure in heart?](#)
- [What does 'blessed are those who mourn' mean?](#)

The Sermon on the Mount reveals the true standard of righteousness which Christ requires of all who belong to Him (Matthew 5:1). The limitation of the Sermon on the Mount lies in the fact that our Lord reveals His standards for the Kingdom life, without the full revelation of the power by which this standard can be obtained or maintained. This fuller revelation would come later. It is somewhat analogous to the John 7:37-39-note passage, where Christ gives His promise of power and fruitfulness before the Holy Spirit has been given to believers in Acts 2-note. The Sermon on the Mount is like a [plumb line](#) (aka "plumb bob") which allows one to discern the crookedness of a wall, but which does not provide the tools to rebuild the wall. As Jesus' ends His sermon, He declares

Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them (OBEYS - WHICH NECESSITATES A SUPERNATURAL POWER SOURCE...THE INDWELLING SPIRIT. SEE DISCUSSION "[Obedience of faith](#)"), may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. 26 "Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 "The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall." (Mt 7:24-27-[note](#))

[More Like Jesus Would I Be](#)

by Fanny Crosby

Let my Saviour dwell in me;
Fill my soul with peace and love,
Make me gentle as a dove.

More like Jesus while I go,
Pilgrim in this world below;
[Poor in spirit](#) would I be;
Let my Saviour dwell in me.

Join the Happy Minority - Are most people happy? Dennis Wholey, author of *Are You Happy?* reports that according to expert opinion, perhaps only 20 percent of Americans are happy.

Those experts would probably agree with the wry definition of happiness offered by psychiatrist Thomas Szasz, who said, "Happiness is an imaginary condition, formerly attributed by the living to the dead, now usually attributed by adults to children and by children to adults."

Are you happy? What if we define happiness as an abiding mood of joyful contentment, a deep-down state of peace and hope, not just an upbeat, fleeting feeling induced by favorable happenings? Now, in light of that definition of happiness, are you happy?

In His "Sermon on the Mount," our Lord gave us His prescription for a life that is truly happy regardless of circumstances. Most English translations of Matthew 5 use the word **blessed**, but Jesus was actually promising happiness. He repeatedly assured His disciples that they would be happy if they trusted Him and practiced His teachings.

The Great Physician has prescribed this remedy for unhappiness. Have you tried it? Take it and rejoice with the "happy minority."—Vernon C. Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

"Rejoice in Him!" Again, again
The Spirit speaks the word,
And faith takes up the happy strain:
"Our joy is in the Lord."
—Peters, Mary Bowley (1813-1856)

The Christian's happiness is not determined by happenings.

[ARE] THE POOR IN SPIRIT: oi ptochoi to pneumati:

- Mt 11:25; 18:1, 2, 3; Lev 26:41,42; Dt 8:2; 2 Chr 7:14; 33:12,19,23; 34:27; Job 42:6; Ps 34:18; 51:17; Pr 16:19; 29:23; Isa 57:15; 61:1; 66:2; Jer 31:18, 19, 20; Da 5:21,22; Mic 6:8; Lk 4:18; 6:20; 18:14; Jas 1:10; 4:9,10
- [Matthew 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Matthew 5:3: Happy are the Humble - Study Guide](#) - click dropdown - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:3: Happy are the Humble](#) - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:3: The Only Way to Happiness: Be Poor in Spirit](#) - John MacArthur

"they who know their spiritual poverty" (Berkley)

"those people who depend only on Him" (CEV)

"who recognize they are spiritually helpless" (GWT)

"those who know they are spiritually poor" (GNT)

" those who are destitute in spirit" (ISV)

"those who feel poor in spirit" (Moffat)

"those who realize their need for him" (NLT)

"people who know they have great spiritual needs" (NCV)

"the poor in spirit (the humble, who rate themselves insignificant)" (Amplified)

"when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule" (Message)

"Blessed are the beggars in spirit, blessed are the spiritual paupers, blessed are the spiritually destitute, blessed are the spiritually bankrupt ones who cringe and cower because of their helplessness; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Dwight Pentecost)

"They who are unfeignedly penitent, they who are truly convinced of sin; who see and feel the state they are in by nature, being deeply sensible of their sinfulness, guiltiness, helplessness." (Wesley)

"Our attitude toward ourselves in which we feel our need and admit it" (Wiersbe)

Blessed [are] the poor in spirit - Note that "**are**" is not found in the Greek text so this literally reads (Young's Literal version) "Happy the poor in spirit." God's Word paraphrases it "Blessed are those who recognize they are spiritually helpless."

Martin Luther acknowledged this truth. After his death, his friends found a scrap of paper in his pocket on which the great reformer had written in Latin and German, "Hoc est verum. Wir sind alle Bettler." ("**This is true. We are all beggars.**") Indeed, but we are "rich beggars" for in Christ "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col 2:3)

The **Expositor's Bible Commentary** has an interesting note here that "one must not make too much of this, for It should be noted that the present tense can function as a future, and the future tense can emphasize certainty, not mere futurity (Tasker). There is little doubt that here the kingdom sense is primarily future, post-consummation, made explicit in Mt 5:12 (note). But the present tense "envelope" (Mt 5:3,10 [note]) should not be written off as insignificant or as masking an Aramaic original that did not specify present or future; for Matthew must have meant something when he chose *estin* ("**is**") instead of *estai* ("**will be**"). The natural conclusion is that, though the full blessedness of those described in these beatitudes awaits the consummated kingdom, they already share in the kingdom's blessedness so far as it has been inaugurated (see Mt 4:17; 8:29; 12:28; 19:29). ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

The poor in spirit in the present context describe not so much those in literal poverty or a depressive condition although many have so misinterpreted Jesus' meaning. Some in fact have given away all their possessions based on Mt 5:3! The tragedy is that a man can possess no earthly possessions and still not possess the spirit Jesus is describing! No, the poverty Jesus describes is the state of **spiritual poverty** (see analysis of the definition of *ptochos* below) without which **no one** can become a believer! And every believer has recognized and acknowledged his spiritual poverty and like the prodigal have also come to their senses (cf Luke 15:17). They have come humble, as beggars, empty of all pride, conscious of the debt owed for their sins (cf **note** Matthew 6:12) realizing that all they can do is cry out "Have mercy on me O Lord!" **because...**

*Nothing in my hand I bring
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress,
Helpless, fly to Thee for grace.
Foul, I to the fountain fly.
Wash me, Savior, or I die. ([play](#))*

And so we see Augustus Toplady ([biography](#)) beautifully expressed the truth of "**poor in spirit**" in his classic hymn [Rock of Ages](#). Praise God for that moment in time and eternity when He by His sanctifying Spirit (cf 1Pe 1:2 (note), 1Cor 6:11, 2Thes 2:13) leads us to see that spiritual poverty is our real condition before Him and recognizing this to be so, then He births that spirit in our hearts. (cf Ro 3:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19-see notes Romans 3:10; 11; 12, 13; 14; 15; 16; 17; 19) We come to see that in God's courtroom of righteousness we are all bankrupt debtors and can only plead for mercy.

In passing it is noteworthy that many who have experienced sustained economic lack and social distress are often who are also "**poor in spirit**". (cf Mt 19:24, Mk 10:25, Lu 18:25) We need to heed Jesus' warning to the Laodicean church who said...

"I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked" (see note [Revelation 3:17](#))

Their failure to recognize their spiritual poverty placed the Laodicean church in danger of being spewed out of the Lord's mouth!

Sinclair Ferguson warns that "We are urged today to develop almost every other kind of spirit except poverty of spirit... There is much teaching on how to be filled with the Spirit, but where can we learn what it means to be spiritually emptied - emptied of self-confidence, self-importance, and self-righteousness? The sad truth is that we know so little of the blessing of which Christ speaks (and which He gives) because we are all too often full of ourselves and our own means of blessing. In fact, there is no sadder commentary on our lack of this spiritual poverty than the readiness so many of us have to let others know what we think. But the man who is poor in spirit is the man who has been silenced by God and seeks only to speak what he has learned in humility from Him. ([Ferguson, Sinclair: Sermon on the Mount :Banner of Truth](#))

Spurgeon - Spiritual poverty is both commanded and commended. It is the basis of Christian experience. No one begins aright who has not felt poverty of spirit. Yet even to this first sign of grace is the kingdom given in present possession: "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The question in heaven's kingdom is not, "Are you a peer?" but, "Are you poor in spirit?" Those who are of no account in their own eyes are of the blood royal of the universe. These alone have the principles and the qualifications for a heavenly kingdom. May I be such! (The Gospel of the Kingdom: A Popular Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew.)

James Smith (1802-1862) on THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE POOR IN SPIRIT. Matthew 5:3.

I. The poverty spoken of. "Poverty of spirit." This is not something put on, but that which concerns the inner

character (spirit). It is not earthly poverty, neither does it mean the spiritually poor. It is the poverty of—

1. BROKENNESS OF HEART (Psa. 51:7). A deep sense of personal unworthiness.
2. SELF-DISTRUST. "No confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3). "In me dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18).
3. ENTIRE DEPENDENCE. Living by faith. "Without Me, nothing" (John 15:5).

II. The nature of this blessedness. This is the kingdom. They come under the reign of grace. A present possession.

1. CHOSEN BY GOD (1 Cor. 1:28, 29). The poor in spirit are the chosen of Heaven.
2. INDWELT BY GOD (Isa. 57:15). The humble heart is the abode of God.
3. RICH IN FAITH (Jas. 2:5). Faith will buy anything from God. It is the current coin of the kingdom.
4. DIVINELY CARED FOR (Isa. 66:2). "To this man will I look that is poor, and of a contrite spirit" (Isa. 66:2). This is the look of continual favour which is the blessedness of the poor in spirit.

It is sad to see how inaccurate **interpretation** can lead to inappropriate **application** as in the case of the Roman emperor Julian the Apostate (332-63) who is reputed to have said with vicious irony that he wanted to confiscate Christians' property so that they might all become poor and enter the kingdom of heaven!

Joseph Hart (1759) paraphrases the essence of Jesus' first and in some ways most important beatitude, for if you tarry till you're better you will never come at all! Dear reader, perhaps you have never seen yourself as utterly, totally bankrupt before the holiness of God. You've tried to be better, to do better, to be pleasing, and on and on... but it was always "you" trying. Jesus says we must recognize our poverty and quit trying to be good enough. *Come ye sinners poor and needy, weak and wounded by the fall.* Your King stands ready to receive you and to make you one of His royal subjects. And you dear fellow citizen of the Kingdom... continue to come thirsty (Mt 5:6-note)... continue to come daily to Him and drink so that you might be replenished, sanctified, adequate and prepared for every good Kingdom work.

[**Come, Ye Sinners, — Poor and Needy**](#)

by **Joseph Hart**

Come, ye sinners, poor and needy,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, love and power.

Refrain

***I will arise and go to Jesus,
He will embrace me in His arms;
In the arms of my dear Savior,
O there are ten thousand charms.***

Come, ye thirsty, come, and welcome,
God's free bounty glorify;
True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings you nigh.

Refrain

Come, ye weary, heavy laden,
Lost and ruined by the fall;
If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all.

Refrain

View Him prostrate in the garden;
On the ground your Maker lies.
On the bloody tree behold Him;
Sinner, will this not suffice?

Refrain

Lo! th'incarnate God ascended,
Pleads the merit of His blood:
Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude.

Refrain

Let not conscience make you linger,
Not of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him. ([play hymn](#))

Alexander Maclaren explains that...

to be **poor in spirit** is to be in inmost reality conscious of need, of emptiness, of dependence on God, of demerit; the true estimate of self, as blind, evil, weak, is intended; the characteristic tone of feeling pointed to is self-abnegation (self-denial), like that of the publican smiting his breast (Luke 18:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14) or that of the disease-weakened, hunger-tortured prodigal (Luke 15:11-32), or that of the once self-righteous Paul, 'O wretched man that I am!' (Ro 7:24, 25-notes Ro 7:24; 25) People who do not like evangelical teaching sometimes say, 'Give me the Sermon on the Mount.' So say I. Only let us take **all** of it; and if we do, we shall come, as we shall have frequent occasion to point out, in subsequent passages, to something uncommonly like the evangelical theology to which it is sometimes set up as antithetic. For Christ begins His portraiture of a citizen of the kingdom with the **consciousness of want and sin. All the rest of the morality of the Sermon is founded on this.** It is the **root of all that is heavenly and divine in character.** So this teaching is dead

against the modern pagan doctrine of **self-reliance**, and really embodies the very principle for the supposed omission of which some folk like this Sermon; namely, that our **proud self-confidence must be broken down** before God can do any good with us, or we can enter His kingdom. (entire sermon) (Bolding added)

Spurgeon sums up this beatitude writing that...

This is a paradox that puzzles many, for the poor in spirit often seem to have nothing; yet they have the kingdom of heaven, so they have everything, lie who thinks the least of himself is the man of whom God thinks the most. You are not poor in God's sight if you are poor in spirit.

POOR: PTOCHOS

Poor (4434) (**ptochos** from **ptosso** = crouch, cringe, cower down or hide oneself for fear, a picture of one crouching and cowering like a beggar with a tin cup to receive the pennies dropped in!) is an adjective which describes one who crouches and cowers and is used as a noun to mean **beggar**. These poor were unable to meet their basic needs and so were forced to depend on others or on society.

Classical Greek used the **ptochos** to refer to a person reduced to total destitution, who crouched in a corner begging. As he held out one hand for alms he often hid his face with the other hand, because he was ashamed of being recognized.

Ptochos describes not simply honest poverty, and the struggle of the laboring man to make ends meet but also describes abject poverty, which has literally nothing and which is in imminent danger of real starvation.

Ptochos focuses on a state of dependence, so that in Mt 5:3 "the poor in spirit" are those who have learned to be completely dependent on God for everything and these are the ones who possess the kingdom of heaven.

Ptochos (35x in NASB): poor, 29; poor man, 5; worthless, 1 - Matt 5:3; 11:5; 19:21; 26:9, 11; Mark 10:21; 12:42, 43; 14:5, 7; Luke 4:18; 6:20; 7:22; 14:13, 21; 16:20, 22; 18:22; 19:8; 21:3; John 12:5, 6, 8; 13:29; Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 6:10; Gal 2:10; 4:9; Jas 2:2, 3, 5, 6; Rev 3:17; 13:16

Ptochos - 88x in the non-apocryphal Septuagint (LXX) -

Exod 23:11; Lev 19:10, 15; 23:22; Deut 24:19; Ruth 3:10; 1 Sam 2:8; 2 Sam 22:28; 2 Kgs 24:14; 25:12; Esth 1:20; 9:22; Job 29:12; 34:28; 36:6; Ps 9:18; 10:2, 9, 14; 12:5; 14:6; 22:24; 25:16; 34:6; 35:10; 37:14; 40:17; 41:1; 68:10; 69:29, 32; 70:5; 72:2, 4, 12f; 74:21; 82:3f; 86:1; 88:15; 102:1; 109:16, 21; 113:7; 132:15; 140:12; Prov 13:8; 14:20f, 31; 17:5; 19:4, 7, 17, 22; 22:2, 7, 9, 22; 28:3, 6, 8, 15, 27; 29:7, 14; 31:20; Isa 3:14f; 10:2; 14:30; 24:6; 25:3; 29:19; 41:17; 58:7; 61:1; Jer 5:4; Ezek 16:49; 18:12; 22:29; Amos 2:7; 4:1; 5:11; 8:4, 6; Hab 3:14

Paul uses the derivative verb form of **ptochos** (**ptocheuo** = to be destitute, extremely poor) to describe our Lord Jesus writing to the Corinthians in his great exposition on giving from the heart that...

you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became **poor**, (He became extremely poor) that you through His poverty (**ptocheia** = noun form = extreme poverty) might become rich (abundance of riches, ultimately speaking of spiritual riches not material riches). (2Cor 8:9) (cf Mt 8:20)

In light of this truth about the extreme poverty of our Lord, **Richards** writes...

Similarly, in order to follow him and to live a life of dependency, Christ's disciples left employment (Mt 4:18-22; Mk 1:16-20; Lk 5:1-11, 27-29; cf. Mt 10:1-16; Lk 10:1-17). Jesus and his disciples accepted this role in their eagerness to do the work of God's kingdom. They had made the choice freely in an awareness of God the Father's care (Mt 6:25-33). ([Richards, L O: Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Regency](#))

Vincent writes that **ptochos** "conveys the idea of utter destitution, which abjectly solicits and lives by alms. Hence it is applied to Lazarus (Luke 16:20, 22), and rendered beggar. Thus distinguished, it is very graphic and appropriate here, as denoting the utter spiritual destitution, the consciousness of which precedes the entrance into the kingdom of God, and which cannot be relieved by one's own efforts, but only by the free mercy of God. (Vincent, M. R. Word Studies in the New Testament. Vol. 1, Page 3-36).

William Barclay - In Greek there are two words for **poor**. There is the word **penēs**. **Penēs** describes a man who has to work for his living the man for whom life and living is a struggle, the man who is the reverse of the man who lives in affluence. **Penes** is defined by the Greeks as describing the man who is **autodiakonos**, that is, the man who serves his own needs with his own hands. **Penēs** describes the working man, the man who has nothing superfluous, the man who is not rich, but who is not destitute either. But, as we have seen, it is not **penēs** that is used in this beatitude, it is **ptōchos**, which describes absolute and abject poverty. It is connected

with the root **ptossein**, which means to crouch or to cower; and it describes the poverty which is beaten to its knees. As it has been said, **penēs** describes the man who has nothing superfluous; **pōchos** describes the man who has nothing at all. So this beatitude becomes even more surprising. Blessed is the man who is abjectly and completely poverty-stricken. Blessed is the man who is absolutely destitute. (Barclay, W: [Matthew 5 Commentary - Daily Study Bible online](#))

Thayer writes that **ptochos** means

"to be thoroughly frightened, to cower down or hide oneself for fear; hence, properly, one who slinks and crouches, often involving the idea of roving about in wretchedness (but it always had a bad sense till it was ennobled in the Gospels)... hence

1. In classical Greek from Homer down, reduced to beggary, begging, mendicant, asking alms: Luke 14:13,21; 16:20,22.

2. Poor, needy: Matt. 19:21; 26:9,11; Mark 10:21; 12:42,43; 14:5,7; Luke 18:22; 19:8; 21:3; John 12:5,6,8; 13:29; Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 2:10; James 2:2,3,6; Rev. 13:16; in a broader sense, destitute of wealth, influence, position, honors; lowly, afflicted: Matt. 11:5; Luke 4:18 (from Isa. 61:1); Lk 6:20; 7:22; the poor of the human race, James 2:5; tropically, destitute of the Christian virtues and the eternal riches, Rev. 3:17; like the Latin *inops*, equivalent to helpless, powerless to accomplish an end: Gal. 4:9 ('bringing no rich endowment of spiritual treasure' (Lightfoot)).

3. Universally, lacking in anything, with a dative of the respect: as respects their spirit, i.e. destitute of the wealth of learning and intellectual culture which the schools afford (men of this class most readily gave themselves up to Christ's teaching and proved themselves fitted to lay hold of the heavenly treasure, Matt. 11:25; John 9:39; 1Cor. 1:26,27; (others make the idea more inward and ethical: 'conscious of their spiritual need') Matt. 5:3

The majority of the NT uses of **ptochos** refer to one who is literally poor or economically disadvantaged, literally being forced to beg to survive! As used in Mt 5:3 **ptochos** is used figuratively to picture one who is spiritually disadvantaged, lacking spiritual worth or power and thus is spiritually destitute and helpless.

In the context of Matthew 3 and Matthew 4 (especially Mt 3:2, 4:17) **ptochos** appears to refer to those who have heeded the message of John and Jesus to "**repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**". They have admitted their need for God's mercy and turned away from their confidence in themselves and their reliance on their physical descent from **Abraham** (Mt 3:9). They have come to see themselves as spiritually impoverished and in need of God's grace, mercy and forgiveness.

Paul uses **ptochos** as an adjective as he rebukes the Galatian church writing...

But (contrast the time when they did not know God and were slaves to those which by nature are no gods) now that you have come to know God or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak (state of limited capacity, impotent) and **worthless (ptochos** - "poverty-stricken" practices, powerless to enrich, edify and equip and here a figurative picture of the religious practices of the Jews) elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? (Galatians 4:9)

To be **poor in spirit** means to recognize your true condition before God and thus does not refer to one's natural disposition but to one's deliberate choice. It is the exact opposite of being **rich in pride**. You might say that being "poor in spirit" means to recognize one's spiritual bankruptcy or acknowledge their own helplessness in the eyes of God, on Whose omnipotence they rely. They sense their spiritual need and find it supplied in the Lord. Like the GNT says...

"Blessed are they who feel their spiritual need."

Ptochos is used some 88 times in the Greek **Septuagint or LXX** Below are some uses of **ptochos** in the Greek LXX translation of the Hebrew Old Testament which convey a meaning similar to that convey by Jesus in the first beatitude. Note also that these Old Testament parallel passages support the conclusion that what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount is not "**new**" truth, but truths that readily can be found elsewhere in both the Old and New Testaments.

David cries out to the Lord in a number of psalms in which he uses the Hebrew word "**ani**" ([Strong's 6041](#)) which is translated by the Greek LXX by our word **ptochos**:

Psalms 25:16 ([Spurgeon's note](#)) Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and **afflicted**

Psalms 34:6 ([Spurgeon's note](#)) This **poor** man cried and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

Psalm 35:10 ([Spurgeon's note](#)) All my bones will say, "LORD, who is like Thee, Who delivers the **afflicted** from him who is too strong for him, and the **afflicted** and the needy from him who robs him?"

Psalm 40:17 ([Spurgeon's note](#)) Since I am **afflicted** and needy, Let the Lord be mindful of me; Thou art my help and my deliverer; Do not delay, O my God.

Psalm 69:29 ([Spurgeon's note](#)) But I am **afflicted** and in pain; May Thy salvation, O God, set me securely on high.

Psalm 70:5 ([Spurgeon's note](#)) But I am **afflicted** and needy; Hasten to me, O God! Thou art my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay.

Psalm 86:1 ([Spurgeon's note](#)) A Prayer of David. Incline Thine ear, O LORD, and answer me; For I am **afflicted** and needy.

David also testifies to Jehovah's salvation of a "poor" people declaring...

2 Samuel 22:28 "And Thou dost save an **afflicted** people; But Thine eyes are on the haughty whom Thou dost abase.

In each of the previous prayers (and the testimony in 2 Samuel 22) by David the word "**afflicted**" or "**poor**" is the same Hebrew word **ani** ([6041](#)) which pictures one in some kind of disability or distress. William Barclay says that this word **ani** (and a related Hebrew word **ebion/ebiyon** [Strong's #34](#)) has

"a most interesting and significant development of meaning. The meaning has three stages.

(i) They mean simply 'poor', in the sense of lacking in this world's goods (Deut. 15.4; 15.11).

(ii) They go on to mean, because poor, therefore 'downtrodden and oppressed' (Amos 2.6; 8.4).

(iii) It is then that they take their great leap in meaning. If a man is poor and downtrodden and oppressed, he has no influence on earth, no power, no prestige. He cannot look to men for help and when all the help and resources of earth are closed to him, he can only look to God. And, therefore, these words come to describe people who, because they have nothing on earth, have come to put their complete and total trust in God (Amos 5.12; Ps 10.2, 19:12, 17; 12.5; 14.6; 68.10). ([Matthew 5 Commentary - Daily Study Bible online](#))

In each of the above verse the Septuagint or LXX choose the Greek word **ptochos** to translate the Hebrew. So what is the point? Clearly **ptochos** is used in each of these prayers to describe on who is in distress and unable to relieve himself of this affliction, just as is the man or woman who experiences the poverty of spirit in Mt 5:3. David was a man who knew the meaning of being **poor in spirit** and **of his need to constantly rely upon the provision and power of Jehovah**.

It follows that to be "**poor in spirit**" is not a one time event by which a person gains entree into the Kingdom of Heaven but is as it was with David (a man after God's own heart) a continual mindset which leads to a lifestyle of submission to and dependence upon His God. This is the man who is blessed, in a state of spiritual prosperity, even though the physical or emotional circumstances are far from "prosperous". This blessed state is thus clearly a paradox and can only reflect a supernatural work of God in a man or woman's heart. It is ultimately a foretaste of the fullness all the poor in spirit will experience eternally in the future Kingdom.

[BLEST ARE THE HUMBLE SOULS THAT SEE](#)

Blest are the humble souls that see

Their emptiness and poverty;

Treasures of grace to them are giv'n,

And crowns of joy laid up in Heav'n.

Blest are the men of broken heart,

Who mourn for sin with inward smart;

The blood of Christ divinely flows,
A healing balm for all their woes.
Blest are the meek, who stand afar
From rage and passion, noise and war;
God will secure their happy state,
And plead their cause against the great.
Blest are the souls that thirst for grace
Hunger and long for righteousness;
They shall be well supplied, and fed
With living streams and living bread.
Blest are the men whose bowels move
And melt with sympathy and love;
From Christ the Lord they shall obtain
Like sympathy and love again.
Blest are the pure, whose hearts are clean
From the defiling powers of sin;
With endless pleasure they shall see
A God of spotless purity.
Blest are the men of peaceful life,
Who quench the coals of growing strife;
They shall be called the heirs of bliss,
The sons of God, the God of peace.
Blest are the suff'ers who partake
Of pain and shame for Jesus' sake;
Their souls shall triumph in the Lord;
Glory and joy are their reward.

---Isaac Watts

C H Spurgeon commenting on "**poor in spirit**" advises...

Learn this lesson—not to trust Christ because you repent, but trust Christ to make you repent; not to come to Christ because you have a broken heart, but to come to him that he may give you a broken heart; not to come to him because you are fit to come, but to come to him because you are unfit to come. Your fitness is your unfitness. Your qualification is your lack of qualification.

None ever considered the poor as Jesus did, but here he is speaking of a poverty of spirit, a lowliness of heart, an absence of self-esteem. Where that kind of spirit is found, it is sweet poverty

In Isaiah we find another use of **ptochos** that parallels the meaning in Mt 5:3, in the famous verse Jesus quoted in the synagogue in Luke 4:18...

Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me **to bring good news to the afflicted**; (ptochos) He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives, And

freedom to prisoners; (See study on The Incredible Prophecy of Isaiah 61:1-3)

Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach **the gospel to the poor**. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are downtrodden, 19 To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."

How unlike the world is Jesus' opening salvo, for the world of natural men would open more like...

Blessed are the **rich**, for theirs is the kingdom of the world.

The paradox is that those who are **spiritually poor** are the very ones who are **spiritually rich!** Truly the foolishness of God is wiser than man (1Cor 1:25, 27-31). Jesus is flatly stating that it is not what a man **does** but what he **is** in the sight of God!

John MacArthur explains that...

The word commonly used for ordinary poverty was penichros, and is used of the widow Jesus saw giving an offering in the Temple. She had very little, but she did have "two small copper coins" (Luke 21:2). She was poor but not a beggar. One who is penichros poor has at least some meager resources. One who is ptōchos poor, however, is completely dependent on others for sustenance. He has absolutely no means of self-support.

Because of a similar statement in Luke 6:20-

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God"-

some interpreters have maintained that the beatitude of Matthew 5:3 teaches material poverty. **But sound hermeneutics (the interpretation of Scripture) requires that, when two or more passages are similar but not exactly alike, the clearer one explains the others, the more explicit clarifies the less explicit.** By comparing Scripture with Scripture we see that the Matthew account is the more explicit. Jesus is speaking of a spiritual poverty that corresponds to the material poverty of one who is ptōchos.

If Jesus were here advocating material poverty He would have contradicted many other parts of His Word-including the Sermon on the Mount itself (5:42)-that teach us to give financial help to the poor. If Jesus was teaching the innate blessedness of material poverty, then the task of Christians would be to help make everyone, including themselves, penniless. Jesus did not teach that material poverty is the path to spiritual prosperity.

Those who are materially poor do have some advantages in spiritual matters by not having certain distractions and temptations; and the materially rich have some disadvantage by having certain distractions and temptations. But material possessions have no necessary relationship to spiritual blessings. Matthew makes clear that Jesus is here talking about the condition of the spirit, not of the wallet. ([MacArthur, J: Matthew 1-7 Chicago: Moody Press](#)) (Bolding added)

Dwight Pentecost writes that **ptochos** which is...

word translated "**beggar**" (Luke 16:20, 22) is the identical word translated "**poor**" in Matthew 5:3. The beggar was destitute, poverty-stricken, without any resources whatsoever. The words poor and beggar come from a root word which means "to cover" or "to cringe." It so humiliated a man to confess he had nothing and was dependent on someone else that the very act of begging demeaned him. So the beggar would cover his face and crouch, or cower, as he held out his hand for an alm. He was ashamed to let the giver know his identity... In spiritual things, poor in spirit is the opposite not of self-esteem but of spiritual pride. It is the self-sufficiency that springs from spiritual pride that our Lord condemned. The New Testament records that the Pharisees were intensely proud, for they counted themselves as righteous; they deemed themselves to be righteous and to need nothing. They heard the Lord Jesus offer a true righteousness from God, and they spurned it. This word is addressed to them and to those who follow their path. The man who is characterized by spiritual pride will receive nothing from God; there can be no blessing of God upon him, for pride is no foundation for righteousness. Spiritual pride is not an evidence of holiness but of sinfulness. Spiritual pride can never produce happiness... The poor in spirit is the one from whom the ground of self-sufficiency has been taken. The poor in spirit is the heart on its knees. The poor in spirit is the one characterized by an attitude of utter dependence. ([Pentecost, J. D. Design for living: Lessons in Holiness from the Sermon on the Mount. Kregel Publications](#))

Oswald Chambers commenting on "**poor in spirit**" writes...

The Sermon on the Mount produces despair in the heart of the natural man, and that is the very thing Jesus

means it to do, because immediately we reach the point of despair we are willing to come to Jesus Christ as paupers and receive from Him. "Blessed are the poor in spirit"—that is the first principle of the Kingdom. As long as we have a conceited, self-righteous idea that we can do the thing if God will help us, God has to allow us to go on until we break the neck of our ignorance over some obstacle, then we will be willing to come and receive from Him. The bed-rock of Jesus Christ's Kingdom is poverty, not possession; not decisions for Jesus Christ, but a sense of absolute futility, "I cannot begin to do it." Then, says Jesus, "Blessed are you." That is the entrance, and it takes us a long while to believe we are poor. The knowledge of our own poverty brings us to the moral frontier where Jesus Christ works. (Chambers, O. Studies in the Sermon on the Mount. Hants UK: Marshall, Morgan & Scott)

Price explains "**poor in spirit**" as follows...

The first step to real happiness is an acknowledgement of spiritual poverty, the recognition of the fact I do not have in myself what it takes to be the person I was created to be. This is deeper than recognizing I fail, it is realizing I do not have the capacity within myself to do anything else! As Paul wrote, 'I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature' (Ro 7:18), more literally, 'in my natural self'. Human beings have been so created that the Spirit of God within them is indispensable in their ability to function as intended. David wrote, 'I said to the LORD, "You are my LORD; apart from you I have no good thing"' (Ps 16:2)... When Paul says, 'nothing good lives in me', it is not that everything about him is bad! Elsewhere he lists some things about which he says he could boast (Phil 3:4-6), but he is saying that apart from the indwelling presence of Jesus Christ, everything else which may be good about me is ultimately good for nothing. I am like a car without an engine. It is to face this fact and acknowledge our own poverty of spirit which is the first step to real happiness. It is to this person Jesus says, 'the kingdom of heaven is theirs'. All the riches of the kingdom of heaven are available to the person who recognizes their own bankruptcy without God." (Price, C. Focus on the Bible: Matthew)

Warren Wiersbe writes that "**poor in spirit**" means

to be humble, to have a correct estimate of oneself (Ro 12:3). It does not mean to be "poor spirited" and have no backbone at all! "Poor in spirit" is the opposite of the world's attitudes of self-praise and self-assertion. It is not a false humility that says, "I am not worth anything, I can't do anything!" It is honesty with ourselves: we know ourselves, accept ourselves, and try to be ourselves to the glory of God. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

J C Ryle writes that "the poor in spirit" refers to

He means the humble, and lowly-minded, and self-abased; he means those who are deeply convinced of their own sinfulness in God's sight: these are people who are not "wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight" (Isaiah 5:21). They are not "rich" and have not "acquired wealth"; they do not fancy they "do not need a thing"; they regard themselves as "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked" (Revelation 3:17). Blessed are all such! Humility is the very first letter in the alphabet of Christianity. We must begin low, if we want to build high. (Ryle, J. C. Matthew)

Lloyd-Jones comments that "**poor is spirit**"

is ultimately **a man's attitude towards himself**..This is something which is not only not admired by the world; it is **despised by it**. You will never find a greater antithesis to the worldly spirit and outlook than that which you find in this verse. What emphasis the world places on its belief in **self-reliance, self-confidence and self-expression!** Look at its literature. If you want to get on in this world, it says, believe in yourself. That idea is absolutely controlling the life of men... Now in this verse we are confronted by something which is in utter and absolute contrast to that, and it is tragic to see how people view this kind of statement. Let me quote the criticism which a man offered a few years ago on that famous hymn of Charles Wesley, "Jesus, Lover of my soul". You will remember the verse in which Wesley says:

Just and holy is Thy name,
I am all unrighteousness;
Vile and full of sin I am,
Thou art full of truth and grace.
(Play [Jesus, Lover of My Soul](#))

This he ridiculed and asked, 'What man desiring a post or job would dream of going to an employer and saying to him, "Vile and full of sin I am"? Ridiculous!' And he said it, alas, in the name of what he regards as

Christianity. You see what a complete misunderstanding of this first Beatitude that reveals... we are not looking at men confronting one another, but we are looking at men face-to-face with God. And if one feels anything in the presence of God save an utter poverty of spirit, it ultimately means that you have never faced Him. That is the meaning of this Beatitude... To be 'poor in spirit' is not as popular even in the Church as it once was and always should be. Christian people must rethink these matters. Let us not take things on their face value; let us above all avoid being captivated by this worldly psychology; and let us realize from the outset that we are in the realm of a kingdom which is unlike everything that belongs to this 'present evil world'. (Lloyd-Jones, D. M. [Studies in the Sermon on the Mount](#)) (Bolding added)

Dave Guzik notes that "**poverty of spirit**"

is not a man's confession that he is by nature insignificant, or personally without value, for that would be untrue. Instead, it is a confession that he is sinful and rebellious and utterly without moral virtues adequate to commend him to God. The **poor in spirit** recognize that they have no spiritual "assets." They know they are spiritually bankrupt. With the word **poor**, Jesus uses the more severe term for poverty. It indicates someone who must beg for whatever they have or get. Poverty of spirit cannot be artificially induced by self-hatred; **it is brought about by the Holy Spirit and our response to His working in our hearts.** (see John 16:8-11, Acts 2:37+, Acts 16:29,30+)

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven: Those who are poor in spirit, so poor they must beg, are rewarded. They receive the kingdom of heaven, and poverty of spirit is an absolute prerequisite for receiving the kingdom of heaven, because as long as we harbor illusions about our own spiritual resources we will never receive from God what we absolutely need to be saved. The call to be poor in spirit is placed first for a reason, because it puts the following commands into perspective. They cannot be fulfilled by one's own strength, but only by a beggar's reliance on God's power ([Guzik's Notes on Matthew 5](#))

Lloyd-Jones goes on to summarize **poor in spirit** as follows...

It means a complete absence of pride, a complete absence of self-assurance and of self-reliance.

It means a consciousness that we are nothing in the presence of God.

It is nothing, then, that we can produce; it is nothing that we can do in ourselves.

It is just this tremendous awareness of our utter nothingness as we come face-to-face with God.

The answer is that you do not look at yourself or begin by trying to do things to yourself.

That was the whole error of monasticism. Those poor men in their desire to do this said,

'I must go out of society, I must scarify my flesh and suffer hardship, I must mutilate my body.'

No, no, the more you do that the more conscious will you be of yourself, and the less 'poor in spirit.'

The way to become poor in spirit is to look at God. Look at Him; and the more we look at Him, the more hopeless shall we feel by ourselves, and in and of ourselves, and the more shall we become 'poor in spirit'. Look at Him, keep looking at Him. Look at the saints, look at the men who have been most filled with the Spirit and used. But above all, look again at Him, and then you will have nothing to do to yourself. It will be done. You cannot truly look at Him without feeling your absolute poverty, and emptiness. (Lloyd-Jones, D. M. [Studies in the Sermon on the Mount](#))

In **Luke 18:9-14 Jesus** gives us a vivid illustration of one "**poor in spirit**"...

And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:

10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer.

11 "The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer.

12 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'

13 "But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, '**God, be merciful to me, the sinner!**' (**This is poverty of spirit!**)

14 "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself

shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

15 And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He might touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them.

Two men in the temple, both men prayed. Whose prayer did God hear? The religious Pharisee? Oh no, because he wasn't praying, he was giving God his resume! Jesus said that God heard the other man's prayer because his words came from a man who was "**poor in spirit**". Then Jesus gave the moral of the story:

"Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled (See Luke 18:9-14).

One man was rich with pride, the other poor in spirit. One man thought highly of himself, the other felt his shortcomings. One man impressed with his own accomplishments, the other depressed by his sin. One man boasted, the other man begged. One man recommended himself to God, the other man pleaded for God's mercy.

One man was saved, the other lost. Only it wasn't the "good" man who was saved. He ended up lost. And the "bad" man? He ended up saved.

Alexander Maclaren in a sermon on this beatitude says that...

This, the first of them, is dead in the teeth of flesh and sense, a paradox to the men who judge good and evil by things external and visible, but deeply, everlastingly, unconditionally, and inwardly true. All that the world commends and pats on the back, Christ condemns, and all that the world shrinks from and dreads, Christ bids us make our own, and assures us that in it we shall find our true blessing. 'The poor in spirit,' they are the happy men.

The reason for the benediction is as foreign to law and earthly thoughts as is the benediction of which it is the reason — 'for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.' Poverty of spirit will not further earthly designs, nor be an instrument for what the world calls success and prosperity. But it will give us something better than earth, it will give us heaven. Do you think that that is better than earth, and should you be disposed to acquiesce in the benediction of those who may lose the world's gifts but are sure to have heaven's felicities?

What is this **poverty of spirit**?... To me it seems to be a lowly and just estimate of ourselves, our character, our achievements, based upon a clear recognition of our own necessities, weaknesses, and sins... Two or three plain questions, to which the answers are quite as plain, ought to rip up this swollen bladder of self-esteem which we are all apt to blow. 'What hast thou that thou hast not received?' Where did you get it? How came you by it? How long is it going to last?... I suppose that we have all come out of nothing, and are anything, simply because God is everything. If He were to withhold His upholding and inbreathing power from any of us for one moment, we should shrivel into nothingness like a piece of paper calcined in the fire, and go back into that vacuity out of which His fiat, and His fiat alone, called us. And yet here we are, setting great store, some of us, by our qualities or belongings, and thinking ever so much of ourselves because we possess them, and all the while we are but great emptinesses; and the things of which we are so proud are what God has poured into us.

A W Pink has some pithy comments on "**blessed are the poor in spirit**" writing that...

There is a vast difference between this and being hard up in our circumstances. There is no virtue (and often no disgrace) in financial poverty as such, nor does it, of itself, produce humility of heart, for anyone who has any real acquaintance with both classes soon discovers there is just as much pride in the indigent as there is in the opulent. This poverty of spirit is a fruit that grows on no merely natural tree. It is a spiritual grace wrought by the Holy Spirit in those whom He renews. By nature we are well pleased with ourselves, and mad enough to think that we deserve something good at the hands of God. Let men but conduct themselves decently in a civil way, keeping themselves from grosser sins, and they are rich in spirit, pride filling their hearts, and they are self-righteous. And nothing short of a miracle of grace can change the course of this stream. Nor is real poverty of spirit to be found among the great majority of the religionists of the day: very much the reverse. How often we see advertised a conference for "promoting the higher life," but who ever heard of one for furthering the lowly life? Many books are telling us how to be "filled with the Spirit," but where can we find one setting forth what it means to be spiritually emptied—emptied of self-confidence, self-importance, and self-righteousness? Alas, if it be true that, "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15), it is equally true that what is of great price in His sight is despised by men—by none more so than by modern Pharisees, who now hold nearly all the positions of prominence in Christendom. Almost all of the so-called "ministry" of this generation feeds pride, instead of

starving the flesh; puffs up, rather than abases; and anything which is calculated to search and strip is frowned upon by the pulpit and is unpopular with the pew.

And what is **poverty of spirit**? It is the opposite of that haughty, self-assertive and self-sufficient disposition which the world so much admires and praises. It is the very reverse of that independent and defiant attitude which refuses to bow to God, which determines to brave things out, which says with Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" **To be "poor in spirit" is to realize that I have nothing, am nothing, and can do nothing and have need of all things.** Poverty of spirit is a **consciousness of my emptiness**, the result of the Spirit's work within. It issues from the painful discovery that all my righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isa 64:6, Phil 3:7-9, Rev 3:17). It follows the awakening that my best performances are unacceptable, yea, an abomination to the thrice Holy One. Poverty of spirit evidences itself by its bringing the individual into the dust before God, acknowledging his utter helplessness and deservingness of hell. It corresponds to the initial awakening of the prodigal in the far country, when he "began to be in want."

Poverty of spirit may be termed the negative side of faith. It is that realization of my utter worthlessness which precedes the laying hold of Christ, the eating of His flesh and drinking His blood. It is the Spirit emptying the heart of self that Christ may fill it: it is a sense of need and destitution. This first Beatitude, then, is foundational, describing a fundamental trait which is found in every regenerated soul. The one who is poor in spirit is nothing in his own eyes, and feels that his proper place is in the dust before God. **He may, through false teaching or worldliness, leave this place, but God knows how to bring him back; and in His faithfulness and love He will do so, for it is the place of blessing for His children. How to cultivate this God-honoring spirit is revealed in Matthew 11:29. (Pink, A. W. An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount)** (Bolding added)

Expositor's Bible Commentary adds that...

To be **poor in spirit** is not to lack courage but to acknowledge spiritual bankruptcy. It confesses one's unworthiness before God and utter dependence on him. Therefore those who interpret the Sermon on the Mount as law and not gospel... stumble at the first sentence... The **kingdom of heaven** is not given on the basis of race (cf. Mt 3:9), earned merits, the military zeal and prowess of Zealots, or the wealth of a Zacchaeus. It is given to the poor, the despised publicans (Ed note: most of these tax collectors were actually relatively rich in terms of "mammon"), the prostitutes, those who are so "poor" they know they can offer nothing and do not try. They cry for mercy and they alone are heard. These themes recur repeatedly in Matthew and present the sermon's ethical demands in a setting that does not treat the resulting conduct as conditions for entrance to the kingdom that people themselves can achieve. **All must begin by confessing that by them selves they can achieve nothing...** in the last book of the canon, an established church must likewise recognize its precarious position when it claims to be rich and **fails to see its own poverty** (Rev 3:14-22). The kingdom of heaven (Mt 3:2; 4:17) belongs to the poor in spirit; it is they who enjoy Messiah's reign and the blessings he brings. They joyfully accept his rule and participate in the life of the kingdom (Mt 7:14). ([Expositors Bible Commentary](#))

John Piper comments on "**poor in spirit**" asking first...

How does it get started, so that we have the power to love and can prove that God is at work within us? The answer was Matthew 5:3

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

We receive Jesus and his kingdom through bankruptcy—by admitting the poverty of spirit. The answer was Mark 10:15

Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all.

We receive Jesus and his kingdom by admitting that we are as helpless as a little child. The answer was Mark 2:17

It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

We receive Jesus and his kingdom by admitting that we are sick and in need of a spiritual physician—namely, Jesus. In other words the commands of the Sermon on the Mount are not the **first things** in the matter of our relationship to Jesus and his Father. The **first things** are free gospel promises that he will be the Forgiver and

Healer for our sin-sickness, the Father for our helpless childlikeness, and the Supplier for our poverty stricken heart. All of that we receive by faith. Jesus said to the prostitute who wept at his feet

Your sins have been forgiven ... your faith has saved you; go in peace. (Luke 7:48, 50)

This is how the Christian life starts. **It doesn't start by measuring up. It starts by realizing that we don't measure up. We are poverty stricken, helpless as a child, and sin-sick in need of a Great Physician.** Then we hear the gospel news that Jesus "came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45); and we hear the free offer that by trusting him our sins we will be forgiven, God will be our Father and the power of the kingdom will come into our lives, and we will have the help we need to live out the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)

We are grafted into the vine by faith in the all-satisfying promises of Christ. And we abide there by faith—drawing on His power and His enabling. So the **fruit** we produce, like loving our enemies, is not produced in our own strength, but by the strength of the Vine. "Without me you can do nothing." (From the sermon [But I Say to You, Love Your Enemies, Part 2](#)) (Bolding added)

Barnes rightly remarks that...

It is remarkable that Jesus began his ministry in this manner, so unlike all others. Other teachers had taught that happiness was to be found in honor, or riches, or splendor, or sensual pleasure. Jesus overlooked all those things, and fixed his eye on the poor and the humble, and said that happiness was to be found in the lowly vale of poverty more than in the pomp and splendors of life. (Barnes' Notes on the NT)

FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN: hoti auton estin (PAI) e basileia ton ouranon

- Mt 3:2; 8:11; Mark 10:14; James 2:5
- [Matthew 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Matthew 5:3: Happy are the Humble - Study Guide](#) - click dropdown - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:3: Happy are the Humble](#) - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:3: The Only Way to Happiness: Be Poor in Spirit](#) - John MacArthur

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

For (hoti) is a **term of explanation** which is used in all nine beatitudes, and serves to explain the reason for each respective beatitude. Why are the poor in spirit blessed? Because they possess the Kingdom of Heaven! We read over this too fast. Ponder what Jesus is promising to those who place their faith in Him! The richest, most powerful people in the world will miss out on this superlative "prize of prizes," unless they repent and believe. The "poor" are rich beyond their wildest imagination, for "EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." (1 Cor 2:9). How quickly we forget this incomprehensible truth when we take our eyes off of Jesus and begin to gaze at the glitz and glamour of this present world which is passing away and even its lusts. The one who does the will of God abides forever! (1 John 2:17-note) What a contrast with the believer's blessed state endures throughout eternity, forever and ever. Amen!

It has been well said that the only **kingdom** that will prevail in this world is the **kingdom** that is not of this world! Amen!

Billy Graham adds that "The longings and dreams of mankind will be fulfilled as God establishes His glorious **Kingdom** on earth for the enjoyment of mankind. (**Ed:** But there is a caveat - Sadly, not all of mankind but only that portion of mankind that has by grace through faith received Messiah as their sole/soul Savior and reigning King!)

Matthew is the only Gospel to use this specific phrase **Kingdom of Heaven**, the other Gospel's using the phrase "Kingdom of God". Most authorities agree that since Matthew's target audience was primarily Jews, he avoided using the name "God" so as not to offend the Jews who traditionally neither pronounced or wrote the name "God." [Click](#) for over 100 uses of the "**Kingdom**" most of which refer to the **Kingdom of Heaven/God**.

Related Resource: See also extensive notes on the **Kingdom of God/Heaven** in **commentary** beginning on Luke 17:20ff.

Is (estin in Greek)([2076](#)) (root verb is [eimi](#)) is in the present tense indicating continuous action. The indicative mood is the mood of

certainty and means that this is a fact (the poor in spirit continually possess the kingdom of heaven).

It is interesting to note that last clause of each of the next 6 beatitudes are in the future tense but that in the eighth beatitude (Mt 5:10-note) promising as a reward "the kingdom of heaven", Jesus reverts back to the present tense.

Notice also that the first half of beatitudes Mt 5:3-10 all have been translated in most modern translations with the verb "**ARE**." E.g., Mt 5:4 = "Blessed **ARE** those who mourn;" Mt 5:5 "Blessed **ARE** the gentle;" Mt 5:6 "Blessed **ARE** those who hunger and thirst for righteousness;" etc.

However all of those modern translations have added the ARE. In other words, all these verses (Mt 5:3-10) lack the specific Greek verb (eimi). And so they should read literally as in **Young's Literal translation** (which is usually very accurate to the Greek text but a little hard to read compared to modern translations). And so Young's Literal reads as follows...

3 'Happy the poor in spirit -- because theirs **is** (PRESENT TENSE) the reign of the heavens.

4 'Happy the mourning -- because they shall be comforted (FUTURE TENSE).

5 'Happy the meek -- because they shall inherit (FUTURE TENSE) the land.

6 'Happy those hungering and thirsting for righteousness -- because they shall be filled (FUTURE TENSE).

7 'Happy the kind -- because they shall find (FUTURE TENSE) kindness.

8 'Happy the clean in heart -- because they shall see (FUTURE TENSE) God.

9 'Happy the peacemakers -- because they shall be called (FUTURE TENSE) Sons of God.

10 'Happy those persecuted for righteousness' sake -- because theirs **is** (PRESENT TENSE) the reign of the heavens.

NET Note (Translates the Greek as "*for the kingdom of heaven **belongs** to them*") The present tense (**belongs**) here is significant. Jesus makes the Kingdom and its blessings currently available. This phrase is unlike the others in the list with the possessive pronoun being emphasized.

John MacArthur has an excellent discussion of "**kingdom of heaven**"...

Although the precise phrase is not found there, the **kingdom of heaven** is basically an Old Testament concept. David declares that "the Lord is King forever and ever" (Ps. 10:16; cf. Ps 29:10), that His **kingdom** is everlasting, and that His dominion "endures throughout all generations" (Ps. 145:13). Daniel speaks of "the God of heaven [who] will set up a **kingdom** which will never be destroyed" (Dan 2:44; cf. Ezek 37:25), a "kingdom [that] is an everlasting **kingdom**" (Dan. 4:3). The God of heaven is the King of heaven, and the heavenly kingdom is God's kingdom. Matthew uses the phrase **kingdom of heaven** thirty-two times, and is the only gospel writer who uses it at all. The other three use "**the kingdom of God**." It is probable that Matthew used **kingdom of heaven** because it was more understandable to his primarily Jewish readers. Jews would not speak God's name (Yahweh, or Jehovah), and would often substitute heaven when referring to Him-much as we do in such expressions as "heaven smiled on me today." There is no significant difference between "**the kingdom of God**" and the **kingdom of heaven**. The one phrase emphasizes the sovereign Ruler of the kingdom and the other emphasizes the kingdom itself, but they are the same kingdom. Matthew 19:23-24 confirms the equality of the phrases by using them interchangeably.

The kingdom has two aspects, the **outer** and the **inner**, both of which are spoken of in the gospels. Those aspects are evident as one moves through Matthew.

In the broadest sense, the kingdom includes everyone who professes to acknowledge God.

Jesus' parable of the sower represents the kingdom as including both genuine and superficial believers (Matt. 13:3-23), and in His following parable (Matt 13:24-30) as including both wheat (true believers) and tares (false believers). That is the outer kingdom, the one we can see but cannot accurately evaluate ourselves, because we cannot know people's hearts. The other kingdom is the inner, the kingdom that includes only true believers, only those who, as John the Baptist proclaimed, repent and are converted. God rules over both aspects of the kingdom, and He will one day finally separate the superficial from the real. Meanwhile He allows the pretenders to identify themselves outwardly with His kingdom.

God's kingly rule over the hearts of men and over the world may be thought of as having a number of phases.

The first is the prophesied kingdom, such as that foretold by Daniel (Da 2:44).

The second phase is the present kingdom, the one that existed at the time of John the Baptist and that he mentions. It is the kingdom that both John and Jesus spoke of as being at hand (cf. Mt 4:17).

The third phase may be referred to as the interim kingdom, the kingdom that resulted because of Israel's rejection of her King. The King returned to heaven and His kingdom on earth now exists only in a mystery form. Christ is Lord of the earth in the sense of His being its Creator and its ultimate Ruler; but He does not presently exercise His full divine will over the earth. He is, so to speak, in a voluntary exile in heaven until it is time for Him to return again.

He reigns only in the hearts of those who know Him as Savior and Lord. For those "the kingdom of God is ... righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Ro 14:17).

The fourth phase can be described as the manifest kingdom, in which Christ will rule, physically, directly, and fully on earth for a thousand years, the Millennium (**Ed**: see notes on this website re: [Millennium 1](#), [Millennium 2](#), [Millennium 3](#)). In that kingdom He will rule both externally and internally-externally over all mankind, and internally in the hearts of those who belong to Him by faith.

The fifth, and final, phase is the "eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" which "will be abundantly supplied" to all of His own (see my notes [2 Peter 1:11](#)).

([MacArthur, J. Matthew 1-7. Chicago: Moody Press](#)) (Bolding added)

Related Resources:

- See more commentary on the Kingdom of Heaven/God in notes on Luke 17:20ff and notes on Acts 1:3.
- ISBE [Kingdom of God or of heaven](#)
- [What is the difference between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven?](#)
- [What are the keys of the kingdom?](#)
- [What is the kingdom of God?](#)
- [What does it mean to seek first the kingdom of God?](#)
- [Who is greatest in the kingdom?](#)
- [What is kingdom theology?](#)
- [What is the gospel of the kingdom?](#)
- [What did Jesus mean when He said, "The kingdom of God is within you" \(Luke 17:21, KJV\)?](#) (See also Luke 17:21 commentary)

Kingdom (932) (**basileia** from **basileus** = a sovereign, king, monarch) denotes sovereignty, royal power, dominion. Basileia can also refer to the territory or people over whom a king rules (See "Three Basic Meanings" below).

Swindoll says **basileia** means "'kingdom," "government," "royal power" This term denotes the dominion of a lawful king, which the Greeks saw as something derived from Zeus. In the Old Testament, Israel was originally a **theocracy**, a nation whose king was God. Therefore, Israel was the kingdom of God. Even when a human sat on the throne of Israel, he derived his power from God. The Gospels depict the earth as the dominion of Satan or evil, a usurper to the rightful throne of God. Jesus came to reestablish divine rule (i.e., the kingdom of God). ([Insights on Luke](#))

At the outset it should be noted that the **Kingdom of Heaven/God** is both simple and complex and has been the subject of many non-Biblical interpretations (this summary makes no attempt to review these interpretations). It is as simple as the truth that wherever the King (God/Jesus) rules and reigns, there the kingdom is present! It is complex in that a number of references to **Kingdom of God/Heaven** have prophetic (eschatological) overtones, so it has a present and future aspect. It is also complex in the sense that the **Kingdom of God/Heaven** is described in both testaments from Genesis to Revelation (See Tony Garland's interesting related summary of [Genesis and Revelation as Bookends](#)). It follows that any attempt to give a Biblical definition of kingdom will be woefully lacking. So as you read these notes on the definition of **basileia**, understand that this is only a summary - **indeed, it will take all eternity to comprehend God's Kingdom, a Kingdom which will endure forever and ever! Amen!**

BASILEIA: THREE BASIC MEANINGS

There are three basic meanings of **basileia** (realize however that there is some overlap in the meanings in a number of passages)

(1) The power exercised by a king, the act of ruling - kingship, royal rule, reign (Acts 1.6, Lxx = 1Ki 15:28, 20:31, Esther 3:6, Lk 19:12, 15, Rev 17:12, 17, 18₊. Lk 1:33, 22:29, 23:42).

Basileia means **kingdom** and is used most often in the NT to describe God's (Christ's) rule and reign, a rule and reign which in turn most often described by the phrases **kingdom of heaven** or **kingdom of God**. Although some scholars attempt to differentiate these terms, it is more reasonable (as discerned from the context) to consider these two phrase as synonyms. **Kingdom of heaven** is found only in the Gospel of Matthew (32 times) and **Kingdom of God** is used in the other Gospels (66 times including 4 times in Matthew), 6 times in Acts, and 8 times by Paul. Most observers conclude that **Kingdom of Heaven** is used by Matthew whose Gospel was addressed primarily to a first century Jewish audience that for the most part would not (and still do not, especially the orthodox) vocalize the Name "God".

Jesus' began His ministry proclaiming the **Gospel of the Kingdom** (See Tony Garland's discussion - [The Arrival of God's Kingdom](#)) by which, if one receives it and believes it, gains entrance into the **Kingdom of God/Heaven**, which is simply another way of saying one is "saved" by grace through faith (Jn 3:3, 5+, Mt 18:3). Where there is a **kingdom**, by definition there is a king who reigns over that kingdom, and it follows that when one enters the **Kingdom of God/Heaven** by believing, Jesus becomes their King. (**Is Jesus King on the throne of your heart dear reader?**) The reign of the King of kings (Rev 19:15+) is the realm of His dominion and can speak of the people over which He rules (believers in this present age - see Col 1:13+) or the land over which He will reign (in "*the age to come*" [Mk 10:30, Lk 18:29, 30+, cp "*end of the age*" Mt 24:3-[note](#)] - referring to the next "age," the future **Millennial Kingdom of Christ** - see Rev 20:6+). Thus we see that from the standpoint of time (temporally), the Kingdom has both a "now" and a "then" aspect. In other words the Kingdom of our Lord has a present spiritual aspect and a future physical aspect. So when one encounters the word **basileia**, one must examine the context to determine whether **kingdom** refers to the spiritual, now aspect, the future, physical aspect or sometimes both. Thus one can see how the definitions (**#1**) and (**#3**) sometimes overlap.

TIMING OF THE KINGDOM

Notice also that Jesus claimed that "If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the **Kingdom of God** has come upon you." (Mt 12:28) Jesus the One prophesied to be King on David's throne (See the Word of God through Nathan to King David = 2Sa 7:12, 13, 14, 15, 16-fulfilled in part in Solomon but completely fulfilled only in Jesus the Messiah, greater Son of David, Mt 1:1) was in hearer's midst and His exercising of supernatural power was clear evidence that the promised King had come (albeit as discussed the Jews failed to recognize and accept Messiah's rule). Remember also the principle that where the King was present, His Kingdom was also present, independent of whether the Jews recognized His rule or not! In Luke 17:21 Jesus declared "Behold, the **Kingdom of God** is in your midst" (In one sense it was because Jesus was the rightful Heir to the throne of David and where the King is present, so is His Kingdom!) In another reference to the timing of the Kingdom, Jesus said "the **Kingdom of God** is at hand (Gk = eggizo = in context near in time - Mk 1:15, cp Mt 3:2, 4:17, Lk 10:11)

In summary, **basileia** or **kingdom** in many NT uses can have a temporal component (see more discussion below by **W. E. Vine** on the past, present and future aspects) as well as a spiritual and/or physical component depending on the context.

In Revelation 1:6 and Rev 5:10, "the redeemed are referred to as **kingdom**, because they are the people over whom God reigns, and also because they will share His glorious reign. There are of the sphere of salvation—those over whom Christ rules—as well as its future millennial and eternal glory.

Only those who "receive the kingdom of God like a child" (Mark 10:15) or accept God's rule here and now, enter into the realm of its blessings in the future.

(2) Basileia can sometimes refer to the land, the realm or the territory over which a king rules.(Mt 4.8, Mt 12:25, 26, 24:7, Mk 3:24, 6:23, 13:8, Lk 11:17, 18, 21:10)

(3) As discussed under #1 basileia or kingdom can refer to the spiritual rule of God in the hearts of people now (Ro 14.17) and ultimately to be fulfilled in the Messianic reign of Christ on earth reign, kingdom (Lk 1.33).

Detzler - The Greek word for **king** in the New Testament is **basileus**, and the word for **kingdom** is **basileia**. These are reflected in such English words as the man's name **Basil**, and in the term **basilica** (which literally means an assembly hall or royal hall). (New Testament Words in Today's Language)

NASB Topical index - The biblical words for **kingdom** primarily signify the abstract idea of kingly authority or reign (kingship, e.g., 1 Sa 14:47; 1Ki 2:12. However, since a reign necessarily creates a realm over which it is exercised, the terms are also used for that realm (kingdom, e.g., Mt 4:8; 8:11). They are used both for secular earthly kingdoms and the kingdom related to God and Christ. Although the expression "kingdom of God" is not used in the OT, the idea of the reign of God and His kingdom is frequent (e.g., Ps 22:28; 145:13; Da 2:44).

KINGDOM OF GOD/HEAVEN: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE SPIRITUAL, PHYSICAL

Vanhoozer offers some helpful summary thoughts on the **kingdom** writing that "When asked when the kingdom of God is coming, Jesus replies that it is already **"among you"** (Lk 17:21+)... at the Last Supper he looked forward to drinking new wine with his disciples "in the kingdom of God" (Mk 14:25). This tension between the now and the not yet is illustrated by the traditional form of the Lord's Prayer, which bids us pray **"Your kingdom come"** and yet concludes with the declaration **"Yours is the kingdom."** (Mt 6:10+, Mt 6:13+) In a series of parables in Mark 4 and Matthew 13, Jesus explains more about the **mystery of the kingdom of God**" (Mk 4:11KJV+). It is not visible to all, but only to those with God-given eyes to see. It is like **seed** that germinates in some soil but not in others (Mk 4:3-8+), like a seed growing secretly away from human observation (Mk 4:26, 27, 28, 29+), like the tiny mustard seed that is now so small as to be unnoticed but will one day be a great tree (Mk 4:30, 31, 32+), like the tiny pinch of yeast that will gradually penetrate the whole lump of dough (Mt 13:33+). So God has already established His rule in the coming of Jesus, yet it still has to work itself out to its full potential. In the meantime (the Kingdom of God/Heaven) remains a secret, a paradox, rejected by some, but for others the one great treasure for which they will sell all they have (Mt 13:44, 45, 46+). **(Ed: This truth begs the question dear reader - have you received the great treasure of salvation by placing your faith in Jesus, the King of kings?)** ([Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible - Kevin J. Vanhoozer](#))

W E Vine summarizes the **past, present and future** aspects of the **Kingdom of God/Heaven** as well as alluding to the **spiritual and physical** aspects of the Kingdom (this discussion has some repetition) ...

The **Kingdom of God** is the sphere of God's rule (Ps 22:28; 145:13; Da 4:25; Lk 1:52; Ro 13:1, 2) Since, however, this earth is the scene of universal rebellion against God (Lk 4:5, 6; 1Jn 5:19) the Kingdom of God is the sphere in which, at any given time, His rule is acknowledged. **(Ed: Spiritual aspect)**

God has not relinquished His sovereignty in the face of rebellion, demonic and human, but has declared His purpose to establish it (Da 2:44-note; Da 7:14-note; 1Cor 15:24, 25). In the meantime, seeking willing obedience, God gave His law to a nation (Israel) and appointed kings (Saul, David, Solomon, etc) to administer **His Kingdom** over Israel (1Chr 28:5). Israel, however, though declaring still a nominal allegiance **(Ed: To Jehovah as their true King, Whom they in effect rejected when they ask for human kings like the pagan nations - 1Sa 8:7, 10:19, 12:12, but even before their rejection, Jacob had prophesied that the true King, Messiah from the lineage of the tribe of Judah, would one day come and all peoples would obey Him - Genesis 49:10 where "scepter" symbolizes kingship and "Shiloh" means something like "Rest Giver" = Messiah, cp parallel prophecy in Nu 24:17 where Messiah = a "Star" and a "Scepter")** shared in the common rebellion (e.g., Isa 1:2-4-note) and, after they had rejected the Son of God **(Ed: The rightful Heir to the Throne of David was openly rejected by the Jews as their King [Jn 19:15b, compare Jn 1:11, 12, 13, Mt 21:33-43]; See Tony Garland's summary on [Presentation and Rejection of Messiah](#) and [Stages in Rejection of Jesus](#)), and were "cast away," (see Ro 11:1KJV-note, Ro 11:2KJV-note) **(Ed: The Jews were temporarily set aside "until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in" to the Kingdom - Ro 11:15KJV-note, Ro 11:20-note, Ro 11:25-note. After the fulness comes in the future, "The Deliverer [King Jesus] will return [Second Coming] and "remove ungodliness from Jacob." [Ro 11:26-note, see Zech 13:8,9 in parallel with Zech 12:10] at which time these spiritually regenerate Jews will enter into the Kingdom of God/Heaven, which at that time will be the beginning of Messiah's Millennial Kingdom!).** Henceforth God calls upon men everywhere, without distinction of race or nationality, to submit voluntarily to His rule **(Ed: That is, to believe in Christ and thus to enter the Kingdom of God, Jn 3:3, 5, cp Mt 19:23, 24).** Thus the Kingdom is said to be 'in mystery' now (Mk 4:11 - This refers to the "spiritual" aspect of the Kingdom of God/Heaven), that is, it does not come within the range of the natural powers of observation (Lk 17:20), but is spiritually discerned, **(Ed: More accurately "it is spiritually entered" in Jn 3:3 and spiritually discerned in 1Co 2:14).** When, hereafter, God asserts His rule universally, then the Kingdom will be in glory, that is, it will be manifest to all **(Ed: Here Vine is alluding to the future aspect of the Kingdom of God/Heaven, that time when Messiah rules as King of kings over the entire earth, which will be filled with His glory and over all the people who live on the earth at that time, the time of His glorious 1000 Year reign - click to read the description of His coming Kingdom) (Mt 25:31-34; Php 2:9-11; 2Ti 4:1, 2Ti 4:18)****

Thus, speaking generally, references to the **Kingdom** fall into two classes, the first, in which it is viewed as **present** and involving suffering for those who enter it, 2Th. 1:5; the second, in which it is viewed as **future** and is associated with reward (Mt 25:34), and glory (Mt 13:43, Acts 14:22). (**Ed:** Others have referred to the temporal aspects of the kingdom of God as "*already*" [present] and "*not yet*" [future] dimensions of the kingdom of God implying that God's divine power is at work in the present and is also a process that is moving toward its future fulfillment or completion.)

WHERE THE KING IS, THERE IS THE KINGDOM

The fundamental principle of the Kingdom is declared in the words of the Lord spoken in the midst of a company of Pharisees, "the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you," Luke 17:21, that is, **where the King is, there is the Kingdom**. Thus at the present time and so far as this earth is concerned, where the King is and where His rule is acknowledged, is, first, in the heart of the individual believer (Acts 4:19; Eph 3:17-note; 1Pet 3:15-note) and then in the churches of God (1Cor 12:3, 5, 11; 14:37; cp. Col 1:27-note).

Now, the King and His rule being refused, those who enter the **Kingdom of God** are brought into conflict with all who disown its allegiance, as well as with the desire for ease, and the dislike of suffering and unpopularity, natural to all. On the other hand, subjects of the Kingdom are the objects of the care of God, (Mt 6:33-note), and of the rejected King, (Heb. 13:5-note).

Entrance into the Kingdom of God is by the new birth (Mt 18:3; Jn 3:5), for nothing that a man may be by nature or can attain to by any form of self-culture, avails in the spiritual realm. And as the new nature, received in the new birth, is made evident by obedience, it is further said that only such as do the will of God shall enter into His Kingdom (Mt 7:21-note), where, however, the context shows that the reference is to the future (**Ed:** That is the Kingdom has both **present** and **future** components) (2Pe 1:10, 11-note. 1Cor 6:9, 10; Gal 5:21-note; Eph. 5:5-note)... Concerning the present, a man is of the **Kingdom of God** as not shown in the punctilious observance of ordinances, which are external and material, but in the deeper matters of the heart, which are spiritual and essential, viz., 'righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit' (See Ro 14:17-note) ([Online reference](#))

The topic **Kingdom of God** (synonymous term = **Kingdom of Heaven**) can be confusing as the interpretation depends on the context in which it is used - It can mean a spiritual Kingdom, a Millennial Kingdom or a Kingdom in the New Heaven and New Earth. Many who espouse the teaching of [replacement theology or supersessionism](#) do not accept a literal earthly **Kingdom of God**. I am firmly convinced (from Scripture) that there will be a literal earthly **Kingdom of God** ruled by the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ. For that reason I have several detailed discussions on the **Kingdom of God** in the commentaries on the following verses...

- Luke 17:20-21-commentary
- Luke 19:11ff-commentary
- Acts 1:6-commentary
- Matthew 5:3 - commentary

Here is my simplistic summary of the Kingdom of God/Heaven:

THE KINGDOM OF GOD/HEAVEN		
Internal Invisible	In Hearts of Believers	Present Age (Between 1st & 2nd Comings)
External Visible	Literal On earth	Messianic Age (After 2nd Coming)
External Visible	Literal New Earth	Eternal Age (After Christ gives Kingdom to Father)

1. **Internal, Invisible - in hearts of believers only** - in this present age (between Christ's First and Second Comings)

2. **External, Visible - literal earthly Kingdom** - will include both believers ("internal" aspect of Kingdom) and unbelievers - in the next age (After Christ's Second Coming)
3. **External, Visible - literal heavenly Kingdom** - only believers ("internal" aspect of Kingdom) - following age #2 (After Christ gives the Kingdom to His Father - 1Co 15:27+ "For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. 28 When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all."

Basileia - 162x in 154v - Observe that most uses occur in the **Gospels**. Mt 3:2; 4:8, 17, 23; 5:3, 10, 19, 20; 6:10, 33; 7:21; 8:11, 12; 9:35; 10:7; 11:11, 12; 12:25, 26, 28; 13:11, 19, 24, 31, 33, 38, 41, 43, 44, 45, 47, 52; 16:19, 28; 18:1, 3, 4, 23; 19:12, 14, 23, 24; 20:1, 21; 21:31, 43; 22:2; 23:13; 24:7, 14; 25:1, 34; 26:29;**MARK** Mk 1:15; 3:24; 4:11, 26, 30; 6:23; 9:1, 47; 10:14f, 23, 24, 25; 11:10; 12:34; 13:8; 14:25; 15:43;**LUKE** Lk 1:33; 4:5, 43; 6:20; 7:28; 8:1, 10; 9:2, 11, 27, 60, 62; 10:9, 11; 11:2, 17f, 20; 12:31, 32; 13:18, 20, 28, 29; 14:15; 16:16; 17:20, 21; 18:16, 17, 24, 25, 29; 19:11, 12, 15; 21:10, 31; 22:16, 18, 29, 30; 23:42, 51; **JOHN** Jn 3:3, 5; 18:36 **ACTS** Acts 1:3, 6; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31; **Pauline epistles** - Ro 14:17; 1Cor 4:20; 6:9, 10; 15:24, 50; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5; Col 1:13; 4:11; 1Th 2:12; 2Th 1:5; 2Ti 4:1, 18; **Other uses** - Heb 1:8; 11:33; 12:28; Jas 2:5; 2 Pet 1:11; Rev 1:6, 9; 5:10; 11:15; 12:10; 16:10; 17:12, 17, 18.

Basileia - Used 437 times in the **non-apocryphal Septuagint**: Ge 10:10; 14:1; 20:9; Nu 21:18; 24:7; 32:33; Deut 3:4, 10, 13, 21; 28:25; Josh 11:10; 13:12, 21, 27, 30f; 1Sa 10:16, 18; 11:14; 13:13f; 15:28; 20:31; 24:20; 28:17; 2 Sam 3:10, 28; 5:12; 7:12, 16; 12:26; 16:3, 8; 19:9; 1Kgs 1:46; 2:12, 15, 22, 35; 4:20; 9:5; 10:20; 11:11, 13f, 31, 34f; 12:21, 24, 26; 16:28; 18:10; 2Kgs 11:1; 14:5; 19:15, 19; 24:12; 25:1, 27; 1 Chr 4:23; 10:14; 11:10; 12:23; 14:2; 16:20; 17:11, 14; 22:10; 26:31; 28:5, 7; 29:30; 2 Chr 1:1; 2:1, 12; 3:2; 7:18; 8:6, 9; 9:19; 11:1, 17; 12:1f, 8; 13:1, 5, 8; 15:10, 19; 16:1, 12f; 17:5, 7, 10; 20:6, 29f; 21:3ff; 22:9f; 23:20; 25:3; 26:21; 29:3, 19, 21; 32:15; 33:13; 34:3, 8; 35:19; 36:20, 22f; Ezra 1:1f; 4:5f, 24; 6:15; 7:1, 13, 23; 8:1; Neh 9:22, 35; 12:22; Esther 1:4, 19f, 22; 2:3, 16, 18; 3:6ff, 13; 4:11, 13; 5:1, 3, 11; 7:2; 8:5, 12f; 9:4, 16, 20; 10:1ff; Ps 22:28; 45:6; 46:6; 68:32; 79:6; 102:22; 103:19; 105:13; 135:11; 145:11ff; Eccl 4:14; Isa 1:1; 7:8; 9:7; 17:3; 23:17; 37:16, 20; 47:5; 62:3; Jer 1:2, 10, 15; 15:4; 18:7, 9; 24:9; 25:26; 27:8; 28:8; 34:17; 51:27, 59; 52:4; Ezek 17:13f; 37:22; Dan 1:1, 3, 20f; 2:1, 37, 39ff, 44; 3:30; 4:1, 3f, 17f, 25ff, 29ff, 34, 36; 5:7, 11, 16, 18, 20f, 26, 28f, 31; 6:1, 3f, 7, 26, 28; 7:14, 17f, 22ff, 27; 8:1, 23; 9:1f, 26; 10:13; 11:2, 4ff, 9, 17, 20f; Hos 1:4; Amos 6:2; 7:13; 9:8; Obad 1:21; Mic 4:8; Nah 3:5.

Here are a few OT uses of **basileia**...

Psalm 22:28-[note](#) For the **kingdom** (basileia) is the LORD'S And He rules over the nations.

Psalm 45:6-[note](#) Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your **kingdom** (basileia)

Psalm 68:32-note Sing to God, O **kingdoms** of the earth, Sing praises to the Lord, Selah.

Psalm 79:6-[note](#) Pour out Your wrath upon the nations which do not know You, And upon the **kingdoms** (basileia) which do not call upon Your name.

Psalm 145:11, 12-[note](#) They shall speak of the glory of Your **kingdom** (basileia) And talk of Your power; 12 To make known to the sons of men Your mighty acts And the glory of the majesty of Your kingdom.

Psalm 145:13-[note](#) Your **kingdom** (basileia) is an everlasting **kingdom** (basileia) , And Your dominion endures throughout all generations.

Isaiah 37:20 "Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand that all the **kingdoms** of the earth may know that You alone, LORD, are God." (Ed: And all God's people say "Amen!")

Daniel 2:44-note "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a **kingdom** which will never be destroyed, and that **kingdom** will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these **kingdoms**, but it will itself endure forever.

Comment: When the **Stone** (Da 2:34, 35-note) strikes the statue representative of the major world empires that have interacted throughout history with Israel, God will remove all vestiges of Gentile world powers and replace them with the **Kingdom of Messiah** (Millennial Kingdom; see also [Overview of Doctrine of Millennium including various views](#)), eg see [Why Must there be a Millennial Kingdom?](#) followed by the New Heavens and the New Earth.

Below are a selected uses of **basileia** in the **New Testament**...

Repent, (present imperative = see related noun **metanoia**) for the **kingdom** of heaven is at hand. (Mt 3:2+)

Comment: The first NT use of **basileia** is very instructive for it defines how an unbeliever gains entrance into the **Kingdom of heaven** (which most agree is synonymous with the phrase "kingdom of God" used in the other Gospels). There is a major attack on the Gospel today which states that repentance is not part of the work of the Spirit in bringing about salvation. To be sure repentance, representing a change of mind leading to a change of conduct, does not arise from within man apart from a work of God, Who grants repentance as an act of mercy (see Acts 3:26 [turning from ~ "repentance", cp Jer 18:11, 23:14, 24:7, 35:15, 36:3, Ezek 18:23, Jonah 3:10], Acts 5:31+, Acts 11:18+, Acts 26:20+, 2Co 7:10+, Ro 2:4+, 2Ti 2:25+).

From that time Jesus began to preach and say, '**Repent**, for the **kingdom** of heaven is at hand.'" (Mt 4:17+)

Comment: Jesus message is identical to John the Baptist's message in Mt 3:2+. Jesus later emphasized "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:32+) Clearly Jesus preached repentance and before He departed, He charged His apostles to also preach repentance (Luke 24:47+). In short, repentance is an intrinsic aspect of genuine, Biblical conversion and the modern church does great harm by not teaching this truth. (for much more discussion of this important truth see H A Ironside's booklet entitled "**Except Ye Repent**") **Woe to those who teach that repentance is not to be preached as part of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!**

KJV Bible Commentary: Jesus, as the Messiah, is not calling on His listeners to prepare for the coming of the kingdom but rather announces that the kingdom is here. In a very real sense the first coming of the King is an honest, straightforward presentation of the kingdom promised by the Old Testament prophets to the people of Israel. Thus, we find unusual miracles **attending** Jesus' presentation of this kingdom: incurable diseases and incomprehensible afflictions are cured by the power of His touch and His word. The kingdom blessings promised in Isaiah 35:5-6 to be fulfilled in a future kingdom, here become the credentials of the King in His first coming.

Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel (**euaggelion** = Good News) of the **kingdom**, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. (Mt 4:23+, cp Mt 9:35+)

Comment: This is the first mention of "gospel" in the NT. It is significant that this beginning of the gospel looks forward to the future kingdom when Christ will finally be acknowledged as King of kings (see Php 2:9, 10, 11+, Rev 1:7[±]). Compare this with the final mention of "gospel" (Rev 14:6,7[±]), which looks back to the creation. The gospel or good news of Christ thus embraces all aspects--past, present, future--of His great work, from creation to consummation.

And after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the **kingdom** of God is at hand; **repent** and **believe** (both present imperative) in the Gospel." (Mk 1:14-15)

BKC: This concept (kingdom of God/kingdom of Heaven) was familiar to the Jews of Jesus' day. In light of Old Testament prophecy (cf. 2Sa 7:8-17; Isa 11:1-9; 24:23; Jer. 23:4-6; Micah 4:6-7; Zech 9:9-10; 14:9) they were expecting a future Messianic (Davidic) Kingdom to be established on earth (cf. Mt 20:21; Mk 10:37; 11:10; 12:35-37; 15:43; Lk 1:31-33; 2:25, 38; Acts 1:6). So Jesus did not have to arouse interest in His message. His hearers naturally understood His reference to the **kingdom of God** to be the long-awaited Messianic Kingdom predicted in the Old Testament. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Mt 5:10+)

Comment: The kingdom of heaven is the glorious promised prize - in the present and in the future! No crown without a cross!

Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Mt 5:19+)

MacArthur Comments: The consequence of practicing or teaching disobedience of any of God's Word is to be called least in the kingdom of heaven (Jas 2:10+). Determining rank in the kingdom of heaven is

entirely God's prerogative (cf. Mt 20:23), and Jesus declares that He will hold those in lowest esteem who hold His Word in low esteem. There is no impunity for believers who disobey, discredit, or belittle God's law (see 2Co 5:10+). That Jesus does not refer to loss of salvation is clear from the fact that, though offenders will be called **least**, they will still be in the **kingdom of heaven**. The positive result is that whoever keeps and teaches God's Word, he shall be called **great** in the **kingdom of heaven**. ([MacArthur Study Bible](#).)

For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the **kingdom** of heaven. (Mt 5:20+)

Comment: God does not "grade on a curve" (meaning all grades are relative to the best score in the class) but demands **perfect** (100%) righteousness, found only in Christ Jesus and only credited to the spiritual account of those who believe in Christ "the Lord our righteousness" (Jer 23:5,6 1Cor 1:30+, 2Co 5:21+, Php 3:9+). Notice that the phrase "enter the kingdom of heaven" is tantamount to conversion or salvation (cp Jn 3:5, 6+)

Thy kingdom **come** (a command). Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Mt 6:10+)

Comment: The phrase **Thy kingdom come** refers to the eschatological nature of this prayer. Notice that the kingdom is to be prayed for, implying that it has not already arrived. The kingdom represents the full and effective reign of God through the mediatorial office of the Messiah. The disciples were not to think of their own convenience as their foremost expression in prayer, but the full and quick realization of the effective rule of God on earth in the hearts of men. That rule is realized through the regenerating process of the new birth in the lives of individuals. It will reach its pinnacle when the last enemy (sin and death, 1Cor 15:24-28) has been destroyed at the Lord's return. ([KJV, The King James Study Bible, Full-Color Edition](#))

Hagner comments: This refers to the eschatological rule of God (cf. Harner) expected and longed for by the Jewish people (cf. the central petition of the Qaddish, above v 9). It involves the consummation of God's purposes in history, the fulfillment of the prophetic pictures of future bliss (cf. Acts 1:6). (Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 1-13)

Hermeneia Commentary: The eschatological interpretation of the prayer has its strongest pillar. In Jewish prayers one frequently praises and prays for God's reign. Indeed, it is amazing how often God's future reign is the object of petitions by the rabbis, for whom ordinarily the present aspect of God's rule is more likely to be in the foreground.

Barclay Newman: The reference is to the final establishment of God's reign on earth. ([The United Bible Societies' New Testament Handbook Series - Matthew](#))

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does (present tense = as one's lifestyle) the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. (Mt 7:21+)

Comment: Jesus is not saying "doing" works gets us into heaven. He is saying that one who does works (direction, not perfection) in keeping with the will of God demonstrates by those works that he or she is a genuine new creature in Christ. We are saved by faith alone in Christ alone, but the faith that genuinely saves is not alone but brings forth fruit in keeping with repentance.

I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the **kingdom** of heaven 12 but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Mt 8:11, 12)

Comment: In this passage clearly kingdom refers to a future (eschatological) event. Jesus has just commended the great faith of the Roman centurion, a Gentile, who came seeking healing for his servant. The "children of the kingdom," in this instance, refers to UNREPENTANT JEWS who thought that their ancestry automatically entitled them to the kingdom of God (see John 8:31-59). In reality, however, these were false children of the kingdom (Mt 7:21-23; 13:38; Lk 13:22-30). Those who come "from the east and west" are Gentiles who exercise personal faith in Jesus Christ. The Jews thought that they were assured of special favor by God, but the Lord reminded them that they could be "last" in the kingdom of God while those who thought themselves "last," such as publicans and prostitutes, would be "first" if they exercised faith in Him (Mt 21:31). Furthermore, the UNREPENTANT JEWS would be "cast out" because of their hypocritical claim that they were the children and followers of Abraham. Abraham was the father of the faithful, and although these men were physical descendants, they were not part of the family of faith.

KJV Commentary: Here Christ is referring to the gathering in of the Gentiles through the preaching of the Gospel, culminating in their final gathering at the time of His Second Coming... The children of the **kingdom**, refers to those to whom the **kingdom** really belongs. The natural claim to that kingdom had been given to the Jews. Their reception of Christ as Messiah could potentially have brought in the kingdom, that had been promised by the Old Testament prophets. However, their eventual rejection of the Messiah caused the postponement of a **literal kingdom** on earth.

(Before Jesus spoke the parable of the soils, He explained to His disciples the reason He was beginning to speak in parables) And He answered and said to them (the disciples, Mt 13:10), "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the **kingdom of heaven**, but to them it has not been granted... 19 When anyone hears the word of the **kingdom** and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. (Mt 13:11,19)

Comment: Note that the "language" of the Kingdom is supernatural speak! It cannot be understood by human intellect alone but must be spiritually discerned (see 1Cor 2:7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 - strictly speaking this post-Pentecost verse refers to the indwelling Spirit which had not yet been given to the disciples but is today present in all Christ followers). Notice also that while Jesus' **word of the kingdom** is a "mystery" (**musterion**) to those who have not been granted understanding (e.g., the "natural man" of 1Cor 2:14), it is also a "mystery" which is revealed to those who will enter or who have entered into the Kingdom of heaven/God (those who are saved or who are being saved, for it is "revealed through the Spirit" [1Cor 2:10]). The "**Word of the kingdom**" the **seed** and is the word of God which in context is another way of saying the Gospel, the Good News which one believes and by which one is saved and gains entrance into the Kingdom of God/Heaven.

He (Jesus) presented another parable to them (His disciples), saying, "The **kingdom of heaven** (as discussed this is a Jewish phrase and is equivalent to the "kingdom of God" used in Gospels other than Matthew) is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; 32 and this is smaller than all other seeds; but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants, and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES." (Mt 13:31, 32)

Comment: This parable shows us that the kingdom is both present and future. Today it is with us in seed form, but someday it will be in full bloom. Today the **kingdom** is significant only to the believers, but then it will encompass the whole earth and all that are in it.

And He said to her (see Mt 20:20), "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that in Your **kingdom** these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left." (Mt 20:21)

Comment: In this context, it is clear that the mother of James and John understood Jesus' **kingdom** to have a future fulfillment and that Jesus would sit on His throne as ruler over His Kingdom (**The Millennial Reign of Messiah**).

Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the **kingdom of God** was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the **kingdom of God** is in your midst." (Luke 17:20, 21)

For He (God the Father) delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the **kingdom** of His beloved Son (Col 1:13-note)

Comment: Unbelievers are in the domain of darkness, this present world system ruled by the devil who is over "the **kingdoms (basileia)** of the world... for it has been handed over to" him (Luke 4:5-6, 1Jn 5:19). All who place their faith in Christ are immediately **transferred** (aorist tense, in context = past completed act) from the kingdom of the devil to the Kingdom of the Deliverer (Jesus).

The **Kingdom of Heaven/God** is the sphere in which God and Jesus are acknowledged as King. In this sense the **Kingdom** has a spiritual aspect, a present physical aspect, and a future eternal aspect (beginning with the **millennium**, cf Mt 25:31,34), all of course depending on the context of the passage in which **basileia** is found ([see discussion below](#)). Paul is careful to remind us that the Kingdom of Heaven/God is not in observance of ordinances, external and material, but in the deeper matters of the heart, which are spiritual and essential (Ro 14:17-note)

And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, "The **kingdom** of the world has become the **kingdom** of our Lord, and of His Christ (the Anointed One, the Messiah - see prophecy of His

Kingdom to come in Ps 2:1,2, 7, 8, 9-[see detailed notes by Tony Garland](#), see also Rev 2:7-[note](#)); and He will reign forever and ever." (Revelation 11:15-[note](#))

Comment: This declaration occurs at the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet which chronologically is at the midpoint of the last 7 years known as **Daniel's Seventieth Week** (see Da 9:27-note). This period is often called "The Tribulation" but in fact that name is never applied specifically in Scripture to the entire seven year period. Jesus used the term **Great Tribulation** (Mt 24:21, cp Rev 7:13-[note](#), Rev 7:14-[note](#)) which is the last 3.5 years of that 7 year period, during which the Antichrist assumes his rule (See Jesus' clear warning of the inception of this horrible time - Mt 24:15 = an event which all the world, especially Jews, would be able to identify!) and reign of terror which is directed especially at the Jews (Zech 13:8, 9), which is why it is also called by Jeremiah "the time of Jacob's Trouble" (Jer 30:7,8,9) and by Daniel "the time of great distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued." (Da 12:1-note, compare Da 12:10-note) Careful observation of the events of the Revelation reveals that Seventh Trumpet is also the Third Woe, the time when "the mystery of God is finished" (Rev 10:7-[note](#)) That mystery (which is no longer a "mystery" but is revealed) is the full revelation of the consummation of God's plan (Rev 11:15, Rev 11:17-[note](#)), a plan which the OT prophets foresaw, but never in its fullness as has been revealed in the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge (Jerome Smith): This seventh trumpet is the last of this series of seven, but not the last absolutely, and is not to be confused with the "last trump" of 1Cor 15:52. Chronologically, the trumpet of Mt 24:31 must follow this seventh trumpet of Revelation, for it occurs after the Tribulation, at the open manifestation of Christ's Second Advent (Mt 24:30), which in the book of Revelation is recorded in Rev 19:11-16, which is after the time expressed here. In the book of Revelation the seventh trumpet is never called "last" (Rev. 1:11, 17; 2:8, 19; 15:1. 21:9; 22:13).

Stephen Charnock: The throne of God outlives the dissolution of the world.

MacArthur: The use of the singular term **kingdom of the world** instead of the plural "**kingdoms**" introduces an important truth. All of the world's diverse national, political, social, cultural, linguistic, and religious groups are in reality one kingdom under one king. That king is known in Scripture by many names and titles, including the accuser (Rev. 12:10+), the adversary (1 Pet. 5:8), Beelzebul (Mt. 12:24), Belial (2Cor 6:15), the dragon (Rev. 12:3, 7, 9), the "evil one" (Jn 17:15), the god of this world (2Cor 4:4), the prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:2), the roaring lion (1Pe 5:8), the ruler of the demons (Mark 3:22), the ruler of this world (John 12:31), the serpent of old (Rev. 12:9+; 20:2), the tempter (1Th 3:5), and, most commonly, the devil (Mt 4:1) and Satan (1Ti 5:15). ([MacArthur J. Revelation 1-11](#). and [Revelation 12-22](#). [Mood Excellent conservative commentary](#))

He has made us to be a **kingdom**, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (Rev 1:6-[note](#), compare similar truth in Rev 5:10-[note](#))

Comment: All who believe live in the sphere of God's rule, a kingdom entered by faith in Jesus Christ.

Tony Garland: Whether we are to be "kings and priests" or "a kingdom [of] priests," it is clear that believers will co-rule with Christ during His coming earthly reign (Rev 20:4-6). This future reign will not come to pass until after Antichrist has his time on the world stage and a judgment is made in favor of the saints (Da 7:18, 25-27). Both now and in the future, our function is primarily priestly. That is, we are to minister to God. Here we run into an extremely important distinction which has not been adequately appreciated among many who lead God's people. Our primary responsibility is to minister to God and not to men. Our focus is to be God-ward rather than man-ward. We are to "offer up spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ" (1Pe 2:5). As we take care to minister to God, He will minister to men through us.

Robert Thomas: Though believers are currently viewed as a royal priesthood (1Pe. 2:5, 9; cf. Ex. 19:6), this is only preliminary to the fullness of the way they will function alongside Christ in the Millennial Kingdom.

Then (after the 1000 year reign of Christ in His **millennial kingdom**) comes the end, when He (Christ) delivers up the **kingdom** to the God and Father, when He (Christ) has abolished all rule and all authority and power. (1Co 15:24)

Comment: Rev 20:7-9 (see notes [20:27](#), [20:8](#), [20:10](#)) which represents the final insurrection against God at the end of the 1000 year reign and is the time when Christ will abolish "all rule and authority and power"

that is opposed to God.

For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the **kingdom** of Christ and God. (Eph 5:5)

Comment: Paul teaches here and in parallel passages (1Cor 6:9,10, Gal 5:21) that the one who practices sin as their general lifestyle is not saved and has no inheritance in the future kingdom. BDAG writes that these three parallel passages "show that for Paul the kingdom is essentially future, since Christians await the complete victory of the spirit over the flesh."

Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose (the language of "election") the poor of this world to be rich in faith (cp Mt 5:3) and heirs of the **kingdom** which He promised to those who love Him? (James 2:5)

MacArthur: Here James intends the **kingdom** in its present sense of the sphere of salvation—those over whom Christ rules—as well as its future millennial and eternal glory.

Rene Pache has an interesting analysis of the progression of the **Kingdom of God** throughout Scripture. Pache writes that...

The progression of the "**kingdom of God**" is gradually revealed. What is this kingdom in principle if it is not the sphere where God reigns? In the Scriptures we can trace for it seven distinct steps:

1. Paradise... (Ge 1:31)
2. The theocracy of Israel...
3. The Kingdom announced by the prophets... (1Sa 7:8; Isa. 11:1-16)
4. The Kingdom offered and rejected in the Gospels... (Mt 4:17; Lk 17:21;10:9-11)
5. The Kingdom hidden in the heart... (Jn 3:3-5; Col 1:13)
6. The thousand year reign... (Rev. 20:1-10+)
7. The eternal Kingdom in heaven... (2Ti 4:18; 2Pe 1:10-11). (The Inspiration & Authority of Scripture (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Company, 1969), 106)

The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the **poor in spirit**. Because they don't deserve it, God gives it to them as a free gift! They are heirs of the "kingdom of heaven", which is a kingdom of grace here and now and a kingdom of glory and grace in the hereafter.

Alexander Maclaren writes that

The '**kingdom of heaven**' is the rule of God through Christ. It is present wherever wills bow to Him. It is future, as to complete realization, in the heaven from which it comes, and to which, like its King, it belongs even while on earth. Obviously, its subjects can only be those who feel their dependence, and in **poverty of spirit** have cast off self-will and self-reliance. '**Theirs is the kingdom**' does not mean 'they shall rule,' but 'of them shall be its subjects.' True, they shall rule in the perfected form of it; but the first, and in a real sense the only, blessedness is to obey God; and that blessedness can only come when we have learned poverty of spirit, because we see ourselves as in need of all things. (entire sermon)

D Martyn Lloyd-Jones explains the **kingdom of heaven** by noting that..

You will find certain people saying that there is a difference between the '**kingdom of heaven**' and the '**kingdom of God**'; but my difficulty is to know what the difference is. Why does Matthew talk about the kingdom of heaven rather than the kingdom of God? Surely the answer is that he was writing primarily for the Jews, and to the Jews, and his chief object, perhaps, was to correct the Jewish conception of the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. They had got into this materialistic way of looking at the kingdom; they were thinking of it **politically and in a military sense**, and our Lord's whole object here is to show that **His kingdom is primarily a spiritual one**. In other words He says to them,

'You must not think of this kingdom primarily as anything earthly. It is a kingdom in the heavens, which is certainly going to affect the earth in many different ways, but it is essentially spiritual. It belongs to the heavenly rather than to the earthly and human sphere.'

What is this kingdom, then? It means, in its essence, Christ's rule or the sphere and realm in which He is reigning. It can be considered in three ways as follows. Many times when He was here in the days of His flesh

our Lord said that the kingdom of heaven was already present. Wherever He was present and exercising authority, the **kingdom of heaven** was there. You remember how on one occasion, when they charged Him with casting out devils by the power of Beelzebul, He showed them the utter folly of that, and then went on to say, 'If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the **kingdom of God** is come unto you' (Matt 12:28). Here is the **kingdom of God**. His authority, His reign was actually in practice. Then there is His phrase when He said to the Pharisees, 'the kingdom of God is within you, or, 'the kingdom of God is among you' ("is in your midst" Luke 17:21). It was as though He were saying,

'It is being manifested in your midst. Don't say "look here" or "look there". Get rid of this materialistic view. I am here amongst you; I am doing things. It is here.'

Wherever the reign of Christ is being manifested, the kingdom of God is there. And when He sent out His disciples to preach, He told them to tell the cities which received them not, 'Be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.' (Luke 10:9, 11, of Luke 19:11, 21:31)

It means that; **but it also means that the kingdom of God is present at this moment in all who are true believers...** In writing to the Colossians he gives thanks to the Father 'who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the **kingdom** of his dear Son' (Col 1:13-note). The 'kingdom of his dear Son' is 'the kingdom of God, it is 'the kingdom of heaven', it is this new kingdom into which we have entered. Or, again, in his letter to the Philippians he says, 'Our conversation is in heaven,' or, 'Our citizenship is in heaven.' We are here on earth, we obey the powers that be, we live our lives in this way. Yes; but 'our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour' (Php 3:20-note). We who recognize Christ as our Lord, and in whose lives He is reigning and ruling at this moment, are in the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of heaven is in us. We have been translated into the 'kingdom of his dear Son'; we have become a 'kingdom of priests. (cf 1Pe 2:9-10-notes 1 Peter 2:9; 2:10, [Revelation 1:6, 5:10](#))

The third and last way of looking at the kingdom is this There is a sense in which it is yet to come.

**It has come;
it is coming;
it is to come.**

It was here when He was exercising authority; it is here in us now; and yet it is to come. It will come when this rule and reign of Christ will be established over the whole world even in a physical and material sense (The **Millennial Kingdom**). The day is coming when the kingdoms of this world will have become 'the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ (Rev 11:15), when...

**Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.**

(Play **Isaac Watt's** precious hymn - [Jesus Shall Reign](#) sing it out unto the Lord)

It will then have come, completely and entirely, and everything will be under His dominion and sway. Evil and Satan will be entirely removed; there will be 'new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness' (2Pe 3:13-note), and then the **kingdom of heaven** will have come in that material way. The **spiritual** and the **material** will become one in a sense, and all things will be subject to His sway, that 'at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' (Php 2:10,11 -note). (Lloyd-Jones, D. M. [Studies in the Sermon on the Mount](#)) (Bolding added)

A T Robertson wrote that "**The kingdom of heaven**" here means the reign of God in the heart and life. This is the *summum bonum* and is what matters most. (Word Pictures in the New Testament)

MacArthur observes that what Jesus declared in this opening beatitude...

was shocking; it was unexpected and unacceptable. It was inconceivable to them (the primarily Jewish audience) that, as God's (chosen) people, they had anything to do to inherit God's kingdom but simply wait for and accept it. The Messiah was their Messiah, the King was their King, the Savior was their Savior, the promise was their promise. Every Jew was destined for the kingdom, and every Gentile was excluded, except for a token handful of proselytes. That was the common Jewish thinking of the day, which John totally shattered. ([MacArthur, J: Romans 1-8. Moody](#))

Pritchard goes on to add...

God wants rejects for His family. He wants rejects who see their failure and run to Him for help. To the spiritually bankrupt, Jesus opens the door of the **Kingdom** and says,

“Come right in. This place was made for you.”

That explains why this is the first Beatitude. In giving this simple truth, Jesus has shown us the way of salvation. Blessed as the poor in the spirit, for they shall be saved. But cursed are the proud, for they shall be condemned.

The world says,

Blessed are the strong, for they shall rule the earth.

Blessed are the mighty, for they shall rise to power.

Blessed are the rich, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are the influential, for they shall be favored.

Blessed are the popular, for they shall be loved.

Blessed are the gifted, for they shall be followed.

Blessed are the beautiful, for they shall be admired.

Jesus says,

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

It is no mistake that “**poor in spirit**” comes first. This is the first and fundamental quality of the spiritual life. This is where discipleship begins. This is the key that unlocks the door of heaven. ([Matthew 5:1-3 The Making of a Disciple](#)) (Bolding added)

See also related discussion on **the Kingdom of Heaven** a phrase which is found 32x in 31 verses in the **NAS** - Mt 3:2; 4:17; 5:3, 10, 19f; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:11f; 13:11, 24, 31, 33, 44f, 47, 52; 16:19; 18:1, 3f, 23; 19:12, 14, 23; 20:1; 22:2; 23:13; 25:1)

Kingdom of God - is found 66x in 55v in the **NAS** -

Mt 12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43; Mark 1:15; 4:11, 26, 30; 9:1, 47; 10:14f, 23ff; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43; Luke 4:43; 6:20; 7:28; 8:1, 10; 9:2, 11, 27, 60, 62; 10:9, 11; 11:20; 13:18, 20, 28f; 14:15; 16:16; 17:20f; 18:16f, 24f, 29; 19:11; 21:31; 22:16, 18; 23:51; John 3:3, 5; Acts 1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 28:23, 31; Ro 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20; 6:9f; 15:50; Gal 5:21; Col 4:11; 2 Th 1:5.

Real Riches...

An artist searching for a man to model as the prodigal son saw a beggar in the street and asked him to come to his studio and pose for him, promising to pay him. At the appointed time the man appeared, neatly shaven and all dressed up. "Who are you?" asked the artist. "I am the beggar," answered the man. "I thought I'd get cleaned up before I got painted." "I can't use you as you are now," said the artist, and dismissed him.

All who come to Jesus for salvation must come just as they are. Simple trust in Christ—with no claim of their own merits—that's what God is looking for. This attitude is also a key to growth in grace and a life of useful service. After we are saved, we may begin to think that we must clean ourselves up in order to prove ourselves worthy. Although we must "work out" our own salvation, pride and conceit blind us to the truth that it is God who works in us "both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil 2:12-note; Phil 2:12-note).

Paul put it like this: "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD" (1 Cor. 1:31). Our part is to yield to His working in us.

Continued spiritual progress requires that we honestly recognize our continual spiritual poverty. Although we are saved once and for all, we must maintain that basic sense of need that prompted our initial response to Jesus in order for God's Spirit to remain in control. God can use only those who rely on Him and maintain a prodigal posture throughout all of life. —D. J. De Haan. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

To be rich in God

Pleasing God

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would we rate the condition of our spiritual life? Even though we may desire to please the Lord, our efforts are so inadequate, our motives often selfish, our faithfulness questionable. No matter how much we do, we fall so far short!

Perhaps these thoughts will encourage you: First, remember how God sees us. Because of Christ's work on the cross, we are completely forgiven and perfect in His sight.

But then there's our present love-trust relationship with Christ. Perhaps we see ourselves as a meager "1." We can still please God, though, if our attitude is right. He knows we're not capable of perfect performance, but He expects the right attitude of heart. Jesus didn't say, "Blessed are those who achieve their potential and never make a mistake." He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, ... those who mourn, ... the meek." We may have just made a mess of our life, and there may be painful consequences to pay, but we can still please the Lord if we repent and humbly confess our sin.

Because we are in Christ, we are always a "perfect 10." And that should motivate us whenever we get discouraged over our slow spiritual growth. --M R De Haan II

No condemnation now I dread;
I am my Lord's and He is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine. --Wesley

**On God's grading scale,
we all rate zero without the Perfect One.**

F B Meyer on THE KEY TO THE KINGDOM

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

HAD Salome and her sons remembered this beatitude, they would never have asked Christ to make them sit, one on His right, and the other on His left in His kingdom. They would have seen that it was not for Christ to give thrones by an act of His royal prerogative, but that places of power were conditioned by the preparation of heart in those who aspired to hold them. The throne is given to those for whom it is prepared; but they must previously have been prepared, and the preparation of heart involves the poverty in spirit from which the golden ladder of beatitudes climbs upward to blessedness.

Earthly thrones are generally built with steps up to them; the remarkable thing about the thrones of the eternal kingdom is that the steps are all down to them. We must descend if we would reign, stoop if we would rise, gird ourselves to wash the feet of the disciples as a common slave in order to share the royalty of our Divine Master. F. B. Meyer. Blessed Are Ye.

F B Meyer on THE PASSIVE SIDE OF THE BLESSED LIFE (Matt. 5:1-12.)

Let us study our Lord's ideal of character with the prayer that He would graciously repeat it in us, and that He would be in us that which He commends; for it is only as He gives us Himself in all the fulness of His perfected manhood that we can apprehend that for which we were apprehended, and be that which He desires. Do you realize this, my reader? Have you made room for Him, and are you allowing Him to possess you wholly, till He becomes in very deed your life? The vine must abide in the branch, or these fruits will be impossible. "Apart from Him, nothing."

To be **poor in spirit** is to be vacant of self and waiting for God. To have no confidence in the flesh; to be emptied of self-reliance to be conscious of absolute insufficiency; to be thankfully dependent on the life-energy of the living God, that is poverty of spirit; and it has been characteristic of some of the noblest, richest, most glorious natures, that have ever trodden the shores of Time. Happy are they who are conscious of a poverty which only the Divine indwelling can change into wealth, and who are willing to confess that they would rather be in hell and have God, than in heaven and not have Him.

It is, indeed, remarkable that some of the most richly dowered in mental and moral wealth have been most

eager to confess that they were nothing, babes in the world of being, children picking up stones on the shores of boundless oceans, scholars on the lowest form of the school, to whom mature growth and knowledge seemed as yet indefinitely distant.

The way to become **poor in spirit** is to realize that thou hast no power of thine own by which to bless and help others, and to open thy whole being to the incoming and through-flowing of the wealth of the ever-blessed God. It was thus that the Master Himself lived and wrought. Though He was rich in all the Divine plenitude of His Divine nature, "He became poor," "and emptied Himself." In other words, He determined not to speak His own words, follow His own scheme and plan, or work His mighty works in His own might, but became the channel and instrument through which His Father spoke, wrought, and reconciled the world unto Himself. O soul of man, there is no other course for thee and me! Not to draw up the water with which to quench men's thirst from the depths of our own souls, but to be channels through which the river of God may flow, as the water of faraway lakes is brought to the myriads of our great cities. To confess that thou art nothing, but that Christ is all; to know that thou canst do nothing effective to bless men, but that Christ can, and will, do it by thee, that is the secret of this poverty of spirit which unlocks the treasures of the kingdom of heaven.

Many ancient authorities place **meekness** next, and it seems the natural order, for the soul that realizes its own nothingness and helplessness is likely to be meek. The meek are so occupied with their desire that God's grace should pass through them to their fellows that they are prepared to sink all considerations of their own standing and position so long as nothing may interfere with the effect for which they long. Their only thought is to carry their point, to bless men who do not want to be blessed, to vanquish hate by love, and rebellion by loving-kindness and tender mercy. They cannot afford, therefore, to be always standing on their own dignity and defending their own rights. These are willingly cast into the furnace to augment the flame, that the obdurate metal may be fused. "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things; but all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace through the thanksgiving of many may abound to the glory of God."

The way to become meek is to be absorbingly taken up with the love of Christ for me. Be lowly before God, allowing His love to enter and fill thy heart, and thou wilt find it easy to be meek towards man. Thy pride will be driven out by the expulsive power of the new affection. Thou wilt be prepared to accept flouts and sneers, if only thou canst bless and help others; even as God who answers not the blasphemous and hard things that are said against Him, but continues to send His rain and cause His sun to shine to bring men back in penitence to His heart.

It would be a great mistake, however, to suppose that the meek are cowardly, deficient in strength of purpose or force of will: they are among the strongest and most strenuous of men. But they are strong in patience and strenuous in seeking the salvation of others. Let the cause of righteousness, justice, or truth be in question, none are so unbending or stalwart as they. Of the wrongs done to themselves they are disposed to take no count, but they dare not refrain from bearing witness, both by speech and act, whenever the sacred majesty of truth is assailed and in danger of being trampled under foot.

It is natural that the meek should become those that mourn. They feel keenly the evil of sin and the sanctity of sorrow; like Him who sighed as He touched the tongue of the dumb, groaned as lie came to the grave of His friend, and wept as He beheld the city.

Of all mourners, Jeremiah is one of the most plaintive. There is no lyric on the page of history to be compared with the Book of Lamentations:

"Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water." "Mine eye poureth down and ceaseth not." "Mine eye affecteth my soul."

When we turn from the sin of the world, the woes of men, the high-handed wrong of the great, and the abject poverty, sorrow, and anguish of heart of the oppressed, to the sin of our own hearts, the broken ideals, the frustrated purposes, the perpetual contrast between what we would be and what we are, surely our tears must have more salt in them, and cut deeper courses in their flow.

There surely is no need to show the way for mourning such as this. Look above thee and see the Christ stand, so pure, so chaste, so glorious in the light in which He arrays Himself as with a garment, and thou wilt abhor thyself and repent in the dust. Look around thee, and try to estimate the weight of a world's apostasy, the deluge of tears, the hurricane of sighs, that mount up to heaven. "Ah, it's a sair world, my masters!"

But the mourners are not content to shed tears only, they hunger and thirst after righteousness. St. Augustine

says that they hunger and thirst after the Righteous One, " Jesus Christ the Righteous." They were made for Him, and will never be satisfied until they attain to the fruition of all their hopes, to know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings.

Without doubt such is their supreme desire, and as included in this they hunger and thirst for the ultimate triumph of righteousness in their own hearts and in the world of men. Every moan of pain, every consciousness of failure, every temporary triumph of reactionary and destructive forces, elicits the more urgent and persistent prayer, "Thy Kingdom come." The personal coming of the Lord is desired not primarily because the Bride desires the Bridegroom, but because the subject longs for the triumph of that Kingdom which is righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost.

This aspiration is noble. Some hungers are ignoble, despicable, and base. But this is shared in by God Himself, whose Spirit longs with inexpressible desire to bring to an end the present condition of things in the vindication and manifestation of His sons. The angels, as they behold the evil and pain of our earth; the champion of the rights of men, who wrestles with the hydra-headed and protean evil of his age; the wronged womanhood of the harem and the street; the dumb creation groaning and travailing with enormous and cruel wrongs, all join in this blessed hunger and thirst, the aspiration which amounts to a sure and certain hope that cannot be ashamed.

Thou needest not be taught this, for thou hast often felt it. Amid the violet light of a dying summer's day, when soft and lovely music, songs without words, is filling the entranced and listening air, when some heroic stand for liberty is drowned and quenched in blood, when the white robes of the soul have been stained and polluted by some recent fall, then the soul hungers with an intolerable pain, and thirsts, as the wounded hart for water-brooks, that righteousness should set up its blessed and all-conquering reign. **F. B. Meyer. The Directory of the Devout Life**

The 49 NT uses of Makarios...

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

Matthew 5:4 - note "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Matthew 5:5 - note "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

Matthew 5:6 - note "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Matthew 5:7 - note Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Matthew 5:8 - note " "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Matthew 5:9 - note "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Matthew 5:10 - note "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:11 - note "Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me.

Matthew 11:6 "And blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over Me."

Matthew 13:16 "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.

Matthew 16:17 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 24:46 "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.

Luke 1:45-note "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord."

Luke 6:20-note And turning His gaze on His disciples, He began to say, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Luke 6:21-note "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

Luke 6:22-note "Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and cast insults at you, and spurn your name as evil, for

the sake of the Son of Man.

Luke 7:23-note "And blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over Me."

Luke 10:23-note And turning to the disciples, He said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see,

Luke 11:27-note And it came about while He said these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice, and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed." **28** But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it."

Luke 12:37-note "Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them. **38** "Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

Luke 12:43-note "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.

Luke 14:14-note and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." **15** And when one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"

Luke 23:29-note "For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.'

John 13:17 "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

John 20:29 Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

Acts 20:35-note "In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Acts 26:2 "In regard to all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I am about to make my defense before you today;

Romans 4:7 - note "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, And whose sins have been covered.4:8 "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account."

Romans 14:22 - note The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

1 Corinthians 7:40 But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

1 Timothy 1:11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.

1 Timothy 6:15 which He will bring about at the proper time-- He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords;

Titus 2:13 - note looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus;

James 1:12-note Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

James 1:25-note But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.

1 Peter 3:14 - note But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled,

1 Peter 4:14 - note If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

[Revelation 1:3 - note](#) Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

[Revelation 14:13 - note](#) And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."

[Revelation 16:15 - note](#) ("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame.")

[Revelation 19:9 - note](#) And he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

[Revelation 20:6 - note](#) Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

[Revelation 22:7 - note](#) "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."

[Revelation 22:14 -note](#) Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.