

EMBASSY

COLLEGE



TEXTBOOK (ACADEMIC VERSION)

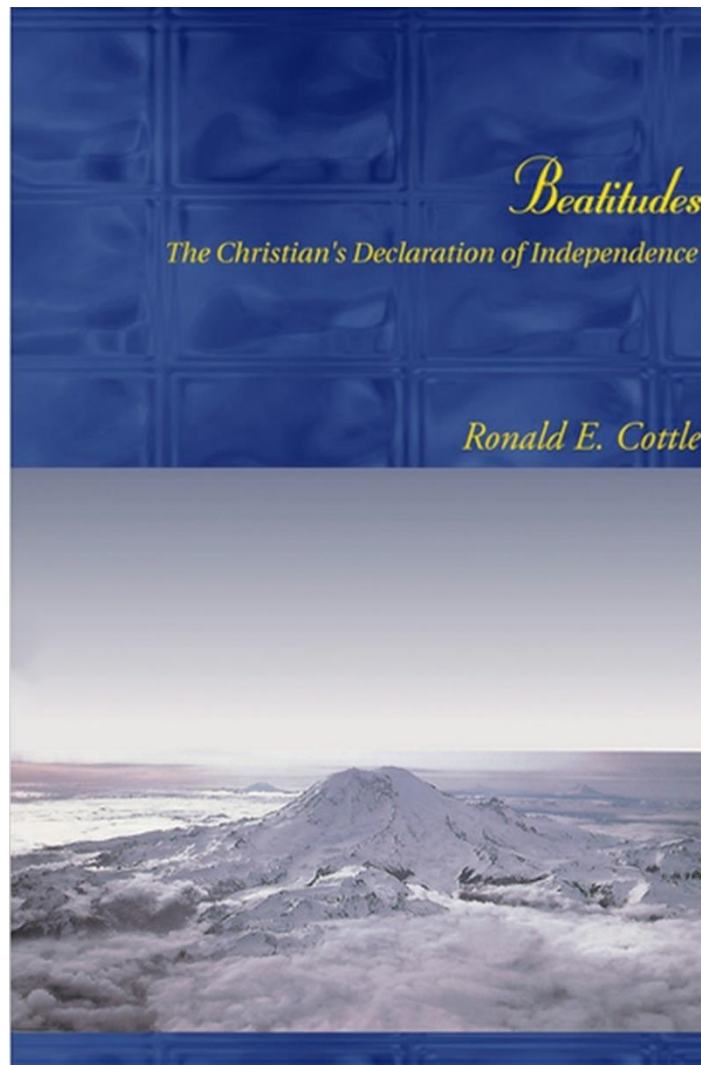
THE BEATITUDES

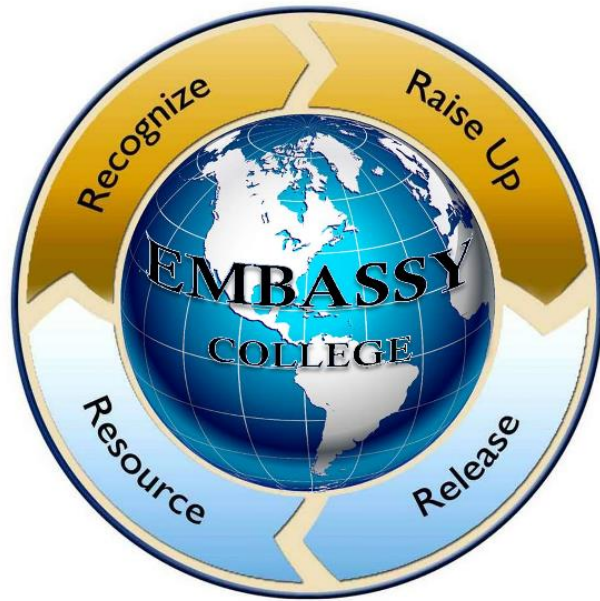
COURSE: THE BEATITUDES OF JESUS (NT303)

DR. RONALD E. COTTLE

THE BEATITUDES: THE CHRISTIAN'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

by Ronald E. Cottle, Ph.D., Ed.D., D.D.





© Copyright 2019

This specially formatted textbook, the Academic Version, is designed for exclusive use by students enrolled in Embassy College. Please do not distribute the PDF file of this book to others. This text is intended as a complement to the course syllabus with the recommendation that the student print this textbook in a two-sided format (duplex) and with a three-hole punch for binding with the syllabus in a notebook folder.

DEDICATION

To Joanne Cottle

She has never wavered in her love and devotion to Christ or to me. For that I am grateful. -

Second Edition - Easter, 1999

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| THE BEATITUDES: THE CHRISTIAN'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE | 1 |
| DEDICATION..... | 3 |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS..... | 4 |
| CHAPTER 1: HOW MANY BEATITUDES ARE THERE?..... | 5 |
| CHAPTER 2: THE CHRISTIAN'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE: MATTHEW 5:1-12..... | 22 |
| CHAPTER 3 BLESSED POVERTY: MATTHEW 5:3..... | 39 |
| CHAPTER 4: BLESSED MOURNERS: MATTHEW 5:4..... | 57 |
| CHAPTER 5: BLESSED MEEKNESS: MATTHEW 5:5..... | 76 |
| CHAPTER 6: BLESSED STARVATION: MATTHEW 5:6 | 90 |
| CHAPTER 7: BLESSED MERCY: MATTHEW 5:7..... | 104 |
| CHAPTER 8: BLESSED PURITY: MATTHEW 5:8..... | 120 |
| CHAPTER 9: BLESSED PEACEMAKERS MATTHEW 5:9 | 134 |
| EPILOGUE: MATTHEW: BACKGROUND INFORMATION | 149 |

CHAPTER 1: HOW MANY BEATITUDES ARE THERE?

Introduction

Matthew 5:1-9 is one of the most revealing passages of Scripture. These verses contain major in-depth revelation. This book, which you hold in your hands, is a study of the Beatitudes of Jesus as they appear in the Gospel of Matthew. We will analyze each statement of the Beatitudes and search out its primary abiding principle. Each of the Beatitudes teaches a major principle that transcends time and culture.

It is wonderful to work with the teachings of Jesus in this section of Scripture. A moment of background is in order. Remember, the spoken language of Jesus was Aramaic. The words of Scripture are Greek, and the words we read in our Bibles are English. Many have undertaken to find an underlying Aramaic text for the Gospels, but these attempts have failed (see epilogue of this book p. 139).

The authors of the Gospels thought in Aramaic-Hebrew and wrote in Greek. We will proceed in our interpretation to inspect the English of the King James Version. Then we will turn to the Greek of Matthew and finally push back beyond Matthew to the Aramaic speech of Jesus. While there is no Aramaic text

available, there are some clues as to what Jesus said in Aramaic. How do we understand his Aramaic speech? The words and thoughts of Jesus come from the Old Testament. Virtually all of the Beatitudes are Old Testament quotations that Jesus gave and interpreted. By looking at the context of these Old Testament passages that appear in the Beatitudes, and interpreting what was being said there, we will arrive at an understanding of what Jesus actually said and meant when he taught these truths.

Seven Beatitudes

These are the Kingdom words of Jesus. They are among the most important words that Jesus taught about the Kingdom while on earth. I believe there are seven Beatitudes beginning with verse 3 and ending with verse 9. Remember that seven is the number of completeness. So here in Matthew, we have the complete expression of what it is to be a person of the Kingdom of God. The Beatitudes are Jesus' own characteristics of a Kingdom person. Verse 10, which is the eighth Beatitude, contains the consequences of Kingdom living in this present evil age. Verses 11 and 12, then, form the result, the culmination of living in the Kingdom. Here is an outline of these verses.

Characteristics of the Kingdom person: vv. 3-9 Consequences of Kingdom living in this present evil age: v. 10 Culmination of living in the Kingdom: vv. 11-12

The Sermon on the Mount is like the Constitution of the United States. While the Constitution tells us how to live as citizens of the United States, the Sermon on the Mount tells us how to live as citizens of the Kingdom of God. The Beatitudes are like the Declaration of Independence. While the Declaration of Independence tells us who we are as Americans, the Beatitudes tell us who we are as Christians. To understand the Beatitudes as the Christian's Declaration of Independence, we must understand them in their context.

What Is the Sermon on the Mount?

The context of the Beatitudes is the Sermon on the Mount. There are several titles that are given to the Sermon on the Mount. It has been called "The Compendium of Christ's Teaching." Every teaching of Jesus found in the Gospel has its kernel in the Sermon on the Mount. It is a prelude of all that Jesus taught. If you master the Sermon on the Mount, you master the teaching of Jesus.

Another title for the Sermon on the Mount is "The Manifesto of the King," given by G. Campbell Morgan. Manifesto has two components: *man*, which

means hand, and *fest*, which means dance. Thus, it has been said that one can see the dancing hand of the King in the Sermon on the Mount.

Another title for this central sermon is "The Magna Carta of the Kingdom." This title was presented by G. K. Chesterton, an Episcopalian scholar and older contemporary of G. Campbell Morgan. The Magna Carta declares what it means to be a citizen of the United Kingdom. It was a charter of English political and civil liberties granted by King John at Runnymede in June, 1215, a document or piece of legislation that serves as a guarantee of basic rights. The Declaration of Independence tells an American what it is to be a citizen of the United States. In the United States of America, the Declaration of Independence is what the Magna Carta is to the British. In like manner, what the Declaration of Independence is to us as Americans, the Beatitudes are to us as Christians. The Declaration of Independence was written by our founding fathers to declare the fact that America was, with the founding of the nation, a self-contained, free republic, independent of other nations for her survival and flourishing.

Jesus, our Founder and King, declared in the Beatitudes that the citizens of his Kingdom, who entered it by faith, are free and independent of the world, the flesh, and the devil for their survival and flourishing. The Sermon on the Mount tells us how to live as believers. It is our Constitution, our code of conduct. The Beatitudes are the prelude or introduction to the Sermon on the

Mount. They tell us who we are in Christ. They are not *attitudes* but *beatitudes*. These two words have nothing in common. An *attitude* is a state of mind, a mental point of view designed to produce a state of being. One may or may not succeed in transferring his "attitudes" into reality. However, a *beatitude* is much more than just a state of mind. It is a state of being that can and will bring about a state of mind. It is a divine declaration or confession of Jesus himself concerning our character as God's children.

How do the Beatitudes relate to the rest of the Sermon on the Mount? They introduce and therefore clarify the rest of Matthew's presentation of Jesus' teaching on the mount. One cannot properly understand the rest of the Sermon on the Mount without first having understood the Beatitudes. While the Beatitudes tell us who we are as λ believers, the rest of the Sermon on the Mount tells us how we live as believers. The Beatitudes, like no other part of Scripture, define the character of those living in the Kingdom. In the Beatitudes, we have the heart and core of the teaching of Jesus to his disciples regarding the nature of blessedness or Kingdom character.

Five Reasons for Seven Beatitudes

I believe that there are seven Beatitudes, not eight or nine. There are five reasons.

1. The Importance of Numbers to Matthew

First, Matthew puts an emphasis on numbers. For example, he uses the following numbers:

three, the number of God;

four, the number of man;

seven, the number of perfection;

eight, the number of new beginnings;

ten, the number for a short undefined period of time; and

forty, the number for a long undefined period of time.

Working with ancient numbers is called *gematria*. The Hebrew word is *cabalism* from *caballah*. The Cabalists were a sect of Jews during the time of Jesus who believed, among other things, that every letter of every word of Scripture had a corresponding number. The deepest revelation, they believed, did not lie in the meaning of the words, but in the numbers that signified the words. While Jesus and Matthew did not ascribe to this theory, it is nevertheless true that to those for whom Matthew wrote, numbers were important. Because of this, it is very likely that Matthew would have seven characteristics of Kingdom life that