

THE AMERICAN CHRISTIAN

NOV-DEC 1999

"... let Facts be submitted to a candid world."



Blessed
are they
that
mourn



BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN

Seeing The World As Jesus Sees It

by Ben Williams

"Blessed are the ones mourning, for they will be comforted."

Mtt. 5:4

Did Jesus actually say that people who MOURNED were blessed? Is that logical?

When someone mourns it is usually a reaction to tragedy or adversity. Why, then, did Jesus associate mourning with blessing?

Perhaps you are wondering if this is a mistranslation in the English versions of the Bible.

No. It is not a mistake. Jesus really did say, *"Blessed are the ones mourning."* The translation, in this case, is correct.

We must take seriously any statement Jesus made. So how do we understand this seemingly strange saying ... that people who mourn are blessed?

RETHINKING JESUS' WORDS

The above verse is part of a longer passage (Mtt. 5:1-11) in which Jesus makes several important statements concerning the Kingdom. This section of scripture – sometimes referred to as "The Beatitudes" – gives us a glimpse into the mind of Christ as He tells us some of the things He deems "blessed." It will also help us see what it means to be *"in the world but not of the world."*

These verses demand our attention. After all, what disciple of Christ wouldn't want to know what Christ considers "blessed"? Looking at this passage, we should first take note of the background and context.

Chapter three tells of the baptism of Jesus and his confirmation as Yahweh's Son.

Chapter four relates Jesus' temptations through the weaknesses of his flesh, and through instigation from a tempter who misapplied scripture

(probably a preacher). Jesus overcame the temptations by faith in his Father's true words ... remembering and applying them correctly: *"He answered and said, It is written, ..."*

Having overcome the basic temptations of the flesh, and having resisted a deceitful tempter, Jesus was ready to launch his ministry. He did this publicly by going into Galilee on a campaign of healing. There He began picking his students (disciples), healing the physically and mentally ill, and preaching the Good News of the Kingdom (*"the Kingdom is at hand!"*). His healings attracted crowds from Galilee and surrounding areas. It was usually the miracles that attracted the crowds ... albeit they heard his message in the bargain.

Jesus had an agenda – a commission – from his Father. Yahweh was intervening in the affairs of men through his Son. He was doing works among his people who had gotten lost. The trouble was that the people seemed to be unable to grasp what God was doing. Communication was difficult. Making blind men see is not easy, but all things are possible with God. Great things were about to happen and witnesses were needed to observe and remember.

Now as we read chapter five Jesus walks away from the crowds, takes his apostles Peter, Andrew, James & John with him, and proceeds to give them a crash course in Kingdomology. Jesus needed his disciples to understand what was happening. They were witnessing astounding things, but were struggling to understand what it all meant. Jesus intended for them to be teachers. Therefore, they must be made to understand ... otherwise, how could they teach? The thing that was beginning there in Galilee was much bigger than the crowds knew, and it was different from the twisted religious propaganda prevalent in Jerusalem.

Jesus was initiating a great adven-

ture. The disciples were beginning an education. This adventure was literally world-changing in scope. In order for them to perceive and understand this change, they needed the gift of "sight" (spiritual sight). It wasn't enough just to hear, memorize, and repeat the good news. In order to teach it the teachers must understand it. Jesus required his disciples to become teachers.

Jesus' message heralded a major change in the paradigm of religious thought in Judea. The religious crowds who were used to Babylonian temples and synagogues couldn't grasp it. Jesus needed teachers with insight; teachers who could see better than the myopic crowds.

During the past several days the disciples had experienced and witnessed amazing things. They had seen and heard things they could not explain. They had stepped into a new world – and they were struggling to understand. When Jesus preached the Good News of The Kingdom of Heaven it was like a "great light" piercing the shadows among "people sitting in darkness" (Mtt. 4:16).

Eyes that are accustomed to darkness cannot see at first when a bright light is turned on. It was shocking and different. There was much to learn: many ideas to change.

Here is what Jesus, in private, told his disciples:

1. *But having seen the crowds He went up into the mountain. And having sat down, his disciples came to Him.*
2. *And He opened his mouth and taught them, saying,*
3. *Blessed are the ones poor in spirit, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*
4. *Blessed are the ones mourning, for they will be comforted.*
5. *Blessed are the meek ones [the ones listening, learning, and repenting], for*

they will inherit the land.

6. *Blessed are the ones hungering and thirsting for justice, for they will be satisfied.*
7. *Blessed are the merciful ones, for they will receive mercy.*
8. *Blessed are the ones pure in heart [the sincere], for they will see God.*
9. *Blessed are the ones making reconciliation, for they will be called sons of God.*
10. *Blessed are the ones persecuted because of righteousness, for the Kingship of Heaven is theirs.*
11. *When you are reproached and persecuted and falsely called every wicked thing on account of me, you are blessed. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven; for thus they persecuted the prophets before you."*

Mtt. 5:1-11

Some have read this and assumed that Jesus was trying to console some folks who were downtrodden (i.e., "It is bad now, but it will be better in the next life"). If you have interpreted this passage this way in the past please look again. Jesus was not consoling the pitiful. Rather, He was taking his teachers aside to explain an important principle. He said, in essence, "You have known what the world deems 'blessed.' Now understand my definition of 'blessed.'"

Jesus was emphasizing the "great gulf fixed" (Lk. 16:26) between his view and the world's view. He was bringing the disciples into a new view; a new paradigm. It was called the Reign of Christ. Perceptions and values in his Kingship were different from those of the world system. Things that fit in the world system paradigm did not fit in Christ's system paradigm. Things celebrated in the world paradigm could cause people in Christ's paradigm to "mourn." And things highly prized in the Kingship of Christ may not appeal to people in the world system.

These two juxtaposed kingdoms are by nature contrary and forever opposed to each other. Citizens of the world system are at odds with the Kingdom of God. Jesus told his disciples to not be surprised or disap-

pointed when the world system hated them. Kingdom citizens are adversaries of the world system, and expect to be treated as such. It comes with the calling.

13. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world is hating you.*

1 John 3:13

18. *If the world is hating you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.*

John 15:18

The disciples' perception of the world underwent a change. Their eyes and ears began working better than before. They were perceiving things in a new way, and there was much to learn. Some of it was alarming.

The disciples were entering into the Kingdom paradigm. As the scales were lifted from their eyes the world looked different. They had been living in the darkness of the Jewish/Roman system. Now Jesus was beaming a light into that darkness, exposing things that had been escaping their notice. They now could see and perceive things. They could see the Kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3).

The problem was that the Israel people had been seeing Jerusalem's Babylonian system without really thinking about it. The Babylon system is created in the minds of men. It is fueled by faith ... blind faith. It exists because men believe it exists. When people stop believing in the system it begins to die.

Jesus wanted his disciples to understand that the people had fallen into a belief system that empowered the Babylonian establishment in Judea. They had done so unwittingly ... assuming it was God's system. But when Jesus shined light upon their system they could see it was NOT of God.

As Jesus revealed the Kingship of God the people's faith in Babylon (i.e., Jerusalem/Rome) began to weaken. This provoked a violent reaction from the establishment itself. For this reason the princes and priests hated Jesus and his disciples.

THE KINGDOM PARADIGM

Jesus gave sight to the blind, allowing them to see the true Kingship.

When they saw it they also saw the true King. Many of the people couldn't relate to what He was talking about. But to those who could "see," He offered a new view of the world. He offered them his System ... but they must first see it. Seeing is believing.

Their terms, their words, their ways had to be reevaluated. People steeped in the old words and ways were loath to abandon them. The Kingdom paradigm required new ways of thinking.

21. *No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth upon and old outer garment. If he does, the new one pulls from the old, and the tear becomes worse.*

22. *No one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does the wine bursts the skins, and the wine is lost as well as the skins. Thus new wine is put into new wineskins.*

Mk. 2:21-22

The disciples were experiencing new things as they walked with Jesus in Galilee. These new experiences could not be contained in the old paradigm, just as new wine cannot be contain in old wineskins. The disciples were struggling to understand what was actually happening, and the ramifications.

Two kingships were thus before them. God's Kingship and man's kingship were clashing. The differences were simple but large. So to illustrate these differences, Jesus spoke to his disciples in terms of contrasts – comparing his world view with the other.

Please reread the account. Ask Jesus for insight. You can miss it if you are not careful.

Notice these key phrases:

- Verse 1: "... *having seen the crowds ...*" Jesus, realizing the crowds did not yet grasp the evidence before them, knew that his disciples needed insight before they could take on the task of teaching them. So He took his disciples aside, away from the crowds. He wanted to start them off by fine-tuning their perception.

- Verse 2-4: "*Blessed are the ones poor in spirit*, The idiom "poor in spirit" meant "lacking enthusiasm." Those who lacked enthusiasm were blessed, according to Jesus.

But how? How did being "unenthused" indicate a blessing? What insight were his disciples to gain from

this? What did it mean?

Jesus, in effect, said, *“Look with new eyes upon the people and their world. See it not as you saw it before, but as I see it.”* He classified people into two categories: those who were complacent, and those who were not complacent. People in one group were content (i.e., enthused). But others were not content (i.e., not enthused); they were poor in spirit.

Jesus told his disciples to look around and consider the ones poor in spirit (unenthused). He deemed them MORE BLESSED than the enthused and satisfied people. Being unenthused (“poor in spirit”) about the spiritual condition of society was a requirement in order to be able to “see” Christ’s Kingship. It was a blessing. Once we have tasted the goodness of Christ’s Kingship we can no longer be content with the world system. We are no longer ignorant of the true condition of society. We mourn their condition, even though they may be blind and complacent.

THE SUFFERING DOCTRINE

Some people read this verse and conclude that Jesus was saying that “mourning” is an inherent quality of Christianity: that Christianity is a mournful state of mind. They assume that righteousness or holiness is somehow connected to living in a state of misery. Such people see depravation as a tool for achieving holiness.

But suffering, in and of itself, is not a quality that is required to make men acceptable to God. Indeed, suffering is evidence of sin. God instructs us to avoid suffering and death; to be prosperous and blessed. He does not want us to suffer. Good people often suffer at the hands of bad people, but again, that is evidence of sin in society.

Neither Jesus nor his Father have ever recommended misery and suffering as a lifestyle. Yahweh gave his law to Israel for the express purpose of preventing misery and suffering among men. Then, Jesus came to put that law into our hearts and advance that objective.

Indeed, heathen religions, including churches, have traditionally taught that suffering is the key to righteousness. It is the heathen way, not the Christian way ... even when it carries the

label of “Christianity.” Not everything labeled “Christian” is Christian.

Monasteries have traditionally stood for the rites of misery. Monks deprive themselves, beat themselves, cut themselves, live in seclusion, and eschew comfort for the purpose of establishing this brand of pseudo righteousness. Monks operate on the theory that enjoyment in this life blinds men from the glories of the next life. Heathen gods seem to require suffering. Thus, men have donned dark robes with hoods pulled over their eyes, locked themselves away from God’s creation (including family and friends) in pursuance of “holiness” through personal, self-inflicted misery.

This is NOT what Jesus taught! Jesus plainly said that He came to relieve the suffering of His people (Lk. 4:18); to give his people the abundant life (Jn. 10:10). Jesus also told them that He preferred devotion rather than sacrifice (Mt. 9:13).

There is nothing inherently holy or righteous about existing in a state of misery. However, it is natural for a righteous man to mourn the sight his people languishing in blindness and depravity. To mourn for this indicates the priorities and values of one who is *“in the world but not of the world.”*

By making this statement, Jesus was teaching his disciples that no one is an island unto himself; that when one member of the ecclesia suffers, we all suffer. The ones who could see the misery, and who mourned the condition, were the ones blessed with “eyes to see” (perceive) the Kingship.

Jesus was no stranger to suffering. He knew about it ... more than any man. But suffering was not the quality that defined Jesus. He suffered because of sinners, not because of righteousness. He was righteous before He suffered (Mtt. 3:17). It was not his purpose to suffer, but rather to save. His suffering was the result of confronting sin. He suffered because the sin of the people came to bear upon him. He took on the burden of Israel’s collective sin in order to expose it and defeat it. He bore the sin of the people to force them to readjust their perception of sin, and so they could see that sin hurts everyone – even Jesus who was guilty of no sin of his own.

Jesus was a living example for man – not to teach us how to suffer, but to

teach us how to overcome suffering. God created man, not for the purpose of suffering, but for the purpose of living and prospering. God gave man life and all the tools and information needed to succeed. God did not recommend suffering for man – rather He recommended life and happiness.

1. *And it shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently to the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command you this day, that Yahweh your God will set you on high above all nations of the earth:*

2. *And all these blessings shall come on you, and overtake you, if you will hearken to the voice of Yahweh your God.*

Dt. 28:1

15. *See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil;*

16. *In that I command you this day to love Yahweh your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that you may live and multiply: and Yahweh your God shall bless you in the land where you go to possess it.*

17. *But if your heart turns away, so that you will not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them;*

18. *I denounce to you this day, that you shall surely perish, and that you shall not prolong your days upon the land, where you pass over Jordan to go to possess it.*

19. *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live:*

20. *That you may love Yahweh your God, and that you may obey his voice, and that you may cleave to him: for he is your life, and the length of your days: that you may dwell in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.*

Dt. 30:15-20

8. *And Yahweh is He who goes before you. He will be with you. He will not fail you, nor forsake you. Fear not, neither be dismayed*

Dt. 31:8

To keep perspective of our current situation, it is good to read Deuteronomy 28-31 often. These are clear, unambiguous passages for everyone to read and comprehend.

Man was not created to suffer. He came to suffering because of sin. It wasn't commanded or recommended. It was the result of irresponsibility; of breaking the laws of creation. Suffering is the result of sin – one's own sin or the collective sin of society. Jesus suffered because of the collective sin of his people. Sin causes suffering.

Today, again, we suffer the effects of collective sin committed over centuries ... sins committed by people we don't even know. We are not personally responsible for those past sins. Nonetheless, sin infected and corrupted our society and caused suffering for all. The fact is sin hurts everyone, and its results are accumulative.

THE "MISSION IMPOSSIBLE" SYNDROME

There are church-oriented diversions that send people on wild goose chases and prevent them from recognizing truth. One such diversion is the "mission impossible" hypothesis.

This one is very subtle. It comes down this way: preachers and priests teach that man was created and equipped to live only in a perfect, sinless environment (i.e., the churches' version of Eden). But immediately after creation another supernatural being ("Satan") showed up and poisoned God's creation. Thus, since man was created only for a perfect world, he could no longer function properly in Satan's world. So man is not equipped to handle the demands of this life.

The upshot of this fallacy is that theologians have invented a scenario that accommodates this doctrine, and makes man blind to God's Kingship. They simply send God away from Earth and give all earthly power to another god they call "Satan." They have churchgoers pray to an absentee King who apparently hears their prayers but is too feeble and too far away to offer meaningful help.

This attempts to rationalize the doctrine that God expects us to suffer in this life. It also justifies man's whole-

sale sellout to Babylon since he has no choice.

THE "PARADISE LOST" SYNDROME

This related fallacy also keeps people off-point today. It comes from churches teaching that God has abandoned man on this Earth, and we can do no better until the next life.

This aspect of the suffering doctrine is widespread. Indeed, when the "paradise lost" people read Matthew five, they probably interpret it to say: "*Blessed are the ones suffering now, because in the next life they will be allowed to be happy.*" "*Blessed are the meek who have nothing in this life, because in the next life they will have it all.*"

Think about it. This is a horrible doctrine. It says that man was created by a sadistic Creator who placed man into a hopeless world designed for misery and suffering. Then, to balance the eternal scale of justice, this Creator proposes to offset the misery by granting happiness in the next life. So man must suffer in this life to be happy in the next.

However, there's more bad news. These theologians tell their people that the majority of souls are destined to NOT make it to "heaven" ... thus the balance remains tipped heavily on the side of misery for God's creation as a whole.

Any way you slice it, it doesn't come out good. It is a false doctrine spawned by pagans and liars. It is wicked.

Denying God's presence and the existence of Christ's Kingship is simply cruel. It is wrong to teach or imply that God has withheld happiness from this age, or that this age has been given over to another god ("Satan"). This is a contemptible teaching spawned in Babylon.

GIVING SIGHT TO THE BLIND

The key to understanding Matthew chapter five is to see it from the perspective of Jesus. In verse eight we find another clue.

8. *Blessed are the pure in heart [the sincere] for they shall see God.*

The pure in heart are blessed because they can see God. That means they can "see the Kingdom" (i.e., the Kingship). The blessing is in the ability to see.

But when? When is this blessing realized? In the next life? Is that the blessing ... seeing God in the next life? ... after suffering through this life? Was that the intent of Jesus' statement?

No! That's not what Jesus said, although the churches have put that spin on it. Jesus didn't say that the pure in heart would have to wait until the next life before they could see God. He said that they ARE blessed right NOW. That meant they could see God at the time He was speaking. The Message was about the ability to SEE GOD.

Could they see Him physically?

No. The word "see" has more than one meaning. When someone explains an answer, the listener may reply, "Oh, I see." But, what does he see? Something physical? Usually not. Generally he means he now understands.

By the same token, when Jesus said that the pure in spirit could see God, He meant they could know and understand God. To "see" means "to perceive; understand."

Not everyone can perceive God and his Kingship. Seeing God is a blessing that only the pure in heart – the sincere – can do. It is only for those who have "eyes to see" (Mtt. 13:16-17; Jn. 3:3). Not everyone can "see" God. Not everyone can "see" God's Kingship. Not everyone has "eyes to see."

16. *But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.*

17. *For truly I say to you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.*

Mtt. 13:16-17

This blessing, however, separates us from the multitudes who cannot see the Kingship of God and cannot relate to it. Furthermore, when enough people are blind to the Kingship a general condition of "Kingship blindness" results. When that happens those who can see the Kingdom are resented because they are different. We are

hated for Jesus' sake.

If people around you are heading toward a deadly precipice, but they are unaware because they are blind and cannot see what lies ahead ... how will that affect you if you have "eyes to see"? You can see what they are headed for, but you cannot make them understand in their blindness. When you realize you cannot turn them away from their fate, you "mourn." You are "poor in spirit."

Seeing can be alarming. But blindness can be fatal.

16. *For God so loved the world, that He gives his only begotten Son, that all believing in Him are not lost, but have eonian life.*

19. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light*

John 3:16 & 19

The gift of "eyes to see" this light is a blessing from heaven. Many men reject the gift. But, those who accept the gift of "eyes to see, and ears to hear" so that they can see and understand the Kingdom are blessed. When? Now? Or, not until the next life?

Think about it. When you've perceived the Kingdom of Heaven, and realize that Jesus is King right now, and that He has removed the blindness that separated you from Him, you are no longer enamored by man's system (the world system). Once you've breathed the clean air of the Kingdom, the foul pollution of Babylon is no longer attractive. It makes you "unenthused" about the condition of people around you who are lost. You "mourn" because of all the victims of Babylonian pollution.

As you consider your present situation, and the plight mankind has gotten itself into, you "mourn." It makes you "hunger and thirst for more justice." It separates you from the world system around you.

There is the answer! Jesus was showing his disciples what was valuable. He said, in essence, that the ability to see his Kingship (i.e., to perceive the creation from his point of view) was the blessing He brought mankind.

The people who know there is something wrong with the world sys-

tem become "unenthused" and "mournful." They "hunger and thirst for justice." These are earmarks of the "BLESSED." In Matthew 5, Jesus listed them as symptoms of having "ears to hear" and "eyes to see." They are symptoms of having been called out and separated from the Babylonian paradigm. That was why Jesus said that the people who incurred these symptoms were the ones who were blessed and qualified for more blessings.

29. *For to everyone that has, more will be given and he will increase; but from him that has not, even that which he has shall be taken from him.*

Matthew 25:29

The ones who rejected the light and remained blind (having no "eyes to see") did not perceive their true situation. They were lost without realizing it; unaware they were heading toward a dangerous precipice. They were error-prone and gullible. They fed on the lies of the propagandists telling them all is as it should be. They were falling for the lies ... and were complacent. They were like today's patriots, churchgoers, government employees, taxpayers, and recipients of bribes. They were proponents of the world system. They couldn't see they were heading for a fall. They couldn't see the Kingdom.

Lines are drawn between the two worlds. Those who see God's Kingship look back at man's system and mourn for those who remain there.

CONCLUSION

In Matthew five, Jesus asks us to refocus our view of the world around us. When we observe people complacent and not critical of the world system, we realize they are blind.

On the other hand, the ones who can see the problem, and who "mourn," and are "persecuted" by the world system are the ones who are truly blessed.

34. *... If anyone wants to come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*

35. *For whoever wants to save his soul will lose it; but whoever will lose his soul for the sake of me and the good news will*

save it.

36. *For does it benefit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?*

37. *For what would a man give in exchange for his soul?*

38. *For whoever becomes ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man will also be ashamed of him when He comes forth in the glory of his Father with the holy messengers.*

1. *And he said to them, Truly I say to you that there are some of those standing here that will not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God having come in power.*

Mk. 8:34-9:1

Though a man may be wealthy and complacent, if he cannot see the problem of living in Babylon he is not "blessed." He has no "eyes to see."

Blessed are you when you are poor in spirit, and when you mourn for the people who reject the LIGHT and prefer the ways of the world system!

Blessed are you when you see better things - when you seek and see the Kingdom of God.

31. *Seek you His Kingship, and these things (food, clothes, etc.) will be added to you.*

32. *Fear not, little flock, because your Father is pleased to provide you the Kingship;*

33. *Sell your belongings and give alms. Make to yourselves purses that don't get old. A treasure never failing in the heavens, where there is no thief or devouring moth.*

34. *For where your treasure is, there also your heart will be.*

Lk 12:31-34

4. *And I heard another voice out of the heaven, saying, Come forth out of her, My people, that you do not share her sins, and that you do not receive part of her plagues.*

Rev. 18:4

It is sad to realize there are those who prefer Babylon over Christ. It makes us (the blessed) mourn for them.

Pray they will repent and accept the gift of sight so they can see.

Ben Williams