

THE SUBJECTS OF THE KINGDOM

By C. D. Cole

The subjects of the kingdom are those born from above. Since the kingdom is spiritual the subjects must be spiritual. The beatitudes give us the characteristics of those who are partakers of the blessings of the kingdom. In the beatitudes we have what might be called spiritual photography — word pictures of a subject of the kingdom taken from different angles — snapshots of the Christian or pictures taken without posing. The saved person can find himself revealed in the beatitudes.

Matthew 5:3 *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

1. He is poor in spirit, the very opposite of a proud and boastful spirit. The Christian is not self-righteous, but is conscious of his lack of personal worthiness — he feels unworthy of the least of God's mercies — he realizes that he is poor and needy, and not sufficient of himself for any good thing.

Matthew 5:4 *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

2. He is a mourner — one who mourns over his sins. The poor in spirit goes a step further and grieves over his sins as he struggles for perfection. The Christian is sensitive to indwelling sin and longs to be perfectly whole.

Matthew 5:5 *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*

3. He is a meek person. Meekness is a spirit that does not seek to avenge a wrong. Vengeance belongs alone to God. Moses showed his meekness by ignoring the criticism of Aaron and Miriam. He did not avenge their attack upon him, but God avenged him by striking Miriam with leprosy. Meekness must not be confounded with weakness. Christ was meek but not weak. The meek shall inherit the earth; they do not fight for it.

Matthew 5:6 *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

4. He is hungry and thirsty — hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Hunger and thirst are metaphors of soul desire, and when combined express very strong desire. The saved person longs for personal and practical righteousness. By faith he has the imputed righteousness of Christ, but he wants to be personally what he is representatively in Christ. As to his standing, the believer is absolutely perfect — he is justified from all things and no charge can be laid against him. Acts 13:39; Rom. 8:33. But as to his state, the believer is only relatively perfect. He has not arrived, but is on his way to sinless perfection. Phil. 3:12-14. If Paul, the greatest of all Christians, confessed he had not attained perfection, it is ill for anyone else to claim it. However, the promise is that the hungering and thirsting soul shall be filled — he shall ultimately be as good as he now wants to be—and tries to be. With the Psalmist the believer can say, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness" (Psa. 17:15). He can rejoice that He Who has begun the good work in him will perform it until the day of Christ. Phil. 1:6. Salvation is of the Lord and there are no abandoned souls on the highway to glory.

Matthew 5:7 *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*

5. He is merciful. Mercy is more than emotion: it is active good will towards the needy. The good Samaritan showed mercy to the wounded man on Jericho road by ministering to him and by providing for his needs. The story is told of Jacob Bright, father of John Bright, that one day on his way home, he found his neighbour in great trouble on the road. His horse suffered an accident and had to be killed on the spot. As Jacob Bright arrived on the scene, the poor man was surrounded by other neighbours who were expressing their sorrow over his misfortune. To the man who kept on repeating how sorry he was, Jacob Bright said, "I am sorry five pounds. How much are you sorry?"

Matthew 5:8 *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*

6. He is pure in heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." The pure in heart is the one who is poor in spirit and who grieves over sin; therefore, purity in heart is not sinless perfection. A pure heart is one who is sincere in his confession of sin and desire to love and serve God.

Matthew 5:9 *Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*

7. He is a peacemaker. The Christian is not only concerned about peace in human relations; he is also interested in making peace between God and men. And in this sense he makes peace by preaching the peace Christ made for sinners by the blood of His cross. Col. 1:20. As Christ's witnesses we have the ministry of reconciliation: "To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," and as His ambassadors, we beg men to be reconciled to God. 2 Cor. 5:19, 20.

[**Editor's note:** The heading and numbered paragraphs are the written words of Brother C. D. Cole. I have inserted the Scriptures to which Brother Cole refers for the convenience of the readers – Leon King]