

Bi132 The Gospels

Lesson Bi132-18 Jesus' Teaching

Hope is an amazing thing. Life in first century Palestine under Roman rule seemed hard. However, belief in one God and hope in the coming redemption made life bearable for the Jews. Just getting enough food to eat, paying taxes, and having a roof overhead were a challenge for most. Poverty was widespread and beggars common. Yet fathers instructed their sons in the Law of Moses and community life revolved around the holy days and festivals. Stories of Abraham and David reminded them of miracles in the past. Stories from the prophets kept hope alive for the future. "One day Messiah will come and life will change," the fathers would say.

When the Jews saw the miracles of Jesus, many started to hope that their deliverance would be soon. They expected Messiah to defeat the Romans and set up God's kingdom on earth. So they flocked to hear Jesus teach. As a spiritual leader, Jesus understood these desires of the multitudes, but he had come to bring spiritual deliverance, not to set up a physical kingdom. He sought to prepare people for life in God's eternal kingdom. So he had to patiently teach them how God wanted them to live their lives in their present circumstances, in order to inherit eternal life in the future.

One day the crowds were large and Jesus went up the side of a mountain to sit down and teach them. The exact location is uncertain, but the slope could have been by the Sea near Capernaum. His purpose was to explain what it means to be Messiah's follower. If a person lives this way, they will be blessed. They will experience both spiritual blessings in their present lives and hope for eternal life in the future. Christ taught them how to live a life pleasing to God, saying:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, not the proud, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.

Blessed are those who mourn, because they will be comforted.

Blessed are the humble, because they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, because they will be filled.

Blessed are those who give mercy, because mercy shall be shown to them.

Blessed are the pure in heart, because they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they treated the prophets who came before you (Matt 5:3-10).

Jesus continued by telling them that he had not come to abolish the Law of Moses or the Prophets, but to fulfill them! He emphasized trying to understand the spirit of the Law, not just giving external obedience to the letter of the Law. He wanted his disciples to live by a higher standard than the religious leaders, who did good deeds to be seen by people, while ignoring the

spirit and intent of the Law. Jesus taught that righteousness does not come by works, but through true faith:

You have heard that it was said, “Do not murder.” But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a person is as bad as if he killed them. You have heard it said, “Do not commit adultery.” But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. You have heard it was said, “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. You have heard it said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Jesus was concerned about their hearts, not just their outward acts.

He continued by contrasting the way the hypocrites prayed to impress others, with the private and humble way his followers were to communicate with God. He gave them this pattern to follow:

Our Father in heaven, your name is holy,
May your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (Matt 6:9-13).

Among many other issues, Jesus taught his followers about their attitudes toward others. Once more he contrasted how their attitudes should be different than the attitudes of the hypocrites. He said: “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Judging others is like a man with a piece of lumber sticking out of his eye. He ignores it because he is focused on the speck of sawdust in someone else’s eye. So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets” (Matt 7:1-5, 12).

The crowd was quiet as they thought about what they were hearing. Jesus concluded by saying, “Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

When Jesus was done teaching, the crowds were amazed. They realized that he taught as one with great authority, not as their teachers of the law, who tended just to quote one another. In these words Jesus lays down the basic life principles for his followers. Jesus holds believers to a high standard of righteousness. His disciples must be motivated to obey God for his approval only. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God sees the heart.

This lesson is **important** because it tells us many details of Jesus' teaching. He explained how he expects us to live as born-again people in this world, until he returns. Jesus' emphasis is that our righteous acts must be done to please God and not to impress people.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that Jesus taught plainly that his followers must be doers of the Word as well as hearers of the Word.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What did Jesus say was the result of living a life pleasing to God?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, "Jesus promised spiritual blessings in the present and eternal life in the future," you are correct.
2. How did Jesus relate to the teachings of the Law?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If your response was, "Jesus came to fulfill the scriptures by helping people understand that the condition of the heart is more important than outward obedience to the Law," you are correct.
3. Concerning judging people's actions, what did Jesus say to his disciples?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, "Jesus told them not to judge others, because they would be judged by the same standards," you are correct.
4. To whom did Jesus compare the person who hears his word and obeys it?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, "Jesus compared those who hear and obey his word to a wise man who built his house on a solid foundation," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to these teachings of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount until you can repeat them to someone else. It is necessary to understand what Jesus taught about the importance of prayer. The only way a person can live a life pleasing God, having the right attitudes in their heart, not judging others, and being doers of the Word, is by living a life of prayer. Memorize the prayer that Jesus gave his followers as a pattern:

Our Father in heaven, your name is holy,
May your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (Matt 6:9-13).