

THE TEACHER AND THE LESSON

- MATTHEW 5:1-16. - JANUARY 23. -

Golden Text: – "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." – V. 8.

NEVER man spake like this man," said the common people, who heard him gladly. And this is the testimony of the humble-minded since. Not all have heard; not all can hear; but only, as the Scriptures declare, "He that hath an ear let him hear." The ear of faith is the special favor of God to those who are of a meek, honest heart, desiring Truth and righteousness. To such the Lord's words apply, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear." The masses see not, hear not, neither do they understand the grace of God, because, as St. Paul explains, Satan has blinded them through ignorance, superstition, etc. – 2 Cor. 4:4.

How glad we should be to know that the report which once reached us, that the Bible teaches that all these sin-blinded ones are to suffer torment eternally, is untrue – that such is not the teaching of the Bible! How glad we should be for the assurances of the Bible that, after the gathering of the Elect Church and the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ, for which we pray, "Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as in heaven," *then* "all the blind eyes shall be opened and all the deaf ears be unstopped," so that "the knowledge of the glory of God shall fill the whole earth" and enlighten every man. How glad we should be of the promise that in and through the Spiritual Seed of Abraham (Christ and the Church, Gal. 3:29), "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" with an opportunity of return to harmony with God, and of everlasting life!

Our study pictures Jesus surrounded by his disciples, teaching them, that in turn they might teach us and all who throughout this Gospel Age would have the hearing ear. The lessons of this sermon on the Mount are wonderful for their simplicity and sublimity. Our Lord's first message was, Repent and get ready for the Kingdom. To those who accepted that message he now gave additional blessed lessons.

(1) The pure in spirit, the humble of mind, the meek, the gentle, the teachable, these would be of the class acceptable to God as participators with Messiah in his Kingdom. Without such meekness they would not be prepared to learn of him, and not learning they would not be proper characters nor be prepared in due time to be the teachers of the World.

(2) They should not expect that becoming his disciples would lift them out of trials, difficulties, sorrows, tears, but, on the contrary, must learn that such experiences would be overruled for their good, would serve to test their faithfulness and trust, so that those who will be worthy of a place in the Kingdom might expect to pass through considerable sorrow and mourning. They were to understand that if they should gain the Kingdom through much tribulation, they would there find in its glories and blessings comforts and joys which would more than compensate for every tear and every sorrow endured as soldiers of the Cross and followers of the Lamb. **[R4557 : page 56]**

(3) To be his disciples and to share with him in the Millennial Kingdom, they must be meek, gentle – not bold, grasping, ferocious, self-willed, getting the best of the earth and of everybody in it. Rather they must cultivate the spirit of meekness; they must learn not only not to fight and contend for the best of earthly things, but even to submit to injustice in the interest of the coming Kingdom and their opportunity to be its heralds and to exemplify the spirit of the Great King and of all

who would be heirs of life eternal. These in the present time may lose houses and lands and the love of parents and children and friends, because of their loyalty to the words and doctrines of Jesus, but eventually they will have a great reward. They with their Lord will inherit the earth. All the earthly privileges, rights and blessings secured by our Lord through his sacrifice he will in the end of this Age share with his Church; and they with him, as kings and priests during the Millennium, will dispense to the world of mankind the earth and its bounties. More than this, the heavenly Kingdom which they will receive will be fully empowered to bring to pass all the restitution blessings promised by the mouth of all the holy prophets – restoring mankind to original perfection, plus knowledge, and bringing the whole earth to be again a Paradise of God and world-wide Eden. – Acts 3:19-21.

(4) Jesus would have his disciples understand that righteousness and Truth are scarce commodities at the present [R4558 : page 56] time amongst men – that the world is full of error and sin and unrighteousness. His disciples, by reason of enlightenment, will discern between good and evil, righteousness and sin. And they must so love Truth, righteousness, as to hunger and thirst for it. To such, spiritual food will be granted. Truth will be dispensed to them as "meat in due season." Nevertheless, because their longings infinite for righteousness are circumscribed by imperfections of the flesh in the present time, they will not attain full satisfaction until they shall experience their resurrection "change." "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (I Cor. 13:10.) "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." – Psa. 17:15.

(5) The followers of Jesus who would share with him in his Kingdom will need to be very merciful. As the kings and priests of the Millennial Kingdom they will have to deal with the poor,

groaning creation, uplifting the willing and obedient out of their sinful and degraded death condition – up to righteousness, perfection, eternal life. Only the merciful of heart could be properly entrusted with such a work. (I Cor. 6:2.) This lesson, therefore, all the followers of Jesus must learn – to be merciful.

Their first lesson must be concerning their own imperfection and their own need of Divine mercy. This lesson needs to be continually impressed until it becomes a fixed element of character – loving-kindness. Hence our Lord's declaration, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses." Again he tells us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Consecrated believers, with all their past sins forgiven, unwillingly trespass against the perfect Law of God by word or thought or act daily, because they have the treasure of the new mind in the imperfect earthen vessel. These trespasses should be daily acknowledged and forgiveness asked for them through our great Redeemer-Advocate. But to impress upon us as a part of our character this essential element of mercy, the Lord declines to forgive our trespasses against his law, unless we exercise this spirit toward our fellow-men. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," and thus be enabled to make their calling and election sure – to a place and a share with their Redeemer in his Kingdom.

(6) Those who will share the Kingdom with Jesus will be "changed" from human nature to spirit nature in the resurrection, and see God – see him who is invisible to human eyes. (John 1:18.) Only the "pure in heart" shall have this blessing. No man can help the fact that he was "born in sin and shapen in iniquity." (Psa. 51:5.) But God has graciously arranged that the merit of Christ's sacrifice shall compensate for the weaknesses and blemishes of the followers of Jesus. Hence, these will not be judged of the Lord according to the flesh and its blemishes, but

will be judged according to the purity of the heart, the mind, the intention, the will. Nothing less than purity of will could be satisfactory to God. Any consent to sin, any sympathy with it or intentionally yielding to it would indicate heart impurity and, unless abandoned, would lead to Second Death.

(7) All who will be heirs with Jesus in his Millennial Kingdom will with him be called "sons of God," "sons of the Highest" under Jesus their Elder Brother. But only such can hold this title as attain that attitude of mind in which they "seek peace and pursue it"; and such to the extent of their opportunity would, therefore, rejoice, "to be peacemakers," not mischief-makers, not strife-breeders, not lawless, as the Apostle expresses it, but "subject to the powers that be," recognizing that God has all the power necessary for the subjection of the whole world, and that if he permits injustice and wrong, it will be for a time and for a purpose. We are not called upon now to rectify the affairs of the world, but to learn obedience and sacrifice and be prepared for sharing in the Kingdom rule of righteousness in God's "due time."

(8) Those who would inherit the Kingdom of heaven as joint-heirs with Jesus must love and serve righteousness to such an extent that a blind and unrighteous world will misunderstand them and persecute them on this account. By enduring such persecutions faithfully, calmly, rejoicingly, they attest to God that they possess characters which are copies of that of his Son our Lord.

(9) St. Peter tells us that if any man suffers as an evil-doer the penalty for his misdeeds, he should be ashamed, but if he suffers as a Christian for his fidelity to Christ and his doctrines, let him glorify God on this behalf – let him be thankful for the opportunity, for on all such rests the spirit of honor and the Spirit of God. The Galilean Prophet emphasized this same thought; as

many spoke evil of him, the King, similarly many would speak evil of all who would seek to follow closely in his footsteps. As they reproached and reviled him, so would they do to his followers. As they spoke evil of him, so would they do of his followers. And all this he would have them receive as evidence or proof of their faithfulness and of God's acceptance of them. These trials would evidence that God found them worthy of shaping and polishing for his service, whereas others without such persecutions would have every reason to doubt that they were in preparation for the Kingdom. Such should rejoice and be very glad. They should realize that there will be different grades of honor and dignity in the Kingdom and that the more they suffer for righteousness sake, the higher and greater will be their reward.

(10) Christ's followers were to be "the salt of the earth" – exerting an influence and power amongst men of a preservative kind, delaying, if not arresting, degrading tendencies toward putrefaction and death. They should remember, however, that salt would be of no more value than sand if it were to lose its saltiness.

(11) Jesus was the great light which came into the world, and his followers were to be lights or candles also. "As he was, so are we in this world" – light-bearers. The Church is not of the world. As Jesus said, "Ye are not of the world." Yet the Church is the light of the world. Each individual Christian should let his light shine before men, and the Church as a whole is to be like a city on a hill which cannot be hidden. As a lamp would do no good if covered with a bushel, but its light would become extinguished, so also with the Church individually and collectively. If light does not shine out it will soon die out. All that are in and of the household of faith should be able to see the shining of the spirit-light in every member of the true Church, "the Church, which is his Body." Individually and collectively

the Church should let its light shine before men that many might see their good works, their likeness of character to the Lord, and glorify the Heavenly Father. Surely these are important lessons from the Great Teacher.

