

# OpenTheo

## The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-16)

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At the beginning of the first great sermon of Matthew's gospel, Jesus identifies the blessed of the kingdom of heaven, presenting himself as the one bringing the good news foretold by Isaiah the prophet.

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## Transcript

Welcome back to this, the fifth in my series on the Gospel of Matthew. Today we're looking at chapter 5 verses 1 to 16, the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. I had hoped to go all the way through chapter 5 today, but given the length of the chapter and the density of the material within it, and the need to give some sort of overview for the sermon as a whole and its place within the Gospel of Matthew, I thought that I would take a bit more time to have a slower start and split the chapter into at least two different parts.

So to start off, it's worth considering the structure of the teaching within the Gospel of Matthew as a whole. Matthew contains five different bodies of teaching within it. So there's five sermons.

The first begins at the beginning of chapter 5 and ends at the end of 7, verses 28 to 29 of chapter 7. The second begins in chapter 10, verse 5, and ends in 11, verse 1. The third begins in chapter 13 and takes that whole chapter. The fourth is from the beginning of chapter 18 to the beginning of chapter 19. And the fifth and final body of it is found in chapters 23, verse 1 to 26, verse 1. Now Matthew, you could argue, foregrounds Jesus' teaching in a great many respects.

Mark emphasizes more Jesus' acts of power and deliverance, his healings, his exorcisms, his miracles. Luke talks a lot about Jesus traveling. So Luke gives 35% of his Gospel to Jesus' journey towards Jerusalem, whereas Mark and Matthew have 8 and 6%.

So there are different emphases within the Gospels and the teaching within the Gospel of Matthew has often been compared to the sort of teaching that we find in the book of Deuteronomy, where there are also five sermons given by Moses to the people of Israel. And there are structures to these sermons. Some have pointed out that there are parallels between the eight Beatitudes, the eight parables of the kingdom in the third speech in chapter 13, and then the eight woes, or arguably eight woes, in chapter 23 at the beginning of the fifth speech.

So the first, third, and fifth speech, that's one thing that Peter Williams mentions. Dale Allison has observed that within the structure of the first speech itself, the Sermon on the Mount, there is arguably a structure to be observed within that too, the chiasmic structure. So you see Jesus at the very beginning ascending the mountain, surrounded by crowds, and then ends with him descending from the mountain, surrounded by crowds.

He begins his teaching with nine blessings, or eight, and plus another one appended to the eighth, and then ends with three warnings. And he argues that these things are connected together. Verses 13 to 16 of chapter 5 is a description of the people of God, and that picture is filled out in the chapters that follow, in chapter 5 verse 17 to 7 verse 12.

And that's bookended by a reference, that section is bookended by a reference to the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. Now that central section, Allison argues, can be broken down into three further sections. So the first concerns the Torah in 5 verses 17 to 48.

The second concerns Christian worship, the Christian cult, Christian form of approach to God, prayer, that sort of thing, in verses 1 to 18 of chapter 6. And then the final part concerns social relations in chapter 6 verse 19 to 7 verse 12. And those sections, he argues, are ordered triadically. So the first and the last of those three sections have a double triadic structure.

So two sets of threes connected together, and then the central one has a triadic

structure. And as Peter Lighthouse has observed, if you follow this pattern, what you'll realize is that at the very heart of the Sermon on the Mount is the teaching on Christian worship, and at the very heart of that is Jesus' teaching concerning prayer, the Lord's, the giving of the Lord's prayer. And at the very center of that is the first three petitions.

Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done. And so there's a structure to the sermon that foregrounds certain elements, and those elements are those three petitions. At the very heart, there's the prayer, and at the very heart of that prayer are those three petitions.

Other things to be observed is that Matthew is not the only one to include beatitudes. Luke, in chapter 6, has four beatitudes and then also four woes that are related to each other. So in chapter 6, he writes, Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man.

Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven, for so their fathers did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets. And so there are parallels between those, contrast between the blessings and the woes.

Now, are these different reports of the same sermon? No, I don't think they are. What we should expect is that Jesus, as an itinerant prophet, was giving the same sort of message in different places. So just like any preacher who goes around from place to place, or speaker, you recycle material, you give the same sermon on different occasions and different places, with slight changes, alterations, additions.

You use the same illustrations and you adjust them for slightly different circumstances, or to illustrate different points. I certainly do that. I'm not someone who has original material for each occasion.

And in the same way, we should expect Christ, as he went from place to place, delivering the good news of the kingdom, to have a very tightly structured message that he would alter in different ways. And so there are elements within it that would recur, and then there are elements within it that would be addressed to specific circumstances that would be altered from place to place. Now, it's important to notice that there are certain parts of this that are very highly structured.

So the Lord's Prayer is very highly structured. It is a body of material that it seems that

Jesus would be using in many different places and occasions. It's something that had a fixity to it that other parts of his message did not necessarily have, rhetorically speaking.

And so it has a more poetic character, a structure to it, a way in which it can be structured in different petitions. There are other things to notice about it in terms of the language. It has a poetic character to it.

The Beatitudes at the beginning of Matthew 5 have a similar character. A number of people have observed that the first four blessings, the first four of the Beatitudes, alliterate on pi. And so they're focusing upon that particular letter that's repeated on a number of occasions.

Peter Williams observes this, and then he observes that the sixth has an alliteration using kappa alpha in catharoi and cardia, and then the fourth has an alliteration using delta and iota. And so these are poetic texts. And why do we have poetry like that? In part, because it would be easier to memorize.

It gets under the skin as well. When you hear something that has a poetic quality to it, it sticks in the brain. And a lot of Jesus' teaching has rhetorical characteristics that serve memorization.

So that may be particular salient illustrations. It may be some turn of phrase that's very powerful, some paradox or something like that. Or, as we see here, alliteration and structured oppositions as well.

So for instance, in Jesus' teaching in Luke, the Beatitudes and the Woes are parallel to each other. So if you remember the Beatitudes, it's easier to remember the Woes. You'd memorize much of this material.

That's what it looks like to meditate upon the law of God, the word of God. You chew these things over, you think about them, and these things would be repeated by his disciples later on. They presumably were hearing Jesus delivering these particular messages with slight alterations on many different occasions, and so they'd be familiar in their mind.

And by the time that they'd heard it several times, they would know things like the Lord's Prayer by heart, they would know the Beatitudes by heart, and the poetic structure of them would assist that memorization and the way that they would stick in the mind. Other things to notice is the affinity between Matthew's Jesus and Moses and the law. Jesus goes up onto a mountain to teach, and many people have observed that in this particular location, he's paralleled with Moses.

He's teaching concerning the law and the prophets, and he goes up in a mountain to give that teaching. He's someone who, like Moses, went up on Mount Sinai. Jesus goes up to deliver a message concerning the law, so he's surrounded immediately by his

disciples, and then by the wider multitude.

That's not the only time that we see him on a mountain within the story of Matthew's Gospel. You'll see other significant events on a mountain. So for instance, the temptation.

He's taken up to a high mountain. The feeding of the 5,000, that occurs on a mountain. The Mount of Transfiguration.

The Olivet Discourse, again delivered on a mountain. And the Great Commission on a mountain in Galilee. All of these occasions, the topographical location in which it's delivered, the teaching or the action that's being performed, it's not insignificant.

Mountains are places of worship. They're places that can be opposed to each other. So I think we'll get into this a bit later on in the Gospel as we see the opposition between mountains, between the Mount of Olives and the Temple Mount, that those two mountains opposite each other, and the way that that can be played upon.

So these important sites, these mountains, other locations like that, they present us with locations that have biblical memory attached. The memory of Sinai, the memory of the Temple Mount, and it may actually be the literal Temple Mount on occasions that we see within the mountains of the Gospels. But they are important locations, sites of worship, sites of access to God, sites from which you could see this vast area around.

Other things to notice is this parallel with Moses should not necessarily be pushed too far. Dale Allison and others have argued that Jesus is compared to Moses throughout the Gospel of Matthew. And there are certain ways in which that does take place.

Jesus is compared to Moses in various locations. But as you look through the Gospel of Matthew, I think you should notice that it's not just the story of Moses that's emphasised, the story of Moses and the Exodus entering into the Promised Land. But there are several other stories that are playing along in the background.

So Peter Lighthouse has argued that the entirety of Israel's history is recapitulated within the events of the Gospel. So it works through from the very beginning, the book of the Genesis of Christ talks about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. It talks about going down into Egypt.

It talks about the Exodus. And then it talks about all these other events leading to David, the exile. And then Christ is the one who's going to fulfil the deliverance from exile in its fullest sense.

Christ brings that. And as you go through the Gospel, you'll see this playing out. You have the Genesis of Jesus Christ.

You have Joseph, the son of Jacob, leading his people down into Egypt. You have

reversals of Exodus themes with Herod trying to kill the baby boys. Jesus going into Egypt, coming up out of Egypt.

You have the entrance into the Promised Land and the wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, 40 days. Christ being in the wilderness and fasting in the wilderness. And then you have this beginning of Jesus teaching on the Mount.

And as you work through, there are other things that appear. So you have the wilderness wandering, the entrance into the land. Then you have the early kingdom.

You have Solomon in the parables of the kingdom, Christ as the wiser than Solomon. You have Elijah and Elisha. You have Joash, Jehu, the late monarchy.

And you have Jeremiah and the promises of the new covenant and the resurrection of Israel. You have themes of the return from exile. As I've noted before, the very end of the Old Testament in the Hebrew ordering is 2 Chronicles.

And at the very end of 2 Chronicles is the Great Commission of Cyrus. And Matthew ends with a Great Commission that very clearly parallels the end of 2 Chronicles. And so what we're seeing is a movement through from the very beginning of Genesis to the very end of 2 Chronicles that goes through the different beats of Israel's history.

And so Jesus is recapitulating, playing out again the history of Israel in a way that fulfills it. All of Israel's history is pushing towards this, is anticipating this. But then Christ is also walking faithfully where Israel walked unfaithfully.

He's taking Israel's destiny upon himself. He's walking in the path that Israel walked. And he's walking faithfully and righteously where Israel walked unfaithfully and unrighteously.

So Matthew is a very carefully structured book. It's a book that is ordered according to a movement through the entirety of the Old Testament. It's a movement that has bookend themes.

So we've noticed this bookend from Genesis to 2 Chronicles. We've also noticed some of the themes that bookend the book. So Jesus as the king of the Jews at the very beginning with the visiting Magi and then at the very end with the crucifixion.

Jesus as the Son of God being tested in the wilderness by Satan. Jesus as the Son of God being borne witness to by the centurion at the cross after he's been given three temptations that very much parallel the temptations that he's given in the wilderness. We've seen the importance of themes of Jesus and the Gentiles at the very beginning in the genealogies and the visitation of the Magi and in the first appearance in Galilee of the Gentiles.

We've seen women and angels at the beginning of the book. We'll see that at the end of the book too. We've seen a Joseph and a Mary at the very end of the book.

We have Joseph of Arimathea and the Marys. We have a virgin's womb at the beginning. We have a new tomb that's never been occupied before at the end.

We have dreams and warnings at the beginning of the book and at the very end of the book we have dreams with warnings too in the case of Pilate's wife. So there are ways in which this whole book is structured by themes. Now another way in which this takes place is starting with the Beatitudes at the very beginning of Christ's ministry and ending with the final sermon which contains woes.

So if you look at chapter 23 there are parallels to be drawn and we'll get into this in a moment between the woes that are given there. There are in certain translations eight woes and those correspond with the eight Beatitudes and they don't just correspond loosely numerically. They correspond one for one.

You can map each onto the Beatitudes at the beginning. So what is the purpose of this? One thing that it does is to present the whole body of Jesus' teaching not just as a mishmash of these are some of the things that Jesus said when he was in his earthly ministry but this is a unified message. It's a message that's going somewhere.

It's a message that has an inner integrity and structure to it and as you see at the beginning it leads towards something at the end. So it begins with this statement of intent. It begins with the statement of the blessing of the people of God and then ends with the woe upon the unrighteous.

It begins with these warnings about the people who will be judged at the end of the Sermon on the Mount and then ends with the statement concerning what that judgment will actually look like as it will befall Jerusalem. So what we're seeing is a very clear structure within the book of Matthew along with all these other bookend themes along with the way in which the book itself is structured from the very beginning of the Bible to the very end of the Hebrew Bible. We're seeing within the book that there is this very clear structure.

The Sermon on the Mount also has this structure as I've already alluded to to some extent. It begins with blessings and ends with warnings. The Beatitudes at the beginning and then the warnings of the people who will reject the word of Christ at the end and we'll get into that a bit more in a moment.

Various biblical books are structured in a way that highlights the blessing-woe opposition. So if you read the book of Deuteronomy you'll have that opposition between blessings and curses concerning Israel's obedience or disobedience of the law at the end of the book. It climaxes the teaching of the book concerning the law.

This is what will happen if you're faithful. This is what will happen if you're unfaithful. It's a life and a death opposition.

It's a wisdom-foolishness opposition. It's a blessing-cursing opposition. You see the same thing in the book of Psalms.

The book of Psalms begins with a beatitude. Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord and in his law he meditates day and night. It goes on to talk about what that man is like and how he contrasts with the wicked that will not stand in the day of the judgment.

And so Deuteronomy, Psalms, also in you have the first nine chapters that introduce the body of the text of Proverbs present an opposition between choices that lead to death, the adulterous woman, and lady folly, and choices that lead to life if you follow lady wisdom. And in chapter nine it presents these two callings, these two ways, the way of death and the way of life, or the way of life and death rather. And it begins with the message of lady wisdom and then has the message of the woman folly.

And they're two parallel messages that are addressed to the same character, this simple person that's passing by. And the person who will listen will find life, the person who rejects finds death. You can maybe argue that Revelation has a similar sort of structure with blessings and curses being a very much structural element of the book and this contrast between those who receive blessing and those who receive death.

So the book of Matthew as a whole is not just a record of teachings that the disciples picked up along the way as they were listening to Christ on his mission. It's a stronger declaration of the way of blessing and the way of judgment. And it's directed to the reader of the book who's supposed to recognise in that a message that is given to every single person that hears about the word of Christ.

They're supposed to recognise that this choice faces them too. It leads to an opposition between the blessings at the beginning and the woes at the end. And both of those things are framed in terms of events that are coming to pass in history.

The people who are blessed are blessed because God is visiting his people and the people who are about to experience the woes are the people who have rejected Christ, the people who have turned their back, who are about to find that their house is left them desolate. And there are many other ways that these themes of chapter 5 and 23 connect but I'll get into that more in a moment. Other things to notice is the way in which this alludes back to Isaiah and his message, particularly to Isaiah 61.

This is a programmatic statement for Christ in chapter 4 of Luke. It's his first message in Nazareth. He delivers this message and he presents Isaiah 61 as his statement of intent.



And if you read Isaiah 61 and then read alongside it the Beatitudes, you should begin to see that the Beatitudes are the natural correlate of Isaiah 61. And in recognising that correlation, you should recognise that Jesus in declaring the Beatitudes is in a declaring himself to be the fulfilment of Isaiah 61 again. So let me read Isaiah 61 and notice some of the details that really recall the Sermon on the Mount and particularly the Beatitudes.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me. This is at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. He's just been anointed by the spirit at his baptism.

He's just defeated Satan in the temptations. Because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. Jesus has just been going through the towns of Galilee and declaring the good news.

He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, those who mourn, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, to grant to those who mourn in Zion, to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit, that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. They shall build up the ancient ruins. They shall raise up the former devastation.

They shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. Strangers shall come, stand and tend your flocks. Foreigners shall be your ploughmen and vinedressers.

But you shall be called the priests of the Lord. They shall speak of you as the ministers of our God. You shall eat the wealth of the nations and in their glory you shall boast.

Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion. Instead of dishonour they shall rejoice in their lot. Therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion.

They shall have everlasting joy. For I the Lord love justice. I hate robbery and wrong.

I will faithfully give them their recompense and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their offspring shall be known among the nations and their descendants in the midst of the peoples. All who see them shall acknowledge them that they are an offspring the Lord has blessed.

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall exult in my God. For he has clothed me with the garments of salvation.

He has covered me with the robe of righteousness. As a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its sprouts and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up.

So the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations. So reading that you should recognise some of the phrases that Christ is taking concerning righteousness, mourning, comfort, concerning hunger and thirsting for righteousness, concerning all these different elements of rejoicing at God's deliverance that's about to come about. These are statements that when you see the correspondence between the two you should understand that this blessing is because God is about to fulfil what he has promised in Isaiah 61.

God is about to come on the scene, his servant is about to bring deliverance and as a result all the people who are looking for deliverance, who are mourning, who are awaiting deliverance in Zion, the people who are waiting for the gospel, this declaration of the kingdom of heaven, they are the ones that will be comforted. They will be the ones who will receive the inheritance. They will be the ones who will be named the sons and daughters of God.

So behind all of this is Jesus' teaching concerning the kingdom and implicit in all of this are different is that this is a statement that these people are about to receive the kingdom. Notice that the very first and the very last of the beatitudes ends with the expression for theirs is the kingdom of heaven and it suggests that all the other things in between are different ways of talking about that single reality. This is all a way of speaking about what it means to receive the kingdom of heaven, being comforted, inheriting the earth, being satisfied in your hunger and thirst for righteousness, receiving mercy, seeing God, being called sons of God.

All of these things are ways in which we receive the kingdom of God and so this programmatic statement is matched with a statement about what will be for all of those who've been awaiting this kingdom. All the people who have been awaiting God to act in the case of his people, who have been mourning, who have been hungering and thirsting for his righteousness, who have been seeking to for comfort and God is declaring comfort to his people. He has sent his servant and they're going to be delivered.

God is visiting his people and their objective condition will change. So it's very easy to read the beatitudes as statements about timeless subjective conditions that will be blessed. So if you have this state of mind you will be blessed or if you behave in this particular way you will be blessed and it's not as if that is entirely without truth but there is something more going on here.

What is the condition of blessedness? Not so much the internal state of the people who cultivate this state of mind but the fact that God is about to turn the tables. God is about to act in their case. It is not necessarily a blessed thing, a good thing in itself, to be persecuted nor is that something that we're doing or is it an internal state of mind.

These are things that have befallen people in a wicked and perverse generation and those people are blessed not because of some intrinsic goodness about that state of

being persecuted or because they have cultivated some state of mind or based some imperative but because God is going to act in their situation. They've been persecuted for righteousness sake and God is going to intervene. Other things to notice on this front is that there is a connection to objective poverty not just a heart condition but nor can we just relate this to objective poverty by itself.

There's something that connects the objective condition of being poor and the spiritual position of longing for God's kingdom to act on our behalf. If you read through the Psalms you'll see the bringing together of poverty and spiritual need on many occasions. The poverty of the man who calls out the Lord for deliverance.

In a similar way the poor in spirit are people who can experience material want but also they're looking to God in their hunger and their desire for action in their case that God would deliver them. The opposition between the poor and the rich is something that we'll see more generally within the New Testament. You see a lot of that in James for instance where James speaks about the way that the rich persecute the people of God and the opposition between the rich and the poor in a way that connects it to spiritual themes.

It doesn't allow it to be merely materialised but nor does he allow it to be detached from the material condition and so there's a danger on the one hand of saying poor in spirit that does not actually mean material poverty. Well it is connected to material poverty and in Luke we have it blessed are the poor. What we need to do is connect those two things together that there is something about the material condition of these people and it is connected to a spiritual posture a spiritual disposition.

We should also be aware of de-eschatologising the beatitudes presenting them as if they were just timeless imperatives timeless states of mind that we should cultivate. That's not what's being said rather the point is that there are people in this objective condition who are being persecuted who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness etc and God is going to act in their case and they're blessed because God is about to act. That blessedness is not so much something intrinsic to those states of mind although it's not without some intrinsic connection but rather it's about the fact that God is imminently going to act and it also helps to explain part of the paradoxical force of the beatitudes.

Blessed are those who are persecuted that's not what we think of as blessedness but God is about to turn the tables and when the tables are about to be turned the people who seem to be the underdogs the people who seem to be misfortunate are actually the people that are going to be blessed as things shake out in the new order so Jesus' teaching needs to be understood in terms of this imminent eschatological horizon that God is going to act in the case of his people. There are people who are about to be judged the people who have resisted him and his word and will resist the ministry of Christ and ultimately crucify him. They will be judged their house will be left to them desolate whereas those who faithfully respond to the message will be blessed in that age

and in the age to come.

So this is a historically rooted theodicy. It's a statement about God's response to the problem of evil suffering and injustice. In the case of his people why do the righteous suffer? We see the Psalms and the righteous suffer often pleading for God to act and to vindicate and complaining about the state of the wicked who seem to prosper on the earth with no consequences for their actions and yet here we see a theodicy an account of God's justice in relation to the issues of suffering evil and injustice in the world and he's going to act in a way that brings justice to bear.

The light is about to dawn and all the shadows are going to be removed. So Matthew is presenting this at the very outset of Christ's ministry. Christ's ministry begins with a bang his spoken ministry this declaration of a changing pattern of the people of God.

They're going to their condition is going to change and it's worth noting that in Luke Jesus ministry begins in a similar way with a statement of Isaiah 61. Here it's the flip side of Isaiah 61. If Isaiah 61 is Jesus' statement of him coming on a mission this is the statement of the state of those who have been awaiting this mission who are going to be the recipients of the blessings of this mission.

And so this isn't just about heart condition it's not just about ethics there's something more to this. It's an eschatological horizon it's about the state of people who have been waiting in a position of injustice suffering and evil and God is about to act in their case. It can be divided the Beatitudes some have suggested into two groups of four and there are 36 words in both sets.

They divide into the first four that alliterate with the letter pi and then the next four after that and some have argued that there is a chiasmic structure even within the type of explanation that follows. Blessed are because and you start off with an inclusory formula theirs is the kingdom of heaven and then the final one is theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Then you have a divine passive and for they shall be comforted and then for they shall be called sons of God that's the seventh.

Then the third and the sixth are they are future active and middle respectively with objects. They shall inherit the earth they shall they shall see God and then the middle ones are they shall be satisfied again a divine passive and they shall receive mercy. And so some have argued that there is a structure here there may well be and I'm not sure how much weight we should put upon it but there are promising and signs that there is some sort of internal structure to the Beatitudes and that's something we should expect with the alliteration with the other ways in which these are connected with the woes and those sorts of parallels suggest that this is a carefully structured text partly for memorization for the reader and for the person who hears these things but also for the purpose of the gospel as a whole that it frames material and it helps you to recognize a larger message that's emerging from Christ's teaching.

A message that emerges not just from a single block of teaching by itself but by that block of teaching as it's situated within the broader ministry of Christ's life. Christ's ministry begins with this and it ends with something different and that movement from that beginning message to the ending message is a movement that has its own structure and pattern to it and seeing those two things alongside each other helps you to see that Jesus is saying something about the state of Israel and something his mission is to Israel and this is a statement that has implications for the identity of the true Israel which we'll get to in a moment. The blessing is founded upon the explanation that follows so that again there is something paradoxical about this.

Blessed are those who mourn. That certainly does not look like a state of blessing. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Now hungering and thirsting does not seem to be a blessed state in itself. Blessed are those who are persecuted. Again that does not seem to be a blessed thing in itself.

You could argue that being merciful, being a peacemaker, being pure in heart, being meek that those might be blessed things in themselves but a number of the others do not fit that and so the paradoxical character of the blessing needs to be explained by what follows and so there are different explanations that follow and each one of those helps to explain part of why that condition is indeed blessed. That at this point in time it seems that that person is not blessed but they are in fact blessed because the day is dawning because God has come to visit his people in Jesus Christ and their condition is objectively going to change. The first beatitude, blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

I've already noted that theirs is the kingdom of heaven is a structural phrase that brackets the two bookend statements, the two bookend blessings and beatitudes and that helps us to see more of what's going on that all of these people are receiving the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the poor in spirit. In spirit is a qualifying phrase and so it's unpacking what is meant by the poor and it's the poor in spirit and as I've argued that's not to be detached from material poverty but it's a particular disposition within a material poverty and connected to a material poverty.

There's a recognition of spiritual neediness and material poverty connected. You have within the beatitudes many references back to the Old Testament. So for instance Isaiah chapter 66 verse 2, but this is the one to whom I will look he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

The humble and contrite in spirit, the poor in spirit. Those two things help us to recognize part of the Old Testament background that Matthew is playing with, that Jesus is playing with in his teaching here. Jesus is speaking to people that had imaginations that were lively with the presence of the Old Testament text.

He's been working with the book of Isaiah at many points and we've seen that already within the book so far but the significance of Isaiah and the servant's mission is one that charges a lot of these of the beatitudes. It helps us to understand what is going on within them. There's a present tense for theirs, blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

That present tense I think has something of a proleptic sense that it's like talking about the plough breaking up the furrowed earth. You're speaking about the furrowed earth as if it has already been ploughed but it's in the process of being ploughed. That is the meaning of something being proleptic, speaking about something that's yet to come as if it has already occurred.

There's also a sense of realized eschatology that may not look this way to anyone else but this is actually the case. This is happening here and now. The kingdom of God is in their midst.

They do not yet know it but yet they are blessed right here, right now. They will receive the kingdom of heaven in the future but it is already taking place at that point. I've noted the way in which the blessings and the beatitudes are contrasted with the woes at the end of the book and here we see a direct mapping on of the beatitudes and the woes.

If we look at the first one, blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. What is the first woe? Woe to you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites for you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces for you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. So you have theirs is the kingdom of heaven, you're shutting up the kingdom of heaven in people's faces and they do not go in themselves.

So that's the contrast. Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted. This emphasis upon mourning is maybe lamenting Israel's sins but probably something more than that.

It's mourning the condition of, mourning as a condition of bereavement, mourning as a condition of being deprived of life, of the well-being that was formerly enjoyed, something like that. The mourning is a bit more connected to bereavement than just lamenting sins here I think and if we see the parallel statement which is in certain texts, not in all texts and this is one of the reasons why I think that there's a good argument for it being within this particular, it should be included within the text. It says woe to you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites for you devour widow's houses and for a pretense you make long prayers therefore you will receive the greater condemnation.

So those who will mourn, devouring widow's houses and we see that within the events of the woman putting in the two mites. Around that there is the condemnation in Luke, I think it is, of first of all that they devour widow's houses then you see the widow putting in the two mites and then immediately afterwards the statement that their house will be

left to them desolate. So blessed are those who mourn.

Blessed among other things are the widows. Blessed are those who are bereaved. Blessed are those who are in a condition of recognising an acquaintance with death that there is something, they're not living in a position of well-being it would seem.

These are people who are suffering, who've experienced the loss of life of people close to them. They're people who are living in the valley of the shadow of death and they're mourning in that position whether because of Israel's condition or because of their own personal condition and the losses that they have sustained. Whereas the people who are rejoicing, who are benefiting, the people who are gaining wealth at this point, they are not going to be comforted.

The third, blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. The Old Testament expressions that are applied in the Old Testament and Jesus is bringing forward that memory. Psalm 37 verse 11.

The meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace. And a few chapters earlier in Psalm 25 verse 13. His soul shall abide in well-being and his offspring shall inherit the land.

It's the man who fears the Lord. In these statements Jesus is bringing to mind the scripture of Israel, reminding them of all these things that God has said about the people that seek him. Now think also about the way that the prophet's message and the message of the psalm so often work.

It's people in a position of suffering, of lament, people who are in a position of exile, of alienation from God and they're seeking his face and God is about to act in their situation and then things change. And these are the texts that Jesus brings to mind. The texts that refer to those who seem to be losing out in history.

These are the people that do not seem to be prospering. These are the people who seem to be rejected and unapproved. The people who seem to be out of power, out of favour and yet these are the people that will be blessed.

The contrast here is also between meekness and force of arms, military might. Jesus describes himself as meek and lowly in heart. He's not someone who is coming with a big bang of military strength, not someone who's throwing his weight around and killing people or attacking people but he comes as one who's meek and gentle and this is a contrast to what many people were expecting.

The other thing to notice is the way that when we read this alongside the woe in chapter 23 we can maybe see a bit more of the meaning that's taking place. Woe to you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, for you travel across land and sea to make a single proselyte and when he becomes a proselyte you make him twice as much a child of hell as

yourself. So blessed are the meek for they'll inherit the earth.

Here you have the scribes and pharisees travelling all around the world to make proselytes over sea and land and when they actually create these proselytes they're made into the people who will inherit hell not inherit the earth and so there's a contrast there as well. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied. Now what does righteousness mean? There's a lot of debate about this.

Some see it as personal ethical righteousness that's a common interpretation in the commentators that to be righteous or to hunger and thirst for righteousness is to hunger and thirst for that personal state of being ethically upright and I think there's something to it and as we look through in Matthew that's often how Matthew is using the language of righteousness with that primary connotation but I think there's more going on here. I think that the term righteousness as it's used in scripture and also in Matthew it refers to something broader the word righteousness is often used in the prophets in places like Isaiah or in places like the Psalms to refer to God's saving righteousness. It's something that God reveals in the fullness of time.

He acts on behalf of his people in his covenant faithfulness and salvation and that is called the revelation of his righteousness and here I think there is something similar being referred to. What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness? To hunger and thirst for God's action in the world, for God's will and this is inclusive of personal obedience I think. It's your will be done.

That's what it means to hunger and thirst for righteousness. Now for God's will to be done it means a broader state of justice being brought about in the situation of injustice that God would act and bring his saving justice to bear but also means the hunger and thirsting that we ourselves should be figures who are righteous, characterised by justice, uprightness, holiness and all these sorts of things. So on the one hand it's referring to God's saving righteousness but also to the state of personal righteousness that should correspond to that and all of this can be included I think under a hunger and thirst for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

In the paralleled woes this is a less obvious one in Matthew 23 That is not such an obvious parallel and I'll be interested to hear people's thoughts on how that could be paralleled with the hunger and thirsting for righteousness and maybe things that are referred to God's table perhaps that's what's in view. I'm not sure. I think that would be a very weak connection if it were.

The fifth beatitude is blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy. This is again a connection between there is a fittingness. Those who are merciful will receive mercy.

There is an aptness, a poetic justice to this that those who are characterised by mercy will be met with mercy and we see this in some Jesus teaching concerning forgiveness



that those who do not forgive will not receive forgiveness and that measure that you meet will be met to you in measure to you in return. This is contrasted with again the behaviour of the scribes and the pharisees. Woe to you scribes and pharisees hypocrites for you tied mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law justice and mercy and faithfulness.

So what they have done is not characterised by mercy. They've not actually kept the heart of the law. They've been about a form of the law that is devoid of mercy, devoid of faithfulness and justice.

It's something that's characterised by a binding of heavy burdens upon people in a way that's the exact opposite, the antithesis of mercy and that contrast is one that Jesus is drawing out very sharply in that point and then placed alongside the beatitude we see more sharply what's taking place. Those who are merciless will receive no mercy whereas those who are merciful who keep the very heart of the law, the people who have remembered the weightier matters of the law, they will receive mercy. The sixth, blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

This again is referring back to Psalms and other places like that. Psalm 24 verses 3 to 6. Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord and who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Seeking the face of God, seeing God's face, clean hands and a pure heart. Blessed are those who are pure in heart.

And then he shall receive blessing from the Lord. Blessed are the pure in heart. So all those elements are within that Psalm and there's a contrast once again between true inner purity and just a mere ritual external purity.

This is something that's seen again in the contrast between Matthew 23 and the woes and the blessings of chapter 5. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you clean the outside of the cup and the plate but inside are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and the plate that the outside also may be clean. Blessed are the pure in heart.

Woe to those who are not pure in heart but are just clean on the outside and inside are filled with ungodliness. The seventh beatitude, blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God. Being sons of God it's reflecting God's character.

We have sons of as an expression in various places in the gospel perhaps particularly in Matthew as a sort of idiom for referring to those who have something of a character

related to that which they are the sons of. So on the one hand you have God and those who reflect his character are those who are described as like the sons of God. This is something expected in the future and we'll see this referred to in part in verses 44 and 5. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your father who is in heaven for he makes his son rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

To be a son of God is to be someone who reflects his character and this is expected in the future that this is what it will look like to receive the kingdom of God. Already in the present there's something of that that's being realised here and now as Christ and his mission is bringing God's presence among his people, the kingdom of heaven in their very midst and the great miracles and signs that Christ is performing are signs that God has come and visited his people. But this is also expected for a greater eschatological horizon that these people will be on the last day recognised to be the true sons of God, those who share in the character of their father.

Now how does this contrast with the woes? Once again, woe to you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites for you're like whitewashed tombs which outwardly appear beautiful but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. And so on the one hand you have the peacemakers who will be called sons of God and then you have those who are hidden containers of death and violence and that contrast between the two is a sharp one at this point.

The peacemakers are those who are characterised by God's own making of peace. God is coming and he's bringing peace to his people. They are called sons of God because they reflect what God himself is bringing in the advent of the kingdom.

Christ is declaring liberty to the captives, he's declaring justice in a situation of injustice and all of this creates a state of peace. Not just a state where there's no conflict but a state of true peace in the sense of shalom, a wellness, a goodness that there's a well-being that God's people will enjoy. They will live in peace and in well-being.

There will be good achieved in their midst and they will all enjoy the brightness of God's love and favour towards them. The final of the beatitudes or arguably some have argued that this is the second to the last and that the final one is parallel to the eighth but is a distinct one in itself. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

It's seeking God's will on earth. Again being persecuted for righteousness sake, those who are seeking God's salvation, seeking God's will and as they do so they will suffer persecution. They are described once again, notice that the emphasis upon identification and affiliation.

Those who are peacemakers will be called sons of God. Those who are pure in heart will see God and here we have another one. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

They are like the prophets. It goes on to discuss the way that they are similar to the prophets and it addresses it not just to a generic group of people that blessed are those who. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Now notice then that there is an identification between the people who are being blessed and the sons of God and through that an identification with God himself. Then there is a parallel here if you read the eighth beatitude and then you read this thing that follows which arguably is a ninth or is in a second part of the eighth.

I would argue that it's a second part of the eighth which relates the eighth commandment the eighth beatitude directly to the people hearing. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Map those statements onto each other and see what you observe. First of all the blessed is the same those who are persecuted is you and when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds evil against you falsely these are people who are falsely persecuted.

For righteousness sake what does that map onto? On my account and so there's for righteousness sake on the account of Christ and so Christ is identifying his mission with the sake of righteousness. So they're being persecuted for the sake of their upright actions but this is more than just personal upright actions. This is people who are representing God's saving will being brought to bear in history.

These are people who are declaring the good news of the kingdom. These are people who are living as a enacted declaration and demonstration of God come to deliver and to bring light and life to his people and those people will receive persecution false accusation and will be reviled. And here we have the two imperatives that we have within the Beatitudes.

We do not really have imperatives we have declarations of who is blessed maybe there's an implicit imperative there but at the end we have imperatives rejoice and be glad that our response to this persecution is to rejoice and to be glad. Why? Because we're being persecuted on the account of Christ and being persecuted on account of Christ is a form

of identification with him. It demonstrates that we are identified with Christ and not just that we are identified with all the prophets that went before all of those who are persecuted for righteousness sake.

We stand in that tradition and Christ shifts at this point from speaking in a more generic sense to about people who are blessed to speaking directly to his disciples and saying that they will be persecuted but as they are persecuted they will be blessed on the account of their association with Christ. How is this paralleled and juxtaposed with the end of Matthew with the woes? It's not hard to see. Woe to you scribes and pharisees hypocrites for you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous saying if we had lived in the days of our fathers we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.

Thus you witness against yourselves that you are the sons of those who murdered the prophets and so they are associated with the murderers of the prophets. The righteous, the disciples of Christ are associated with the prophets themselves. Fill up then the measure of your fathers you serpents you brood of vipers how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes some of whom you will kill and crucify and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth from the blood of righteous Abel beginning of Genesis to the blood of Zachariah the son of Arachia the end of second chronicles whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.

Truly I say to you all these things will come upon this generation. And so these frame the book this contrast between blessings and woes a contrast between the true people of God the people who are associated with Christ and his mission and the false people of God the people who seem to sit in Moses seat and Christ sits as it were in the seat of Moses here as he sits down on the mount and teaches the people the scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses seat but they are false teachers and they are the ones who will experience all the woes that are about to come upon the unfaithful people and the association between the faithful people of God and the prophets is and the association through that with Christ is seen both in Matthew 23 that God is or Christ is going to send prophets wise men and scribes his apostles and his disciples he's going to send them they're going to be persecuted in the synagogues and mistreated and all these sorts of things and the blood of all the prophets will come upon Israel as a result and then in Matthew 25 whatever you did to the least of these my brethren you did to me connect that with the earlier way that Christ sends out his disciples as sheep among wolves and the way that whatever the response they receive is a response that Christ is receiving through them the association between between Christ and his disciples is very strong so Christ comes to declare the message of the servant that he is bringing God's light to bear upon a people in darkness that he is about to bring liberty to the captives the recovering of sight to the blind he's going to comfort those who mourn and he's going to

bring joy and rejoicing to people who have suffered in darkness and the response to that is that all these people who have suffered in poverty and mourning who've hungered and thirsted for God's righteousness all of these people are going to be comforted they're going to inherit the kingdom of God they're going to rejoice and they're going to be exceedingly glad because God has visited his people and Christ from there he goes on to talk about the character of his people a description of the sort of thing that his people are and note the way that this has an emphatic force you are the salt of the earth you are the light of the world the disciples are taking on here the mantle of Israel the mantle of the prophets Israel was supposed to be like a city on a hill maybe the Jerusalem connection should be seen there that Jerusalem was a city on a hill and the Israelites were supposed to be a light to the nations the servant was to be given as a light to the nations and now the disciples of Christ will be playing that role they are told that they are salt and light not just how to become it they're not told you ought to be salt and light though that is very clearly part of the message they're told that they are salt and light note that there are different words used for earth and land earth land and world here so they are the salt of the earth or the land and they are the light of the world i suggest that maybe there is a contrast there between one relating primarily to Israel and the other relating to the wider cosmos or the wider gentile nations other thing to notice that they are salt and light what does that remind you of it should remind you of the story of Abraham where you have sand and stars sand connected with salt stars connected with light and they are in this respect connected with the true sons and daughters of Abraham if you are the people of God if you are the body of this these disciples you are the true Israel you are the people who are blessed this is what the true Israel looks like in the midst of the nation of Israel Christ is raising up a faithful Israel an Israel within Israel an Israel that will take on the mantle of Israel's calling that will continue what the prophets were supposed to do and will bring that mission to its proper destination they will bring light to the nations they will bring salt to the earth salt what is the purpose of salt salt serves to preserve things it also is something that can be used as a form of judgment and salt is cast upon the land in or the land becomes a salt in the judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah Deuteronomy chapter 29 it says and the next generation your children who will rise up after you and the foreigner who comes from a far land will say when they see the afflictions of that land and the sickness with which God has made it sick the whole land burned out with brimstone and salt nothing sown and nothing growing where no plant can sprout an overthrow like that of Sodom and Gomorrah so salt can destroy land salt can be a means by which the land is rendered infertile by an invading army perhaps but salt is also associated with other things it's a salty associated with sacrifice in Leviticus chapter 2 verse 13 you shall season all your grain offerings with salt later on it talks about the sacrifices more generally you shall not let the salt of your covenant of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering with all your offerings you shall offer salt in Mark chapter 9 we have another expression of this and if your eye causes you to sin tear it out it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell where the worm does not die

and the fire is not quenched for everyone will be salted with fire or in some versions every sacrifice will be salted with salt salt is good but if the salt has lost its saltiness how will you make it salty again have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another so salt can be associated with fire and sacrifice if you think about salt on your tongue it has something of a fiery flavor to it gives savor to things it makes things tasty when the salt of the covenant is placed upon the sacrifice it makes it tasty to the Lord on the other hand it's something that can destroy land that is judged it's something that is as as fire to destroy land it's something that is associated with judgment and condemnation so it has many different associations it preserves it gives taste and savor it is something that is presented as a good thing in our speech we're supposed to have speech seasoned with salt in Colossians 4 5 it is a sort of solid fire that brings out the taste of things gives it an extra piquancy and a strength we talk about the salience of it that has a particular flavor to it i'm not sure if that comes from the same the root of salt but when we talk about salience but it has something similar to it it brings out flavors it brings things into a prominent um flavors that would otherwise be dulled and insipid it makes them more alive it is not however something that can salt itself salt is always salt for something else if salt loses its saltiness its point is completely worthless why would you salt salt you don't salt salt you use salt to salt other things and here i think and there's a vision of righteousness that is implicit here the salt of the earth is to give the earth its flavor its savor in the mouth of god and so we're supposed to be spread out upon the earth like sand on the seashore like salt upon the sacrifice to give the sacrifice flavor to be good for it to make it something that's tasty and maybe it's to preserve it too maybe it's something that on certain occasions is to destroy but we are spread out as salt within the world and as we are spread out we will not lose our taste we will as we act to salt towards the world we will make the world something that has savor in the mouth of god and so the numerous purposes of salt i don't think that we should just narrow these down to one i think that matthew is playing with part of the ambivalent ambiguity here that it could be many different ways in which salt is acting and in salt we're like sand spread out upon the earth we're like um that which preserves we're like that which gives flavor with we're like that which can destroy on certain occasions like fire on the land or salting of the earth we're all of these things and within the gospel i think you'll see that every single aspect of that is reflected by the disciples in some way or other they are salt in many of these different senses not just in one the danger if they are not faithful assault that they will be trampled underfoot that is an image that is connected to occupation or a city that is trampled underfoot is an occupied city a city the city of jerusalem trampled underfoot by the gentiles for instance and if you are unfaithful in your calling assault you will be trampled underfoot that is indeed what has become of israel israel was supposed to be defined by salt the salt of the covenant salt was something that epitomized the covenant it was added to all of the sacrifices and yet israel has lost that salty flavor and god is about to spit them out of the land and out of his mouth and they are not pleasing to him but rather this is the true israel scattered throughout the land scattered throughout the world bringing things to a proper taste of

savour making things savoury now think baby back to the story of sodom and gomorrah what did sodom and gomorrah need it needed an act of good seasoning of the faithful and it lacked that it lacked the um it lacked a number of righteous people within it that would preserve it and without that number of righteous people to preserve it they rejected lot and lot failed to be faithful in that situation and as a result lot was removed the saltiness was removed and the whole of the city was seasoned was destroyed with salt as it were became a salt salty wasteland and lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt so the barrenness there but i think there's also a theme maybe we could connect with that that the salt of the righteous are those that preserve places so as god sends um as abraham into seeds for sodom before um god sends the as god sends the angels there there is a recognition that god preserves places by the seasoning of his people you have that the same thing in jesus mission that he sends the disciples onto the places in israel that places will be preserved by the presence of the righteous within them and if they are not then they should wipe the dust off their feet there's a sense in which salt will in that situation be used to condemn that it will be worse for those places than sodom and gomorrah on the day of judgment the disciples are also the light of the world and this draws upon imagery once again of the book of isaiah chapter 42 verse 6 i am the lord i have called you in righteousness i will take you by the hand and keep you i will give you as a covenant for the people a light for the nations and in 49 verse 6 is it too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of israel and to bring back the preserved of israel i will make you as a light for the nations that my salvation may reach the end of the earth note again that these these statements refer not just to israel but to a broader body of people this is in reference to all the nations that god is going to bring his light to the gentiles and in christ's mission as we've already seen christ is a light dawning and that is drawing upon the prophecy of isaiah and here we see the prophecy of isaiah come to the foreground again the beginning of christ ministry ministry that paradigmatic statement that we see in luke's luke chapter 4 from isaiah 61 and the converse of that within the beatitudes all of this is expressing the fact that god is visiting his people the kingdom has come the good news is being proclaimed and the light to the world is being set up what is that light to the world christ is the light to the world and all of his people who are identified with him who are identified with the isaianic servant who are identified with the one that god has sent in his name the one who represents his own coming to the people that he is the light to the world and in him all these other people are the light to the world these are the people within whom through whom god is acting and working in the world once again note that it's not a matter of you're not being light to yourself you're not being salt to yourself the purpose of light and salt is to act towards other things you're light and salt for other things and there's a vision of righteousness in there when we think about righteousness so often we're thinking about a sort of ethical behavior that is for our own sake to build up brownie points or something like that to feel good or justified before god but the vision of righteousness that jesus is presenting here is a vision of righteousness connected with the salvation of god with the saving righteousness of god that goes out into the world brings light to the nations is

characterized by mission and is characterized by the gift of your presence and your work towards others people see this and the response is not well as a righteous man he's obviously clear in good standing with god note that they glorify god in heaven the response is to recognize that god is working on the world through this people and note it's not just an individualistic thing you and your small corner corner and i and mine this is about a people that's being established israel was supposed to be the light to the world and here is the true israel here is an israel being formed from within israel the faithful israelites the disciples of christ and the disciples defined around the new the one who's their master the one who's the messiah come to visit his people we've seen already in the earlier chapters how christ is set apart as the fitting messiah the one who fulfills the prophecies the one who ticks the boxes and now christ is already establishing a new identity of israel around himself and this is something that is brought out by dale brunner and not right other people like that within their work this is a very prominent theme we've already seen christ is the dawning light in the land of zebulon and naftali christ is the one that brings the light promised by isaiah and his people are this light on the hill jerusalem is a city set on a hill they are supposed to be a new jerusalem a city set on that hill the lamp may also be connected with the temple perhaps and so there's a play upon the salt of the sacrifices the salt of the sand promised to abraham that his descendants would be like the sand of the seashore covering the whole earth and then there's a way in which all of this can be connected to old testament imagery perhaps but the disciples are on display to the world they bring things to light they cause people to glorify god as they see what god is doing through and in them there are people who preserve the world from judgment there are people who give the world its savor to make it tasty and to be glorifying to god as they scatter throughout the world they change the flavor of the world they preserve it from corruption and they bring its flavor to the surface in all of these ways we're seeing a depiction in very pregnant imageries images of what god god's people are to be the people formed around the messiah the people that are at the heart of this new practice of the kingdom and as jesus goes on to declare what the fulfillment of the law looks like what it looks like to worship as such a people and what it looks like to relate to others as this people and then the warnings concerning those who reject his way we will see all of the things implicit within this unpacked this is what it looks like to be a people they're not just defined by ticking boxes of commandments but by people who display the will of god in its full saving import these are people who are expressing what it means to have the will of god done on earth as it is in heaven and the people who reflect in their character the character of god himself to the extent that they would be called his sons and daughters thank you very much for listening if you have any thoughts or questions please leave them in the comments on my curious cat account if you'd like to support this and other podcasts and videos like it please do so using my patreon or my paypal accounts god bless thank you for listening