



The tribe of Issachar understood the times and knew what Israel should do
Issachar Ministries UK seeks to be a people who understand the times, listen to the Lord and know what should be done

Resourcing for Prayer Network **Spiritual Guidelines**

Teaching on the Kingdom

The Sermon on the Mount (iv)

'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth'

(Matthew 5.5)

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This is the first of the 'Blesseds' in the Beatitudes which is not replicated in Luke which chooses just 4 of the 8 in Matthew - but also adds 4 'Woes' highlighting the dangers of opposing characteristics. This verse can also be seen as essentially just a rephrasing of Matthew 5:3, *'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'* - equating poor in spirit with meek and the Kingdom of heaven with inheriting the earth. So let's explore the differences.

What is the Real Meaning of 'Meek'?

Meekness is an attribute of human nature and behaviour and usually defined as righteous, humble, teachable, and patient under suffering.

There has been a change in our common usage of the word 'meek' over the years - the 29 uses mentioned in the King James Version (16 from the New Testament) is reduced to 10 in the New King James version and then to just 4 in the NIV - one of which is in the Beatitudes - the other three are in the Old Testament: 1 Kings 21:27 (referring to Ahab's repentance); Psalm 37:11 *'But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity'* which we will discuss later and Zephaniah 3:12 (referring to the need to be meek and humble in order to trust in the name of the Lord).

Gentleness or humility are often used in its place as in *'Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth'* (the World English Bible)

Meek and poor, which can also be translated as humble and unassuming, simple and patient, are seen as essentially meaning the same thing although Greek understanding would have accentuated 'powerless'. Literature of the period often used the word meek to mean gentle or soft which would have been revolutionary in those societies who placed enormous stock on honour and status. At that time the Christians were seen as a small and powerless sect.

To many today, 'meekness' suggests the idea of passivity, someone who is easily imposed upon, spineless and weak. Since Jesus declared himself to be meek (Matthew 11:29) this is far from the true meaning and how it would have been understood in the Roman and Greek times of the day. In the Greek New Testament, "meek" comes from the Greek term *'praus'* and does **NOT** suggest weakness; rather, it denotes strength brought under control. The ancient Greeks employed the term to describe a wild horse tamed to respond to the bridle. So in the biblical sense, we can describe someone who is meek as someone one who has channelled his strengths into the service of God, who imitates the meekness of the Lord, and who says, *"Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart."* (Matt 11.29).

Paul gave an example of meek behaviour when writing to Timothy: *'The servant of the Lord must be gentle, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose'* (2 Tim. 2:24-25).

In the throwaway line in Numbers 12.3 in the King James version when Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses severely, God pronounced *'Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth'* (Num 12.3) which is translated in the NIV as 'humble'.

Meekness is often seen as an attribute of a true disciple of Christ and its use has been contrasted with humility: meekness referring to behaviour towards others, where humbleness refers to an attitude towards oneself. When Jesus used the term in the Beatitudes he was almost certainly drawing on Psalm 37.11 *'But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity'*. The previous verses in this chapter give us a picture of a meek follower which begins with putting their trust in God (see box above).

Portrait of the Meek (Psalm 37)

1. They have confidence that God is with them and not against them and that he will use his power and mercy to keep them close to him.
2. They admit that their own efforts are not enough and commit their ways to following the ways of God
3. They wait patiently for him to show them the way - they are not lazy but they have a quiet steadiness about their lives in the midst of upheaval.
4. They do not fret when things go wrong and they refrain from anger so they do not produce the kind of bitterness and anger and fretfulness in themselves and in others.

Inheriting the Earth

All the Beatitudes are looking to the end times and encourage repentance with the promise that all who obey will receive their reward in due time. The phrase *"inherit the earth"* is also similar to *"theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven"* in Matthew 5:3. Some people feel that the two terms reflect the two different views of the end times current when Matthew was writing. ie that the imminent end of the world would see all the believers brought up to join the Kingdom of Heaven at the same time as the physical world as we know it ceases to exist as God comes down to rule the Earth directly, and gives the chosen people dominion over the entire world.

Some believe that the word "earth" does not mean the physical world but rather the Israelites taking possession of the Holy Land (Deut 4.1 and 18.20) in which case the 'Holy Land' may or not be on earth.

Whatever our view of the end times:

1. God is the owner of this earth (Psalm 24:1).
2. Those who obey Christ become children of God (Gal 3:27; Heb 5:9), and "joint-heirs" with the Lord (Rom 8:17).
3. The Father supplies all our needs (Phil 4:19), we therefore enjoy this earth and its blessings more than all others.
4. Mainly, however, our inheritance is spiritual (Acts 20:32); we are heirs in the kingdom of Christ (Eph 5:5), and citizenship in that kingdom is available now on this earth (cf. Jn 3:3-5; Col 1:13).
5. Finally, we also look for an inheritance that is reserved for us in heaven (1 Pet 1:4), because we are aware that the earth as we know it will be destroyed when Christ returns (2 Pet 3:10).

Finally

Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount emphasising the need to give the Father the glory in every circumstance including the way in which the disciples should live - their lifestyle would make the non-believers think about the value God could and should have in their own lives. The early Christians were meek and powerless in the eyes of the world but drew their strength from God - unfortunately when they grew in status and assumed worldly power they often forgot this call to be meek. May we regain this attribute and all become the best ambassadors for him that we can be with true 'meekness'.

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