

The Beatitudes Story Profile

Bible Story: The Beatitudes
(AKA: The Beatitudes for Kids)

Bible Text: Matthew 5:1-12

God's Unfolding Story Element: God sent Jesus to help us.

Story Summary:

Jesus often had crowds of people following Him to hear him teach. One day Jesus gathered His disciples and a crowd of people on a big hillside or mountain where He preached a sermon we call *The Sermon on the Mount*.

The people following Jesus at that time were Jews or Israelites just like Jesus. The Jews had been waiting for a long time for God to restore Israel's government or what they believed was the Kingdom of God. At the time they were ruled by the Romans and they felt like slaves. They wanted to go back to the time when they ruled themselves with God's help.

Jesus began His sermon with what we now call *The Beatitudes*. Jesus used *The Beatitudes* to teach His fellow Jews that God's Kingdom had come, but it wasn't the kind of kingdom they were expecting. Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God was a spiritual kingdom that changed a person's heart more than the government.

Jesus said the Kingdom of God belonged to those who were "poor in spirit." These were people who didn't believe they had the power to bring God's Kingdom themselves, so they had to trust Him to do it.

Even today, people usually believe that in order to be happy, we need to have comfort, power, lots of food, lots of things, and people who like us. We want our circumstances to be good. The people listening to Jesus that day believed this, too. But in *The Beatitudes*, Jesus changed everything around. Jesus taught that the most important thing is what's happening in our hearts on the inside, not the outside. As we are changed on the inside, then we will live differently and change things on the outside in the world around us.

This can be a hard lesson to learn, but Jesus wanted His listeners then and His followers today to understand that His Kingdom starts in our hearts, not in our circumstances.

Highlights:

- Jesus was speaking to the Jews of His day and was addressing and correcting their misconceptions about the Kingdom of God. They were expecting a political and military kingdom that would change their government and outward circumstances.
- The Kingdom of God is the opposite of what we often seek or desire. Jesus took the Kingdom expectations of His listeners and turned them upside down.
- In *The Beatitudes*, Jesus taught that the most important thing is what's happening in our hearts, not the outward circumstances. As we are changed on the inside, then we will live differently and change things in the world around us.

Point(s) of Interest:

- The northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyria in 722 BC. The people of the Kingdom of Israel were dispersed by the Assyrians to many different places. This kingdom was, in many ways, lost to history after that. The southern Kingdom of Judah would survive until 587 BC. Many of the people of Judah were carried into exile in Babylon (rather than being dispersed) for approximately 70 years. These people were eventually allowed to return to Judah and many did, but the great political kingdom the people hoped for was never restored. Still, the people hoped for a Messiah to come and restore the kingdom. Jesus was the longed for Messiah, but His kingdom was not the kind of kingdom they were expecting.

Approximate Date:

The Sermon on the Mount probably occurred fairly early in the ministry of Jesus, but it's difficult to say with certainty.