

Matthew 5:10-12

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-5/matthew-510-12/>

The eighth and final statement (A') of Jesus's Makarios chiasm deals with being righteously persecuted. Jesus reiterates this point by telling His disciples that God will reward them for their righteous living in the face of persecution.

The parallel account of this teaching is found in Luke 6:22-23.

Jesus's statement (A') *Makarios are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*, corresponds with (A) *Makarios are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*.

The kingdom of heaven presently belongs to both *those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness* and *the poor in spirit*. All the other blessings in this chiasm are presented as being delivered in the future. The paradoxical mix of present with future blessings corresponds with the paradoxical nature of God's *kingdom*. *The kingdom of heaven* is both now and 'not-yet.' Jesus told Pilate that "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). This statement is both present and future. The kingdom is now, because Jesus says, "My kingdom is." But we know from other scriptures that Jesus' kingdom will someday be upon the earth. His kingdom is real, and in existence. But it does not currently occupy the full space it is destined to fill.

Persecution occurs when a group or individual is harassed or harmed because of who they are, what they represent, or what they do. Persecution can come from a broad spectrum of sources and degrees. It can be social, such as public ridicule or shame. It can be political where the abuse comes from a governmental authority in the form of fines, confiscation of property, imprisonments, or execution. Regardless of who is doing the persecution, the goal is always the same: shame the victim, isolate them from the wider group, and make an example in order to shape the behavior of others within the community.

Jesus paradoxically says that *those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness* are *Makarios* (happy and fulfilled). Jesus knew that the rulers of the world's kingdoms would not like it when His followers began to live according to the laws of His *kingdom* (John 15:18-20, 16:1-2, 33). The powers of the old kingdoms will demand that Jesus's followers act like them. They will persecute anyone who seeks and practices His *righteousness*, which is harmony with Jesus' kingdom, instead of their *righteousness*, which is harmony with their kingdom. Jesus tells His faithful followers that when they are persecuted for following *His righteousness*, they are *Makarios* for it means that *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*. *The kingdom of heaven* belongs to *those who are persecuted* for living Christ's *righteousness*.

In effect Jesus is saying live in harmony (*righteousness*) according to God's *kingdom*, over living in harmony (*righteousness*) with the kingdoms of this world (Romans 12:2). In other words, happiness and fulfillment (*Makarios*) doesn't come from seeking harmony with the world, it

comes from seeking harmony with Jesus. When we seek harmony (*righteousness*) with Jesus, His *kingdom* is ours.

Jesus emphasizes this point by shifting from a generic *Blessed are those* to a more personal *Blessed are you*. Jesus is telling His disciples that they are a part of His kingdom and will receive its blessings if they will be like Jesus, and live out these sayings in the “Beatitudes.”

As He shifts from third person to second, Jesus unpacks the final line of the chiasm. He tells His followers that even *when people insult* (try to shame) *you*, *persecute* (harass or harm) *you*, or *falsely say all kinds of evil against you* (slander) *because of Me*—that you are *Makarios*. Notice that Jesus nowhere says that everyone who is *persecuted* for any reason is *Makarios*. It is only *those who are persecuted for the sake of Christ’s righteousness* or those who are harassed *because of Jesus* that are *Makarios*.

Rather than mourn or complain about their mistreatment, Jesus remarkably tells His disciples to *Rejoice and be glad!* The reason for their gladness is not sadistic pleasure over the pain and shame, but because of the result of being *persecuted: for your reward in heaven is great*. Jesus regularly speaks of reward throughout the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:46; 6:1-6; 6:16-18; 6:19-20). This makes sense because He is teaching His disciples. His servants.

Just as the first Moses set forth a path of life and blessing if Israel would follow God’s commands which He set forth in His covenant agreement with them, now Jesus, the second Moses, is setting forth rewards for obedience. Jesus speaks of rewards in the context of future reward (from God) for present faithfulness.

This *reward in heaven* is not ‘getting into heaven’ or ‘spending eternity with God’ which is only granted on the basis of God’s grace through faith in Jesus (Ephesians 2:8-9). Rather, the reward that Jesus promises is *Makarios*. To be satisfied. To reign in harmony with Christ over His *kingdom*. The reward is given for faithful service. For living a life of faith in the face of earthly trials, of which persecution is only a type. Jesus’s half-brother, James, writes the same message in his epistle: “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials” (James 1:2). James also writes “Blessed (*Makarios*) is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:12).

Jesus demonstrates that this is how God has always treated those who have been *persecuted for the sake of righteousness*. He reminds His disciples that *the prophets who were before you* (Abel, Noah, Joseph, Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, etc.) *were persecuted in the same way*. The implied upshot is that as God richly honored and rewarded those prophets for seeking harmony with Him instead of the world, despite constant persecution, so will He reward us if we do the same.

Biblical Text

5:10-12 Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of M