

Matthew 5:9

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-5/matthew-59/>

The seventh statement (B') of Jesus's chiasm focuses on being a peacemaker.

There is no apparent parallel account of this teaching in the Gospels.

Jesus's statement (B') *Makarios are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God*, corresponds with (B) *Makarios are those who mourn for they shall be comforted*.

Even though there were no ongoing wars at the time Jesus delivered this statement to His disciples, there was no peace. Tensions were high from all factions and quarters of Judea. The disciples must have had this on their minds while they listened to Jesus, looking over the Sea of Galilee's northern shore on the towns run by Pharisees: Corazine, Capernaum and Bethsaida. Further down the western shore to their right was Herod's capital city, Tiberius, where his Herodian party and Sadducees enjoyed the luxuries of Rome. Across the sea to the East was the Greco-Roman Decapolis and the city of Hippos atop a hill rising from Galilee's eastern shore. Roman legions were garrisoned there. And on the horizon lay the hornet's nest of Gamala where Zealots spent their days plotting bloody revolution against the Romans.

Each of these factions had their own vision for peace, which mostly meant dominance, or the elimination and ruin of their rivals. When Jesus said, *Makarios are the peacemakers*, His disciples would have been fully aware of all that these parties stood for. Each disciple surely had political leanings, if not allegiance, to one of these factions. For instance, Matthew was a Herodian tax collector while Simon was a Zealot (Matthew 10:2-4).

Peace for the Herodians and Sadducees meant compromise with Rome and all it represented. Peace for the Pharisees meant capitulating to Rome even as they officially remained aloof. They wanted to be seen as standing up to Rome and for God's law (which Jesus will call out as hypocrisy). Peace for the Roman soldiers in the Decapolis meant the annihilation of any who defied Rome. This was the "Pax Romana," the Roman Peace. Do as Rome demands, and all will be peaceful. Defy Rome and be crushed. The Jewish Zealots will experience Rome's crushing power one generation after Jesus departs from earth, during the Jewish Wars (66-73 A.D.). Peace for Zealots meant the retreat of Rome and the downfall of the Herodians.

But Jesus did not come to take sides between this or that faction. He came to take over. He did not come to lift up one party and destroy the others (as happened when the Roman general Pompey intervened in Israel and brought in Roman authority a century earlier).

Later, Jesus will tell His disciples that He "did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). Jesus did not come to compromise with evil or find a way to fit into the corrupt systems and wicked kingdoms of this world. Moral compromise and cozying up to corruption is not the kind of "peace" Jesus was talking about when He said "*Makarios*" *are the peacemakers*.

Rather, Jesus came to institute His kingdom built on righteousness, mercy, and peace. The fullest expression of these ideals is the Hebrew concept—shalom. Peace. Jesus taught *Makarios are the Shalom-makers, the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.*

Shalom is more than mere justice or lack of war. It is wholeness, the full-bodied presence of harmony and love that only comes from God's presence (Judges 18:6;).

An apparent paradox emerges when we consider Jesus' two statements:

Blessed are the Shalom-makers for they shall be called sons of God.

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34).

How can Jesus be summoning His followers to both peace and war at the same time?

These statements may be reconciled when we recall two truths that have been previously mentioned.

1. It is impossible for the corrupt kingdoms of this world to experience Shalom. Evil and Shalom are mutually exclusive. Jesus is not calling His disciples to compromise with the sinful dominions of the world.
2. Instead of the hollow peace of compromise with evil, Jesus and His Kingdom offer the fullness of Shalom.

With those truths in mind, we see that a major aspect of what Jesus meant by Shalom-maker is to be a faithful witness; to lay down your life for what is true and good; to resist compromising with the world; to expose false teaching; to stand against injustice and corruption. In so doing, as we follow Jesus we bring the sword to the world system—the sword that is the Shalom of Jesus.

This idea of Shalom as an uncompromising witness also feeds into both the next Beatitude—“*Makarios are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness*” (Matthew 5:10) and Jesus's declaration that His disciples are “salt” and “light” (Matthew 5:13-16).

Because Shalom only comes from God's presence, apart from God, shalom is elusive to man (Leviticus 26:6, Job 25:2, Isaiah 26:12, Ezekiel 37:26). Jesus, God's Messiah, our Immanuel (God with Us) came to bring Shalom (peace).

This can be seen many places in the Old Testament. One example is in Zechariah 6:12-13. This is a Messianic passage speaking of Messiah as both King and Priest. Normally the king executes judgement while the priest intervenes between man and God. Jesus harmonizes both functions, and the way He harmonizes the “two offices” of king and priest is through the “counsel of peace.”

“Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord. Yes, it is He who will build the temple of

the Lord, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.”
(Zechariah 6:12-13)

It is righteousness, harmony of people serving one another, that brings true peace. Jesus is a *peacemaker*. Jesus, God’s Son, is the bringer of Shalom. *The peacemakers*, those who bring the Messiah’s Shalom to the people in their lives, will be like Jesus (God’s Son) and *shall be called sons of God*.

The notion of being a “son” in the context of ruling in the ancient world was a reward for faithful service. A faithful vassal would receive “adoption” as a “son” of the king, gaining honor and privileges, as a reward for faithful service. God rewards those who seek harmony, or *righteousness*. As we will see, part of seeking Shalom, being a *peacemaker*, is to call out false teachers, as Jesus will do to the Pharisees (Matthew 23). For a body to be healthy, diseases must be removed. This reward reflects the future reward of reigning, which is also expressed in clause C of the chiasm.

- A. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
- B. *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*
- C. *Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.*
- D. *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*
- D’. *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*
- C’. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*
- B’. *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*
- A’. *Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

We cannot demand any of these rewards. There is no external standard by which any human can measure their deeds and demand rewards from God. When God rewards us, it is an act of mercy. Becoming *sons of God* is not the same thing as becoming a child of God through belief. Becoming a son of God is the reward of reigning with Christ. It will be the *peacemakers*, those who seek the righteousness of harmony of the Body under the Headship of Jesus who will be rewarded in a manner that they can be satisfied.

It is interesting to note that the core of the chiasm does not include the future reign with Jesus as a reward. As important as that is to fulfill our design as humans, reigning appears to be a means to an end: to be satisfied. To be fulfilled. And in order to be satisfied, it is necessary to receive mercy.

Being such a *peacemaker* requires carrying the burdens of others. It requires living what is true, and rejecting what is false, an approach that always brings rejection from the world. But this is the path to happiness, to *be blessed (Makarios)*.

The opposite of being a *peacemaker* is to be one who creates division and strife. Jesus was a warrior. He battled His enemies. But His purpose was to serve. He was actually acting in the best

interest of those He confronted. His goals in showing the Pharisees the truth about themselves (that they were hypocrites) were twofold. Jesus was offering the Pharisees an opportunity to repent. He was also diminishing their social status, weakening their ability to lead others astray.

A person who creates division for the purpose of elevating himself is the opposite of a *peacemaker*. Jesus fought, but He fought for unity. Jesus desires to reward faithful servants who will fight for unity, and serve courageously, just like He served.

Biblical Text

5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.