

The Beatitudes
(Lesson 13)

Introduction:

1. Jesus began His Sermon on the Mount by giving "the Beatitudes" (Matthew 5:3-12).
2. In the Beatitudes,:
 - a. Jesus revealed some special blessings that are available to His followers
 - b. Jesus gave His requirements for receiving these blessings.
3. This lesson is a study of the 8th Beatitude in Matthew 5:10-12 -- it deals with what we can expect from the world when we practice the first 7.

Discussion:

- I. (vs.10a) *"BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE"*
 - A. Jesus was talking about a particular kind of harsh treatment.
 1. Christians are not to suffer because of doing wrong (1 Peter 4:15).
 2. Jesus talked about being persecuted *"for righteousness' sake"* [doing what is right according to God's will].
 3. The Lord's followers are to *"hunger and thirst after righteousness"* (Matthew 5:6).
 4. When we do this we can expect some persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).
 - B. Persecution may come in various forms.
 1. (vs.11) Those who practice righteousness may be:
 - a. *reviled*: reproached (Matthew 27:39-40)
 - b. *persecuted*: troubled, harassed, molested
 - c. *spoken against falsely*: slandered.
 2. We also learn from Luke 6:22 that those who practice righteousness may be hated and separated from friends and loved ones.
 - C. Examples of people being persecuted:
 1. Jesus (1 Peter 2:21-23)
 2. Stephen (Acts 6:8-13; 7:57-58)
 3. the members of the Jerusalem church (Acts 8:1, 3).
 - D. Jesus showed in John 3:19-20 that His followers may expect persecution because the world hates righteousness.
- II. (vs.10b) *THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE WILL BE BLESSED: "THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN"*
 - A. Persecution will keep us out of the kingdom if we allow it (Matthew 13:20-21).
 - B. Those who bear up under persecution they face for practicing righteousness will be part of the kingdom.
 - C. Let us consider some passages that teach us how to face persecution so we can receive the Lord's blessing.
 1. (Matthew 5:12a) Jesus said, *"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad"* (1 Peter 3:13-17; 4:12-16).
 2. To react to persecution correctly, we must:
 - a. keep our minds focused on the reward God has promised (Matthew 5:12b)
 - b. consider examples set by others (Matthew 5:12c; Acts 5:40-42; Hebrews 12:2-3).

Conclusion:

1. The Lord wants us to do what is right and shun evil.
2. When we do this, we can expect persecution in some form.
3. (Acts 2:47) The Christians in Jerusalem enjoyed *"having favor with all the people"* for a time.
4. However, it wasn't long until they began to be persecuted.
5. Rather than compromise or give in, they did the Lord's will.
6. We must follow their example.
7. Only those who do so will be a part of the kingdom of heaven.