

***Another Perspective***

**November 4-5, 2024**

**What Does It Mean To Be Blessed? –** As you may recall, this was one of the questions occupying my mind as I considered the promises found in our theme verse, Revelation 1:3. As I was looking for insights, I began by just looking up the meaning of the Greek word for “blessed” and found that it means essentially the same as its Hebrew equivalent, i.e. “happy, fortunate, well off”. That didn’t resolve my dilemma, though, of how reading about all the judgments in Revelation would produce that happiness and well being in us and for us. And then the Holy Spirit recalled to my mind the passage found in **Matthew 5:3-12**, where almost every verse begins with “Blessed are the…” When I took a fresh look at that passage (i.e. the Beatitudes), I realized that it gives a good picture of what it looks like to be blessed by God, and it definitely addresses the troubling questions of persecution and suffering. So let’s look at those verses together now and see what we can glean.

**Matthew 5:3-12 ESV**

*3“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*4“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

*5“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

*6“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

*7“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*

*8“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

*9“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons (children)of God.*

*10“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*11“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Notice the future tense in the sentences above: Jesus is telling His disciples how things *will be* in the kingdom of heaven. In Revelation we see **scenes of fulfillment** of what Jesus had predicted in Matthew:

1. The “poor in spirit” are those who recognize that they lack righteousness in themselves. In Revelation 7, the vast innumerable group of saints that John saw are described as those who had “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” That is, they had gained *Christ’s* righteousness through His blood.
2. Those who have mourned over their sin and over the fallout of sin on earth are described in Revelation 7:15b-17 as having God’s personal attention: He shelters them and shepherds them; He protects them from hunger, thirst, scorching heat and other difficult conditions; and He wipes every tear from their eyes.
3. The 144,000 are described in Revelation 14 as being utterly pure and blameless, and they “follow the Lamb wherever He goes”. They not only see God, but are always *with* Him.
4. All the ones who “came out of the great tribulation” are repeatedly shown to be in Heaven, celebrating with God forever. They have their reward there, and nothing and no one can ever take it away from them. They are truly forever ***blessed***.

**Jesus and Other Examples of Enduring Persecution –** So how can we be “overcomers” when we are called upon to suffer for our faith? Hebrews 12:2 gives us one clue: the example of Jesus. Christ never asks us to endure something that He Himself was not willing to do, and Paul tells us in this verse in Hebrews that we should “look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the **joy** that was set before Him **endured the cross**, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” We, too, can remember the joy that is set before us in Heaven and find the patience, courage, and endurance needed for whatever trial we may face here.

There are other people in the Bible who are good examples to us as well:

* Stephen (Acts 7:54-60) – As Stephen was about to die, he was given a vision of Heaven itself, and he saw Jesus there, waiting for him. So he died joyfully, knowing he was entering Jesus’ presence.
* Paul (2 Timothy 4:6-8) – Paul was in prison and knew that he would soon be put to death for his preaching. But he told Timothy, “…the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord…will award to me…and not only to me but also to *all* who have loved His appearing.” There was no fear, just anticipation.
* Peter (2 Peter 1) – Peter begins this letter to fellow believers with a list of character qualities they should cultivate. Then he tells them, starting in verse 10, “…if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ…I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.” Again, no fear, just concern for those under his care and an absolute confidence in his own “entrance into the eternal kingdom of Christ”.
* Jude (verses 24-25) – Jude didn’t write about himself, but he had wise words for the beloved friends he was writing. He had originally wanted to write about salvation, but felt compelled to warn his friends about how difficult things would get before the coming of Christ. After describing the evil times at length he said, “But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves [think “abide”] in the love of God…Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory **with great joy**, to the only God, our Savior…be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

And that doxology seems an excellent way to end this week’s “Perspective”!