

Study Guide: Matthew – Lesson 42

October 5, 2025

This study guide is designed to review the core concepts presented in Lesson 42 of the series on the Sermon on the Mount, focusing on the text of Matthew 5:10-12. The material explores the relationship between a righteous, Christian life and the inevitability of societal persecution.

Short-Answer Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in two to three complete sentences, drawing your information directly from the provided source material.

1. According to the sermon, what is the consequence of living a righteous life in the face of an unrighteous society?
2. How did the religious leaders of Israel, such as the Pharisees and Herodians, react to Jesus's ministry early on?
3. What did the phrase "pick up his cross" mean to a first-century Jew, and what did it imply about the cost of following Jesus?
4. Provide an example from the sermon of how a new Christian's professional life could have been disrupted in the ancient world.
5. Who was Tertullian, and what was his response to the new convert who said, "I must live"?
6. How did the Roman Empire use the worship of Caesar to create unity, and what was the specific annual requirement for all citizens?
7. What was a *libellus*, and why did early Christians refuse to obtain one?
8. List three specific accusations the Romans made against early Christians to slander them.
9. According to the speaker, what is a potential reason that modern Christianity is "so tolerable" in today's society?
10. The sermon states that Jesus's words in Matthew 5:11 describe specific types of persecution. What does the original Greek text imply about a person's attitude toward this possibility?

Answer Key

1. According to the sermon, you cannot live a righteous life in the face of an unrighteous society without experiencing a negative reaction. Jesus taught that if you are popular with everyone in the world, you are likely hiding your faith.
2. The religious leaders reacted with immediate hostility. The Pharisees and Herodians plotted to destroy Jesus, and the scribes watched him closely to find an accusation against him, filled with rage about what they might do to him.
3. To a first-century Jew, the cross was a symbol of death. When Jesus told his followers to "pick up his cross," they understood he was saying there is a significant price to pay for living in his kingdom, one that could cost them their lives.
4. A stonemason who converted might have a contract to build a pagan temple. After hearing Jesus, he would face the dilemma of how to continue that work in good conscience, potentially having to quit his job and lose his livelihood.
5. Tertullian was a prolific early Christian author. When a new convert worried about his job and said, "I must live," Tertullian replied, "Must you?" This response emphasized that a Christian's only true loyalty is to Jesus Christ, even above the necessity of one's own livelihood.
6. The Roman Empire used emperor worship as a cohesive element, personified by Caesar. Once a year, every person in the empire was required to go to a temple, burn incense on a fire, and declare, "Caesar is Lord."
7. A *libellus* was a certificate given to Roman citizens after they had performed the annual sacrifice to Caesar. Christians refused to declare "Caesar is Lord," as they believed Jesus was their only Lord, and therefore they never received a *libellus*, which made their worship illegal.
8. The Romans accused Christians of being cannibals based on a misunderstanding of the Lord's Supper ("Eat my flesh and drink my blood"). They also accused them of engaging in "orgies of lust" because of the "kiss of peace" and of being political rebels for their refusal to worship Caesar.
9. The speaker posits that the reason modern Christianity may be so tolerable is because its standards are "so low." He suggests that believers have become complacent and bend their knee to the world to avoid offending anyone, in contrast to God's unchanging high standards.

10. The sermon explains that the original Greek text for "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you" carries a deeper meaning. It truly says, "Blessed are you when you have a willingness in your life to be persecuted," implying an expected and accepted component of faith.

Essay Questions

Instructions: The following questions are designed for deeper reflection and analysis. Use the concepts and examples from the sermon to construct a thorough response.

1. The speaker states, "If you're popular with everybody in the world, then they don't know all the truth about you if you're a Christian." Analyze this statement in the context of the Beatitudes and the message of Matthew 5:10-12.
 2. Compare and contrast the forms of persecution faced by early Christians in the Roman Empire with the modern examples of opposition mentioned in the sermon (e.g., churches being denied banking services).
 3. Discuss the tension between a Christian's loyalty to Christ and their obligations in their social, professional, and family lives, using the historical examples of the stonemason, the Jewish convert, and the speaker's own "club" testimony.
 4. Explain the role of the Christian community, or "the church," as a response to the isolation and chaos that persecution can cause in an individual's life.
 5. The sermon concludes with a call for self-examination before the Lord's Supper, linking a lack of persecution to a potential lack of genuine faith. Evaluate this argument and its implications for a modern Christian.
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Glossary of Key Terms

Term / Name	Definition
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Appian Way	The main roadway leading into the city of Rome, where Christians were reportedly lined up and set on fire to provide light at night.
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Beatitudes	A series of declarations made by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), each beginning with "Blessed are..." They describe the qualities of people in the Kingdom of Heaven.
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Caesar	The title for the Roman Emperor. In the context of the sermon, Caesar became the personification of the Roman Empire and the object of a mandatory state religion used to unify the vast empire.
Charlie Kirk	Mentioned as a contemporary example of a Christian who was bold in the declaration of his faith.
Cross	Described as a symbol of death to a first-century Jew. Jesus's instruction to "pick up his cross" was a call to be willing to pay the ultimate price for following him.
Herodians	A party of Jewish political leaders who were aligned with the family of Herod. Mark 3 notes that they plotted with the Pharisees to destroy Jesus.
Libellus	A certificate or document issued in the Roman Empire certifying that a person had performed the required sacrifice to the emperor. Christians did not receive these because they refused to participate.
Makarios	The Greek word for "blessed" used in the Beatitudes, which is also translated as "happy."
Nero	A Roman Emperor known for his brutal persecution of Christians. The sermon mentions he would throw pitch on Christians to light his garden parties and sew them into animal skins to be torn apart by hunting dogs.
Pharisees	A powerful and influential Jewish religious sect at the time of Jesus. The sermon notes that they immediately began to plot against Jesus after he began his ministry.
Scribes	Professional scholars and teachers of Jewish law. Luke 6 mentions that they watched Jesus closely to find an accusation against him.
Sermon on the Mount	A collection of Jesus's teachings found in the Gospel of Matthew, chapters 5-7. It is one of the five great discourses in Matthew and contains the Beatitudes.
Spiritual Rebels	A term the speaker uses to describe early Christians. They were not political rebels seeking to overthrow Rome, but their spiritual refusal to compromise their faith made them dissidents against the state religion.

Synagogue

A Jewish house of worship. The sermon notes that a Jew who converted to Christianity would be ostracized from the synagogue, effectively cutting them off from their community and family.

Tertullian

A prolific Christian author from approximately 100 years after Jesus's ministry. He is quoted as telling a new Christian, who claimed he "must live" and was worried about his job, "Must you?"