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### The Savior's Coronation Sermon

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## The Savior's Coronation Sermon

*(For the sake of clarity, we use the word "Beatitudes" to include all of verses 1 through 16 in 3 Nephi 12. They begin "Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve" and conclude, "Therefore let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.")*

### The Beatitudes: "In the state of the gods"

One of the most interesting examples of Joseph Smith's statement, "We believe the Bible to be the word of God so far as it is translated correctly," is found in the *Anchor Bible's* very scholarly where a whole volume or more is devoted to each biblical book. The book of Matthew, which contains many quotes from the Old Testament, has two author/translators, W. F. Albright, a distinguished Old Testament scholar, and C. S. Mann, an equally distinguished New Testament scholar. This is the way they translated the Beatitudes:

3 Fortunate are the humble in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. 4 Fortunate are those who mourn, for they shall be consoled. 5 Fortunate are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. 6 Fortunate are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. 7 Fortunate are the merciful, [and so on].

In a footnote, they explain why they chose the word *fortunate*:

3.*Fortunate*. The word in Greek was used in classical times [to mean] of the state of the gods in contrast to men. The usual English "blessed" has more and more come to have liturgical or ecclesiastical overtones, and we have chosen "fortunate" as being the best translation available to us.<sup>871</sup> Third Nephi uses the same language as the King James Version: "Blessed are all the meek for they

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<sup>871</sup> W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *The Anchor Bible, Matthew* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1971), 45.

### *In the Book of Mormon.*

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shall inherit the earth.” It does not jar its first-time readers with language that stretches their understanding too far. It is important that Joseph used the same word in the Book of Mormon that is in the King James Matthew, because it lets us compare the Bible and the Book of Mormon with confidence and know that the Book of Mormon carries the same understanding as the Bible. It is also important that these two scholars have clarified what the Bible actually says—and therefore what the Savior said to the people at Bountiful. The thing that is so interesting about the clarification in their footnote is that these world-class scholars knew what the Greek word means—“in the state of the gods”—but they did not believe Jesus could have meant that, so they came up with a watered-down word—“fortunate” —because that made more sense to them. Then, consistent with their training as scholars, they put the real meaning in a footnote, leaving LDS readers of the Book of Mormon free to pursue the limits of the meaning if they wish to, but without imposing it on them:<sup>872</sup>

1 And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto Nephi, and to those who had been called (now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize, was twelve) and behold, he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them, saying: Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants; and unto them I have given power that they may baptize you with water; and after that ye are baptized with water, behold, I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost; therefore blessed are ye if ye shall believe in me and be baptized, after that ye

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<sup>872</sup> The words Joseph Smith chose when he translated the Book of Mormon are striking. For example, he used the word “blessed,” with the meaning in the Beatitudes, when he translated 1 Nephi. It was written in Egyptian characters almost 600 years earlier, and we have no idea what Egyptian word was used here. But there can be little question about its intent. In this example, the word *blessed* in 1 Nephi might best be understood as “in the state of the gods,” meaning the condition of the past, present, and future members of the Council in Heaven. In the festival drama, kingship began with a foreordination, extended through this life and continued forever. When the Lord spoke to Nephi, that one word embraced that entire continuum.

“And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Blessed [in the state of the gods] art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, ...And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher [king and priest] over thy brethren” (1 Ne. 2:19-22).

*Psalms of Israel's Temple Worship*

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have seen me and know that I am.

2 And again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized, for they shall be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.

3 Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 And again, blessed are all they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 And blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 And blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.

7 And blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

8 And blessed are all the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

10 And blessed are all they who are persecuted for my name's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 And blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake;

12 For ye shall have great joy and be exceedingly glad, for great shall be your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you.

13 Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the salt of the earth; but if the salt shall lose its savor wherewith shall the earth be salted? The salt shall be thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.

14 Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the light of this people. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

15 Behold, do men light a candle and put it under a bushel? Nay, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house;

16 Therefore let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven (3 Nephi 12:1-16).

The Beatitudes—as written in 3 Nephi—are among the most complete and succinct statements of the ideas—not the events, but the ideas—of the Feast of Tabernacles temple

*In the Book of Mormon.*

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drama that one can find anywhere in the scriptures. Most of the Beatitudes are very short quotes or paraphrases from the Psalms or from Isaiah. It is apparent that the Savior quoted these passages in order to evoke his listeners' memories of the entire passage to which he was referring. His speaking the Beatitudes would have only taken about three minutes. For his audience it must have been an overwhelming experience to hear the Savior run through that sequence of ideas so quickly—while their minds were filled to overflowing with the full intent of those passages of scripture. As the Spirit conveyed the message to his listeners, their minds would have been flooded with a quick succession of infinitely powerful ideas.

The following discussion of the Beatitudes is not intended to be anything like an exhaustive one. Indeed, it is intended to be rather limited.