

Blessed, as used in the Beatitudes.

This is one of my favorite examples of Joseph's "We believe the Bible to be the word of God so far as it is translated correctly." The *Anchor Bible* is a very scholarly multi-volume edition of the Bible in which one or more volumes are devoted to each book in the Bible. Each volume contains a new translation as well as a commentary. Because the book of Matthew quotes so heavily from the Old Testament, that volume 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 translate 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, for they shall have mercy shown to them. 8 Fortunate are the pure-minded, for they shall see God. 9 Fortunate are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. [and so on]

In a footnote, they explain why they chose the word "fortunate," rather than "blessed."

3. *Fortunate*. The word in Greek was used in classical times 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. [W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *The Anchor Bible, Matthew* (New York, Doubleday, 1971), p.45.]

The underlying reason that the scholars rejected "in the state of the gods," was because they did not understand that early Christians were not monotheistic, but believed in a Father, Son, Holy Ghost, and Council of the gods. It appears that the Saviour's use of that classical Greek word was intended to convey the understanding that the Beatitudes were describing the earthly condition, or state of understanding, that was (is or will be) enjoyed by the members of that Council.

It is important to me that the Prophet Joseph used the same word "blessed" in Third Nephi 12, as the King James translators had used in Matthew 5. We can now know that the Saviour said the same thing in both Palestine and Bountiful, because that enables us to compare the Bible and the Book of Mormon with confidence, and know that the Book of Mormon carried the same understanding as the Bible was intended to carry. It is also important that these two scholars have clarified what the Bible – and therefore what the Book of Mormon – actually means. The thing that is so interesting to me about the clarification is that these world-class scholars knew what the Greek word said – "in the state of the gods" – but didn't believe that it intended to say what it said, so they came up with a watered-down word – "fortunate" – because that made more sense to them. Then, consistent with their integrity as scholars, they put the real meaning in a footnote.

So now we can understand that the first part of the Beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God," carries the same impact as the last part. The Lord defined Zion as the pure in heart: "let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion - THE PURE IN HEART." (D&C 97:21) Now we can read that Beatitude: "In the state of the gods are the pure in Heart, for they - Zion - shall see

God.”

I frequently find myself being astonished at the words Joseph Smith chose when he translated the Book of Mormon. For example, he used the word “blessed,” with the meaning in the Beatitudes, when he translated First Nephi which was written in Egyptian almost 600 years earlier. Here are two examples where the word “blessed” in First Nephi might best be understood as “in the state of the gods,” which may also suggest the past, present, and future condition of the members of the Council in Heaven.

“And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Blessed 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)

In the Book of Mormon that covenant is the equivalent of the Davidic covenant of the Bible, and is the foundation upon which the legitimacy entire Nephite dynasty rested.

Later in his autobiography, Nephi records,

“And when I had spoken these words, the Spirit cried with a loud voice, saying: Hosanna to the Lord, the most high God; for he is God over all the earth, yea, even above all. And blessed art thou, Nephi, because thou believest in the Son of the most high God; wherefore, thou shalt behold the things which thou hast desired.” (1 Nephi 11:6)

Each of those statements by Nephi can be read to suggest that “blessed” denotes that his state is the same as the other members of the Council.

It is important to me that Joseph used the same word that is in the King James Matthew, so we could compare the Bible and the Book of Mormon with confidence, and know that the Book of Mormon carried the same understanding as the Bible. It is also important that these two scholars have clarified what the Bible – and therefore what the Book of Mormon – means. The thing that is so interesting to me about the clarification is that these world-class scholars knew what the Greek word said – “in the state of the gods” – but didn’t believe what it said, 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.

Whatever Egyptian word Nephi used here in this preview of the Beatitudes, and whatever Reformed Egyptian word the Saviour used in Third Nephi, the Prophet Joseph Smith translated them both “blessed” just as the translators of the KJV New Testament translated that Greek word “blessed.” So, I presume, they all mean the same thing, and can all be read the same way.

I frequently find myself being astonished at the words Joseph Smith chose when he translated the Book of Mormon. For example, he used the word “blessed,” with the meaning in the Beatitudes, when he translated First Nephi which was written in Egyptian almost 600 years earlier. Here are two examples where the word “blessed” in First Nephi that 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.

“And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: **Blessed 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) In the Book of Mormon that is the equivalent of the Davidic covenant upon which the legitimacy entire Nephite dynasty is based.

And

“And when I had spoken these words, the Spirit cried with a loud voice, saying: Hosanna to the Lord, the most high God; for he is God over all the earth, yea, even above all. And **blessed art thou, Nephi**, because thou believest in the Son of the most high God; wherefore, thou shalt behold the things which thou hast desired.” (1 Nephi 11:6)