

“Poor in Spirit” as code, LeGrand Baker

*3 Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (3 Nephi 12:3).*

That Beatitude is easier to understand if one reads it backwards to discover first its object and then its method. The object is: “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” That does not say they shall be citizens of the kingdom, it says it is “theirs”--- they shall own it. People who own kingdoms are called priests and kings. So, implicitly, the beatitude says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me, for they are the priests and sacral kings of the kingdom of heaven.”

To “come unto me” means precisely what the words say. It is not about just doing good things, it means one must go to the place where he is. The entire purpose of the ancient Israelite temple drama was to bring one behind the veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the world. Understood symbolically, the phrase “come unto me” happened when one had passed beyond that veil and entered the Holy of Holies of Solomon’s Temple--- God’s earthly throne room--- to be in the presence of Jehovah. Taken quite literally it meant one must come to the place where Christ is.

Implicitly then, the Beatitude says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit who came through the beautifully embroidered veil of the ancient Israelite temple to the place where they may meet God, for they are the priests and kings of the kingdom of heaven.”

The question now is “Who are the ‘poor in spirit’?”

Non-Mormon commentators on Matthew’s text insist the phrase has nothing to do with being impoverished. “Poor” does not mean lacking either spirit, spirituality, or worldly goods. There is nothing about poverty that precludes one’s coming to Christ. Similarly, there is nothing about emotional, spiritual, or worldly poverty that qualifies one to come to the place where the Savior is, or to be anointed to become a king or queen, unless that “poverty” is acquired in righteousness and according to eternal law. The “poor in spirit” are not spiritually impoverished, but “those living in uprightness, or ‘perfection.’”

The only kind of poverty that fits those criterion is acquired through sacrifice. “Sacrifice” does not mean to lose something or to give it up; rather, it means to make it sacred--- to set it apart. Throughout the scriptures--- even while animal sacrifices were still performed under the Law of Moses--- the sacrifice the Lord declared to be most acceptable was that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. The Savior explained the meaning of this Beatitude a few moments later when he said:

19 And behold, I have given you the law and the commandments of my Father, that ye shall believe in me, and that ye shall repent of your sins, and come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Behold, ye have the commandments before you, and the law is fulfilled.

20 Therefore come unto me and be ye saved; for verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven (3 Nephi 12:19-20).

Earlier, when the Lord spoke to the Nephites out of the darkness, he explained that a broken heart and a contrite spirit is the acceptable sacrifice:

18 I am the light and the life of the world. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

19 And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your

burnt offerings.

20 And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost (3 Nephi 9:18-20a).

The Psalmist had promised:

18 The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit (Psalm 34:18).

16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise (Psalm 51:16-17).

The Lord reiterated the same principle to the Prophet Joseph:

Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness [*zedek*], even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit (D&C 59:8).

It is apparent that the phrase “poor in spirit” is a reference to those who have made the sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit in the context of the ordinances of the ancient temple, and in preparation to entering the Lord’s presence there, and becoming priests and kings of the kingdom of heaven. Thus, one way of reading this Beatitude might be, “Blessed are those who make the sacrifice, who come to where I am, for they are the sacral kings of the kingdom of heaven.”

In the Beatitudes, the Savior will repeat the phrase “theirs is the kingdom of heaven” again. That repetition leads one to believe that the use of the phrase here in verse three represents the ancient tradition of first anointing one to become king, then later, actually anointing him as king, which apparently is represented as occurring later on in verse 10.