
3 Nephi 12 — In Me It Hath All Been Fulfilled — The Beatitudes and the Higher Law

3 Nephi 12: the Sermon at the Temple begins — the risen Christ's own delivery, to the Nephites, of the sermon he had given on the mount in Galilee. He blesses the twelve he has chosen and those who will believe their words, promising the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost. Then the Beatitudes, opening the kingdom to the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, those who hunger for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted. He names the disciples salt of the earth and light of the world — a city on a hill that cannot be hid. He declares that he has not come to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfil them: 'one jot nor one tittle hath not passed away from the law, but in me it hath all been fulfilled,' and the new law he gives is to come unto him with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Then he raises the law from outward act to inward heart: not only no murder but no anger; not only no adultery but no lust; not only no false oaths but no swearing at all — let your communication be Yea, yea, Nay, nay; not an eye for an eye but turn the other cheek, give the cloak also, go the second mile; not love your neighbor and hate your enemy but love your enemies, bless them that curse you. 'Old things are done away, and all things have become new.' And the summit: 'I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.' The chapter is the constitution of the kingdom — the blessedness of the lowly, the fulfilled law, the higher righteousness of the heart, and the call to a wholeness like God's own.

This is the beginning of the Sermon at the Temple — the risen Christ delivering, to the gathered Nephites, the same sermon he had preached on a mountainside in Galilee, now spoken by the resurrected Lord to the remnant of Joseph. It is one of the most important chapters in scripture because it is the *constitution of the kingdom* — the charter of the new life Christ requires of his people. And it does two great things. First, the Beatitudes turn the whole world's value system upside down, declaring *blessed* the very people the world counts as losers — the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the persecuted. Second, Christ takes the law of Moses, declares it *fulfilled in himself*, and raises it to a new and far higher standard — moving the whole of righteousness from the *outward act* to the *inward heart*, from "do not murder" to "do not even be angry," from "do not commit adultery" to "do not even lust." The chapter is the announcement that with Christ's coming a new and higher law has begun, a law not of external compliance but of inward transformation, and that the goal of it all is nothing less than to be *perfect* — whole, complete — as God himself is.

Hebrew Word Studies

anawim (אָנָוִים) — "the humble, the meek, the poor, the afflicted lowly" — **anawim** (singular **anaw**), the humble and lowly ones; the poor not merely in money but in spirit — bowed down, afflicted, dependent, the ones who have nothing to lean on but God. The "poor in spirit" and "meek" of the Beatitudes vv. 3, 5 (blessed are the poor in spirit... blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth). The Beatitudes open the kingdom to *the poor in spirit* and *the meek*, and both phrases translate one of the most important words in the Hebrew Bible — *anawim*, "the humble, lowly, afflicted ones." The *anawim* are not simply the financially poor; they are the *bowed-down*, the lowly in spirit, the ones who have been brought low and have learned, in their lowness, to depend wholly on God. The word carries the double sense of *affliction* and *humility* — for in the biblical imagination, those who have been humbled by affliction, who have nothing to lean on but the Lord, become the *anawim*, the meek poor whom God especially loves and defends. And the Old Testament is full of God's tenderness toward them. *The Lord lifteth up the meek (anawim)* (Ps. 147:6); *he will beautify the meek (anawim) with salvation* (Ps. 149:4); *the meek (anawim) shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace* (Ps. 37:11) — the very promise Christ repeats in verse 5. The *anawim* are the people of the great reversal that runs all through scripture: *he hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree* (Luke 1:52); *God giveth grace unto the lowly* (Prov. 3:34). They are Hannah, and Mary, and the faithful remnant — the lowly who know their need, who do not trust in their own strength or wealth or righteousness, who come before God empty-handed and dependent. And the deepest thing about the *anawim* is that their poverty is precisely their *qualification*. The kingdom of heaven belongs to the *poor in spirit* (v. 3) not in spite of their poverty but *because* of it — because only the one who knows he is spiritually bankrupt will come to Christ for everything, while the one who thinks himself rich (like the Nephites of chapter 6, *distinguished by ranks* in their riches and learning) will not come at all. The poor in spirit have the kingdom because they alone will *receive* it; the proud cannot, because their hands are full of themselves. This is why the Beatitudes are so revolutionary, and why they so directly answer the sin that destroyed the Nephites. The whole catastrophe of 3 Nephi 6 was *pride* — the building of ranks, the exalting of the rich and learned over the poor and ignorant. And the very first word of the risen Christ's sermon reverses it: *blessed are the poor in spirit* — blessed are the *anawim*, the lowly, the ones the ranks despised. The kingdom Christ establishes runs on the exact opposite economy from the society that murdered the prophets. There, the rich and proud ruled; here, *the meek shall inherit the earth*. And the inclusion of *who come unto me* (v. 3) seals it: the poverty of spirit that the world pities is the very thing that drives a soul to Christ, and the soul that comes to Christ in its poverty receives the kingdom that no amount of riches could ever buy. The *anawim* are blessed because they alone are empty enough to be filled — and the God who *exalts the lowly* delights to fill them.

tamim / shalem (תָּמִים / שָׁלֵם) — "complete, whole, perfect, sound, without blemish" (**tamim**); "whole, complete, finished, at peace" (**shalem**) — **tamim**, whole, sound, of integrity, lacking nothing; **shalem**, complete, finished, made whole (kin to shalom, peace). To be "perfect" in the biblical sense is to be whole, complete, integrated — not flawless but undivided, lacking nothing, made entire v. 48 (I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect). The summit of the sermon — *be ye perfect* — is one of the most misread verses in scripture, and the Hebrew behind it dissolves the misreading. We hear "perfect" and think *flawless, faultless, making no mistakes* — and then the command sounds impossible and crushing. But the biblical idea of perfection, carried by *tamim* and *shalem*, is not flawlessness but *wholeness*. *Tamim* means *complete, sound, whole, of integrity* — it is the word for a sacrificial animal *without blemish* (whole, entire, lacking no part), and for a person of *integrity*, undivided in heart. *Noah was a just man and perfect (tamim) in his generations* (Gen. 6:9); God commands Abraham, *walk before me, and be thou perfect (tamim)* (Gen. 17:1) — not *be flawless* but *be whole, be wholly mine, be undivided*. And *shalem*, the kindred word, means *complete, finished, whole, at peace* — it shares its root with *shalom*, and to be *shalem* is to be made *whole and entire*, nothing missing, nothing fractured. So the call *be ye perfect* is the call to be *whole* — complete, integrated, undivided, lacking nothing — *as God is whole*. This changes everything about the verse. The command is not the impossible demand to never make a mistake; it is the glorious invitation to become *complete*, to have every fractured and missing part of the self made whole, to be integrated into the entire and undivided wholeness that God himself is. And notice the deep connection to the rest of the sermon. The whole Sermon at the Temple has been moving righteousness from the *outward act* to the *inward heart* — and *that* is precisely the movement toward *wholeness*. The hypocrite is *divided*: clean on the outside, foul within; refraining from the act while harboring the desire; a fractured self at war with itself. The *tamim* heart is *undivided*: what it does and what it is are one; the act and the desire are reconciled; the person is *whole*. To be *perfect* in Christ's sense is to have the inner and outer self made one, the heart and the hands integrated, the whole person undivided in its love of God. This is why he can hold it out as a real hope rather than a cruel impossibility. And note the precious addition in the Nephite sermon: where Matthew has *be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect* (Matt. 5:48), the risen Christ says *be perfect even as I, or your Father* (v. 48) — he includes *himself*. Why? Because now he is *resurrected and glorified*, the perfected Son, *tamim* and

shalem in his immortal wholeness — and he is therefore the *pattern* and the *firstfruits* of the perfection he calls his people to. In Galilee, before the cross, he pointed only to the Father; here, after the resurrection, he can point to himself, for he has now become the whole and complete Man, the template of what redeemed humanity will be. The call *be perfect even as I* is therefore the most hope-filled verse in the sermon: it is the resurrected Christ holding up his own perfected wholeness and saying, *this is what you shall become*. Not flawless tomorrow by gritted effort, but *whole* in the end by grace — every fracture healed, every division reconciled, the self made entire and integrated and at peace, *tamim* and *shalem*, perfect even as he is perfect. The God who *makes whole* will make his people whole; *be ye perfect* is the promise that he will not stop until they are.

From the Chapter's Architecture

``cross-references Matt. 5 (the Sermon on the Mount — the Galilean delivery of this same sermon, the parallel throughout); Ps. 37:11 (the meek — *anawim* — shall inherit the earth — quoted in v. 5); Ps. 147:6; 149:4 (the Lord lifteth up the meek... he will beautify the meek with salvation — the *anawim* God exalts, vv. 3–5); Isa. 61:1 (the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek — *anawim* — Christ's mission to the lowly, vv. 3–5); Gen. 6:9; 17:1 (Noah was... perfect — *tamim*... walk before me, and be thou perfect — the wholeness of v. 48); Lev. 19:2 (ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy — the call to be like God, fulfilled in *be perfect*, v. 48); Lev. 24:20; Ex. 21:24 (eye for eye, tooth for tooth — the old law Christ raises, vv. 38–39); Lev. 19:18 (thou shalt love thy neighbour — extended to enemies, vv. 43–44); 3 Ne. 9:19–20 (offer... a broken heart and a contrite spirit — the new law restated in v. 19); 3 Ne. 6:10–14 (the ranks and pride that destroyed the Nephites — answered by the blessing on the poor in spirit, v. 3); 3 Ne. 11:29 (the spirit of contention that is of the devil — healed by *be reconciled*... love your enemies, vv. 24, 44); 4 Ne. 1:2–3 (the Zion of no rich and poor — the society the sermon's law would build); Moro. 7:48 (pray... that ye may be filled with this love... that ye may become the sons of God... that we may be purified even as he is pure — the perfection of v. 48 as Moroni later frames it). ``