

# Jesus—Savior and Redeemer

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It is an honor and a responsibility, brothers and sisters, to stand before an audience like this, even though I am still in my youth. I hope the Lord will be with us and that our minds will be able to understand what I have in my heart and what I would like to say, though I am sure I do not have the words to say it. And so I ask him, and ask you to ask him, to help us that we may have joyous spirits as we consider a few principles of the gospel that are vital for all of us to know.

During the recent Christmas season our thoughts were naturally directed to the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. In harmony with these thoughts, I shall in these remarks emphasize the manner in which he became and is our Savior and Redeemer. I was happy with that first song and also with the second—the first one, “Redeemer of Israel,” because I want to talk about how and in what manner he is our Savior and Redeemer.

First I shall call attention to a few fundamentals which are essential to an understanding of him and his ministry. The most important of these fundamentals is a knowledge of God the Father, man, and their relationship to each other. Without such knowledge it is impossible to realize the manner in which Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: “It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another . . .” (Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 345; hereinafter referred to as *TPJS*). In reporting his first vision, the Prophet wrote concerning God as follows:

... I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. . . .

... [In it] I saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name, and said—pointing to the other—“THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, HEAR HIM.” [Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* 1:5; hereinafter referred to as *HC*; see also Joseph Smith 2:16–17]

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Later the Prophet said that “the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s” (D&C 130:22). He also declared that “if . . . God . . . was to make himself visible, . . . you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man . . .” (TPJS, p. 345).

Such teachings seemed blasphemous in the days of Joseph Smith. It will help us to appreciate their impact if we remember that the Athanasian Creed was then, and so far as I know still is, the generally accepted concept of God held by the so-called Christian world. It reads:

*We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost is all one; the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The father [sic] uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal. As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreate, but one uncreate and one incomprehensible. [Are you following the description?] So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Ghost almighty, but one almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God. [HC 1:LXXXV]*

The clear and simple truth concerning God revealed through and taught by the Prophet was certainly a great contrast to this mystifying confusion.

A knowledge of the Prophet’s teachings concerning God and a personal testimony that they are true is a prerequisite to an understanding of the way in which Jesus is our Savior and

Redeemer. Next in importance to an understanding of Jesus and his mission is an understanding of what and who men are. On this subject the Lord has revealed the truth that men are souls and he has revealed the fact that a soul is a dual being, a spirit and a body combined—that each of us is a spirit clothed in a physical body. The Lord has further revealed the truth that God, who is an immortal, exalted, glorified, eternal soul, is the Father of our spirits. Paul was referring to our spirits when, in his great speech on Mars’ hill he said: “. . . In him we live, and move, and have our being; . . . For we are . . . his offspring” (Acts 17:28).

The scriptures repeatedly confirm this truth. God the Father himself declared that we are his children.

*At a time when Moses was caught up into an exceedingly high mountain,  
 . . . He saw God face to face, and he talked with him, . . .  
 And God spake unto Moses, saying: Behold, I am the Lord God Almighty. . . .  
 And behold, thou art my son. [Moses 1:1–4]*

Another truth we should keep in mind as we consider how Jesus is our Savior is the universal law that the offspring of all reproducing life has the capability to become, in full maturity, like unto its parents. In harmony with this law, we, the spirit offspring of God, have the capability of becoming like him. To bring us to that likeness is what the gospel is all about.

The gospel, frequently called the plan of salvation, is so called because it is the program by and pursuant to which we, spirit children of God, come to the earth, receive corporeal bodies, are placed between the forces of good and evil, are given our free agency, and by the choices we make here on earth prove ourselves worthy—or unworthy—to return to God’s presence and receive eternal life, which is the type of life God the Father and Jesus enjoy and

which they have made it possible for us to enjoy. The gospel is called the gospel of Jesus Christ because he, Jesus Christ, was the first-born spirit son of God, and volunteered, in the great pre-earth council of spirits, to come to earth and implement—that is, put into operation—the gospel plan.

We learn of that great heavenly council and something about what took place in it in Abraham's account of it as reported in the Pearl of Great Price, from which I now quote.

*Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;*

*And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.*

*And there stood one among them that was like unto God [that, of course, was Jesus Christ—the spirit Jesus Christ], and he [Jesus Christ, understanding at that time the gospel plan] said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell [we were all there, and he was talking about a dwelling place for us as spirits];*

*And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;*

*And they who keep their first estate [referring to those who would be faithful there in the spirit world] shall be added upon [that is, given bodies]; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate [of course, this referred to those who would and did reject the gospel plan there in the spirit world and who followed Satan. They are not to have glory in the same kingdom with those who there followed Christ]; and they who keep their second estate [that*

*is, those mortals who prove faithful in this estate] shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.*

This refers, of course, to those who accept and live the gospel here in mortality. They are the ones who will "have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever."

With reference to a Redeemer, which the gospel plan required, the Father said, in that great council,

*Whom shall I send? [That was to be the Redeemer.] And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first.*

*And the second was angry and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him. [Abraham 3:22–28]*

There is a followup on this account in the book of Moses in the fourth chapter, the first to fourth verses, in which the Lord said to Moses—Moses was on the mount and had an interview with the devil and they did not agree; so Moses told him where to go, [laughter] and he went. [laughter] And so—don't laugh about this; this is a serious Church meeting [smiling; more laughter]—and so the Lord appeared to Moses and said,

*That Satan, whom thou hast commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the beginning, and he came before me [referring to the spirit council in heaven] saying— Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor.*

*But, behold, [said the Father to Moses,] my Beloved Son, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning, said unto me—Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.*

*Wherefore, [continued the Father,] because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down;*

*And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice. [Moses 4:1–4]*

Speaking of this event, John the Revelator wrote:

*And there was a war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,*

*And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.*

*And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. [Revelation 12:7–9; emphasis added]*

These scriptures make it clear that in the great council Jesus volunteered and was accepted and appointed to be our Savior and Redeemer; and that Satan with the spirits who followed him was cast out.

The earth was created according to plan and prepared to be man's dwelling place during his mortal probation. Adam, who was *Michael* referred to by John and who stood with Christ in the great council, and his companion Eve were placed in the "Garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it" (Moses 3:15). In their coming to earth, as has been true of all their posterity, the memories of Adam and Eve were suspended. They had to be taught the gospel after they came to earth.

The Lord, there in the Garden of Eden, commanded them, saying:

*Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat,*

*But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat . . . , nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but, remember that I forbid it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. [Moses 3:16–17]*

As everyone knows, Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit. As a consequence, pursuant to the Lord's statement, death passed upon them and all their posterity.

Death—which is the separation of body and spirit—unless it could be overcome, would make it impossible for men ever to obtain the exaltation and eternal life which God the Father enjoys. This is so because he, God, has a body of flesh and bones. If we ever attain unto his likeness we must have bodies of flesh and bones, which we would not have unless death is overcome and we are resurrected. Jacob, the brother of Nephi, recognized this and emphasized it in these beautiful words:

*For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfill the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord.*

Jacob also knew that the transgression—that was the partaking of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—which brought death must be atoned for in order to bring about the resurrection, and he added:

*It must needs be an infinite atonement—save it should be an infinite atonement this corruption could not put on incorruption. Wherefore, the first judgment which came upon man [which is death and banishment from the presence of God] must needs have remained to an endless duration. And if so, this flesh [this, as I read it for the hundredth time, went deeper into my understanding than it ever did before] must have laid down*

*to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more.*

[And then Jacob declares,] *O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more.*

*And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself.* [2 Nephi 9:6–9]

That would have been our condition without the Resurrection. The required “infinite atonement” could not be made by any man nor by all men together because all men, being descendants of Adam, inherited by nature the death penalty. Atonement for disobeying the Father’s command not to partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which brought death, could not be made by one who was subject to the penalty. It had to be one who was not subject to death. That someone was Jesus Christ, whose Father in the flesh as well as in the spirit was Elohim.

Jesus was and is our Savior because he brought about our resurrection, through which our bodies and spirits will be united again. We shall be raised from the grave as immortal souls never again to be separated. This Jesus accomplished by voluntarily giving his life to satisfy the demands of justice for the broken law which brought death. This he was qualified to do because he was not subject to death. He was not a descendant of Adam in the same sense as are other men. He was the literal Son of God in the flesh as well as in the spirit. He thus inherited from the Father life in himself. He could have lived on indefinitely. Being the Son of God in the flesh, death had no claim upon him.

By voluntarily giving his life, he won the victory over the grave. Paul put it in these terms:

*For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.*

*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* [1 Corinthians 15:21–22]

Adam and Eve were responsible for death. Jesus brought about universal resurrection. In this respect, he was and is our Savior.

The fact that all men are to be resurrected, regardless of their conduct, does not, however, mean that all men shall obtain eternal life in the celestial kingdom. There are many kingdoms to which resurrected beings will be assigned—some of glory and some of less than glory. The kingdoms to which they will go will be determined by how well they, while in mortality, do the things the Lord their God commands them. Resurrected souls will have to be clean and pure to dwell with God. As the resurrected Jesus taught the Nephites, “no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom,” regardless of the fact that they are resurrected. (Somebody wanted me to quote from the Book of Mormon; that’s from the Book of Mormon that I just read to you: 3 Nephi 27:19.)

Since all men become unclean by sinning, it follows that there must be—if men are to reenter the kingdom of God—in addition to resurrection, a means provided whereby they can be cleansed from the stain of their sins. This means Jesus also provided. In the great heavenly council he voluntarily undertook to, and later came to earth and did, atone for the sins of all men by suffering on the cross and in Gethsemane sufficiently to satisfy the demands of justice for the sins of all men.

Men do not, however, get the benefit of Christ’s atonement for their sins unconditionally. They obtain the benefit of Christ’s victory over the grave unconditionally because they were not in any way responsible for the transgression which brought death. On the other hand, they are responsible for their own sins and are, therefore, required to do all they can

do by way of atoning for them. This is so because, while they are in mortality, men—being endowed with free agency—are placed between influences for good, led by Christ, and influences for evil, led by Satan. They will be held responsible for the choices they make because they are endowed with the means to distinguish between good and evil. As Mormon says, “the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil” (Moroni 7:16). Every man has that power; he is endowed with it at birth and will be responsible for his choices. The Lord confirmed this truth when he said to the Prophet Joseph Smith that

*the Spirit [of Christ] giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and [that] the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit. [D&C 84:46]*

On the other hand, Satan and his minions tempt everyone to do evil.

From the days of Adam until today, Satan has fought against Christ for the souls of men. Every person who has reached the age of accountability, except Jesus, has yielded in some degree to sin, some more and some less, but all save Jesus only have yielded sufficiently to be barred from the presence of God. This means that every person must be cleansed through the atonement of Jesus Christ in order to reenter the society of God. Jesus stated the situation to the Nephites in these words:

*Nothing [a term which, as Jesus used it, included no person] entereth into his [God’s] rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end. [3 Nephi 27:19]*

As has already been said, Jesus provided the means whereby men can be cleansed from the stain of their sins through his suffering in

Gethsemane and on the cross. This he was able to do because he himself never sinned; he therefore never was banished from God’s presence. By voluntarily taking upon himself to suffer as he did, he satisfied the demands of justice so that men, if they will repent, may be cleansed from the stain of their sins by the spilt blood of Christ.

He explained the purpose of his mortality to the Nephites when he visited them following his resurrection, as follows—this is Christ’s own statement as to why he came into the world:

*I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me.*

*And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me [that is, by the resurrection], that as I have been lifted up by men [when he was making this statement he was a resurrected being, having been crucified and “lifted up upon the cross” by men, and he was talking to the Nephites following his resurrection] even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil [we have all got that experience coming in the future, because we will all die, be resurrected, and stand before the judgment bar of Christ to see whether we are worthy of exaltation]—*

*And for this cause [he said] have I been lifted up [speaking of his crucifixion]; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works.*

*And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled [he means filled with the Holy Ghost]; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall . . . judge the world.*

*And he that endureth not unto the end, the same is he that is also hewn down and cast into the fire,*

*from whence they can no more return, because of the justice of the Father.*

*And this is the word which he hath given unto the children of men. And for this cause he fulfilleth the words which he hath [spoken], and he lieth not, but fulfilleth all his words.*

*And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.* [Those are the words, my beloved brothers and sisters, of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer.]

*Now this is the commandment [the Savior is still talking]: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.*

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel.* . . . [3 Nephi 27:13–21]

In the 19th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord declared that suffering is the inevitable result of unrepented sin, and that he had redeemed men from sin upon condition of repentance. Speaking to Martin Harris, he said, giving the revelation through the Prophet Joseph Smith:

*I command you to repent . . . lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.*

*For behold, I, God, [the Savior is speaking], have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;*

*But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;*

*Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore [can you imagine the suffering that Christ went through in Gethsemane, where he sweat blood from every pore? I have*

*been in the hospital and seen people suffering what the doctor said was the severest pain that man can suffer, but I never saw one sweat a drop of blood], and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—*

*Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.* [D&C 19:15–19]

He made the atonement for our sins on the condition that we repent. If we can remember and keep in mind these great basic truths, along with what Alma says about what happens to the soul between death and resurrection (read that in Alma 40:11–14), we will be able to more fully understand and appreciate Jacob's great discourse on the mission of Jesus as our Savior and Redeemer, recorded in 2 Nephi 9:10–14, and the sermon of Amulek and Alma as recorded in Alma 11:40–45 and Alma the twelfth chapter. We will know with certainty that Jesus Christ is our Savior because he brought about our resurrection and because he atoned for our sins on condition that we have faith in him and comply with the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now, my young brothers and sisters, I bear you my personal witness that I know that these things are true. I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; he walked the earth as the Son of God in the flesh and in the spirit, he brought about the resurrection unconditionally, and he has opened the way for you, for me, and for all mankind to have our sins forgiven through acceptance of his gospel, repentance, and living of the commandments. Oh, how glorious it would be if every person here tonight would qualify that we might someday meet around the throne of God, cleansed and purified and admitted into his celestial presence! I pray that it may be so, and leave you my blessing that you may have the strength you desire to bring that about, and I do it in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, our Redeemer, and our Savior. Amen.