

Message Sublime

WILLIAM R. BRADFORD

I deliver to you a message that I know to be true. There will be no speculation in my words. It is the greatest message that can be known either in the heavens or upon the earth. It has cost the lives of millions to preserve and bring forth.

Through the ages a most formidable effort has been and continues to be expended to prevent this message from being transmitted, by either the spoken or the written word. Any and every method, regardless of how mean or cruel or destructive, is being used to seal the lips of the messenger, to plug the ears of the listener, and to blind the eyes of the reader that this, the most sublime of all messages, may not be delivered.

The Message

I will speak with the authority of a messenger sent by Him whose message it is. The message is, there is a God in heaven. Oh, rejoice all who inhabit the earth, for as assuredly as we live there is a God. God is a being. He is a person. He has a body of flesh and bone. It is tangible. He lives and moves and has emotions and passions. This God is infinite and eternal. He is unchangeable and is from everlasting to everlasting.

I rejoice to know and I declare to you that this God is my Father. I am His son. I was begotten after His image. By His seed was I conceived, and I am of His species. Could there be any other knowledge so blissful? Is there any truth that can be perceived by man that is of such all-encompassing magnificence?

I am His son. He is my Father. It is a Father-son, Parent-child relationship. He loves me. Oh, how He loves me! As I come to know Him, I love Him.

God, who is my Father, has a dwelling place. It is named heaven. God is my Father in Heaven. God is the framer of the heaven. He used laws to organize intelligence, light, and truth into a supernal habitat where His children may dwell with Him if they will obey the conditions of the law by which heaven is organized.

God organized heaven into an environment of light as opposed to darkness—of life as opposed to death—of joy as opposed to

William R. Bradford was a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 28 June 1983.

sorrow—of harmony and order as opposed to confusion and disorder—of grace as opposed to disgrace. All goodness and exactness, all truth and virtue, are incorporated into that environment.

God outlined the boundaries of this heaven and established it as His kingdom. He set forth its limits and conditions as decreed by law. He named it celestial, the celestial kingdom, the place where God, my Heavenly Father, dwells.

Knowing this, is it unusual or cause for wonderment that I would raise my voice toward the heaven and rejoice and say, “My Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,” or “Oh, God my Eternal Father”?

God “created man, male and female, after his own image and in his own likeness, created he them” (D&C 20:18).

If you have eyes to see and mind to perceive, if you have emotions and passions with which to feel, if you have hands to touch and ears to hear, if you have consciousness of man with all or any of these senses, then you know the true nature of God.

We Are God’s Children

God created man after his own image and in His own likeness, male and female, created He them.

I repeat, it is a Father-son, Parent-child relationship. He loves us. He created a home for us, a heavenly home. He wants us to live in that celestial home. He wants us to be as He is. He wants us to live the glorious style of life He lives. In order for us to be as He is and live the style of life He lives, we must be obedient to the same conditions of law to which He is obedient.

God knows this, and He has taken upon Himself a work to provide a sequence of training and experience that will teach and perfect His children that they may, if they will, come to obedience to the conditions of the laws of God.

In order for this to happen, it was necessary for God’s children to leave His presence. They would need to go to a place where they could work with the laws of God until they came into full harmony with and obedience to them.

God brought about the creation of the earth and all things that are in it. The earth is known to us. We know its environment. We can touch and smell and see and feel it. We know its systems and seasons, its givings and its exactings.

The Plan Was Instituted

God gave His children commandments with a promise that if they would obey the commandments, the experiences they would have on earth would perfect them and bring them into full harmony with the conditions of His law and that they would then be qualified to return to dwell with Him and live the style of life He lives.

The commandments that God gave His children are very simple: “that they should love and serve him, the only living and true God, and that he should be the only being whom they should worship” (D&C 20:19).

There was to be no force. All God’s children were to have free agency, the authority to choose for themselves. They could obey the commandments and gain the blessed results, or they could disobey. God taught His children that if they disobeyed, they could not return. He explained to His children that while they were upon the earth, He could not leave them alone. He would send His teachings, His word, by way of messengers, and by His Spirit, and by the communication of prayer. There would be prophets to whom He would reveal His will for His children’s progress. There would be examples, all of which they could take full advantage of, but nevertheless they must choose for themselves and act according to their choices. They were also taught the consequences of disobedience.

All of this was organized into a plan, a plan for the salvation and exaltation of God’s

children. The plan was carefully and precisely taught to us. All the consequences of the plan were considered and provisions made for them. Administrators of the plan were chosen.

Let me use God's own words as He tells us of this process. He said one of His sons, whose name was Lucifer,

came before me 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. . . .

Wherefore, 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, 3, 4]

The Doctrine of Fallen Man

God placed His children upon the earth, male and female, and gave them physical bodies to house their spirit bodies, but they listened to Satan and transgressed the holy laws of God. "By the transgression of these holy laws man became sensual and devilish, and became fallen man" (D&C 20:20).

Fallen man simply means that death came upon us. There are two kinds of death. One kind is known about by all of us. It is that our physical bodies die. No one ever escapes this death. There is nothing that can be done to avoid it. It overcomes us in an hour that we know not.

We all love life. We cling to it. We endure pain and sorrow in the process, but we are willing to endure almost anything if it will sustain life. We fear death only because death is clouded by the unknown.

This death of the physical body separates us from those with whom we have lived in mortality. Our spirit body lives on, but the spirit body of fallen man cannot return to that glorious dwelling place of God.

Just as our physical body is separated from our home and loved ones at its death, so then must our spirit body be separated from our heavenly home and environment forever, to live the conditions of darkness and sorrow forever, and this because of disobedience to God's commandments which made us fallen man.

Oh, what agony! Oh, what unquenchable grief! Oh, what a pitiful circumstance to be doomed to an everlasting misery, separated from both physical body and the presence of God.

Oh, fallen man, from whence is thy recovery? From what source thy redemption?

A Savior Was Provided

"Wherefore, the Almighty God gave his Only Begotten Son" (D&C 20:21).

He said, "But, behold, 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" (Moses 4:2).

This Only Begotten Son's name is Jesus Christ. He came to the earth and did a work which was sufficient to overcome both physical death, which is the separation of the physical body from the spirit body, and spiritual death, which is separation of the spirit body from God.

He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them.

He was crucified, died, and rose again the third day. [D&C 20:22–23]

And since his children had fallen, the Almighty God saw their awful carnal state and enacted

the plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, through Christ, for all whosoever would believe on his name.

And since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself; but the sufferings and death of Christ atone for their sins, through faith and repentance . . . and that he breaketh the bands of death, that the grave shall have no victory, and that the sting of death should be swallowed up in the hopes of glory. [Alma 22:13–14]

After Christ had completed this work, He

ascended into heaven, to sit down on the right hand of the Father, to reign with almighty power according to the will of the Father;

That as many as would believe and be baptized in his holy name, and endure in faith to the end, should be saved. [D&C 20:24–25]

And we know that all men must repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ, and worship the Father in his name, and endure in faith on his name to the end, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God. [D&C 20:29; emphasis added]

This is the most transcendent and magnificent of all things that man can know.

“Death is conquered, man is free. / Christ has won the victory” (Cecil Alexander, “He Is Risen,” *Hymns*, No. 61).

I solemnly testify that I speak of what I know. That which I have said is true.

The Witness of the Book of Mormon

There may be those who say to themselves, “How do you know it is true?” To you I say: I hold in my hand the Book of Mormon, Another Testament of Jesus Christ. This book has cost the lives of millions to preserve and bring forth. The Almighty God has stretched forth his arm and has let fall the sword in behalf of the preservation of this book. The book contains two things that make it absolutely vital

to us. The first is that it contains a record of a fallen people.

Why is it so vital that we have a record of a fallen people? Why would such a record merit the trial and suffering of those who have sacrificed to bring forth this book, even to the constant and direct intervention of God Almighty?

I submit to you that no one, regardless of race or creed, can ever understand the role of and the need for a savior and a redeemer unless he first knows from what he needs to be saved or redeemed. No person, regardless of his religion or tradition, can understand victory over death and the terms upon which his salvation depends unless he understands the doctrine of fallen man.

Satan from the beginning, when Adam and Eve were first placed upon the earth, has gone forth deceiving the children of our Heavenly Father.

They have been beguiled and, through the ages, but for a few, have had no understanding of the true doctrine of fallen man.

Therefore, behold this book which contains a record of fallen man,

By these things we know that there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them;

And that he created man, male and female, after his own image and in his own likeness, created he them;

And gave unto them commandments that they should love and serve him, the only living and true God, and that he should be the only being whom they should worship.

But by the transgression of these holy laws man became sensual and devilish, and became fallen man. [D&C 20:17–20]

Fallen man is he who must forever be separated from his physical body and from the

presence of God, forever dead in that there is no return to God for fallen man.

The second thing this book contains is the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. That marvelous plan which God has prepared for the salvation and exaltation of His children is named the gospel of Jesus Christ. It outlines in every detail what men may do, *if they will*, to return to God our Father to dwell where He dwells and live the style of life He lives. It outlines to the mind of men who Christ really is. It places Him in His supreme role as Savior and Redeemer and the Almighty who rules and reigns over this earth.

The Witness of the Holy Spirit

“How do you know it is true?” you may ask.

When Christ ascended to heaven to reign with almighty power according to the will of the Father, He did not leave us alone. He sent the Holy Ghost to the earth, the Holy Ghost, the third member of the holy trinity, a member of the presiding Godhead. This Holy Ghost is the Comforter. He witnesses to God’s children that the message I have just presented is true.

By these things I know that it is true: By the doctrine of fallen man, by the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ as contained in the Book of Mormon, and by the witness of the Holy Ghost who has come to me and has overcome my soul so that I know it is true.

The Undeniable Witness

The most transcendent and magnificent message in the heavens and in the earth is that there is a God in heaven, that He is our Father, and that we are His children. Oh, that the world knew that message!

Those who know this marvelous truth have the privilege and responsibility to declare it throughout the world. Upon our ability to bring God’s children to this knowledge and understanding rests the success of our labors.

I repeat, no man can know and understand the need for a savior unless he understands first what it is that he must be saved from. And no man can understand what he must be saved from unless he understands the doctrine of fallen man. And no man can understand the doctrine of fallen man unless he understands that God is our Father and that He gave us commandments and that because of transgression and disobedience to these commandments, man became sensual and devilish and *fallen man*.

This Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion. No man can be exalted in the celestial kingdom unless he knows and lives the doctrine contained in this book. This book comes with a sacred promise. If you will read it and then lift up your voice to God in prayer, if you will ask, “God, are you there? Are you my Father? Is this true?” He will send the Holy Ghost, who will overcome your soul, and you will know that it is true. This happens in that same indescribable way by which you know that you love someone or that someone loves you.

Again I declare unto you with the undeniable witness of the Holy Ghost that this message is true and that the book is true. May God grant that you become a partaker of these glorious gifts of exaltation. God lives. He is there in His heaven. He loves us and awaits our return. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.