

Jesus the Christ— Our Master and More

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Sister Nelson and I are very grateful to be with you. And we are a bit surprised to see so many here to commemorate Groundhog Day! We appreciate the attendance of President Rex E. Lee, President Kerry Romesburg, their companions, and associates from Brigham Young University and the Utah Valley Community College. We are also thankful for stake presidents and bishops and their partners and all who give so much that students and welcome visitors may be edified here.

Tonight's meeting concludes the annual Book of Mormon Symposium, which has focused intensively on the book of Helaman and the first ten chapters of 3 Nephi. I find it intriguing that scholars can feast for days on a banquet based on less than sixty printed pages. It is somewhat reminiscent of another phenomenon that I have also found to be most fascinating. I once regularly attended meetings of the American Heart Association, mingling with thousands of fellow scientists from many institutions and diverse disciplines, all congregated to learn more about the human heart. Surely God's gifts are great, and their importance is infinite! How blessed we are to be recipients of his word and of his works.

My lifelong interest in the human heart took an unexpected turn in April 1984, when I was called to leave the operating room of the hospital and enter the upper room of the

temple. There I became an ordained apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. I did not seek such a call but have humbly tried to be worthy of that trust and privilege of being his representative, now hoping to mend hearts spiritually as I previously did surgically.

So I come to you as one who has been called, sustained, and ordained—one of the twelve special witnesses of our Lord and Master. In speaking with you, I sense our mutual desire and sacred responsibility to follow this vital theme from the Book of Mormon:

We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, [and] we prophesy of Christ. [2 Nephi 25:26]

We honor him as the most important individual ever to live on Planet Earth. He is Jesus the Christ—our Master and more. He has numerous names, titles, and responsibilities, all of eternal significance (for example, see Daniel H. Ludlow, "Jesus Christ Is Basis of LDS Beliefs," *Church News*, 29 March 1980). Under the heading "Jesus Christ," the Topical Guide

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in the King James Version of the LDS edition of the Holy Bible has eighteen pages (pp. 240–58) filled with references listed under fifty-seven subheadings. In the time allotted we could not fully consider or comprehend all of these important facets of his life. But this evening I would like to review, even briefly, ten of those mighty responsibilities of Jesus the Christ. You may choose to number them in your notes, but I will not do so—not wanting to imply any order of priority—because all that he accomplished was equally supernal in scope.

Creator

Under the direction of the Father, Jesus bore the responsibility of Creator. His title was the *Word*—spelled with a capital W. In the Greek language of the New Testament, that *Word* was *Logos*, or “Divine Expression.” It was another name for the Master. That terminology may seem strange, but it is so reasonable. We use words to convey our expression to others. So Jesus was the “Word” or “Expression” of his Father to the world. The gospel of John begins with this important proclamation:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God.

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. [John 1:1–3; see also D&C 93:21]

The book of Helaman records similar testimony declaring that “Jesus Christ [is] the Creator of all things from the beginning” (Helaman 14:12).

Another clarifying quotation came from Moses:

The Lord God said unto Moses: For mine own purpose have I made these things. . . .

And by the word of my power, have I created them, which is mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth.

And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten. [Moses 1:31–33]

In modern revelation, Jesus’ responsibility as Creator of many worlds is again affirmed:

Therefore, in the beginning the Word was, for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation—

The light and the Redeemer of the world; the Spirit of truth, who came into the world, because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men.

The worlds were made by him; men were made by him; all things were made by him, and through him, and of him. [D&C 93:8–10; see also Hebrews 1:2; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Nephi 9:5; 3 Nephi 9:15; D&C 76:23–24; 88:42–48; 101:32–34]

This hallowed Creator provided that each of us could have a physical body, uniquely individual, yet in many respects comparable to every other human body. Just as a well-educated musician can recognize the composer of a symphony by its style and structure, so a well-educated surgeon can recognize the creator of human beings by the similarity of style and structure of our anatomy. Individual variations notwithstanding, this similarity provides additional evidence and deep spiritual confirmation of our divine creation by our same Creator. It enhances the understanding of our relationship to him:

The Gods went down to organize man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them.

And the Gods said: We will bless them. [Abraham 4:27–28]

Indeed, they have blessed each of us. Our bodies can repair and defend themselves. They regenerate new cells to replace old ones. Our bodies carry seeds that allow reproduction of

our own kind with our unique individual characteristics. Little wonder our Creator is also known as the Great Physician (see Matthew 9:12)—able to heal the sick (see 3 Nephi 9:13; D&C 35:9; 42:48–51), restore sight to the blind (see John 9:1–11), unstop ears of the deaf (see Isaiah 35:5; 3 Nephi 26:15), and raise the dead (see Matthew 9:23–26; John 11:5–45). And in these latter days, he has revealed a code of health known as the Word of Wisdom that has blessed the lives of all who have obeyed those teachings in faith. So we honor Jesus as our Creator, divinely directed by his Father.

Jehovah

Jesus was Jehovah. This sacred title is recorded only four times in the King James version of the Holy Bible (see Exodus 6:3; Psalms 83:18; Isaiah 12:2; 26:4). The use of this holy name is also confirmed in modern scripture (see Moroni 10:34; D&C 109:68; 110:3; 128:9). *Jehovah* is derived from the Hebrew word *hayah*, which means “to be” or “to exist.” A form of the word *hayah* in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament was translated into English as “I AM” (Exodus 3:14). Remarkably, *I AM* was used by Jehovah as a name for himself (for example, see D&C 29:1; 38:1; 39:1). Listen to this intriguing dialogue from the Old Testament. Moses had just received a divine appointment that he did not seek—a commission to lead the children of Israel out of bondage. The scene takes place atop Mount Sinai:

Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? . . . [No doubt Moses felt inadequate for his calling, even as you and I may feel when given a challenging assignment.]

And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever. [Exodus 3:11, 13–15]

Jehovah had thus revealed to Moses this very name that he had meekly and modestly chosen for his own premortal identification—I AM.

Later, in his mortal ministry, Jesus occasionally repeated this name. Do you remember his terse response to tormenting questioners? Note the double meaning in his reply:

The high priest asked him, . . . Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

And Jesus said, I am. [Mark 14:61–62]

He was declaring both his lineage and his name.

Another instance occurred when Jesus was taunted about his acquaintanceship with Abraham:

Then said the Jews unto him, . . . hast thou seen Abraham?

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. [John 8:57–58]

Jehovah—the Great I AM, God of the Old Testament—clearly identified himself when the resurrected Jesus personally appeared in his glory to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836. I quote from their written testimony:

We saw the Lord standing upon the breast-work of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber.

His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice

was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying:

I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain. [D&C 110:2–4; emphasis added; see also D&C 76:23]

Jesus fulfilled his responsibility as Jehovah, “the Great I AM,” with eternal consequence.

Advocate with the Father

Jesus is our Advocate with the Father (see 1 John 2:1; D&C 29:5; 32:3; 45:3; 110:4). The word *advocate* comes from Latin roots meaning a “voice for,” or “one who pleads for another.” Other related terms are used in scripture, such as *intercessor* or *mediator* (see also 1 Timothy 2:5; 2 Nephi 2:28; D&C 76:69). From the Book of Mormon we learn that this responsibility was foreseen before his birth:

[Jesus] *shall make intercession for all the children of men; and they that believe in him shall be saved.* [2 Nephi 2:9]

This mission was clearly evident in the compassionate intercessory prayer of Jesus. Picture him in your mind, kneeling in fervent supplication. Listen to the beautiful language of his prayer. Sense his feeling for his weighty responsibility as mediator:

I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

I pray for them. [John 17:6–9]

He is also known as the mediator of the new testament or covenant (see Hebrews 9:15;

12:24). Comprehending him as our advocate-intercessor-mediator with the Father gives us assurance of his unequalled understanding, justice, and mercy (see Alma 7:12).

Immanuel

Jesus was foreordained to be the promised Immanuel. Remember Isaiah’s remarkable prophecy?

The Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. [Isaiah 7:14]

Fulfillment of that prophecy was not just unlikely—it was humanly impossible! Incredible! Everyone knew that a virgin could not bear a child. And then for that child to be given such a pretentious name was doubly daring! The Hebrew name that Isaiah announced—*Immanuel*—literally means “with us [is] God!”

That holy name was subsequently given to Jesus in the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants (see Matthew 1:23; 2 Nephi 17:14; D&C 128:22).

Immanuel could be such only at the will of his Father.

Son of God

Jesus alone bore his responsibility as the Son of God—the Only Begotten Son of the Father (see John 1:14, 18; 3:16). Jesus was literally “the Son of the Highest” (Luke 1:32, 35). In more than a dozen verses of scripture, the solemn word of God the Father bears testimony that Jesus was truly his Beloved Son. That solemn testimony was often coupled with God’s pleading for mankind to hear and obey the voice of his revered Son (see Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35; 2 Peter 1:17; 2 Nephi 31:11; 3 Nephi 11:7; 21:20; D&C 93:15; Moses 4:2; JS–H 1:17). Through the condescension of God, that most unlikely prophecy of Isaiah had become reality.

The unique parentage of Jesus was also announced to Nephi, who was thus instructed by an angel:

Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh. . . .
. . . Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! [1 Nephi 11:18,21]

From his mother, Jesus inherited his potential for mortality and death (see Genesis 3:15; Mark 6:3). From his Heavenly Father, Jesus inherited his potential for immortality and eternal life. Prior to his crucifixion, he spoke these words of clarification:

I lay down my life, that I might take it again.
No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This . . . have I received of my Father. [John 10:17–18]

Though separate from his Heavenly Father in both body and spirit, Jesus is one with his Father in power and purpose. Their ultimate objective is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

Some of you may wonder why the Son is occasionally referred to as “the Father.” The designation used for any man can vary. Every man here is a son but may also be called “father,” “brother,” “uncle,” or “grandfather,” depending on conversational circumstance. So we must not allow ourselves to become confused regarding divine identity, purpose, or doctrine. Because Jesus was our Creator, he is known in scripture as “the Father of all things” (Mosiah 7:27; see also Mosiah 15:3; 16:15; Helaman 14:12; Ether 3:14). But please remember, “Jesus Christ is not the Father of the spirits who have taken or yet shall take bodies upon this earth, for He is one of them. He is The Son, as they are sons and daughters of Elohim” (Statement of the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles, 30 June 1916;

reproduced in James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924], Appendix 2, p. 473).

We comprehend that distinction well when we pray to our Heavenly Father in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost. And as we do so regularly, we honor our heavenly and earthly parentage, just as Jesus honored his as the Son of God.

Anointed One

“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power” (Acts 10:38). So Jesus was the Anointed One. The Hebrew word for *anointed* is *Messiah*, and the Greek translation is *Christ*. Thus, “Jesus is spoken of as the Christ and the Messiah, which means he is the one anointed of the Father to be his personal representative in all things pertaining to the salvation of mankind” (Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Anointed One,” p. 609). Scriptures declare that Christ is the only name under heaven whereby salvation comes (see 2 Nephi 25:20). So you may add either of these titles to signify your adoration for Jesus—as “the Christ” or as “the Messiah,” anointed by God for that supernatural responsibility.

Savior and Redeemer

Jesus was born to be Savior and Redeemer of all mankind (see Isaiah 49:26; 1 Nephi 10:5). He was the Lamb of God (see 1 Nephi 10:10), who offered himself without spot or blemish (see 1 Peter 1:19) as a sacrifice for the sins of the world (see John 1:29). Later, as the resurrected Lord, he related that sacred responsibility to the meaning of *the gospel*, which he described in one powerful passage:

Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you — that 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. [3 Nephi 27:13–14]

Thus Jesus personally defined *the gospel*. This term comes from the Old English *godspell*, which literally means “good news.”

The good news is that Jesus Christ has made a perfect atonement for mankind that will redeem all mankind from the grave and reward each individual according to his/her works. This atonement was begun by his appointment in the premortal world but was worked out by Jesus during his mortal sojourn. [Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Gospels,” p. 682]

His atonement had been foretold long before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Prophets had so prophesied his advent for many generations. Since this year’s Book of Mormon Symposium’s spotlight is focused on the book of Helaman, let us sample from its record, written some thirty years before the Savior’s birth:

Remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, who shall come; yea, remember that he cometh to redeem the world. [Helaman 5:9]

His atonement blesses each of us in a very personal way. Listen carefully to this explanation from Jesus:

For behold, I, God, 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, 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 19:16–19]

Jesus fulfilled his glorious promise made in pre-earthly councils by atoning for the fall of Adam and Eve unconditionally and for our sins upon the condition of our repentance.

His responsibility as Savior and Redeemer was indelibly intertwined with his responsibility as Creator. To shed additional insight on this relationship, I would like to share a remarkable quotation that I found in a rare book in London one day while searching through the library of the British Museum. It was published as a twentieth-century English translation of an ancient Coptic text. It was written by Timothy, Patriarch of Alexandria, who died in A.D. 385. This record refers to the creation of Adam. Premortal Jesus is speaking of his Father:

*He . . . made Adam according to Our image and likeness, and He left him lying for forty days and forty nights without putting breath into him. And He heaved sighs over him daily, saying, “If I put breath into this [man], he must suffer many pains.” And I said unto My Father, “Put breath into him; I will be an advocate for him.” And My Father said unto Me, “If I put breath into him, My beloved Son, Thou wilt be obliged to go down into the world, and to suffer many pains for him before Thou shalt have redeemed him, and made him to come back to his primal state.” And I said unto My Father, “Put breath into him; I will be his advocate, and I will go down into the world, and will fulfil Thy command.” [“Discourse on Abbaton by Timothy, Archbishop of Alexandria,” *Coptic Martyrdoms Etc. in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, vol. 4 of *Coptic Texts*, edited, with English translations, by E. A. Wallis Budge (London: British Museum, 1914; New York: AMS Press, 1977), p. 482; brackets appear in printed text. For comparison with related scriptures see Moses 3:7; 6:8–9, 22, 29.]*

Jesus’ responsibility as Advocate, Savior, and Redeemer was foredetermined in premortal realms and fulfilled by his atonement (see Job 19:25–26; Matthew 1:21). Your responsibility is to remember, to repent, and to be righteous.

Judge

Closely allied to the Lord's status as Savior and Redeemer is his responsibility as Judge. Jesus revealed this interrelationship after he had declared his definition of *the gospel*, which we just cited:

*As I have been lifted up [upon the cross] by men 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—
 . . . Therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works.* [3 Nephi 27:14–15]

The Book of Mormon sheds further light on how that judgment will occur. So does the temple endowment. When we approach the threshold of the eternal court of justice, we know who will personally preside:

The keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name.

And whoso knocketh, to him will he open.
 [2 Nephi 9:41–42]

Scriptures indicate that the Lord will receive apostolic assistance when exercising judgment upon the house of Israel (see 1 Nephi 12:9; D&C 29:12). Your personal encounter at judgment will be aided by your own “bright recollection” (Alma 11:43) and “perfect remembrance” (Alma 5:18) of your deeds, as well as by the desires of your heart (see D&C 137:9).

Exemplar

Another responsibility of the Lord is that of Exemplar. To the people of the Holy Land, he said,

I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done. [John 13:15; see also 14:6; 1 Peter 2:21]

To the people of ancient America, he again emphasized his mission as Exemplar:

I am the light; I have set an example for you.
 [3 Nephi 18:16; see also 27:27; 2 Nephi 31:9, 16]

In his sermon on the mount, Jesus challenged his followers with this admonition:

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. [Matthew 5:48]

Sinless and flawless as Jesus was in mortality, we should remember that he viewed his own state of physical perfection as being yet in the future (see Luke 13:32). Even he had to endure to the end. Can you and I be expected to do any less?

When the crucified and resurrected Lord appeared to the people in ancient America, he again stressed the importance of his example. But now he included himself as a perfected personage:

I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect. [3 Nephi 12:48]

Are you vexed by your own imperfections? For example, have you ever locked your keys inside the car? Or to accomplish a task, have you ever moved from one room to another only to find you have forgotten what you wanted to do? (Incidentally, troubles of that nature don't disappear as you grow older.) Meanwhile, please, do not be discouraged by the Lord's expression of hope for your perfection. You should have faith to know that he would not require development beyond your capacity. Of course you should strive to correct habits or thoughts that are improper. Conquering weakness brings great joy! You can attain a certain degree of perfection in some things in this life. And you can become perfect in keeping various commandments. But the Lord was not necessarily asking for your errorless and

perfect behavior in all things. He was pleading for more than that. His hopes are for your full potential to be realized—to become as he is! That includes the perfection of your physical body, when it will be changed to an immortal state that cannot deteriorate or die.

So while you earnestly strive for continuing improvement in your life here, remember your resurrection, exaltation, and perfection await you in the life to come. That precious promise of perfection could not have been possible without the Lord's atonement and his example.

Millennial Messiah

I have chosen to speak last of the Lord's ultimate responsibility, which lies yet in the future. That will be his masterful status as the Millennial Messiah. When that day comes, the physical face of the earth will have been changed:

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. [Isaiah 40:4]

Then Jesus will return to the earth. His second coming will be no secret. It will be broadly known.

The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. [Isaiah 40:5]

Then, "the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). He will govern from two world capitals—one in old Jerusalem (see Zechariah 14:4–7; D&C 45:48–66; 133:19–21) and the other in the New Jerusalem "built upon the American

Continent" (Articles of Faith 1:10; see also Ether 13:3–10; D&C 84:2–4). From these centers he will direct the affairs of his church and kingdom. Then he "shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15; see also Exodus 15:18; Psalms 146:10; Mosiah 3:5; D&C 76:108).

In that day he will bear new titles and be surrounded by special Saints. He will be known as "Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that [will be] with him [will be those who] are called, and chosen, and faithful" to their trust here in mortality (Revelation 17:14; see also 19:16).

He is Jesus the Christ—our Master and more. We have discussed but ten of his many responsibilities: Creator, Jehovah, Advocate with the Father, Immanuel, Son of God, Anointed One, Savior and Redeemer, Judge, Exemplar, and Millennial Messiah.

As his disciples, you and I bear mighty responsibilities, too. So I now speak in a very personal tone. In my lifetime I have visited all fifty states in the USA. I have also set foot upon the soil of eighty-six other countries of the earth. Wherever I walk, it is my divine calling and sacred privilege to bear fervent testimony of Jesus the Christ. He lives! I love him. Eagerly I follow him, and willingly I offer my life in his service. As his special witness, I solemnly teach of him. I testify of him.

I also express my deep admiration and affection for each of you, my beloved brothers and sisters, along with my hope and blessing that you will bear your responsibility to know the Lord, love him, follow him, serve him, teach and testify of him, as do I. His church has been restored to the earth in these latter days to prepare the world and its people for his second coming. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.