

Gaining a Testimony of God the Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost

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Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day
Saints when this General Conference address was given at the
Conference Center in Salt Lake City in April 2008.*

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I, like you, appreciated the participation in the solemn assembly. But I thought I might give one point of doctrine and help. When we raised our hands to the square in the solemn assembly, it was not just a vote in that we gave of ourselves a private and personal commitment, even a covenant, to sustain and to uphold the laws, ordinances, commandments, and the prophet of God, President Thomas S. Monson. I so appreciated participating with you and raising my right hand to the square.

My brothers and sisters, over the past few months I have had a humbling experience which has given me the opportunity to reflect with gratitude on the gift of life. In the course of this experience, I have continually pondered my testimony of God our Eternal Father and His eldest Son, our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, and how I gained my testimony of the Father and the Son.

People all over the world, of every creed and persuasion, search and struggle to know, Who is God? What is His relationship to Jesus Christ? And what is our relationship with Them?

I know with surety that our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ live. The Atonement is real. God the Father and Jesus Christ are distinct, separate, immortal beings. They know us as individuals, and They hear and answer our sincere prayers. The Savior testified to the inhabitants of the New World, "I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me."¹ The Holy Ghost has testified to me that these things are true.

I began to gain my testimony in my youth when I reflected on 13 prophetic statements called the Articles of Faith, written by Joseph Smith. It was in Primary that we memorized them. They describe the basic beliefs of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. The first of these statements reads, "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost."²

Joseph Smith knew the nature of the three members of the Godhead by personal experience. As a 14-year-old boy he wanted to know which of the many Christian churches he should join. In the Bible, in the book of James of the New Testament, he read, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God."³ Obediently he knelt in prayer and was visited by God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. He described Them as "two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above [Joseph] in the air. One of them [God the Father] spake unto [him], calling [him] by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!"⁴

Since my own boyhood, Joseph Smith's experience has been a guide to me—and can be for all of us. The young prophet learned the truth about our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, because he sought to know from the scriptures his Heavenly Father's will and then he faithfully obeyed.

This pattern was set and perfectly exemplified by the Savior as recorded in the Bible. When Jesus was a 12-year-old boy, His mother, Mary, and His earthly father, Joseph, found Him teaching in the temple. Jesus asked them, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"⁵ But Jesus was not speaking of

Joseph's business. He was speaking of the business of His literal and Eternal Father in Heaven.

The manner by which God the Father introduced His Son on several occasions is significant: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water. . . . And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."⁶ And again, on the Mount of Transfiguration, "there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him."⁷

When Jesus appeared on the American continent, He was introduced in the same way by His Father: "Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him."⁸ And then nearly two millennia later, the same words were spoken to the young Joseph Smith: "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!"⁹

It is of special significance that whenever Heavenly Father wants to introduce His Son to us, He commands us to listen—to "hear" the words of Jesus.

Who is this Jesus? He participated with His Father in the Creation of the world and was responsible, under the direction of His Father, to create all things on the face of the earth. "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."¹⁰ Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He is our Mediator with the Father. He is the Savior who laid down His life for us and pleads our cause with the Father. Therefore, we pray to Heavenly Father in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Son, is not the same being as His

Father, but He is like His Father. He too is a glorified being of power and authority.

It is very enlightening and touching to me to consider how Jesus talks to His Father. In His great Intercessory Prayer, which is found in the Bible in the book of John, it is unmistakably clear that Jesus acknowledges He is the Son. Listen to His words as He reports the obedient completion of His earthly mission to His Father in Heaven:

"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. . . .

"For I have given unto them [the disciples] the words which thou gavest me . . . , and they have believed that thou didst send me. . . .

"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. . . .

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one."¹¹

Through the course of the Savior's ministry, the disciples did indeed become one but not in their physical bodies. They became one in unity of purpose and love. This is the oneness of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, spoken of in the scriptures. They too are distinct beings, but They are united in purpose, in Their love for us, and in the work They are doing on our behalf.

The Savior also prayed:

“O Father, glorify thou me . . . with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. . . .

“ . . . That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

“ . . . For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”¹²

Oh, how Jesus wanted us to know the Father as He did. He prayed:

“O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these [the disciples] have known that thou hast sent me.

“And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.”¹³

Jesus showed His great love for those who choose to follow Him as He prayed for their protection: “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”¹⁴ He was praying for us, brothers and sisters.

And then our Savior tenderly asks that they, meaning us, may be with Him again: “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.”¹⁵

In preparation for the atoning sacrifice, Jesus prayed to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane as He took upon Himself the sins, sorrows, and sufferings of all mankind. In those hours alone, He again made it clear that He was not performing His own work. He prayed, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass

from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”¹⁶ In this most crucial moment for Him and for all of us, He was not talking to Himself or relying on His own strength. He was calling upon His Father, God Omnipotent, to sustain Him and allow Him to do His Father’s will; and His Father sent an angel “from heaven, strengthening him.”¹⁷ I so love the love that the Father has for His Son and for all of us.

From before the foundation of the world to the final moments on the cross, the Savior had been about His Father’s business. He completed the work He had been sent to do. Therefore, we do not wonder to whom He was talking when, upon the cross, “he said, It is finished,”¹⁸ and “cried with a loud voice, . . . Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”¹⁹ We know He was praying to His Heavenly Father.

I testify that our Savior lives. He is the Only Begotten of the Father, and He will come again on this earth to reign. He is Jesus Christ, the Holy One of Israel, “full of grace, and mercy, and truth. . . . It is he that cometh to take away the sins of the world, yea, the sins of every man who steadfastly believeth on his name.”²⁰ He is the literal Son of God, who rose from the dead on the third day, bringing the reality of resurrection to all who will come to earth. I also testify that God our Eternal Father lives and loves each of us, for we are His children. So great is His love that He sent His Only Begotten Son into the world “that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”²¹

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I testify of the truth of what is in

the scriptures and what has been told to me and can be told to you by the Holy Spirit. It will be revealed according to your obedience and desires. The Savior taught us during His mortal ministry this great truth that applies to all of us: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you."²² I testify that I do know these things, and I know with surety that these things which I have spoken of are true. That you may seek for that same surety is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 11:32.
2. Articles of Faith 1:1.
3. James 1:5.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
5. Luke 2:49.
6. Matthew 3:16–17.
7. Luke 9:35.
8. 3 Nephi 11:7.
9. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
10. Moses 1:33.
11. John 17:4, 8, 18, 22.
12. John 17:5, 23–24.
13. John 17:25–26.
14. John 17:15.
15. John 17:24.
16. Matthew 26:39.
17. Luke 22:43.
18. John 19:30.
19. Luke 23:46.
20. Alma 5:48.
21. John 3:16.
22. 3 Nephi 18:20.