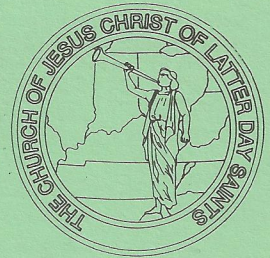


The IRON ROD



OUR CHARGE AS MISSIONARIES IS TO TEACH AND TESTIFY OF CHRIST AND THE RESTORATION AND INVITE ALL TO COME AND BE BAPTIZED UNTO REPENTANCE THAT THEY ALSO MAY BE PARTAKERS OF THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF LIFE.

President's Message

December 1992

Immanuel

Nephi, in speaking of the latter days said, "...wherefore they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved." (1 Nephi 15:14.) This scripture suggests that our gospel studies should be precise and not casual, especially concerning our knowledge of the Savior.

Prophets both ancient and modern teach the doctrines of salvation with exactness. They use words and names that are themselves very descriptive and by definition teach gospel doctrine. A good example of this is the name, "Immanuel". This name-title was used by ancient prophets in the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Book of Mormon to teach an essential doctrine of the gospel. Like the ancient prophets, President Benson has masterfully taught the doctrine of the Divine Sonship when he said, "Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He came to this earth at a foreappointed time through a royal birthright that preserved His godhood. Combined in His nature were the human attributes of His mortal mother and the divine attributes and power of His Eternal Father. As the Son of God, He inherited powers and intelligence that no human has ever had before or since. He was literally Immanuel, which means 'God with us.'" (President Ezra Taft Benson in *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, pages 7-8.)

It is a fundamental and oft repeated teaching of the Book of Mormon that Christ as God, even the Son of God, would be born into the world after the manner of the flesh in the express and particular manner in which he was so that he inherited from his Father the power to work out the infinite and eternal atoning sacrifice. He inherited from his immortal, exalted Father the power of immortality and from his mortal mother the power of mortality. Therefore, having a dual nature and ministry and being as Abinadi taught, "One God" (see Mosiah 15:4), he could elect to live or elect to die. Having followed the will of the Father in all things, he allowed himself to be scourged and crucified and die. Then by the power of the Father, which is the power of immortality, he took up his life again in the resurrection.

An angelic messenger twice used the phrase, "the condescension of God" to teach Nephi the doctrine of the Divine Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ. (see 1 Nephi 11:16, 26.) The definition of condescension is to descend to a lower and less dignified state; to waive the privileges of one's rank and status; to bestow honors and favors upon one of lesser stature and status. It is closely connected with the attribute of mercy.

A close reading of 1 Nephi 11 reveals that there are

two aspects of the condescension of God, and they both teach the very point of the doctrine of the Divine Sonship of Jesus Christ. Verse 16 includes the condescension of God the Eternal Father, and also the pre-mortal Jehovah, both members of the Eternal Godhead. They condescended so that the Only Begotten Son could be born in the flesh. Verse 26 refers to the condescension of Jesus Christ in the circumstances of his mortal life and how he willingly suffered and died on our behalf. In commenting on these scriptures, Elder Bruce R. McConkie said:

Here we have a glorious thing. Here we have exalted, noble beings on a plane and status so far above our present circumstance that we have no way of comprehending their dominion and glory, and we have one of them, God our Eternal Father, through the condescension and infinite love and mercy that he has for us, stepping down from his noble status and becoming the Father of a Son after the manner of the flesh. We have that Son being born, that Son who was his firstborn in the spirit, who had like power and omnipotence with the Father. We have each of them performing a work that there is no way for us to understand as far as magnitude and glory and importance is concerned.

The importance of the Restoration is demonstrated by the fact that the doctrine of Divine Sonship which has been lost to the world for centuries has been restored to us through latter-day scripture and living prophets. The Divine Sonship of Jesus Christ is the very doctrine upon which every other principle of salvation rests. The doctrine of atonement, for example, grows out of the Divine Sonship. Only because Christ had a mortal mother and an immortal Father was he able to lay down his life and take it up again. It took both the power of mortality and the power of immortality to work out the Atonement because that infinite sacrifice required both death and resurrection.

As missionaries, we are privileged to teach and testify of the doctrine of the Divine Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ and also the marvelous story of the restoration of his gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith. It is particularly appropriate that we do so with great faith and desire at this season of the year when we celebrate the birth of the Lord and of his great latter-day prophet.

With Love,

President Lunt