

WORSHIPING THE FATHER IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

April Conference, 1975

I have prayed earnestly for the power to present, in an intelligent and persuasive way, certain great truths about Him whom we worship and whose presence we seek.

In doing so I issue this invitation: Come now and let us reason together; let us talk of God and his laws, and of why men must come to know him if they ever expect to go where he is and gain that full salvation reserved for the faithful.

For a text let us adopt these words spoken by Jesus at Jacob's well: "Ye worship ye know not what," he said to the woman of Samaria, but "we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews."

Then he said: "The true worshippers . . . worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. And unto such hath God promised his Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (I. V. John 4:24-26.)

All men everywhere are commanded to worship the Lord. He expects it of them. To Adam and his posterity, in all generations, God issued a firm decree, "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.)

Jesus reaffirmed this eternal truth by quoting what the prophets who were before him had taught, which was: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Luke 4:8.)

And in our day the most perfect rendition of the first and great commandment comes to us in these words of Deity: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him." (D&C 59:5.)

In this connection, Jesus said in his great Intercessory Prayer: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.)

Our text lays down two eternal truths: First, the only acceptable worship is that ascribed to the Father; and, second, all true worship must be founded on truth and performed by the power of the Spirit.

Now let us reason together" Can man gain salvation by worshiping a false God? Can an idol raise a person from the grave and place him in a celestial heaven? Can anyone gain faith unto life and salvation if he supposes that God fills the immensity of space and is

everywhere and nowhere in particular present? Is eternal life available to anyone who fails to gain a knowledge of the Father and who does not worship him in the name of the Son?

Let there be no misunderstanding. There is only one living and true God, and he is the Father. He is not a spirit. He is not a congeries of laws floating like a fog in the universe. He is not the forces of nature, anymore than he is a cow, a crocodile, or a grove of trees.

There is nothing difficult, hard, or uncertain about this. God is our Father. We are his children. We were born in his household. We lived with him in our pre-mortal life, and we have seen his face.

He is not incomprehensible, unknowable, or uncreated. He is not an incorporeal essence or power. He is not an immaterial nothingness pervading immensity, and he is neither described nor identified in the creeds and writings of uninspired men.

His attributes are: Knowledge; Faith or power; Justice; Judgment; Mercy; and Truth.

And his perfections consist of “the perfections which belong to all of the attributes of his nature.” That is, his perfections consist in the possession of all knowledge, all power, all truth, and the fulness of all good things. (*Lectures on Faith*, cited *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., pp. 261-267.)

Again let us reason together: Does God who made the world and all things that in it are lack anything? Are there truths yet to be learned by Him who made Orion and the seven stars? Is he who has created and peopled worlds without number just experimenting like a chemist in a laboratory? If the particles of this earth and of millions of earths like this are not a beginning to the number of his creations, is there some power which he does not possess?

Truly he is omnipotent, the possessor of all truth, the embodiment of every godly attribute in its perfection!

And he it is—our Eternal Father—who begat us as his spirit children. The Great Jehovah, who is the Lord Jesus Christ, was the Firstborn among all the seraphic hosts of heaven. And it was this beloved and chosen one who by obedience and devotion, while yet in pre-existence, advanced until he became in knowledge and understanding “like unto God.” (Abraham 3:24.)

He is described and identified in the writings of apostles and prophets to whom he has been revealed, and some of these writings have been preserved for us in the Holy Scriptures. And he is clearly known by the simple expedient of coming to a knowledge of his Son who dwelt among men in times meridian.

The number one message of the four gospels is that God was in Christ manifesting himself to the world. The Son came in the likeness and similitude of the Father, so much so that the mortal offspring could say of his immortal Parent: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John 14:9.)

The resurrected Lord Jesus walked as a man on the Emmaus road; appeared to a group of saints in an upper room; announced he had a body of flesh and bones; ate before them; and was handled and felt by the faithful there assembled. He had a tangible, corporeal, immortal body.

Of him Paul said he possessed "the brightness" of "his" Father's "glory," and was in "the express image of his person." (Heb. 1:3.)

Of him and his Father our scripture says: "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also." (D&C 130:22.)

Such is the Father whom we worship. Such is he who appeared to his prophet in the Spring of 1820 and who, attended by that holy being who is in the express image of his person said: "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Jos. Smith 2:17.)

Now this exalted and perfected person, this holy being in whose image man was created, "is infinite and eternal." "From everlasting to everlasting," he is "the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them." (D&C 20:17.)

He has all power, all might, and all dominion. He is omnipotent. He knows all things. There is no power he does not possess, no truth he does not know, and no good thing that is not embodied in him in its fulness and perfection.

Joseph Smith taught that "a correct idea of his character, perfections, and attributes" is essential to salvation.

His character was then summarized by the Prophet under these six headings:

1. "He was God before the world was created, and the same God that he was after it was created";
2. "He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness, and . . . he was so from everlasting, and will be so to everlasting";
3. "He changes not, neither is there variableness with him, and . . . his course is one eternal round";
4. "He is a God of truth, and cannot lie";
5. "He is no respecter of persons"; and

6. “He is love.”

Because of his infinite goodness and grace, while we yet dwelt as spirits in his presence, our Eternal Father ordained and established a plan of salvation that would enable us to advance and progress and become like him.

“God himself,” the Prophet says, “finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself.” (*Teachings*, p. 354.)

This plan of salvation, this gospel plan, was taught to all the hosts of heaven. It included the creation and peopling of this and many worlds. When the time came to choose a Savior and Redeemer in his plan the Father made this pronouncement:

“Whom shall I send to be my Son? Who will go down and put the terms and conditions of my plan into operation? Who will work out the infinite and eternal atonement whereby all men will be raised in immortality, while those who believe and obey my law will be inheritors also of eternal life?”

Then it was that two volunteers came forward—Christ and Lucifer.

The first, who was the Lord Jesus, said: “Here am I, send me; I will be thy Son. I accept thy plan, Father; and the honor and glory be thine in all things.”

But the second, who was Lucifer, sought to change the plan. He proposed to save all men and aspired to become God himself.

Then it was that the Father said: “I will send the first” (Abraham 3:27); and then it was that Christ was “foreordained” (1 Pet. 1:19) and became “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Rev. 13:8.)

Thus was ordained and established the great plan whereby all of our Father’s children—Christ included!—might be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Father’s gospel.

But with the selection of Christ to be the Redeemer, that gospel which originated with the Father was named after the Son. Paul calls it “the gospel of God, . . . Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,” and says it is now known as “the gospel of Christ.” (Rom. 1:1-2, 16.) It consists of all of the truths, powers, and ordinances which saved Christ and will save us if we walk in the course charted by him.

And so it is that we worship the Father in the name of the Son. And so it is that we seek to be like the Father by following the example of the Son.

We do not worship Adam. He as the great Michael was a spirit son of the Father, and he, as with all of us, serves “under the counsel and direction of the Holy One” (D. & C. 78:16) who is Christ.

We do not pray to Christ. He is our Elder Brother, and the Father is his God as he is our God. “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” (John 20:17), were his words to Mary of Magdala. We sing praises to his holy name, because he has redeemed us with his blood, but we worship the Father, and so far as in us lies, we do so by the power of the Spirit.

Now once again let us reason together: How do we worship the Father? What does he expect of us? Does not true worship consist of keeping the commandments? Can there be any greater worship than emulation?

“Where shall we find a saved being?” the Prophet Joseph Smith asked; “%~?here is the prototype?” he inquired, “into whose likeness we may be assimilated, in order that we may be partakers of life and salvation?”

His answer: “It is Christ: . . . he is the prototype or standard of salvation; . . . he is a saved being.”

Then the Prophet gave this definition: “Salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power and dominion which Jehovah possesses and in nothing else; and no being can possess it but himself or one like him.”

After this setting forth “the nature of salvation,” the Prophet explained how Christ, through his atoning sacrifice, purposed to save the human family. These are his words:

“He proposed to make them like unto himself, and he was like the Father, the great prototype of all saved beings; and for any portion of the human family to be assimilated into their likeness is to be saved; and to be unlike them is to be destroyed; and on this hinge turns the door of salvation. “ (*Lectures on Faith*, cited *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., pp. 257-258.)

Speaking similarly to certain faithful Nephites, the Lord Jesus himself said: “Ye shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father; yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fulness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one.” (3 Ne. 28:10.)

Perfect worship is emulation. No greater glory or honor can be ascribed to another than to be as he is, to live as he lives. And the greatest reward that can be conferred upon true worshipers is to be made like unto Him whom they worship.

May I now say in perfect plainness:

All the world worships it knows not what, but we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Latter-day Saints.

The Father has revealed himself unto us. We know his laws. We have taken upon ourselves the name of his Son, in which holy name we worship the Father in Spirit and in truth.

And as it was anciently so it is today—the Father seeketh such to worship him, and unto such hath he promised his Spirit.

And so we, as his agents, knowing whereof we speak because we have received that Holy Spirit, call upon his children everywhere to come unto Christ, who has revealed himself anew in our day, and to worship the Father in his name.

All who do so shall gain peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.