

WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD?

April 18, 1984

I shall ask what is probably the single most important question that can enter the mind of man.

It is a question that reveals the purpose of life itself; that lets us know the whence, why, and whither of all things; but opens the door to that newness of life which gives peace here and eternal reward hereafter. It is, above all others, the question upon which our salvation depends.

This is the question: Who is the Lord God whom men must worship to gain salvation?

This question fathers many others—many questions that are and must be answered by every man, standing alone, personally, Independent of kinsmen, friends, or the masses of mankind. For instance:

Shall we worship the Everlasting Elohim in the name of the Eternal Jehovah, who is called Christ? Shall we worship the Father in the name of the Son by the power of the Holy Ghost?

Does our worship ascend to an exalted, resurrected, and Supreme Being who has a body of flesh and bones and in whose image man is made? Is our God the same God to whom Jesus prayed, and whom he worshipped in spirit and in truth? Do we accept this Jesus, in the full majesty of his own Godhood, as the Way, the Truth, and the Life—as the one sent by the Father to reconcile fallen man to himself?

Or, do we suppose that Deity is a mysterious spirit essence that fills the immensity of space and is everywhere and nowhere in particular present; that he has neither body, parts, nor passions; and that in some way incomprehensible to us he is both one being and three beings all wrapped together in an unknowable Trinity?

Or, do we assume that the designation God is intended to describe or define the laws of nature—to set forth the forces and powers that by some unexplained chance caused this earth to come into being, thus providing primordial swamps, again by chance, wherein the body and mind and soul of man, starting as an amoebic-like nonentity, might become the majestic creature that now is?

Or, giving no thought to spiritual things, do we center our interests and affections upon the things of this world? Do we spend our time satisfying the appetites of the flesh, gratifying our passions, seeking money and power, following the downward course that leads to destruction?

There is no such thing as an atheist, except in the sense that someone may reject belief in the true God whom others worship. All men worship something. It is instinctive to believe and worship. A few of earth's inhabitants worship the God of Heaven; most of them center their affections in something created by the arm of flesh. The issue is not whether men worship, but what or who and how they worship.

The whole purpose of our mortal probation is summed up in these words, words that refer to the destined earth life of all the spirit hosts, words spoken in the Grand Council by the Lord Jehovah: "We will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them." (Abraham 3:25.)

What is the first, foremost, and chief commandment? It is that we should love, worship, and serve the true God and him only. It is that the God who made us is the one before whom we bow in worshipful adoration; the one who deserves our full love and total allegiance; the one whom we love and serve with all our heart, might, mind, and strength.

Thus it is that we hear the Lord Jehovah, ministering among mortals as the Lord Jesus, say: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Luke 4:8.) And thus also is it written in the holy word: "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 his great Intercessory Prayer, Jesus taught that full salvation—that salvation found only in the highest heaven of the celestial world; that salvation which is exaltation itself; that eternal life which includes both eternal increase and the fulness of the glory of the Father—all this is reserved for those who know "the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom" he "sent," to be the Savior of the world and the Redeemer of men. (John 17:3.)

How is it that we can know the Father and the Son? The answer—by revelation, by the opening of the heavens, by direct communion with these divine beings, and in no other way.

God stands revealed or he remains forever unknown. He is not to be found in the laboratories of science, nor by research in the tomes of the learned, nor by any intellectual power, however great it may be.

He is not revealed in the creeds of Christendom, nor in the Koran of Islam, nor in the pronouncements of the so-called apostolic fathers. His word does not come forth from conclaves or councils or papal bulls.

The things of God are known only by the power of his Spirit. Revelation comes first to apostles and prophets. They see visions, entertain angels, and talk personally with the Lord. Jehovah, for instance, "spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." (Ex. 33:11.)

Apostles and prophets then bear witness to the world of those things that are revealed unto them. Portions of their revelations are written in the holy scriptures for the benefit and blessing of all mankind. The residue of men either hear the spoken word or read the written record.

When men obey the law entitling them to receive revelation from the Holy Spirit, that divine witness bears testimony to them of the truth and divinity of the truths revealed to the Lord's earthly leaders. And if they are true and faithful in all things, it also becomes their privilege to hear and see and know by personal revelation the very truths first given to the apostles and prophets, for God is no respecter of persons.

I suppose everyone knows—it is surely a self-evident really—that there is always a conflict between the true God and all false gods. One of the classical confrontations took place on Mount Carmel nearly three thousand years ago. It was there that Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal.

To all Israel he cried: "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him."

It was then agreed that the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal should offer one sacrifice and Elijah another, each inviting his God to send down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice. "The God that answereth by fire, let him be God," said Elijah.

Baal gave no answer to his servants, but the "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known" that he was "God in Israel" by sending down fire that "consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench." (1 Kings 18:21-38.)

Thus the Lord dramatized the eternal truth that he is known by fire. "Our God," Paul says, "is a consuming fire." (Heb. 12:29.) He is known by fire; Christ will return in flaming fire—all of which is symbolical of the fact that the fires of testimony must burn in our hearts if we are to know the Lord with absolute certainty.

Of their walk with the Lord Jesus on the Emmaus road, Luke and Cleopas said: "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scripture?" (Luke 24:32.)

Seeking to describe feelings that cannot be expressed in words—the feelings of the multitude on the day of Pentecost, when "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost"—the scripture says: "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." (Acts 2:3-4.)

Unless and until each of us has received the promptings of the Holy Spirit, promptings that burn in our souls as though to consume our very being, we do not know that God who "answereth by fire" as fully as our privilege is.

Fleeing from Carmel to escape the wrath of Jezebel, Elijah came “unto Horeb the mount of God” where he hid himself in a cave. After visiting with an angel, and after fasting for forty days, the Lord Jehovah commanded him to stand forth and receive his word. Elijah did so, and a great and marvelous thing occurred.

“Behold, the Lord passed by”—the Eternal Jehovah manifest himself—“and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord.” Imagine if you call the kind of a wind that rends the very rocks of the mountains! “But the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire.”

Winds and earthquakes and burning fires are not prerequisites for gaining knowledge from the Lord. It is not fire in the literal but in the figurative sense that manifests the divine mind to men.

When all these manifestations of divine power—manifestations that shook the very earth itself—had ceased, the holy word says simply: “And after the fire a still small voice.” (1 Kings 19:1-12.)

The Still Small Voice—a sound of gentle stillness; the quiet peaceable things of the Spirit; the calmness and serenity that raises mortals above the tumults of life, and reveals to them in their closets and secret places, the mind and will of Him whose we are! Such is the way revelation comes. The voice of the Spirit is the voice of the Lord.

Is it any wonder then that the Prophet Joseph Smith, as a prelude to announcing the mind and will of the Lord, said: “Thus saith the still small voice, which whispereth through and pierceth all things, and often times it maketh my bones to quake while it maketh manifest.” (D&C 85:6.)

Or, does it come as any surprise to hear the Lord Jesus say: “True worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. For unto such hath God promised his Spirit. And they who worship him, must worship in spirit and in truth.” (JST, John 4:25-26.)

Unless and until each of us attunes himself to the infinite so as to receive the whisperings of the Still Small Voice, we do not know that God of whom the Holy Ghost bears witness as fully as our privilege is.

One of the great axioms of revealed truth, one that is as firm and enduring as the very pillars of heaven, is expressed in these words of scripture: “The things of God knoweth no man, except he has the Spirit of God.” (JST, 1 Cor. 2:11.)

This is the way, the one way, the only way to know that God whose we are, and his Christ whom he hath sent to reveal Omnipotence and lead us back to the divine presence. God is our Father; Christ is our Mediator; and the Holy Ghost is their witness.

We repeat—it is a voice that will echo from peak to peak forever—God stands revealed, or he remains forever unknown. And the Holy Ghost, that Holy Spirit who as a member of the Godhead is one with him, is his revelator. Either we receive revelation from the Holy Spirit of God, or we never come to know those Holy Beings whom it is life eternal to know.

Now, in the providences of God, a wondrous thing has happened in our day. The God of heaven has revealed himself anew and set up his kingdom again on earth. It is a kingdom made without the hands of man, a kingdom which administers the gospel of salvation, and like the little stone of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, it will grow until it fills the whole earth. This kingdom will stand forever.

God has revealed himself; prophets have seen his face and now speak in his name; and the Holy Ghost bears record to all who attune themselves to his broadcasts that God is true and that the gospel has been restored. And the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is the right to the constant companionship of that member of the Godhead based on faithfulness, comes to every person who believes and obeys the gospel.

This great revelation of God and his laws, destined to take place in the last days, was known to the prophets of old. Jeremiah even recited the very words gathered Israel would use with reference to the false creeds of their fathers. These are the words: "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit. Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods?" Jer. 16:19-20.)

These creeds, applying the names of the true God to the false gods of an apostate people, are the very documents to which the Lord God referred when he said to Joseph Smith "that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight." (JS-H 1:19.)

But the promise of relief from the engrafted creeds of darkness comes to us in these words of Deity: "Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is the Lord." (Jer. 16:21.)

And thus was promised that which has come to pass—the restoration of eternal truth, the revealing anew of God and his laws, the dispensing from heaven of the fulness of the everlasting gospel.

What says the prophetic word as to the spread of the knowledge of God in this day of restoration? It says the Lord has a controversy with the nations. It says that all nations shall be gathered to the greatest confrontation of the ages. The Confrontation on Carmel, between Elijah and the ministers of Baal, will be as nothing in comparison.

Those in all nations will stand in the Valley of Decision—every man deciding for himself whether he will follow the Baal's of the world or stand up for Jehovah who is Christ and who will lead believing souls to the Father.

“Multitudes, multitudes In the valley of decision,” saith the holy word, “for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. Be sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. . . . The heavens and the earth shall shake,” and the Lord himself, even Jesus who was crucified, shall receive those whose decision is for Christ. (Joel 3:9-17.)

Of this pre-Millennial confrontation between Jehovah and the God of the Creeds, the Lord sent this word to gathered Israel: “Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth.”

How then shall men make their decision? By hearing the testimony of witnesses—some witnesses who will tell of the wonders of an incomprehensible and unknowable nothingness; others who will testify that Jehovah is Lord of heaven and earth, and that he came to Joseph Smith in the Spring of 1820 with Elohim, his Father, to usher in the dispensation of the fulness of times.

To us—to all of the sons and daughters in his kingdom, all who have taken upon them his name—the Lord Jehovah says: “Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servants whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour. I have declared, and have saved. . . . Therefore, ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.” (Isa. 43:3-12.)

And so now, in this final dispensation of grace—this age and era in which God again stands revealed—let me, as a witness of the Lord Jehovah, as a special witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, let me bear an apostolic testimony as to whose God is the Lord.

I know by the revelations of the Holy Spirit to the spirit within me that there is a God in heaven who is infinite and eternal, a holy being of flesh and bones who created us in the image of his own body.

I know that he is the Father of spirits; that the Great Jehovah is his Firstborn; and that this Everlasting Elohim ordained and established a plan of salvation pursuant to which we have power to advance and progress and become like him.

I know that he sent his Only Begotten Son to ransom men from the temporal and spiritual death brought into the world by the fall of Adam, and that this Blessed Jesus is our Mediator, our Intercessor, and our Advocate, and that through him and him alone may we be reconciled to the Father.

I know there are gods many and lords many, but that “To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” (1 Cor. 8:6.)

I know that the Father and the Son appeared in person to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and that this mighty seer of latter days revealed to the world anew the true nature of those exalted beings whom we honor, praise, and worship with all the power we possess.

Now I have no knowledge that is not readily available to all men. Those with the faith of Luke and Cleopas will feel their bosoms burn within them when the servants of God testify by the power of the Spirit of that God whom they worship.

Those with the faith of Elijah will hear the Still Small Voice as it makes their very bones quake and their marrow melt as the witness of eternal truth sinks into their heart.

To those who are kindred to the Pentecostal multitude the knowledge will come with such surety that it will seem as though cloven tongues of fire was burning unbelief and ignorance out of their souls.

Hear then our invitation, issued in the name of Him whose witnesses we are:

Come to the Valley of Decision—for the day of the Lord is near—and make your decision for the living Christ who is revealed anew by living prophets.

Come, stand on Mount Carmel as the heavenly fires burn dross and evil from those souls whose desire it is to worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

Come, step forth from the cave of unbelief on Mount Horeb and hear the Still Small Voice testify of Jesus Christ and the Church that bears his name, and Joseph Smith by whom that Church was again established among men.

Come, walk on the Emmaus road and let the fire of testimony burn in your heart as you read the prophetic word and learn of Him of whom that word testifies.

Come, kneel in the Sacred Grove and pour out your soul to that God who made you, asking him, by the power of his Spirit, to tell you which of all the churches is right and which you should join.

Come, join that choir on earth which is in perfect harmony with like choirs in heaven, as it sings: “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” (Rev. 5:13.)

Come, live the gospel, keep the commandments, overcome the world, walk as becometh the saints of the Most High, and assuredly, as the Lord lives, the day will come when you will hear the blessed benediction: Come, Ye blessed of my Father, enter into the joy of thy Lord; Come and “sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” (Rev. 3:21.)

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.