



By Elder Robert D. Hales

Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

The PROMISE of CHRISTMAS

*May we take time this Christmas season to
renew our covenants to follow the Savior and
to do His will, just as He did the will of our
Heavenly Father.*

We can't fully understand the meaning of Christmas unless we understand the meaning of the Savior's life, Atonement, and Resurrection.

I cannot think about the birth of the Savior without thinking of His words to Pilate: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18:37).

As we begin the Christmas season, may we consider the scriptural prophecies about the Savior. They are not just odd statements of coincidence; rather, they are profound statements of purpose and promise about His life and mission and what He means for each of us.

Prophecies of His Coming

Christ's coming was foretold for thousands of years. About 2,000 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, Abraham taught about His role in the plan of salvation. About 1,400 years before His birth, Moses taught the same wonderful truths. About 700 years before His birth, Isaiah revealed the circumstances of His birth, life, and death:

"Therefore 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).



“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and 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 is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. . . .

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities . . . and with his stripes we are healed. . . .

“ . . . He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

“He was taken from prison and from judgment. . . .

“And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth” (Isaiah 53:3–5, 7–9).

Not long after Isaiah’s prophecy, the prophet Lehi had a profound dream and taught his family what he had learned. Nephi recorded: “Six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews—even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world” (1 Nephi 10:4).

Lehi also spoke about the great number of prophets who had testified concerning the coming of the Redeemer of the world (see 1 Nephi 10:5).

The Promise of Christmas

The Gospel of Luke records that before the Savior’s birth, His mother traveled with haste to visit her cousin Elisabeth.

“And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:

“And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb” (Luke 1:41–42).

As the Holy Ghost bore record to Elisabeth, He bears record to us that the words of the prophets have been fulfilled. The Savior has come and performed the work His Father sent Him to do.

Of the Savior, Nephi recorded:

“And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms.

“And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father!” (1 Nephi 11:20–21).

When the Savior was 12, He taught in the temple. He explained to His anxious parents that He was about His Father’s business (see Luke 2:42–49).

That business was accomplished as He went forward fulfilling His earthly mission. The Savior describes the



Each week as we participate in the ordinance of the sacrament, we renew the promise of the Savior’s birth in our own lives.

culmination of that mission in these stirring words:

“I came unto my own, and my own received me not. And the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled.

“And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons [and daughters] of God; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled” (3 Nephi 9:16–17).

His promise that we can become His sons and daughters will be realized as we believe in Him and exercise faith in Him unto obedience. Then we will be prepared to receive the gift of eternal life.

He said: “Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. . . . In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters” (Ether 3:14).

The Meaning of Christmas

Christmas is a time to share our gifts, strengthen others, and do our part in the kingdom of God. Christmas is also a time to express our love to others and to bear our testimony of the Savior.

One way we can share our testimony is to have a nativity in our home so we can spark conversations

about the Lord’s birth. Another way is to relate stories like that of John Weightman in *The Mansion*.

John Weightman was a successful man whose charities brought him attention and renown. One evening, after perusing a pile of newspaper clippings praising him for his generosity, he picked up his Bible. Soon he fell asleep after reading the Savior’s words: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal” (Matthew 6:19).

As he slept, John found himself in “the heavenly city,” traveling with others as they received their mansions. When the Keeper of the Gate stopped in front of a tiny hut built of cast-off materials, he said to John, “This is your mansion.”

John protested, listing his many public contributions. “Were not all these carefully recorded on earth where they would add to your credit?” asked the Keeper of the Gate. “You have had your reward for them. Would you be paid twice?”¹

During this Christmas season, I hope each of us has the opportunity to give anonymously.

Obtaining the Promise

Each week as we participate in the ordinance of the sacrament, we renew the promise of the Savior’s birth in our own lives. We take His name upon us, and we renew

our covenant of obedience and our promise that we will always remember Him.

The gospel, as recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants, is this:

“That he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness;

“That through him all might be saved” (D&C 76:41–42).

May we take time this Christmas season to renew our covenants to follow the Savior and to do His will, just as He did the will of our Heavenly Father. As we do so, the words of King Benjamin’s people, recorded 125 years before the Savior’s birth, will be fulfilled for us today: “O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men” (Mosiah 4:2).

I testify that the Savior came down in the meridian of time and that He will come again. I bear witness that His Church, restored in this last dispensation before His Second Coming, is the “marvelous work and a wonder” (2 Nephi 25:17) in which we as Latter-day Saints are engaged. ■

NOTE

1. Henry Van Dyke, “The Mansion,” in *Inspirational Classics for Latter-day Saints*, comp. Jack M. Lyon (2000), 54–57, 62–63.