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# Teachings of Jesus

*Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten and Beloved Son of God. . . . He is our Savior from sin and death. This is the most important knowledge on earth.*

**W**hat think ye of Christ?" (Matthew 22:42). With those words Jesus confounded the Pharisees of His day. With those same words I ask my fellow Latter-day Saints and other Christians what you really believe about Jesus Christ and what you are doing because of that belief.

Most of my scriptural quotations will come from the Bible because it is familiar to most Christians. My interpretations will of course draw on what modern scripture, notably the Book of Mormon, teaches us about the meaning of Bible scriptures so ambiguous that different Christians disagree on their meaning. I address believers but others as well. As Elder Tad R. Callister taught us this morning, some who call themselves Christians praise Jesus as a great teacher but refrain from affirming His divinity. To address them, I have used the words of Jesus Himself. We should all consider what He Himself taught about who He is and what He was sent to earth to do.

## **Only Begotten Son**

Jesus taught that He was the Only Begotten Son. Said He:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should

not perish, but have everlasting life.

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16–17).

God the Father affirmed this. In the culmination of the sacred experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, He declared from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5).

Jesus also taught that His appearance was the same as His Father's. To His Apostles, He said:

"If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

"Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

"Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:7–9).

Later the Apostle Paul described the Son as being "the express image of [God the Father's] person" (Hebrews 1:3; see also 2 Corinthians 4:4).

## **Creator**

The Apostle John wrote that Jesus, whom he called "the Word," "was in

the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:2–3). Thus, under the plan of the Father, Jesus Christ was the Creator of all things.

## **Lord God of Israel**

During His ministry to His people in Palestine, Jesus taught that He was Jehovah, the Lord God of Israel (see John 8:58). Later, as the risen Lord, He ministered to His people on the American continent. There He declared:

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. . . .

". . . I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth" (3 Nephi 11:10, 14).

## **What He Has Done for Us**

At a stake conference many years ago, I met a woman who said she had been asked to come back to church after many years away but could not think of any reason why she should. To encourage her I said, "When you consider all of the things the Savior has done for us, don't you have many reasons to come back to church to worship and serve Him?" I was astonished at her reply: "What's He done for me?" For those who do not understand what our Savior has done for us, I will answer that question in His own words and with my own testimony.

## **Life of the World**

The Bible records Jesus's teaching: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Later, in the New World, He declared, "I am the light and the life of the world" (3 Nephi 11:11). He is the life of the world because He is our Creator and



because, through His Resurrection, we are all assured that we will live again. And the life He gives us is not merely mortal life. He taught, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:28; see also John 17:2).

### ***Light of the World***

Jesus also taught, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness” (John 8:12). He also declared, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). He is the way and He is the light because His

teachings light our path in mortal life and show us the way back to the Father.

### ***Doing the Will of the Father***

Always, Jesus honored the Father and followed Him. Even as a youth He declared to His earthly parents, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49). “For I came down from heaven,” He later taught, “not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38; see also John 5:19). And the Savior taught, “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6; see also Matthew 11:27).

We return to the Father by doing His will. Jesus taught, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). He explained:

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

“And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:22–23).

Who then will enter the kingdom of heaven? Not those who merely do wonderful works using the name of the Lord, Jesus taught, but only “he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”

### ***The Great Exemplar***

Jesus showed us how to do this. Again and again He invited us to follow Him: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27).

### ***Priesthood Power***

He gave priesthood power to His Apostles (see Matthew 10:1) and to others. To Peter, the senior Apostle, He said, “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19; see also Matthew 18:18).

Luke records that “the Lord appointed . . . seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come” (Luke 10:1). Later these Seventy joyfully told Jesus, “Even the devils are subject unto us through thy name” (Luke 10:17). I am a witness of that priesthood power.



### **Guidance by the Holy Ghost**

At the close of His earthly ministry, Jesus taught His Apostles, “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26), and “he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13).

### **Guidance by His Commandments**

He also guides us by His commandments. Thus He commanded the Nephites that they should have no more disputes concerning points of doctrine, for, He said:

“He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

“Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away” (3 Nephi 11:29–30).

### **Focus on Eternal Life**

He also challenges us to focus on Him, not on the things of the world. In His great sermon on the bread of life, Jesus explained the contrast between mortal and eternal nourishment. “Labour not for the meat which

perisheth,” He said, “but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you” (John 6:27). The Savior taught that He was the Bread of Life, the source of eternal nourishment. Speaking of the mortal nourishment the world offered, including the manna Jehovah had sent to feed the children of Israel in the wilderness, Jesus taught that those who relied on this bread were now dead (see John 6:49). In contrast, the nourishment He offered was “the living bread which came down from heaven,” and, Jesus taught, “if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever” (John 6:51).

Some of His disciples said this was “an hard saying,” and from that time many of His followers “went back, and walked no more with him” (John 6:60, 66). Apparently they did not accept His earlier teaching that they should “seek . . . first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33). Even today some who profess Christianity are more attracted to the things of the world—the things that sustain life on earth but give no nourishment toward eternal life. For some, His “hard saying” is still a reason not to follow Christ.

### **The Atonement**

The culmination of our Savior’s mortal ministry was His Resurrection

and His Atonement for the sins of the world. John the Baptist prophesied this when he said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Later Jesus taught that “the Son of man came . . . to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). At the Last Supper, Jesus explained, according to the account in Matthew, that the wine He had blessed was “my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28).

Appearing to the Nephites, the risen Lord invited them to come forward to feel the wound in His side and the prints of the nails in His hands and His feet. He did this, He explained, “that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world” (3 Nephi 11:14). And, the account continues, the multitude fell “down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him” (verse 17). For this, the whole world will ultimately worship Him.

Jesus taught further precious truths about His Atonement. The Book of



Mormon, which elaborates the Savior's teachings and gives the best explanation of His mission, reports this teaching:

"My Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross . . . , that I might draw all men unto me, . . .

". . . that they may be judged according to their works.

"And . . . whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world. . . .

"And no unclean thing can enter into [the Father's] kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end" (3 Nephi 27:14–16, 19).

And so we understand that the Atonement of Jesus Christ gives us the opportunity to overcome the spiritual death that results from sin and, through making and keeping sacred covenants, to have the blessings of eternal life.

### Challenge and Testimony

Jesus issued the challenge "What think ye of Christ?" (Matthew 22:42). The Apostle Paul challenged the Corinthians to "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). All of us should answer these challenges for ourselves. Where is our ultimate loyalty? Are we like the Christians in Elder Neal A. Maxwell's memorable description who have moved their residence to Zion but still try to keep a second residence in Babylon?<sup>1</sup>

There is no middle ground. We are followers of Jesus Christ. Our citizenship is in His Church and His gospel,



and we should not use a visa to visit Babylon or act like one of its citizens. We should honor His name, keep His commandments, and "seek not the things of this world but seek . . . first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33, footnote a; from Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38).

Jesus Christ *is* the Only Begotten and Beloved Son of God. He *is* our Creator. He *is* the Light of the World. He *is* our Savior from sin and death. This is the most important knowledge on earth, and you can know this for yourself, as I know it for myself. The Holy Ghost, who testifies of the

Father and the Son and leads us into truth, has revealed these truths to me, and He will reveal them to you. The way is desire and obedience. As to desire, Jesus taught, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7). As to obedience, He taught, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). I testify of the truth of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTE

1. See Neal A. Maxwell, *A Wonderful Flood of Light* (1990), 47.