
THE CONDESCENSION OF THE LAMB OF GOD

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The condescension of the Savior may be traced back to premortal life, where He “was like unto God” (Abraham 3:24), and compared with God’s other spirit offspring, Christ was “more intelligent than they all” (3:19). Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained, “In *intelligence and performance*, He far surpasses the individual and the composite *capacities and achievements* of all who have lived, live now, and will yet live!”¹ With no other premortal individual worthy or able to open the way of salvation for a mortal world (see Revelation 5:1–6), Jesus, the Lamb of God, volunteered, “Here am I, send me” (Abraham 3:27). Only He could fulfill the conditions required for the infinite Atonement.

This condescension was motivated by the Savior’s love for all of mankind, for “God is [the very personification of] love”

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1. Neal A. Maxwell, Conference Report, October 1981, 9; emphasis added.

(1 John 4:8). His capacity to love distinguished Christ from the other who volunteered: Satan had no love for others, and instead of being willing to condescend in love to bring about the Father's plan, Satan sought ascension. Isaiah taught regarding Satan's motivation, "Thou [Satan] hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High" (Isaiah 14:13-14). The Father declared, "I will send the first" (Abraham 3:27), and the great plan of happiness was put into effect in order for us to come to earth with an opportunity to progress and become more like God (another great testimonial to His condescension). Thus, the Lord's condescension in premortal life, in contrast to Satan's personal goal of ascension, was the catalyst for our mortal experience, which caused us to shout for joy (a possible reference to a premortal Hosanna Shout in gratitude for the condescension of the Savior; see Job 38:4-7).

The condescension of the Lamb of God was needed in order to rescue us from the effects of the Fall. As Abinadi testified, "Thus all mankind were lost; and behold, they would have been endlessly lost were it not that God redeemed his people from their lost and fallen state" (Mosiah 16:4). Nephi's witness taught that without the condescension of the Lamb, we would have been "shut out from the presence of our God . . . to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself," thus becoming "angels to a devil" (2 Nephi 9:9). The Savior rescued us through His atoning sacrifice.

All who are born into mortality enjoy another aspect of the condescension of the Lamb. Each individual is given a gift at birth: the light of Christ, often referred to as a conscience. Moroni bore witness that "the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil" (Moroni 7:15; see also D&C 84:45-47). President Joseph Fielding Smith explained,

"The Light of Christ acts as our conscience. If a man who has never heard the gospel will hearken to the teachings and manifestations of the Spirit of Christ, or the Light of Truth, which come to him, often spoken of as conscience—every man has a conscience and knows more or less when he does wrong, and the Spirit guides him if he will hearken to its whisperings . . . it will lead him eventually to the fulness of the gospel."² Because of the condescension of the Lamb of God, every mortal individual is blessed with a "guiding light" which draws one toward good and the love of God.

Like Heavenly Father, His Son condescends to respect the agency of individuals less intelligent than He as they decide whether to hearken to the promptings of conscience, or the light of Christ. President Howard W. Hunter taught:

To fully understand this gift of agency and its inestimable worth, it is imperative that we understand that God's chief way of acting is by persuasion and patience and long-suffering, not by coercion and stark confrontation. He acts by gentle solicitation and by sweet enticement. He always acts with unfailing respect for the freedom and independence that we possess. He wants to help us and pleads for the chance to assist us, but he will not do so in violation of our agency. He loves us too much to do that, and doing so would run counter to his divine character. . . .

To countermand and ultimately forbid our choices was Satan's way, not God's, and the Father of us all simply never will do that. He will, however, stand by us forever to help us see the right path, find the right choice,

2. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56), 1:51.

respond to the true voice, and feel the influence of his undeniable Spirit.³

His condescension is thus also manifested in His great patience. Continuing President Hunter's teaching: "His gentle, peaceful, powerful persuasion to do right and find joy will be with us 'so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved' (Moroni 7:36)."⁴

When an angel asked Nephi, "Knowest thou the condescension of God?" Nephi responded, "I know that *he loveth his children*; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things" (1 Nephi 11:16-17; emphasis added). Apparently, Nephi gave the correct answer in the first part of his response: to know of the condescension of God is to know of His love. In panoramic vision, Nephi was shown the mortal birth of the Savior as the angel declared, "Behold the Lamb of God." To the angel's ensuing question, "Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?" Nephi responded without hesitation, "Yea, it is *the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men*; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things" (1 Nephi 11:21-22; emphasis added). This great manifestation of God's love can be equated with the word *condescension*. Viewed in that light, it becomes apparent that the condescension of God is more than something that occurred in the past; it is still occurring in the present and will continue to occur in the future. Every time God interacts with any of His children, that interaction is a manifestation of His continuing condescension.

Condescension is the very essence of God's work and glory as He seeks "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life

3. Howard W. Hunter, Conference Report, October 1989, 21.

4. Hunter, Conference Report, October 1989, 21.

of man" (Moses 1:39). The definition of *condescension* provides an apt overview of God's work with His children: "To descend voluntarily to the level, regarded as lower, of the person that one is dealing with."⁵ Perhaps the first scriptural reference to condescension as it affects our world is couched in the statement, "We will go down . . . and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell" (Abraham 3:24).

As applied to Heavenly Father, His condescension is manifested in siring spirit offspring, allowing them an opportunity to be born on a mortal earth, and providing for them the gospel plan for their advancement, including the provision of a Savior for their redemption.⁶

As applied to the Savior, it is manifested in His willingness to literally go down and be born on a mortal earth to live and minister among His fellow beings. In so doing, the "Lion of the tribe of Juda" (Revelation 5:5; emphasis added), the Lord Omnipotent, condescended to accept the appellation of "a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19). He would be the sacrificial lamb for all of humanity.

His birth into mortality illustrates the most commonly understood example of His condescension. It would ordinarily be deemed appropriate that one destined to be the greatest king of all time should be born within kingly circumstances. Certainly the "King of kings" (1 Timothy 6:15) deserved a palace in which to be born, located in the luxurious part of a notable city. Expensive attire for the royal child would also be expected. However, the Lamb of God condescended to be born "in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inns" (JST, Luke 2:7), and He was wrapped in "swaddling clothes"

5. Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, 2d ed. s.v., "condescend."

6. See Bruce R. McConkie, "Behold the Condescension of God," *New Era*, December 1984, 35-36.

(2:7). The humble circumstances surrounding His birth in Bethlehem harmonized with the declaration Christ made later in life: "I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29).

It is not known if animals were in the stable at the time of His birth as traditionally depicted in Christmas greeting cards, but it is recorded that sheep were on the gentle slopes of the country adjacent to the city of Bethlehem (see Luke 2:8). This setting is symbolic of the condescension of the "Lamb of God," the Good Shepherd, and His mission of sacrifice for the world. It is interesting to note the comments of Elder McConkie regarding those circumstances on that night: "These were not ordinary shepherds nor ordinary flocks. The sheep there being herded—nay, not herded, but watched over, cared for with love and devotion—were destined for sacrifice on the great altar in the Lord's House, in similitude of the eternal sacrifice of Him who that wondrous night lay in a stable, perhaps among sheep of lesser destiny."⁷

In Nephi's vision of the mortal ministry of Jesus, he beheld that "the Lamb of God went forth and was baptized" (1 Nephi 11:27). According to the fourth article of faith, baptism is for "the remission of sins." The Savior, through His baptism, manifests His condescension in at least two prominent ways: that He would let a mortal man baptize Him and that He had no sins to remit. Perhaps this is what John sensed as he made the uncomfortable response, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" (Matthew 3:14). Again, His condescension was for our benefit, as Nephi testified: "And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfil all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even

7. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 1:347.

by water!" (2 Nephi 31:5). His submission is exemplary for us because "he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments" (31:7).⁸ Thus, in the lowest body of fresh water to be found upon the earth, the Savior was buried in baptism.⁹ As mortals born into a fallen condition, we need to be born again "of water and of the Spirit" (John 3:5). Even though He was without sin, the Savior "marked the path and led the way"¹⁰ by being baptized.

Throughout His mortal life, He condescended to experience the vicissitudes of mortality. Elder Francis M. Gibbons testified, "The supernal status of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and the preeminent place which he occupies in the eternal scheme of things cause us to stand in awe at what has been called the condescension of Christ, meaning his willingness to step down from his exalted place and to go forth, as the scripture says."¹¹ "And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people" (Alma 7:11). The poignancy of His endurance is illustrated in the testimony of King Benjamin, "And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer" (Mosiah 3:7). Thus, His condescension led Him to

8. The Father and the Holy Ghost condescended to bear witness of the divinity of the Son at this occasion (see Matthew 3:16-17).

9. *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 2d ed. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), s.v. "Jordan River."

10. *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 195, v. 4.

11. Francis M. Gibbons, Conference Report, April 1991, 41.

experience the trials and tests of mortality in a degree greater than any other human being could possibly endure.

As Paul testified regarding the Savior, "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" (Ephesians 4:9). Elder McConkie explained that this scripture had reference to the mortal life of the Messiah.¹² Perhaps the phrase "lower parts of the earth" has significance not only to this world but to the countless earths like this one. In His condescension, the Lamb chose to come to a world that He described to Enoch thus: "Wherefore, I can stretch forth mine hands and hold all the creations which I have made; and mine eye can pierce them also, and among all the workmanship of mine hands *there has not been so great wickedness as among thy brethren*" (Moses 7:36; emphasis added).

His condescension to live on this earth also provided for the people a manifestation of the power of God. King Benjamin taught around 124 B.C.: "Behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases" (Mosiah 3:5). His presence also gave the spiritually perceptive a manifestation of the character and physical appearance of His Father, for He testified, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

It was an act of condescension to deliver the keys of the

12. See Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary: Acts-Philippians*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1970), 2:510.

kingdom to the presiding Apostle, Peter (see Matthew 16:18–19), allowing others to act in His name. Today, He allows the delegation of that same priesthood authority for the blessing of men and women. Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained, "We know that the priesthood is the power of God delegated to men to act for the blessing and salvation of all mankind. . . . We must never forget that the priesthood is not owned by or embodied in those who hold it. It is held in a sacred trust to be used for the benefit of men, women, and children alike."¹³

The greatest act of condescension, however, is centered in the Atonement. As Elder McConkie testified, "Now the greatest and most important single thing there is in all eternity—the thing that transcends all others since the time of the creation of man and of the worlds—is the fact of the atoning sacrifice of Christ the Lord." Continuing, he bore witness that "the atonement is the central thing in the whole gospel system."¹⁴ It was in that atoning sacrifice that Christ "descended below all things" (D&C 88:6). No mortal can fully comprehend the implication of that phrase, but we can learn enough to stand in awe at the marvelous love and mercy exhibited in that godly act. In the words of hymn number 193, "I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me, / Confused at the grace that so fully he proffers me."¹⁵

Elder Merrill J. Bateman personalized the concept of the atoning sacrifice with the statement that "in the garden and on the cross, Jesus saw each of us and not only bore our sins, but also experienced our deepest feelings so that he would know how to comfort and strengthen us."¹⁶ It is one thing to know

13. Dallin H. Oaks, Conference Report, April 1992, 51.

14. McConkie, "Behold the Condescension of God," 36–37.

15. *Hymns*, no. 193, v. 1.

16. Merrill J. Bateman, Conference Report, April 1995, 16. See also Isaiah 53:10–11; Mosiah 15:10–11.

that Christ died for *all* of mankind—"Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8)—and another to gain the knowledge that the Atonement was meant to be experienced on an individual basis: "The Son of God . . . loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*" (Galatians 2:20; emphasis added). The condescension of the Lamb provides for that individual relationship with the Lord. For me it was a donkey outside the city of Bethlehem that led me to that personalization. My wife, Janene, and I were on a tour of the Holy Land with other religious educators in the Church Educational System. On a warm June day, we were seated on the ground singing sacred Christmas carols in a place called the Shepherd's Field. We had read of the birth of the Savior as recorded in Luke 2. Occasionally, we would look across the gentle slope towards the outskirts of Bethlehem, where Jesus was born.

Following our devotional service, we were allowed time to ponder, to contemplate what it might have been like to have been there on the eve of the birth of the Savior nearly two thousand years ago. Having a background in choir, I tried to imagine angels singing in the heavens while the shepherds on the ground listened intently. Perhaps a shepherd had listened near the very spot on which I was seated. I imagined myself gazing upon those scenes. I felt the excitement and in my day-dreaming, I wanted to hurry to see the Heavenly Babe lying in a manger.

With the setting of Bethlehem in the background, I thought of how the Savior of the world was born in the humblest of circumstances. I began to make a connection between what I was experiencing and what I had read about Jesus.

I pondered, "When was the Savior's moment of public triumph?" I thought quickly of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when the people cheered and strewed palm branches and cloaks before Him. Then another connection

formed to strengthen my understanding of the Savior: in His moment of public triumph, He did not ride a powerful stallion. Instead, He condescended to ride on the back of a humble donkey. In fact, it was a young donkey, a foal. I imagined Jesus riding upon such a beast. At that moment, I learned something that I had not sensed before: Jesus was a humble man. I had always thought and taught of Him as all-powerful, capable of destroying the wicked and commanding the elements, able to save through His power. But now, I knew that the Savior was also a humble individual; in fact, I supposed, He was the perfect model of humility.¹⁷ This realization brought me closer to Him, and I felt more comfortable in my desire to someday enter His presence.

The next question that came was, "When was the Savior's real moment of triumph?" It was an easy question to answer: "In the Garden of Gethsemane, where He began the atoning sacrifice." "And what was the mission of the Savior?" I felt prompted to answer: "To bear upon His back the burdens placed there by mankind."

Suddenly, in an unexplainable way, I sensed a personal connection with the Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane. I felt, rather than imagined, that a part of His suffering was because of my sins; a part of His pain was caused by me. I was stung with that realization. I didn't want to be the cause of pain to the Savior. For the first time in my life, I gained a testimony that Jesus atoned for my sins (that was more personal than "the sins of all mankind"). And He did it willingly, in humility, out of love. I think that in the great condescension of the Savior, this lesson was meant to be learned by everyone, one way or another.

17. Note the Savior's description of Himself in Matthew 11:29: "For I am meek and lowly in heart."

There is an implication in the brief account of the Atonement that bears further examination, an element that may indicate that before Christ descended below all things in the atoning sacrifice, He recognized the presence and support of Heavenly Father in the Garden of Gethsemane. As a prelude to that implication, a reference to Lehi's dream of the tree and the rod of iron seems appropriate. The word *fell* becomes a key word in the account. Of those who made it to the tree, some fell away after partaking of the fruit (see 1 Nephi 8:28), while others fell down at the tree before partaking. As Nephi viewed the reality for which the symbols in the dream stood, he "beheld the Son of God going forth among the children of men; and [he] saw many fall down at his feet and worship him" (11:24). There seems to be an element of religious devotion and spiritual perception as suggested by the words, "fall down" (11:24). This perception is the element missing in those who fell away after partaking of the fruit. Those who fell down to worship at the base of the tree of life recognized the divine presence of God when they were near Him.

As Jesus entered into the Garden of Gethsemane to begin His final descent below all things, an interesting event occurred: "And he went a little further, and fell on his face" (Matthew 26:39). I had always supposed that He fell because of the tremendous weight that was building upon His atoning shoulders. But it seems much more likely that as He was about to begin the atoning sacrifice, He recognized the presence and support of His Father in Heaven, there in the garden with Him, for the very next words He uttered were a prayer beginning, "O my Father" (26:39). Perhaps He illustrated in perfect example what Nephi and Lehi witnessed in the dream: as others approached the Lord and fell down at His feet, so the Lord Himself, in His moment of supreme sacrifice, fell down at the feet of the Father. He then makes supplication in prayer

for that which pressed most urgently upon Him: He asked if it were possible to "let this cup pass" from Him. But stating, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," He proceeded with the supreme sacrifice of condescension: to bear the weight of the sins of all mankind (26:39). Elder Marion G. Romney explained that in the atoning sacrifice, "the suffering he undertook to endure, and which he did endure, equaled the combined suffering of all men."¹⁸

Perhaps it was later, on the cross, where "all the infinite agonies and merciless pains of Gethsemane recurred,"¹⁹ that the final descent was made as the Savior cried out in agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). Elder James E. Talmage of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles testified that this final, condescending descent left "to the Savior of men the glory of complete victory over the forces of sin and death."²⁰

Elder Melvin J. Ballard expressed the following about our Heavenly Father during that final moment: "I imagine that He had looked upon that Son until even the Father could not stand it, and He turned to some secluded spot and bowed and wept for the suffering of His Son, until, in the last agonizing throes of terrible suffering He cried, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'"²¹ It defies human imagination how horrific that must have been. To feel abandoned even by God Himself must have been the lowest point in the condescension of Christ. Perhaps it was then that the ascent from the deepest depth of the atoning sacrifice began, for after crying out with a loud voice, He testified on the cross, "It is finished"

18. Marion G. Romney, Conference Report, October 1969, 57.

19. Bruce R. McConkie, Conference Report, April 1985, 10.

20. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 661.

21. Melvin J. Ballard, Conference Report, October 1910, 83.

(John 19:30); "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). He then willingly bowed His head in death.

Yet even in death, His statement made at age twelve still applied: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). While His body lay in the tomb, He condescended to organize a missionary force "from among the righteous" in the spirit world (D&C 138:30). The objective was to preach the gospel of salvation to all, including "those who had died in their sins, without a knowledge of the truth, or in transgression, having rejected the prophets" (D&C 138:32). "And so it was made known among the dead, both small and great, the unrighteous as well as the faithful, that redemption had been wrought through the sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross" (D&C 138:35). This knowledge was revealed after President Joseph F. Smith had been pondering "the great and wonderful love made manifest by the Father and the Son in the coming of the Redeemer into the world; that through his atonement, and by obedience to the principles of the gospel, mankind might be saved" (D&C 138:3-4). Like Lehi and Nephi of old, a modern prophet sensed the love in the condescension of God.

The etymology²² of the word *condescension* provides an interesting overview when applied to the mission of the Son. The root traces back to the Latin *com*, meaning "together." Jesus testified, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30); "I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (8:28). He and the Father are together in all things. This togetherness is then extended in the Savior's mission statement to His followers: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us" (17:21).

22. *Webster's New World Dictionary*, s.v. "condescend," "descend."

Next in the etymology is the Latin word *descendere*, meaning "descend." Jesus came down from glory to be born in the flesh, from a status as Jehovah to that of a mortal, subject to the trials of mortality. As Abinadi testified, "God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God" (Mosiah 15:1-2).

Before His mission was completed for the redemption of mankind, "He that ascended up on high . . . descended below all things" (D&C 88:6).

De-, "down," or "down from." Jesus came down from the presence of the Father: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38).

Scandere, "to climb." "I, John, saw that . . . he received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness" (D&C 93:12-13). Having climbed from grace to grace in His mortal life, He set the example for us and gave the commission, "Follow thou me" (2 Nephi 31:10).

After His Resurrection, Christ condescended to appear again to mortal man (see Luke 24:36-39; Acts 1:3). In our time, the latter days, He condescended to appear with His Father to the Prophet Joseph Smith, who testified: "I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—'*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*'" (Joseph Smith—History 1:16-17).

These appearances of the Lamb to His prophets are typical of a pattern of condescension that has been maintained

throughout the history of the earth. In premeridian appearances, "the Lord appeared unto Abram" (Genesis 12:7; see also 17:1, 22). The book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price confirms the biblical account, for Abraham testified, "I, Abraham . . . prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord appeared unto me" (Abraham 2:6). Of Isaac it is recorded that "the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee" (Genesis 26:24). Jacob, whose name was changed by the Lord to Israel, bore the following testimony, "For I have seen God face to face" (32:30). Moses testified that he "stood in the presence of God, and talked with him face to face" (Moses 1:31).

In these and other premeridian and postmeridian appearances, the Lord, through condescension, has made known His presence, His character, and His form so that the children of men might have consistent witnesses to help them develop faith in Him. As Joseph the Prophet taught, men must have "the idea that [God] actually exists," and they must have "a *correct* idea of his character, perfections, and attributes."²³

The Savior's appearances have been both to individuals and to groups. One of the most impressive accounts of ancient scripture is contained in the Book of Mormon, wherein it is recorded that soon after the resurrection of Christ, He appeared on the American continent. At His invitation, "the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come" (3 Nephi 11:15).

23. Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 38.

In a latter-day revelation, the Lord promises that "every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am" (D&C 93:1). Regarding this passage, Elder Bruce R. McConkie testified that "we have the power—and it is our privilege—so to live, that becoming pure in heart, we shall see the face of God while we yet dwell as mortals."²⁴

The great latter-day restoration of the Church and kingdom of God may be attributed to the condescension of the Lamb. We are living in the dispensation of time when the very "God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Daniel 2:44). It is a day of continuing revelation and additional scripture, a time when truth has sprung "out of the earth" and righteousness is looking "down from heaven" (Psalm 85:11; see also Moses 7:62). We are in the midst of the burgeoning growth of that great latter-day kingdom which shall crush "peacefully all nations and [invite] all to come to Christ."²⁵ We have the opportunity to become builders of the kingdom and "saviours . . . on mount Zion" (Obadiah 1:21). We can play a role in the salvation process, which once again is a manifestation of the condescension of the Lamb.

The Savior manifests His condescension whenever He "comes down" in order to "lift us up." This divine interaction sets us on a course toward eternal glory just as Jesus asked of His Father, "that they may be one, as we are" (John 17:11; see also vv. 22–24). This course is marked by covenants, and it is

24. Bruce R. McConkie, Conference Report, October 1977, 52.

25. Merrill J. Bateman, Conference Report, April 1994, 84.

an act of condescension that God would make such promises with men and women. Perhaps the first and most significant of these covenants is available through baptism. When we are baptized, we are allowed to "take upon [us] the name of Christ" (2 Nephi 31:13). The Lord allows us as mortals to take upon us His name. Following baptism, He allows each of us to "receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels" (31:13), for "angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost" (32:3). Through the condescension of the Lamb, mortals can speak by the same power as angels. For the rest of our lives, we are allowed the privilege of renewing our covenants of baptism whenever we partake worthily of the sacrament.

When we sin, He condescends to forgive us, for baptism is for the remission of sins. "Though [our] sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). Through the Spirit and power of the Lamb's atonement, we can become clean. Even doing our best, we need constant forgiveness. While Joseph Smith taught that "daily transgression and daily repentance is not that which is pleasing in the sight of God,"²⁶ yet whenever we slip we have the promise that "as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me" (Mosiah 26:30).

In speaking of the latter days, Nephi "beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord" (1 Nephi 14:14). As "the Holy Ghost descended . . . like a dove" (Luke 3:22) in witness to the divinity of the Son, so will the great Jehovah, the Lord God Omnipotent, allow the Holy Ghost to descend upon individual Saints to give and

26. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 148.

strengthen their testimonies. This helps them as they progress through covenants of righteousness which culminate in the temple. He condescends to favor His Saints, for "he that is righteous is favored of God" (1 Nephi 17:35). He has promised to preserve His people (see Moses 7:61). "Wherefore, the righteous need not fear; for . . . they shall be saved, even if it so be as by fire" (1 Nephi 22:17).

In our continuing efforts to follow the example of the Savior, He condescends to give the Saints numerous spiritual gifts (see D&C 46:8–30; 1 Corinthians 12:4–11) to help them progress from "grace to grace" (D&C 93:20). Included is the often unseen ministering of angels. In vision Nephi testified, "And I looked, and I beheld the heavens open again, and I saw angels descending upon the children of men; and they did minister unto them" (1 Nephi 11:30). Elder Bruce C. Hafen offered this explanation: "When do the angels come? If we seek to be worthy, they are near us when we need them most. . . . Angels have . . . come at times that were significant mostly because of their personal, spiritual meaning in the lives of ordinary but faithful men and women."²⁷

It is through the enabling power of the Atonement that we are allowed such great blessings. C. Richard Chidester commented, "We must yield our hearts to him (see Helaman 3:35), seek his guidance, and do his will in order to take advantage of His grace. His grace is his enabling power—his help and strength—which we receive as we expend our own best efforts."²⁸

It appears that without the enabling power of the Atonement, made available through the condescension of the Lamb, mankind could not have survived in the environment

27. Bruce C. Hafen, "When Do the Angels Come?" *Ensign*, April 1992, 12, 16.

28. C. Richard Chidester, "No Place for Pride," *Ensign*, March 1990, 19.

of a mortal world, "for in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). "He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth; which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ" (D&C 88:6-7). He is the light of the sun, the moon, the stars, and the light by which the earth was created and does exist. He is "the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed" (D&C 88:7-13). Therefore, because of the condescension of the Lamb, the world exists and people live on it. Perhaps this is why "in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments" (D&C 59:21). The Lamb, who gave His all and is the power by which all things exist, is still ignored and scorned by the majority of those who inhabit the earth. It is His condescension which provides grace, the "life support" of mortality.

There is another lesson that we ought to learn about condescension. If we liken the condescension of the Lamb to ourselves, we will not only rejoice in the blessings we receive, but we will mirror the concept of righteous condescension. We can do so with our children as we talk on their level. We will also listen on their level, show interest in the things they are interested in, and participate in activities they enjoy. We will minister to the sick and afflicted in a loving way. We will help the aged at whatever level of ability they may possess. We will share our wealth with the poor and our food with the hungry. Most important of all, we will seek to invite all to "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him" (Moroni 10:32). This will bring about the culminating condescension of the Lamb to us as individuals: that the glory given Him by the Father will be extended to us as "joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17).

Paul's testimony and the words of a latter-day hymn seem to provide an apt conclusion: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9).

*Jesus, once of humble birth,
Now in glory comes to earth.
Once he suffered grief and pain;
Now he comes on earth to reign. . . .*

*Once a meek and lowly Lamb,
Now the Lord, the great I Am.
Once upon the cross he bowed;
Now his chariot is the cloud.²⁹*

29. *Hymns*, no. 196, vv. 1-2.