
THE DIVINE NATURE OF JESUS CHRIST DURING MORTALITY

Craig J. Ostler

Knowest thou the condescension of God?" an angel asked Nephi (1 Nephi 11:16). Who can understand or comprehend the grandeur and marvel of a God born into a fallen world? The nature of mortality for the Savior poses many questions. The scriptures testify that He is the Son of God, the Only Begotten in the flesh. Yet, "often when we read, write, or speak of Christ, he is placed so far above our human condition that we may lose sight of his mortal life."¹ The doctrine concerning the nature of mortality for the Lord Jesus Christ is amply taught in the scriptures and teachings of latter-day prophets. They testify that He is the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh because He needed to be not only God but also mortal, to atone for sin, to die, and to come forth from the tomb.

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1. Craig J. Ostler, "What Is a Mortal Messiah?" in *The Apostle Paul: His Life and His Testimony*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 151.

"THE SON OF MAN HATH DESCENDED
BELOW THEM ALL"

One of the greatest events in all eternity occurred when Jehovah surrendered His premortal glory to be born into mortality, and His condescension was twofold. First, the Savior relinquished the fulness of the glory of God, including knowledge attained through the aeons of time spent learning from His Father as a premortal spirit. Second, He took upon Himself a body of flesh and blood, subject to death, disease, and other physical weaknesses.

The Apostle Paul wrote concerning the Lord's condescension to mortality:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:5-8)

The verb used by Paul in this passage, which reads, He "made himself of no reputation," is a translation of the Greek word derived from the infinitive *kenosis*,² meaning "to make empty."³ One Bible scholar renders Paul's writings to literally

2. *The Word Study New Testament*, eds., Ralph D. Winter and Roberta H. Winter (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1978), 635; George V. Wigram and Ralph D. Winter, *The Word Study Concordance* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1978), entry 2758.

3. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 661.

say that Jesus "emptied himself."⁴ Other translations interpret the meaning of Paul's writings to say Jesus "made himself nothing,"⁵ or "of his own free will he gave it all up."⁶ Furthermore, additional translations indicate that the sense of the words should read that He "stripped himself of every advantage"⁷ and "laid aside his mighty power and glory."⁸

John the Baptist similarly testified of the condescension of the Messiah:

And I, John, bear record that I beheld his glory, as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, even the Spirit of truth, which came and dwelt in the flesh, and dwelt among us.

And I, John, saw that he received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace;

And he received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness;

And thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not of the fulness at the first. (D&C 93:11-14)

Hence, as the familiar Christmas hymn declares, "Mild he lays his glory by,"⁹ Jesus Christ emptied Himself of the glory that He possessed as the premortal Jehovah, the God of Israel.

4. Jerusalem Bible and Revised Standard Version, Philippians 2:7.

5. The New English Bible and New International Version, Philippians 2:7; J. R. Dummelow's commentary expounds further on the concept of the Messiah emptying Himself: "The verb 'emptied' in v. 7 supplies the theological term *kenosis* for the deprivation of divine attributes or powers involved in the incarnation of our Lord. However far this diminution went—and we cannot pretend to define its limits—since it was a self-emptying, an act of our Lord's sovereignty, it involved no forfeiture of intrinsic Deity." *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), 973.

6. Today's English Version, Philippians 2:7.

7. Phillips Modern English Bible, Philippians 2:7.

8. The Living Bible, Philippians 2:7.

9. *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. 209.

What was the glory that Christ laid aside when He was born into mortality? Abraham saw in vision that the premortal Jesus Christ "was like unto God" (Abraham 3:24). He had a fulness of the glory of God the Father (see D&C 93:3-11). Our scriptures reveal, "The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth" (93:36). Further, "truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come" (93:24). In essence, this scriptural definition of truth describes the glory of Jesus Christ before His mortal birth. To condescend to a mortal condition required that He surrender His knowledge gained in the premortal life. When He was born into mortality, "over His mind had fallen the veil of forgetfulness common to all who are born on earth," wrote Elder James E. Talmage, "by which the remembrance of primeval existence is shut off."¹⁰ President Lorenzo Snow further elucidated: "When Jesus lay in the manger, a helpless infant, He knew not that He was the Son of God, and that formerly He created the earth. When the edict of Herod was issued, He knew nothing of it; He had not power to save Himself; and His father and mother had to take Him and fly into Egypt to preserve Him from the effects of that edict. Well, He grew up to manhood, and during His progress it was revealed unto Him who He was, and for what purpose He was in the world. The glory and power He possessed before He came into the world was made known unto Him."¹¹ Thus, when Jesus condescended to be born into mortality, He did not have a fulness of the glory of God as it pertains to knowledge and truth.

In the premortal realms, Jesus Christ was chosen by the Father and given preeminence in all things. He was given the responsibility to preside over all other spirit children. He had

10. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 111.

11. Lorenzo Snow, Conference Report, April 1901, 3.

committed into His hands supervision of the plan for the salvation of His Father's family. He was chosen before He was born on earth to be the Savior and Only Begotten Son of the Father. He was the Creator, the very Eternal Father of heaven and earth. Further, He was the God of our fathers, Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and all other prophets. Yet when born upon this earth, He came not to a palace; He was not laid in silken sheets by attendants to a queen. Rather, He was born into the most humble of circumstances and walked the dusty roads of Palestine without a place to lay His head. As Isaiah foresaw, during mortality Jesus Christ was "despised and rejected of men" (Isaiah 53:3). In His condescension, "he descended below all things" (D&C 88:6), and He was judged by men

to be a thing of naught; wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men.

And the God of our fathers, . . . yea, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, yieldeth himself, according to the words of the angel, as a man, into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up, according to the words of Zenock, and to be crucified, according to the words of Neum, and to be buried in a sepulchre, according to the words of Zenos. (1 Nephi 19:9-10)

THE NATURE OF THE MESSIAH'S EARTHLY TABERNACLE

The scriptures repeatedly testify of both the similarities of Christ's mortal body to that of all of Adam and Eve's descendants and of His uniqueness as the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh. King Benjamin taught his people, "For 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" (Mosiah 3:5). Furthermore, the Savior testified, "I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men" (D&C 93:4). The Apostle Paul explained that Christ came to earth not as a glorified angelic messenger, but He "was made a little lower than the angels. . . . For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren" (Hebrews 2:9, 16–17).

His earthly tabernacle did not distinguish Him from any other man. Indeed, Isaiah testified concerning the mortal Messiah: "When we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2). So much was the mortal Jehovah like other men that, even though He was God, those who opposed Him in His mortal ministry judged "him to be a thing of naught" (1 Nephi 19:9) and "consider[ed] him a man" (Mosiah 3:9). As previously noted, Jesus Christ came to earth without memory of His premortal activities. The Savior began His mortal sojourn like the rest of Adam's seed, as a babe born helpless and dependent upon others. He continued His mortal life growing and maturing to manhood (see Luke 2:40, 52). "Jesus walked the same road from infancy to manhood that has been trod by every adult mortal," explained Elder Bruce R. McConkie. "As a babe he began to grow, normally and naturally, and there was nothing supernatural about it. He learned to crawl, to walk, to run. He spoke his first word, cut his first tooth, took his first step—the same as other children do."¹²

12. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 1:367–68. In writing about the childhood of Christ, Cunningham Geikie maintained: "Mysterious as it is to us, we must never forget that, as a child, He

Christ experienced the weaknesses of the mortal body. John records that as He sat upon Jacob's well in Samaria, Jesus was "wearied with his journey" (John 4:6). He also records that the scripture was fulfilled when Jesus uttered, "I thirst" (19:28) while He hung upon the cross. Coupled with declarations of prophets and apostles previously cited, it is clear that in His condescension the Messiah took upon Himself all of the physical aspects of mortality.

Even so, the Savior's body of flesh and blood was also distinct from that of other mortals. The father of His earthly body was God, and Jesus was conceived in the flesh to bear the "express image of his person" (Hebrews 1:3). He inherited from His Father physical characteristics in the same manner that He inherited them from His mother. But, because His Father was God, a perfect resurrected being, He inherited perfect physical characteristics. In that manner, the physical attributes of God the Father dwelt within the body of the mortal Christ. God was Christ's Father, and Mary was His mother. His mortal body was created in their image, and He could experience pain and joy in all of their fulness. Yet, the matter that composed His body came from the dust of the earth, as had the bodies of all of the children of Adam.

THE MESSIAH'S GLORY IN MORTALITY

Though He was born without the memory or knowledge gained in His premortal estate, Jesus of Nazareth was still the Eternal God of Israel. Likewise, though He condescended to a

passed through the same stages as other children. . . . As Irenaeus says, 'He sanctified childhood by passing through it.' Neither His words nor acts, His childish pleasures nor His tears, were different from those of His age. Evil alone had no growth in Him: His soul gave back to the heavens all their sacred brightness. The ideal of humanity from His birth, He never lost the innocence of childhood, but He was none the less completely like other children in all things else." *The Life and Words of Christ* (New York: D. Appleton, 1897), 165.

body of temporal and corruptible clay, He was yet the Lord God Omnipotent. "When we pass from preexistence to mortality," explained Elder Bruce R. McConkie, "we bring with us traits and talents there developed. True, we forget what went before because we are here being tested, but the capacities and abilities that then were ours are yet resident within us. . . . And all men with their infinitely varied talents and personalities pick up the course of progression where they left it off when they left the heavenly realms."¹³ Christ "brought with him from that eternal world the talents and capacities, the inclinations to conform and obey, and the ability to recognize truth that he had there acquired."¹⁴ I have written elsewhere, "That Jesus of Nazareth excelled all mankind during his mortal sojourn is due to his character, spiritual sensitivity, and obedience to his Father in Heaven."¹⁵ Christ had gained a fulness of glory in the premortal realms, yet He would empty Himself of all He possessed. Mortality would be, in large measure, a regaining of the knowledge and power He had attained as a premortal spirit. His soul was attuned to the infinite strength of truth. Thus, though "he received not of the fulness at first, [he] continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness" (D&C 93:13).

As "Jesus grew up with his brethren, and waxed strong, and waited upon the Lord for the time of his ministry to come, . . . He spake not as other men, neither could he be taught; for he needed not that any man should teach him" (JST, Matthew 3:24-25). It is evident that the Savior grew and matured more rapidly in the spiritual realm than He did physically. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "When still a boy He had all the

13. McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 1:25.

14. McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 1:369.

15. Ostler, "What Is a Mortal Messiah?" 161.

intelligence necessary to enable Him to rule and govern the kingdom of the Jews and [He] could reason with the wisest and most profound doctors of law and divinity, and make their theories and practice to appear like folly compared with the wisdom He possessed; but He was a boy only, and lacked physical strength even to defend His own person; and was subject to cold, to hunger and to death."¹⁶

In time, as John bore witness, the Savior attained a fulness of glory, that intelligence that He had before He was born. Following His baptism at the hands of John and before He began His public ministry, Matthew records, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be with God" (JST, Matthew 4:1). President Brigham Young declared that before the hour of the atoning sacrifice "Jesus had been with his Father, talked with Him, dwelt in His bosom, and knew all about heaven, about making the earth, about the transgression of man, and what would redeem the people, and that he was the character who was to redeem the sons of earth, and the earth itself from all sin that had come upon it. The light, knowledge, power, and glory with which he was clothed were far above, or exceeded that of all others who had been upon the earth after the fall."¹⁷

Therefore, in some respects Christ did come in glory, but not in the manner that was expected by the Jews. Nearly a century before the birth of Christ in Bethlehem, Alma testified: "And not many days hence the Son of God shall come in his glory; and his glory shall be the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, equity, and truth, full of patience, mercy, and long-suffering, quick to hear the cries of his

16. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938), 392.

17. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854-86), 3:206.

people" (Alma 9:26). It was this glory of which John testified: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The glory of the Mortal Messiah was that of the power of godliness and righteousness.

THE MORTAL MESSIAH SUFFERED TEMPTATIONS

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," declared the Apostle Paul, "but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). "A question deserving some attention," declared Elder James E. Talmage, "is that of the peccability or impeccability of Christ—the question as to whether He was capable of sinning. Had there been no possibility of His yielding to the lures of Satan, there would have been no real test in the temptations, no genuine victory in the result. Our Lord was sinless yet peccable; He had the capacity, the ability to sin had He willed so to do. Had He been bereft of the faculty to sin, He would have been shorn of His free agency."¹⁸ Thus, temptations common to our mortality were also part of the Messiah's mortal experience. The Gospels record some of the temptations of Christ and clearly indicate that He was tempted with bodily appetites, the need for self-assurance, and the honors of men (see Matthew 4:1–10; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:1–13). However, He "gave no heed unto them" (D&C 20:22).

Likewise, those emotions of ill temper, impatience, envy, unkindness, and hatred were presented to the Mortal Messiah. President Harold B. Lee explained, "Although He was moved by human emotions throughout His life, there was an essential difference between His expression of them and ours. His

18. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 134.

emotions were always under control."¹⁹ His response to such temptations was consistent with His divine character. In the midst of misunderstanding, He was patient; in times of opposition, He retained His composure; and in the most trying circumstances, He maintained His dignity. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that He "descended in suffering below that which man can suffer, or, in other words, suffered greater sufferings, and was exposed to more powerful contradictions than any man can be. But, notwithstanding all this, he kept the law of God, and remained without sin, showing thereby that it is in the power of man to keep the law and remain also without sin."²⁰

THE POWER OF THE MORTAL MESSIAH

The Son of God led the way for all, placing His mortal body in perfect subjection to the will of the Spirit. "None ever were perfect but Jesus," stated the Prophet Joseph Smith, "and why was He perfect? Because He was the Son of God, and had the fulness of the Spirit, and greater power than any man."²¹ The reservoir of strength that empowered the Savior to withstand the onslaught of temptation is available to all of God's children. Similar to the binding of Satan in the millennial day, the Mortal Messiah bound Satan by His righteousness (see 1 Nephi 22:26). The Savior testified, "No man receiveth a fulness unless he keepeth his commandments. He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things" (D&C 93:27-28). Those who sin in mortality require a mighty change of heart that they might root out their sinful nature

19. Harold B. Lee, *Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996), 8.

20. Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 5:2.

21. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 187-88.

and receive a fulness of truth and light. This remarkable change, wrought by the Spirit of God, enables them to "have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2). The Mortal Messiah retained the innocence empowered by absolute obedience to His Father's will. He thus retained the nature of a godly disposition to do only good continually.

Regarding the power of the Savior to heal the sick and raise the dead, Elder Erastus Snow explained, "For God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him! It is measured out to you and me in the providence of the Lord; but for him there was a storehouse to draw upon, as it were, without measure. He could continue to heal the sick and raise the dead and perform great and marvelous things, and yet the supply of vitality was not in the least abated. Mortals less gifted and less favored who should be the means of healing many sick by the power of God, would feel that in taking their infirmities upon them, they were sinking under the weight, and would want to hie themselves away to rest and recuperate their exhausted frames. . . . He, however, waged war constantly, and was well prepared for this work, having an inexhaustible source of strength to draw from, the Spirit having been given to him without measure."²² Wherefore, it was not by attributes of His physical body that He had the power to give sight to the blind, strength to lame legs, new flesh to lepers, and life to the dead. Rather, it was by the power of the Spirit of God. The same power by which He "created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are" (2 Nephi 2:14). Spiritual power, growth, and knowledge come not by heredity but by obedience and experience.

22. Erastus Snow, *Journal of Discourses*, 21:25–26.

THE ATONING SACRIFICE OF THE MORTAL MESSIAH

The atoning sacrifice involved two dimensions, one physical and the other spiritual. The perfect atonement required that the Messiah overcome the physical and spiritual deaths incurred upon all of mankind by the fall of Adam. The Savior explained that He suffered "both body and spirit" (D&C 19:18). In doing so, the Son of God took upon Himself the pains of death and the sins of the world.

When the hour of the atoning sacrifice came, Jesus Christ called upon every lesson learned, every power over the flesh He had attained. To the greatest extent, He submitted His tabernacle of clay to the pains of death and sin. As He, an eternal being, submitted His will to that of His Father, He knew intimately the reason that His mortal body must needs be sired by God. It was absolutely necessary that His physical body have a perfect organization of mortal matter, inherited by divine design, to suffer "more than man can suffer" (Mosiah 3:7). The material that made up His body was like that of His brothers and sisters, consisting of the dust of the earth. However, that body was "specially prepared," taught President John Taylor, "and being the offspring of God, both in body and spirit, he stood preeminently in the position of the Son of God, or in the place of God, and was God, and thus the fit and only person capable of making an infinite atonement. Hence we read: 'Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast prepared me' (Hebrews 10:5)."²³

Further, evidence of divine wisdom in the eternal plan of the Father to sire Jesus as His Only Begotten Son shines forth in the spiritual sufferings of the Savior's atonement. The

23. John Taylor, *The Mediation and Atonement* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1882), 137.

anguish and torment of sin became so intense that He bled from every pore (see Luke 22:44; Mosiah 3:7; D&C 19:18). Yet the Savior remained in control and consciously continued to submit to the will of the Father. The pain was so excruciating that He lay prostrate on the ground, trembling in agony (see Matthew 26:39; D&C 19:18). Nevertheless, He did not sink into oblivion of mind.

As Elder James E. Talmage so eloquently explained, "Christ's agony in the garden is unfathomable by the finite mind, both as to intensity and cause. . . . He struggled and groaned under a burden such as no other being who has lived on earth might even conceive as possible. It was not physical pain, nor mental anguish alone, that caused Him to suffer such torture as to produce an extrusion of blood from every pore; but a spiritual agony of soul such as only God was capable of experiencing. No other man, however great his powers of physical or mental endurance, could have suffered so; for his human organism would have succumbed, and syncope would have produced unconsciousness and welcome oblivion."²⁴ With His eternal spirit united to His mortal body, the Messiah suffered the pains of all men.

The body of flesh and blood that Jesus Christ inherited from God, His immortal father, and Mary, His mortal mother, fitted Him for the atoning sacrifice. In addition to that physical endurance necessary for the atoning sacrifice, the Savior also needed to be the Son of God in the flesh that He might answer the ends of the law as an "infinite and eternal sacrifice" (Alma 34:10); that is, He must be an infinite and eternal being, a God, for "there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world" (34:12). Moreover, He needed to be the Son of God that He might

24. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 613.

rightfully represent and preside over all of Adam and Eve's posterity in the patriarchal order of the priesthood. If He had been the son of Joseph, then He would fall in the lineage of Joseph, and according to our understanding of the sealing of families, Jesus would be presided over by Joseph in eternity. However, Jesus presides over the inhabitants of worlds without end, created under the direction of the Father. He does so by right as the Firstborn, or first spirit child born to our Heavenly Father. In addition, He is the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh, and thus He eternally presides over all of the family of Elohim under His Father's direction.

Returning the discussion to the atoning sacrifice, the suffering for sin required that the Messiah undergo a withdrawal of the Spirit, which fulness He previously enjoyed because of His sinless life. In Gethsemane, Jesus Christ "descended below all things" (D&C 88:6). Yea, He "suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent" (19:16). The separation from the Spirit enabled the condescension of the Son of God to be complete. The horrors of spiritual death returned while the Savior hung on the cross at Calvary. During the agony of crucifixion, "Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46; see also Mark 15:34). President Brigham Young taught: "The Father withdrew His spirit from His Son, at the time he was to be crucified. . . . At the hour when the crisis came for him to offer up his life, the Father withdrew Himself, withdrew His Spirit, and cast a veil over him. That is what made him sweat blood. If he had had the power of God upon him, he would not have sweat blood; but all was withdrawn from him, and a veil was cast over him."²⁵ Thus, we see that He needed to be the Son of

25. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 3:206.

God in the flesh, with a body specially prepared for Him, that He might have the physical capability of suffering more than man can suffer, when the Spirit of God was withdrawn from Him during the atoning sacrifice. The withdrawal of the Spirit accompanied by the pains of crucifixion enabled the Son of God to experience mortality in the fundamental and ultimate sense "that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:12).

During the last twenty-four hours of the Savior's mortal life, He underwent a sleepless evening of legal manipulation and lacerations of the scourging whip that normally produced death. However, He had power over the life and death of His own tabernacle of flesh. He himself testified, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17-18). When Christ fulfilled all that He was to accomplish in the flesh, and only then, He gave up His mortal life. His spirit had complete control over His body. As an eternal being of spirit, He was immortal. Only the physical body was capable of dying. He allowed death to have claim on the body provided for Him by His mother, Mary, and His Father, Elohim.

THE POSTMORTAL MESSIAH HAD THE POWER OF RESURRECTION

The doctrine of the Savior's condescension to mortality may raise questions concerning the Savior's power over death. If His mortal tabernacle was mere dust, by what power did He come forth from the tomb? After the Crucifixion, the spirit of the "Redeemer, even the Son Ahman," lived (D&C 78:20). Only the clay was given lease to perform its foreordained work of death. The prophet Lehi testified that the Holy Messiah

"layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise" (2 Nephi 2:8). Mormon added that "he was slain by the Jews, and by the power of the Father he hath risen again, whereby he hath gained the victory over the grave" (Mormon 7:5). Hence, the spirit of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Father, raised His body from the tomb three days after He breathed His last mortal breath while on the cross at Calvary. The power of resurrection was not in the flesh, the dust of the earth, but was the power of the eternal being, the spirit personage of the Great I AM.

In this manner, the Son of God demonstrated great faith in His Father's plan, perhaps the greatest act of faith ever undertaken. He laid down His life and exercised faith in doing that which His Father had done. "Jesus, what are you going to do?" queried the Prophet Joseph Smith. "To lay down my life as my Father did, and take it up again. . . . My Father worked out his kingdom in fear and trembling, and I must do the same."²⁶ Jesus Christ trusted His Father's word that He could lay His life down and raise His body again to reunite both body and spirit as a resurrected soul. During His mortal ministry, the Savior taught, "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will" (John 5:21). Thus, as the Prophet Joseph Smith explained regarding the Savior's resurrection, "He did as He was sent, to lay down His life and take it up again; and then was committed unto Him the keys."²⁷ That is, following His own resurrection from the tomb, Christ was given the keys, or right and responsibility, to direct the Resurrection for all others.

26. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 346–47.

27. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 373.

SEEING HIM AS HE IS

The doctrine of the divine nature of the Mortal Messiah underscores the plan of salvation. It opens the door of understanding to the commonality of mortal experiences that we share with Jesus Christ. "When the Savior shall appear," taught the Prophet Joseph Smith, "we shall see him as he is. We shall see that he is a man like unto ourselves" (D&C 130:1). Furthermore, it appropriately teaches that Jesus of Nazareth is the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh, chosen to be "the way, the truth, and the life" for all to follow (John 14:6). "I give unto you these sayings," explained the Savior concerning His condescension, "that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness. For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father; therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace" (D&C 93:19-20). In summary, I echo the testimony of the Apostle Paul, "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews 2:11).