

# 3

## JESUS CHRIST

The testimony of Christ comes to us with special importance in the Restoration, for through the Restoration the knowledge of Christ and a continued testimony of the divinity of His work has come. We approach this with a study of the scriptural story of His work before, during, and after His life on earth.

### BEFORE HIS LIFE ON EARTH

Jesus Christ was in the beginning with God: “And I, God, said unto mine Only Begotten, which was with me from the beginning” (Genesis 1:27). “In the beginning was the gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God. The same was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1-2). Christ in His prayer said, “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:5).

He shared in the creation. Though we recognize God as the Creator, for it was by His power that creation was possible, we find that Christ shared in creation. Modern-day revelation tells us, “And worlds without number have I created, and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten” (D&C 22:21c). This was apparently understood by the writers in the first-century Church (see John 1:3; Colossians 1:16); and Nephi records the words of Christ: “Behold I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are” (3 Nephi 4:44).

He chose to become the Savior (Genesis 3:3). This fact was known by many of the prophets centuries before the coming of Jesus Christ. Jacob writes, “For this intent have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and not only we, ourselves, had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us” (Jacob 3:4).

### HIS LIFE ON EARTH

In the meridian of time, Christ came to the earth and took upon Himself mortal life. His mission was clear. He came to make it possible for men to come again into the presence of God, to make the atonement (*at-one-ment*). Christ came to empower man: “As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; only to them who believe on his name” (John 1:12).

The mission of Christ is expressed in various ways in the Scriptures. He came to seek and save that which was lost (see Luke 19:10), make everlasting life possible (John 3:16), free men through truth (see John 8:31-32, 18:37), and give men abundant life (see John 10:10). All of these are caught up in His overall purpose—leading men back to God.

The nature of the work of Christ was threefold. Basically, it was *apostolic*. He was a witness for truth, and His chief concern was for the souls of men. He was also *prophetic*. He was an inspired interpreter and revealer of the divine will. He looked not only at the past or present but to the future. He was the *teacher*; He imparted much knowledge to His followers, dealt with the iniquity in their lives, and challenged them to cleanliness. He was also an example to mankind, leaving these records of His purpose: “I can of mine own self do nothing because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father who hath sent me” (John 5:31); “I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29); and “Ye shall observe to do the things which ye have seen me do” (Matthew 26:25).

### AFTER HIS LIFE ON EARTH

The testimony of the Restoration becomes most distinctive in our belief that the nature of His work continues to be apostolic, prophetic, and teaching. Much of this work is accomplished through the Holy Spirit, in accord with His promise: “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you

another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16-17) and “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). While it is the Holy Spirit who speaks, we note that He speaks only that which He hears Christ speak.

As further evidence that the crucifixion did not end the personal work of Christ with men, we note His promise that other sheep should hear His voice (John 10:16) and the testimony of Nephi bearing witness of the fulfilling of His promise (3 Nephi 7:16-23).

We believe that Christ continues to be concerned with living children of men and that His love and mercy reach beyond the grave in a continuous effort to influence even the wicked (see 1 Peter 3:18-20, 4:6). Some accuse us of believing in a second chance for man, but we see it is but a continuation of the work of Christ toward the accomplishment of the purpose of God.

## **THE WORK OF CHRIST IS ETERNAL**

We can plainly see that the work of Christ is eternal. He works through precept and example to bring man to God. At the heart of His teaching is the Fatherhood of God. He seeks to challenge men by the proclamation of the intense and personal affection of our heavenly Father for every individual He has created. He invites men with His offer of power that we might become the true sons of God.

In a general way, all men are the sons of God by the fact of creation; but this natural relationship does not make us sons in the deepest sense of the word. That comes with mutual understanding, a unity of interest, activity, and will. Men truly become the sons of God through their relationship with Christ. To obtain this divine relationship, man must lay aside his personal desire and accept the will of God. He who has learned to yield his own will to the will of God and to take delight only in that which is well pleasing to God has learned to follow the life of Jesus and become filled with the joy of sonship.

The work of Christ seeks to do away with the separation between God and man which has resulted from sin. The outstanding feature of the life of Jesus has been His intelligent obedience to the will of God in every instance. His mortal suffering, the agony of the cross, and His physical death are symbolic of the sorrow and pain we cause the eternal Father by choosing that which separates us from Him. This is the price He pays, that we by choice and intelligence may become one with Him. However, this sacrifice of righteousness offered by Christ can alter the relationship in which we stand to God only as we bring ourselves into union with Him.

Jesus prayed, “That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” (John 17:21). Who are we to hinder the fulfillment of His desire?

## **CHRIST OFFERS FULFILLMENT OF OUR NEEDS**

In Christ alone do we find hope of fulfillment of our needs. The great cry coming from the hearts of the masses is “peace” —not just peace with neighbors but peace within. The cry is for peace that brings freedom from fear, freedom from agitating passion, and freedom from moral conflict. Such peace is not the result of outward environment but rather an inward quality. Christ promises such a peace—one that is not of this world, a peace that removes trouble from our hearts and fear from our minds (John 14:27). Stephen found this peace even in an agonizing physical death: “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60). Paul, in the midst of persecution, found this peace and the sureness of God’s love (Romans 8:35-39). Some of the Book of Mormon people likewise found this peace in spite of persecutions (see Alma 1:42).

This peace comes to us as we respond to the Master’s pleading to take His yoke upon us and learn of Him (Matthew 11:29-30). In the resultant fellowship, man need never again feel alone. Brother Elbert Smith wrote, “The only man who walks alone is the man who walks without God.” The peace of Christ comes as we find the freedom that can result only in a knowledge of the truth (John 8:31-32). The peace of Christ comes as the raging passion and moral conflict find answers through His strength. When we sense that He comes to our aid, we are delivered from sin (Romans 7:14-22). We know this peace as we see the awfulness of death replaced with the reality of His promise of continuous, eternal life with God (John 11:25-26; 14:1-3).

Yes, Christ is the answer to man’s need!

## **OUR FINAL TESTIMONY—HE LIVES!**

Basic to the witness of Christ as we know Him is the beautifully worded statement of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon after seeing Him in vision in 1832: “And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: that he lives; for we saw him, even on the right hand of God” (D&C 76:3g).

In the midst of a Christian world that increasingly denies that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of faith and thus rejects the fact of His resurrection, we move forth to proclaim boldly that “HE LIVES!”

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. What three things must we know about Christ in the period prior to His earthly ministry?
2. Christ came to earth for what purpose?
3. What message is at the heart of all His teaching?
4. How did Christ’s work continue after His crucifixion? Give scriptural proof.
5. How is Christ’s work threefold?
6. In what ways does the message of Christ offer security to man?
7. How does one acquire the peace of Christ?
8. Of what are we speaking when we say, “the atonement of Christ” and in what way is it related to a living Christ?
9. Does Christianity require a living Christ in order to become productive and worthwhile?