

BURKE REES



the
Majesty

of JESUS
CHRIST

© 2025 Burke Rees

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form whatsoever, whether by graphic, visual, electronic, film, microfilm, tape recording, or any other means, without prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief passages embodied in critical reviews and articles.

This is not an official publication of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The opinions and views expressed herein belong solely to the author and do not necessarily represent the opinions or views of Cedar Fort, Inc. Permission for the use of sources, graphics, and photos is also solely the responsibility of the author.

Paperback ISBN 13: 978-1-4621-5017-5

eBook ISBN 13: 978-1-4621-5018-2

Published by CFI, an imprint of Cedar Fort, Inc.

2373 W. 700 S., Suite 100, Springville, UT 84663

Distributed by Cedar Fort, Inc., www.cedarfort.com

Library of Congress Cataloging Number: 2025943173

Cover design by Shawnda Craig

Cover design © 2025 Cedar Fort, Inc.

Edited and Typeset by Liz Kazandzhy

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed on acid-free paper

CONTENTS

Foreword

The Majesty of Premortal Jesus

Jesus of Nazareth Is the Chosen Savior

The Majesty of Christ's Miracles

The Majesty of Christ's Mortal Ministry

The Majesty of Christ's Atonement

The Majesty of Christ While in the Grave

The Majesty of Christ's Resurrection

The Majesty of Christ's Grace

The Majesty of Our Resurrection

The Majesty of Christ's Way

The Majesty of Christ in Our Lives

The Hope of Christ During Our Trials

Conclusion

About the Author

THE MAJESTY OF PREMORTAL JESUS

Our appreciation and understanding of Jesus Christ and His mission here on earth is greatly enhanced when our perspectives are not bound by His birth in Bethlehem and His death on Calvary. Mortal life does not stand alone. Life is better understood when it is related to the premortality that went before and the immortality that will come after.

Small tidbits of truth are found in the Bible that help us realize that there was a premortal life. But those truths are oblique and difficult to find. Many people are familiar with Jeremiah 1:5: “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” That scripture is a powerful witness that there was life before earth, that God knew us, and that He ordained at least some of us to perform important missions during mortality. We learn the same from the teaching of Paul: “He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians. 1:4). Peter tells us that Jesus Christ was foreordained before the foundations of the world (see 1 Peter 1:20).

The Lord asked Job some intriguing questions, and through those questions, we learn that we watched the Creation of this earth and shouted for joy when it was complete. “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? . . . When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:4, 7)? We were in a premortal existence watching the Creation.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 teaches us that when we die, our spirits will return unto God. The inference is clear: We lived with God prior to mortality.

The psalmist declared that “all of you are children of the most High” (Psalm 82:6). Paul corroborated this truth when he wrote, “We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live” (Hebrews 12:9).

The healing of a man born blind by Jesus presupposes a knowledge of a premortal life. We read, “And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind” (John 9:1–2). Birth deformities can indeed be caused by parental abuse and disobedience. The taking of drugs while pregnant can and has caused birth deformities. Immorality can lead to disease, which can cause blindness in an unborn child. But how can an unborn child cause his own blindness? Can an unborn child sin, which would cause the blindness? The question is a manifestation that the disciples understood premortality. Can premortal sin cause one to be born blind? In this particular instance, Jesus replied, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God

should be made manifest in him” (John 9:3). The Savior proceeded to heal the blind man.

The Gospel of John begins with these words, which are a great witness of a premortal life: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . 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 1:1, 14).

Jude tells us that “the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 1:6). Further, John the Revelator writes, “And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven” (Revelation 12:7–8). Those two scriptures simply can’t be understood without a knowledge of a premortal life and some of the events that occurred there.

There is considerable evidence from apocryphal writings and the Dead Sea Scrolls that suggests that a premortal existence was taught in the early Church. Josephus wrote of the Essenes, who believed in a premortal existence.³ As Joseph Fielding McConkie concluded after referencing some of the ancient Jewish and Christian texts, “The doctrines of premortal existence, heavenly councils, and foreordinations were all a part of the theology of the ancient saints.”⁴ It seems that the doctrine of premortality is one plain and precious truth that was removed from the Bible.

SPIRIT CREATION IN PREMORTALITY

Latter-day revelation provides a wealth of information regarding premortality. In the book of Moses, we learn that God created all people in the heavens before the earth was formed. We read, “I the Lord God, had created all the children of men; and not yet a man to till the ground; for in heaven created I them; and there was not yet flesh upon the earth” (Moses 3:5). Again, “I am God; I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh” (Moses 6:51). We now clearly know that all of us lived with God, our Eternal Father, in a premortal world. All men and women who have ever lived or who will yet live were born as spirit children to our Father in Heaven. “Man was also in the beginning with God” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:29). We also learn that Jesus Christ was the Firstborn of the spirits (see Doctrine and Covenants 93:21). We know that God created both male and female spirits; gender was determined prior to one’s mortal birth.⁵

We are not given any detailed account of the spirit creation. This spirit creation happened untold ages before we came to this earth. Abraham described the sons and daughters of God as *intelligences*. The term *intelligence* is also used as a synonym for *spirit element*. The sons and daughters of God were organized intelligences or spirit bodies born from spirit element (see Doctrine and Covenants 93:29; 131:7–8; Abraham 3:22). In a literal sense God is the Father of our spirits. In Athens, Paul declared, “Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God” (Acts 17:29). This understanding gives us greater appreciation when we talk about the brotherhood and sisterhood of humankind. Not only have we all descended from Adam, but all of us have the same heavenly parentage. We address Him such—our Heavenly Father—in our prayers. Today, we are striving to become acquainted with Him. In reality, we have merely forgotten what we knew while

living with Him.

How long did we live with our Father in Heaven in this premortal sphere? We are not told, but it was likely eons of time. During that time, spirits progressed and grew in wisdom and power through their diligence and obedience (see Doctrine and Covenants 130:19).

Abraham received a vision of the premortal world and he tells us, “There stood one among them that was like unto God” (Abraham 3:24). Abraham said Jesus was “like unto God”! Jesus had yet to pass through a mortal probation, to overcome the world, to attain a resurrection, and to return to His Father with His own glorious and tangible body to enjoy eternal progeny. In those important aspects, Jesus was not like God. But Jesus was like Him in intelligence, in knowledge and understanding, in the possession of truth, in conformity to divine law, and therefore in power. Jesus was like Him in plan and purpose, in desires for righteousness, in a willingness to serve His brethren. Jesus was like Him as a guide and a light to all others.

JESUS CHRIST WAS THE GREAT CREATOR

Jesus Christ’s diligence and obedience far surpassed what any other spirit exhibited. So much so that we learn that Christ, under the direction of the Father, became the Creator. “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” (Moses 1:33). Jesus Christ was and is the Lord God Omnipotent, the great Creator—“that by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created” (Doctrine and Covenants 76:24). John testified, “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3).

Our world is just a small orb in the vast space of the universe where trillions of worlds exist. The mortal mind cannot fully comprehend the vastness of all the creations. As a young boy, I often would sleep outside under the stars during the summer. I enjoyed looking up at the night sky with its myriad of stars. Recently, the Hubble Satellite and the James Webb Space Telescope have given us a deeper look into the universe, and scientists have concluded that it is even bigger than we originally thought. Today’s astronomers tell us that the Milky Way Galaxy has roughly 100 billion stars! We simply cannot fathom the vastness of that number. Traveling at the speed of light—roughly 186,000 miles per second—it takes only eight minutes to travel from our sun to Earth. To travel across the Milky Way Galaxy at that same speed would require more than 100,000 years! Yet if we were sufficiently distant from the Milky Way, it would be seen as but one bright dot among countless bright dots in space. Such immensity!

When Moses was shown a portion of all the Lord’s creations, he exclaimed, “I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed” (Moses 1:10). In comparison to the might and majesty of God, we are, comparatively speaking, nothing. Given our relative nothingness, the psalmist wrote, “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psalm 8:3–4)? If we have visions of just this life, we would be filled with hopelessness precisely because of our nothingness.

The Prophet Joseph taught in his King Follett discourse, delivered in April 1844, that Elohim, our Eternal Father in Heaven, was the savior in His world:

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man and sits enthroned in yonder heavens. God himself the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth the same as Jesus Christ himself did. Scriptures inform us that Jesus said, As the Father hath power in himself, even so hath the Son power—to do what? Why, what the Father did. The answer is obvious—in a manner, to lay down his body and take it up again. Jesus, what are you going to do? To lay down my life, as my Father did, and take it up again.⁶

So Elohim experienced mortality, then became a God as he lived the gospel faithfully, and then had spirit children, including Jesus Christ. Then who made Elohim's world? How do we reconcile God's declaration that Christ made all the worlds when Jesus did not create the world on which Elohim lived? Our finite minds cannot comprehend such things. God speaks to man simplistically (basic math) rather than providing all the intricate details (calculus) precisely because of our finite minds. It is reasonable to my mind that God is simply telling us that all creations that man can see or even fathom were all created by Jesus Christ. God wants us to know that Christ was unlike any other of His spirit children! Rather than being bogged down by the unfathomable, let us simply stand in awe at the majesty of Jesus Christ being the Creator of all that we know.

HEAVENLY FATHERS' PLAN OF HAPPINESS

One can only imagine that we were happy as we lived with God. Over time, we understood that we could never attain complete joy or realize our complete potential without becoming like our Father in Heaven. We wanted to be like Him. He desired the same for us.

There were three distinguishing features that made us different from our Father in Heaven. First, He has a glorified, resurrected, immortal body of flesh and bones (see Doctrine and Covenants 130:22). We had just spirit bodies. Latter-day revelation reveals that a person will receive a fulness of joy only when their eternal spirit is joined with an immortal body of flesh and bones (see Doctrine and Covenants 93:32–34). Second, God is perfect and holy in every good attribute. We lacked perfection in those attributes. We needed an environment where opposition existed so we could prove ourselves, or demonstrate who we really are or who we could become by our consistent choices. Third, our Father in Heaven has the power to beget children throughout all eternity. All of us are His children. In that premortal world, we simply did not have that power.

Our Father in Heaven had a plan for us to eliminate those three differences and become like Him. It is called the plan of salvation or the plan of happiness. Jesus Christ did not present a plan in the heavenly councils that was adopted in preference to a less desirable plan presented by Lucifer, as is so often mistakenly taught. Our Father in Heaven is the author of the plan of salvation. As the Prophet taught, “God himself finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself. He has power to institute laws to instruct the weaker intelligences, that they may be

exalted with himself.”⁷

The Lord’s plan called for the creation of a world to allow His spirit children to come and receive bodies. Our mortal bodies are incredibly inferior to the body of our Father in Heaven, but they are a prerequisite to obtaining such a body. The plan would have our mortal bodies die so that we might be resurrected with immortal bodies. One’s resurrected body will never be subject to disease, pain, or affliction and will never again die.

That plan called for a world in which an environment of opposites existed. We were taught that we would experience trials and afflictions, including pain, sorrow, and disappointment. We learned that those trials would be for our good (see Doctrine and Covenants 122:7) and would help us develop godlike attributes as we responded to them with faith. The Lord would place a veil over our memories of the premortal life so we could exercise our agency to choose good or evil without being influenced by the memory of living with our Heavenly Father.

God’s plan also provides a way for us to have children and a family throughout eternity, just like our Father in Heaven. But eternal procreation is such an honor and privilege that a specific path would have to be followed in mortality to obtain such a blessing.

THE NEED FOR A SAVIOR

Dependent only upon our own abilities, we would fail in two spectacular ways. First, when we come to this world, we do indeed receive bodies of flesh and bones, but they are mortal, subject to death. Death is the common lot of all humankind, no matter one’s wealth or status. Death is a certainty. Contrary to how the world thinks, death is part of the Lord’s merciful plan (see 2 Nephi 9:6). When death occurs, none of us, by our own strength, would ever have the power to raise our bodies from the grave and transform our bodies from mortal, corruptible bodies to immortal, incorruptible bodies. Death is part of the Lord’s merciful plan precisely because He made it possible for us to rise from the dead—to resurrect.

Second, we would fail because all of us would sin. Living in a fallen world with intense opposition, we would simply all sin to some degree or another. Paul taught, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). He also taught, “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). This death is not the death of the body. It refers to spiritual death, meaning being cut off from the presence of the Lord. In our day, the Lord has declared, “I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:31). Sin would prevent us from returning to our Father in Heaven and becoming like Christ! Thus, left to our own devices and powers, physical death and sin prevent us from ever returning to and becoming like our Father in Heaven.

The Lord’s plan had a way to overcome physical death and sin: a Savior, or Redeemer. The Lord’s plan would work only because of this Savior. This Savior needed to have power over death and the power of the Resurrection. The designated Savior would be given that power because His birth would be unique. The Savior would be given those powers by virtue of the fact that God Himself—having such powers—would sire the Savior. Since God would sire only the Savior, the Savior would be known as the

Only Begotten of the Father (see John 1:14). With a mortal mother, the Savior could die. With God as His father, the Savior would have the power to withstand death indefinitely and have power over the grave once He did die.⁸ While ministering on earth, Jesus declared, “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).

For the plan of salvation to work, this Savior needed to save us from our sins, for the punishment for sin was banishment from God. In order to have the power to redeem us from sin, the Savior needed to live a sinless life! Who could we trust for such an assignment?

NOBLE AND GREAT SPIRITS

Abraham tells us, “Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones” (Abraham 3:22). Abraham continues: “And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born” (Abraham 3:23). I pondered at great length what those spirit children, including Abraham, did to become noble and great. It is obvious from that scripture that not everyone became noble and great.

The answer came to me while reading the words of Alma: “The Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order . . . to teach these things unto the people . . . this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling” (Alma 13:1–3). Some spirit children of God became noble and great precisely because they chose good over evil and exercised great faith.

Choosing good over evil denotes that we had agency in the premortal world. In order to have agency, there must be four elements present: (1) laws must exist that can be obeyed or disobeyed; (2) opposites must exist—good and evil, virtue and vice, and each force vying for the attention of the individual; (3) there must be an awareness of those opposites; and (4) the individual must have the power to act in accordance with their own wishes, to follow that path they want to follow. Alma clearly taught that the noble spirits chose to do good. It is well to remember President Dallin H. Oaks’s masterful discourse “Good, Better, Best,” delivered at the October 2007 general conference. He taught, “As we consider various choices, we should remember that it is not enough that something is good. Other choices are better, and still others are best.”⁹ It is reasonable to assume that those spirits who became noble and great were not content with doing good but consistently chose the best paths.

JESUS CHRIST WAS CHOSEN TO BE THE SAVIOR

The question posed in Abraham 3:27 is the source of confusion regarding volunteerism in the premortal heavens: “And the Lord said: Whom shall I send?” That

question was asked as God contemplated who should be the Savior. One needs to understand the setting or context to fully appreciate that question. I submit that it was not asked in a Grand Council or in some grand sacrament meeting for all spirits of the heavens to hear and to which they could respond.

When Abraham recounts his version of the Creation, he always uses the plural “Gods” who created the earth (see Abraham 4). Abraham consistently teaches that God our Father counseled with other gods during the Creation. Even in the Genesis account, we read, “Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness” (Genesis 1:26; emphasis added). The obvious reference to “us” and “our” would be the gods. I submit that the question “Whom shall I send?” was posed in a council of gods. Elohim, our Father in Heaven, along with the full council of gods, looked upon all the faithful and noble children and chose the greatest spirit—indeed His Firstborn—to be His Only Begotten Son, to be our Savior and Redeemer. Can anyone doubt that the call came to him in a private interview?

The government of God is on display in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The government of God on earth is patterned after the government of God in the heavens. Parley P. Pratt wrote what he called a “Proclamation” in the *Millennial Star* in 1843. It reads in part as follows: “The legislative, judicial, and executive power is vested in Him (the Lord). He reveals the laws, and he elects, chooses, or appoints the officers; and holds the right to reprove, to correct, or even to remove them at pleasure. Hence the necessity of a constant intercourse by direct revelation between him and His Church.”¹⁰

Elder John A. Widtsoe wrote, “By the spirit of revelation, the Priesthood governs the Church of Christ. Under this government, the Priesthood has power to instruct, rebuke and bless, as needed for the welfare of individuals, but only as authorized by the officers of the Church. And the government so obtained is perfect. It is freed from the dross of personal desire, and the uncertainty of self-assumed authority.”¹¹

When I served in a stake presidency and we needed to select a new bishop or an elders quorum president, we did not go to the ward and ask in a sacrament or priesthood meeting for volunteers who would be willing to serve in those capacities. We called someone as moved upon by revelation. When the Brethren come to organize or reorganize a stake presidency, they do not ask for volunteers. They call someone as directed by revelation. In other words, God calls them.

God directs His kingdom by calling and ordaining those who He would have preside. Surely those same principles operated in the premortal world. To think that God would call righteous, noble men and women who had shown exceedingly great faith to be great leaders in this mortal world, and then rely upon some volunteer to assume the greatest role on earth, a role that makes the plan of salvation work, is simply not congruent with how God governs. As President Joseph Fielding Smith taught:

It is reasonable to believe that there was a Church organization there. The heavenly beings were living in a perfectly arranged society. Every person knew his place. Priesthood, without any question, had been conferred and the leaders were chosen to officiate. Ordinances pertaining to that pre-existence were required and the love of God prevailed. Under such conditions it was natural for our Father to discern and choose those who were most worthy and evaluate the talents of each individual. He knew not only what each of us *could* do, but what each of us *would* do when put to the test and when responsibility was given us. Then, when the time came for our

habitation on mortal earth, all things were prepared and the servants of the Lord chosen and ordained to their respective missions.¹²

Abraham tells us that the Lord foreordained the great and noble spirits to be His rulers on this earth. He did so in order to carry forward His purposes among all people and nations. Those foreordinations designated certain individuals to perform missions that the Lord knew they had the talents and capacities to do. Alma taught the great truth that every person who would hold the Melchizedek Priesthood was foreordained to receive that priesthood because of their noble stature in the premortal world. Similarly, all women who would serve in God's kingdom on earth by divine investiture of priesthood authority were also foreordained. One can learn of his or her foreordained mission to some degree by receiving a patriarchal blessing. The Prophet Joseph taught, "Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose."¹³

Restoration scripture includes many instances of specific foreordination. Christ was foreordained to be the Son of God and the Savior of the world (see Moses 4:1–4; Abraham 3:27). Mary, the mother of Jesus, was foreordained for her sacred mission (see 1 Nephi 11:18–20). John the Baptist received a premortal commission to prepare the way for the first coming of the Savior (see 1 Nephi 10:7–10). The Lord's Twelve Apostles were chosen in the premortal world (see 1 Nephi 11:29, 34–36). Joseph, who was sold into Egypt, spoke prophetically of Moses and Joseph Smith and their foreordained missions long before they were born in this world (see 2 Nephi 3). The mission of Columbus to bring the American nations to the knowledge of the Old World was foreordained (see 1 Nephi 13:12). The Founding Fathers of the American nation and the establishment of the Constitution were foreordained in the premortal world to accomplish that great work (see Doctrine and Covenants 101:80). Perhaps the same could be said regarding the great statesmen of the ages, the great artists, the great scientists, the great inventors, the leaders of nations, or even the technological wizards of today

Foreordination does not destroy agency. The Lord foreordains individuals to perform certain missions. If the individual chooses wisely and measures up to the standards expected by the Lord, the foreordained mission will be accomplished (see 1 Nephi 3:7). However, we are taught that "there are many called, but few are chosen" (Doctrine and Covenants 121:34). In other words, in the premortal life, many were called or foreordained to perform missions on this earth. One becomes chosen when one performs the mission for which he or she was foreordained. Sadly, the Lord notes that "few are chosen." The scripture continues, "And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men" (Doctrine and Covenants 121:34–35). The Lord also warns, "There is a possibility that man may fall from grace and depart from the living God; Therefore . . . take heed and pray always . . . even let those who are sanctified take heed also" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:32–34).

Jesus Christ was asked to condescend below all things by coming to this fallen world where He would suffer great temptations, pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, a world in which He would be rejected by most men, a world that would not shower Him with glory as He enjoyed in premortality, and a world that would ultimately kill

Him. He was to suffer all these things without crushing all of His enemies, which He had the power to do. Always meek and humble, always eager to please His Father, Jesus majestically and simply responded, “Here am I, send me. . . . Thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever” (Moses 4:1–2). In essence, one who is called as a bishop, a stake president, an Apostle, or any other calling says the same thing. They willingly submit to the demands of the calling.

It is reasonable to assume that the Father informed all His spirit children in a Grand Council that He had called our eldest brother to fulfill the role of Savior and asked for our sustaining vote. Endowed with the divine power of agency, we could choose to follow the Father’s plan and accept the chosen Savior, or to reject the goodness and grace offered by the plan. All who have or will live upon this earth sustained the plan. I have become convinced that we accepted the plan of happiness primarily because we had great hope and faith in Jesus Christ that He would fulfill His mission to be our Savior.

CHRIST DEFEATED LUCIFER’S REBELLION

In that Grand Council, one who held great authority and position, who the scriptures have referred to as “a son of the morning” (Isaiah 14:12–20), no doubt a mighty personage, not only objected to the call being extended to Jesus Christ but also objected to the plan of salvation. He showed no faith in his eldest brother. It appears from the scriptures that sufficient time was given to this spirit son to expound on his alternative plan and to convince us to follow him. However, make no mistake—the Father did not seriously consider the plan, for He knew it was fatally flawed. Lucifer, who has been called the “father of lies,” told the great first lie that we know of: that he could save us all, “that one soul shall not be lost” (Moses 4:1). He knew his plan would not lead us back to God or help us become like Him. He didn’t want to pay the heavy price to redeem us. His plan would have made us subject to him, thus giving him glory in some perverted way, but none of us would have become like our Father, the sole object and purpose of the plan of salvation.

When the Father announced that His plan would continue as outlined, with Jesus Christ being our Savior, Lucifer rebelled in outright apostasy. So John tells us of the “war in heaven” (Revelation 12:7). It was a war between following God or following Lucifer who wanted to take God’s place. Lucifer turned “a third part of the hosts of heaven” away from God. Because of their rebellion against God, by the power of Jesus Christ they were cast out of heaven! Lucifer became Satan (see Doctrine and Covenants 29:36–39). Satan and his followers lost all opportunity to have physical bodies and to be saved by the plan of salvation. He and his followers now “maketh war with the saints in this life” (Doctrine and Covenants 76:29).

Isaiah saw this war in heaven and lamented, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell” (Isaiah 14:12–15). We are told that “the heavens wept over him” (Doctrine and Covenants 76:26).

FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST IN PREMORTALITY

As previously noted, Alma taught that for those who received the promise of priesthood, it was “on account of their *exceeding faith* and good works” (Alma 13:3; emphasis added). When I was a Primary child, my teachers told me we came to earth to learn to live by faith. That just isn’t true! Alma clearly taught that some became noble and great and received priesthood promises because they exercised exceeding faith in the premortal world! Exceeding faith in what? We lived with God, so faith in His existence was not required. They showed exceeding faith in Jesus Christ (i.e., that He would come to earth and fulfill His mission as the Savior). How did one show exceeding faith? By not standing on the sidelines and watching. Rather, one actively fought alongside Jesus Christ to trumpet the plan of salvation when there were other forces shouting that the Lord’s plan of salvation should be scrapped.

The difference between Jesus and Lucifer was this: Jesus was willing to submit to the Father. Everything that we read about Jesus Christ, coupled with our own experience in relation to the effect of the Spirit of God upon the heart, leads me to the conclusion that if Jesus had proposed a plan that would not have been accepted by the Father, He would not have rebelled against the Father nor against the chosen Redeemer. How different it was with Lucifer! Because he could not have his way, he was determined to wreck everything. He was not one with the Father. If he had been, that rebellion would not have occurred.

Now, with the decree issued that Jesus should redeem and save humankind—that His Atonement would enable men to return to and become like their Father in Heaven—the Messiah “verily was foreordained” (1 Peter 1:20) and became “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

With Christ having been chosen as our Savior and Redeemer, our Father in Heaven then gave Him the commission to build this earth whereon we would dwell. Perhaps some of the noble and great assisted in that effort, for we read, “*We* will go down, for there is space there, and *we* will take of these materials, and *we* will make an earth whereon these may dwell” (Abraham 3:24–25). We do know that “all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:7) when the creation of this earth was complete.

JESUS CHRIST IS JEHOVAH

As the Savior, it fell upon Christ to deal with all humankind. From the beginning, all revelation that came from God came from Jesus Christ. On rare occasions, our Father in Heaven would introduce Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament, even Jehovah! Jesus Himself declared to His critics that He was Jehovah and they attempted to stone Him for what they considered blasphemy.

Modern revelation clearly teaches that Jehovah is the premortal Jesus Christ. “The Lord Omnipotent . . . shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay . . . he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God . . . the Creator of all things; and his mother shall be called Mary” (Mosiah 3:5–8). When Jesus appeared to the Nephite nation, He testified, “I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world . . . I am the God of Israel” (3 Nephi 11:10),

and then He taught, “I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel” (3 Nephi 15:5).

The prophet Nephi further testified, “The God of our fathers, who were led out of Egypt, out of bondage . . . yea, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, yieldeth himself . . . into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up . . . and to be crucified . . . and to be buried in a sepulchre” (1 Nephi 19:10).

When the Lord appeared to the Prophet Joseph in the Kirtland Temple, Joseph recorded that the Lord Jehovah proclaimed, “I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father” (Doctrine and Covenants 110:3–4). Knowing that Jesus Christ is Jehovah only enhances our appreciation of His majesty. Because of the truths removed from the Bible, the world at large does not have a correct understanding that Jehovah and Jesus Christ are one and the same. No wonder Nephi called the forces who removed such precious truths “abominable.”

We gain valuable insight regarding the likeness of our spirits when Jesus Christ, as Jehovah, appeared to the brother of Jared thousands of years before His birth in a manger in Bethlehem. After appearing, Christ declared, “Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit . . . as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh” (Ether 3:16). “Our spirit beings were men and women appearing in all respects as mortal persons do, excepting only that their spirit bodies were made of a more pure and refined substance than the elements from which mortal bodies are made.”¹⁴ “All spirit is matter,” the Prophet said, “but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes” (Doctrine and Covenants 131:7).

The intent of the Lord’s plan of salvation or plan of happiness is to have His children become like Him. It will work only because of a Savior. Jesus Christ was called and foreordained to be the Savior of the world. The Savior would overcome physical death and sin, which we were powerless to do. His great work to save us from physical death and from sin is called the Atonement. The Atonement was the Savior’s mission.

³. See Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews* (Alpha Editions, 2021), 15:371; *The Jewish War* (Penguin Classics, 1984), 2:154–56.

⁴. *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints* (Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 183–84.

⁵. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” Gospel Library.

⁶. Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Published in *Times and Seasons*, 614, josephsmithpapers.org.

⁷. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 354.

⁸. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (1916), 22.

⁹. Dallin H. Oaks, “Good, Better, Best,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 104.

¹⁰. Quoted in Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (Deseret Book, 1974), 150–51.

¹¹. John A. Widtsoe, *Priesthood and Church Government* (Deseret Book, 1950), 48.

¹². Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection* (Deseret Book, 1984), 50–51.

¹³. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 365.

¹⁴. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 589.

You've Just Finished your Free Sample

Enjoyed the preview?

Buy: <http://www.ebooks2go.com>