Jesus Christ, literal Son of God, December 20, 1914


Copy furnished by Thomas Truitt, Salt Lake City, Utah.


This sermon and doctrinal discourse on the literalness of the Sonship of Jesus Christ is an extremely important addition to L.D.S. doctrinal literature. Its contents should be carefully studied in connection with the statement of the First Presidency of 1909 on the Origin of Man and of the letter to Samuel O. Bennion in 1912 appearing earlier in this volume. It should also be read in connection with the doctrinal statement of the First Presidency of June 30, 1916, entitled “The Father and The Son; A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Twelve.”

I am indebted to Thomas G. Truitt of Salt Lake City for a correct copy of these instructions of President Joseph F. Smith.

The story of the final authentication of this sermon is given in a little publication by Thomas Truitt in March, 1967, entitled Lost Talk Found. Circumstances of the reporting and publication of this sermon and instructions including correct dates and source of publication are given by Truitt. The sermon was submitted to President Smith for his editing and approval before publication by the Box elder News. Truitt writes:

“For over fifteen years I have been searching for this talk by President Joseph F. Smith. There are others who have been searching for over twenty-five years. The cause of the confusion was that the talk was typed up and circulated under the date of Sept. 20, 1914 and that the source was given as the Box Elder Times, both of which were in error. The correct date of the conference talk was Dec. 20, 1914, the date of publication was January 28, 1915, and the correct source of publication was the Box Elder News.” Thomas G. Truitt is a member of the staff of the L.D.S. Church Historian’s Library.

Brigham Young had earlier made similar statements that Christ was literally the Son of God. (See JD 4:218, February 5, 1857, and JD 11:268, August 19, 1866.)

THE BOX ELDER NEWS, THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 1915

PRESIDENT JOS. F. SMITH’S ADDRESS

SUNDAY MORNING

(Following is a stenographic report of the address President Joseph F. Smith delivered at the Sunday morning session of the recent quarterly conference.—Ed.)

I feel very humble this morning as well as very grateful to have the privilege of meeting with such a large number of good people and the dear little children also of these good people who are striving to build up Zion and who are doing all they can, all at is in their power, to bring up their little children in the way they should go that when they get old they will not depart from the right way.

I commend the remarks of Brother George Albert Smith, and I want to tell these little folks who George Albert is. He is the son of John Henry Smith, who was the son of George E. Smith, an own cousin of the prophet. Geo. A. Smith was a son of John Smith. John was a brother of Joseph Smith who was the father of the Prophet, so you can account for the spirit and for the feeling and the testimony that dwells in the heart of this good boy who has spoken to us here this morning, and why he is so earnest and so interested in the well-being of the children of Zion.

Some of the things that have been mentioned this morning have touched the sensitive part of my soul, and I possess that degree of human weakness that I cannot help being affected by the sentiments that have been expressed, not only in relation to the Prophet and his brother, but relative to the Great Master, Jesus Christ, son of God.

We are all sons and daughters of God, and I want the little folks to hear what I am going to tell you. I am going to tell you a simple truth, yet it is one of the greatest truths and one of the most simple facts ever revealed to the children of men. Yet it is one that has been mystified and philosophized by men, more perhaps, than any other truth ever uttered by the mouths of the prophets. If I talk to the little folks so they understand the parents and teachers will be able to
understand.

Now in the first book in the Bible and the Bible has been the standard of the Christian faith for nineteen centuries, yet nearly all the Christian believers and advocates of the Bible throughout the world have seemed to ignore one of the great truths that is taken from this book we read: “In the beginning God created man in his own image, and in his own likeness male and female.” Right on the face of this great and yet simple truth that is revealed in Genesis, the Christian world has formulated a God that is incomprehensible. One of the greatest syndicates of learned men known in history were once chosen to determine and define the Being called God, and after deliberating over it for months rendered the decision that “God was incomprehensible,” and that “to comprehend God would be to destroy Him.” Yet he said he created man in his own image and likeness, male and female. If God made man in the likeness of God then he is like God and God is like man. The Saviour, Jesus Christ, begotten of God, was in the likeness of his Father, resembling him so nearly that He said on one occasion that “He that hath seen me has seen the Father.” I see a little boy. He has hair, he has eyes and he has a face which resembles his father’s, and when he grows up we say that we cannot tell him from his father, so perfect is resemblance between the boy and his father. The boy looks like the father and the father looks like the boy; he looks a little older; of course you can tell the father from the boy because he is a little older than his son. Jesus Christ was created just like his Father; had the same features; same frame, same kind of body and was so like Him when you saw him you saw an exact likeness or similitude of His Father.

You all know that your fathers are indeed your fathers and that your mothers are indeed your mothers you all know that don’t you? You cannot deny it. Now, we are told in scriptures that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God in the flesh. Well, now for the benefit of the older ones, how are children begotten? I answer just as Jesus Christ was begotten of his father. The Christian denominations believe that Christ was begotten not of God but of the spirit that overshadowed his mother. This is nonsense. Why will not the world receive the truth? Why will they not believe the Father when he says that Jesus Christ is His only begotten Son? Why will they try to explain this truth away and make mystery of it?

Now if God is a man, a glorious perfected man—that is, perfect in all his glorious attributes, and infinite in power, there never will come a time when God the Father will not have power to extend His dominion and His Glory. He is the maker of Heaven and the Earth, on which we dwell, for He made this earth by his word and by his power. How did he make it? He called the elements that are invisible to our eyes. He formed the earth on which we dwell, and has formed millions of worlds, and they are peopled with his children, for there is no end to his dominions and the worlds he has created cannot be numbered unto man.

Now, little boys and girls, when you are confronted by infidels in the world who know nothing of how Christ was begotten, you can say he was born just as the infidel was begotten and born, so was Christ begotten by his Father, who is also our Father—the Father of our spirits—and he was born of his mother Mary.

The difference between Jesus Christ and other men is this: Our fathers in the flesh are mortal men, who are subject unto death; but the Father of Jesus Christ in the flesh is the God of Heaven. Therefore Jesus, as he declared, received the power of life from his Father and was never subject unto death but had life in himself as his father had life in himself. Because of this power he overcame death and the grave and became master of the resurrection and the means of salvation to us all.

Shall we as Latter-day Saints deny the truth and then claim that God made man in his likeness in the beginning? Shall we come under the impression that God possesses the power of creation, and yet did not literally create? He is not without his companion any more than I am without my companion, the mother of my children.

These are truths and I wish they could be instilled into the hearts of these little children so that they will not be tossed about by every wind of doctrine and be confused by the teachers of atheism. Now, by and by you will be able to understand this far better than you can today. Some of us grandparents find it difficult to conceive the truth we want to think of something marvelous. We want to try to make it appear that God does not do things in the right way, or that he has another way of doing things than what we know, we must come down to the simple fact that God Almighty was the Father of His Son Jesus Christ. Mary, the virgin girl, who had never known mortal man, was his mother. God by her begot His son Jesus Christ, and He was born into the world with power and intelligence like that of His Father.

He was God with us, He was indeed Emmanuel for He came for a purpose and He possessed power that no human being ever possessed. He had power to lay down His life and take it up again, He had power to resist His murderers; if He had so willed it they never could have taken his life. He came for a purpose—what was it?—to redeem man from death. Life everlasting came into the world by the death and sacrifice of this one man.
He went to the spirits in prison, to proclaim liberty to them. As Jesus Christ proclaimed liberty to the living so also He proclaimed liberty to the dead, for He had passed from mortality to immortality, to make the proclamation to the dead as He had to those that were in mortal life that all might obtain salvation thru obedience to the simple ordinances of the gospel.

I was so impressed to hear these little boys sing as they did. Their beautiful voices were so harmonious with each other. All that has been sung has been pleasing to hear. I glory in the son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, the babe of Bethlehem, having power to redeem all mankind from all their sins.

You understand it is said here in the Doctrine and Covenants that God cannot look on sin with any degree of allowance.

Now, my little friends, I will repeat again in words as simple as I can, and you talk to your parents about it, that God, the Eternal Father is literally the father of Jesus Christ.

Mary was married to Joseph for time. No man could take her for eternity because she belonged to the Father of her divine Son. In the revelation that has come thru Joseph Smith, we learn that it is the eternal purpose of God that man and woman should be joined together by the power of God here on earth for time and eternity.

If a man and woman should be joined together who are incompatible to each other it would be a mercy to them to be separated that they might have a chance to find other spirits that will be congenial to them. We may bind on earth and it will be bound in Heaven, and loose on earth and it will be loosed in Heaven. I would like teachers of the Sunday school to take these simple facts and teach them to the children so that they may understand the truth, that their faith may be founded in fact and in truth; for nothing that is not built upon truth will stand. That which is false will fall. Only that which is based upon God's truth will endure.

Now, my brothers and sisters and the Sunday school workers, we want you to teach the children the truth and nothing but the truth.

Those who partake of the Sacrament without the spirit of forgiveness in their hearts eat and drink condemnation to their souls, because they do it without recognizing the power of His redeeming grace to them; they came to the table of the Lord's supper without forgiveness in their hearts, without repentance in their souls. I shall read the prayer of the bread. (Here read prayer on bread from Doctrine and Covenants.)

That they will always keep the commandments of God that they may always have His spirit to be with them and that they are always willing to take upon them His name and remember Him. What does it mean? It is a witness unto God that we do always remember Him and that we are always willing to keep his commandments, that He has given us. Do we think of that when we partake of the Sacrament? He has said, "I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men."

We are responsible for what we do, it is nobler to forgive than to be forgiven. We should feel it is greater, more Godly to say to those who trespass against us, I forgive you—I will not allow my soul to be corroded by bitter enmity against my fellow man.

Oh, if this spirit could be possessed by the Latter-day Saints where would be your High Council trials? Your Bishop's courts? Where your prisons and your prisoners? Men would say no matter what you do, I forgive you. It is better to say, let God judge between me and my enemy.

It is good when a man can say to those who trespass against him, the Lord have mercy on you, but for me I forgive you.

May God help us to forgive all men as we hope to be forgiven by Him. May the Lord bless us with the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, who in the last moments of agony upon the cross, when he looked down upon his murderers, said, "Oh Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

God bless you is my prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen.