God’s Children Must Descend Below All Things
By Coming to Mortality

(Emphasis added in all quotes)

Brigham Young

• The disposition, the will, the spirit, when it comes form heaven and enters the tabernacle, is as pure as an angel. The spirit from the eternal worlds enters the tabernacle at the time of what is termed quickening, and forgets all it formerly knew. It descends below all things, as Jesus did. All beings, to be crowned with crowns of glory and eternal lives, must in their infantile weakness begin, with regard to their trials, the day of the probation: they must descend below all things, in order to ascend above all things. (Journal of Discourses, Vol.6, p.333)

• It seems to be absolutely necessary in the providence of him who created us, and who organized and fashioned all things according to his wisdom, that man must descend below all things. It is written of the Savior in the Bible that he descended below all things that he might ascend above all. Is it not so with every man? Certainly it is. It is fit, then, that we should descend below all things and come up gradually, and learn a little now and again, receive “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little.” (Discourses of Brigham Young, p.60)

• Mother Eve partook of the forbidden fruit. We should not have been here today if she had not; we could never have possessed wisdom and intelligence if she had not done it. It was all in the economy of heaven, and we need not talk about it; it is all right. We should never blame Mother Eve, not the least. I am thankful to God that I know good from evil, the bitter from the sweet, the things of God from the things not of God. When I look at the economy of heaven my heart leaps for joy, and if I had the tongue of an angel, or the tongues of the whole human family combined, I would praise God in the highest for his great wisdom and condescension in suffering the children of men to fall into the very sin into which they had fallen, for he did it that they, like Jesus, might descend below all things and then press forward and rise above all. (Discourses of Brigham Young, p.103)

• In my fullest belief, it was the design of the Lord that Adam should partake of the forbidden fruit, and I believe that Adam knew all about it before he came to this earth. I believe there was no other way leading to thrones and dominions only for him to transgress, or take that position which transgression alone could place man in, so descend below all things, that they might ascend to thrones, principalities, and powers; for they could not ascend to that eminence without first descending, nor upon any other principle. (Journal of Discourses, Vol.2, p.302)

• When this portion of the school is out, the one in which we descend below all things and commence upon this earth to learn the first lessons for an eternal exaltation, if you have been a faithful scholar, and have overcome, if you have brought the flesh into subjection by the power of the Priesthood, if you have honored the body, when it crumbles to the earth and your spirit is freed from this home of clay, has the devil any power over it? Not one particle. (Journal of Discourses, Vol.3, p.371)

John Taylor

• All the designs of God concerning this world and the work of creation, were perfected in his mind before this world rolled into existence, or “e’er the morning stars sang together for joy.” When this world was formed, God intended it as the final dwelling-place of those bodies which should inhabit it. And when “the sons of God shouted for joy,” it was at the prospect of that exaltation, that they would be capable of obtaining, in consequence of this creation, which they then saw come into existence. And if, as Jesus, they had to descend below all things, in order that they might be raised above all things; still this was the medium, or channel, through which they were to obtain their ultimate exaltation, and glorification. (The Government of God, Ch.9)
...when God created this earth, and organized men upon it, “the morning stars sung together for joy;” they looked upon it as God looked upon it, as a work perfect, magnificent, and glorious, through which they saw their way to exaltation, glory, thrones, principalities, powers, dominions, and eternal felicity. They had the intelligence before, but now they saw a way through which to develop it. Through the world’s great Architect, their Father, they discovered a plan fraught with intelligence and wisdom, reaching from eternity to eternity, pointing out a means whereby, through obedience to celestial laws, they might obtain the same power that he had. And if, in fallen humanity, they might have to suffer for a while, they saw a way back to God, to eternal exaltations, and to the multiplied, and if, in fallen humanity, they might have to suffer for a while, they saw a way back to God, to eternal exaltations, and to the Multipled, and eternally increasing happiness of innumerable millions of beings. And if, as Jesus, they had to descend below all things, and take their position as sons of God, in the eternal world; that overcoming the world they might sit down with Christ upon his throne, as he overcame and sat down upon the Father’s throne. (The Government of God, Ch.9)

In the economy of God pertaining to the salvation of the human family, we are told in the Scriptures that it was necessary that Christ should descend below all things, that He might be raised above all things; as stated above, He had to “become subject to man in the flesh.” It was further necessary that He should descend below all things, in order that He might raise others above all things; for if He could not raise Himself and be exalted through those principles brought about by the atonement, He could not raise others; He could not do for others what He could not do for Himself, and hence it was necessary for Him to descend below all things that He might be raised above all things; and it was necessary that those whom He proposed to save should also descend below all things, that by and through the same power that He obtained His exaltation, they also, through His atonement, expiation and intercession, might be raised to the same power with Him; and, as He was the Son of God, that they might also be the adopted sons of God; hence John says: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” -- 1 John 3:2. (Mediation and Atonement, Ch.20)

George Q. Cannon

We talk about the glory which is in store for us, and well we may talk about it, because we have, to a certain extent, had a foretaste on the earth of those promises, the fulness of which we shall enjoy in that world to which we are all hastening. We can see the effects of the Gospel upon the minds of the people, and upon our own minds; we see the people being morally developed in everything that will make them mighty before God. I know that the Lord, for a wise purpose, has called the noblest spirits that he had around him to come forth in this dispensation. He called them to come in humble circumstances, that they might receive the experience necessary to try and prove them in all things, that they might descend below all things, and gradually begin to ascend above all things; there was a wise design in this, and we see it carried out at the present time. (Journal of Discourses, Vol.11, p.100)

From A Vision Given to Benjamin F. Johnson

[While serving a mission for the Church in 1840, Benjamin F. Johnson received the following vision while in Erie, Pennsylvania. What he saw is interesting in light of man’s descending below all things.]

The word at once went out that a Mormon elder had come, and all appeared anxious that I should preach. I did so the next day, and the day after I was taken by others of the kindred to Union district, where I commenced to preach to a large congregation, and from there to a larger still. Here now a wide door for preaching was opening to me . . . . Here lived Washington Walker, a Universalist, who took me to his house and made it my home while I remained in that country, often taking me in his sleigh or carriage to my appointments. He was a gentleman of culture, but of few words. At this time his sister, an eminent Presbyterian, came from Erie City to visit them. They took her to my appointments to hear Mormonism in which she seemed to take a lively interest, and on one occasion said there was one subject that greatly interested her, on which she wanted light, and wished I would make it the subject of my next
discourse. This was “Foreordination” or “Election and Reprobation.” If she had struck me with a club I could not have felt more stunned, dazed and foolish. I felt that I must comply with her request, but how? In preaching the first principles of the Gospel, the Second Coming of Christ, the gathering of Israel, Book of Mormon, etc., I was perfect, both in the letter and in the Spirit, but what did I know about Predestination? I did not know its definition, or meaning, nor of Election and Reprobation. And I was expected to preach upon that subject. How could I without one gleam of light or some key of knowledge to inspire me? I searched the scriptures and prayed, but no light came to me. The subject occupied my thoughts, and “foreordination” rang in my ear like a funeral knell. I wished to make excuse to the lady, but how dare I shrink from my calling? Had I not professed that my capability to teach was from the Lord, and could I say I was not prepared? But oh, how dark it all was to me!

The day of meeting came, the hour was fast approaching, and the thought almost took my breath. I had not eaten, I had not slept, for Predestination had occupied my thoughts night and day. I did not fear for myself, but for the great cause to be dishonored, perhaps by me. But the hours would not wait, the congregation had assembled, the house was full, and my feelings almost as dark as suicide. I opened the meeting, arose, and mechanically, without a thought as to what I would read, opened the Bible and saw the first chapter to the Ephesians and read, “We were chosen from before the foundation of the world, to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.” Here now was the key of knowledge, and with it came the light of the Lord to fill my whole being. The visions of heaven were opened before me. I saw that all intelligence moved to the accomplishment of objects for their own greatness and glory, and to that end the earth was made, not upon the principle that nothing had put forth to beget something, but from matter as coexistent with spirit. I saw that the spirits of all men had been begotten and that they were the morning stars that sang together and shouted for joy when the foundations of the earth were laid, for they saw that upon the earth they would receive tabernacles, through which they, like the Elder Brother would “descend below all things to arise above all things.” And that as He was foreordained a Lamb slain for sin, also was it foreordained that man should sin; for if sin had not come there would have been no death, and without death no pain, sorrow and suffering; and without these there could be no joy and happiness; for as light is comprehended through darkness, so pleasure is bought by pain, its opposite. I saw that there is opposition to all things, and had there been no element of death there could have been no increase of life, “that man sinned that man might be, and that men might have joy,” after tribulation.

All these ideas, and many others I presented and elucidated in a discourse delivered in a vehement and powerful manner, of over three hours’ length, while the congregation sat as if riveted to their seats, and not a move did I notice from the time I arose, until I took my seat, and even yet all sat still as if in a maze.

But though all seemed to wonder, the marvel of no one could equal my own. To me it was as though from Egyptian darkness I had been suddenly brought into the light of the sun. The heavens had seemed opened to me, and of all I was the one most instructed. I knew it was all of the Lord because I had not desired the light for my own praise and glory.

An old Methodist preacher came to me at the close and said, “My young friend, you have taken us beyond all of my comprehension but I cannot gainsay one word.” The lady left the next day, seemed very thoughtful, and treated me with the greatest respect, but she was of wealth and position, and I thought was sorrowful that all the great things she had learned were through so low and poor a people as the Mormons. (Benjamin Johnson My Life’s Review [1947], pp.79-82)