The Roles of Jesus Christ in Fulfilling Heavenly Father’s Eternal Plan

Reading Assignment No. 5

Introduction

Jesus Christ is God’s servant in fulfilling “the great plan of the Eternal God” (Al. 34:9). A few hours before entering Gethsemane where He would begin the greatest act of service—the Atonement—the Savior gathered the Apostles into an upper room where they partook of “the last supper.” Contention arose among the Apostles as they argued over who among them should be “accounted the greatest.” The Savior asked them a rhetorical question, “in a dining setting, who is considered greater, the one who is sitting to eat or the waiter serving him?” The answer is obvious, the one sitting to eat. However, in a stunning declaration, the Savior said, “but I am among you as he that serveth” (Luke 22:24-27; emphasis added).

Jesus Christ, the Firstborn and Heir, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, is first and foremost the Servant of His Heavenly Father. The Savior summed up the centrality of His role in Heavenly Father’s plan:

I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6)

Without the service of Jesus Christ, without His fulfilling of the many roles He has and is and will fulfill, it would not be possible for any of Heavenly Father’s children to fulfill their destiny: to become “gods, even sons of God”!

The focus of this reading assignment is to briefly study the roles Jesus Christ in His service to God and His children.

Firstborn and Heir

Read the following passages of scripture:

* Colossians 1:15-19 (including footnote 15d)
* D&C 93:21
* Hebrews 1:1-6

Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (Joseph F. Smith, President of Church)–June 30, 1916:

From this scripture we learn that Jesus Christ was “the firstborn of every creature,” and it is evident that the seniority here expressed must be with respect to [pre]mortal existence, for Christ was not the senior of all mortals in the flesh. He is further designated as “the firstborn from the dead,” this having reference to Him as the first to be resurrected from the dead, or as elsewhere written “the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15:20; see also 1 Cor. 15:23); and “the first begotten of the dead” (Rev. 1:5; compare Acts 26:23). The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews affirms the status of Jesus Christ as the firstborn of the spirit children of His Father and extols the preeminence of the Christ when tabernacled in flesh: “And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him” (Heb. 1:6; read the preceding verses). (Reprinted in Ensign, April 2002, p.13-18)

Hugh B. Brown (1883-1975) First Presidency

Chief among that vast [premortal] assembly was Jehovah, the same who would become the Christ Child, the Redeemer. He was the Firstborn among the spirits, and by birthright was both heir and leader. (Conference Report, Oct.1963, p.92; emphasis added)

Jesus Christ is Heavenly Father’s Representative and Spokesman

By Divine Investiture of Authority (analogous to power of attorney), Jesus Christ is Heavenly Father’s representative. The following explains the Savior’s role as the agent of Heavenly Father—

Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (Joseph F. Smith, President of Church)–June 30, 1916:

Jesus Christ the "Father" by Divine Investiture of Authority. In all His dealings with the human family Jesus the Son has represented and yet represents Elohim His Father in power and authority. . .Thus the Father placed His name upon the Son; and Jesus Christ spoke and ministered in and through the Father's name; and so far as power, authority, and Godship are concerned His words and acts were and are those of the Father. (Reprinted in Ensign, April 2002, 13-18)

Jeffrey R. Holland Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

First and foremost, as Abinadi taught, Christ was "conceived by the power of God" and therefore has the powers of the Father within him. In addition to that divine lineal relationship, Christ also acts as the Father in that he is the Creator of heaven and earth, is the father of our spiritual rebirth and salvation, and is faithful in honoring-and therefore claiming the power of-the will of his Father above that of his own will. Because of this inseparable relationship and uncompromised trust between them, Christ can at any time and in any place speak and act for the Father by virtue of the "divine investiture of authority" the Father has given him. (Christ and the New Covenant [1997], pp.183-4)

The Creator

Under the direction of Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ created the earth. There are many scriptures that teach this truth. The following are two passages teach particularly important aspects of His role as Creator:

Read Moses 1:31-33

Review Colossians 1:15-16

King of the Earth; King of Israel

The earth was created by Christ and for Christ. As such He is the rightful King of the earth. This concept is important for
latter reading assignments.

Read Psalms 47:2, 7; Colossians 1:16

John Taylor (1808–87) President

Who made this earth? The Lord. Who sustains it? The Lord. Who upholds everything in the universe? The Lord. . . . Who has a right to rule the nations, to control kingdoms and govern all the people of the earth?

This earth is properly the dwelling place, and rightful inheritance of the Saints. Inasmuch as it belongs to Jesus Christ, it also belongs to his servants and followers, for we are told, “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof,” [Psalm 24:1] and that, when things are in their proper place, “the Saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom, and the greatness of the kingdom of the Lord under the whole heaven, shall be given to the saints of the Most High.” [See Daniel 7:18, 27.] It is therefore their rightful inheritance. (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor [2001], 221-2)

Upon His second coming, Christ will resume His role as king of the earth:

Read D&C 38:17-22 and 45:56-59

Gordon B. Hinckley (1910-2008) President

Under [the Kingdom of God’s] present organization it has been moving forward for only a little more than a century and a half. It will continue, ever growing and spreading over the earth, as part of a great millennial pattern until the time comes when He whose right it is to reign will rule as King of kings and Lord of lords. (“An Ensign to the Nations,” Ensign, Nov. 1989, 51; emphasis added)

The Lord made a covenant with King David that his seed would rule over the house of Israel forever (2 Sam. 7). This became known as the Davidic Covenant. It is because of this covenant that Jesus Christ will return to the earth and rule as King.

The following passage of scripture is what Gabriel said to Mary when he announced to her that she would bear the Son of God.

Read Luke 1:26-33

The Davidic Covenant will be discussed in greater detail in latter reading assignments.

Jehovah

Russell M. Nelson President

We worship God the Eternal Father in the name of His Son by the power of the Holy Ghost. We know the premortal Jesus to be Jehovah, God of the Old Testament. (Thus Shall My Church Be Called’, Ensign, May 1990, p.16)

Acting for Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ is God over this world. In the Old Testament, He was called Jehovah—a Hebrew word that literally means, “he is”. When Moses asked God what name he should call Him, the Lord responded saying that His name is “I AM” (Exodus 3:14). The Hebrew word, ehveh, translated “am” is a verb in the imperfect form. Hebrew verbs are generally found in the perfect form (meaning the verbal action is completed) or imperfect form (the verbal action is either not complete or is ongoing—context determines which one is meant). The phrase “I am” literally means, “I always am” or “I always exist.” This name expresses an important attribute of the nature of God: He always exists as God.

Of course, “I AM,” or EHVH, is what God call’s Himself, since “I” refers to the one speaking. But this is not what others would call Him. Rather, they would call Him, “HE IS” or, in Hebrew, JEHOVAH (often written, yahweh by scholars). Jehovah is the Hebrew words, “he is” and literally means, “he always is” or “he always exists.”

This was an important concept for the children of Israel to understand in the days of Moses for they believed in many gods, each in control of a certain power such as the sun, moon, stars, wind, rain, underworld, drought, the sea, war, etc. These gods were born, lived, and could die. But Jehovah, the God of Israel claimed to be the only one and true God, who is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and perfect in His nature (character and attributes). Jehovah always had been, always is, and always will be God.

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we share that belief about God. Therefore, we believe in Jehovah—“the Great I AM” (D&C 38:1). Jehovah is one of the many names we call Him (D&C 109:42, 56, 68, 110:3; 128:9) since each name is indicative of an aspect of the true nature of God

We believe Jehovah was known by this name prior to the time of Moses (Abr. 1:16; 2:8). The Joseph Smith Translation changes the concluding statement in Exodus 6:3, “by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them” to a rhetorical question; “And was not my name known unto them?”

The Good Shepherd

In the days of Moses and Joshua, the Lord established the house of Israel as a nation that would become a blessing to the Gentile nations. He gave them a land in the heart of the ancient world. “In the sight of the nations” around them, Israel’s obedience would bring blessings upon the nation that would cause the Gentile nations to look to Jehovah (Deut. 4:6-8; 28:1, 9-10). At first, Israel to keep the commandments of God. But in the days of King David, they turned to the Lord and were greatly blessed. In the days of Solomon, David’s son, they were led into forbidden paths by their leaders. Eventually, the Lord scattered Israel throughout the world. Through the ancient prophet, Ezekiel the Lord placed the blame of Israel’s failure upon their rulers, whom he called “the shepherds of Israel.”

Ezekiel 34:2-10: speak of the Lord’s dispair for the ancient rulers of Israel.

Ezekiel 34:11-16: The Lord promised that He would come as a good shepherd to gather and restore His lost sheep.

John 10:11-18: During His mortal ministry, the Savior while in the temple in Jerusalem, Jesus Christ declared, “I am the good shepherd.”

1 Nephi 22:25 speaks of the gathering of the house of Israel in the last days “from the four quarters of the earth.” Nephi states that, as any good shepherd, “numbereth his sheep,” so the Lord also numbers and knows his sheep and “and they know him.” Then Nephi sums up the latter-day work saying, “and there shall be one fold and one shepherd; and he shall feed his sheep, and in him they shall find pasture.” (see also 3 Ne. 15:15-21; 16:3)

The Exemplar of the Father

An extremely role Jesus Christ performs is to exemplify the Father.

Read Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:1-3

Read John 14:6-11

Jeffrey R. Holland Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Of the many magnificent purposes served in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, one great aspect of that mission often goes uncelebrated. His followers did not understand it fully at the time, and many in modern Christianity do not grasp it now, but the Savior Himself spoke of it repeatedly and emphatically. It is the grand truth that in all that Jesus came to say and do, including and especially in His atoning suffering and sacrifice, He was showing us who and what God our Eternal Father is like, how completely devoted He is to His children in every age and nation. In word and in deed Jesus was trying to reveal and make personal to us the true nature of His Father, our Father in Heaven.

To come to earth with such a responsibility, to stand in place of Elohim—speaking as He would speak, judging and serving, loving
and warning, forbearing and forgiving as He would do—this is a
duty of such staggering proportions that you and I cannot
comprehend such a thing. But in the loyalty and determination that
would be characteristic of a divine child, Jesus could comprehend
it and He did it. Then, when the praise and honor began to come,
He humbly directed all adulation to the Father.

“The Father . . . doeth the works,” He said in earnest. “The Son
can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for
what things soever [the Father] doeth, these also doeth the Son
likewise” (John 14:10; 5:19). On another occasion He said: “I
speak that which I have seen with my Father.” “I do nothing of
myself, but as my Father hath taught me.” “I came down from
heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me”

The Advocate and Judge

Because Christ performed the atoning sacrifice in our behalf, He
becomes also our advocate with the Father.

Ezra Taft Benson (1899-1994) President

He is our Advocate, Mediator, and Judge. Because He
is God, He is perfectly equitble with justice and mercy.
He can simultaneously plead our cause and judge our
destiny. (“Jesus Christ,” Ensign, Nov. 1983, 8).

Read: D&C 29:5; D&C 45:3-5

Russell M. Nelson Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Jesus is our Advocate with the Father (see 1 Jn. 2:1; D&C 29:5;
D&C 32:3; D&C 45:3; D&C 110:4). The word advocate comes from
Latin roots meaning a “voice for” or “one who pleads for
another.” Other related terms are used in scripture, such as
mediator (see 1 Tim. 2:5; 2 Ne. 2:28; D&C 76:69). From the Book
of Mormon we learn that this responsibility to mediate, or make
intercession, was foreseen before His birth: Jesus “shall make
intercession for all the children of men; and they that believe in him
shall be saved” (2 Ne. 2:9). . . .

He is also known as the Mediator of the new testament, or new
covenant (see Heb. 9:15; Heb. 12:24). Comprehending Him as our
Advocate, Intercessor, and Mediator with the Father gives us
assurance of His unequaled understanding, justice, and mercy (see
Alma 7:12). (From “Jesus the Christ: Our Master and More,” Liahona, April 2000)

Father of Those Who Abide in His Gospel

The objective of Heavenly Father and Mother’s plan is for
their children to become “gods, even the sons of God” (D&C
76:58). This means that they want all of their children—“sons
and daughters” (D&C 76:24)—to be heirs of all They are and
possess. (D&C 76:55). As heirs they will be granted full
equality with God “in power, and in might, and in dominion”
(D&C 76:95; also 88:107). This is possible through adoption
to Jesus Christ, their Heir. How can this be?

By coming into this mortal realm, which was made possible
by the Fall of Adam, Heavenly Father and Mother’s children
inherit a spiritual death upon birth—eternally cast off from their
presence. Of this, Abinadi declared, “Thus all mankind were
lost; and behold they would have been endlessly lost were it
not that God redeemed his people for their lost and fallen state”
(Mosiah 16:3-4).

Through the gospel of Jesus Christ, man may become heirs
to the kingdom of God. Through the priesthood ordinances
they become adopted to Jesus Christ. He becomes their Father.

King Benjamin declared: “An now, because of the covenant
which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ,
his sons, and his daughters” (Mosiah 5:7). As his “seed”—sons
and daughters—“they are the heirs of the kingdom of God”
(Mosiah 15:11). This is exemplified in the story of Alma the
Elder—one the of the wicked priests of King Noah—who, with
other who repented, were baptized and formed a community of
righteous saints. “And thus they became the children of God”
(Mosiah 18:22).

A First Presidency Statement (Joseph F. Smith, President) reads:

Salvation is attainable only through compliance with the
laws and ordinances of the Gospel; and all who are thus
saved become sons and daughters unto God in a distinctive
sense. In a revelation given through Joseph the Prophet to
Emma Smith the Lord Jesus addressed the woman as “My
daughter,” and said: “for verily I say unto you, all those who
receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom”
(Doc. & Cov. 25:1). In many instances the Lord has
addressed men as His sons (e. g. Doc. & Cov. 9:1; 34:3;
121:7). . . .

That by obedience to the Gospel men may become sons of
God, both as sons of Jesus Christ, and, through Him, as sons
of His Father, is set forth in many revelations given in the
current dispensation. Thus we read in an utterance of the
Lord Jesus Christ to Hyrum Smith in 1829: “Behold, I am
Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I am the life and the light of the
world. I am the same who came unto my own and my own
received me not; But verily, verily, I say unto you, that as
many as receive me, to them will I give power to become the
sons of God, even to them that believe on my name. Amen.”
(Doc. & Cov. 11:28-30) (Messages of the First Presidency, 6 vols.
[1965-75], 5, pp.27-31; also see a recent printing in Ensign, Apr 2002)

The Redeemer of the World

D. Todd Christofferson Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Among the most significant of Jesus Christ’s descriptive
titles is Redeemer. As indicated in my brief account of
immigrant “redemptioners,” the word redeem means to pay
off an obligation or a debt. Redeem can also mean to rescue
or set free as by paying a ransom. If someone commits a
mistake and then corrects it or makes amends, we say he has
redeemed himself. Each of these meanings suggests different
facets of the great Redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ
through His Atonement, which includes, in the words of the
dictionary, “to deliver from sin and its penalties, as by a
sacrifice made for the sinner.” (Webster’s)

The Savior’s Redemption has two parts. First, it atones for
Adam’s transgression and the consequent Fall of man by
overcoming what could be called the direct effects of the
Fall—physical death and spiritual death. Physical death is
well understood; spiritual death is the separation of man
from God. In the words of Paul, “For as in Adam all die,
even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians
15:22). This redemption from physical and spiritual death
is both universal and without condition.

The second aspect of the Savior’s Atonement is redemption
from what might be termed the indirect consequences of the Fall—our own sins as opposed to
Adam’s transgression. By virtue of the Fall, we are born into
a mortal world where sin—that is, disobedience to divinely
instituted law—is pervasive. . . . Because we are accountable and responsible for our own choices, the redemption from
our own sins is conditional—conditioned on confessing and
abandoning sin and turning to a godly life, or in other words,
conditioned on repentance (see D&C 58:43). .

The Savior’s suffering in Gethsemane and His agony on
the cross redeem us from sin by satisfying the demands that
justice has upon us. He extends mercy and pardons those
who repent. The Atonement also satisfies the debt justice
owes to us by healing and compensating us for any suffering
we innocently endure. “For behold, he suffereth the pains of
all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men,
women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam” (2
Nephi 9:21; see also Alma 7:11-12). (“Redemption,” Ensign, May
2013, 109-110)

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