

Jesus Christ our Savior

Written by Eric Shuster

Founder and Executive Director of the Foundation for Christian Studies



The mission of Jesus Christ and his role in our salvation was established in the spirit world long before he came to the earth. The Plan of Salvation called for us to leave our heavenly existence and come to the earth where we would need a savior to teach us how to return to our Heavenly Father and redeem us from our sins. The chosen savior was Jesus Christ, who willingly accepted his mission despite the grief & sorrow he would endure (Isa. 53:3-7).

Early Origins of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary whereby the Holy Ghost came upon her and the power of the Highest overshadowed her (Luke 1:35). Through this act "God the Father became the literal father of Jesus Christ," (Gospel Principles, 64), being the only person to ever be born of an immortal father and a mortal mother—thus the "Only Begotten Son." While his divinity would be inherited from his Father, his mortal characteristics would be inherited from his human mother.

Although little is known about his youth, we know Jesus "...grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom" (Luke 2:40), and at 12 years old he had knowledge of his divine mission (Luke 2:46-49). At about 30 years old, Jesus was baptized "...to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15). This was followed by a fast and temptation by Satan for 40 days in the desert to prepare Jesus for a public ministry that would change the course of man's salvation forever (Matthew chapter 4).

The Public Ministry of Jesus Christ

During the public ministry of Christ, he set the example of service, performed a variety of stirring miracles, demonstrated human love with divine nature, established his church, and taught the gospel to all who would hear. Although declaring himself to be "...the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), Jesus gave glory to God and proclaimed, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38), the will of his father being "...that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40).

The Atonement of Jesus Christ

At the end of his public ministry, Christ fulfilled his ultimate mission on earth by performing the great Atonement. Jesus first went into the garden of Gethsemane. There he took upon himself the sins of every human who has ever (and will ever) walk the earth. It was here that Jesus endured what no mortal could ever endure, saying "...my soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death" (Mark 14:34). The pain was so great that "...being in an agony... his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). While Jesus asked Heavenly Father to relieve him of this pain, he freely submitted to it continuing according to the will of Heavenly Father (Mark 14:36).

From Gethsemane Jesus allowed himself to be taken by the Pharisees and the Romans, physically and verbally abused, and then crucified at Calvary. The sacrifice made by Jesus upon the cross was accepted by God the Father to reconcile all mankind to him—hence the "atonement" (at-one-ment) between God the Father and each one of us. Such was the greatest and "...most important event that has ever occurred in the history of mankind" (Gospel Principles, 71).

Jesus Opens the Spirit World and is resurrected

Jesus was buried in a tomb and during the three days before his resurrection, his spirit entered the spirit world to organize and commence the teaching of his gospel to those who had died before him, and for those who would die in the future (1 Peter 3:18-20).

After three days Jesus was resurrected. His spirit and his body were reunited in perfection and glory, demonstrating his power over physical death. Through the fulfillment of his mission, Jesus made it possible for each one of us to be resurrected into immortality, giving every person who accepts the Atonement the gift of being saved from spiritual death.

Following his resurrection, Jesus appeared to many individuals, including his apostles in Jerusalem and the people of the Americas, to expound upon his teachings and strengthen those in need. Following this brief period on earth Jesus ascended into heaven and now sits at the right hand of God the Father. Jesus Christ will come again in fulfillment of the scriptural prophecies, will reign in righteousness during the millennium, and will oversee the final judgment.

Jesus Christ and the Plan of Salvation

While most Christians understand that Jesus is the Christ and Savior of the world, most will gloss over the doctrine of the mission and significance of the Savior as part of God's master plan, which can be referred to as the "Plan of Salvation." Jesus is not only our Savior, but our brother—an important distinction that is rarely mentioned among Christians. Jesus even referred to his apostles as "friends" (John 15:15), something we should remember.

Worthy of more examination in the life of Jesus is his experience in the garden of Gethsemane, as well as that which happened on the cross. Most of the Christian world puts a great deal of emphasis on the crucifixion (the cross) and less emphasis on the agony in the garden. The great atonement of Jesus Christ includes the events of the garden and the crucifixion—you cannot have one without the other; however, to put excessive emphasis on the crucifixion without equal or greater emphasis on what happened in the garden of Gethsemane is to misunderstand the process of the Atonement of Christ. This is detailed more fully in the Foundation's Sword Series™ essay on the Atonement.

Jesus Christ in the Americas

The understanding of Christ coming to the Americas (as outlined in great detail in the Book of Mormon) helps

explain the scripture from John 10:16: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

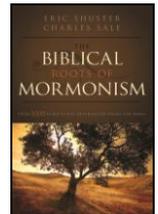
Christ coming to the Americas opens up a dialogue that begins to connect the dots for a number of historical and cultural traditions from past civilizations. His ministry in the Americas, like that of the old world, produces valuable insight into important doctrines that would never have come forth without modern day scripture.

Testimony of the Living Christ

Page three of this essay includes *The Living Christ* testimony from the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Its content perfectly reflects on one page the mission, eternal nature, and deity of Jesus Christ our Lord.

About The Sword Series™

The Sword Series™ is a collection of Christian theological essays that are freely distributed for the education and enjoyment of all. These essays later inspired the book *The Biblical Roots of Mormonism* by Eric Shuster (2010). The views expressed in the Sword Series™ are those of Eric Shuster based upon his study and understanding of the scriptures under the influence of the Holy Ghost. All formatted content in this paper is the property of Eric Shuster and may be distributed freely. Any modification of the content of this paper without the express written consent of Eric Shuster is prohibited. Copyright 2008 ©



About the Foundation for Christian Studies

The Foundation for Christian Studies is a non-profit organization dedicated to the study, teaching, and practice of Christianity with an emphasis on the doctrines and principles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormonism).

THE LIVING CHRIST

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

As we commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ two millennia ago, we offer our testimony of the reality of His matchless life and the infinite virtue of His great atoning sacrifice. None other has had so profound an influence upon all who have lived and will yet live upon the earth.

He was the Great Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Messiah of the New. Under the direction of His Father, He was the creator of the earth. "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). Though sinless, He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness. He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38), yet was despised for it. His gospel was a message of peace and goodwill. He entreated all to follow His example. He walked the roads of Palestine, healing the sick, causing the blind to see, and raising the dead. He taught the truths of eternity, the reality of our premortal existence, the purpose of our life on earth, and the potential for the sons and daughters of God in the life to come.

He instituted the sacrament as a reminder of His great atoning sacrifice. He was arrested and condemned on spurious charges, convicted to satisfy a mob, and sentenced to die on Calvary's cross. He gave His life to atone for the sins of all mankind. His was a great vicarious gift in behalf of all who would ever live upon the earth.

We solemnly testify that His life, which is central to all human history, neither began in Bethlehem nor concluded on Calvary. He was the Firstborn of the Father, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Redeemer of the world.

He rose from the grave to "become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20). As Risen Lord, He visited among those He had loved in life. He also ministered among His "other sheep" (John 10:16) in ancient America. In the modern world, He and His Father appeared to the boy Joseph Smith, ushering in the long-promised "dispensation of the fulness of times" (Eph. 1:10).

Of the Living Christ, the Prophet Joseph wrote: "His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying: "I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father" (D&C 110:34).

Of Him the Prophet also declared: "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; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God" (D&C 76:2224).

We declare in words of solemnity that His priesthood and His Church have been restored upon the earth—"built upon the foundation of ... apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20). We testify that He will someday return to earth. "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (Isa. 40:5). He will rule as King of Kings and reign as Lord of Lords, and every knee shall bend and every tongue shall speak in worship before Him. Each of us will stand to be judged of Him according to our works and the desires of our hearts.

We bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel, who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine Son.

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE

Handwritten signatures of church leaders, including members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve.

JANUARY 1, 2000