

Satan, My Brother? Becoming a Son and Daughter of God

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One of the greatest criticisms that the Evangelical Christian community has with Mormon or Latter-day Saint theology, is that of Satan being the brother of Jesus Christ. This is the basic premise that transforms the designation of ‘Mormonism’ from a religion to that of a “cult” in the view of many Christian organizations. The cry of the evangelical and anti-Mormon voice is that Latter-day Saints believe in a “different Christ” than the Jehovah, or Jesus that is found in the Bible and particularly the New Testament. Again, these critics establish the “different Christ” belief and designation of “cult” in the Mormon doctrine or tradition because it is taught, and found in the printed word, that Christ and Satan are not only brothers but that the Devil is a spiritual brother to all of Adam’s posterity. To many, this relationship of Satan and Christ, is akin to blasphemy, and is just as incomprehensible to Mormon thought, as the concept of the ‘Trinity’ of the Godhead existing as one single non physical being.

How do we deal with this conflict? What do the scriptures teach? What did Joseph Smith teach about this concept? To answer these questions is the purpose of this paper. As we walk through the scriptures and the teachings of Joseph it is hoped an explanation and answer might be visible to the naked eye of understanding. Keeping in mind that [accepted] ‘tradition’ is often stronger than scripture and doctrine, it is hoped that the reader will bear with the explanation until the end of this article to make judgement. It is realized that the concepts presented here may have never been discussed in a Gospel Doctrine class, which has become the hydrant or fountain of gospel knowledge.

Three Sons

Our standard works speak of three categorical ‘sons,’ who, because of their choices in mortality have created a spiritual character, that *all* the offspring of Adam fall into. These are: The “*sons of God*” i.e. Those who have come to a knowledge of God, have sought for light and truth, and were obedient to the Gospel, looking in faith to Jesus Christ for their salvation. The “*sons of men*” are those who do not know or have rejected the Gospel and Jesus Christ. And the “*sons of perdition*” Who are those who have received the Gospel and have been made partakers of the power of God and altogether turneth therefrom having no forgiveness of sins in this world or the world to come (see. D&C 76:32-38).

The difference between the sons of God and the sons of men is rendered to that of choice and character. These ‘three sons’ are such, because of the natures of their spirit, which have been developed by choice and action; and not their physical bodies. All can become a spiritual son or daughter: of God, of man or of perdition; by choice and action.

Sons of Men

Speaking of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Paul teaches that it was not “made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Ephesians 3:5). The scriptures discuss the concept of the sons of men from in those first generations after the fall:

52 . . .for they kept not the commandments of God, and it displeased God, and he ministered not unto them, and their works were abominations, and began to spread among all the sons of men. And it was among the sons of men.

53 And among the daughters of men these things were not spoken, because that Lamech had spoken the secret unto his wives, and they rebelled against him, and declared these things abroad, and had not

compassion;

54 Wherefore Lamech was despised, and cast out, and came not *among the sons of men*, lest he should die.

55 And thus *the works of darkness began to prevail among all the sons of men*.

56 And God cursed the earth with a sore curse, and *was angry with the wicked, with all the sons of men whom he had made*; (Moses 5:52-56)

Noah and his sons who were righteous are called the sons of God. In the passage below the Lord explains the difference between the sons of men and the sons of God:

13 And Noah and his sons *hearkened unto the Lord, and gave heed, and they were called the sons of God*.

14 And when these men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, *the sons of men saw that those daughters were fair, and they took them wives, even as they chose*.

15 And the Lord said unto Noah: The daughters of thy sons have sold themselves; *for behold mine anger is kindled against the sons of men, for they will not hearken to my voice*. (Moses 8:13-15)

This passage is explaining that the daughters of the the sons of Noah, who were the sons of God, were marrying out of their faith to the non-believing sons of men, thus bringing themselves and their future posterity under condemnation. This was also problem after the children of Israel entered the Promised Land under the Prophet Joshua. After the death of Joshua, the narrative in the Book of Judges concludes that the wickedness of Israel was due to the fact that the younger generation never had the same testimonies that their fathers had.

10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and *there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel*.

11 And *the children of Israel did evil* in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim: (Judges 2:10-11)

5 And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites:

6 And they took their daughters to be their wives, and *gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods*.

7 *And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God, and served Baalim and the groves*. (Judges 3:5-7)

This tendency is recognized and discussed further in the Book of Mormon as the rising generation begins to separate themselves from the faith and testimony of their fathers. It is typical in any culture that the further removed in time from a life-changing event the less important that event becomes. This is especially true when there are a few generations separating themselves from the memories of their fathers.

1 Now it came to pass that there were many of *the rising generation that could not understand the words of king Benjamin*, being little children at the time he spake unto his people; and *they did not believe the tradition of their fathers*.

2 *They did not believe* what had been said concerning the resurrection of the dead, neither did they believe concerning the coming of Christ.

3 And now *because of their unbelief they could not understand the word of God; and their hearts were hardened*. (Mosiah 26:1-3)

The Nephite record continues explaining (a most horrible thought for our day) that even the sins of the adult culture were easily seen “because of the wickedness of the rising generation” (3 Nephi 1:29-30). The Book of Mormon is a witness that a culture may begin with the knowledge sufficient to be, or become, the sons of God, however, by choice they may become a nation of sons of men; as “that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience” (D&C 93:39).

Sons and Daughters of God

One of the greatest teachings for members of the Church, is that of our relationship with God. This relationship is often and best described as that of a Father, of which we are familiar. There is not a better word than “father” that could convey the feeling of love and trust of a parent who would have our life, protection and provision, security as a major concern, than the designation and relationship of ‘father to child.’ The title of God as “Father” places all of humanity in the position of being viewed as a spiritual son or daughter of God. Yet, all scripture explains (without exception) that we must “*become*” a son or daughter of God. This “*becoming*” is a concept of the progression of our spirits and character by the chosen reception of light and truth, rather than one of spiritual progeny and inheritance. Below the scriptures and statements of the Prophet Joseph Smith will become the sources used for this part of our discussion. These statements and scriptures will be somewhat different than the teachings and traditions of which we are familiar, so please bare with the sources.

The process of ‘becoming a son or daughter of God’ is explained in scripture so often, that one must conclude that the repetition is there for a reason. The reason being, that we should understand without error. The relationship one has *with* God has an eternal consequence as does an understanding *about* God and this necessary relationship. “And this is life eternal, that they might **know thee** the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (John 17:3). The Doctrine and Covenants proclaims this purpose in the opening verses of Section Ninety-three, as this passage begins to discuss the eternal truths about; our creation, our spirit, and our relationship with God: “I give unto you these sayings *that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship*, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness” (D&C 93:19). The necessary light and truth about deity, the creation of mankind and becoming his seed, is expounded in scripture as these sacred texts teach all *how to become* a son and daughter of God.

The first chapter of the Gospel of John begins with the creation, “in the beginning” and continues with the involvement of Christ, the Gospel, and the Council, concluding with man becoming the son of God. “But as many as received him, to them gave *he power to become the sons of God*, even to them that believe on his name: (John 1:12; D&C 11:30). According to this verse, there are at least, two requirements are necessary to become a son of God. As “many as received him” and “them that believed on his name,” the Savior gave the “power” to become sons of God. This implies that there are requirements, obligations, and perhaps stipulations to *become* a son of God, and the “power” to do so is internal not external, in this non-genetic, yet progenitorial blessing. The information is now on the earth and we must do something to become something. Christ is the light which “shineth in darkness: and the darkness comprehended it not” (John 1:5) as he came unto “his own, and his own received him not. (John 1:11). To become a “son of God” we must ‘*comprehend*’ and ‘*receive*’ Him and His doctrine. The message in the First Chapter of the Gospel of John is reinforced in the Doctrine and Covenants. “I came unto mine own, and mine own received me not; but unto as many *as received me gave I power to do many miracles, and to become the sons of God; and even unto them that believed on my name gave I power to obtain eternal life*” (D&C 45:8). “Power to become” a son or daughter of God is synonymous with ‘power to obtain eternal life’ or exaltation. Speaking of those in the Celestial Kingdom the Lord explains “wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, *even the sons of God*” (D&C 76:58).

In Moses Chapter Five, Adam is offering sacrifices as he had been commanded. Yet, he was obedient without understanding the Gospel plan of salvation, knowing nothing of the Atonement, faith, repentance, baptism or the gift of the Holy Ghost. As the angels explain to Adam that the sacrifice was and is in similitude of the sacrifice of Christ, he begins to understand. This is found in Chapter Five verses five through nine.

5 And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord.

6 And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And *Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.*

7 And then the angel spake, saying: *This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth.*

8 Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore.

9 *And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will. (Moses 5:5-9)*

There are a number of details left out between verses eight and nine. It just so happens that Enoch, as he is preaching in the next chapter (Moses 6:51-68) begins to quote from the Book of Adam and provides the detail missing between Moses 5:8, 9. The verses in Chapter Six begin with an explanation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the ‘plan of salvation’ and continues through the next eighteen verses. Once the plan of salvation is explained to Adam, and he is baptized and the Holy Ghost came upon him in Moses 6:65, which brings us back to verse nine in Chapter Five. After the Gospel and plan of salvation is explained in Chapter Six the Lord concludes teaching Adam, as quoted by Enoch, by stating:

65 And thus *he was baptized*, and the Spirit of God descended upon him, and thus he was *born of the Spirit*, and became quickened in the inner man.

66 And he heard a voice out of heaven, saying: *Thou art baptized with fire, and with the Holy Ghost.* This is the record of the Father, and the Son, from henceforth and forever;

67 And thou art after the order of him who was without beginning of days or end of years, from all eternity to all eternity.

68 Behold, *thou art one in me, a son of God; and thus may all become my sons.* Amen. (Moses 6:65-68)

The Lord explains to Adam that to become a son of God all must be born again as He states “and *thus* (by this process explained above) may all become my sons.”

To Emma Smith the Lord explains through a revelation how to become a son or daughter of God: “...Emma Smith, my daughter; for verily I say unto you, all those who receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom” (D&C 25:1). This “becoming a son or daughter of God” is connected to the meaning of the Atonement as described by Christ in the Gospel of John as the individual may become ‘one’ in Christ and the Father. In the Doctrine and Covenants the connection of becoming ‘one with God’ and a ‘son of God’ is clear.

2 I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for the sins of the world, even as many as will believe on my name, *that they may become the sons of God, even one in me as I am one in the Father, as the Father is one in me, that we may be one.* (D&C 35:2)

This would give a somewhat alternate meaning to Alma’s teachings and words on being born again or becoming a son of God:

24 For, said he, I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold *I am born of the Spirit.*

25 And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, *must be born again*; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, *becoming his sons and daughters*;

26 And thus they become new creatures; and *unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.*

27 I say unto you, unless this be the case, they must be cast off; and this I know, because I was like to be cast off.

28 Nevertheless, after wading through much tribulation, repenting nigh unto death, the Lord in mercy hath seen fit to *snatch me out of an everlasting burning, and I am born of God.* (Mosiah 27:24-28)

Christ explains that “all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the Firstborn. (D&C 93:22). This verse places the “sons of God” in the Celestial Kingdom, whose residents are described as:

54 They are they who are *the church of the Firstborn.*

55 They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things

58 Wherefore, as it is written, *they are gods, even the sons of God* (D&C 76:54-58)

Gospel knowledge has within it the “power to become” a child of God, with the application of light and truth, or with the receptive character of the individual by ordinance and change. This power is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, ‘*received and comprehended*’ by the obedient. As explained by the Savior, “Who so loved the world that he gave his own life, that as many as would believe *might become* the sons of God. Wherefore you are my son” (D&C 34:3). The Gospel knowledge, which is the ‘power to become a son of God’ is described in the scriptures as Faith, Repentance, Baptism and the Gift of the Holy Ghost. The inspired Version or JST connects Christ and the Gospel together in this “power to become” found in the Gospel of John:

1 In the beginning *was the gospel preached through the Son.* And the *gospel was the word,* and the *word was with the Son,* and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God.

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made which was made.

4 *In him was the gospel, and the gospel was the life,* and the life was the light of men;

5 And the light shineth in the world, and the world perceiveth it not. (JST John 1: 1-34:1-5)

With knowledge and the light and truth of this Gospel and Doctrine of Christ, the JST again emphasizes that: “as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; *only* to them who believe on his name” (JST John 1:12). This belief on His name is the beginning of faith.

4 But to as many as *received me,* gave I power to become my sons; and even so will I give unto as many as will *receive me,* power to become my sons.

5 And verily, verily, I say unto you, *he that receiveth my gospel receiveth me;* and *he that receiveth not my gospel receiveth not me.*

6 And *this is my gospel—repentance and baptism by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost,* even the Comforter, which showeth all things, and teacheth the peaceable things of the kingdom. (D&C 39:4-6)

The power to become a son of God lies in the knowledge and obedience to principles and ordinances of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And as scripture explains it is not by obedience to law alone that saves, but a character change is required to validate the ordinances of salvation and exaltation.

Paul, in the New Testament, explains the character necessary to become a son or daughter of God. This whole chapter (Romans 8) is directed to those who have already participated in the ordinances of the Gospel and should be changing their character into one directed by the Spirit, now with the ‘power to become’ a child of God.

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:1, 4)

The righteous are those who have “received” Christ and now have the “power” needed to become the children of God. The Apostle explains that there is a difference between those who walk ‘with or in the flesh’ and those walk ‘in the spirit’ of Gospel knowledge and action. The “darkness that comprehended him not” are those who walk after the flesh and refuse to receive Him, and thus remain in the flesh refusing the ‘power to become’ by their own choice and agency.

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:5-8)

Those who have participated in the Gospel and the ordinances required, have commenced the walk and transformation of character necessary to become the children of God. Those directed by the Spirit are the sons of God and are adopted by God, worthy to address the supreme deity by the name of Abba, Father.

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

14 For *as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but *ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

16 *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (Romans 8:9, 12-17)

Those who are worthy to become sons and daughters of God become “heirs” of God and “joint-heirs” with Christ. Likewise, this is explained by the words of the Savior in the Doctrine and Covenants; “And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father; And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him” (D&C 84:37-38). Herein is the ‘power and blessing’ of becoming a son or daughter of God.

Not unlike Paul, King Benjamin explains in the Book of Mormon the *process of becoming a Son or Daughter of Deity*. The inclusive elements of character change that are described by King Benjamin in Mosiah Chapter Four are listed or categorized by verse, for review. This inspired discussion of King Benjamin included by Mormon, outlines the nature and character necessary to become a Child of God. The words in this chapter explain in simple terms the “power to become” as described in the opening lines of the Gospel of John as reviewed above.

2 And they had *viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried* aloud with one voice, saying: O *have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men.* (Mosiah 4:2)

This was the ‘beginning of becoming’ that King Benjamin was looking for. This was the necessary change of heart required to move the people forward toward the goal of being “sealed to God” becoming His Sons and Daughters.

3 ...the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come, according to the words which king Benjamin had spoken unto them.

4 And king Benjamin again opened his mouth and began to speak unto them, saying: My friends and my brethren, my kindred and my people, *I would again call your attention, that ye may hear and understand the remainder of my words which I shall speak unto you.*

5 For behold, *if the knowledge of the goodness of God* at this time has awakened you to a sense of your nothingness, and your worthless and fallen state—

6 I say unto you, *if ye have come to a knowledge of the goodness of God*, and his matchless *power*, and his *wisdom*, and his *patience*, and his *long-suffering* towards the children of men; and also, *the atonement which has been prepared from the foundation of the world*, that thereby *salvation might come to him that should put his trust in the Lord, and should be diligent in keeping his commandments, and continue in the faith even unto the end of his life*, I mean the life of the mortal body—

7 I say, that *this is the man who receiveth salvation, through the atonement* which was prepared from the foundation of the world for all mankind, which ever were since the fall of Adam, or who are, or who ever shall be, even unto the end of the world.

8 And *this is the means whereby salvation cometh. And there is none other salvation* save this which hath been spoken of; neither are there any conditions whereby man can be saved except the conditions which I have told you.

9 *Believe in God*; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; *believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend.*

10 And again, *believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them*, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you; and now, *if you believe all these things see that ye do them.* (Mosiah 4:3-10)

This chapter explains what it means to put off the flesh and walk in the spirit as discussed by Paul in Romans. This is the meaning of ‘putting off the natural man’ as discussed by Benjamin in this same sermon. Changing character is by choice and agency and must be done by the individual with a knowledge and understanding of the Gospel Plan of Salvation. Receiving the ordinances of salvation or exaltation does not guarantee a character change. However, it is the character change that confirms the ordinances are justified, in the life of the individual, and prepared to be ratified and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

Benjamin now begins to explain what our understanding should be of man’s relationship with God. These statements of Benjamin often offend many concerned about the personal relationship one has with themselves. The humanistic cry of the so-called self-help books is that; ‘you can’t love others until you love yourself’ is an admission of ignorance and a lack of understanding the Gospel plan. This New Age doctrine of worship me first and then God second is frivolous hyperbole. Nowhere in scripture does it state or imply that a love of self is paramount to the love of God, your neighbor or your fellow man. The unconverted find security in loving themselves before their fellow man. The statements below are clear and concise and should be understood as they are written. Until one understands their own nothingness before God, they cannot take the Atonement seriously.

11 And again I say unto you as I have said before, *that as ye have come to the knowledge of the glory of God, or if ye have known of his goodness and have tasted of his love*, and have received a remission of your sins, which causeth such exceedingly great joy in your souls, even so I would that ye should remember, and *always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness*, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you, unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, calling on the name of the Lord daily, and standing steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come, which was spoken by the mouth of the angel.

12 And behold, I say unto you that *if ye do this ye shall always rejoice, and be filled with the love of God*, and always retain a remission of your sins; and *ye shall grow in the knowledge of the glory of him that created you, or in the knowledge of that which is just and true.* (Mosiah 4:11, 12)

Retaining in remembrance our nothingness before God, and our ‘unworthy’ life will help make one’s view their relationship with God and their fellow man an exalting trait. Verses Eleven and Twelve lead to verse 13.

13 *And ye will not have a mind to injure one another, but to live peaceably, and to render to every man according to that which is his due.* (Mosiah 4:13)

Moving from outside the home to the inside Benjamin councils in parental responsibility.

14 *And ye will not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked; neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another, and serve the devil, who is the master of sin, or who is the evil spirit which hath been spoken of by our fathers, he being an enemy to all righteousness.*

15 *But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another.* (Mosiah 4:14, 15)

The home is the place to learn to love others, and those outside of the home should be cared for, the same as we care for family members surrounding our hearth. The question posed to Christ was “Who is my neighbor?” In Matthew Chapter Twenty-five, the Lord explains what is meant by the oil trimmed in the lamps, and that which separates the wise from the foolish and the faithful servants from the unfaithful, as He explains was the character traits that caused one to become a ‘sheep’ or a ‘goat.’ The first was in the home: “For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in.” The second act was out of the home, which required more effort and love. “Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me” (Matthew 25:35-36).

16 *And also, ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish.*

20 *And behold, even at this time, ye have been calling on his name, and begging for a remission of your sins. And has he suffered that ye have begged in vain? Nay; he has poured out his Spirit upon you, and has caused that your hearts should be filled with joy, and has caused that your mouths should be stopped that ye could not find utterance, so exceedingly great was your joy.* (Mosiah 4:16, 20)

There is an extended explanation in verses 17-24 (that should be understood) of the law and the prophets and what it means to “love God and your fellow man,” which is an integral part of one’s character necessary to be called a son of God. Benjamin now explains that participating in the Gospel of repentance is not enough: one must live the Law of the Gospel for forgiveness to remain effective in one’s life.

26 *And now, for the sake of these things which I have spoken unto you—that is, for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God—I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants.* (Mosiah 4:26)

Mormon continues in the following Chapter Five, as King Benjamin explains the ‘power’ inherent in the covenant that his people have made, that will assist them in becoming the children of God. The King questions if they “believed the words which he has spoken” (vs. 1) and with the collective acclamation, they all cry with “one voice, saying: Yea, we believe” declaring that it was because of the “Spirit” that a “mighty change” was wrought in their hearts (vs. 2). They explain that because of the manifestation of the Spirit they saw things that were yet to come and could even prophesy if it had been expedient (vs. 3) attributing this blessing to the “great knowledge” taught to them by the King (vs 4). The people state that they are willing to enter “into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his

commandments” to keep from the judgments of torment and wrath (vs. 5). This covenant of obedience is the same as that of baptism, which is a covenant and ordinance of obedience. The covenant of obedience must precede any participation in the organized administration of the Gospel and blessings associated with it. This covenant of obedience is declared by Benjamin to be a “righteous covenant” and one that was desired of him for his people (vs. 6). Because of their knowledge and comprehension of the Gospel and plan of salvation, King Benjamin declares:

7 And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters. (Mosiah 5:7)

Taking upon themselves the ‘name of Christ’ by a covenant of obedience has given the people power to become the “children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters.” This covenant, Benjamin states, will make them free:

8 And under this head ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives. (Mosiah 5:8)

Taking upon oneself the Name of Christ is “having a determination to serve him until the end” (Moroni 6:3) which is a covenant of obedience. This blessing and covenant of obedience carries with it a warning that one’s salvation is not secured but could be lost or “blotted out through transgression” (vs. 11). The final counsel and admonition are, the epitome of exaltation and becoming a son or daughter of God. King Benjamin pleads:

15 Therefore, I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is God above all. Amen. (Mosiah 5:1-15)

Many will explain that being a “sons and daughters of God” and a “sons and daughters of Christ” are two different concepts. The assumption lies in the traditions that by spiritual birth we are sons and daughters of God, and by Gospel obedience we become the children of Christ. Yet Christ, in the Gospel of John and elsewhere, declared that he gave men “power to become the sons of God” through the Gospel. This difference will be addressed as the statements of the Prophet Joseph Smith are reviewed.

The Prophet Abinadi explains the Divine parentage of humanity to King Noah and his priests; and then speaks of the becoming the seed and offspring of God. This is a *process* as King Benjamin declared and described, that requires effort and knowledge by seeking for light and truth and then obedience to the eternal truths of the Gospel and the ordinances. This *process is the power* to become.

10 And now I say unto you, who shall declare his generation? Behold, I say unto you, that when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed. And now what say ye? And who shall be his seed?

11 Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God.

12 For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed?

13 Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into

transgression, I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed. (Mosiah 15:10-13)

The Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians reminds the saints to “come out” of the world and “touch not the unclean” with the council to “separate” themselves from the world.

17 Wherefore *come out from among them, and be ye separate*, saith the Lord, and *touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you*.

18 And will be a *Father unto you*, and *ye shall be my sons and daughters*, saith the Lord Almighty. (2 Corinthians 6:17-18)

Paul continues this thought to the members living in Galatia stating that by their “redemption” they were “under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:3-7).

One verse found in First John is used to teach the doctrinal tradition that all the spirits of mankind are a result of a divine relationship between a Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother. The verse reads:

2 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)

However, the surrounding text should be read to understand that the scriptures are consistent in presenting the requirements to become a child of God. This verse is usually taken out of context to teach a tradition not in concert with scripture and Joseph Smith. The full context is supplied below for review:

23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] *he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father* also.

24 Let *that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning*. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall *continue in the Son*, and in the Father.

25 And *this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life*.

27 But *the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you*, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, *ye shall abide in him*.

28 And now, little children, *abide in him*; that, when he shall appear, *we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him* at his coming.

29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that *every one that doeth righteousness is born of him*. (1 John 2:23-29)

1 Behold, *what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God*: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

2 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*.

3 And *every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure*. (1 John 3:1-3)

The blessing of being called a ‘son of God’ is found in the second verse of Chapter Three. However, the requirements to receive that blessing is found at the end of Chapter Two and in the opening verses of Chapter Three. Those who can ‘become’ the sons of God, according to this passage, must ‘acknowledge the Son’ (vs. 23) and be obedient to the Gospel which was ‘heard from the beginning’ continuing in this knowledge and ‘continue in the Son, and in the Father’ (vs. 24). The connected promise of becoming a son or daughter of God is the ‘promise of eternal life’ (vs. 25). The concluding three verses have a message of promise that if the faithful will abide in Christ he will be taught truth and Christ will abide in the believer (vs 27). The great blessing of those who ‘abide in him’ [Christ] will be able to stand in His presence and have their ‘confidence wax strong’ (vs. 28) knowing that “every one that doeth righteousness is born of him” (vs. 29).

As Chapter Three begins John questions the love, and grace of God that would cause the Father to ‘call the faithful the sons of God’ (vs. 1). John stating that ‘every man that hath this hope in him [to become a son of God] purifieth himself even as he [God] is pure’ (vs. 3) Verse Two is the blessing of righteousness in the Gospel of repentance [character change] which is the declaration and acceptance by God himself:

2 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.*

Moroni writing the words of his father Mormon discusses the principles and doctrines of faith, hope and charity ending with an exegetical commentary on 1 John 3:2.

46 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, *if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth.* Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

47 But *charity is the pure love of Christ*, and it endureth forever; and *whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.*

48 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, *pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love*, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; *that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure.* Amen. (Moroni 7:46-48)

These three verses in Moroni explain the writings of John in the New Testament. It should be noticed that the discussion about “charity” is the end result that qualifies one to be called a ‘son or daughter of God.’ It is the pure love of Christ or “charity” that one must have to be “*like Him*” when he appears. When the contest is read carefully, it is easy to realize that ‘charity’ is the key to becoming like God: “*pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love*, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; **that** ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him” (vs. 48). Notice that Moroni (vs. 48) combines Verses Two and Three in 1 John Chapter Three, as one concept and in the same statement. Moroni is trying to explain that submitting our ‘will’ to the ‘will’ of God is just the beginning. The reality of exaltation is that our ‘will’ ‘must become the *same* as God’s ‘will,’ and in order to dwell with God, our character must be the same as God’s. When this character and ‘will’ is created by choice, and with the Grace of God, (the Atonement and Resurrection) we truly become the sons and daughters of God. For it is “by grace that we are saved after, all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23).

Conclusion

The scriptural definition of becoming a son of God, would not conclude or infer, in any way, that Satan ‘is, was, or ever could be’ a son of God. By this same understanding he could not be the brother of Christ nor ever be a brother to any of the spirits that came to this earth (sons of men) and especially to the spiritual reborn who truly ‘become’ the sons and daughters of God.

Like the scriptures, the statements of the Prophet Joseph Smith, that were reviewed, explain that the spirits of men are eternal and were not created. Joseph states that “God never had the power to create the spirit of man at all” and that “Intelligence” teaches the Prophet, “is a spirit from age to age, and there is no creation about it.”¹ This concept as taught by the Prophet Joseph, alone would demand an understanding that Satan was *never* a common spiritual son of God, and therefore he could never be a brother to Christ, or a brother to any spirit of mankind that came to this earth to receive a physical body.

¹ TPJS, 354.

Christ, The Firstborn of the spirit and the Only Begotten of the Flesh was worthy to be a “Son of God” by his ‘Intelligence of spirit’ receiving a fullness of light and truth even before he came to this earth to receive a physical body. Christ was worthy for his exaltation in the progression of His spirit before his birth and therefore became the ‘Firstborn of God’ in and from the beginning (See, D&C 93:21, 22; Moses 5:9). For this reason, Christ declares to Abraham:

18 . . . if there be two spirits, and one shall be more intelligent than the other, yet these two spirits, notwithstanding one is more intelligent than the other, have no beginning; they existed before, they shall have no end, they shall exist after, for they are gnolaum, or eternal.

19 And the Lord said unto me: These two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other; there shall be another more intelligent than they; *I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all.* (Abraham 3:18-19)

This spiritual ‘intelligence’ is the spirit’s natural ability to seek for, obtain and be obedient to light and truth, until one receives a fullness of light and truth. Speaking of the pre-mortal Christ (pre-temporal, pre-earth, in an A-temporal environment (without time), in the beginning) the first born of God, He who was “more intelligent” than all spirits, is described by John as a process that the spirit of man has the opportunity to achieve in this life what they could not in their first estate:

11 And I, John, bear record that I beheld *his glory, as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father*, full of grace and truth, even *the Spirit of truth*, which came and dwelt in the flesh, and dwelt among us. (D&C 93:11)

Christ is the “Spirit of Truth” like the spirit of man in verse 23.

12 And I, John, saw that *he received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace;*
13 *And he received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness;*
14 *And thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not of the fulness at the first.* (D&C 93:12-14)

Christ is called a “Son of God because he received not of the fulness” at first. For this same reason the spirit of man cannot receive a fullness at except through obedience, verse 27, when he (man) receives a fullness he becomes also a son of God.

16 And I, John, bear record that *he [Christ] received a fulness of the glory of the Father;*
17 *And he received all power, both in heaven and on earth, and the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him.*

19 I give unto you these sayings *that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship*, that you may come unto the Father in my name, *and in due time receive of his fulness.*
20 *For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father;* therefore, I say unto you, *you shall receive grace for grace.* (D&C 93:16-20)

Verse 20 is a definition of the Atonement: to ‘receive of his fulness and be glorified in Christ as He is in the Father’ and to “receive grace for grace” as did Christ in verses 12, 13.

21 And now, verily I say unto you, *I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn;*

Christ was in the beginning, as also the spirit of man (verse 29) and He (Christ) was the first to become a Son of God by obedience to light and truth, and of all the spirits is the “Firstborn” unto God, the first worthy for Exaltation, even before birth. And because of the Father’s foreknowledge, He knew that Christ would not sin in mortality and therefore in every way be worthy to be chosen as the Savior of all spirits. Because of the Atonement all spirits can become “begotten” sons and daughter of God (verse 22).

22 And all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the Firstborn.

23 Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth;

26 The Spirit of truth is of God. I am the Spirit of truth, and John bore record of me, saying: He received a fulness of truth, yea, even of all truth; (D&C 93:22, 23, 26)

Just as Christ received a “fulness of truth” (verse 26), so also may the spirit of man receive a fulness by obedience, (verse 27, 28).

27 And no man receiveth a fulness unless he keepeth his commandments.

28 He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.

29 Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be. (D&C 93:27-29)

The ‘spirit of man’ was also in the beginning with God. The ‘intelligence of spirit’ is the light of truth, and the spirit was not created or made, neither can be as Joseph Smith taught. Once again, Intelligence as defined in scripture and in conjunction with the spirit is: *the spirit’s ability to seek for, receive, and be obedient to the light and truth* presented to it. “intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence: truth embraceth truth light cleaveth unto light” (D&C 88:40). The agency of man, and the condemnation of man is dependent of them receiving light and truth they were taught and knew ‘from the beginning’ when it is manifested to them in this life. (verse 30).

30 All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence.

31 Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light. (D&C 93:30, 31)

God has chosen the title of “Father” to convey to mind of mortal man, the love concern, protection, provision and security of a loving parent and God. He is our Father by virtue of the creation of the Earth and providing the plan of salvation and exaltation through the Atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Recognizing the key doctrinal concepts in this and the previous chapter would lead to the interpretation and understanding of Joseph’s words; that our spirits are not the birthed spiritual offspring who are conceived by any physical relationship of our Father and Mother in Heaven. This eternal nature of the spirit, would then render no spirit a brother or sister by birth (as we know it on earth) to another spirit, except by adherence to the Gospel and one’s ‘becoming a son or daughter of God’ as will be explained below.

By the explanations of the Prophet Joseph on the eternal nature of the spirit, Satan’s spirit could never have been, or ever be, a brother to Christ or any other spirit that may have come to this earth, if the spirits of man were eternal and had no common creation. Satan, it is taught, “kept not his first estate,” which valiancy would be required to receive a physical body, thus having the *chance* to “become a son of God. Lucifer, will never receive a physical body, having rejected the light and truth provided in the first estate. He (Satan) “shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate” (Abraham 3:26-28) and move into mortality, or the second estate. This probationary state of mortality is the place where one can be ‘born again’ unto God so that He can seal us His, (Mosiah 5:15) as His son or daughter.

That which is written here is not to be considered official doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is not even to be considered traditions of the Church. The things discussed in this article have not gone through the Correlation Committee and therefore are not to be taken seriously. The concepts discussed here are for one’s ‘gee whiz file’ or considered the unhealthy fast food for thought. However, this

discussion does answer some questions that have been raised in the past and continue to be a concern for many in the Church.

The author is not to be considered a priesthood authority or in any position as a priesthood leader. Nor is he to be considered a footnote to any argument or Gospel discussion. The scriptures are the standards of the Church and the Prophet Joseph Smith the prophet of the restoration of priesthood, keys and the doctrines of eternity. As the author, I advocate the support and respect of all priesthood leaders, both, general and local in their respective callings and responsibilities. The priesthood leadership and keys they hold, provide the necessary assistance and ordinances needed by the father in his responsibility for the salvation and exaltation of his family. However, the scriptures assure the reader that there is no priesthood position that is required for an individual to receive knowledge, revelation or an understanding of light and truth. The eternities and the mysteries of Godliness are available (with restriction: see Alma 12:9) to those who are prepared and worthy. Of all the gifts of the spirit, only two are visible, the gifts of prophecy and the gift of tongues. All others are individual and invisible to the ocular view of others. The gift of knowledge that a person might have, may never be evident to a priesthood leader or lay member.

The Prophet Joseph stated that he was speaking of “more noble things” as he began the discourse discussed in this article. These ‘more noble things’ are not the “milk” which has become the diet of the general membership, but the “meat” for those who seek it. These ‘more noble things’ are not the traditions that are taught in our Gospel Doctrine class as doctrine and policy, but the things of eternity as described and testified by the Prophet Joseph. Tradition is stronger, and more readily accepted than scripture and doctrine and it is expected that the reader may dismiss the statements of Joseph Smith and the scriptures presented, because of the years of traditional teachings and beliefs. And that is all right. Who can argue with a person’s choice of belief? No one. Scripture is another case. As the author, I am not trying to change any belief in any tradition or doctrine as understood by anyone from the greatest to the least. Nor am I trying to change or correct the Church, doctrine or any priesthood leader. This article is just for fun, just some fast food for thought. I don’t teach it, nor firmly believe it, but I cannot ignore it because of scripture and Joseph Smith.

As this discussion began about the ‘brotherhood of Satan,’ it must conclude on task and topic. It will always be the choice of some to believe that Satan is their spiritual brother and also a son of God, as this tradition has been pressed into the minds of Latter-day Saints. Wither tis policy or doctrine, this discussion will change no one, and all may rest easy and be assured that this traditional teaching is secure, even though it may not be supported by scripture or the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith as understood by the author. No matter, all have a choice to be the ‘sons of men’ or the ‘sons of God.’ Every individual is a begotten son or daughter by the ‘natural’ man. The individual makes the choice to be born again and become ‘begotten by God’ founded in their faith in Jesus Christ, their actions, fruits and works, and the change of character necessary to dwell with God. It does not matter if our spirits are eternal, were never created, and co-eternal with God’s spirit as explained by the Prophet Joseph, or that the spirits that animate our physical bodies came into existence by some, conception, gestation and birth process unexplained in scripture. Our goal is to do as Christ has commanded and ‘*become sons and daughters of God*’ that He ‘*may seal us His*’ in the eternities (Mosiah 5:15). Or perhaps, once worthy to be ‘sealed’ to God we then ‘become’ and are recognized as: His sons and daughters and admitted into His presence and glory.