

# 12 - Becoming Sons and Daughters of God

## Becoming Sons and Daughters of God

Last time we were together we discussed the conflict between Satan and Adam as shown in various ancient texts. Those texts pave the way for us to begin talking about our topic today: Becoming Sons and Daughters of God. As a little groundwork for our discussion, when I was doing research for the Church I was specifically told that I could only use three sources: 1) the standard works; 2) the Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith; and 3) the words of the prophets while they were prophets – not when they were Apostles or held other offices. The words of the prophets had to agree with the words of the first two sources. I was told that any answers discovered in my research could only be answered from those sources. The scriptures were my primary source, for even the prophets have declared that if their words are not in harmony with the scriptures then we can assuredly know they are only speaking their opinion. The scriptures are our standards, and even the prophets are held accountable to them. Without a standard, then there is no standard for truth.

## The 3 M's of Doctrine

Keep in mind there are also three types of **Doctrinal M's** we talk about in the Church and within scripture: The **Milk**; the **Meat**, and the **Mysteries**. The **Milk** is what we have to have. The Manuals would fall in the Milk category. The Church has to teach to the lowest common denominator, and that would include the newest baptized member and the primary youth. Therefore, Milk is what is offered at church by necessity and design. The **Meat** is extracted from the scriptures by personal initiative and study. It is found only by those who have expended the effort and sacrificed the time to seek and study more. The **Mysteries** are those things *revealed to you by God*. Those who receive the mysteries always have a restriction placed upon them: **Alma 12:9** says:

It is given unto many to know the **mysteries of God**; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men [*that which everyone already has*], according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him.

The restriction is that the mysteries are between you and God, and you are not to tell anyone else about them.

You will discover the **Meat** as you go to your scriptures. When you decide you want to know more, the **Meat** is waiting for you in the scriptures. This is why Joseph emphasized that he wanted to “talk of things more noble,” which are greater things than the milk. The **Mysteries** come to you and you alone when you have done your research in the scriptures and want more answers, like Abraham. It was then he began to understand the stars, the heavens and the planets, spirits, light and truth.

Several years ago, the Ensign printed President Hinckley's admonition for Bishops and Stake Presidents to have their members get into the scriptures and the Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

“If I were a bishop or stake president today, what would I do? I think that I would try to put my major efforts on building the spirituality of the people. I would work as hard as I knew how to work in building their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in God our Eternal Father, in the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Restoration of this work and what it means and what it is all about. I would encourage my people to read the scriptures, to read the Book of Mormon, to read the New Testament. I would urge them with all the capacity I have to read quietly and thoughtfully and introspectively, if you please. I would urge them to read the Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith.” (regional conference, Eugene, Oregon, 14 Sept. 1996). [Ensign, October 2003]

The **Meat** is something you, the individual, discovers on your own. The Church serves the milk that provides the foundation, but even Isaiah says:

“Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? *Them that are weaned from the milk...*” (Isa 28:9)

The Church provides the foundational milk, and when you're ready to be weaned from the milk, the meat is found in the scriptures and in the Teachings of Joseph Smith!

In the King Follet Discourse, found in the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Joseph explained that he would be teaching concepts far and above what we normally see in our manuals. He said he wanted to “lift your minds into a more lofty sphere and a more exalted understanding than what the human mind generally aspires to” (p. 343). Later, in the same discourse, he said he wanted to “tell of things more noble” (p. 352). Joseph used scriptures to explain and distinguish the meat.

Today, on this topic of “Becoming Sons and Daughters of God,” I am going to use the scriptures and the statements of Joseph Smith. Just know and understand up front that these things are not found in the “milk department.” I'm not telling you that you have to go about trying to change people's minds or that you have to believe these things, only that Joseph taught these things and they reconcile with the scriptures.

The things we are discussing today are answers to questions brought up in Provo at a Know Your Religion Series. These statements cannot be ignored because they were made by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and they are in the scriptures.

### **The 3 Types of Sons**

There are three types of Sons found in our scriptures: **Sons of Men**, **Sons of God**, and **Sons of Perdition**. **Sons of men** are those who have not heard or have not accepted the Gospel. We are all sons of men until we accept the Gospel. Then, the Lord says, when we accept the Gospel and enter into certain covenants, we obtain the right, or the power, to become the **sons of God**. If we don't accept the Gospel we remain the sons and daughters of men. When you become a son of God (as did Cain) by accepting the Gospel and entering into all the covenants of exaltation, and are

pronounced clean by the Father, but then “altogether turneth therefrom” (D&C 84:41), you become a **son of perdition**. These are the three sons talked about in scripture.

**The Sons of Men** Haven't heard or accepted the Gospel

**Sons of God** Accept the Gospel and receive all the ordinances, endure to the end

**Sons of Perdition** Accept the Gospel, enter into sacred covenants, pronounced clean by the Father, and then reject it or “all together turn therefrom”.

We see in Genesis 6:2 and in the Book of Moses (Moses 8:20-21) that the sons of God came down and married the daughters of men. They then began to fall spiritually. Solomon was given warning as to who he married because men generally end up worshipping the god of their wife (1 Kings 11:1-8). In a part-member family, if the husband is a member and the wife isn't, the chances are higher that the man will become inactive. If the wife is a member and the husband is not, chances are greater that the man will become a member than the other way around. In the Book of Judges, “there arose another generation after them which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel” (2:10). The sons of God began to marry the daughters of men. There is always a warning in scripture concerning marrying outside of your covenants. Generally speaking, a man will almost always worship the god of his wife. What's the definition of God? It is the motivating force in your life. It's what gets you up in the morning; it's what you live for. The motivating force in your life is the definition of the god in your life. Your relationship with God should be the motivating force in your life. The first of the Ten Commandments states that we are to have no other gods before [Him]. The word *worship* is an old English word that means ‘that which is of most worth to you.’ That which is of most worth should be our relationship with God.

## **The Case for Religious Freedom**

During this past presidential election, I had numerous discussions with many people asking my opinion of who to vote for or who not to vote for. The Book of Mormon contains insights about the preservation of faith and freedom for our families that many have not considered seriously. We are more apt to worry about economics, public policies, foreign affairs, and foreign policies than to worry about our religion and the freedom to exercise it. The Book of Mormon has a large section right in the center of it that addresses this important issue. If you were to take the Book of Mormon and turn it into a Chiastic structure, you will find that Captain Moroni believed that the most important right to preserve was a person's right to religious freedom. He maintained that the freedom to worship God was important to one's faith and the preservation of one's family. **Faith, Freedom and Family** was the essence of the Title of Liberty (Alma 46:12-22). Later, when the Gadiantons began to take control of their government, the people's religious freedoms eroded. Today, we are seeing certain sins or certain beliefs turned into civil rights. It's a sure sign that religious freedom is being eroded.

The most important issue facing our nation today is protecting your right to worship God according to the dictates of your own conscience. This should be of greater concern than any political party or platform. When certain sins become civil rights, or become protected under law, the voice of opposition and moral choice will be considered a hate crime. When the government can control

what is said from the pulpit, religious freedom is lost. We see this toward the end of Helaman and the beginning of 3 Nephi. What matters to me is the winning candidate's view on religious freedom. Looking at history, when a nation falls it is *always* preceded by that nation's degenerate beliefs and practices. All of world history is nothing more than the battle that rages between Babylon and Zion. The goal of God in every dispensation is to establish Zion. The goal of every prophet of every dispensation is to establish Zion. But Zion has not been established because of Babylon (spiritual wickedness) and secret oaths and combinations – for those two reasons. All we have to do is decide which part we want to play in the history of the establishment of Zion. Are you trying to establish Zion within your own sphere? What matters is whether you are going to have the **freedom** of your **faith** to teach your **family**, or not!

The rising generation is being exposed to philosophies that demand that they be accepting of all lifestyles and personal choices. What is more important than Proposition 8 is whether a church has the freedom to teach the tenets of its faith to its own members, and can then determine if its members are in good standing within their faith and religion.

### **To Sin or Not to Sin – That Was the Question**

Satan's plan was to make sure that no one could sin, that not one soul would be lost. God's plan was to ensure that everyone *could* sin if they wanted to. We don't want Satan's plan – we just want to establish Zion. Zion needs to be established in the ways outlined in the Doctrine and Covenants. The D&C is the rule book on how to establish Zion, but it must come from the heart. Satan's plan was to stop people from sinning, but God's plan was to make sure you can. He cannot condemn you for using the agency that he ensured when He kicked Satan out for trying to destroy that agency.

You all remember the story about the woman brought to Jesus who had been taken in the very act of adultery. She had broken the law and the commandment and she never denied it. The consequence for breaking that law was to be stoned to death. The scribes and the Pharisees brought this woman to Christ to ask Him what should be done with her. They reminded Him of the Law of Moses, and what it said should be done. He stooped down to write something in the dirt, and then looked up and said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Those who brought the woman to Jesus were convicted by their own conscience and left the scene, one by one, from the eldest to the last. Our text says:

### **John 8:10-11**

10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

Even though she had been caught breaking the law and never denied it, Christ told her that He was not condemning her for using her agency. This is coming from the God who gave the law to the children of Israel. What *did* he say? "Go, and sin no more." Jesus is telling the woman to sin no more because by not sinning, she can become happy. So what Jesus is really saying to the woman is, "I am not going to condemn you for using your agency, but if you really want to be happy here and in the next life, you need to make some changes."

Commandments are not restrictions. They are recipes for happiness in this life and in the next. They are given to us that we “may act in futurity according to the moral agency He has given us, that we may be accountable for our own sins in the Day of Judgment.” (See D&C 101:78)

Becoming a son or daughter of God is directly connected to our understanding of the Gospel. We’re going to go through several of these scriptures that expound and enlarge our understanding of this very important concept and doctrine.

## **Power to Become**

In the opening verses of John’s record, we see him speaking to a more educated membership of the church. It is no accident that he begins his record similar to how Moses did in the opening chapter of Genesis. I’m quoting from the *Inspired Translation* 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.

14 And the *same word* was made flesh, and dwelt among us,...

### **John 1:12**

12 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:*

Here begins the pattern for obtaining the power to become the sons of God. This is the pattern that shows up in these scriptures. This “power to become” is connected to either receiving Christ, and/or believing on His name. Christ has given everyone the “power to become the sons of God.” We are all sons and daughters of men to begin with. We’re not all Christians to begin with. For example, I was born into a Mormon family. There was no way that I could ever get out of being baptized at 8 yrs. old. My grandparents were active and there was no way that my baptism wasn’t going to take place. Thus, I was born to be a Mormon. That baptism did not turn me into a Christian – that is something I had to learn to do. My baptism did give me power to become a Christian, and that takes work. With our agency guaranteed, Christ comes to give us power to become the sons of God. We have to receive Him and believe on His name.

### **D&C 11:30**

30 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.

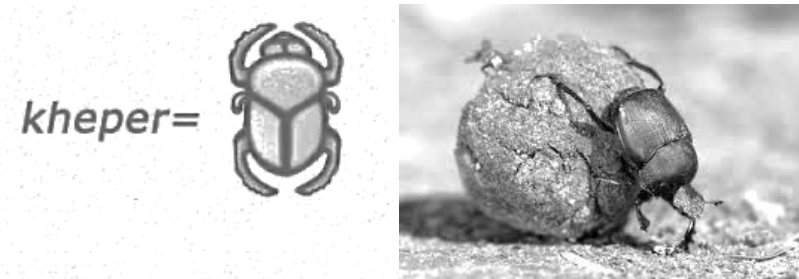
This verse is nearly the same as what we read in John’s record.

### **D&C 45:8**

8 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.

It doesn't say because you believe you *will* obtain eternal life; it doesn't say you *are* a son or daughter of God. What it does say is that because you do believe you have "the power to become" the sons of God. That's the whole concept.

One of the most recognizable symbols in the Egyptian hieroglyphics is the Kheper Beetle (hep'per) or scarab beetle.



*Kheper* means 'to be or to become.' It also conveys the meaning to change your form while at the same time retaining your identity. This is an eternal principle as one can change your existence and retain your identity. When the beetle lays an egg in camel dung, that egg becomes a larva, and when it emerges from the dung, moving from egg to larva and eventually a beetle, it is still a Kheper Beetle. It changes its form but retains its identity. This is also what these verses mean: we are not the sons of God by default, or by accepting Him, but we have power given to us **to become** the sons of God.

#### **D&C 34:3**

3 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 39:4**

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.

#### **Rom. 8:14-17**

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 it so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

When we accept the Gospel and enter into certain covenants, we obtain the right or the power to become the sons of God.

#### **2 Cor. 6:17-18**

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.

Notice the future tense: “ye *shall* be my sons and daughters.” It’s coming back to that battle between Babylon and Zion. Sometimes we like to have a foot in Babylon and foot in Zion. That doesn’t work! You cannot live in Zion and have a condo or a time share in Babylon. It’s either one or the other. The Natural man cannot become a Saint if he is double minded.

### **Mosiah 3:19**

19 For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.

The Book of Mormon tells us:

10 And he said unto me: Behold there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth. (1 Ne 10:14)

You are in one, or you are in the other – you cannot be in both.

### **Gal. 4:3-7**

3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:  
*[before we put off the natural man]*

4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, *[because of the Atonement]*

5 To redeem them that were under the law, **that we might receive the adoption of sons.**

6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

7 Wherefore **thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.**

Paul is explaining that there is a process that we must follow in order to become a son of God – it is not a natural thing by birth.

### **1 John 3:1-3**

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. *[we need to take our other foot out of Babylon and move it into Zion.]*

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. *[this verse is in the context of us accepting the Gospel; it is not referring to the birth of our spirits.]*

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Moroni expounds on the same concept:

### **Moro. 7:48**

48 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, [*charity*] 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.

It is a process. Until it happens, we remain the sons of men. The beginning of that process is to develop the love that makes God *God*. Can you see that? If we don't love others as Christ loved us then we are not His disciples (John 13:34-35).

**Key Point:** All power within the Gospel of salvation and exaltation lies within our individual agency and not in anything else. There is no ordinance, miracle, or magic wand that can make you pure or give you the same love that Jesus has. There is no ordinance that can give you the Charity we must develop. It's all accomplished by the exercise of our agency. The ordinances we participate in have no power in and of themselves unless we change our character. This is where the power of the ordinance lies – not in the Priesthood leader who administers the ordinance.

### **Mosiah 5:7**

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**. [*this is talking about those who have coventanted to live the type of life the Gospel requires*]

### **Mosiah 27:25-26**

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**; [*Being born again is defined*]

26 And thus **they become new creatures**; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. [*again, referring to putting off the natural man and becoming a Saint*]

### **3 Ne. 9:17**

17 And as many as have received me, to them have I given **to become the sons of God**; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled.

### **Moro. 7:26**

26 And after that he came men also were saved by faith in his name; and **by faith, they become the sons of God**. And as surely as Christ liveth he spake these words unto our fathers, saying: Whatever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in



faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you. [It is because of the atonement that we can place our faith in Christ.]

### **Alma 34:15-17**

15 And thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of **mercy**, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may *have faith unto repentance*.

16 And thus **mercy** can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no *faith unto repentance* is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has *faith unto repentance* is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.

17 Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to *exercise your faith unto repentance*, that ye begin to call upon his holy name, that he would have **mercy** upon you;

Speaking to Emma Smith the Lord says:

### **D&C 25:1**

1 Hearken unto the voice of the Lord your God, while I speak unto you, Emma Smith, my daughter; for verily I say unto you, all those who receive my gospel are **sons and daughters in my kingdom**. [This implies that action is needed to participate in the Gospel.]

In Moses 6:53, Adam asks the Lord why it is that men must repent and be baptized, and the Lord explains why and then lays out the plan of salvation to Adam (Moses 6:51-68). After the Lord explains everything Adam is to do, He closes with this statement in v 68:

68 Behold, thou art one in me, a son of God; and *thus may all become my sons*. Amen.

By participating in the Gospel, by exercising our faith (in Christ and in His atonement) unto repentance, and by being baptized and receiving the Holy Ghost – by doing all of these things, **THUS** may all become the sons of God!

### **Moses 7:1**

1 And it came to pass that Enoch continued his speech, saying: Behold, our father Adam taught these things, and many have believed and *become the sons of God*, and many have believed not, and have perished in their sins, and are looking forth with fear, in torment, for the fiery indignation of the wrath of God to be poured out upon them. [*those who don't believe are still the sons of men*]

### **D&C 35:2**

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.

Notice what is being said: Becoming a son of God is directly connected with the atonement—being at-one-with God. To become a son or daughter of God, we need to become one with God. The atonement needs to be a reality in our lives. Believing is not enough—we need to become one with God, "even one in me as I am one in the Father, as the Father is one in me, that we may be one." This verse in D&C 35 is related to John 13-17. Those chapters in John ought to be read together as one discourse. This is the conversation Christ has with His disciples as he leaves the upper room and walks to the Garden of Gethsemane. Chapter 13 begins with the Last Supper in the upper room, and chapter 17 ends right before he is arrested by the High Priests. These chapters are about the atonement and how to become one with God.

John says at the beginning of his book that Christ is going to give mankind "power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12), and in chapters 13-17 Christ explains how to become one with Him and with the Father. Chapters 18-21 deal with his atonement, crucifixion, and resurrection. John is writing to members of the Church. He is not trying to convert people; he is trying to give members a little bit of meat!

This is how the Lord describes those in the celestial kingdom:

### **D&C 76:58**

58 Wherefore, as it is written, *they are gods, even the sons of God—*

In the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* we learn:

If you wish to go where God is, you must be like God, or possess the principles which God possesses, for *if we are not drawing towards God in principle, we are going from Him and drawing towards the devil.* Yes, I am standing in the midst of all kinds of people. Search your hearts, and see if you are like God. I have searched mine, and feel to repent of all my sins. (TPJS p 216)

In other words, we cannot dwell with God unless we have the character of God. That character can only be acquired through the exercise of our agency. It is not by a miracle, a magic wand, or ordinance. It is by our choices, using agency, that we can become a son or daughter of God. Through His atonement and resurrection, through His Gospel and His teachings, He has given us "the power to become," and that power is our own agency. He has given us the knowledge and the opportunity, but that power lies within our agency. The ordinances mean nothing unless we use that agency. The endowment of power is always knowledge. The Good News is that the Gospel is here! The Bad News is that no one is listening. The question then becomes: Are we using our agency not only to listen, but to do (D&C 84:57)?