

42. Personal correspondence, 15 Jan. 2002.
43. Our mortal probation has been likened to the second act of a three-act play. When the curtain comes down on act two, the play is not over. Without the vision gained from acts one and three, the

second act could seem either too short, too long, too hard, or too confusing. When we know about all three acts, the second act acquires greater significance; thus the need for an eternal perspective.

## Elder John M. Madsen

### “He that hath eternal life is rich”

Almost 2,000 years ago a rich young man asked an extremely important question of the Savior: “Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16).

Having heard the Savior’s instructions and His gentle invitation to “come and follow me” (Matthew 19:21), the rich young man “went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions” (Matthew 19:22).

Tragically, millions in the world today still prize and choose “the riches of the earth” over the “riches of eternity” (D&C 38:39), not knowing or fully understanding that “*he that hath eternal life is rich*” (D&C 6:7; italics added) and that *eternal life is God’s greatest gift to man* (see D&C 14:7). Simply stated, eternal life is to live forever as families in the presence of God (see D&C 132:19–20, 24, 55).

### Know God and Christ to obtain eternal life

In His great Intercessory Prayer, the Savior gives to all mankind the key to obtaining eternal life: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

But how can man come to know the only true God? The Savior answers:

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

I testify that the only way we and all mankind can come unto our Heavenly

Father and know Him, and thus obtain eternal life, is to come unto the Lord Jesus Christ and know Him.

### The identity and role of Jesus Christ

But who *is* Jesus Christ that we should come unto Him and *know* Him? I know of no more wonderful summary of the identity and role of the Lord Jesus Christ than the declaration of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve entitled “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” from which I quote:

“[Jesus Christ] 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. . . .

“ . . . He gave His life to atone for the sins of all mankind. . . .

“ . . . 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 Corinthians 15:20). As Risen Lord, He . . . ministered among His ‘other sheep’ (John 10:16) in ancient America. . . . He and His Father appeared to the boy Joseph Smith, ushering in the long-promised ‘dispensation of the fulness of times’ (Ephesians 1:10). . . .

“ . . . 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’ (Ephesians 2:20).

“... He will someday return to earth ... [and] rule as King of Kings and reign as Lord of Lords. ... Each of us will stand to be judged of Him. ...

“... His duly ordained Apostles [bear testimony] that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel. ... He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world” (*Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2–3).

It is wonderful, and absolutely essential, to know who the Lord Jesus Christ is.

But again, I testify that the only way we and all mankind can come unto our Heavenly Father and know Him, and thus obtain eternal life, is to come unto the Lord Jesus Christ and know Him.

#### To know Jesus, we must receive Him

What does it mean to know the Lord Jesus Christ, and how can we come to know Him? The Savior answers:

“Strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me.

“But if ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me” (D&C 132:22–23).

Can we truly and fully comprehend His words? “If ye receive me”—the Great Jehovah, the Messiah, the Creator of the earth, the Savior and Redeemer of the world, the immortal Son of God—“If ye receive me . . . , then shall ye know me” (D&C 132:23; italics added).

To know the Lord Jesus Christ, we and all mankind must receive Him. And to receive Him, we must receive His servants (see Matthew 10:40; D&C 1:38; 68:8–9; 84:36; 112:20).

To receive Him, we must receive the fulness of His gospel, His everlasting covenant, including all those truths or laws,

and ordinances needed for us to enter back into the presence of God (see D&C 39:11; 45:9; 66:2; 76:40–43; 132:12; 133:57).

To receive Him, faithful sons of God must receive His priesthood and magnify their callings (see D&C 84:33–35).

But ultimately, to receive Him and know Him, we and all mankind must, as Moroni exhorts, “*come unto Christ, and be perfected in him*” (Moroni 10:32; italics added). In other words, we must come unto Christ and strive to “become” like Him (see Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 40–44; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32–34).

Said the risen Lord: “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27). The meaning of the word *ought*, as used in His question “What manner of men ought ye to be?” is crucial to understanding His answer, “Even as I am.” The word *ought* means “to be necessary” or “to be held or bound in duty or moral obligation” (*Noah Webster’s First Edition of an American Dictionary of the English Language*, 7th ed. [1993], “ought”; see also Luke 24:26), suggesting—and the holy scriptures, ancient and modern, confirm—that it is “necessary,” and that we are “bound,” as by covenant, “to be,” as He declared, “even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27; see also 3 Nephi 12:48; Matthew 5:48; 1 John 3:2; Moroni 7:48).

It is my prayer that the time may soon come “when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” (Mosiah 3:20; see also Moses 7:62; Isaiah 11:9), that all who will may receive Him, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and know Him, that they may come unto our Heavenly Father, and know Him, and thus obtain eternal life, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.