

“The Condescension of God”

By Bishop Richard C. Edgley
First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric



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From His magnificent throne, Jesus Christ descended to face the most extreme humiliation and suffering that mortality could inflict.



There is much to ponder about the greatness of God, His condescension, and what it might mean to us as recipients of His great gift.

We read of the great condescension of God in a few select verses of Nephi’s vision that explain Lehi’s dream of the tree of life.

“And it came to pass that I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me. ...

“And he said unto me: Knowest thou the condescension of God?

“And I said unto him: I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things” ([1 Ne. 11:14, 16–17](#)).

With Nephi’s somewhat vague response, the angel began to teach him about the condescension of God.

“And he said unto me: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh. ...

“And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms. ...

“And after he had said these words, he said unto me: Look! And I looked, and I beheld the Son of God going forth among the children of men; and I saw many fall down at his feet and worship him. ...

“And the angel said unto me again: Look and behold the condescension of God!

“And I looked and beheld the Redeemer of the world, of whom my father had spoken; and I also beheld the prophet who should prepare the way before him. And the Lamb of God went forth and was baptized of him. ...

“And I beheld that he went forth ministering unto the people, in power and great glory; and the multitudes were gathered together to hear him; and I beheld that they cast him out from among them. ...

“And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me again, saying: Look! And I looked and beheld the Lamb of God, that he was taken by the people; yea, the Son of the everlasting God was judged of the world; and I saw

and bear record.

“And I, Nephi, saw that he was lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world” ([1 Ne. 11:18, 20, 24, 26–28, 32–33](#)).

To understand the meaning of *condescension*, reference can be made to the *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*: “voluntary descent from one’s rank or dignity in relations with an inferior.” President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught, “It means to descend or come down from an exalted position to a place of inferior station.” [1](#)

The Condescension of God

As the angel taught Nephi, he may have been speaking of two condescensions—one of God the Father and one of the Son, Jesus Christ. Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles elaborates, “The condescension of God,’ of which the scriptures speak, means that the Immortal Father—the glorified, exalted, enthroned ruler of the universe—came down from his station of dominion and power to become the Father of a Son who would be born of Mary, ‘after the manner of the flesh.’” [2](#) God the Father also condescended by sending His Only Begotten Son to suffer the sins of the world. The Savior is God’s gift to us.

While God the Father’s condescension reflects His great love for all mankind by permitting His Only Begotten to be sacrificed for even the humblest and lowliest of His children, Christ’s condescension was more personal and visible—for He was the sacrifice. His condescension was manifest by who He was and the way He lived. His condescension can be seen in almost every recorded act of His 33 years of mortality. In this article we will focus on the condescension of the Savior of the world as the Creator/Redeemer and Exemplar.

God the Creator/Redeemer

We know of Jesus Christ’s work in the creation of the world under the direction of the Father. In preparation for Moses’ great work, our Father in Heaven, through the voice of Jesus, revealed to Moses the wondrous creation, “yea, even all of it, and there was not a particle of it which he did not behold” ([Moses 1:27](#)). Then a few verses later the Lord stated, “And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten” ([Moses 1:33](#)). Our understanding and testimony of this is further enlightened and reinforced through our temple worship.

The magnitude of God’s work is incomprehensible. It is infinite. From His magnificent throne, Jesus Christ, the God of this world, all-knowledgeable and all-powerful, descended. Indeed, it is sobering to ponder that He alone would come down from this glorified throne to face the most extreme humiliation and suffering that mortality could inflict.

President Benson stated, “When the great God of the universe condescended to be born of mortal woman, He submitted Himself to the infirmities of mortality to ‘suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death’ ([Mosiah 3:7](#)).” [3](#)

The *Lectures on Faith* teach that one reason Jesus Christ is called the *Son* of God is because He “descended in suffering below that which man can suffer; or, in other words, suffered greater sufferings, and was exposed to more powerful contradictions than any man can be.” [4](#)

The Book of Mormon helps us understand the magnitude of this descent. When brought before the wicked King Noah, Abinadi testified of this magnificent, unthinkable condescension that evidences the Lord’s mercy and love:

“And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people.

“And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God. ...

“And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people” ([Mosiah 15:1–2, 5](#)).

But, hardened by years of evil, self-indulgence, and selfishness, King Noah had not the slightest comprehension or feeling toward the truths being unfolded before him.

When I contemplate the magnitude of this gift, the magnitude of His descent, and the extremity of His suffering, the words of a song thunder through my mind: “O Lord my God. ... How great thou art! How great thou art!” (*Hymns*, no. 86).

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