

Brothers and Sisters, I testify that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. Our assigned topic addresses his early years growing in wisdom and stature.

In the first chapter of Genesis it teaches: “God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” ([Genesis 1:26–27](#)). After Adam and Eve partook of the fruit of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” God said they had “become as one of us,” ([Genesis 2:17](#); [3:22](#)). Later in the Old Testament, a passage in the book of Psalms declares, “I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.” ([Psalm 82:6](#)).

“At this joyous Christmas season we celebrate the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. The story of that birth is well-known; the story of His sacrifice is an inspiration to all. But [...] we do not know much about His youth; although because of our knowledge of His later life, we can picture the growing Boy.” We know that “[Jesus Once Was a Little Child](#)”.

Jesus once was a little child,
A little child like me;
And he was pure and meek and mild,
As a little child should be.

Talmage (in his work [Jesus the Christ](#)) contends that the Christ child indeed started his mortal life as a helpless, perfect child to his loving mother Mary and a caring adoptive legal father Joseph, each prepared by the Lord with prior angelic visitations. Knowing the plan designed by the Father and as agreed to in the great pre-existent council, Christ allowed himself to pass through the veil the same way we all came, permitting the forgetting of His former station and glory to come into this earth life that we are experiencing for ourselves right now. Talmage notes that from the Bible of the actual birth it records very little: “And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.” ([Luke 2:6, 7](#))

Nephi in The Book of Mormon provides but little more detail to the story: “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: Nephi, what beholdest thou? And I said unto him: A virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins. 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. 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 it came to pass that I beheld that she was carried away in the Spirit; and after she had been carried away in the Spirit for the space of a time the angel spake unto me, saying: Look! And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms. And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! ([1 Nephi 11:16](#))

To understand the meaning of the word 'condescension', reference can be made to the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: where it is defined as a “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.” ([Benson: New Era Dec 1980](#))

President Benson taught: “We must keep in mind who Jesus was before He was so born. He was the

Creator of all things, the great Jehovah, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was and is the Holy One of Israel.” ([Benson: New Era Dec 1979](#)). Despite all this, He came to earth as a baby, grew and progressed as a little child just as we had to do.

Many of us were children once. Some of you are caring for children, or have grandchildren of your own, or at least were grandchildren once yourself. Many of these children and grandchildren are pretty close to perfect – just ask their parents or grandparents. It is wonderful and amazing to me to think that our Lord and Savior, the creator of the world, He in whose likeness we were each made, condescended to come himself to earth as a baby child.

Jesus came into this world, weak and vulnerable, and grew line upon line to become the Savior of all mankind. He did so without sin. Only in the sense of descending to a lower station did it 'fall'. We also have fallen, both by coming here and by failing to live perfectly without sin. Because of Christ and His atonement, our growth can remain upward, back towards God, by making and keeping covenants that bind us to Him.

William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898) was an English writer of hymns and carols. About age of 29 he was struck with a near fatal illness and consequently suffered months confined to his bed and a subsequent spiritual revival. In Christmas of 1865 after re-reading the story in Mathew 2:1-12 he penned these words:

What child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The babe, the son of Mary.

(LDS.org topics: Becoming Like God:) “Joseph Smith, spoke of the nature of God and the future of humankind to the Saints in conference address later called the 'King Follett discourse'. “What kind of a being is God?” he asked. Human beings needed to know, he argued, because “if men do not comprehend the character of God they do not comprehend themselves.”³⁶ In that phrase, the Prophet clarified the position between God and humanity. Human nature was at its core divine. God “was once as one of us” and “all the spirits that God ever sent into the world” were likewise “susceptible of enlargement.” Joseph Smith preached that long before the world was formed, God found “himself in the midst” of these beings and “saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself”³⁷ and be “exalted” with and like Him. ³⁸”

From reading the scriptures we know that as a little child Jesus was watched over by angels, and that His earthly parents were divinely guided. One angelic message was delivered to them about the safety of their Son, telling them that King Herod had a murderous plan. The angel said: “Take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.” ([Matt 2:13](#)) When the death of Herod was announced and the danger had passed, the angel came again, and in another dream he told the loving guardian Joseph: “Take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel.” ([Matt 2:20](#)) When the family arrived back

in Palestine, there was still some fear in their minds, and the angel came again and directed them to go into Galilee. And the scriptures tell us that there “the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.” ([Luke 2:40](#))

Jesus studied the scriptures of his time, the writings of Isaiah and old testament prophets, and grew to understand God’s plan and his own role in it ([D&C 93:13](#)). Jesus received not a fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness .. this is our path too. He, unhindered by sin, nor by the need to repent, progressed much faster than we might. For example, “.. when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day’s journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business? ([Luke 2:42-49](#))

The Dec 1980 Friend published an article entitled '[Jesus Once Was a Little Child](#)' from which I would like to quote from now:

“Jesus lived in Nazareth, which is toward the top of one of some very rough hills. This was an interesting place to grow up, and Jesus undoubtedly had all kinds of experiences that would ripen His life for His magnificent future. From the top of the hill Jesus may have seen the military and commercial routes teeming with life and movement and commerce. The rim was precipitous and from this high place, having been angered by His teachings and claims, Jesus’ fellow townsmen once tried to cast Him down headlong, but He escaped from their clutches.”

I grew up in North Calgary at the edge of the city back then at the base of a hill we called the 'Spy Hill' (now named Nose Hill Park). We would explore in that direction from time to time, bravely wondering up the hill from Butte Place past Capri Ave and 'Turtle Park' the mile or so up the hill (as the crow flies - 3.5 km by car).

“The boy Jesus lived probably not more than 24 kilometers (about 15 miles) from the Sea of Galilee, where He would likely have learned much about clouds and storms and waves and sand and rocks and boats and ships. It was not much farther to the Mediterranean Sea, and here also He may have become acquainted with larger ships and tides and waves and streams and all the material that He referred to so eloquently in the sermons He gave later.

Here in Magrath we live about the same distance from Wally's Beach at the St Mary Reservoir that most of us have been to from time to time. I recall one youth activity at the base of the spill gates where my future wife fed me pie while blind-folded (her not me) at that location. Not much later as a 17 year old scout I recall an infamous white water rafting incident attempting to navigate the normally placid St Mary river a short distance downstream in the early springtime. The river levels had increased some 15-20 feet and President Dudley was our Bishop and leader back then. The two large rubber rafts were tossed on top of each other and everyone suddenly experienced the cold water first hand. I recall the

image of Bishop Dudley diving into the drink to attempt some rescuing, despite his earlier counsel to stay with the raft and losing his glasses in the attempt, and being carried along under the raft for some time myself. My younger brother recounts losing his life jacket the moment he hit the water and 'walking' along the bottom of the river under the rafts above. All participants, however, somehow made it safely to shore, likely with much angelic intervention, and the church owned rafts were sold a short time later.

“As a boy, Jesus could have climbed the slopes of Mount Tabor, and He may have been familiar with the place where He led three apostles in later years. To climb Mount Tabor would be a real challenge, but one that a young, growing boy might find irresistible. Jesus also could have walked from Nazareth to the Jordan River, where there would have been numerous live animals in the brush and natural growth. He probably observed nests with bird eggs in them. Undoubtedly He had seen the foxes and had watched them escape into their holes. He also knew of the grass of the field. He knew of the barns where food was stored. He knew of the toil of men and women. Jesus grew up in a builder’s home and He knew of slivers and beams and measurements.

“Jesus probably went fishing by Himself many times and helped Mary make bread. He knew of thorns and probably pulled many from His feet. He knew of figs and thistles. Certainly all these experiences were part of His life. And so when He spoke of them the people knew that He had a knowledge of those things. And most surely Jesus knew sheep and their importance to the people. He had seen sheep without a shepherd wander away and become lost. He said to those who followed Him, “Ye are my sheep, and ye are numbered among those whom the Father hath given me.” ([3 Ne 15:24](#)). To all of us He has declared: “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” ([John 10:11](#))

We know He was himself perfect but lived in a very imperfect world amidst very imperfect people. Despite this, Jesus grew by loving. [1 John 4:19](#) states, “We love him, because he loved us first”. His love for Samaritans and sinners and for the whole world allowed him to give his own life as a vicarious sacrifice for all. His love is wide enough and deep enough to encompass the whole world. We can follow him as we love and serve others, and grow in his love as we pray for charity .. as Moroni counsels: “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.” ([Moroni 7:48](#))

We can grow as Jesus grew to become perfected in him. I have been blessed to feel His love, for you and for many whom I am blessed to work with, in my own heart from time to time. You may notice it first in your own family, perhaps with the selection of a spouse and eventually in the birth of a child. This feeling, this great love, is not limited to your own family, it can expand to anyone you serve. It may come as you ponder “the great and wonderful love made manifest by the Father and the Son in the coming of the Redeemer into the world;” ([D&C 138:3](#)). It is often a reflection of His love for those around you. May we each learn and grow and wax strong in spirit, eventually being filled with wisdom: and find the grace of God upon us through Him.

I leave these words with you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.