

## "He Dwelt Among Us"

By the late Rev. Joseph H. Smith

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The Son of God became truly the Son of man. He not only partook of our nature; he also entered into our fellowships. Jesus was neither an ascetic nor an iconoclast. Not so much a reformer as a revivifier and a regenerator. "He dwelt among us;" that is, he made his home with us. He would not dehumanize us nor desocialize us to spiritualize us, but rather he would demonstrate the practicability of spirituality and the possibility of purity amidst normal social and public relationships of men on earth.

In dwelling among us, the Master exemplified and established a proper sociability. We see him welcoming first disciples to come to his lodging and tarry that night. We see him accepting an invitation to share the hospitality of Peter's home. We find him at weddings, and at occasional feasts in homes of rich as well as at the home of friends. And we see him, too, at the Paschal Supper of his own devising and providing, commingling the social with the religious in a natural yet most masterful fashion.

Though we are individual beings, and individuality is foremost in our personality, still we are largely relative in our lives; and had Jesus been abstracted from the relationships of men, he would have been an anomaly rather than an example among us. "He dwelt among us."

While he thus commingled with men, and duly entered into the relationships of life, he upon the other hand was not appreciated by his own. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." "Neither did his brethren (or kinsfolk) believe on him." His townsmen discredited his ministry because he was one of themselves. Religionists of his day scorned him for going to be a guest with a man that was a sinner. His own disciples were amazed at him for talking with a Samaritan water carrier. Some, though, like Martha and Mary, were glad to have him come to their home—especially in times of their trouble.

John, in the opening of his first epistle, sums up this friendly friendship of the Incarnate thus: "We have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." And he himself had shared of this to the full when as the "disciple whom Jesus loved," he did lay his head upon his breast. His dwelling among us was not professional, nor official, nor conventional; it was friendly and affectionate. "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." And he said to his disciples, "I call you not servants . . . but I have called you friends." Redemption, then, we see, takes full account of our social nature, and involves the relationships of life as well as our life itself. For no man liveth unto himself.

But we must next notice Christ's improvement of social occasions, and his mode of adjustment of our relationship to his kingdom. (1) his frequent retirement from social contact. He withdrew himself not only from seething crowds but from the circle of his disciples themselves betimes, and gave himself to solitude and to prayer. And he bade the disciples to do the same. "Come ye yourselves apart . . . and rest a while." Enter into thy closet." And, as already seen, He did forego some of the social relationships altogether, and gave himself the more exclusively to prayer and to the Word of God. (2) Adapting himself readily to the social customs, whether of prince's house or fisherman's home, he, without cant or ecclesiastical perfunctoriness, turned all social occasions to spiritual profit. While Martha fussed over getting dinner, he taught Mary the Word. Finding Peter's wife's mother sick, he healed her so that she served. He gave the Pharisee

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a lecture, and the poor woman a commendation when she anointed him at the supper. At the wedding he turned the water into wine. At the burial place of Lazarus with the mourners, he not only raised the dead, but preached a sermon first on Life Eternal. When the disciples impertuned him as a seeming stranger to stay for supper, he manifested himself to them as the risen Saviour. When his mother came in where he was preaching, he took occasion to show that his disciples were to be to him as kinsfolk—brother, sister, mother, etc.

Now, then let us show some conclusions for ourselves, for in social life as well as in personal life Jesus must be our example.

1. With all that has been noted, it must be seen that he was "separate from sinners." He "walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

2. He moderated his intermingling with society, for private prayer, for meditation, and for service. He withdrew himself from promiscuous and profitless social pleasures.

3. He sanctified social privileges, and seized opportunities for the bettering and blessing of those among whom he mingled.

4. He respected the claims of God's kingdom and service upon him as supreme and above the claims of home or kindred or even mother.

5. He nevertheless met just filial obligations even to his dying hour.

6. He founded a new social order and a new kinship analogous to that of the family in "the household of faith."

7. He left us promises, that as he had dwelt among us, we would sit down with him at his Father's table in his heavenly abode.

"God, the Eternal the All-sufficient, All-wise Creator came near to humanity that first Christmas morning and revealed His will, His thought, His purpose."

### THAT FIRST CHRISTMAS MORN

Leland Wilcox

Let songs of praise to Him arise  
Who rules the earth and sea and skies;  
'Till all the hosts of Paradise  
Join in the glad triumphant song  
On this our joyful Christmas morn.

Lo it was on a midnight clear  
While shepherds bowed themselves in fear,  
Angelic hosts were hov'ring near  
Proclaiming "peace upon the earth",  
By our great Redeemer's birth.

"All hail the glorious paschal Lamb,  
The chosen seed of Abraham;  
Born on this day in Bethlehem  
That all the sons of Adam's race  
May find in Him redeeming grace".

Let ev'ry tongue glad praises sing  
To Him that did salvation bring,  
And ever reigns our glorious King;  
So long ago to earth was born  
Upon that first glad Christmas morn.

Chorus: O glory, glory to the Lamb,  
The blessed Prince of Bethlehem;  
Let all the world His praises sing,  
Ye sons of men, receive your King!