

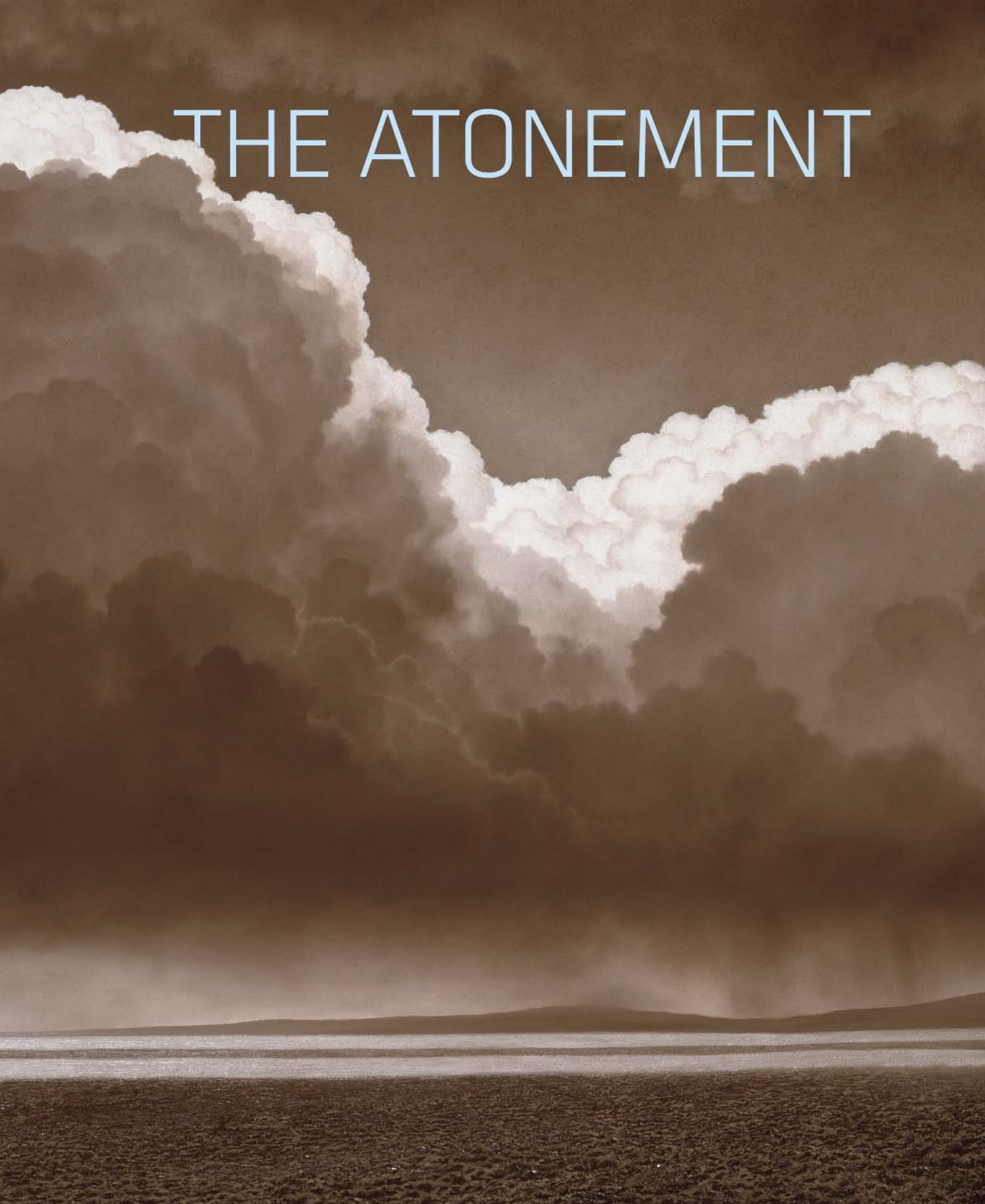
THE TRIUMPH OF



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THE ATONEMENT



The Easter season to me is a wonderful season. I would like to share with you some of the events that occurred during the life of Christ during the last week of His life. There will not be time to read extensively from the scriptures. If you had perhaps an entire year, you could probably study this topic in great detail.

Each July when we have a little break as General Authorities, we are encouraged to be at home, to be with family. Each of us tries to use that time for preparation for the next year. Several years ago I took the opportunity in the month of July to study these events. I did it in this manner: I had on one part of my table the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. I had *Jesus the Christ* by James E. Talmage. Then I had a third book called *The Life of Christ* by Frederic Farrar. Frederic Farrar was a German born in 1831, a year after the Church was organized. He was not a member of the Church. But in 1879 he wrote this marvelous book. It is quite a well-versed doctrinal history of the life of Christ and compares very similarly with what we read in our Church literature, particularly in *Jesus the Christ*.

I took time to review each of the Gospels because they vary. The synoptic Gospels vary a little bit, as you would expect, as they are written by different authors. Matthew was written to convince the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. Mark was written more for the common people. Luke was a very literary writing that appealed more to the Greeks. And John in his writing focused on the more spiritual manifestations of the life of the Savior. Each of them is different; some include events that others do not. But as a group, as a synopsis, they tell this marvelous story. As law students, I am sure you like to do research: reading and studying notes that go with the text, and precedents and court cases. Study this subject using the four Gospels, the other books that I have referenced, and the footnotes that appear at the end of each chapter of *Jesus the Christ*. It is a great opportunity to see the similarities and the differences.

I would like to start with the beginning of the week preceding the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. Sometime about the first of the week, the Savior made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The Christian world celebrates that date as Palm Sunday. You'll find in the scriptures the references of how He came into Jerusalem, how they laid palms

in front of Him. I also would like to share with you some of the messianic prophecies that foretell of events that are referenced in the New Testament.

Fortunately, the Book of Mormon is many times more elaborate in its messianic prophecies of the Savior, but I am going to focus on some of the Old Testament messianic prophecies. For example, referring to His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, we read the following in Zechariah 9:9:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

That is quite descriptive of the triumphal entry of the Savior into Jerusalem. Now, Jesus was one to honor the local customs, and, of course, this was the week of the Passover. He came to celebrate the Passover, the feast of the unleavened bread. In His time they would put the blood of the lamb on the altar. He honored the local customs and all that went with them.

But as He proceeded into Jerusalem, He instructed His disciples to go out into the street, where they would find a man who would invite them to use his home for the special meeting Christ had planned for the disciples. Of course this referenced the upper room. This man recognized the apostles, and that gave them access to this upper room.

It is important to note the way the Jewish people numbered the hours in their days. A day would begin at what we consider 6:00 p.m. For example, it is now 7:40 p.m. on Sunday evening, but under the Jewish calendar, this would be the beginning of Monday. So on Thursday evening before 6:00 p.m., it would be Thursday, and after 6:00 p.m. it would be the beginning of Friday. Probably around sundown, Jesus and the disciples went into this upper room. One of the first events that occurred was the disclosing of who would betray the Savior. Judas had already determined with the elders that he would betray the Savior. As they sat down in this upper room, the Savior announced, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me" (John 13:21). Of course they looked at one another, and some said, "Is it I? Is it I?" And then:

Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. . . .

He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night. [John 13:26-27, 30]

I thought it was most interesting that after Judas left, there was some very vital instruction that probably could not have been given if he had been present in the room. As Judas left, the Savior began to teach. One of the first things He did was teach about service, and He did this by washing the disciples' feet. Remember that Peter did not want the Savior to wash his feet, and the Savior said, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (John 13:8). Then Peter said, "Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head" (v. 9).

Then Jesus taught them about the Lord's Supper (this is when the sacrament was introduced, the breaking of the bread and the wine). He taught them new commandments that they love one another as He loved them. Then He prepared them for their future and some of the challenges they would have. Peter, of course, stepped forward and offered to lay down his life in exchange for the Savior not having to suffer some of these things. That is when the Savior turned to Peter and told him that before the cock crowed, Peter would deny Him three times.

After He taught them, He left the upper room and went to the Mount of Olives. For those who have been to Jerusalem, you know that the city is separated from the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane by the Kidron Valley, which is quite a steep ravine. But, nevertheless, sometime later in the evening they departed. The rest of His instructions occurred as they were walking or arriving at the Mount of Olives.

This was the beginning of the test period that came to the disciples. Of course Judas had already failed; he was no longer with them. But this is when Jesus taught that in His Father's house were many mansions. "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter," which is the Holy Ghost (John 14:15-16). He taught the principle that the Holy Ghost is the third member of the

Godhead and then the wonderful allegory of the 15th chapter of John regarding the true vine and its branches.

Then He gave what is referred to as the great Intercessory Prayer, or the Lord's high priestly prayer. For all of you, especially you returned missionaries, of course, this is chapter 17 of John. Let me read these several verses as an instruction of almost this entire chapter:

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. [John 17:3-4]

The Savior then speaks of unity—a wonderful prayer for the unity of the people and a prayer for the unity of His Twelve:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. [John 17:20-21]

The entire 17th chapter of John is one of the most beautiful prayers in all of scripture. All these things were said at the Mount of Olives. Then they sang a hymn and departed for the Garden of Gethsemane (which, as I remember, is down the hill a bit from the Mount of Olives). When they went into the entrance of the Garden of Gethsemane, the Savior instructed the eight disciples to remain there and to pray and to watch over Him. He took Peter, James, and John and went into the center of the Garden of Gethsemane, and He told them to pray and to be on guard. Alone, He went into the garden and prayed. There is not much we know about this prayer. In fact, Elder McConkie, speaking of the prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, indicated that we have but a sliver of a great tree as to what Jesus said. The most quoted portion of that prayer is this statement: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

I have always enjoyed this paragraph from Farrar's *The Life of Christ*; listen to the beauty in which he described this event in Gethsemane:

As he went into Gethsemane, it was with a total awareness of what lay ahead. "Jesus knew that the awful hour of His deepest humiliation had arrived—that from this moment till the utterance of that great cry with which He expired, nothing remained for Him on earth but the torture of physical pain and the poignancy of mental anguish. All that the human frame can tolerate of suffering was to be heaped upon His shrinking body; every misery that cruel and crushing insult can inflict was to weigh heavy on His soul; and in this torment of body and agony of soul even the high and radiant serenity of His divine spirit was to suffer a short but terrible eclipse. Pain in its acutest sting, shame in its most overwhelming brutality, all the burden of the sin and mystery of man's existence in its apostasy and fall—this was what He must now face in all its most inexplicable accumulation."

[Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979-1981), 4:126; quoting from chapter 57 of Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* (1874)]

There is no language known to mortals that can tell what agony and suffering was His while in the Garden of Gethsemane: blood ran from the pores of His body.

As He was going through this experience, He got up three times, and each time He found that the apostles were asleep. I wonder how He must have felt that even His trusted three and His trusted eight were not able to remain on guard as He had instructed them. So great was His pain that we're told that a heavenly messenger appeared to Him to strengthen Him while He was suffering this lonely vigil and individual struggle.

About this time, as He concluded this experience in the garden, the soldiers came accompanied by Judas, and we read how Judas betrayed Jesus. He made a pact with the guards that the individual he would kiss was the one they should arrest. That's exactly what Judas did. He kissed the Savior and then quickly left, and the Savior was taken.

Now, going back to Judas, let me share with you two messianic prophecies that tell of this event. In Psalm 41:9 we read: "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." And in Zechariah 11:12-13, it tells what happened next in the life of Judas:

And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.

And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.

Judas, when he left the Garden of Gethsemane with the 30 pieces of silver, came to himself as he came into the temple where the priests and the elders were gathered, and he realized what he'd done. He took the 30 pieces of silver and cast them down on the floor of the temple and ran out and hanged himself. The priests picked up these 30 pieces of silver and with them bought what was referred to as the potter's field, which was to become a burial place for the indigent and strangers.

At this time all of the apostles, except Peter and possibly John, disappeared. The Savior had instructed them that they should leave. But Peter lingered and followed, and it's quite possible that John did also. This would have been sometime in the middle of the night, possibly after midnight, which would be Friday according to our time. The soldiers took the Savior first to the house of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest. All of this took place probably between midnight and sunrise on Friday morning. If you look at a map of where the Garden of Gethsemane is and where you would have to pass through the Kidron Valley up the other side to go into the city of Jerusalem, you'll see that these locations are quite some distance and that it's not an easy walk.

When they got to the house of Caiaphas, all of the high priests and the elders were waiting for Christ to come; they knew that He had been captured, that Judas had betrayed Him, and that now He was to come in and they were going to find some charge that would bring about His death. And so they conducted what is referred to as a trial. Now, as you know, the Jews did not have the liberty of inflicting death on a person, and so they had to focus on finding Christ guilty of something. So they began to question Him, and they began to bring in witnesses who could testify against Him—the scriptures refer to them as false witnesses. Two witnesses testified of something the Savior had said earlier. In Matthew, one person said, "This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days" (Matthew 26:61). In Mark 14:56-58 we read:

For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.

And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying,

We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with bands, and within three days I will build another made without bands.

Now, you can go to John 2:19 to read what He actually said as recorded at the wedding in Cana several years earlier in His ministry. Speaking to the Jews who asked for a sign, “Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

He did not say “I will destroy.” He simply said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” We know why each of the false witnesses were false; they made reference that He said “I will destroy” and “I will raise it up.” His accusers took these two witnesses and this testimony as evidence that He was guilty of sedition, or that He was a disturber of the peace. But they needed more, so they began to ask Him who He was. And finally they asked Him if He was the Christ, the Son of God, and Jesus said, “Thou hast said” (Matthew 26:64). His reply was evidence of blasphemy, because now He was saying that He was Jesus the Christ or the Savior whom they expected to come. So they had these two charges: blasphemy, which is the most serious charge under Jewish law, and high treason, or sedition, which is the most serious charge under Roman law.

On the basis of that, they felt they had the means now to go to the Roman governor and to seek a penalty. When all of this was taking place in the house of Caiaphas, Peter was somewhere close by. A woman turned to Peter and said, “Art not thou also one of [them]?” and Peter said, “I am not” (John 18:17; see also v. 25, 27). This occurred three times. As the cock crowed, Peter suddenly remembered the statement that the Savior had said. Now, let me read Luke 22:60–62, which I think is probably the best account of godly sorrow.

And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

Imagine how Peter must have felt to know that the Lord knew that he had denied Him three times. His later life would testify that he went out in true godly sorrow and true repentance because he later became the president of the Church. That was a very defining moment in the life of Peter to have this occurrence.

From there they went to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor over all of Judea, and they encouraged him to seek some sort of death penalty for the Savior. But Pilate simply said, “I find no fault in him” (John 19:4; see also Luke 23:4 and John 18:38). In great frustration they left Pilate and went to the home of Herod Antipus, the tetrarch over Galilee. Now this was the man who had beheaded John the Baptist, and it was his father, Herod the Great, who ordered the slaying of all the babies a couple years after Christ was born. So you get some idea of this family—the father slaying all of the children at the birth of the Savior and Herod Antipus killing John the Baptist, beheading him.

Herod began to question Christ, and the scriptures record that to all of the questioning by Herod, the Savior said nothing—He did not utter one word. Talmage said that Herod is likely the only person who questioned the Savior but never heard His voice. I think the Savior did not dignify that individual by even speaking to him. In fact, Herod was the only person known about whom Christ made a contemptuous reference, when on one occasion He told the apostles, “Go ye, and tell that fox” (Luke 13:32). Well, they left Herod and went back to Pilate, in great frustration because Herod would not impose a penalty. Now, under their law during the season of the Passover, it was permissible to release a prisoner, and so Pilate offered to release a prisoner. Of course the priests did not want that, and that’s where you have the story of Barabbas, a murderer, being released. Once again Pilate found no fault in Christ and even washed his hands in evidence that he found no fault, no blasphemy or sedition.

But because the people were becoming so pleading and so boisterous—and, we don’t know, maybe out of fear—Pilate finally succumbed, and he agreed that he would inflict the Roman sentence of death by crucifixion because that is what they wanted.

Now, sometime when you have an opportunity, read the 34th chapter of *Jesus the Christ*. In the footnote there are 12 points of the illegality of the trial by night, and, as lawyers, future lawyers, and law students, you should find it most interesting to read those three pages, as each aspect of that trial that took place that evening under Jewish law was illegal. But nevertheless it occurred, and they were able to extract a penalty from Pilate.

We are told that at that point they scourged Him, probably stripping the clothing from the upper part of His body, which they lashed with a leather whip embedded with tiny pieces of bone that would be sharp like a razor. As He was whipped, the pieces of bone would be embedded in and cut His flesh.

They spit in His face. They put a blindfold on Him, and different people would strike Him on the face and say, “Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?” (Luke 22:64). And, of course, the Savior said nothing and endured it. They put a crown of thorns on His head.

They put a reed representing a royal scepter in His right hand to signify that He was a king. They saluted Him as king of the Jews, and, of course, as they went to Golgotha, He was required to carry His own cross, which He did for a while—but due to exhaustion, another individual assisted Him. Finally, He was crucified between two criminals. You know the manner of crucifixion: one’s arms would be outstretched and large nails would be driven through the palms and the wrists of the hands and through the ankles to hold the body to the cross, and then the cross would be put into a hole, where it would remain upright. A sign was put on the cross: “The King of the Jews.” And then He was mocked: “If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself” (Luke 23:37). They kept saying, “If thou be Christ, save thyself” (v. 39). Of course this “if” was a reference to His 40 days of fasting when He was tempted by Satan (see Matthew 4:6–10). Then finally the Savior asked for water; He said, “I thirst” (John 19:28). But He was given vinegar instead of water.

Let me read to you several of the messianic prophecies that foretold of the events that occurred on the cross. In the book of Psalms we read, “For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet”



(Psalm 22:16). In Isaiah 22:23 we read, “And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father’s house.” Again, in Psalm 22:18: “They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.” You remember that the soldiers cast lots for the clothing that they had taken from His body. In Psalm 69:20: “Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.” In the book of Psalms He then said what we know as His final statement.

Before I read that, let me read one other verse from Psalm 69:21: “They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”

Let me just point out the chronology of this: According to scriptural references, we believe that the Savior was nailed to the cross sometime in what was referred to as the “third hour.” They would number their hours starting with 6 a.m. being the first hour, 7 a.m. the second, 8 a.m. the third, and so forth. He was put on the cross sometime in the third hour. Sometime in the sixth hour,

being about noontime, darkness came across the land and lasted for three hours. We believe He expired sometime around the ninth hour, or around 3:00 p.m.

Just before He expired He turned to His apostle John and gave him charge to take care of His mother, Mary. We are told He then uttered these words: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). In that bitterest hour of His suffering, Christ was truly alone. He then said, “It is finished” (John 19:30) and “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46).

I HAVE GLORIFIED THEE ON THE
EARTH: I HAVE FINISHED THE WORK
WHICH THOU GAVEST ME TO DO.

JOHN 17:4



He lowered His head and voluntarily gave up His life. That is where this messianic prophecy that I read from the book of Psalms comes in: "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth" (Psalm 31:5). Then, again, in Psalm 22:1 (a psalm of David): "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?"

And so, as we read, the Savior voluntarily gave up His life and died. You have read the accounts, not only in Talmage's *Jesus the Christ* but also in many other books, that relate the cause of His death as likely being a ruptured heart. The sword being thrust into His side and the combination of blood and water coming forth is a good description of how that would be medical evidence of a ruptured heart. That is why I like the reference in Psalm 69:20: "Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness." It was truly of a broken heart that He died.

Well, now it's about sundown on Friday, and of course to the Jews this would be a horrible desecration of the Sabbath to have these bodies on the cross at the beginning of their Sabbath. By custom they would immediately cause death by breaking the bones of the feet and legs, and when that occurred, the body would slump down in death. When they came to the Savior, He had already died, so His legs were not broken. We read again in Psalm 34:20: "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken." So, very quickly, as it became sundown they took Christ down from the cross, and Joseph of Arimathea, a righteous, wealthy man, made available his tomb where His body could be laid. We are told that Nicodemus—a great friend of the Savior who came to Him early in His ministry and enquired about his mission—brought myrrh and aloes, and primarily the women took the body and wrapped it in clean linen with spices and brought it in haste and laid it in the sepulchre. Pilate had instructed his soldiers that they were to guard the tomb in case Christ's worshippers came to steal the body, as was rumored. They rolled a large stone across the opening, and the soldiers were placed there to guard the entrance.

The body lay in the tomb that Friday evening, which was now the beginning of the Saturday in the Jewish calendar, and was there all day Saturday. When you visit Jerusalem,

the guides show you a location where they claim the sepulchre was located. We believe it was at the Garden Tomb. Several of our prophets (including President Harold B. Lee, Spencer W. Kimball, Howard W. Hunter, and Gordon B. Hinckley) have borne witness that the Garden Tomb is the correct location.

Now, moving to early Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene and the other women knew and recognized that they simply had not had time to properly prepare the body for burial. When the women arrived there, the stone had been rolled back, and the tomb was empty. The women were told by an angel that He had risen and that they were to go tell the apostles. So the women went and found the apostles and told them. Peter and some of the disciples quickly ran to the tomb, and when they arrived there they went in and also found the tomb empty and the linen that had covered His body neatly folded. They did not understand, so they left. Then Mary came back alone, and she saw two personages who were angels, and she asked if they knew where His body was. Mary went outside the tomb and saw a man whom she thought was the caretaker of the garden, and He said to her, "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" (John 20:15). She replied, thinking that someone had taken the body of Jesus, and then this man simply said to her: "Mary" (v. 16). She recognized the voice and manner in which He said, "Mary." Of course she was speaking to the resurrected Christ.

All of the writings are a witness to the fact that the first person to see the resurrected Savior was a woman, Mary Magdalene. She quickly went and informed the apostles of what she had seen. Of course the Savior went to the 10 disciples—Thomas not being with them at this time—and showed them His hands and His feet and His body and broke bread with them and ate. Thomas, really not believing this, said that unless he could thrust his hand into His side and touch the nail prints, he simply would not believe. That's where we get the term "Doubting Thomas." The Savior appeared to Thomas individually and gave him that witness, and Thomas then became a believer of the Resurrection. The Savior appeared to several people on the road to Emmaus.

The Savior also appeared to over 500 as recorded by Paul. Of course He visited the Nephites, and then as He ascended into

heaven, He appeared to the disciples. As you read this account, you can only believe that the Resurrection was literal—the flesh-and-bone body came back and joined with Him. He ate, He consumed food, and they touched Him and felt a human being.

Now these events, my brothers and sisters, usher in a whole topic of the Resurrection and the Atonement. The greatest event that I can think of that has occurred in our world is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and His putting in place the Atonement and providing the opportunity for us to return to Him. His disciples became His witnesses, and that is what they did for the balance of their lives—they bore witness of what they had seen. Most of them lost their lives through persecution, with many of them dying in exactly the same way the Savior died.

Then we have the long period of apostasy and the ushering in of this dispensation through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and fortunately today we have not only these witnesses of the Bible but also the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, and we have the living witnesses of the apostles and prophets who live and walk the earth today.

I bear this witness of these men who are true witnesses; they are charged to bear witness of Jesus Christ of their own knowledge, not on any other person's knowledge but to acquire their own knowledge that Jesus is the Christ—that He lived, He died, He was resurrected, and He lives again today. I have that witness. That is one of the charges that the Seventy receive; we are charged to be special witnesses of Jesus Christ.

I bear that witness to you that He indeed does live, that He was resurrected, that He is our Savior, and that He has wrought the wonderful Atonement that will provide us with the opportunity to return to our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, if we keep the covenants and the commandments that have been given to us by our prophets. I leave this testimony and witness with you and wish you all joy and happiness during this wonderful Easter season. This is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

ART CREDITS

Page 1: *Illuminated Section*, 1999. Page 20–21: *You Will Find It*, 2005. Page 25: *Presence*, 2005. Page 26: *Remember This Day*, 2005. David Linn, private collection.