



# THE SAVIOR'S MINISTRY TO THE SPIRIT WORLD

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AT ABOUT THREE o'clock on a Friday afternoon, in a then-obscure province of the eastern Roman Empire almost two thousand years ago, Jesus of Nazareth drew his last labored breath in mortality. The minutes *before* his decease and the minutes *after* are a study in contrasts. And this is one of two focal points for our part of the story—a story encompassing what Hugh Nibley called the “three missions,” the “three descents” of Christ. The first was “as a mortal condescending to mortals”; the second “as a spirit, ministering to spirits in their deep prison”; and the third “as a glorified, resurrected being who frequently descends . . .

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to minister to certain mortals who share in his glory in special manifestations.”<sup>1</sup>

As Jesus hung on the cruel cross of crucifixion, nailed to its wood by iron spikes hammered in by expert crucifiers, the physical and spiritual pain, the agony, the torture so intense as to be incomprehensible to finite minds, reached a crescendo. God the Father completely withdrew his support and caused an agony of soul so great as to elicit a cry of abandonment from Jesus (see Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). But this withdrawal was the only way Jesus could die, since the Father’s spirit and influence are life-giving and life-sustaining. If the Father had not withdrawn from the Son again on the cross as he did in Gethsemane, Jesus would have been sustained and nourished by the light and life of his Father’s spirit. Total degeneration of his body could not have occurred, and thus he could not have died so readily by an act of will. One writer has noted, “The withdrawal of the Spirit from Jesus, with the influence which the powers of spiritual death and darkness then had upon Him, apparently caused a critical breakdown to occur in His bodily organs and tissues so that, when He willed that He should die, His spirit could readily depart into the spirit world.”<sup>2</sup>

What added to the utterly pathetic atmosphere of this crucifixion scene were the taunts, the mockings, the jeers, and the undeserved abuse heaped upon Jesus by passersby who did not know, understand, or care about the true significance of the events that were unfolding before their very eyes. Matthew reports, “They that passed

by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matthew 27:39–40). Luke similarly records, "The people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him. . . . And the soldiers also mocked him" (Luke 23:35–36).

Stunningly, *all* this was captured by the Psalmist many centuries before it happened.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" (Psalm 22:1; compare Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34)

"All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head." (Psalm 22:7; compare Matthew 27:39; Mark 15:29; Luke 23:35)

The scorers said, "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." (Psalm 22:8; compare Matthew 27:43)

"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of



When Jesus was crucified, except for a relatively small percentage of the population in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, almost all of the known world had no idea about what was going on at a place called Golgotha. (James Tissot, *The People Beholding the Things That Were Done, Smote Their Breasts*, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.)

my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.” (Psalm 22:14–15; compare John 19:28–29)

“The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. . . . They look and stare upon me.” (Psalm 22:16–17; compare Matthew 27:35–38)

Furthermore, when Jesus was crucified, except for a relatively small percentage of the population in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, almost all of the known world had no idea about what was going on at a place called Golgotha. At that moment it was an obscure event. In fact, the term *Golgotha* itself is found in no other ancient, non-Christian records.

On that Friday afternoon, Jesus suffered on the cross until all the things which God the Father desired, and which the demands of justice required, had been accomplished. Then, knowing by revelation that he had fulfilled these things, Jesus uttered the last of his seven statements from the cross—not as it is reported in the King James Version but rather as given in the Joseph Smith Translation: “Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, *saying, Father, it is finished, thy will is done*, yielded up the ghost” (JST, Matthew 27:54).

The cause of Jesus' physical death in relationship to the horrifying practices of crucifixion has been much discussed. The insight that has come to mean the most to me was offered years ago by Elder James E. Talmage. In sum, he said that he believed Jesus died of a broken heart:

While, as stated in the text, the yielding up of life was voluntary on the part of Jesus Christ, for He had life in Himself and no man could take His life except as He willed to allow it to be taken, (John 1:4; 5:26; 10:15–18) there was of necessity a direct physical cause of dissolution. . . .



Elder James E. Talmage  
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The crucified sometimes lived for days upon the cross, and death resulted, not from the infliction of mortal wounds, but from internal congestion, inflammations, organic disturbances, and consequent exhaustion of vital energy. Jesus, though weakened by long torture during the preceding night and early morning, by the shock of the crucifixion itself, as also by intense mental agony, and

particularly through spiritual suffering such as no other man has ever endured, manifested surprising vigor, both of mind and body, to the last. The strong, loud utterance, immediately following which He bowed His head and “gave up the ghost,” when considered in connection with other recorded details, points to a physical rupture of the heart as the direct cause of death. If the soldier’s spear was thrust into the left side of the Lord’s body and actually penetrated the heart, the outrush of “blood and water” observed by John is further evidence of a cardiac rupture; for it is known that in the rare instances of death resulting from a breaking of any part of the wall of the heart, blood accumulates within the pericardium, and there undergoes a change by which the corpuscles separate as a partially clotted mass from the almost colorless, watery serum. . . . Great mental stress, poignant emotion either of grief or joy, and intense spiritual struggle are among the recognized causes of heart rupture.

The present writer believes that the Lord Jesus died of a broken heart. The psalmist sang in dolorous measure according to his inspired prevision of the Lord’s passion: “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. They gave

me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (Ps. 69:20, 21; see also 22:14).<sup>3</sup>

How important to know this, for Jesus asks each of his disciples to offer as a personal sacrifice the very things he suffered in Gethsemane and on the cross—a broken heart and a contrite spirit (see 3 Nephi 9:19–20). According to *Webster’s New World Dictionary*, College Edition (1966), a synonym for *contrite* is “crushed.”

Moments after Jesus breathed his last breath, the environment and atmosphere of his torturous, abusive, pitied, and ignominious Crucifixion changed abruptly and completely. Though his physical body died, his spirit body continued to live—as will each of ours—and Jesus entered the world of spirits. He did not go to a different planet in some far away place in the universe. Rather, Jesus passed through a veil into a different realm of existence right here on this earth. The spirit world is on this earth. President Brigham Young taught this concept in clarity,<sup>4</sup> as did Elder Parley P. Pratt. In fact, Elder Pratt also implied that the spirit worlds for other earths, like our own, are located on those other planets. Elder Pratt said:

As to its location, [the spirit world] is here on the very planet where we were born; or, in other words, the earth and other planets of a like sphere, have their inward or spiritual spheres, as well as their outward, or temporal.

The one is peopled by temporal tabernacles, and the other by spirits. A vail [*sic*] is drawn between the one sphere and the other, whereby all the objects in the spiritual sphere are rendered invisible to those in the temporal.<sup>5</sup>

The spirit world into which Jesus entered was a fundamentally and thoroughly different environment from the one he had just come from. Let us consider four aspects of comparison. First of all, as the prophet Alma declared “concerning the state of the soul between death and the resurrection” that “the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow” (Alma 40:11–12). How unlike the Crucifixion scene was this new condition or state of existence called paradise! The very essence of the former environment (the one at the site of the cross) was sorrow, suffering, excruciating pain, anguish, torture, and horror, while the essence of the latter was (and is) peace, rest, and joyful anticipation (see D&C 138:15).

Second, if there is a single word that might possibly capture the atmosphere that surrounded Jesus at Golgotha, as well as those attitudes about him that were so prevalent on the part of many Jews, perhaps the best word is *ignominy*, meaning shame, dishonor, disgrace, infamy, and contempt—all of which were directed at Jesus. Compare *that* setting with the one of the world of spirits, or at least

that portion where Jesus made his personal appearance. “There were gathered together in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just. . . . They were filled with joy and gladness, and were rejoicing together because the day of their deliverance was at hand. They were assembled awaiting the advent of the Son of God into the spirit world, to declare their redemption from the bands of death” (D&C 138:12, 15–16).

Third, the number of people at the cross who grasped the significance of Jesus’ life and death was very small—if there were any at all. I think the case could be made that even among the Apostles—all but one of whom had forsaken and fled from Jesus (see Matthew 26:56)—there was little real understanding of who Jesus was and what he was doing. As late as the morning of the Resurrection, John records that Peter and he did not know what to make of the empty tomb and missing body of Jesus, “for as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead” (John 20:9).

On the other hand, compare the language of Doctrine and Covenants 138 in describing those who waited for Jesus, the very God of heaven and earth, to make his appearance. Phrases are used such as “an innumerable company” and a “vast multitude” who were gathered together, “firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection, through the grace of God the Father and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ” (vv. 12, 14, 18). The picture painted in modern revelation is one of vast portions of the spirit world, “the hosts of the

dead, both small and great” (v. 11) abuzz with increasing excitement over and conversation about the physical death, atoning sacrifice, and spirit appearance of the Great Messiah.

They were not disappointed! He did come. As the revelation states,

While this vast multitude waited and conversed, rejoicing in the hour of their deliverance from the chains of death, the Son of God appeared, declaring liberty to the captives who had been faithful;

And there he preached to them the everlasting gospel, the doctrine of the resurrection and the redemption of mankind from the fall, and from individual sins on conditions of repentance. (D&C 138:18–19)

Surely, in the long history of our Heavenly Father’s great plan of happiness, few events have witnessed as tremendous an outpouring of rejoicing and exultation as the Savior’s appearance to the righteous dead in the world of spirits.

This leads us to our fourth point of comparison between the environment at Golgotha and the environment of the spirit world. The atmosphere at Golgotha was infused and suffused with brutality, coarseness, and wickedness. Crucifixion itself was a brutal and bloody business from start to finish. The Jewish and Roman leaders

who condemned Jesus to death, as well as the soldiers who carried out the sentence of execution, were brutal and bloody men. Moreover, the chief Apostle, Peter, had testified to the men of Judea that Jesus was crucified and slain by “wicked hands” (Acts 2:23).

Contrast the foregoing with the environment of the spirit world. The latter was filled with righteousness. Those who waited with joyful anticipation for our Lord’s advent were some of the best, most righteous souls that God the Father had created and caused to be placed on this earth. They were the noble and great ones of our pre-mortal existence.

Among the great and mighty ones who were assembled in this vast congregation of the righteous were Father Adam, the Ancient of Days and father of all,

And our glorious Mother Eve, with many of her faithful daughters who had lived through the ages and worshiped the true and living God.

Abel, the first martyr, was there, and his brother Seth, one of the mighty ones, who was in the express image of his father, Adam.

Noah, who gave warning of the flood; Shem, the great high priest; Abraham, the father of the faithful; Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, the great law-giver of Israel. (D&C 138:38–41)

Moreover, there were Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Elias, and Malachi (see vv. 42–46). “All these and many more, even the prophets who dwelt among the Nephites and testified of the coming of the Son of God, mingled in the vast assembly and waited for their deliverance” (v. 49).

What an amazing assembly this was. And what a glorious atmosphere prevailed. It must have been even more emotionally powerful than described in scripture, as our first parents, Adam and Eve, welcomed Jesus Christ into their midst: the very Son of God, but also one of their very own posterity, a member of *their* family, who had rescued and ransomed all the other members of their family—the entire human race.

Jesus’ appearance in the spirit world was the embodiment of freedom and redemption, and all the righteous spirits knew it. “For [all] the dead had looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage” (D&C 138:50). We usually speak of a portion of the spirit world as “spirit prison,” the place where the wicked spirits, as well as those yet unbaptized, dwell apart from the righteous spirits who are in paradise. And yet the truth is that the whole of the spirit world was a prison to all who resided there.

Even though the spirits of the righteous will be happy in paradise, they will not be—cannot be—truly and completely happy while a part of them is lying in the grave. In the language of the revelations of the Restoration, the spirit and the body are the soul of man. When inseparably connected, the spirit and the physical body can

receive a fulness of joy. When separated, they cannot receive a fulness of joy (D&C 88:15; 93:33; 138:17). Without their physical bodies, the spirits of all men and women “are in prison,” said President Brigham Young.<sup>6</sup>

Elder Melvin J. Ballard gave this explanation:

I grant you that the righteous dead will be at peace, but I tell you that when we go out of this life, leave this body, we will desire to do many things that we cannot do at all without the body. We will be seriously handicapped, and we will long for the body; we then will pray for the early reunion with our bodies. . . .

. . . We are sentencing ourselves to long periods of bondage, separating our spirits from our bodies, or we are shortening that period, according to the way in which we overcome and master ourselves [in mortality].<sup>7</sup>

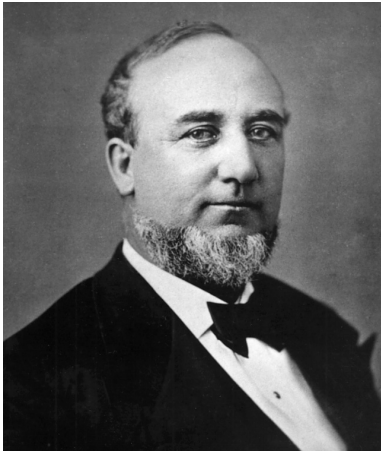
Thus, through his atoning sacrifice and subsequent resurrection, Jesus Christ opened the prison doors to the righteous as well as the wicked. He fulfilled Isaiah’s messianic prophecy, spoken more than seven hundred years earlier and which he quoted during his mortal ministry: “The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to

proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound” (Isaiah 61:1; see also Luke 4:16–20).

### WHAT THE SAVIOR DID

This leads us then to discuss the second focal point of the Savior’s spirit-world ministry—what he did and did *not* do while he was there. It is important to understand that after Jesus died, he did not immediately enter the physical presence of his father, our Father in Heaven. Perhaps a misunderstanding on this point arises from the language of Alma, who stated, “The spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body, yea, the spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life” (Alma 40:11). Several of the early apostles and prophets of this present dispensation have helped us to understand Alma’s language.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the clearest interpretation of Alma’s use of the phrase “taken home to that God who gave them life” was offered by President George Q. Cannon, counselor in the First Presidency for many years.

Alma, when he says that “the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body, . . . are taken home to that God who gave them life,” has the idea, doubtless, in his mind that our God is omnipresent—not in His own personality but through His minister, the Holy Spirit.



President George Q. Cannon  
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He does not intend to convey the idea that they are immediately ushered into the personal presence of God. He evidently uses that phrase in a qualified sense. Solomon . . . makes a similar statement: “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God

who gave it.” (Ecclesiastes 12:7.) The same idea is frequently expressed by the Latter-day Saints. In referring to a departed one it is often said that he has gone back to God, or he has gone “home to that God who gave him life.” Yet it would not be contended that the person who said this meant that the departed one had gone where God, the Father Himself is, in the sense in which the Savior meant when He spake to Mary.<sup>9</sup>

When Jesus arrived in the spirit world, he commenced a unique work, something that had never been done before. President Brigham Young declared, “Jesus was the first man that ever went to preach to the spirits in prison, holding the keys of the Gospel of

salvation to them. Those keys were delivered to him in the day and hour that he went into the spirit world, and with them he opened the door of salvation to the spirits in prison.”<sup>10</sup>

The Savior’s visit to the spirit world, and the commencement of his unique work among the dead, involved as much delegation of authority as did his ministry in mortality. President Joseph F. Smith saw for himself that Jesus Christ confined his visit to paradise and that, as holder of the keys of the work for the dead, he commissioned and organized the faithful spirits in paradise to visit the other spirits of the unbaptized, unrighteous, ungodly, unrepentant, disobedient, rebellious, and ignorant in order to proclaim liberty to them by teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. President Smith stated:

I perceived that the Lord went not in person among the wicked and disobedient who had rejected the truth, to teach them;

But behold, from among the righteous, he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men; and thus was the gospel preached to the dead. (D&C 138:29–30)

Jesus did not go in person to the wicked in the spirit world, nor to any who were unbaptized, which is the great determining factor that differentiates those in paradise from those in spirit prison.<sup>11</sup> Jesus did not, would not, reenter the environment from which he had just come in mortality (which is one reason I began by comparing the environments of Golgotha and Paradise.) Jesus would no longer stand among the wicked and rebellious. Rather, he organized a mission.

All of the ancients we have already mentioned by name, beginning with Adam and Eve, formed part of the missionary force organized to teach the gospel to those in spirit prison. They were delegated keys of power and authority to do so by the Savior. Just as none in mortality are sanctioned to go forth to preach the gospel or build up the Church without authorization (D&C 42:11), so none in the spirit world were sent forth without being given authority.

Such delegation by the Lord Jesus Christ implies the continuing operation of the priesthood in the world of spirits. “As in earth, so in the spirit world,” declared Elder Parley P. Pratt. “No person can enter into the privileges of the Gospel, until the keys are turned, and the Gospel opened by those in authority.”<sup>12</sup> Of the authorized ministers in the spirit world, President Joseph F. Smith further said, “They are there, having carried with them from here the holy Priesthood that they received under authority, and which was conferred upon them in the flesh.”<sup>13</sup> President Brigham Young observed that “when a person passes behind the vail [*sic*], he can . . . officiate in the spirit-world;

but when he is resurrected he officiates as a resurrected being, and not as a mortal being.”<sup>14</sup>

The Savior's work among the righteous dead in the spirit world, and his act of delegating authority to them so they could help others there, enlarges our picture of the operation of the priesthood in time and eternity. Truly, the priesthood is eternal. Its existence spans premortality, mortality, and the postmortal world. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, “The Priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years.”<sup>15</sup> Moreover, modern prophets have declared that righteous men did indeed hold the priesthood in our *premort* existence. President Joseph Fielding Smith presents us with this insightful declaration: “With regard to the holding of the priesthood in the preexistence, I will say that there was an organization there just as well as an organization here, and men there held authority. Men chosen to positions of trust in the spirit world held the priesthood.”<sup>16</sup> The foregoing is consistent with President Joseph F. Smith's panoramic vision and perspective found in Doctrine and Covenants 138, which also spanned premortality and the postmortal spirit world. Speaking of the missionaries and ministers of the gospel in the spirit world, he said: “I observed that they were also among the noble and great ones who were chosen in the beginning to be rulers in the Church of God. Even before they were born, they, with many others, received their first lessons in the world of

spirits and were prepared to come forth in the due time of the Lord to labor in his vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men” (D&C 138:55–56). President Joseph F. Smith also saw that the missionary work begun in the spirit world at the time Jesus inaugurated his spirit-prison mission continues in our own day by “the faithful elders of this dispensation” who have passed on (D&C 138:57).

Memories of my own father come flooding back to my mind when I read this portion of President Smith’s vision. My father was a member of the Seventy and a stake missionary at the time he passed away, a real force for missionary work in the area where we lived. Even at a young age, I could tell he felt genuine passion for the work and for his quorum. My father’s regular Sunday assignment was teaching a special Gospel Doctrine class to inmates at the nearby federal prison. I know he cherished that opportunity. I have thought since, and I believe it so, that he is again engaged in teaching prisoners, but prisoners of a different kind. Missionary work carries on in the postmortal spirit world.

Priesthood holders are not the only ones involved in this work among the dead. President Joseph F. Smith offered this truly profound and significant insight about sisters involved in the work of salvation in the spirit world:

Now, among all these millions of spirits that have lived on the earth and have passed away, from generation to

generation, since the beginning of the world, without the knowledge of the gospel—among them you may count that at least one-half are women. Who is going to preach the gospel to the women? Who is going to carry the testimony of Jesus Christ to the hearts of the women who have passed away without a knowledge of the gospel?



President Joseph F. Smith  
(Courtesy of Wikimedia.)

Well, to my mind, it is a simple thing. These good sisters who have been set apart, ordained to the work, called to it, authorized by the authority of the holy Priesthood to minister for their sex, in the House of God for the living and for the dead, will be fully authorized and empowered to preach the gospel and minister to the women while the elders and prophets are preaching it to the men. The things we experience here are typical of the things of God and the life beyond us. There is a great similarity between God's purposes as manifested here and his purposes as carried out in his presence and kingdom. Those

who are authorized to preach the gospel here and are appointed here to do that work will not be idle after they have passed away, but will continue to exercise the rights that they obtained here under the Priesthood of the Son of God to minister for the salvation of those who have died without a knowledge of the truth.<sup>17</sup>

Just as sisters in this life are called and authorized to preach the gospel on the earth, often working among other women, so sisters in the next life are called and authorized to be messengers of the Lord's gospel, ministering specifically among women. It will be remembered that President Smith made it a point of stating explicitly in his vision of the spirit world that he saw "our glorious Mother Eve, with many of her faithful daughters who had lived through the ages and worshiped the true and living God" (D&C 138:39). It is to be assumed that these were part of the Savior's "forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned . . . to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness" (D&C 138:30).

## CONCLUSION

Truly, the gospel is for all of our Heavenly Father's children—"black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God" (2 Nephi 26:33). In no place

or way do we see with greater clarity the fulfillment of this scripture than in the Savior's continuing ministry to the spirit world. The chief Apostle in the meridian dispensation, Peter, confirmed Nephi's statement about God's all-inclusive love and fairness when he explained how the Atonement applies to both the living and the dead and why Jesus went to the spirit world after his mortal mission was finished: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison. . . . For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter 3:18–19; 4:6).

These verses are quite remarkable. Many in the Christian community cannot fully explain them. But as Latter-day Saints, we can imagine quite easily what powerful visions of the spirit world Peter was privileged to see that enabled him to teach this doctrine so succinctly and with such power. His experience must have been akin to Joseph F. Smith's manifestation as recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 138.

Before the coming of Jesus to the world of spirits, those spirits could not be judged according to men in the flesh while living according to God in the spirit, because the gospel had not ever been preached to the dead. The great gulf that existed between paradise and spirit prison had not been bridged. Baptisms for the dead had not been performed. "Not until Christ had organized his missionary forces in

the world of spirits do we find references to the Saints practicing the ordinance of baptism for the dead (1 Cor. 15:29).<sup>18</sup> Jesus' visit to the spirit world changed the universe forever. Those "dead who had been confined in darkness *not knowing their fate*" could be set free.<sup>19</sup>

With the great gulf in the spirit world finally bridged after thousands of years of waiting on the part of all those who had died from Adam to Christ, Jesus was prepared to fulfill the next phase of the glorious and infinite Atonement—his Resurrection. But Jesus Christ's ministry to the spirit world is by itself a powerful testimony of God's perfect love and concern for all his children.

I am grateful for this profound knowledge of the spirit world, communicated to us through modern prophets. This full understanding can be found nowhere else except in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Because of this knowledge, death need not hold any fear for disciples of Jesus Christ. For the righteous, those who strive to live the gospel of faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, the spirit world will be a place of peace, rest, and security. President George Q. Cannon gave us the assurance that "Satan is bound as soon as the faithful spirit leaves this tabernacle of clay and goes to the other side of the veil. That spirit is emancipated from the power and thralldom and attacks of Satan. Satan can only afflict such in this life."<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, those that pass into the spirit world will find it to be a place of great reunion. Again, President Cannon stated, "How

delightful it is to contemplate the departure of those who have been faithful, as far as their knowledge permitted, to the truth which God has revealed! There is no sting nor gloom nor inconsolable sorrow about the departure of such persons. Holy angels are around their bedside to administer unto them. The Spirit of God rests down upon them, and His messengers are near them to introduce them to those who are on the other side of the veil.”<sup>21</sup>

President Joseph F. Smith added this thought: “What is more desirable than that we should meet with our fathers and our mothers, with our brethren and our sisters, with our wives and our children, with our beloved associates and kindred in the spirit world, knowing each other, identifying each other . . . by the associations that familiarize each to the other in mortal life? What do you want better than that?”<sup>22</sup>

Last, but not least, the spirit world will be a place of great learning to baptized disciples of Jesus Christ. Elder Orson Pratt of the Quorum of the Twelve spoke powerfully of the increased capacities of spirits in paradise to learn, grow intellectually, and increase in knowledge exponentially:

When I speak of the future state of man, and the situation of our spirits between death and the resurrection, I long for the experience and knowledge to be gained in that state, as well as this. We shall learn many more things

there; we need not suppose our five senses connect us with all the things of heaven, and earth, and eternity, and space; we need not think that we are conversant with all the elements of nature, through the medium of the senses God has given us here. Suppose He should give us a sixth sense, a seventh, an eighth, a ninth, or a fiftieth. All these different senses would convey to us new ideas, as much so as the senses of tasting, smelling, or seeing communicate different ideas from that of hearing.<sup>23</sup>

In sum, President Joseph F. Smith said of paradise, it is a place where the righteous can “expand in wisdom, where they have respite from all their troubles, and where care and sorrow [will] not annoy.”<sup>24</sup> Paradise will be a place where our spirit bodies will be free to think and act with renewed capacity, vigor, and enthusiasm that will prepare us for eternal life, which is made possible by the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

#### NOTES

1. Hugh Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 428.
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3. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 620–21.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: The

- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997), 279.
5. Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1855), 80.
  6. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854–86), 3:95.
  7. Melvin J. Ballard, "The Three Degrees of Glory," in *Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin J. Ballard*, ed. Bryant S. Hinckley (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1949), 240–42.
  8. See, for example, Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:368; and Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:332–33.
  9. *Gospel Truth: Discourses and Writings of President George Q. Cannon*, ed. Jerreld L. Newquist (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 57–58.
  10. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, 280.
  11. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56), 2:230.
  12. Parley P. Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:11.
  13. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 471.
  14. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:88–89.
  15. Joseph Smith, in *Journal of Discourses*, 6:237.
  16. Joseph Fielding Smith, in Conference Report, October 1966, 84.
  17. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 461.
  18. Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie, *The Life Beyond* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 51.
  19. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1958), 2:81.
  20. *Gospel Truth*, 61.
  21. *Gospel Truth*, 61.
  22. Joseph F. Smith, "The Resurrection," *Liahona: The Elders' Journal*, August 8, 1908, 178.
  23. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:247.
  24. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 448.

The doctrine of salvation for the dead . . . provides the perfect balance between justice and mercy. Without that balance—without that plan—God could neither be all loving and merciful nor perfectly fair and just.



(Courtesy of Toby Hudson.)