

RICHARD E. BENNETT

“IT IS FINISHED”:  
THE DIVINE ACCOMPLISHMENT  
OF THE CRUCIFIXION



Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. (Acts 2:23)<sup>1</sup>

**A**t this sacred Easter season of the year, between the Good Friday of Christ’s death and the Sunday of His Resurrection, it is fitting to meditate upon the life, mission, and particularly the death and sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is a most sacred topic, surely one of the mysteries of godliness, or as William W. Phelps’s oft-sung hymn puts it, “that sacred, holy offering, by man least understood.”<sup>2</sup> President Gordon B. Hinckley has said, “No member of this Church must ever forget the terrible price paid by our Redeemer,

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. . . the agony of Gethsemane, the bitter mockery of His trial, the vicious crown of thorns tearing at His flesh, . . . the terrifying pain as great nails pierced His hands and feet. . . . We cannot forget that. We must never forget it, for here our Savior, our Redeemer, the Son of God, gave Himself, a vicarious sacrifice for each of us.”<sup>3</sup> The great Protestant Reformer Martin Luther once said: “Whoever meditates thus upon God’s sufferings for a day, an hour, yea, for a quarter of an hour, we wish to say freely and publicly, that it is better than if he fasts a whole year, prays the Psalter every day, yea, than if he hears a hundred masses. For such a meditation changes a man’s character and almost as in baptism he is born again, anew.”<sup>4</sup>

The specific purpose of this chapter is to ponder on the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, to consider Gethsemane and the Crucifixion of the Son of God, and that to understand such divine drama was an ordained accomplishment. While everything about the life and death of Christ was foreordained and prepared “from the foundation of the world” (Moses 7:47)—as Pope Benedict XVI has said, “The Cross of Jesus is a cosmic event” and “Nothing is mere coincidence; everything that happens is contained in the Word of God and sustained by his divine plan”<sup>5</sup>—we will look only at the final chapter of a perfect, sinless life and show that Christ was not the hapless victim of evil circumstance but the supreme architect of a perfect Atonement.<sup>6</sup> It was, in the words of scripture, if not a miracle, then certainly a divine accomplishment, a “high commission to fulfill.”<sup>7</sup>

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The Crucifixion was an accomplishment in that from the Mount of Transfiguration to Golgotha, Christ left little, if anything, to chance. It was an accomplishment in that His Crucifixion fulfilled prophecy in every particular detail and occurred just as He taught and predicted it would occur. It was an accomplishment in that evil men, in exercising their agency to condemn the Son of God, were fully responsible for their own sins. As President Hinckley has written, “He loves us so much that He shed drops of blood in Gethsemane, then *permitted* evil and wicked men to take Him, to compel Him to carry the cross to Golgotha, to suffer beyond any power of description terrible pain when He was nailed to the cross, to be lifted up on the cross, and to die for each of us.”<sup>8</sup>

It was also an accomplishment in that Christ successfully took upon Himself the sins of all mankind, thereby obeying every word of His Father in Heaven. In the final week of Christ’s life, commonly referred to as the Passion Week, while men mocked and devils laughed, the master of deception was blinded by his own deceit. The central redeeming act of Christ’s mortal ministry and of man’s immortality and eternal life, made necessary because of Adam’s transgression, could no more have been left to chance than could the earth have been accidentally created. It was, in every way, a fulfillment of the plan of salvation as laid out before this world was created. As the Apostle Peter came to understand and express so poignantly, “Him, being delivered by the *determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” (Acts 2:23; emphasis added).

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Pondering upon such things is the very core of lasting personal testimony and conversion. Wrote the Apostle Paul, “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:23). And again, “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). Modern revelation indicates that one of the abiding gifts of the Holy Spirit is not only to “know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,” but also “*that he was crucified for the sins of the world*” (D&C 46:13; emphasis added). Indeed, the Doctrine and Covenants is replete with references to the Crucifixion and our understanding of it as Jesus bears witness anew of His long-ago sacrifice. It confirms repeatedly the fact that “he came into the world, even Jesus,” for this very moment, “to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness” (D&C 76:41). For, He said, “I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for the sins of the world, even as many as will believe on my name” (D&C 35:2).<sup>9</sup> And again to the Prophet Joseph F. Smith: “Redemption had been wrought through the sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross” (D&C 138:35).

### “AND SPAKE OF HIS DECEASE”

Some six months before His death, Moses and Elijah appeared as translated beings before Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. In Peter’s words, they heard the voice of God the Father there declare, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (2 Peter 1:17). Among the many

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other important things said and done on this majestic occasion, Moses and Elijah also “spake of his [Christ’s] decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:31). A moment of glorification, the Transfiguration was also a time of preparation and review of what the prophets of old had long said concerning Christ’s death and of what must inevitably transpire on Christ’s final walk to Calvary. Elder James E. Talmage has said of it, “We may safely assume that the time was devoted, in part at least, to the further instruction of the Twelve respecting the rapidly approaching consummation of the Savior’s mission on earth, the awful circumstances of which the apostles were loath to believe possible.”<sup>10</sup> Also, as Elder David B. Haight has more recently said, “He went up to prepare for His coming death. He took His three apostles with Him in the belief that they, after having seen His glory—the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father—might be fortified, that their faith might be strengthened to prepare them for the insults and humiliating events which were to follow.”<sup>11</sup>

And all along the way, He taught His disciples in all of the particulars pertaining to His pending demise, though He was careful not to agitate them to the point of interfering with His mission. The very next day after the Transfiguration, “when they were come down from the hill,” He said to His disciples, “Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not” (Luke 9:37, 44–45).<sup>12</sup>

And with ever-increasing clarity as the time of His death drew closer, Christ continued to prophesy and expound

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upon these things to followers who could not, or would not, understand. Mark indicates, “He taught his disciples, and said unto them, the Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him” (Mark 9:31–32). While going up to Jerusalem, Jesus “took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again” (Mark 10:32–34). Matthew further points out another essential detail—that He knew beforehand and taught He “shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes” (Matthew 20:18). Thus, Christ knew well the culture, environment, and details pertaining to His pending death.

### “WHEN IT TESTIFIED BEFOREHAND THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST”

One also wonders if His disciples comprehended the plenitude of prophecies that He was about to fulfill. Only later did Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, come to realize the magnitude of what had happened as he declared, “Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it

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testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Peter 1:10–11).

The Crucifixion, and every lamentable element leading up to it, would occur in such a way as to fulfill a multitude of ancient prophecies. Christ, the God of the Old Testament, knew long before His coming what manner of death He would suffer; He revealed such to His ancient prophets. Enoch saw in a vision the ignominious manner of Christ’s Crucifixion, for Jehovah said unto Enoch: “Look,” and Enoch “beheld the Son of Man lifted up on the cross, after the manner of men” (Moses 7:55). Enoch also said, “The Righteous is lifted up, and the Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world; and through faith I am in the bosom of the Father” (Moses 7:47).

Nephi, a Book of Mormon prophet, understood not only how the Messiah would be crucified but also who would be responsible. “It must needs be expedient,” Nephi prophesied, “that Christ . . . should come among the Jews, among those who are the more wicked part of the world; and they shall crucify him—for thus it behooveth our God, and there is none other nation on earth that would crucify their God” (2 Nephi 10:3).<sup>13</sup> The Apostle Paul likewise wrote of Christ and His death: “Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Corinthians 2:8).

Nephi also saw the many degrading details of the events leading up to the Crucifixion. “And the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught; wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it. . . . And the God of our fathers

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. . . yieldeth himself . . . into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up . . . and to be crucified . . . and to be buried in a sepulchre” (1 Nephi 19:9–10). In the Old Testament, Isaiah prophesied as follows: “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed . . . and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:5–6; see Mosiah 14:5–8).

And in one of the great messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, the Psalmist captured many of the final details attending Christ’s death on Calvary:

But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men,  
and despised of the people.

All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot  
out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him:  
let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. . . .

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 my bowels.

My strength is dried up like a potsherd. . . . They  
pierced my hands and my feet. . . . They look and stare  
upon me.

They part my garments among them, and cast lots  
upon my vesture. (Psalms 22:6–8, 14–18)

David even recorded some of the very words Christ would utter from the cross: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1; see also Matthew 27:46). As one scholar has so aptly phrased it, “None of



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this suffering was unforeseen; it was all part of the plan of salvation from before the world was created.”<sup>14</sup>

If the Apostles could scarcely comprehend these things beforehand, the Savior’s enemies were even more resolutely blind to them. Peter was among the very first to see the awful irony that only after Christ’s death, and only after he, Peter, had received the gift of the Holy Ghost, whose mission it is to “teach . . . all things” and to “bring all things to [our] remembrance,” did Peter comprehend fully both who his master really was, what Christ had accomplished, and by what powerful means (John 14:26). “For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed,” a much wiser Peter later prayed to his Father in Heaven, “the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done” (Acts 4:27–28). Clarifying still further, Peter went on to explain to the Jewish leaders their unwitting participation. “And now, brethren, I wot [know] that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled” (Acts 3:17–18). In other words, Peter was boldly declaring to them that in their very act of denying and crucifying Christ, they were exercising their agency to condemn themselves while fulfilling prophecy. In modern scripture, Christ revealed again this truth. For “the Comforter . . . manifesteth that Jesus was crucified by sinful men for the sins of the world, yea, for the remission of sins unto the contrite heart” (D&C 21:9). While preaching in Antioch, the Apostle Paul demonstrated that he also understood these truths: “For they that dwell at Jerusalem,

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and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, *they have fulfilled them in condemning him*. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre” (Acts 13:27–29; emphasis added). Likewise Nephi bore record of this terrible truth of wickedness fulfilling righteousness when he wrote, “But because of priestcrafts and iniquities, they at Jerusalem will stiffen their necks against him, that he be crucified” (2 Nephi 10:5).

Clearly Christ was master of His own destiny. Knowing all things from the beginning, He knew He would have to enter into Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover; that so great an uproar must erupt in Jerusalem as to cause Roman interference; that Satan would enter into Judas, one of His own, who would then betray Him (see Luke 22:3); that evil men, full of jealousy and rage, envy and deceit, would betray and condemn Him and in so doing bring down judgment upon their heads; that He must die in full public view, at the hands of Roman guards outside the city and before the Passover upon a cross between two thieves; and finally, that He would die in such a way as to mask the fact that He gave his life, though it would appear to all that it was taken from Him.

## THE ROAD TO CALVARY

How, then, would all such things be accomplished? Surely Christ knew that He would not escape His final

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entry into Jerusalem and that men would seek His life at almost every turn. The raising of Lazarus from the dead in Bethany just before Christ’s coming to Jerusalem was a miracle bound to stir up the countryside, or as the scriptures put it, “The people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle” (John 12:18). Since Lazarus’s death was well known, his return from the dead led many faithful Jews to worship Christ while driving the Pharisees to jealousy. “Behold, the world is gone after him,” they bitterly complained (John 12:19). Such attention would lead only to jealousy on the part of those Jewish leaders who “from that day forth . . . took counsel together for to put him to death” (John 11:53)—not only Christ but Lazarus as well (see John 12:10)—so as to blunt the rising tide of Jewish belief in the Man of Nazareth. Murder was ever in their hearts, and they sought every which way to accomplish their ends!

Six days before the Passover, as Jesus entered the city, “very great” and adoring crowds spread branches of palm trees in His pathway and cried, “Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matthew 21:8; John 12:13). Even in this moment of worship, Christ “[knew] all things that should come upon him” (John 18:4) and was heard to say, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32).

Once inside the city walls, Christ pursued a deliberately powerful, majestic course of action aimed at fulfilling His objectives. He consecrated His Father’s house, the temple, by driving out the money changers (see Matthew 21:12) and by healing within it the blind and the lame, both of

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which actions caused an uproar of praise and adoration on the one hand and criticism and derision on the other. For when the chief priests saw it, “they were sore displeased” (Matthew 21:15). Then turning His attention to Pharisees, Sadducees, and the other Jewish leaders, in both parable and forthright language, He boldly castigated them time and time again for their spiritual blindness, wickedness, and hypocrisy. “But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven . . . ye devour widows’ houses . . . and have omitted the weightier matters of the law. . . . ye are like unto whited sepulchres. . . . Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matthew 23:13–14, 23, 27, 33). Such deserved condemnations, Jesus well knew, would hardly endear Him to those men increasingly desperate to “lay hands on him” and to put Him away; nevertheless, they “feared” doing so only because of the adoring multitude (Matthew 21:46).

Not content merely to chastise the corrupt Jewish leaders, Christ then charged them, or at least their ancestors, with the ancient murder of Zacharias, son of Barachias, “whom ye slew between the temple and the altar” (Matthew 23:35).<sup>15</sup> Stunned by His courage, stung by His accusations, and fearful that their grip on power was in terrible jeopardy, the “chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people” assembled at the palace of Caiaphas “and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty [cunning] and kill him” (Matthew 26:3–4).

Much has been written on all sides about God’s foreknowledge of what these evil men would do. Was

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God the author of evil? Did He originate their sin and absolve them in the doing? Were they predestined to do the will of Satan? It seems clear that God’s foreknowledge could not deprive man of his responsibility. As Matthew recorded, “Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” (Matthew 18:7). No amount of prophecy, no amount of planning, and no amount of God’s foreknowledge could absolve that terrible sin of crucifying the Savior of the world. Only He could do that. Instead of being the author of sin, Christ is the finisher of our redemption.

Meanwhile Christ set forth on another, much quieter course of action—the Last Supper, in which He instituted the sacrament to replace forever the old Passover: “And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you” (Luke 22:19). When asked by His disciples where they should gather for this, their last meeting together, Jesus directed Peter and John to go into the city and “there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him” and “say unto the goodman . . . Where is the guest chamber . . . ? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished” (Luke 22:10–12). It is humbling to behold how in both this and the earlier obtaining of the colt or ass upon which He rode into the city, Christ knew precisely how to accomplish His designs and how to act upon the agency of men. These small acts, both prophecies fulfilled, well show that if He could foresee and accomplish such little things,

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Christ could not have found anything pertaining to His mission beyond His grasp.

In His great intercessory prayers offered first at the Last Supper and later in Gethsemane, where He bled from every pore for the sins of all mankind, Christ spoke to His Father in Heaven in ways and of truths that are beyond mortal comprehension. One may grasp the fact that here, in a moment of agony when an angel appeared to render Him comfort, He wondered if this cup could be removed from Him: “Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). There is no stronger witness of Christ’s willing obedience to the Father’s will than Gethsemane and the cross. It appears, moreover, that Christ understood He had accomplished much of what He had been reminded of on the Mount of Transfiguration and that He was in the throes of fulfilling the mission of His life: “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:4–5).<sup>16</sup>

Any effort to artificially separate Gethsemane from the Crucifixion and from the subsequent Resurrection is futile. Christ’s sacrifice and Atonement encompassed all three. As Elder McConkie aptly put it, “That which began in Gethsemane was finished on the cross and crowned in the resurrection.”<sup>17</sup>

Then from Gethsemane to the cross: His betrayal, the uproar before Pilate, His appearance before Herod and return to Pilate, the agitation of the crowds to “Crucify him!” Pilate’s reluctant decree to release the murderer Barabbas, the tortuous walk to Golgotha, the casting of lots

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for His robe, the driving of the nails into His hands and feet, and His being lifted up for all to see—all show that all these things were done to fulfill prophecy, to condemn unrighteousness, and to accomplish His death in the way He alone determined. For it was critical in the plan of heaven that Christ not be murdered on the sly, out of the way in a dark corner or blind alley, for the very fact that He could not be killed without His consent. His life was His to give, not one to be taken. While the scriptures do attest that He was “slain,” His death, after six hours upon the cross, came only with His consent (see Luke 9:22; Acts 13:28; 1 Nephi 10:11). Christ’s death, as President Joseph Fielding Smith has indicated, was “a voluntary act,” not a murder but rather a willing sacrifice: “I lay down my life for the sheep . . . that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down. . . . This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10: 15, 17–18).<sup>18</sup>

Both prophecy and God’s future purposes were fulfilled in the very method of the Crucifixion. The acts of pounding nails or spikes into the flesh of His hands and feet and piercing His side left wounds which will stand as lasting tokens of His death and Resurrection. Zechariah prophesied, “What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends” (Zechariah 13:6). In this dispensation, Christ revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith how such wounds will yet play a part in Christ’s millennial return: “Then shall they know that I am the Lord; for I will say unto them: These wounds are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends” (D&C 45:52).<sup>19</sup>

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In excruciating agony, alone upon the cross, stripped of all dignity and apparent power, and suffering not for Himself but for all mankind, Christ knew “that all things were now accomplished” (John 19:28). He then prayed to His Father, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). As John records, the Lord’s dying words were, “It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost” (John 19:30). To the amazement of the Roman guards below who were accustomed to seeing men suffer for several hours, if not days, Christ died of His own volition. “The actual death of Jesus,” wrote Talmage, “appeared to all who were present to be a miracle, as in fact it was.”<sup>20</sup> Eliza R. Snow has written in her beautiful hymn “Behold, The Great Redeemer Die”:

He died, and at the awful sight  
The sun in shame withdrew its light!  
Earth trembled, and all nature sighed,  
In dread response, A God has died.<sup>21</sup>

One would grossly err in reducing the Crucifixion to the simple equation of prophecy fulfilled and promises realized. Though all this is true, it was infinitely removed from a mere mechanical or clever culmination. The enormous sinfulness of the act, Christ’s incomprehensible suffering, and the very death of God defy all understanding. Elder Talmage writes: “It seems, that in addition to the fearful suffering incident to crucifixion, the agony of Gethsemane had recurred, intensified beyond human power to endure. In that bitterest hour the dying Christ was alone, alone in most terrible reality. That the supreme sacrifice of the Son might be consummated in all its fulness,



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the Father seems to have withdrawn the support of His immediate Presence, leaving to the Savior of men the glory of complete victory over the forces of sin and death.”<sup>22</sup> The New Testament speaks of an earthquake (see Matthew 27:54) and three hours of gross darkness in Palestine. The Book of Mormon tells of three days of thick darkness and terrible destructions upon all the face of the land in the Americas (see 3 Nephi 8:20). Enoch prophesied that upon Christ’s death “the heavens were veiled; and all the creations of God mourned; and the earth groaned” (Moses 7:56). The prophet Zenos also prophesied, “And the rocks of the earth must rend; and because of the groanings of the earth, many of the kings of the isles of the sea shall be wrought upon by the Spirit of God, to exclaim: The God of nature suffers” (1 Nephi 19:12). Christ’s death upon the cross triggered frightening natural catastrophes, especially on the American continent and on the isles of the sea, and may stand as the most frightful moment of all time.

Our purpose has been to show that in the walk from the Mount of Transfiguration through Gethsemane and finally to Golgotha, Christ left nothing to chance. He was careful to prepare His disciples for that which must occur. He was careful to fulfill all prophecy. He was careful in allowing evil men to work their wrath upon Him. And He was careful that His death came as a sacrifice. In all this, He accomplished all that His Heavenly Father desired of Him.

Just as Jesus Christ took upon Himself the sins of all mankind, so must every accountable human being take upon himself or herself His sacrifice. The Crucifixion is not just a spectacle to behold on our way out of Jerusalem or a

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mere historical fact to pore over and analyze. Ultimately, it must become an integral, if not the essential, experience of our lives. We may live because He died and was resurrected on the third day. His Atonement is as intimate as it is infinite, as personal as it is universal.<sup>23</sup> Though it is not part of our experienced memory, it must ever be engraved upon our minds and hearts and the very center of our souls.

### NOTES

1. The author wishes to thank Chontal Green and Arran Wytinck for their very capable assistance in researching materials for this chapter.
2. "O God the Eternal Father," *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 175.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Symbol of Our Faith," *Ensign*, April 2005, 4.
4. Martin Luther, "The True and the False View of Christ's Sufferings," in *Sermons of Martin Luther*, ed. John Nicholas Lenker (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 188.
5. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, "Way of the Cross," (mediations and prayers given at the Good Friday 2005 celebration of the Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff, Presented March 22, 2005), <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com>.
6. The Reverend Robert C. Harbach has said it very well: "God is never put into a predicament; and the Cross was no afterthought, suddenly brought in to cope with an unforeseen difficulty. Nor was the death of Christ a calamity which calls for man's sympathy and pity.

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Neither was his death a mere experiment, uncertain in its results. . . . It was perfectly planned in the eternal purpose and counsel of the sovereign God. . . . Christ was not a victim of circumstances” (Robert C. Harbach, “Christ’s Predetermined Death,” in *Reformed Witness* 8, no. 4 [April 2000], <http://www.hopeprc.org/reformedwitness/2000/RW200004.htm>).

7. “Behold, The Great Redeemer Die,” *Hymns*, no. 191.
8. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 29; emphasis added.
9. See D&C 20:23; 21:9; 45:52; 46:13; 53:2; 54:1. It may be surprising to some how often Christ refers to His Crucifixion in modern revelation.
10. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 370.
11. David B. Haight, “We Beheld His Glory,” *Ensign*, May 1977, 7. Elder Haight says further: “Though difficult for us to understand, Jesus himself must have been strengthened and sustained by Moses and Elijah to prepare Him for the suffering and agony ahead for Him in working out the infinite and eternal atonement of all mankind.”
12. Mark tells us that Christ had been teaching the same to His disciples even before the Mount of Transfiguration experience (see Mark 8:31).
13. It should be understood that these and other scriptures are condemning of the Jewish leaders, not the Jewish people generally. “The primary instigators of the plot to kill the Savior were the Jewish *religious leaders* . . . not the Jewish people as a whole, and not even all of the leaders, were the ones who plotted Jesus’ death” (Gerald N. Lund, *Jesus Christ, Key to the Plan of Salvation* [Salt Lake City:

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Deseret Book, 1991], 31–32). Further to this point, Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written: “We must not generalize to the point of assuming there were none among the Jews who knew and understood the mission and ministry of the Anointed One. . . . [He] was known and recognized and worshipped by many of his Jewish kinsmen while he yet dwelt among them. . . . It was Jewish converts . . . who welcomed crucifixion and death rather than bring dishonor to the Messianic name that they as Christians chose to bear. Whatever we may say of the Messianic hopes and knowledge of the generality of the Jews, the basic reality remains unchanged that there were those [Jews] who believed” (Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981], 1:46–47).

14. Paul Y. Hoskisson, “The Witness for Christ in Psalm 22” in *Covenants, Prophecies and Hymns of the Old Testament: The 30th Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001), 291. Elder Bruce R. McConkie, a careful student of all these things, has written: “We cannot believe that all these sayings—given as allusions, as similitudes, and in plain words—constituted a tithe, or a hundredth, or a thousandth part of what the Blessed One said of his coming death and crucifixion and of his resurrection on the third day. Nor can we think that the people generally were unaware of his teachings; friends and foes alike had fixed in their minds that such was his announced course. That few truly envisioned the import and glory of it all, there is no doubt” (*Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4:11).

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15. It is probable that Jesus was referring to the murder of Zacharias mentioned in 2 Chronicles 24:20–22—the last murder mentioned in the Old Testament. Joseph Smith, in referring to this episode, condemned the Jewish leaders further for not teaching the truth far sooner. “Hence as they possessed greater privileges than any other generation, not only pertaining to themselves, but to their dead, their sin was greater, as they not only neglected their own salvation but that of their progenitors” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], 222–23).
16. “Gethsemane,” in the words of Vaughn J. Featherstone, “was the most severe experience of pain, suffering, and mental agony ever experienced. The demands physically, mentally, and spiritually were incomparable to any ever known in eternity” (*The Incomparable Christ: Our Master and Model* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995], 80).
17. McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 224. While many Latter-day Saints tend to focus more on Christ’s suffering in the garden of Gethsemane than they do on His crucifixion on Calvary, apostles old and new have pointed to the inseparability of the two in the accomplishment of Christ’s perfect Atonement. To emphasize one at the expense of the other is to do a doctrinal disservice. Robert L. Millet has recently written: “We seem to have begun to place a greater stress upon Gethsemane than upon the cross. It is difficult to define exactly when this began to occur, although President Joseph Fielding Smith seems to have formalized this emphasis more than anyone. That it did occur is obvious to most of us who were raised in the Church; we were taught that Gethsemane, not the

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cross, was where Jesus suffered for our sins and that as horrendous as would have been the pain of Golgotha, yet the suffering in Gethsemane was greater and more far-reaching. As time has passed, however, the leaders of the Church have begun to speak of the importance of both Gethsemane and the cross to emphasize that what began in Gethsemane was completed in Golgotha” (Robert L. Millet, “Where Did the Cross Go?” unpublished manuscript to Religious Education faculty, September 16, 2005, 16). Gerald N. Lund has further said of this: “We cannot possibly argue which portion of Christ’s ministry is the most significant, for each aspect of his mission is an integral part of the whole design. It would be safe to say, however, that the events connected with the Last Supper, the Garden of Gethsemane, his arrest and trial, his crucifixion, and his resurrection were the culminating events of his ministry. From the day of his birth and through every step of his ministry, his face was set toward Jerusalem, the cross, and the empty tomb” (*Jesus Christ, Key to the Plan of Salvation*, 29–30).

18. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), 1:127.
19. The Lamb of God would also have to be sacrificed in perfect similitude to animal sacrifices that had from Adam’s day for centuries to follow characterized the atonement offering in the tabernacles of ancient Israel. A perfect male lamb, without blemish, would have to be sacrificed with no bones broken. Said the Lord: “And he gave unto them [Adam and Eve] commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer

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the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord. . . . And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth” (Moses 5:5, 7); see also Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:22–23.

20. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 663.
21. “Behold, The Great Redeemer Die,” *Hymns*, no. 191.
22. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 661; see also McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 4:230.
23. See Merrill J. Bateman, “The Power to Heal from Within,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 14.

