

“Our Savior” Transcript
Lecture 10, Beholding Salvation
Gethsemane and the Trial
Eric D. Huntsman

Introduction

I'd like to welcome you all here this evening. Thank you very much for returning for our next lecture in this ongoing series. This evening we are favored to hear from Dr. Eric Huntsman. By way of introduction, I'd like to tell you a little bit about him. Dr. Huntsman is Assistant Professor of Ancient Scripture here at BYU. He received his BA degree in classical Greek and Latin from BYU. He has a Master of Arts degree and Ancient History obtained from the University of Pennsylvania, and his Ph.D. in Ancient History also from the University of Pennsylvania. He has written extensively and specifically, the most recently, I think together with colleagues Richard Holzapfel and Thomas Wayment, he has *coauthored Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament: An Illustrative Reference for Latter-day Saints* published by Deseret Book last year. He served a mission for the LDS church in Thailand, Bangkok Mission and, more interestingly perhaps for us this evening, he's currently a member of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, so we trust he's in good voice. His areas of expertise are New Testament studies, particularly Johannine writings, Pauline epistles, and the Luke-Acts. He is also interested in Women in Classical Antiquity. Tonight Dr. Huntsman's talk is on "Gethsemane and the Trial." Dr. Huntsman.

Gethsemane

Good evening. As we know from all four of the Gospels, following the Last Supper, Jesus and his disciples left Jerusalem, went to cross the Kidron Valley to the western slope of the Mount of Olives. Although the term "disciple" generally is synonymous with the twelve in the Gospels, it can include a wider group, so we know that at least the eleven—the Twelve minus Judas—were with Jesus, although conceivably others of His close, intimate friends were with him as well. It is interesting, following the account in the gospel of John, that shortly after John 14 Jesus said, "Arise, let us go hence." Some of the Last Supper discourses, as they're called, particularly John 15 where he talked about he was the tree vine, might have been delivered as the group walked under the full moon of Passover to the Mount of Olives. It's significant to me that some of these discourses were delivered in transit because John 17, the Great Intercessory Prayer or the Great High Priestly Prayers it is sometimes called, would have been delivered as Jesus was approaching one of these most critical moments of His mission.

As you know, the Intercessory Prayer ends with a plea that all believers in Christ may be one with God and Jesus as Jesus is one with the Father. When we consider the literal meaning of the word "atonement," at-one-ment, what subsequently begins in Gethsemane and continues throughout the Passion, culminating on Calvary and in the Garden Tomb, is an answer to that prayer as Jesus worked this great mystery of the Atonement.

Now the Gospels call the site of Jesus' experience that night, different things. We are told in Matthew and Mark that He went to a place, the term in Greek is *chōrion*, meaning a plot of ground, which was called "Gethsemane" in Hebrew or Aramaic and means, "the place of the olive press." Interestingly Luke doesn't call it anything at all: he simply recorded that Jesus and

his disciples went to the Mount of Olives to “the place,” or *topos*, suggesting that it was a place that was well-known either to Jesus and His disciples, to the original audience, or perhaps to Luke’s reading audience. John’s is the account that tells us that it was a garden, the term connoting the idea of a walled garden, a private place.

As we enter the Garden of Gethsemane, it’s interesting to consider how the four Gospel accounts emphasize different aspects of what occurred there. Matthew and Mark set the scene, noting that he entered the garden and began to pray. Luke adds one detail absent in Mark and Matthew, namely that Jesus prayed that the disciples would not enter into temptation. Interestingly the term used here, *peirasomos*, can also mean “trial” or “time of trial,” perhaps suggesting that Jesus prayed that his disciples would not be captured or arrested that evening and then be tried as indeed He would be tried the next day. Matthew and Mark alone tell us that at this moment Jesus’ soul began to be sorrowful. He left some of the disciples further out and took his intimate companions, Peter, James, and John with Him a bit further, where again we are told that His soul became very heavy. As Mark 14:33 described it, he “began to be sore amazed.” The Greek term here *ekthambeomai*, connotes the idea of a being shocked or perplexed.

Elder Maxwell described this aspect of Jesus’ experience in his usual poetic terms, observing that Jesus, although he cognitively understood all things through the Spirit and as Jehovah knew what was going to happen, nevertheless had to experience it. As a result of what Brother Maxwell called the “awful arithmetic of the Atonement,” He was shocked. I refer you to Alma 7:13 where Alma said to the people of Gideon, “Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh.” The three Synoptics, Mark and Matthew and this time with Luke, noted that Jesus prayed that the cup would pass from Him, that whatever the ordeal was that He was about to experience would be something that He would not need to undergo. Interestingly enough, Gentile Christianity in the succeeding century was a bit embarrassed by this plea. In classical philosophy, the wise man is never afraid of death, never afraid of suffering. Socrates, for instance, took the cup of hemlock without any fear, and so Gentile Christians were a little embarrassed that for some reason their Lord, the Son of God, might be overwhelmed. I don’t think Socrates ever imagined what it would be like to bear the sins and pains of the universe, however, so this clearly was not a fair comparison.

Interestingly enough, the most significant parts of the experience that took place are not recorded in the gospel of John. This is surprising, since John was one who was closest to the event, what we could call a “near witnesses” of the experience at Gethsemane. Matthew was presumably a little further off, but still nearby. Mark, was not present, although some have tried to associate him with the young man who, at the time of the later arrest of Jesus here in Gethsemane, fled the scene wrapped in a linen cloth. While probably not present, Mark’s account was likely the earliest and perhaps based upon the testimony of Peter, yet together with Matthew, Mark wrote nothing about the details of what occurred to Jesus in Gethsemane other than Jesus’ plea that the cup might pass. Rather it was Luke, the assumed Gentile author who probably was converted long after these events, who gives us what are perhaps the most salient details of this experience.

I have reflected often why John—who is otherwise the most theological Gospel author and the one who seems to understand Jesus’ divine nature better than any other—omitted the Garden of Gethsemane experience. In fact the whole Gethsemane incident is summarized in one verse, John 18:1: Jesus and His disciples arrive at the Garden in verse 1, and in verse 2 Judas arrives and betrays Him and He is arrested. Nothing is discussed in the Gospel of John. This is not the time and the place to discuss Johanna and theology, but probably this omission exists

because this Gospel focuses so strongly on the cross as the culminating act of the Atonement that John doesn't want to be distracted from this, although it is also possible that perhaps the original text of John did include great detail of this experience. Was this perhaps a plain and precious part that was lost?

The following passages in Luke are the only surviving record that discusses what actually happened to Jesus after he prayed the cup could pass but then admitted or acknowledged that he would let His Father's will be done. Interestingly enough, these very verses are debated by textual critics. In the oldest manuscripts—the Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of Luke—verses 43 and 44 are missing: these are the verses that discuss Jesus' suffering in great agony, His needing an angel to come strengthen Him, and His sweating blood because of the ordeal. While some biblical scholars suggest that these passages—since they're not in the early manuscripts—were added later, some noted scholars think that perhaps they were taken out because early on because Christians could not conceive of a divine being, the Son of God, suffering or needing any kind of help.

Let's take a few moments and just look at these two verses and see how they stand with Restoration scripture, which do indeed confirm that these verses must have been part of the original text. Here I am referring to Mosiah 3:7 and Doctrine and Covenants 19:16–19, which we'll discuss in a moment. Luke 22:43 says that an angel appeared to strengthen Jesus. Nothing in scripture identifies this being, but as many of you know, Elder McConkie was of the opinion in his last testimony in April of 1985 that this angel might indeed have been the archangel Michael. Elder McConkie said, "We know that an angel came from the courts of glory to strengthen Jesus and His ordeal and we suppose it might have been mighty Michael who foremost as Adam fell that mortal man might be." Although this is but an opinion, it is an Apostolic opinion and one that I suggest that we take with some degree of consideration as it is in perfect harmony with another apostle, Paul, who in 1st Corinthians 15:21–22 wrote, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Andrew Skinner of our faculty has written of the Savior's Atoning work in his book *Gethsemane*, directly linking it to Adam's transgression which brought about the fall of man: "Who better than Adam to aid and assist the Savior during his time of extreme distress than he whose actions have brought about mortality? Who better to thank the Savior for paying the debt that his actions had introduced than Adam himself?" Building perhaps on what Brother Skinner has said, I would suggest once again looking at what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15. What beautiful symmetry is revealed in the fact that the person who fell and introduced sin and death into the world might have been there, somehow representing each of us, somehow symbolically transferring that to Jesus.

In verse 44 we have the passage of Jesus' suffering and sweating, as it were, blood. Let's take that verse in two parts. The first half of verse 44 reads, "And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly:" The word *agonia* in Greek connotes apprehensiveness of mind, especially when faced with impending ills, distress, or anguish. It actually comes from the Greek term, *agōn*, which means "contest" or "game." Think, if you will, of the ancient Olympic games. It is what an athlete felt before the great race, before the competition—in my case before giving a lecture at the "Beholding Salvation" Series. One scholar, Raymond Brown, a great Johannine scholar but also an expert on all of the Gospels, tried to understand what Jesus may have been experiencing and he wrote the following in his great work, *The Death of the Messiah*:

The Greek *agonia* often meant the kind of agony that a runner in an athletic contest experienced just before the start. *Agōn* originally meant the place of an athletic contest and then the contest itself. An athletic parallel offers an explanation for the profuse sweat that follows. The runner is tense up to the beginning of the trial and sweat brakes out all over his body. In such an interpretation, the *peirasmōs*, or great trial, which Jesus now knowingly will enter, resembles an athletic contest.

This is wonderfully interesting, and it reflects the sectarian Christian view that what happened in Gethsemane with Jesus feeling apprehension for what was going to happen the next day: the Passion, the suffering at the hands of the Jewish guard and the Roman soldiers and the Crucifixion. It's wonderfully interesting exegesis—that is to say explication of the text from a limited perspective—but what it fails to understand is the full depth of what Jesus was beginning to feel at that very moment.

The rest of 44 says, “And his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Now in antiquity there was a lot of discussion about what this meant. In Greek the syntax or sentence structure is actually ambiguous. Does the phrase mean that his sweat was falling like blood falls? Is it an adverbial expression or was it adjectival, that is to say, is it describing what the sweat was? The sweat was dripping and it was blood. Now for us the answer is clear. We have Restoration scripture which explains what went on, but many of our Christian compatriots have been floundering on this issue. Those who do think it is adjectival note that there are medical conditions that could account for this. For instance, there is a phenomenon called hematuria, which literally means “dripping blood,” in which a body under extreme duress might suffer capillary bursts throughout the skin, allowing blood to mix in the sweat glands with perspiration, in which case there would be notional amounts of blood in the sweat. As a result, Jesus suffered to such an extent that his body was physically affected by it.

The imagery, of course, is very powerful indeed. Olives, when they are first crushed, actually produce a mash that, when squeezed, further emits a dark brown or reddish-brown fluid. Later, when clarified, it becomes the familiar amber color that we expect from olives, but during the moment of crushing it can, in fact, look much like blood.

Back to this issue of what actually occurred at this moment, we as Latter-day Saints have a unique and wonderful understanding of what happened. This does not mean that other Christians do not know that Jesus suffered here, even if they may not understand the full implications. I was interested to review that the Roman Catholic tradition, in which one of the five sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary is “the suffering in the Garden.” Our Christian friends of other denominations know that Jesus suffered, but they don't understand why this suffering caused Him to sweat bloody sweat, so I'd like to leave the Gospel accounts for a moment and look at Restoration scripture that confirms that these verses in Luke were indeed original to the text or at least that they are teaching true doctrine that clarifies what is meant by Jesus' suffering.

Let's turn first to Mosiah 3:7. “And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people.” In Alma 7, the second half of verse 12 and the entire verse of 13, “And he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to [his] infirmities.” I love that word “succor.” It is rather archaic English, but it actually comes from a Latin word, *succuro*, which means “run to help,” not just to help His people but run eagerly to

help them. “Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance.” With these verses in mind, I respectively disagree with Father Raymond Brown. The *agonia* was not merely in anticipation of suffering that would happen, it was suffering that actually occurred, in some way incomprehensible to us, as Jesus actually took upon himself the weight, not only of our sins, but as Alma tells us in one of the great christological passages of the Book of Mormon, our infirmities, our weaknesses, our sicknesses, our sorrows.

As Latter-day Saints we understand that the Atonement began in Gethsemane as He took upon Himself all of these burdens. Now we tend to stress redemption from sin: He took upon Himself our sins and suffered for them in our place, but how wonderful it is to know that He also took upon him our sorrows. The Atonement is not just a redeeming mystery, it is a healing mystery. All of us have suffered heartache or loss, discouragement or depression, sickness. To think that our Lord in some way felt those things along with us! Additionally, we recognize that the sense of the cumulative weight of this was so great it literally squeezed the life out of Him. In Jewish tradition blood is the life of man, mortal life at least, so the imagery of sweating blood may in fact indicate that the physical life of Christ, the mortality, was actually in some way, being squeezed out of Him, leaving only the divine and eternal.

Now here we need to be cautious. It is normal for groups to teach to their unique points—that is to say to emphasize a doctrine that is a little bit different or, better, fuller than that taught in other groups. We tend to focus on such differences, and so there is a tendency in the Latter-day Saint community for some of us, sometimes, to stress Gethsemane to the exclusion of Calvary. I’m not talking tonight about the Crucifixion—that is Brother Skinner’s topic in a subsequent lecture—but I would suggest to you as we prepare to move into the trial section of our discussion today, that rather than thinking of the Atonement as a discrete—albeit, infinite and eternal—act, that we think of it instead as a journey, a journey that it *began* in Gethsemane, *continued* through the awful hours of that night and into the hours of that next morning, and *culminated* on the cross and *continued* all the way through that first Easter.

In Old Testament sacrificial practice, the victim for a sin offering or for the great Yom Kippur sacrifice, the atonement sacrifice, was brought to the temple, and the sacrificer, would in some way symbolically put upon that animal, that sacrificial victim, his guilt, by laying his hands on the animal. Then the priests, assisted by the Levites, would take the animal from the worshiper and lead it up to the altar, where it was sacrificed. I think we need to consider Gethsemane as the moment when our guilt was symbolically—well literally actually, not symbolically at all—was literally placed upon the Savior. But we mustn’t forget any moment in that journey. Jesus did not just take upon Himself the weight of our sins, our transgressions, our sorrows. Just as the sacrificial victim was led to the altar, Jesus carried this burden throughout that night and the next day. And He didn’t just suffer for our sins, He died for them. And in the broad sense the Atonement—making us one with God—is not just about redemption from sin and healing from sorrow, it is also about resurrection from the dead. The Atonement and the Resurrection are not two separate things. Redemption and resurrection are part of that Atonement, and so this journey all culminates at the end on Easter morning.

Now once again, how Jesus did this is beyond our comprehension, but some interesting suggestions have been made. Brother Skinner in his book on Gethsemane has suggested, quoting various authorities among the Brethren, that Jesus, who was always one with His Father, at the moment that He took upon himself our guilt, experienced something He had never experienced

before: spiritual death. This conclusion is reached by analogy to what happens to Jesus on the cross when he cried out, “Eloi, Eloi lama sabachtani” or “My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?” From that passage we get some real sense that at that moment on the cross the Father withdrew Himself, either to let Jesus encounter and conquer this on His own or out of sorrow, or out of a combination. Perhaps by analogy, at that moment He became “sin for us” to use Paul’s term. Suddenly He had to be separated from the Father, and for a being who was always sustained and enlivened and empowered by His Father’s Spirit this was devastating. Brother Skinner suggests that Jesus experienced that idea of going below all things: He suffered Hell at that moment, and perhaps that was the crucial component of what He suffered.

Betrayal and Arrest

So as we try to understand Gethsemane and consider this the beginning of the Atonement, I would like to move on to our discussion about Jesus’ betrayal, arrest, and then his trial, attempting to see these events as part of the atoning journey. Now that Jesus is bearing our sins, let’s see Him as He is led to the altar, as it were. Jesus emerged from this experience, shared by no one but the angel, to find His friends, Peter, James, and John, sleeping. In Mark and Matthew, three times He actually comes out and finds them sleeping and has to say, “Can’t you stay awake with me?” Luke, who is wonderfully compassionate and doesn’t like to dwell on people’s faults, softens this a bit, saying, in effect, “Yes, they fell asleep, next, let’s move on.” As a result, Luke only has Jesus wake them once. There’s kind of an odd passage in Matthew and Mark where Jesus a third time says “What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” and then the gospel authors record “then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest.” This is probably the result of a difficulty in translation. The expression, “sleep on”, as it is translated in the King James, is probably an imperative in Greek: *katheudete*. It can be indicative, but it makes more sense as an imperative, suggesting that Jesus might have come right out and said, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest at this moment when I have just suffered the pains of Hell and have been squeezed, crushed, by them?”

And so He woke his disciples, and at that very moment an act which I think we must see as part of the Atonement occurs. The person who leads the arresting party to Him is a disciple, is a friend, is Judas. I do not know that we will ever understand what Judas’s motivations were, and we are certainly not going to rely upon any apocryphal second or third century text or extracanonical gospels to understand Judas’s motivations. What I think is more important is how did Jesus feel when one of His closest friends betrayed Him? If Jesus had to descend below all things and suffer all of our sorrows, heartache and disappointment, wouldn’t betrayal be one of them? Every heart-broken woman whose husband has been unfaithful has felt betrayal. Every abused child who is victimized by those who should be closest to him or her and should have protected him or her knows betrayal. Every 8 or 9 year old boy or girl whose friends tease him or her on the playground knows betrayal. It was necessary for Jesus to experience this very act, and how poignant that Judas did it with a kiss. Now it is true, culturally speaking, that it was common for a disciple or student in that age to greet his teacher with a kiss, it may have been that simple. Judas said to the group with him, “I’m going to go, and I’ll point out which one of these bearded fellows in the row is Jesus by kissing him.” But the act, especially to our perspective, was ironic.

John mentions that Judas brought a band of men and some servants of the high priest. The Greek term for “band,” *speira*, was commonly used to translate the Roman military term

“cohort.” A cohort was a military division of five or six hundred men. This has led many people to see this arresting group as consistent of temple guard or group servants of the high priest—Jewish police if you will—as well as Roman soldiers. Although that is a very popular position, it is actually still somewhat debated. The term is used in Josephus and other authors writing in Greek for any military formation. We have Jewish groups called a *speira*, so I’m not absolutely convinced that there were Roman soldiers in the arresting party, but the attraction of having the arresting band consist of both Jewish soldiers, temple police, and perhaps Roman soldiers is that it establishes a theme that we will see throughout the arrest and the succeeding trial narratives that I think is very important for understanding the Atonement.

In these following sections of the Gospels—the betrayal, the arrest, the mocking, the trial narratives—the Jews and the Romans present in the story represent more than just Jews and the Romans. The Jews stand for all of Israel. They represent the people of God, so Jesus is rejected by His own. The Romans represent all Gentiles, so Jesus is rejected by everybody else. The significance of this is that it cautions us against engaging in a fruitless debate about culpability. In some circles it’s popular to discuss who was responsible for the death of Jesus. Was it the Jews? Did they reject their Savior? Did they try Him? Did they trick Pilate into killing Him? Should we blame them for the next two thousand years? Should we have pogroms and anti-Semitism and the Holocaust because of it? Now that was a very popular position for a long time, although now, of course, it is politically incorrect. Now we tend to say that really the Romans did it. You can’t be politically incorrect when there aren’t any of those people left—the ancient Romans are all dead! I think that all of this completely misses the point. First of all, I would ask one who is interested in understanding who was responsible for the death of Jesus that following question: Do you not want Jesus to die for your sins? Do you want Jesus to go free and not suffer for you, die so He can overcome sin and death? So it’s an academic discussion to begin with. Second, it missed the point that *we* are *all* responsible for His death. Every man and woman, Jew and Gentile, is responsible for what occurred here. Whether a Roman party was there or not—which personally seems a little strange, I don’t have any other examples in Roman history where a Roman guard is delegated to Jewish high priest or whatever turned a captive over to a foreign body—the possibility that both groups were present at the arrest, as they were in the trials and abuses that followed, establishes a theme which I think is important.

We’ve talked about the horrible betrayal that Jesus may have felt at this time. John’s discussion of this is very powerful. He says to the group, “who have you come to see?” They say, “Jesus of Nazareth.” He responds, “I am he.” It’s interesting how the text reads: it says that the men “went backwards.” Now in John, every time we see the expression, “I AM” we should be sensitized to think that something else is going on. *Egō eimi*, means either “I AM” or “I AM he.” It also appears in expressions such as “I AM the vine,” “I AM the bread,” “I AM the life,” and this seems to be John’s way of rendering an expression in the Old Testament which in Hebrew is translated, “I am that I am” It is short hand for saying, “I am Jehovah.” So at least any Jews in the arresting party might have been scandalized when they said, “We’re looking for Jesus of Nazareth,” and He replied, “Well, I’m Jehovah, I’m God.” They may have recoiled in horror that he had said the divine name aloud. Or in typical Johannine fashion, where Jesus is always very powerful, perhaps—and this is just my imagination, but perhaps—as He said “I AM” with such power and authority, spiritually they were overwhelmed and twice they fall backwards.

Jesus then moves from talking about Himself to thinking about His disciples. He actually answers the prayer that He pled at the beginning of the Gethsemane incident when Luke tells us

He prayed that His disciples would not come “into the time of trial.” He says, “Let these go free, take me.” He intervenes for them that they may not be seized as he has been and face the kind of trial and conviction that he does.

And what is their response? He’s arrested and the disciples do what? They run for it. The betrayal continues. The disciples who gave up everything to follow Christ, at His moment of need give up everything to get away from Him. In fact this is illustrated quite graphically in the account of Mark. Mark 14:51–52 in the incident of a young man, perhaps a disciple. We don’t know who he is, he just wanders in dressed in a linen sheet, his bed clothes, his pajamas probably, and when they try to grab him he’s so desperate to get away that he throws off his clothes and flees naked. It’s an odd little passage and people wear themselves out trying to figure out the symbolism of this and what’s going on and why he’s wearing that linen shield. I think that it may simply be symbolic. These disciples had given up everything to follow Jesus and now they’re giving up everything—even the clothes on their back to get away from him. Their betrayal is a matter of degree. Judas betrayed Him in a terrible way, but they are now betraying Him in a more passive way.

Trials and Abuse

Now what occurred over the course of this evening is much debated. It is now common scholarship to call this scene, in Mark 14 and Matthew 25 and perhaps in Luke 22, “Jesus before the Jewish Authorities.” During the course of the night, Mark and Matthew tell us that Jesus was interviewed by the high priest and the council, presumably the Sanhedrin. John says, in addition to being interviewed by the sitting high priest, the former high priest, Caiaphas’ father-in-law Annas also interviewed Him. In the nineteenth century, biblical scholars, Protestant mostly, loved to discuss the irregularities or “illegalities” of this trial. According to Jewish law one cannot try anyone at night. According to Jewish law one cannot do this, cannot do that, and once again it was probably an issue of culpability. The sense of these attempts seems to be, “Look, the Jews were wrong for doing this, the Jewish leadership shouldn’t have done this and broke its own laws in try to do it.” This is perhaps missing the point, although a lot of commentators since the nineteenth century have followed this line of reasoning. The arguments that are made about what was illegal about the so-called Jewish trial of Jesus are based on much later evidence: not evidence from the first century when the event took place but second or third century rabbinic evidence from the Mishnah. We actually don’t know what the rules were at the time of Jesus. Most scholars who study this at this point, think that the Jewish leadership wasn’t actually holding the trial but they were holding what we would call a hearing or an inquest. They were gathering evidence, trying to build a case, deciding what they could charge Jesus with the next day, either in a formal Jewish court or, more preferably, before the Romans.

Much of what happens in Matthew and Mark’s account finds a parallel the next day in the Roman actual trial. Jesus is asked questions, He responds, and He’s abused, He’s mistreated. Everything that’s done more graphically by the Romans the next day—crowning him with thorns, smiting Him with a reed, dressing Him in a red robe, whipping Him—was to a certain extent paralleled by the treatment Jesus received the night before at the hands of the temple guard or the Jewish police, the attendants of the high priest. He’s abused, He’s spit upon. This seems to represent the rejection of Jesus by His own people, just as the Roman mistreatment of Jesus the next day represents his rejection by the Gentiles.

A lot of times we do not spend much time on this part of the so-called “Passion,” the suffering of Jesus. We mention Gethsemane in great detail, we skip to Calvary but move past that as fast as we can, and hurry to Easter morning so we can be happy again. But I think it is significant that the things that Jesus suffers during the Jewish hearing or inquest and will happen the next morning in connection with the Roman trial were all part of prophecy. Some years ago as I was studying the Roman trial of Jesus, and I decided to use the Book of Mormon as my guide. I thought it was significant that Book of Mormon prophets did not just prophesy that Jesus would be in such great agony that His sweat would drip blood. They did not just prophesy that He would die, that He would rise again. In addition they mention that He was scourged, that He was spit upon. Somehow the idea of being punished, being abused, being falsely accused wrongly judged is all part of this atoning journey. Every one of us who has been falsely accused and falsely judged at any point in our life can know that Jesus too was falsely judged. Every one of us that has been mistreated, physically or emotionally, knows that Jesus was mistreated in somewhat the same way.

During the Jewish hearing, as we’re going to call it, two different charges were floated. First, false witnesses were found who charged they had heard Jesus say He would destroy the temple. Now He actually did talk about the destruction of the temple, so there was something for them to build upon, but because they were false witnesses, they couldn’t quite get their stories straight and the high priest had to move to another charge. And so finally he directly asked Jesus, “are you the son of the blessed, the most high?” In other words, he asked “Are you really the Messiah and to you does that mean you’re the Son of God?” Not all Jews at this time would have thought of the Messiah being the Son of God, but Jesus answered in Matthew and Luke, “Ye say that I am,” but in Mark he is more straightforward, saying, “I am.” He didn’t deny it, and the High Priest melodramatically ripped his clothes and said, “I’ve heard blasphemy,” which under Jewish law was punishable by stoning.

And so Jesus was rejected by His own. They entertained and began to consider a charge of blasphemy—a religious or spiritual charge—but then they handed Jesus over to the Roman instead. Luke actually says that the Jewish leadership just heard Jesus the next morning briefly before He is delivered to the Romans. It’s interesting that although this grand jury, if you want to call it that, had decided they were going to charge Him with blasphemy, when they took Him to the Romans, they did not say, “Pilate we found this man committing blasphemy.” Instead they decided to change the charge and instead charge Him with a political crime, treason or revolution. Clearly a Roman governor would be more interested in treason or revolution than he would be in the niceties of Jewish law, so perhaps they thought they would have a better chance at getting Jesus convicted. Many have thought that they took Jesus to the Romans because they lacked at this time the right to execute anyone under the Roman occupation. There’s a passage in John where they say, “it is not lawful for us to put any man to death,” but this passage is actually one of only two pieces of evidence in all of ancient literature that suggest the Jewish leadership could not execute someone. Provincial courts in the Roman Empire always had the right of capital punishment unless it was for some reason suspended. The Roman governor only got involved when it concerned Roman interests. While the Jews may have lost the right to inflict capital punishment, we actually have examples to the contrary. Brother Stephen, who was stoned by a Jewish mob, would disagree that the Jewish authorities could not put someone to death! The adulterous woman who was almost stoned would disagree that the Jewish authorities could not try to put someone to death.

Other times when the Jewish leadership claims that something is not lawful, it is their precious Law of Moses that forbids an act. Significantly, we know that during the Passover season they could not execute or hold trial, so perhaps it was just very pragmatic to turn the case over to the Romans. The Jewish punishment for blasphemy was stoning. They can't try, convict or stone anyone during a holiday, but the Romans can crucify someone anytime they want. But something else is going on, I would suggest. Jesus has admitted to the High Priest and the Sanhedrin that He is the Son of the Blessed, that He's somehow holy. What better way to prove that He's wrong than to have Him die in a way that proves He's not blessed? Instead execute him in a way that proves that He is cursed. Deuteronomy 21:23 rules that anyone who was "hanged on a tree" was cursed—stoning doesn't cut it, but crucifixion counts as being hanged on a tree. Perhaps transferring Jesus to the Romans was a calculated move to make sure it could be advertised to everyone that this Jesus who claims He's the Messiah is not blessed, he is cursed and even God has rejected him. Indeed Paul wrote in Galatians 3:13, "Christ was made "a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth [upon] a tree."

One thing that time does not allow us to discuss in any detail this evening is the wonderful series of interviews that occurred between Pilate and Jesus. Pilate, wanting to get to the bottom of the matter, has some closed-door interrogation of Jesus. This raises an interesting question: who reported to John what was said since presumably the only ones there were Pilate, Jesus, and probably some guards and a translator. What I am going to suggest in passing is just what President Clark used to call "reflective speculation." I imagine a situation where after the Resurrection, as Jesus is sitting around a campfire with some broiled fish with His best friends, they asked him, "Lord, what happened that night? What happened while you were in the garden and we couldn't stay awake? What happened the next day when you were taken in to talk to Pilate?" And Jesus told His best friends about Pilate, "He asked me if I was a king." Reflective speculation, to be sure, but as Joseph Smith used to say, "It tastes good."

Jesus has been charged with the crime of treason, and so Pilate naturally says, "Are you a king? Do you claim to rule these people?" And Jesus says, "My kingdom is not of this world" and begins to talk about truth, and Pilate like any good mid-level Roman bureaucrat with a little education but not quite enough to get it right, was aware this was a philosophical discussion about the nature of truth. So he decided that Jesus was just one of those crackpot philosophers and emerges from the interview to announce, "I find no fault in this man."

Jesus then confronts a mob. It often seems ironic to remember that the week before Jesus was rapturously received by the common people in Jerusalem during the Triumphal Entry. Now on Friday morning he faces a screaming group calling for His blood. Matthew and Mark tell us that this was actually happening quite early, before the third hour, before nine o'clock a.m. Many people may not have been out of bed or even aware of what was going on, so this was probably a stage group, what we call a "claque"—consisting probably of the slaves and the servants and the clients of the Sanhedrin and the chief priests who comprised a stacked audience that cries for Jesus to be executed.

One of the things that the Book of Mormon says Jesus must experience in this Atoning journey is "the flagellation, the whipping." Once again for our Catholic friends this is one of the great "sorrowful mysteries," what the rosary calls "the scourging on the pillar." In our "Behold The Lamb" video this is treated very tactfully, not like Brother Gibson and his "Passion of the Christ" supposedly treated it in gruesome detail. In "Behold The Lamb" we hear the whip and we hear the horses cry, but we don't have to see the blood and the flesh ripped apart, and this is more in harmony with the gospels' account, which baldly report what happened but do not

indulge in gratuitous descriptions. In regard to the scourging, the gospel accounts actually differ as to what happened when. In Luke, Jesus is just threatened with “chastisement,” which was a low form of whipping. In John, where Pilate has just had a philosophical discussion with Jesus, Pilate wants to free Him, and thinks that maybe he can Jesus some other punishment, not death, to satisfy the leadership and the mob. He may have thought, “I can whip Him really hard and that will be enough. Then I can show Him to these people, and this bloody, bleeding, bruised man will arouse some pity in them.” And so He had Jesus scourged, and then presented the bleeding Jesus to the mob and famously declared “Behold the Man.” The Latin expression *Ecce Homo*, and perhaps he was hoping to arouse some pity in the audience.

In Matthew and Mark, however, the Greek term used for scourging or whipping refers to the most severe kind. In these accounts the scourging occurs *after* the trial as part of the preparation for the Crucifixion. And before that happens, all four Gospels agree that Pilate gives the crowd, the angry mob, a choice. Although we have no other sources corroborating this custom, the gospels tell us that the Romans, or at least Pilate, had the custom of releasing or pardoning one prisoner at Passover time. Perhaps he hoped that this bleeding, whipped Jesus would be the person they choose to free. In prison Pilate had a real revolutionary, a real traitor to the Roman order, someone whose name is Barabbas, which means “Son of the Father.” Barabbas was probably not his real name, it was probably his *nome de guerre*, his military name inasmuch as he was a guerilla leader. And so Pilate brought forth two men “Son of the Father,” and “Jesus Son of God,” meaning of the Heavenly Father. He showed these two people to the audience, to the mob and let them pick which one they would have released. We know the account. The mob—perhaps actually just a high priestly clique—screamed for Barabbas. They chose a revolutionary, a murderer, over the Son of God.

Those who study Roman history know that Pilate found himself in a difficult and unusual position. He had served in Judea for a long time, serving as governor AD 26–36, which was longer than any of his predecessors. Tiberius preferred keeping his governors in the field for a longer time than other emperors: he figured that governors were always going to rob their subjects, and so he said “If you leave someone there for a year or two every two years you’ll have someone fleece the sheep. But if you leave them there for a long time eventually they will take all the money and then they will just rule for the next eight to ten years.” So Pilate had been governing Judea for a long time. His political situation was interesting, because he probably received his appointment because he had the support of an important figure named Sejanus, who was the equivalent of a prime minister to Tiberius. Just before Jesus’ trial, however, Sejanus had been overthrown in Rome, his family murdered, and those that he had helped place in government positions were being fired or killed. This probably made Pilate very sensitive to his position; with his patron overthrown, Tiberius might recall him or execute him. Consequently, when the Jewish leadership said “If you release Jesus and don’t give us Barabas you are no friend of Caesar, suddenly the discussion is not about Jesus’ being a traitor and being guilty of the charge of treason, but now whether Pilate is being threatened with an accusation of treason. And so he gives in, “You take care of Him, you do what you want.” And so Jesus is convicted on the charge of treason.

Now the Jewish hearing which proffered the charge of blasphemy, a spiritual charge, and the Roman actual trial, which convicted Him on the charge of treason, a political charge, actually reflects the dual nature of Jesus as the Son of God. On the one hand He is the Son of God, a spiritual figure, but He is also, and will be when He returns, a political figure, the actual the King of the Jews. And so although the participants were not witting when they did this, they

unknowingly identified exactly who Jesus is: the Son of God, King of Israel. As a result, it is important that both groups, the Jews and the Romans, be involved in this, showing that the House of Israel, God's people—represented by the Jews—and everyone else, the Gentiles—represented by the Romans—came together in charging Jesus. If we consider that they represent us it becomes very poignant indeed.

Pilate then gave Jesus to the soldiers to mock in anticipation of His crucifixion. While Jesus had Himself predicted the scourging and humiliation that He would suffer, as I've mentioned, some of the most powerful recorded prophecies of this aspect of His abuse and His mockery are found in the Book of Mormon: 1 Nephi 19:9, 2 Nephi 6:9, and Mosiah 3:9. There the focus is not on when and how the scourging, hitting and spitting took place. It was not whether it was done early in the trial as a way to try to get the mob to feel pity for Jesus or later as part of what we're doing to prepare Jesus to die on the cross. What is significant is instead why Jesus needed to experience these things. Nephi tells us that Christ was willing to suffer these things because of His loving kindness and His long-suffering towards the children of men. Thinking perhaps of the very whip marks on our Lord's back, Isaiah, centuries before, had prophesied, "and with his stripes we are healed."

Taking the trial, and the scourging, and the betrayal, and the arrest of Jesus together with Gethsemane today, I hope has lead you to consider, as I've suggested, that we consider not just an atoning moment but rather the atoning journey of Jesus Christ. We must not just stop with Gethsemane and quickly get to Calvary, and then move on to the empty tomb. Instead, we ought to consider every step of Jesus' suffering.

I have a great testimony of Jesus Christ as both the Son of God and the King of Israel. I know that in the Garden, He took upon Himself not just the weight of my sins, but my own sorrows, my own heartache, my own discouragement, my own failings. I know as He was betrayed by His friends, He understands how I knew and felt at different times in my life. He was falsely judged by the two people in the ancient world who were most noted for their jurisprudence: the Jews and their Law of Moses and the Romans and their great civil law. The two people most noted for law and justice misjudged the Savior! As a result, I know that He understands how I feel when I am misjudged. When He was spit upon and abused and hit, I know He knows how we feel and have felt and will feel at times in our lives. I know that He moved past the incidents that we have discussed today, not just to suffer for our sins, but to die for them.

Using the imagery of the Apostle John, He was the Lamb of God. And just as the Passover lambs were slain in the Temple on Friday afternoon, so on Friday afternoon Jesus died upon the cross. I know, echoing John 19, that when Jesus died upon the cross a soldier put a spear into His side and out of His side flowed blood and water, representing His amazing and mysterious dual nature as both the Son of God and the Son of Mary. He had within Himself the ability to lay down His life as an offering for sin, but He also had within Himself divinity. In view of what Amulek taught in Alma 34, we know that only "an infinite and eternal nature can work an infinite and eternal Atonement." Because of his dual nature, He could take that life up again. I know that Jesus Christ not only died for me, but He lives for me. And I pray that each of us, as we reflect upon these sacred and mysterious events, will pledge to live for Christ. That we may be in Him and He may be in us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.