



Faculty Publications

---

2013

## Christ's Crucifixion Reclamation of the Cross

Gaye Strathearn

Brigham Young University - Provo, [gaye\\_strathearn@byu.edu](mailto:gaye_strathearn@byu.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub>



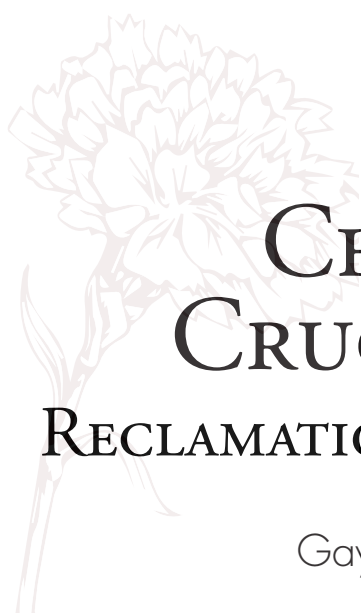
Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [History of Christianity Commons](#)

---

### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Strathearn, Gaye, "Christ's Crucifixion Reclamation of the Cross" (2013). *Faculty Publications*. 3532.  
<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/3532>

This Peer-Reviewed Article is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).



# CHRIST'S CRUCIFIXION RECLAMATION OF THE CROSS

Gaye Strathearn

**T**WENTY-THREE YEARS AGO, I came to BYU as a student. This was a major, life-changing event for me. My mother and grandmother had joined the Church in Australia in 1958, and I spent most of my early life growing up in a *very* small branch of the Church, small even by Australian standards. You can perhaps imagine my feelings of excitement at the thought of coming to live in the heartland of the Church. It was quite a novel thought that I would be able to go to Church with my roommates. I still remember my feelings of wonderment and excitement as I walked to the Marriott Center for my first devotional along with thousands of people my

---

*Gaye Strathearn is an associate professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.*

age as the carillon bell played “Come, Come, Ye Saints”! Against the backdrop of such wonderment, it was a huge culture shock for me when Easter came and I realized that Good Friday was a nonevent at BYU. Honestly, I was quite surprised that it was business as usual with classes being held on what I considered to be one of the holiest days in the Christian calendar.

While I know that it isn’t true, there is a part of me that can understand how an outsider might form the following conclusion that was published in an issue of the *Newsweek* magazine: “Mormons do not . . . place much emphasis on Easter.”<sup>1</sup>

I have been asked to speak on “Christ’s Crucifixion: The Reclamation of the Cross.” Before turning to this subject, I would like to make two caveat statements. First, I want to say that the nature of my topic means that I will not be discussing much about Gethsemane. Even so, I want to make it clear that I recognize that the events that took place in the Garden of Gethsemane are absolutely seminal to our understanding of the Atonement. Second, I want to be clear that in this paper I am *not* advocating that the Church should start putting up crosses on our chapels or temples. That is certainly *not* my place. What I do want to argue, however, is that if we fail to appreciate or if we minimize the importance of the cross and what it stands for, then we ignore a very significant part of our scriptural texts: both in the Bible *and* in our Restoration scriptures, the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants.

So with that in mind, I will begin by reviewing some of the historical details of crucifixion in antiquity, including what pagans thought about the fact that Christians worshipped a god that had been crucified and how the Apostle Paul countered such arguments. Then I will suggest four reasons why I believe that the cross today should play an important part in our study and both our private and public discourse.

#### CRUCIFIXION: "A MOST MISERABLE DEATH"

Although each emphasizes its own unique aspects, all four Gospels are united in their witness that Jesus was crucified on a cross. Matthew, Mark, and John call the site of the Crucifixion Golgotha (see Matthew 27:33; Mark 15:22; John 19:17). Luke uses the Latin term *Calvary* (see Luke 23:33).

The Jewish historian Josephus described crucifixion as "the most pitiable of deaths" (*thanatōn ton oiktiston*).<sup>2</sup> Crucifixion was an ugly way to die—purposely so. Although it is generally acknowledged that the Persians invented crucifixion,<sup>3</sup> the reality is that many ancient groups practiced it<sup>4</sup> and that it was performed in different ways.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes it meant that the victims were impaled (*avestaurōse*);<sup>6</sup> sometimes they were tied to a cross or a tree,<sup>7</sup> but usually they were nailed.<sup>8</sup> Archaeologically, only one set of remains has been found of a person who was crucified in Palestine prior to AD 70. We know that the person was crucified because the nail was still in the right

calcaneum (or heel bone). These remains suggest that in this case the individual's feet were nailed on either side of the vertical pole.<sup>9</sup> Often the victims were crucified while alive, but sometimes it was after they were dead.<sup>10</sup> Sometimes the victim was even crucified upside down.<sup>11</sup> Sometimes the legs were broken in conjunction with the crucifixion.<sup>12</sup> By Roman times, crucifixion was preceded by flogging,<sup>13</sup> and the victims "often carried the beam to the place of execution, where [they were] nailed to it with outstretched arms, raised up and seated on a small wooden peg."<sup>14</sup> Sometimes the bodies were left to be devoured by birds and wild animals,<sup>15</sup> but in Roman times



Thomas exclaimed, "Except I shall see in his the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into in to his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25).

Matt Reier, *Nails*, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

it was possible for the family to petition to take the body and bury it once death had been verified.<sup>16</sup> Crucifixion was chosen as a form of execution, especially for murderers, thieves, traitors, and slaves, because it was public and humiliating, and because the torture could be extended for long periods of time.<sup>17</sup> One first-century Roman author named Quintilian wrote, "When we crucify criminals the most frequented roads are chosen, where the greatest number of people can look and be seized by this fear. For every punishment has less to do with the offence than with the example."<sup>18</sup>

The accounts of Jesus' Crucifixion in the four Gospels are the most detailed accounts that we have of an ancient crucifixion. Many, but not all, of the points noted in the gospel are known details from ancient sources that we have discussed above. Prior to crucifixion, Jesus was scourged (see Mark 15:15) and forced to carry his cross, although Simon of Cyrene did it for him (see Matthew 27:32). The soldiers also gave Jesus a drink of gall and vinegar (see v. 34). In the gospel accounts of the Crucifixion, there is no specific mention of Jesus being nailed to the cross, although, as we have noted, that was the usual practice, as is indicated in Jesus' case by Thomas's exclamation, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). A sign reading "The King of the Jews" was placed on the cross (Mark 15:26; Matthew 27:37; Luke 23:38;

John 19:19), and passersby mocked him (see Matthew 27:39–43). The soldiers would have broken his legs to hasten his death before the beginning of the Sabbath, but he was already dead (see John 19:32–33),<sup>19</sup> and Joseph of Arimathea petitioned Pilate to be able to bury Jesus' body (see Luke 23:50–53).

But while the Gospels describe the Crucifixion in terms of what happened, and Acts shows that the Crucifixion was at the heart of the teachings of Peter and John (see Acts 2:23, 36; 4:10), it is only the writings of Paul that discuss the *why* of Christ's Crucifixion. At least some early Christians seemed to struggle with the idea that the Son of God would be executed in such a shameful manner as crucifixion. Paul acknowledged to the Galatians that under the law of Moses, "cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Galatians 3:13; see also Deuteronomy 21:22–23).<sup>20</sup>

We also know that pagans mocked Christians for worshipping a God who was crucified. One example is the second-century Cynic philosopher Lucian, who once lived among Christians in Palestine. He later wrote a satire that mocked Christians who "have sinned by denying the Greek gods, and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living according to his laws." Further, he was a man "whom they still worship—the man who was crucified in Palestine for introducing this new cult into the world."<sup>21</sup> In the literature, we also see Christians and pagans in dialogue over the value of the Crucifixion. In the second century, Justin Martyr, a Christian

apologist, identified the charges and responded to them: "It is for this that they charge us with madness, saying that we give the second place after the unchanging and ever-existing God and begetter of all things to a crucified man."<sup>22</sup> In the second or third century, in Minucius Felix's *Octavius*, we read a pagan quip against Christians: "To say that a malefactor put to death for his crimes, and wood of the death-dealing cross, are objects of their veneration is to assign fitting altars to abandoned wretches and the kind of worship they deserve."<sup>23</sup> A graphic representation of the disdain that pagans had for the Christian worship of a crucified god may be a graffito carved into plaster on a wall near the Palentine Hill in Rome that is probably dated from the second or third century.<sup>24</sup> It depicts a boy at the foot of a crucified man that has the head of a donkey. The crude inscription reads, "Alexamenos, worship [your] God."<sup>25</sup>

It is this type of criticism of Christianity, "the offence [Greek *skandalon*] of the cross" (Galatians 5:11), that Paul is probably responding to as he emphasizes the importance of the cross. He acknowledges this type of taunt when he declares, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. . . . For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:18, 22–23). Not only is the crucified Christ not foolishness to Paul, it is in fact the *power of God*.



Therefore, Paul asserts the centrality of this message for his missionary activities: “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). Later, in a response to Christians in Corinth who were rejecting the reality and importance of the Resurrection, he makes a statement that in our English King James Bible loses some of its impact: “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). The phrase in Greek that is translated as “first of all” is *en prōtois*, which can be more accurately translated as “most important.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, Paul taught that *the most important things* that he had delivered unto them were (1) the Crucifixion and (2) the Resurrection. In his mind, the Crucifixion, rather than being an embarrassment, was in fact *central* to his missionary message.

In the second century, Justin Martyr would argue that the Crucifixion, a point of ridicule for pagans, was in fact the very thing that separated Christianity from all other religions.<sup>27</sup>

### WHY SHOULD THE CROSS BE MEANINGFUL TO LATTER-DAY SAINTS?

As I have thought about Christ’s Crucifixion and the central place that Good Friday has held historically and theologically in Christianity, I would like to discuss four reasons why I believe that

the cross should hold an important place in our private and public discourse, both among ourselves and in conjunction with our Christian friends.<sup>28</sup>

1. *The events on the cross are an integral part of the Atonement.* The most important reason that we should consider the cross is that both doctrinally and functionally it is part of Christ's Atonement. I think it is fair to say that traditionally Latter-day Saints have emphasized the Atonement as taking part in Gethsemane. For example, Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written:

Where and under what circumstances was the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God made? Was it on the Cross of Calvary or in the Garden of Gethsemane? It is to the Cross of Christ that most Christians look when centering their attention upon the infinite and eternal atonement. And certainly the sacrifice of our Lord was completed when he was lifted up by men; also, that part of his life and suffering is more dramatic and, perhaps, more soul stirring. But in reality the pain and suffering, the triumph and grandeur, of the atonement took place primarily in Gethsemane. . . . Many have been crucified and the torment and pain is extreme. But only one, and he the Man who had God as his Father, has bowed beneath the burden of grief and sorrow that lay

upon him in that awful night, that night in which he descended below all things as he prepared himself to rise above them all.<sup>29</sup>

As we have already noted, it is certainly true that many people were crucified in antiquity. At a later time, however, Elder McConkie also taught, “All of the anguish, all of the sorrow, and all of the suffering of Gethsemane recurred during the final three hours on the cross, the hours when darkness covered the land. Truly there was no sorrow like unto his sorrow, and no anguish and pain like unto that which bore in with such intensity upon him.”<sup>30</sup> This reality suggests that Christ’s Crucifixion was unlike any other’s experience. Elder Neal A. Maxwell reminds us of “the axis of agony which was Gethsemane *and* Calvary.”<sup>31</sup> Thus Paul taught the Romans that “we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son . . . by whom we have now received the atonement” (Romans 5:10–11).

I am struck by the number of times that the teachings on the Atonement and redemption in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants specifically include Christ’s death in the equation.

For the Book of Mormon, the cross is *not* a marginal footnote to the Atonement. Rather, the phrase “sufferings and death” is at the very heart of some important sermons. For example, when Alma the Elder was secretly preaching the words of Abinadi, he taught, “Yea,

concerning that which was to come, and also concerning the resurrection of the dead, and the redemption of the people, which was to be brought to pass through the power, and *sufferings, and death of Christ*, and his resurrection and ascension into heaven” (Mosiah 18:2; emphasis added). When Aaron, the son of Mosiah, preached to the Amalekites in the city of Jerusalem, we read, “Now Aaron began to open the scriptures unto them concerning the coming of Christ, and also concerning the resurrection of the dead, and that there could be no redemption for mankind save it were through the *death and sufferings of Christ*, and the atonement of his blood.” Likewise, when he preached to King Lamoni’s father, Aaron declared, “And since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself; but the *sufferings and death of Christ* atone for their sins” (Alma 22:14; emphasis added). Finally, when Mormon wrote to his son Moroni, he implored that Christ’s “sufferings and death . . . rest in your mind forever” (Moroni 9:25).

In the Doctrine and Covenants, such as section 19, we find powerful verses about the Atonement in Gethsemane, but we also have verses where redemption is specifically identified with the cross. In sections 53 and 54, Jesus himself declares to both Sidney Gilbert and Newel Knight that he “was crucified for the sins of the world” (D&C 53:2; 54:1), and in the revelation to President Joseph F. Smith on the redemption of the dead we read, “And so it was made known among the dead, both small and great, the unrighteous as well as the

faithful, that redemption had been wrought through the sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross” (D&C 138:35).

All of these passages from our Restoration scripture support the biblical message of Paul that the Crucifixion of our Lord was an essential part of the Atonement, and thus that it is an essential part of our personal and collective redemption. Elder Holland described Easter Friday as “atoning Friday with its cross.”<sup>32</sup> I like that description because it reminds me of why Easter Friday should be an important part of the Easter season.

2. *The scriptural metaphor that we can be “lifted up” because Christ was lifted up on the cross is a symbol of God’s great love for us.* On day two of the Savior’s visit to the Americas, he responded to a request from his disciples, “Tell us the name whereby we shall call this church” (3 Nephi 27:3). Jesus responded with two qualifications for the Church: it must bear his name, and it must be “built upon [his] gospel” (vv. 5–10). Then he proceeded to do something that we have no record of him doing in biblical times; in the following verses he gives a definition of his gospel:

Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me.

And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil—

And for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works. (vv. 13–15)

What is important for our discussion is that when the Savior himself describes his gospel and the Atonement, he describes it in terms of the cross: “My Father sent me that I might be lifted up on the cross” (v. 14). Notice the purpose of Christ being lifted up on the cross: so that he could draw all men unto him to be judged.<sup>33</sup> Then the rest of his definition of the gospel outlines what we must do to make sure that day of judgment is a day of rejoicing: we must repent, be baptized in his name, endure to the end, and be sanctified by the Holy Ghost “that [we] may stand spotless before [him] at the last day” (v. 20).

Although in this passage being “lifted up” is associated with judgment, in other places it is associated with God’s great love for his people. For example, when Jesus spoke with Nicodemus, he made

reference to Moses lifting up a brass serpent to heal the Israelites who had been infiltrated by a plague of serpents. Jesus specifically identified the act of raising a pole with a serpent as a type of his Crucifixion: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14–15). Then note the famous verses that immediately follow: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (vv. 16–17). The context of this passage indicates that the evidence of God’s great love for the world is that his Son was lifted up on the cross so that everyone could have eternal life.

This same principle is also found in Nephi’s vision of the tree of life. Nephi learns that the tree represents “the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is most desirable above all things” (1 Nephi 11:22). Then the heavens are opened to Nephi, and he sees in a vision the manifestations of that love: he sees the mortal ministry of the Son of God, John the Baptist and Jesus’ baptism, the Twelve Apostles, angels ministering to the people, and Jesus healing the sick. And then we read: “And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me again, saying: Look! And I looked and beheld the Lamb of God, that he was taken by the people; yea, the Son of the everlasting God was judged

of the world; and I saw and bear record. And I, Nephi, saw that he was lifted up upon the cross for the sins of the world” (vv. 32–33). Again, the context of this chapter reinforces Jesus’ teachings to Nicodemus: Jesus’ being lifted up upon the cross was a manifestation of the love of God.

The phrase “lifted up” thus becomes in the scriptures a frequent way to describe salvation. Nephi teaches his brothers, “The righteous have I justified, and testified that they should be lifted up at the last day” (1 Nephi 16:2). In the Doctrine and Covenants we find this image used frequently. The Lord tells Martin Harris, “And if thou art faithful in keeping my commandments, thou shalt be lifted up at the last day” (D&C 5:35). Oliver Cowdery is instructed, “Stand fast in the work wherewith I have called you, and a hair of your head shall not be lost, and you shall be lifted up at the last day” (D&C 9:14). Likewise, the Three Witnesses, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, are all promised, “And if you do these last commandments of mine, which I have given you, the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; for my grace is sufficient for you, and you shall be lifted up at the last day” (D&C 17:8).

3. *In the New Testament the invitation to take up our cross was the symbol of discipleship.* In the synoptic Gospels, just after Jesus had promised Peter that he would give to him the sealing keys, Jesus began to speak openly about his destiny to go to Jerusalem,



where he would “suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (Matthew 16:21; see Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22). Peter immediately tried to assure his Master that this would not happen, to which Jesus responded by saying, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:23–24). Luke, who uses a slightly different form of the verb (*arneomai*), adds, “Let him deny himself, and take up his cross *daily*, and follow me (Luke 9:23; emphasis added). What does it mean for us to “take up our cross”? In the context of these passages it means to deny ourselves. Both Matthew and Mark use the Greek word *aparneomai*. It suggests that discipleship entails the breaking of every link that ties a person even to themselves. It is about being able, like the Savior, to submit our will to the will of the Father. As Elder Maxwell taught, it is “really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God’s altar.”<sup>34</sup> Just as there was a cost for the Savior on Calvary, there is also a cost to be a disciple. In fact, in other settings, Jesus also taught, “And he that taketh *not* his cross, and followeth after me, *is not worthy of me*” (Matthew 10:38; emphasis added), and even more pointedly, “Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, *cannot* be my disciple” (Luke 14:27; emphasis added).

Paul understood something of the cost of being a disciple. He acknowledged to the Philippians, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ . . . that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death [i.e., to be like Christ in his death; Greek *summorphizō*]" (Philippians 3:7, 10). More specifically, he declared to the Galatians, "I have been crucified with Christ." For him, crucifixion was a symbol not of death but of life, a new life in Christ. "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).

Thus the symbol of the cross is *not* a postbiblical symbol adopted by Christians; rather it is a symbol identified by the Savior himself, and emphasized by Paul. The symbol of the cross is important because in the New Testament it is *the* symbol of our discipleship and commitment to leave behind the allurements of the world and dedicate ourselves to the Lord and his kingdom.

4. *The signs of the Crucifixion were so important for Christ that he kept them even after he received a glorified, resurrected body.* When Jesus first came to the temple in Bountiful, the people were not initially sure who appeared to them. Even though, after the third time, they

finally understood the words of the Father, “Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him,” when they saw Jesus descending out of heaven and standing in the midst of them, “they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them” (3 Nephi 11:7–8). So Jesus declared to them:

Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning. . . .

Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.” (vv. 10–11, 14)

Here stood the Son of God in a glorified, resurrected body; a body that was perfect in every way, except for the fact that, as prophesied by Zechariah (see Zechariah 13:6), he chose to retain the marks of



The signs of the Crucifixion did not cause mourning but were a reason to rejoice!

his Crucifixion. For the people of 3 Nephi, this retention was one of the tangible proofs that this being was not an angel but was in fact the Savior of the world. And after they each went forth one by one and “thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet. . . . They did cry out with one accord, saying: Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him” (3 Nephi 11:15–17).

I wonder how many of those present at that supernal time might have remembered what Jehovah had said to the prophet Isaiah, and what had been recorded in the Nephite records: “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands” (Isaiah 49:15–16; 1 Nephi 21:16). In this instance, the signs of the Crucifixion did not cause mourning but were a reason to rejoice!

Finally, Elder Holland gives us another reason to rejoice in the signs of the Crucifixion that Christ retained in his resurrected body:

When we stagger or stumble, He is there to steady and strengthen us. In the end He is there to save us, and for all this He gave His life. However dim our days may seem, they have been a lot darker for the Savior of the world. As a reminder of those days, Jesus has chosen, even in a resurrected, otherwise perfected body, to retain for the benefit of His disciples the wounds in His hands and in His feet and in His side—signs, if you will, that painful things happen even to the pure and the perfect; signs, if you will, that pain in this world is *not* evidence that God doesn’t love you; signs, if you will, that problems pass and happiness can be ours. . . . It is the wounded Christ who is the Captain of our souls, He who yet bears the scars of

our forgiveness, the lesions of His love and humility, the torn flesh of obedience and sacrifice. These wounds are the principal way we are to recognize Him when He comes.<sup>35</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Most of the Christian world refers to Easter Friday as Good Friday. This may seem odd for a day that commemorates death, even the cruel, torturous death of the Son of God. It is called Good Friday because the word *good* in English can mean “pious or holy.” In that sense, Good Friday is a most holy day. But in spite of sordid details of the way Jesus was crucified, I hope that during the Easter season we will find reason to rejoice and celebrate his death as well as his Resurrection. Because of his death on the cross, we can celebrate the grace of his Atonement; we can rejoice in God’s great love for us that he would give his Only Begotten Son; we can celebrate the opportunity to respond to Jesus’ invitation for all to come, follow him, and be his disciples; and in our darkest moments, we can find solace and reason to rejoice in the memory that we are engraven in the palms of his hands! I thank God for *all* of the Easter season.

## NOTES

1. Kenneth L. Woodward, “What Mormons Believe,” *Newsweek*, September 1, 1980, 70.
2. Josephus, *The Jewish War* (1928; repr., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968) 7.203.

3. J. Schneider, “σταυρός,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 7:573.
4. Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 22–23.
5. “The soldiers out of rage and hatred amused themselves by nailing their prisoners in different postures; and so great was their number, that space could not be found for the crosses nor crosses for the bodies.” Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.451. “Yonder I see instruments of torture [crosses; *crucis* in Latin], not indeed of a single kind, but differently contrived by different peoples; some hang their victims with head toward the ground, some impale their private parts, others stretch out their arms on a fork-shaped gibbet.” Seneca, *Dialogue: De Consolatione ad Marciam* (1932; repr., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965) 20.3.
6. Herodotus, *History* (1921; repr., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971) 3.125.3; Polybius, *Histories* (1923; repr., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011) 8.21.
7. Galatians 3:13; 11Q19 64.9–11. The apocryphal *Acts of Andrew* describes Andrew’s crucifixion: “They . . . bound his feet and his arm-pits, without nailing him.” Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 2:148.
8. Kent P. Jackson, “The Crucifixion,” in *From the Last Supper through the Resurrection: The Savior’s Final Hours*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 320n7. See also Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.308; 5.451.
9. Joe Zias and James H. Charlesworth, “Crucifixion: Archaeology, Jesus, and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 279–80. See also Herodotus, *History* 9.120; Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.451.
10. “They were accordingly scourged and subjected to torture of every description, before being killed, and then crucified opposite the walls.” Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.449.
11. Seneca, *Dialogue: De Consolatione ad Marciam* 20.3. See text in note 5.
12. Cicero, *Philippics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009) 13.27.

13. See Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* (1943; repr., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966) 12.255–56; Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.307; Philo, *Flaccus* 10.84. English translation from *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Version*, trans. C. D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992).
14. Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World*, 25. For an example of having to carry the cross beam, see Plutarch, “On the Delays of Divine Vengeance,” *Moralia* (1959; repr., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968) 7:554 A, B.
15. Juvenal, *Satire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004) 14.77–78; *Acts of Andrew*, in Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 148.
16. “The bodies of those who suffer capital punishment are not to be refused to their relatives; and the deified Augustus writes in the tenth book of his *de Vita Sua* that he also had observed this [custom]. Today, however, the bodies of those who are executed are buried in the same manner as if this had been sought and granted. But sometimes it is not allowed, particularly [with the bodies] of those condemned for treason. . . . The bodies of executed persons are to be granted to any who seek them for burial.” Corpus Iuris Civilis, *Pandectae* 48.24.1–3; English translation in *The Digest of Justinian*, ed. Theodor Mommsen and Paul Krueger, trans. Alan Watson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 4:863. In the Dead Sea Scrolls *Temple Scroll* it was forbidden that corpses be left on a tree overnight (11Q19 64.11–13). “I have known of instances before now of men who had been crucified when this festival and holiday [i.e., the Emperor’s birthday] was at hand, being taken down and given up to their relations, in order to receive the honours of sepulture, and to enjoy such observances as are due to the dead.” Philo, *Flaccus* 10.83.
17. For excellent LDS discussions on crucifixion, see Jackson, “The Crucifixion,” 318–37; Donald W. Parry and Jay A. Parry, “The Cruel Cross: The Crucifixion,” in *Symbols and Shadows: Unlocking a Deeper Understanding of the Atonement* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2009), 222–53.
18. Quintilian, *Declamations* 274.13. English translation in *Quintilian: The Lesser Declamations*, ed. and trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge,



- MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1:259.
19. Erkki Koskenniemi, Kirsi Nisula, and Jorma Toppari, "Wine Mixed with Myrrh (Mark 15.23) and Crurifragium (John 19.31–32): Two Details of the Passion Narratives," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27, no. 4 (2005): 279–91.
  20. Tertullian responds to this Jewish complaint in *An Answer to the Jews*, trans. S. Thelwall (New York: Kessinger, 2004), 164.
  21. Lucian, *The Death of Peregrinus*, 13, 11, in *Lucian: Selected Dialogues*, trans. Desmond Costa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 77.
  22. Justin Martyr, *First Apology of Justin* 1.13.4, in *Early Christian Fathers*, ed. and trans. Cyril C. Richardson (New York: Collier Books, Macmillan, 1970), 249.
  23. Minucius Felix, *Octavius* (1931; repr., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984) 9.4.
  24. George M. A. Hanfmann, "The Crucified Donkey Man: Achaïos and Jesus," in *Studies in Classical Art and Archaeology: A Tribute to Peter Heinrich von Blanckenhagen*, ed. Günter Kopcke and Mary B. Moore (Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1979), 205–7, pl. 55, 1.2; Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries*, trans. Michael Steinhauser, ed. Marshall D. Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 338; G. H. R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1979* (North Ryde, NSW: Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, Macquarie University, 1987), 137.
  25. The charge that Christians worshipped a god with an ass's head is one that early Christian writers had to deal with. For example, see Tertullian, *To the Nations* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 11, 14; and Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 9.3. Jews also had to deal with this type of charge. Josephus recounts that Apion claimed a man by the name of Zabidus entered their temple and "snatched up the golden head of the pack-ass." Josephus shows his disdain for the account by inserting the comment "as he facetiously calls it." Josephus, *Against Apion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press) 2.114.

26. “πρῶτος,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 726.
27. Justin Martyr, *First Apology of Justin* 1.13.4 and 55.1, 249, 278.
28. For another discussion of Latter-day Saint teachings on the cross, see Robert L. Millet, *What Happened to the Cross? Distinctive LDS Teachings* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2007), 96–114.
29. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), 1:774–75.
30. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 4:232n22.
31. Neal A. Maxwell, “Apply the Atoning Blood of Christ,” *Ensign*, November 1997, 23; emphasis added.
32. Jeffrey R. Holland, “None Were with Him,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 88.
33. Compare John 12:32–33, where Jesus says, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.”
34. Neal A. Maxwell, “‘Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father,’” *Ensign*, November 1995, 24.
35. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Teaching, Preaching, Healing,” *Ensign*, January 2003, 42.

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.



Robert Barrett, *Christ Teaching in the Spirit World*. © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.