

The Atonement

by Cleon Skousen

President Kimball introduced one subject in General Priesthood Meeting that isn't generally discussed that I want to comment on because it's the whole foundation of Easter that's never discussed. We just don't talk about it, and we're the only people that know about it. And we've almost lost it as a doctrine of the Church. So I was quite thrilled when President Kimball introduced it. He said:

"I want everybody to understand that in this life we only have a very limited amount of priesthood authority to function with. There are many ordinances that as yet must be given to us in the next world. One of them is the ordinance of resurrection. We're not allowed to perform that ordinance here. It's an ordinance of the priesthood, we'll get it over there.

Over in the next life we'll also have the ordinance of begetting spirit children with spirit bodies and that's something that we have no power or capacity to do here. Physical bodies, yes, but not spirit."

Then he got onto a theme that I'm sure may have sounded a little strange to some ears. He said:

"You'll be able to have access to the intelligences in the universe and organize them and make planets and organize kingdoms."

Now this is a beautiful doctrine that it's time we discussed a little bit more because if we understand that principle, it will help us to comprehend why there had to be an atonement. I don't know whether this bothers you or not, but as I was a little boy sitting in Sunday School and they talked about the terrible suffering of Jesus on the cross, I would say to my Sunday School teacher, "Who wanted that? What was all the suffering for? Everybody talks about all the suffering. What was it for? Who was it to satisfy?" And my teacher said, "Well, it was to satisfy Heavenly Father." And that didn't answer my childish questions either. Seems like if Heavenly Father wanted us to come down on this earth, after we'd repented, He'd just say, "Come back on up, you did the best you could." What did we need all this suffering up there for?

When I (Cleon Skousen) went on my mission I asked James Widtsoe, my mission president, all my childhood questions concerning all the suffering of Jesus. Why all the pain? President Widtsoe said, "This is the most profound question of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and it shouldn't be answered unless people are first capable of at least wondering about it so they can hear the answer. The answer to this question is what President Kimball was talking about in priesthood meeting. He didn't associate it with the subject of the Atonement, but it's the foundation of it."

The following are passages in the scriptures—the answers to the questions of the pain of the atonement. If you look each one up you will appreciate them much more than if you just say,

“Now I know where.” Actually read each passage and you’ll begin to see what a marvelous ocean, an avalanche, a veritable waterfall of truth has poured out upon the saints in the latter days, and some of it we’ve allowed to run off without appreciating what it really represented. Now, first of all, is II Nephi 2:14. This is what you’ll read:

And now, my sons, I speak unto you these things for your profit and learning; for there is a God, and He hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both things to act and things to be acted upon.

Father Lehi says that everything in the universe is made of two things. This is where we get our “building blocks” concept—something to act and something to be acted upon. Now the next reference is D&C 93:29.

The thing which acts is called “eternal intelligences”. In the plural— eternal intelligences! The next one is D&C 93:30.

These intelligences are independent and act voluntarily. They are not compelled. The heavens wait on them until they obey. They don’t do anything until they are ready, just like us! And our Heavenly Father built the whole universe with this element of action, this energy factor in the universe is intelligence and it only operates as fast and in a direction that it is willing to follow. Now Abraham 3:19.

These intelligences are graded from the lowest to the highest and the highest is God’s intelligence Himself. And we’re in between. Some of the intelligences are assigned to the elements, and some were assigned to plant life and some were assigned to animals and those that were his very special, superior, super deluxe intelligences were given bodies in his image. And you are they. You are very, very, very special people. Now Joseph Smith describes this in Documentary History of the Church Vol. 4, p. 519. He says:

“And I explained to the Quorum of the Twelve and their wives the doctrine of the eternal progression of intelligences.”

Then he doesn’t tell us what the explanation was. So you have to go to Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt and Heber C. Kimball and they tell what was explained to them but they got the doctrine from him. Our next one is D&C 93:33.

That which is acted upon is called “eternal element” (two blocks—act, acted upon)—element, matter. Joseph Smith said that matter exists on two dimensions— the very refined element is called spirit. And the more coarse element is called this temporal matter we’ve got here, physical (D&C 131:7–8). It’s all matter but it exists on two planes. Like ice and water. They’re the same thing but they’re on different dimensions. Everything is made up of a combination of intelligence and matter. They are the building blocks of the universe. (Abraham 4:10,12,18; Helaman 12:8–9)

Now if you’re interested in science, this will be very exciting information. Our most advanced research scientists in the pure research area have just proven this to be true. Matter does not function mechanically. It has an element of finite intelligence in it, they say. That’s what Bergsen called it—the French philosopher. It can distinguish, it can choose, it doesn’t always

do what the rules say. Some of these little elements are just as ornery as you and me. They go wandering around—and in the aggregate we say that that's the law of chemistry. In the aggregate, yes, but you look at them individually and they're fooling around. As a matter of fact, Robert Milligan said that if all the elements were obeying all of the rules of chemistry, you would never die. Through rebellion in the flesh. And they're called seeds of death—you may have heard of that before. Now at God's command, element which has received intelligence attached to it, at God's command it will obey. You want a mountain to move? Talk to it. "MOVE!" "YES, SIR." And they move when God commands it, or his priesthood does it by his authorization. When God commands, these intelligences obey, in the elements. That's Jacob 4:6; I Nephi 20:13.

Now listen to Brigham Young discussing this principle. There is life or intelligence in all matter through the vast extent of all the eternities. It is in the rock, in the sand, in water, air, the gases, and in short, in every description and organization of matter whether it be solid, liquid, or gaseous. Particle operating with particle. Now, all of a sudden, we begin to catch the vision of the miracle of God's creation. He goes up into the outer darkness of unorganized intelligences and unorganized bits of element and combines them together so that a little tiny bit of element has an intelligence attached to it and now you can command it. They're combined in certain ways. The Lord has given to all of them a pattern, which becomes the law by which they operate. Some will accept electricity and some will resist it. Some will combine with various things and you get a combination—2 parts Hydrogen and 1 part Oxygen—and we call it water. That's because they were organized in that way. They're so marvelously organized that you can take one single little complex organization—it's called a cell—and it's fertilized by another cell. And within 9 months because of the DNA organization that is set up there by highly intelligent Heavenly Father, that will grow into trillions of cells, called a human being. All by design. You can almost stand in a worshipful feeling toward our Heavenly Father as you realize what is possible in that organizational structure. (Discourses of Brigham Young, p.368–369)

Now let me show you a miracle. See that hand? That is made of dirt! You want to see a miracle in engineering and Godly power, it's in that hand. That is made of dirt! And our Heavenly Father can speak to all those little intelligences and He could turn them back into dirt that fast. Or He can say to them—as to the hand of Moses—"My children, halfway, not all the way, just halfway." Like leprosy, maybe? "Moses, put your hand into your bosom." So he puts it in and the Lord says, "Now, my children, Moses, take your hand out." Leprosy! Dripping, incurable, on the way back to dirt. "Moses, put your hand back into your bosom." Then the Lord says, "Now my children, as you were—everybody back in your places. Take your hand out, Moses." Ah! Beautiful, clean, strong, pink flesh. That's the miracle of God. Children are a miracle. Everything around us is a miracle, and for the first time we're beginning to understand. God speaks and they obey. Things are made of that which acts and that which is acted upon, and they've been identified for us by name and President Kimball said that in the next world—that's where we have access to these intelligences to organize our own great systems. Now, our Heavenly Father says, "Do you know what makes me God?" You might want to put this down. The source of God's power is D&C 29:36, Moses 4:1,4.

Here he talks about the source of his power—what makes him God. What do you think it turns out to be? What makes a being suddenly or over the process of time a God? MY HONOR is my

power. My honor is my power. So that when I speak and say, "water, reorganize into wine—a very high grade of wine, please," there's no problem. They reorganize. We called it a miracle. It was nothing in the world but obedient intelligences. That's the doctrine.

Now keeping that in mind, that's D&C 29:36, what would happen if the Father violated the confidence of those intelligences? What do you think would happen? No church on the face of the earth has dared to announce the doctrine contained in the Book of Alma, Chapter 42. No church has dared to suggest that God could fall. And our Heavenly Father says, "I want you to know that I walk the razor's edge of Celestial Law continually in order to maintain the confidence and the honor of all these who trust me because that's the source of my power." This gives us a whole new understanding of our Heavenly Father. In Alma 42:13,22,25 he repeats it over and over again. And in Mormon 9:19 it is repeated. If He were unjust, if He were arbitrary, if He were false in any sense, He would what? CEASE TO BE GOD. Who dares to suggest that anything could happen to challenge the power of the almighty Elohim, chief of the Gods? Our Heavenly Father says, "I want you to understand me. I work within very strict rules. I have to function so that I enjoy their confidence and do not violate it." Now Alma 34:9.

The Father says, "Once I had put you down into the second estate, I lost complete control over the possibility of bringing you back Myself." God the Father cannot save us. These are doctrines of the church that we seldom put in these dimensions. But this is the Easter story. This is really the Easter story. In fact, it says there that if there had not been some way to get us back to the presence of the Father, and it had been left to the Father and He had been helpless to get us back, we would have ended back in outer darkness with Satan and his hosts. We'd have gone the same route they went. And everything that had been organized by the Father in connection with us, our earth and the other earths on which part of this family is located and all of the creations connected with it, would have disintegrated and gone back to outer darkness, disorganized, That's the scripture.

Now this takes all the magic out of creation. All of a sudden, we can understand it, in our finite way. All of a sudden, our Heavenly Father becomes much more rational, comprehensive, and our appreciation begins to accelerate as we begin to realize what a remarkable, beautiful, powerful personality He is. II Nephi 9:9 is where it says we would end up with Satan and his angels were there no atonement. That it is absolutely beyond the capacity of our Heavenly Father to lift children who have stumbled while learning the difference between good and evil back into His presence. Because He has to operate according to law and all the other intelligences would say, "Father, now they have sinned and come short of Thy glory. They cannot come back. Remember all the laws that held us back? We didn't get to be those top people, we were graded down. Remember? Remember laws? You kept talking about laws . . ." These are they who demand justice and will not let us return. And should God try it, as it says in Alma, they would cease to honor Him. And He would cease to be God. That's the doctrine.

Then how do we do it? How do we do it? Alma 34:11. No person can suffer for the sins of another person, that's the law. The law says no person can suffer for the sins of another person. That's what these little intelligences are saying—"that's the law." Now, you just stop and think why that is so. If I commit a very serious offense could my brother die for it and

satisfy you people? Even though we love each other and my brother says, “No, don’t let him be killed, I’ll die for him.” Do you think everyone would be happy about that? No, it would violate your sense of justice. And it does all these little intelligences. And Alma 34:11 says, “No person can die or be punished for the sins of another person and have it acceptable as justice.” See, there’s demands of justice. That’s what these little intelligences are doing. “There’s an offense there, they cannot come back, Father.” Everybody see the problem?

Now, the genius of the solution. The Gods know that these little intelligences have a capacity for compassion. Compassion—just like you and me. Intelligences have a capacity for compassion. Therefore, the atonement is based not on law, but mercy. That’s Alma 34:15. In other words, we’re going to try and get to these little intelligences in some way so that we can overcome the demands of justice. With what? Sympathy, mercy—so that we’ll actually overcome the demands of justice. That’s Alma 34:15.

Now, once the families of Gods—and they must have worked this out eons and eons ago with other families, so this is a pattern. Remember when they were selecting the Savior? Jesus volunteered, but Satan said, “You know, Father, this is very old fashioned, this just isn’t necessary. We can satisfy the intelligences of the universe. Just put our children in straight jackets and get them through the second estate . . . it’s a great idea, I thought of it. I really would like to get credit for it because I’m offering the whole family, the whole human family, insurance. All I’m asking you to do is to give up the hang-up that the family has always had on this free agency thing. It’s only for this little bit of time. We’ll put them in a straight jacket, get them through the second estate—no body can object to them then. We’ve taken them down, they’ve got bodies, we’ve prevented them from violating any laws . . . bring them back . . . it’s that simple.”

“No!” the father said, “it isn’t that simple.” Apparently implying that if you introduce compulsion into our eternal plan of salvation, or into the cosmic universe, you put coercion there. Anyway, your sowing the seeds of what? . . . Revolution, disintegration. Everything we have out there is moving as it is willing to move. You don’t get revolution that way.

Then Satan says, “I’ll start a revolution.” And he does. I wouldn’t be a bit surprised if the real followers of the Father there, for a while, were a minority. And we had a big uncommitted, in the middle, majority. Jesus said, “Father, I’ll do it your way—I’ll do it the way they’ve always had to do it. We do have casualties, true—but, at least we maintain a voluntary participation that you’ve always done in the past. And I know someone has to suffer in order to have that atonement, and create that sense of compassion, but I’ll do it.” And so we had a big argument, and the revelation says that the war in heaven was a testimony meeting.

As we said one to another, “The Father’s way is the right way. Now you don’t want to introduce compulsion. If you start compulsion, who says where it could end? Lucifer’s trying to steal the throne of our Heavenly Father and he wants the glory for it and there’s nothing in that direction but rebellion and destruction.” We finally got 2/3’s on our side. I won’t be surprised when we see this in the vision if we only had a minority to begin with. But we finally got 2/3’s. And the other 1/3 went for no-risk insurance. They wouldn’t take a chance with us.

All right, now, how does this atonement work? Watch how the principle functions. Now you're an intelligence. You are capable of being subjected to so much sympathy and compassion, you've stopped asking for every pound of flesh that the law permits. Ever notice that in yourself? It works—first the principle. They must have a person who is infinite as it says in Alma 34—one who is infinitely loved. Infinite means completely—everybody recognizes this. So we take a spirit who is so superior He's first counselor in the first presidency of heaven. He's so honored that when the Father wants something done He speaks to this person and he tells all the intelligences what to do. And He's identified as the Word. He's the one through whom the word passes. He's loved and respected by all, just like the Father. So we use him. He is infinitely loved. And we have Him come down into the second estate and live a perfect life without offense so that He can return to the Father and incidental thereto while laboring among the human family, we have Him suffer so terribly that the little intelligences of the entire universe are revolted. It's abhorrent—the suffering that He went through. They loved Him. As it says in the Book of Mormon, even the elements of the earth couldn't stand it, and churned back and forth until the whole face of the land northward was different than before. The very elements were crying out against this terrible torture of someone that they loved. And all this was by design. That's the mission of Jesus Christ. You must suffer so much that those little intelligences, when you come and plead on behalf of someone who did the best that he could, which is called repentance—they'll say, "Well, they really shouldn't go back, but if you want them, after all you went through for them . . . yes, they can go up." That's the atonement.

And so listen to Alma 34 as we hear the prophets who use to understand and preach this doctrine extensively, which we've kind of stopped preaching among ourselves. Listen to this statement here. Alma 34:15.

"And thus He shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on His name. This being the intent of this last sacrifice—to bring about the bowels of mercy." Whose mercy? The bowels of mercy . . . whose mercy? Our Heavenly Father already has mercy toward us. This is His plan. We don't have to create that in Him. We have to create it in those that are demanding justice. "Father, they've sinned—come short of the glory of God." There's where you must arouse the bowels of mercy, which overpower justice, being the demands of justice. "And brings about the means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance. And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice. And encircles them in the arms of safety. While he that exerciseth not faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice. Therefore, only unto them that hath faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption."

Now let's turn to D&C 45 and listen to the Savior telling about it. Verse 3—listen to Him who is the advocate with your Father—who is pleading your cause before him saying, "Father, behold the suffering and death of Him who did no sin. In whom thou wast well pleased. Behold the blood of thy Son, which was shed. The blood of Him who thou prayest that Thyself may be glorified, Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren"—see how He does that? "Spare these my brethren that believe on my name." He doesn't plead for those who don't believe, He can't—He's not allowed to—it would rob justice. "Spare these that believe on my name, that they may come to me and have everlasting life." And the Father can do it without ceasing to be God. Because of what? Mercy! Let me give you an example of how that works.

During the Civil War there was a 19 year old soldier who went to sleep on guard duty. A whole section of the Union army was wiped out in that particular sector. He lost many of his very best friends all because he went to sleep and they were able to make a surprise attack on one flank of that particular defense effort. He survived the battle. He was court-martialed and sentenced to be hanged for neglect of duty for going to sleep while servicing as a guard, which was routine military law. The death sentence and order of execution was placed on the desk of President Lincoln and he was prepared to sign it. We lost a lot of valuable men because a 19 year old soldier went to sleep. President Lincoln was communicated with by a little old woman. This mother said to President Lincoln, "When this war started, I had a husband and 6 sons. First I lost my husband, then I lost my sons—5 of them. I just have one son left. And he's about to be executed for neglect of duty. He feels terrible about what he did. He knows he deserves to die. President Lincoln, I wonder if, maybe, because you have the pardoning power under the constitution, you could find it in your heart to let me have the last of my family—for my sake?" President Lincoln said to the mother, "For your sake, I pardon your son. I pray God he'll survive the war and be a blessing to you all the days of your life." See how compassion works? We completely overcame the demands of justice. And nobody criticized President Lincoln for using his pardoning power in that case once they found out what the plea of that little mother had been. And that's the way all of us are.

I just pause at this moment to ask the question, "What do you think an intelligence is?" What is an intelligence? Well, we don't know. It's a wonderful, self-knowing, eternal little entity that says, "I am." You see me up her, but what you're really seeing isn't me—this is mine. And the little "I am" that always existed—I can locate him pretty well. I touch my chin, and that's outside and below me. Shut your eyes and touch your right ear— is that you? Or is that to the right of you? Notice that? Put your hand on the top of your head. Is that you or is that above you? Isn't that interesting? Put your fingers out here—is that you or is that way, way, way out from you? You see, "I am" is right in there—that's the seat of power. Want to know what an intelligence is? That's it, that's you! And you're one of the very advanced intelligences. You're so advanced that one of our brothers on this level thought that he was as smart as the Father, and tried to take over the Father's kingdom. Those other little intelligences wouldn't have thought of that. But the Father's elevated far beyond us. I tell you, this is an exciting place to be, and it took eons to bring us here and everyone is so precious. Our Heavenly Father says, "If you see one of them trying, then backsliding, then he tries, keeps backsliding, you work with him if you have to forgive him 70 x 7 — as long as he's trying—keep in there, push him—we might make it eventually—maybe we've got an Alma in the making. Who knows?"

Toward the evening they went to the last supper. They partook of the passover lamb. And he looked out over his 12 apostles and He said, "One of you will betray me." Peter says to John, "You're closest. You ask Him, who?" And John the Beloved said, "Master, who?" The Savior whispered, "He to whom I give the sop." And He picked up a piece of bread, dipped it in the gravy, handed it to Judas Iscariot and said, "Judas, whatsoever thou doest, do thou quickly." Judas got up and went out. I wonder if he suspected that maybe Jesus suspected. We don't know. We don't think so. He'd already received the 30 pieces of silver—he'd already approved to betray the Christ. He went out. He went to see the elders of the city. Now it says that Jesus became very depressed. And then rose up and he gave that beautiful high priest prayer

found in John, Chapter 17, where he pleads with the Father to, "Bless these, that they may be one as thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee- That they also may be one in us." And He says, "Bless those who shall believe on their words, who have not seen-that they also may be one, that we all may be one. I pray not for the world, but for those that thou hast given me out of the world. That they may be one." And in the greatest of anguish and suffering He pleaded with that prayer.

Now, He said, "Let us be gone. I need to pray." And so they went from the part of the city where the poor people lived-we think that's where it really was-across the temple square, out through the golden gate on the eastern side, down through the brook Cidron, and up unto the top of the Mount of Olives. It was dark now, and as He came in, He told eight of his disciples to stay by the gate. He took Peter, James and John and went into the grove. Then He had them watch, and He went further up the hillside into the grove, and apparently only John stayed awake. And John heard Him fall full-length on the ground and said, "O Father, all things are possible unto thee. Take this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but Thy will be done." What He's saying is, "Father, You are God. You're all powerful-all things are possible unto Thee-don't make me go through this. We can work it out some other way." And that angel that came to minister unto Jesus, undoubtedly, explained to Him something He'd forgotten-He's forgotten His preexistence. He was born to suffer and die. What the angel must have said, and undoubtedly did, though we don't have the message-but I won't be surprised if it was something like this, "O Jehovah, Thou Son of God-You do not have to do this, unless you wish. But you should know that unless you fulfill this assignment, the Father will lose not only this family, this whole family, but the entire creation associated with them. The planets, the plants, the animals, everything that you used your hands to create, will be lost to the Father and go back to the chaos of outer darkness from which it came."

Because when the angel had finished ministering to Him, He said, "Then Thy will be done." And He sweat drops of blood. The channels of His lifestream couldn't even contain the fluid of life and it spilled out into the sweat glands and poured out on His skin as it were great drops of blood. The agony of that moment. Now you and I couldn't have endured that-we don't have any idea how terrible that was. But Jesus has given us some idea of what it was like in the 19th Section of The Doctrine and Covenants, in which He says, verse 15, "Therefore, I command you to repent. Repent lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth and by my wrath and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore. How sore you know not-how exquisite you know not. How hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent. But if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I, which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble with pain and to bleed at every pore, and suffer both body and spirit and would that I might not drink the bitter cup and shrink. Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparation unto the children of men." "Now will you accept it? Will you let me blot them out? I can, if you'll be obedient through repentance, the spirit will justify you, and I will sanctify you. I've done it for you. Come unto me." After that, Judas came with the soldiers, and Jesus heard them coming-He came back and here were His apostles sound asleep. We don't know what else happened- John didn't stay awake. He was tired. Judas came up to Him. It was night- they had torches-they'd seen Jesus in the temple square but it was night time and they wanted to be sure and get the right one because the

others will all flee as soon as they grab somebody. And so Judas came up to Him, Took Jesus in his arms and said, "Hail, Master." And the Savior looked down at him and said, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" The soldiers screamed, "Seize him! Seize him!" And everybody fled. Then the Savior was taken up to the house of Ananias and we all remember the terrible night that He spent. We remember the three denials by Peter—he was petrified—Peter will never forgive himself for these three denials. The next morning there was an illegal trial before the Sanhedrin. They can't kill Jesus without the consent of Pilate, so they take Him into the Antonian, named after Mark Antony and this was a big fortress that's part of the temple square, and right in the open square they brought in Jesus and turned Him over to Pilate.

Pilate tried to create sympathy in their hearts by flogging Him and putting a crown of thorns on His head and blood running down His face, His robe is just saturated with blood and they bring Him out and say in Latin, "Behold! Behold the man!" And they scream, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him! That's not enough." "Bring me water—see ye to it—I wash my hands of this judgment."

"Crucify Him!" And so they took Him with the cross—carried it as long as His broken body could endure the pain and finally they took Him up to the place of the skull and there they nailed Him to the cross and swung it into position. Two thieves were crucified on either side. The earth trembled and the sky grew black at noon and remained black with the ground trembling occasionally clear up until 3 o'clock.

Over in America, the whole continent was in turmoil as were the islands of the sea. Towards the end, He cried out, "I thirst." On a sponge they put vinegar up because that was supposed to alleviate the pain a little bit. He looked down in His agony and He said, "John, behold thy mother; mother, behold thy son." Apparently Joseph had passed away. He's just saying, "John, take care of my mother, Mary." And then, after they'd tormented Him and pestered Him, "Why don't you come down? Why don't you heal yourself?" All of this is in the 110th Psalm—all of it was seen by David. He knew the very words Jesus would say. And then almost when the agony was beyond bearing, and it was getting toward dusk when they would have to start breaking their legs so they would die fast, suddenly Jesus looked up and said, "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani? My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The Spirit of the Father had withdrawn from this man—left Him absolutely alone, hanging on that cross. But just for a moment—and then the Spirit of God surged back into Him, to say, in effect, "My Son, I'm here—we did it!" He lifted up His face and He said, "It is finished. Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." And he departed.

At that moment Jesus became the Christ. He had done what was necessary to overcome the demands of justice so we could go back. He did it. And by the power of that great force that was in Him, He now had three days and nights and would have that body lifted, resurrected, purified, and glorified, and it's such a thrilling thing to contemplate Mary Magdalene coming and leaning against the wall of the tomb—she knows that someone stole the body. She thinks maybe it's the gardener and she sees that person standing through her tears, standing there. She said, "Master, if thou hast born Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him and I will bear Him away." And the person said, "Mary." She looked up and said, "Master!" He said,

“Touch me not. I am not yet ascended to my Father who is in heaven. But go and tell the brethren I ascend unto my God and their God.” And he was gone. That’s the Easter story.

And our Heavenly Father suffered so much that night in Gethsemane when that Son of His lay among the leaves underneath the olive trees and said, “O Father, if it be possible, take this cup from me.” Our Heavenly Father was suffering so much that moment that He wanted at least one of His children of the earth to know what that was like that night for Him. And so He said to our great ancestor, Abraham, “I want you to take your best, beloved son up onto the top of Mount Moriah and I want you to offer him unto me as a sacrifice.” “My son! To whom you promised his seed might be like unto the sands of the seashore. Mine only son and heir. I kill him? And burn him?” And without telling Sarah, he took this young man, probably in his early teens, up to the top of Mount Moriah. And Josephus, who had access to all the books of the temple, says that he said to his son, “My child, I wouldn’t have had you without a special blessing from God to your mother. And He, having sent you to me, now asks that I send you back—not by disease, or war, or old age, but as a sacrament unto Him at the hands of your own Father. I now send you to Him.” And he raised the knife. Oh, the anguish of that father! And in Jacob 4:5 of The Book of Mormon it says that that was done to symbolize the feelings of the Father and the Son. That was specifically done so that at least one human father would know what the pain and anguish was like that night in Gethsemane as Jesus said, “O Father, all things are possible unto Thee—take this cup from me.”

You know as you begin to understand this beautiful doctrine—the intelligences in the universe, the fact that their honor of God is what makes Him God—the fact that if He lost their confidence, He’d cease to be God—these are basic doctrines of the restored gospel as it says in Jacob 2. Why don’t we talk about the atonement more? We don’t talk about the real basis of the atonement—we talk about it as a proven fact, without ever reaching out and saying, “Heavenly Father, I think I understand just a little. I think I understand.” I don’t know what it does for you but it has made me to love my Heavenly Father like I’ve never loved Him before. And I’ve learned to love the Savior Jesus Christ like I’ve never loved Him before. Now that I know what those two wonderful people did for me and you and our children and all the people of this world, the planet on which we live—and all the beautiful things that He’s blessed us with. It would have all been destroyed and lost if those two people hadn’t done what they did. I love them for that.

I bear witness that Jesus is the Christ. We have a Father in Heaven who loves us. The atonement is real. The atonement is effective. The atonement works. There is a resurrection. There is forgiveness of sins. Though our sins be as scarlet, if we will truly repent, we can be restored and taken back to our Heavenly Father cleansed like white snow. (Isaiah 1:18) I pray our Heavenly Father that He’ll help us so we won’t let Him down, so we won’t betray the Christ, so we’ll be good missionaries and spread this great message to our neighbors. I pray that we may be worthy of the atonement and gospel of Jesus Christ which has been restored for us, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.