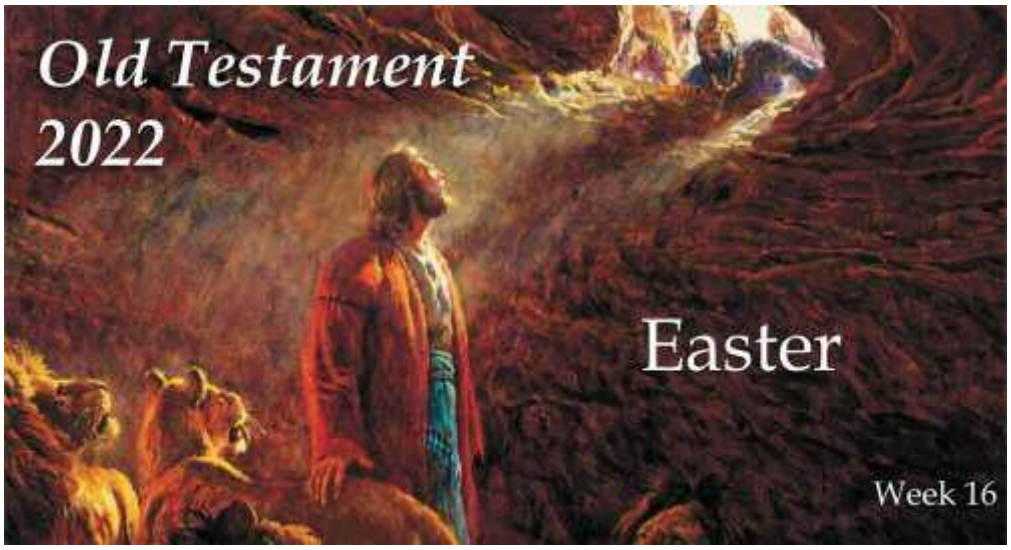

Week 16 is scheduled for study April 11-17, 2022. This Easter week includes a study of the Atonement of Christ, as well as a look at the hope and promises made by those in the Old Testament who knew Christ best.

Personal note: The two lessons each year that scare me most are the Easter and Christmas lessons. I feel completely inadequate when it comes to addressing the life and mission of our Savior. I hope that what I write for this week's lessons will be worthwhile to you.

Day 1

As you read about and ponder the Savior's Atonement this week, consider recording your thoughts and feelings about His sacrifice in your journal or in the space provided in this outline.

The Old Testament testifies of the Savior's atoning sacrifice.

Growing up I thought it odd that no one knew about Jesus in the Old Testament. He just suddenly showed up in the New Testament and got a whole book written about him. Many years later I wondered why the Book of Mormon people knew the name of the Savior would be Jesus Christ, but those in the Old Testament did not. Then it was even more years later that I finally realized from the inspired translation of the Bible by Joseph Smith, that the name of the Savior has never been a well-guarded secret. God has broadcast the Savior's identity from the days of Adam on through history.

I finally patched all these experiences together when I remembered being told that before the Bible was pulled together into book form by the Christians, the Jewish scholars went through the writings they had and systematically removed any reference that might give Jesus any traction with his believers of their day. Hence we have an Old Testament that is devoid of any reference to the Son of God's earthly name. They left in all the references of the Messiah that was to come, because they didn't believe that Jesus was that Messiah. So we have all the references you see listed in the manual for today's lesson. There are many more besides this short list.

My point here is that the Lord has been consistent in telling us who it is we need to look to for our redemption and salvation. It has never been withheld or kept a secret, unless the people have openly rejected that information they had already received. Our Father has always been anxious for us to learn about the Christ, his role in our lives, and what he was sent here to do for all of God's family. It has been wicked and designing men who have deprived us of Christ's identity in mortality.

Have you noticed in the Book of Mormon that the single most often used lie Satan used to deceive the people is that there could be no Christ? Over and over again those who listened to Satan came among the people and taught them that they couldn't know of things to come, and that the teachings of a Messiah were "foolish traditions" passed down from their deluded forefathers. Enlightened people didn't believe such things. And further, have you noticed that multiple times in the Book of Mormon the Lord had to re-reveal the name of His Son to the prophet? Over and over again Satan tried to hide the Savior's earthly identity. I assume it was so that when he came no one would recognize him and it would be easier to make the people not believe his message.

We are truly blessed that the modern prophets have affirmed that the Messiah spoken of in the Old Testament is truly Jesus Christ. The message of his Atonement for our sins has been universally preached since the beginning of time. The message of salvation in and through Christ has remained the same from the beginning of the world down to the present day. As we read the Old Testament, since we won't see the Savior's name written anywhere, we must look for references to his work, his atoning work, and the promises of what the Messiah would someday do for all of mankind. We know this is the Jesus of the New Testament, and we can find comfort that his message is clear and consistent throughout the Old Testament.

Day 2

As you read about and ponder the Savior's Atonement this week, consider recording your thoughts and feelings about His sacrifice in your journal or in the space provided in this outline.

I can find peace and joy through the Savior's Atonement.

As I began looking through today's lesson, I was impressed by the first scripture listed, Moses 5:9-12. It occurred to me that Adam and Eve have a unique perspective on mortality, as the only mortals to ever live who began life on earth as immortals, and without the knowledge of good and evil. They truly knew what it is like to live in a complete state of innocence, without any concept of evil. With that perception in mind, look at how they describe the blessings of the Fall.

Verse 9 - Adam and Eve are filled with the Holy Ghost, and Adam learns that "as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will." Being saved is an individual choice given to all of God's children. Salvation isn't a selective gift given to just some choice souls, but it is offered freely and independently to every living soul. No one will be denied the opportunity to live with God again if that is what they truly want.

Verse 10 - Adam and Eve had a unique perspective in that they had walked and talked with God here on earth. They knew the joy of His company and companionship. Once Adam learned of the plan of salvation for all of humanity (and they hadn't even had children yet) he said, "Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God." To once again see God and to live with Him is the highest privilege we can achieve. And Adam implies here that following God's teachings will bring us joy.

Verse 11 - Eve heard the same things Adam heard, and her response was, "Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient." Did you catch that reference? She said that there is joy in "our

redemption." This is the result of accepting the Savior's Atoning sacrifice for us, and repenting of our sins.

Verse 12 - "And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters." The first couple did what we all do when we find something that brings us great joy, they shared it with those whom they loved. They taught the plan of salvation to all their children.

David's take on the Atonement

King David lost his exaltation because of his choices, yet even he looked at the Atonement of Christ and rejoiced Psalms 16:8-11).

> 8 I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
>
> 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.
>
> 10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
>
> 11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

He knew he would have to spend time in hell for what he did. He also knew that his Savior would deliver him from that torment once he had paid his price for the sins he had committed. David acknowledges that in the presence of God "is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." This coming from someone who knew he would never be able to live in the presence of God for the sins he had committed. What a testimony of the power and strength of Christ's atonement!

Day 3

As you read about and ponder the Savior's Atonement this week, consider recording your thoughts and feelings about His sacrifice in your journal or in the space provided in this outline.

Through His Atonement, Jesus Christ has power to help me overcome sin, death, trials, and weaknesses.

I hope you will read all the scriptures listed for today's lesson and contemplate them. Let's start by looking at the first scripture, Isaiah 61:1-3. All these years, whenever I read these verses, I only fleetingly wondered how these words applied Isaiah, personally. It wasn't until today that it occurred to me that Isaiah was speaking the words of the Savior. It was then that I thought, "Why would the Savior need for Isaiah to speak the words of the Messiah many hundreds of years before the Messiah was born?" Let's look at it again.

> 1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me
> to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
> to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;
>
> 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God;
> to comfort all that mourn;
>
> 3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil
> of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be
> called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

Jesus was in his hometown. He went on to talk about how a prophet is never accepted by his own people, and he gave examples of that to the congregation in the Synagogue. And true to form, when they realized that he was declaring himself the Messiah, they were angry with him, asking each other dismissively, if this wasn't just Joseph's son.

God knew that Jesus needed someone else to declare his Messiahship, so He gave those words to Isaiah to record. Jesus just quoted them then sat down.

> 20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the
> eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.
>
> 21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

This allowed the Savior of mankind to declare himself using the words of the most respected and revered prophet in all of Israel's history, next to Moses himself. The words of Isaiah are literally the truth about the Savior's divine appointment from the Father. These verses in Isaiah define the Savior's role in the plan of salvation and describe the priesthood calling of the Christ.

The whole purpose of the Savior's role in our lives is to provide a way for us to find happiness, find relief from the burdens of sin and mistakes, to find peace, overcome

weaknesses, and to find the strength and comfort needed to pass successfully through the trials and sorrows of this life. His entire reason for being is to bring us home to God once again. There is nothing Jesus ever did that doesn't, in one way or another, contribute to our eternal happiness.

As David pointed out, even hell is a blessing from Christ. Without Christ there would be no way to pay for our sins, for there could be no forgiveness of sins for ever and ever. At least hell, though brutally unpleasant, provides what payment we can make for our own misdeeds, and in the end we are all released from that torment, never to be troubled by our past deeds again. So even hell provides us with a measure of eternal relief from our sins. And if we take advantage of Christ's atoning sacrifice, even hell can be skipped, for our sins will have been covered by Christ's suffering on our behalf.

FHE/Personal Study

Hope in the Atonement of Christ

In the little gray box on page 69 of the manual is this small paragraph to help us become better teachers of Christ.

> To be a Christlike teacher [in your home], perhaps the most important thing you can do is to ... live the gospel with all your heart. ... This is the principal way to qualify for the companionship of the Holy Ghost. You don't have to be perfect, just diligently trying — and seeking forgiveness through the Savior's Atonement whenever you stumble (Teaching in the Savior's Way, 13).

We are commanded to become perfect, even as Christ is perfect. But remember that though Christ is perfect in every sense of the word, we are only commanded to be perfect in the sense that the word perfect means to become whole or complete. We all have gaps in our obedience and our learning in life. As we seek the companionship of the Holy Ghost He shows us where these gaps are, and helps us to figure out how to fill them with truth and righteous living. Little by little (and that is the key here) we fill in those gaps that made us incomplete. The more we strive to live the gospel of Christ, follow the promptings of the Spirit, and seek to repent of our recognized sins and mistakes, the closer we draw to the perfection we have been commanded to seek.

Perfection is a process, and one that will follow us into the spirit world after this phase of mortality. God will not judge us on whether we become completely whole during our time in mortality, for many of us have our time here cut short from one thing or another. His judgment is based on our current willingness to pursue that perfection that can only be found in Christ. When we leave mortality are we currently seeking to follow Christ? That is the question that will steer our judgment. Christ has already paid for all the sins that can or ever will need to be forgiven by him. So we don't need to worry about that. What we need to worry about is making sure that we don't deny his payment for our sins, so we have to pay for our own by spending time in hell. As great as it is that at the end of hell we get released and achieve forgiveness for our sins, we still don't want to find ourselves on the other side of Christ's atoning sacrifice, and finding ourselves unworthy of returning to live with Christ and our Father.

All of our hopes for eternal happiness, family happiness, and eternal joy, rest in the acceptance of Christ's Atonement. By seeking to live and keep his commandments, and doing our best to stay close to the influence of the Spirit, we can have not just hope, but confidence that God will accept our efforts and bring us home when we leave this mortal life.

Click the link below to

print a PDF copy of the article.

OT16-2022 - Easter

Week 16