

LESSON 5

The Infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ

Introduction

The Atonement of Jesus Christ—the greatest event to ever take place—makes it possible for all people to be forgiven from sin and to dwell with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ throughout eternity. Through the Atonement, all will be

resurrected and return to the presence of God to be judged. Because the Atonement required Jesus Christ to suffer in an infinite number of ways, He has perfect empathy for each of us.

Background Reading

- Boyd K. Packer, “The Atonement,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 75–78.
- D. Todd Christofferson, “Redemption,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 109–12.

Suggestions for Teaching

Mosiah 3:5–11; Alma 34:8–12

Only Jesus Christ could accomplish the infinite Atonement

Display and invite a student to read aloud the following statement by President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency:



“I wish to speak about the greatest event in all history. That singular event was the incomparable Atonement of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. This was the most transcendent act that has ever taken place” (“The Atonement: Our Greatest Hope,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 18).

Invite two or three students to take turns reading aloud from Alma 34:8–12 while the class marks key words and phrases that illustrate why the Atonement is the greatest event in history.

- Why is the Atonement of Jesus Christ the greatest event ever to take place? (Emphasize this truth: **The Atonement of Jesus Christ is infinite and eternal, making salvation possible for all mankind.**)

Consider sharing the following statement by President Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"An infinite atonement was required to redeem Adam, Eve, and all of their posterity. ... According to eternal law, that atonement required a personal sacrifice by an immortal being not subject to death. Yet He must die and take up His own body again. The Savior was the only one who could accomplish this. From His mother He inherited power to die. From His Father He obtained power over death" ("Constancy amid Change," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 34).

- Why was Jesus Christ the only one who could redeem all people? (He was an immortal being not subject to death.)
- In what ways is the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ infinite and eternal?

To help answer this question, display the following statement by President Russell M. Nelson, and ask a student to read it aloud:



"[Jesus Christ's] Atonement is infinite—without an end. It was also infinite in that all humankind would be saved from never-ending death. It was infinite in terms of His immense suffering. ... It was infinite in scope—it was to be done once for all. And the mercy of the Atonement extends not only to an infinite number of people, but also to an infinite number of worlds created by Him. It was infinite beyond any human scale of measurement or mortal comprehension" ("The Atonement," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 35).

Explain that at the end of his reign, King Benjamin taught his people that an angel had declared to him a message of "glad tidings of great joy" that would cause the people to be "filled with joy" (Mosiah 3:2–4). Ask a few students to take turns reading aloud from Mosiah 3:5–11 while the class follows along, looking for the "glad tidings" that King Benjamin described.

- What messages in these verses do you think would have caused King Benjamin's people to be filled with joy? (As students respond, emphasize that Jesus Christ makes salvation possible.)
- What words or phrases describe the price that Jesus Christ paid for our salvation?

Invite a student to read the following statement by Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"Christ's agony in the garden is unfathomable by the finite mind, both as to intensity and cause. ... He struggled and groaned under a burden such as no other being who has lived on earth might even conceive as possible. It was not physical pain, nor mental anguish alone, that caused Him to suffer such torture as to produce an extrusion of blood from every pore; but a spiritual agony of soul such as only God was capable of experiencing. No other man, however great his powers of physical or mental endurance, could have suffered so" (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 613).

- What thoughts and feelings do you have as you ponder the magnitude of Jesus Christ’s suffering for us?

2 Nephi 9:6–12, 20–22

Jesus Christ overcame both physical and spiritual death

Ask students to imagine what would have occurred if there had been no Atonement. To help students visualize what the state of mankind would have been if there had been no Atonement, ask a student to read 2 Nephi 9:6–9 aloud. Invite the class to follow along, looking for phrases that describe what our fate would be without the Atonement.

- According to the prophet Jacob, what would happen to our bodies if there were no Atonement? What would happen to our spirits?

Remind students that the central message of the gospel is that because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ we do not have to experience this awful fate.

Ask two students to take turns reading aloud from 2 Nephi 9:10–12, 20–22 while the class looks for the means by which we are delivered from spiritual and physical death.

- What is the means provided for us to escape from spiritual and physical death? (Help students summarize this doctrine: **Through His Atonement, Jesus Christ overcame the effects of physical and spiritual death.**)
- What do these verses teach about the blessings of the Resurrection? (Our physical bodies and our spirits will be reunited for eternity. We will be brought back into the presence of God for judgment.)

Display the following statement by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and ask a student to read it aloud:



“By His Atonement and Resurrection, Jesus Christ has overcome all aspects of the Fall. Physical death will be temporary, and even spiritual death has an end, in that all come back into the presence of God, at least temporarily, to be judged” (“The Resurrection of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 112).

- When have you felt gratitude that Jesus Christ has overcome physical and spiritual death?

Mosiah 3:11, 16; 15:7–9; Alma 7:11–13; Moroni 8:8–12; Doctrine and Covenants 137:7–9

Through His Atonement, Jesus Christ offers redemption to all people

Remind students that in addition to delivering all mankind from the physical and spiritual death caused by the Fall, Jesus Christ can deliver us from the spiritual death caused by our own sins. Invite a student to read Mosiah 15:7–9 aloud while the class looks for how Christ makes it possible for us to be redeemed from our sins.

- What do these verses teach about how Christ makes it possible for us to be redeemed from our sins? (Emphasize this doctrine: **Through the Atonement, Jesus Christ broke the bands of death and took our iniquities upon Himself, satisfying the demands of justice and gaining power to make intercession for us.**)
- What does the word *intercession* mean? (*Intercession* is the act of intervening between parties to help them reconcile differences. In this case, Jesus intercedes between us and God in order to reconcile the broken relationship caused by our sins.)

Explain that the Book of Mormon helps us understand how the Atonement of Jesus Christ saves little children and people who have died without receiving the gospel or being baptized.

Have part of the class silently read Mosiah 3:16 and cross-reference it to Moroni 8:8–12. Have another part of the class silently read Mosiah 3:11 and cross-reference it to Doctrine and Covenants 137:7–9.

- What do these verses teach about the salvation of children who die before being baptized?
- What do these verses teach about the salvation of those who “died not knowing the will of God”? (Mosiah 3:11).

Tell students that through the Atonement the Savior gained perfect empathy to understand us and help us through the challenges of mortality. Ask students to search Alma 7:11–13, looking for words that describe the mortal challenges that Jesus Christ experienced as part of the Atonement. As students report their findings, list the following words on the board: *pains, afflictions, temptations, sicknesses, death, infirmities (weaknesses or inability), and sins*. Point out the phrase “of every kind” in Alma 7:11, and ask students to share examples of the various conditions listed on the board.

Point out that the phrase “take upon him” is repeated several times in verses 11–13. (*Note:* Identifying repetition is a scripture study skill that you might emphasize here. Noting scriptural repetitions can help learners identify key points of emphasis.)

- According to verses 11–12, why did Jesus Christ “take upon him” our pains, sicknesses, infirmities, and other conditions listed on the board? (Help students identify this principle: **The Savior took upon himself our pains, sicknesses, and infirmities so He could succor us as we face the challenges of mortality.**)

Display the following statement by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and ask a student to read it aloud:



"I testify that the Savior's Atonement lifts from us not only the burden of our sins but also the burden of our disappointments and sorrows, our heartaches and our despair [see Alma 7:11–12]. From the beginning, trust in such help was to give us both a reason and a way to improve, an incentive to lay down our burdens and take up our salvation" ("Broken Things to Mend," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2006, 70–71).

- How can trusting in the Savior's Atonement affect your actions and your eternal perspective?
- How can understanding the truths in Alma 7:11–13 help you as you face challenges?

Invite students to share experiences in which they felt the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ in their lives (caution them not to share anything that is too sacred or personal).

Invite students to write down what they can do to better apply the healing and strengthening power of the Savior's Atonement in their own lives. Invite them to act on their impressions.

Student Readings

- 2 Nephi 9:6–12, 20–22; Mosiah 3:5–11, 16; 15:7–9; Alma 7:11–13; 34:8–12; Moroni 8:8–12; Doctrine and Covenants 137:7–9.
- D. Todd Christofferson, "Redemption," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2013, 109–12.