

EASTER

Introduction

The following “Witnessing Christ from the Old Testament” is about Christ’s Atonement and Easter.

[You can find the LDS outline of study and resources here.](#)

LDS Study Focus

This week the LDS study guide takes a break from the Old Testament schedule for Easter. The lesson has three main sections which use Old Testament prophecies to teach about the Messiah. As you study the Bible with your LDS friends, you can use this opportunity to discuss 1) what the Old Testament believers understood about the Messiah and 2) what the Messiah means for us. These main sections are:

- 1) **The Old Testament testifies of the Savior’s atoning sacrifice.**
- 2) **I can find peace and joy through the Savior’s Atonement.**
- 3) **Through his atonement, Jesus Christ has power to help me overcome sin, death, trials, and weaknesses.**

The LDS study guide focuses on the theme: “He Will Swallow Up Death in Victory.”

The life of Jesus Christ “is central to all human history” (“[The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles](#),” [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](#)). What does that mean? In part, it surely means that the Savior’s life influences the eternal destiny of every human being who has ever lived or will ever live. You might also say that the life and mission of Jesus Christ, culminating in His Resurrection on that first Easter Sunday, connects all of God’s people throughout history: Those who were born before Christ looked forward to Him with faith (see [Jacob 4:4](#)), and those born after look back on Him with faith. As we read Old Testament accounts and prophecies, we don’t ever see the name Jesus Christ, but we do see the evidence of the ancient believers’ faith in and longing for their Messiah and Redeemer. So we who are invited to remember Him can feel a connection with those who looked forward to Him. For truly Jesus Christ has borne “the iniquity of us all” ([Isaiah 53:6](#); italics added), and “in Christ shall all be made alive” ([1 Corinthians 15:22](#); italics added).

Biblical Focus

Since the first sin in the Garden of Eden, the law dictated that all should physically and spiritually die. But God promised to send the Messiah who would defeat death. Old Testament believers longed for this promised rescue and the one who “will swallow up death in victory” (Isaiah 25:8).

Paul requotes Isaiah in 1 Corinthians 15:55–56.

Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ lived a sinless life and perfectly fulfilled the entire law on our behalf. He did what we could not do. His victory is a gift. Those who are in Christ need no longer fear physical or spiritual death.

THE OLD TESTAMENT TESTIFIES OF THE SAVIOR’S ATONING SACRIFICE

Throughout his life, Jesus fulfilled more than 300 prophecies. These prophecies were made by the men like Daniel and Isaiah, who lived hundreds of years before Jesus was born.

The LDS resources include a chart of eleven messianic prophecies along with New Testament references to show their fulfillment.

Old Testament	New Testament
Zechariah 9:9	Matthew 21:1–11
Zechariah 11:12–13	Matthew 26:14–16
Isaiah 53:4	Matthew 8:16–17 ; 26:36–39
Isaiah 53:7	Mark 14:60–61
Psalm 22:16	John 19:17–18 ; 20:25–27
Psalm 22:18	Matthew 27:35
Psalm 69:21	Matthew 27:34, 48
Psalm 118:22	Matthew 21:42
Isaiah 53:9, 12	Matthew 27:57–60 ; Mark 15:27–28
Isaiah 25:8	Mark 16:1–6 ; Luke 24:6
Daniel 12:2	Matthew 27:52–53

One way to use these materials for witnessing is simply working through this chart and letting God do the talking. Some pairings are spot-on; some are a bit lacking.

The last three Old Testament sections in the chart could be used to create a fruitful discussion about the Messiah’s purpose.

As you discuss these prophecies and their fulfillment in Christ, it would be valuable to review the LDS view of the [atonement](#) by reading this article in the [Dictionary of Mormonese](#).

As you read and study the following sections, think about how your LDS friends and family view the work of Christ differently. Before discussing these verses with them, consider how they might understand and interpret them differently based on the LDS emphasis on Christ as an example to follow rather than a substitute in whom to trust. You can learn more about the important substitute vs. example distinction [here](#).

Isaiah 53:9–12

And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

¹⁰ Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

¹¹ He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

¹² Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Conversation Starters:

- **What does it mean that Jesus was made an offering for sin?**
- **Who punished the Messiah? For what was he punished?**
- **How did the Righteous Servant provide justification?**
- **What does this all mean for us?**

Isaiah 25:8

He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.

Conversation Starters:

- **Why are those who trust in Jesus no longer afraid of death? (See also 1 Corinthians 15:55-57 and Revelation 21:4)**
- **What rebuke has been taken away? What does this mean?**

Daniel 12:2

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Conversation Starters:

- **To what is death compared?**
- **What is everlasting life? What is everlasting contempt?**

I CAN FIND PEACE AND JOY THROUGH THE SAVIOR’S ATONEMENT.

The *Come Follow Me* manual introduces this section with the following thoughts:

Throughout time, Jesus Christ, through His atoning sacrifice, has offered peace and joy to all who come unto Him (see [Moses 5:9–12](#)). Consider studying the following scriptures that testify of the peace and joy He offers, and as you do, think about how you can receive the peace and joy He brings:

To a Mormon and a Christian, peace and joy are attained differently. The Mormon achieves peace and joy *eventually* by following Christ and obeying the commandments. The Christian already has peace and joy because they know and trust what Christ has done.

The additional resources in the LDS study guide highlight Jesus as a relatable example and friend, teaching that because Jesus endured this mortal life, he can relate to us and help us thrive in this mortal life too. Of course, Christians find this comforting, but it comes up short. Jesus didn’t come to earth *just* to be a relatable friend; he came to endure God’s wrath FOR US so that we might receive peace with God. Because Jesus has made our status and our eternal life with God sure, there is nothing left to fear. We already have the gift of true peace and joy.

Look at the Biblical references in the *Come Follow Me* manual and let God do the talking again. As you read and study, highlight all of the things that cause discord and disharmony and how God provides peace.

- Psalm 16:8–11
- Psalm 30:2–5
- Isaiah 12
- Isaiah 25:8–9
- Isaiah 40:28–31
- John 14:27
- John 16:33

Conversation Starters:

- **From what were the people seeking relief?**
- **How did God provide?**
- **Is the emphasis on the action of God or the action of the people?**
- **What does eternal peace mean to you? What is the source of that peace?**

THROUGH HIS ATONEMENT, JESUS CHRIST HAS POWER TO HELP ME OVERCOME SIN, DEATH, TRIALS, AND WEAKNESSES.

As the Christian reads the LDS purpose statement for this section, one may wonder what the concern is. Christ did overcome sin and death, and he does help us in our trials and weaknesses.

However, two little words “to help” change Christ’s purpose. The LDS concept of helper implies that Jesus defeated sin and death *so that* we could overcome sin, death, trials, and weaknesses. Reviewing the Dictionary of Mormonese entry on [grace](#) will help you understand the LDS idea of Jesus as a helper.

LDS theology teaches that we must overcome and endure to become worthy of life eternal with Heavenly Father (exaltation). The words “to help” take away the free gift and certainty of eternal life with God. Instead, Jesus becomes an encouraging friend on the side, shouting, “You can do this, I did it, just follow my example.”

As you read these verses, help your LDS friends see *all* that Christ has accomplished for us. Because he has already given us everything, our status before God is sure. Jesus has defeated sin and death, but he also overcame every trial and weakness for us making us worthy before God. From this place of confidence and security, we are enabled to overcome difficulties and weaknesses, but our successes or failures never influence our worthiness or status before God.

Isaiah 61:1–3

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.*

Conversation Starters:

- **Who were the captives spoken about in these verses? To what were they held captive?**
- **How does it make you feel to know that you were a slave?**
- **Describe the gifts that God gives in these verses.**
- **Who is glorified?**

Ezekiel 36:26–28

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

²⁷*And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

²⁸*And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.*

Conversation Starters:

- **What does it mean to have a heart of stone? Who gives one a heart of flesh? What does this analogy imply about our spiritual state without God?**
- **What promises are attached to the gift of a new heart?**

- **Look carefully at the subjects. Who is the one acting?**

Matthew 11:28–30

*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

Conversation Starters:

- **Because of Christ’s atonement, for what do we no longer need to labor?**
- **What rest does Christ give you?**

Luke 1:46–55

*And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,
⁴⁷ And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
⁴⁸ For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
⁴⁹ For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.
⁵⁰ And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.
⁵¹ He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
⁵² He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.
⁵³ He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.
⁵⁴ He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;
⁵⁵ As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.*

Conversation Starters:

- **Who is the one doing the action in Mary’s song?**
- **What great things has God done?**

Romans 8:35–39

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
³⁶ As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.
³⁷ Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.
³⁸ For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,
³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Conversation Starters:

- **What does it mean to be separated from the love of God? Why were all humans separated from God?**
- **How are we connected to God's love?**

Sharing Personally:

God the Father, desiring our salvation, offered up his Son, who willingly suffered for the sins of the world.

Mine ought to be a life of guilt and condemnation, but instead, the Father sent his Son to win my salvation.

God the Father and God the Son were in perfect agreement and harmony as to what must be done to save humanity.

Jesus' sinless life must be offered as a sacrifice, and willingly, he suffered. The very one who formed man out of the dust of the ground was lifelessly laid in the ground for me and my salvation.

That is a love that is strong to save. The Father's love for his Son, who willingly offered himself for me, now guides all I am and all I do.

And

If Jesus were still dead, then I would have a reason for great fear and dread. But because he lives, I can face this day and every day knowing that God is the one who holds my life and my future in his competent hands.

There was no way that I could, on my own, overcome the enemies of sin, death, and the devil. But in Christ, those three great enemies have been defeated, and now I am alive.

God, in mercy, did all that was necessary so that I could live this life without fear and have a future with him filled with songs of joy that never end.

And

It's a hard scene to imagine. Not only has Jesus been violently ripped from their lives, but they had to watch him be nailed to a cross and die there. Then, just days later, they come to care for the dead body, and it's not there. Mary and the women were shocked, confused, and probably angry. Then angels appear, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen" ([Luke 24:5-6](#)). Why do you fear? Why do you weep? Why are you surprised? You're Lord is alive. He is risen!

Like those disciples, we know and have experienced the same sting of death in the lives of those around us. We need to hear that death is not the end and that God has a plan for them and us.

God sent Jesus to do what we never could. And in the perfect sacrifice of the lamb slain for the sins of the world, God forgave sin and paid the impossible debt. In raising Christ, he proved that debt was paid in full and that he has power over sin and death. Because of Jesus' resurrection, God can and will bring me to be with him one day. I will rise.

Additional Resources:

To learn more about how to talk with Mormons about Jesus' death and resurrection, please see, [A Humanitarian by Dying for Us](#) and [A Humanitarian by Giving Us Proof of Christ's Resurrection](#) from the study of God—The Ultimate Humanitarian on [BeYePerfect.org](#) or [chapters 10 and 11 of the book by the same name, available in our online store.](#)

Additional Resources:

You can learn more about how and when to talk with Mormons about God's judgment in the article [Judgment and Justification](#) on TILM.org. Additionally, you could direct LDS members to the article [What Will Happen to You on Judgment Day](#) on BeYePerfect.org.