

## Episode 38

### Stories from General Conference

#### THE LIFE OF CHRIST

**NARRATION: The Messiah, Jehovah, Redeemer, Prince of Peace, the Great Shepherd—these are just some of the many names that refer to our Savior Jesus Christ. Today’s episode of *Stories from General Conference* is on the life of Christ.**

**In the April 1988 general conference, Elder John R. Lasater told of a time when he came across an old shepherd. He witnessed firsthand the love a shepherd has for each of his sheep.**

(John R. Lasater, 1988 April General Conference, Sunday afternoon)

Some years ago, it was my privilege to visit the country of Morocco as part of an official United States government delegation. As part of that visit, we were invited to travel some distance into the desert to visit some ruins. Five large black limousines moved across the beautiful Moroccan countryside at considerable speed. I was riding in the third limousine, which had lagged some distance behind the second. As we topped the brow of a hill, we noticed that the limousine in front of us had pulled off to the side of the road. As we drew nearer, I sensed that an accident had occurred and suggested to my driver that we stop. The scene before us has remained with me for these many years.

An old shepherd, in the long, flowing robes of the Savior’s day, was standing near the limousine in conversation with the driver. Nearby, I noted a small flock of sheep numbering not more than fifteen or twenty. An accident had occurred. The king’s vehicle had struck and injured one of the sheep belonging to the old shepherd. The driver of the vehicle was explaining to him the law of the land. Because the king’s vehicle had injured one of the sheep belonging to the old shepherd, he was now entitled to one hundred times its value at maturity. However, under the same law, the injured sheep must be slain and the meat divided among the people. My interpreter hastily added, “But the old shepherd will not accept the money. They never do.”

Startled, I asked him why. And he added, “Because of the love he has for each of his sheep.” It was then that I noticed the old shepherd reach down, lift the injured lamb in his arms, and place it in a large pouch on the front of his robe. He kept stroking its head, repeating the same word over and over again. When I asked the meaning of the word, I was informed, “Oh, he is calling it by name. All of his sheep have a name, for he is their shepherd, and the good shepherds know each one of their sheep by name.”

It was as my driver predicted. The money was refused, and the old shepherd with his small flock of sheep, with the injured one tucked safely in the pouch on his robe, disappeared into the beautiful deserts of Morocco. As we continued our journey toward the ruins, my interpreter shared with me more of the traditions and practices of the shepherds of that land. Each evening at sundown, for example, the shepherds bring their small flocks of sheep to a common enclosure where they are secured against the wolves that roam the deserts of Morocco. A single shepherd then is employed to guard the gate until morning. Then the shepherds come to the enclosure one by one, enter therein, and call forth their sheep—by name. The sheep will not hearken unto the voice of a stranger but will leave the enclosure only in the care of their true shepherd, confident and secure because the shepherd knows their names and they know his voice.

**NARRATION: Like the shepherd in this story, our Savior knows and loves each of us. In the 1988 April general conference, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin shared a story from the Bible that shows just how well the Savior knows us.**

(Joseph B. Wirthlin, 1988 April General Conference, Sunday afternoon)

Early in his mortal ministry, the Savior soon had a multitude of disciples drawn to him by the power of his presence and the spirit of his message. From among these disciples, he chose twelve to be his special witnesses. “And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles” (Luke 6:13).

Clearly, Jesus had chosen them; he said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you” (John 15:16). These twelve were common men from various walks of life. The Savior selected them because he could see far beyond their earthly appearance and look into their hearts, recognizing their potential.

After the Savior called Peter, Andrew, and Philip, Philip introduced Jesus to Nathanael, whom some scholars believe to be Bartholomew, the Apostle. Philip said to Nathanael, “We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45). In this statement, Philip testified that Jesus is the Messiah. Nathanael wondered whether any good thing could come out of Nazareth, indicating the relatively bad reputation of Nazareth in those days. Philip asked him to come and see. This is the perfect answer to all who seek to know the truth about Christ. Impartial investigators are converted when they come and see.

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he exclaimed of Nathanael, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” (John 1:47). At that moment, Nathanael recognized that Jesus could see into his heart and asked, in surprise, “Whence knowest thou me?” (John 1:48). The Savior’s reply demonstrated an even greater power of perception. He told Nathanael that before Philip had called him to come and see, Jesus saw him under a fig tree.

Nathanael apparently had undergone some surpassing spiritual experience while praying, or meditating, or worshipping under a fig tree. The Lord, though absent in body, had been present with Nathanael in spirit. Nathanael then recognized the Savior as the Christ and said, “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel” (John 1:49).

Nathanael spoke without guile. The words came from his heart. They expressed a deep conviction of truth. He followed the Savior.

**NARRATION: In celebration of the second millennium since Christ’s birth, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued a declaration entitled “The Living Christ.” The document shares their testimony of Christ and His earthly mission. It reads in part:**

**“We bear testimony, as His duly ordained apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel, who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine Son.”**

**In the October 1989 general conference, Elder David B. Haight gave a powerful witness of the Savior.**

(David B. Haight, October 1989 General Conference, Sunday morning)

Six months ago at the April general conference, I was excused from speaking as I was convalescing from a serious operation. My life has been spared, and I now have the pleasant opportunity of acknowledging the blessings, comfort, and ready aid of my Brethren in the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, and other wonderful associates and friends to whom I owe so much and who surrounded my dear wife, Ruby, and my family with their time, attention, and prayers. For the inspired doctors and thoughtful nurses I express my deepest gratitude, and for the thoughtful letters and messages of faith and hope received from many places in the world, many expressing, “You have been in our prayers” or “We have been asking our Heavenly Father to spare your life.” Your prayers and mine, thankfully, have been answered.

One unusual card caused me to ponder upon the majesty of it all. It is an original painting by Arta Romney Ballif of the heavens at night with its myriad golden stars. Her caption, taken from Psalms, reads:

“Praise ye the Lord: ...

“He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

“He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.

“... His understanding is infinite.” (Ps. 147:1, 3–5.)

As I lay in the hospital bed, I meditated on all that had happened to me and studied the contemplative painting by President Marion G. Romney’s sister and the lines from Psalms: “He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.” I was then—and continue to be—awed by the goodness and majesty of the Creator, who knows not only the names of the stars but knows your name and my name—each of us as His sons and daughters.

The psalmist, David, wrote:

“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? ...

“For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.” (Ps. 8:3–5.)

To be remembered is a wonderful thing.

The evening of my health crisis, I knew something very serious had happened to me. Events happened so swiftly—the pain striking with such intensity, my dear Ruby phoning the doctor and our family, and I on my knees leaning over the bathtub for support and some comfort and hoped relief from the pain. I was pleading to my Heavenly Father to spare my life a while longer to give me a little more time to do His work, if it was His will.

While still praying, I began to lose consciousness. The siren of the paramedic truck was the last that I remembered before unconsciousness overtook me, which would last for the next several days.

The terrible pain and commotion of people ceased. I was now in a calm, peaceful setting; all was serene and quiet. I was conscious of two persons in the distance on a hillside, one standing on a higher level than the other.

Detailed features were not discernible. The person on the higher level was pointing to something I could not see.

I heard no voices but was conscious of being in a holy presence and atmosphere. During the hours and days that followed, there was impressed again and again upon my mind the eternal mission and exalted position of the Son of Man. I witness to you that He is Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, Savior to all, Redeemer of all mankind, Bestower of infinite love, mercy, and forgiveness, the Light and Life of the world. I knew this truth before—I had never doubted nor wondered. But now I knew, because of the impressions of the Spirit upon my heart and soul, these divine truths in a most unusual way.

I was shown a panoramic view of His earthly ministry: His baptism, His teaching, His healing the sick and lame, the mock trial, His crucifixion, His resurrection and ascension. There followed scenes of His earthly ministry to my mind in impressive detail, confirming scriptural eyewitness accounts. I was being taught, and the eyes of my understanding were opened by the Holy Spirit of God so as to behold many things.

The first scene was of the Savior and His Apostles in the upper chamber on the eve of His betrayal. Following the Passover supper, He instructed and prepared the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for His dearest friends as a remembrance of His coming sacrifice. It was so impressively portrayed to me—the overwhelming love of the Savior for each. I witnessed His thoughtful concern for significant details—the washing of the dusty feet of each Apostle, His breaking and blessing of the loaf of dark bread and blessing of the wine, then His dreadful disclosure that one would betray Him.

He explained Judas's departure and told the others of the events soon to take place.

During those days of unconsciousness I was given, by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, a more perfect knowledge of His mission. I was also given a more complete understanding of what it means to exercise, in His name, the authority to unlock the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven for the salvation of all who are faithful. My soul was taught over and over again the events of the betrayal, the mock trial, the scourging of the flesh of even one of the Godhead. I witnessed His struggling up the hill in His weakened condition carrying the cross and His being stretched upon it as it lay on the ground, that the crude spikes could be driven with a mallet into His hands and wrists and feet to secure His body as it hung on the cross for public display.

Crucifixion—the horrible and painful death which He suffered—was chosen from the beginning. By that excruciating death, He descended below all things, as is recorded, that through His resurrection He would ascend above all things (see D&C 88:6).

Jesus Christ died in the literal sense in which we will all die. His body lay in the tomb. The immortal spirit of Jesus, chosen as the Savior of mankind, went to those myriads of spirits who had departed mortal life with varying degrees of righteousness to God's laws. He taught them the "glorious tidings of redemption from the bondage of death, and of possible salvation, ... [which was] part of [our] Savior's foreappointed and unique service to the human family." (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1977, p. 671.)

I cannot begin to convey to you the deep impact that these scenes have confirmed upon my soul. I sense their eternal meaning and realize that "nothing in the entire plan of salvation compares in any way in importance with that most transcendent of all events, the atoning sacrifice of our Lord. It is the most important single thing that

has ever occurred in the entire history of created things; it is the rock foundation upon which the gospel and all other things rest.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, p. 60.)

**NARRATION: That was a powerful testimony of the living Christ from one of His modern-day Apostles! After Christ’s resurrection, He visited the Apostles in the Holy Land. In the April 1985 general conference, President James E. Faust related some of the events following Christ’s resurrection.**

(James E. Faust, April 1985 General Conference, Saturday afternoon)

As Mary stood without the sepulchre weeping, she was addressed by an apparent stranger with two ever-so-tender, compassionate questions: “Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?” In her grief and blinded by tear-filled eyes, she pleaded with the stranger, whom she supposed to be the gardener, “Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.”

“Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself” (John 20:15–16).

*One, only one, person could speak her name that way. With that single word all doubt, confusion, and uncertainty was swept away. Mary, in that instant, came to the grand, sublime realization that He for whom she mourned, even Jesus that was crucified, had risen from the dead, just as the angels early that very morning had testified, “He is risen” (see Luke 24:6).*

Mary was not to be the only witness of the miracle of the Resurrection. Although the Savior was the “firstfruits” of them that slept (1 Corinthians 15:23), the scriptures testify that “many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many” (Matthew 27:52–53).

Jesus appeared to two followers in Emmaus whose “eyes were holden that they should not know him” (Luke 24:16), and they entreated him: “Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them” (Luke 24:29). As Jesus ate with them, their eyes were opened, and they knew him. Upon his first appearance to the ten Apostles following the Resurrection, they were terrified and thought they had seen a spirit, and he comforted them by saying, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

“And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet” (Luke 24:39–40).

Thomas was absent, and when the others told him of Jesus’ resurrection, his response was disbelief: “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.” At his next appearance a week later, Christ said to Thomas: “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

“And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God” (John 20:25, 27–28).

And so for forty days the Savior ministered to his Apostles and other disciples and taught them. During these forty glorious days, Christ was also “seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present. . . . After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.” Paul adds, “And last of all he was seen of me” (1 Corinthians 15:6–8).

**NARRATION: We know from the Book of Mormon that the Savior also visited His other sheep in the Americas. In the April 1987 general conference, Elder J. Thomas Fyans spoke about Christ’s visit to the western hemisphere.**

(J. Thomas Fyans, 1987 April General Conference, Saturday Afternoon)

We stop to drink deeply and spiritually meditate as we study this scene. And I re-read for you at the request at the President of the Church when he said Third Nephi, and re-read it, so I re-read from Third Nephi:

“A great multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple. . . .

“And they were also conversing about this Jesus Christ, of whom the sign had been given concerning his death” (3 Nephi 11:1–2). They heard a voice. Again they heard a voice, and they understood it not.

“And again the third time they did hear the voice, and did open their ears to hear it, and their eyes were towards the sound thereof; and they did look steadfastly towards heaven, from whence the sound came.

“And behold, the third time they did understand the voice which they heard; and it said unto them:

“Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him” (vs. 5–7).

And the Savior responded to the invitation of the Father to speak in this manner:

“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.

“And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words the whole multitude fell to the earth; for they remembered that it had been prophesied among them that Christ should show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven.

“And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto them saying:

“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.

“And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come” (vs. 10–15).

The heavens were opened and had kissed the earth with certain knowledge. Then the Savior continued:

“And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me. . . . I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me.

“And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God” (vs. 32–33).

**NARRATION: Christ taught the same gospel to the Nephites that He taught to the people in the Old World. Those same teachings apply to us today.**

**In the October 1990 general conference, President Howard W. Hunter conveyed some details from the life of the Savior. He invited all to have their burdens lifted by the Savior.**

(Howard W. Hunter, 1990 October General Conference, Saturday morning)

In his beloved Galilee, that familiar, favored home region of Jesus, the Son of God performed not only his first recorded miracle but went on to perform many great miracles that surely must have astonished and awed the people of Galilee who saw them. He healed a leper, cured the servant of a centurion, stilled a tempest, cast out devils, healed a paralytic, opened the eyes of the blind, and restored a young woman to life who had died. Most of the people of his home region would not truly believe. “Is not this Joseph’s son?” (Luke 4:22) they asked of Jesus, refusing to acknowledge his divine heritage. Jesus wept over these people who should have known better. Because of their skepticism and unbelief and refusal to repent, he upbraided the cities where most of his mighty works had been done. In severely criticizing and finding fault with the wicked cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, he said:

“For if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

“But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee” (Matt. 11:23–24).

While anguishing over the wickedness and lack of faith among so many in his home area, the Savior voiced his prayer of gratitude for the humble and plain people who did hear his teachings and did believe. These lowly learners needed him, and they needed his message. They demonstrated that the humble, the needy, and the sorrowing would hear the word of God and cherish it. With reassurance to these new believers and concern for those not choosing to follow him, Christ issued a profound invitation in what Elder James E. Talmage has appropriately called “one of the grandest outpourings of spiritual emotion known to man” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3d ed., Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1916, p. 258). These are the words of the Master used in making this appeal:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“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.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28–30).

This invitation and promise is one of the most oft-quoted of all scripture and has been of untold comfort and reassurance to millions. Yet there were those among his hearers that day whose vision was so limited that they could see only a carpenter’s son speaking of a wooden yoke. A yoke which, from time to time, he had undoubtedly hewn and shaped from heavy wooden timbers for the oxen of these same men who were listening. Elder Talmage added: “He invited them from drudgery to pleasant service; from the well-nigh unbearable burdens of ecclesiastical exactions and traditional formalism, to the liberty of truly spiritual worship; from slavery to freedom; but they would not” (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 259).

Here was a prophetic appeal and magnificent promise to a troubled people facing great peril, but they could not understand it. He knew what lay ahead for them even if they did not, and he was inviting them to come unto him to find rest and safety for their troubled souls. Had he not already shown them that he could give rest to those who labored with profound illness and disease? Had he not already relieved the burden of those who were heavily laden with sin and the cares of the world? Had he not already raised one from the dead, proving that he possessed the divine power to relieve even that greatest of all universal burdens? And yet most would still not “come unto [him].”

Unfortunately, a refusal to accept his miracles and his glorious invitation is still seen today. This marvelous offer of assistance extended by the Son of God himself was not restricted to the Galileans of his day. This call to shoulder his easy yoke and accept his light burden is not limited to bygone generations. It was and is a universal appeal to all people, to all cities and nations, to every man, woman, and child everywhere.

**NARRATION: The scriptures repeatedly invite each of us to come unto Christ. He is always there with outstretched arms. In Hebrews 13, verse 5, the Lord says, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”**

**We hope you have enjoyed these stories and testimonies about Jesus Christ. This is the Mormon Channel. Tell your friends about us!**