

BH Porter – At the Garden Tomb



We have seen quite a bit these past few days. I always enjoy ending our tour here at the Garden Tomb. We're fortunate to have this small enclosed area in which to meet. For the past few days we have been looking at Christ's life as well as many references in the Old Testament that talk about His life, His resurrection and second coming. His life should be our focus no matter where we are, as we covenant to "always remember Him".

The Church provides us a building where we can meet. The Priesthood makes sure the sacrament is on the table when we get there so that we, the individuals might have all we need to have a relationship with Christ. It is by your own agency that you create your relationship with Him. It is not the Church's responsibility to provide that relationship. They provide the place to meet so we might learn of His life and how we might develop His attributes. I've often said I don't care what the Bishop may be doing on Saturday night as long as the sacrament is there on Sunday when I attend, and the priesthood is there to bless and pass it to me, or as long as the font is filled when it is time for my daughter to be baptized. The Priesthood has fulfilled their responsibility if the things that are needed for that relationship are available for myself and my family. The focus of the Church is to help all to come unto Christ. Classes are taught for our Primary youth, our young men and women, and for us older folks, a Gospel Doctrine class is provided. It is our personal responsibility, not the Church's, to develop a spiritual and lasting relationship with Christ.

I have decided to make it my mission in my teaching to talk about "coming unto Christ". Our Church is the authorized administrator of the Gospel of Jesus Christ so that all who desire, may have the opportunity to come unto Christ and develop that relationship necessary for our salvation. The Church is true, and it is true in that it is the only authorized administrator as described in the scriptures. (see 3 Ne 27: 10) It is the Gospel that is really true. The Church is to administer the Gospel that teaches and invites all to come unto Christ.

In the last few days we have seen the places where significant events took place during the last week in the mortal life of Christ. Christ's key mission was in the Garden of Gethsemane, on Calvary, and the empty Garden Tomb – these three places and events are the culmination Christ's mission on earth. He was born into mortality to teach mankind, to suffer and die for mankind, and to be resurrected for all humanity.

We were in Bethlehem a few days ago and celebrated the Birth of Christ. We talked about the shepherds and the angels – the angel who came to the shepherds, and the angels who sang. In reality, those angels were not celebrating just His birth – they were also celebrating His sacrifice and His conquering death. Jesus was born to die, and He was born to rise. In the celebration of His birth the heavens were rejoicing that the atonement and the resurrection promised to Adam and Eve at the fall, would soon be fulfilled.

We have the opportunity to participate in Christ's life. When we go to the Temple, we participate in what is called the initiatory. The 'initiatory' is an initiation which is a preparatory introduction, ritual or ordinance, that must precede something much greater in scope and

importance. In that initiatory we are basically participating in a ritual relationship and activity that symbolizes Christ's mission on earth. We are washed so that we can become clean and pure and cleansed from the effects and judgments of sin. We are anointed on various parts of our body in the ordinance and blessing that this body will rise and properly function, and to come forth in the Celestial first resurrection. These are the two aspects of Christ's life, the Atonement and the Resurrection. The Atonement that took place in the Garden of Gethsemane where the 'great drops of blood' were shed for the sins of the penitent, as mankind's sin-stained garments are washed 'white in the blood of the Lamb' (Alma 5:21). This is the symbolic and ritual washing that we participate in the initiatory ordinances in preparation to come before God in his Temple clean and free from sin. The Anointing of the initiatory is the ordinance of the resurrection, to rise from the dust and function properly, as this corruption puts on incorruption in preparation to stand before the Father in His House. (Hel 14:15, 17)

Every Sunday we have an opportunity to participate in Christ's atonement and resurrection as we partake of the sacrament. We don't often stop to think about it that way, but it represents almost the same thing as that initiatory. (Bruce passes out olive wood sacrament cups for each to take one.)

We partake of bread and water. When you get home and partake of the sacrament, maybe you will take a minute to think about what you saw here in the Holy Land, and in other parts of Israel and what we did these last few days. We went to the Garden of Gethsemane where He bled from every pore. We stood at the base of Golgotha where He hung and died. We visited the tomb, be it the actual tomb or not, we visited an empty tomb and know that Jesus was resurrected. We need to keep these things in mind when we partake of that sacrament.

When we usually partake of the water, we seldom think about what that water truly represents. That water does not necessarily represent the blood Christ shed on the cross, or from the spear that pierced His side, rather it represents the blood He shed from every pore in that Garden



of the Press, 'Gethsemane'. It is that blood that the water represents. Calvary was just a form of death. Christ did not suffer on the cross any more than anyone else did. The Romans crucified thousands of people in this manner. The cross was only a form or method of inflicting death. The actual atonement took place where we were earlier today. These cups that I am giving you are for a reminder of that blood.

As I come to Israel over and over, I have collected many of the items some of you had to purchase extra suitcases just to take back home. I have enough olive wood to suffice for my years' supply of fuel. Each time I come I take a piece of



olive wood home. The most important piece of olive wood I take home is a little cup. These cups are carved from genuine olive wood in Bethlehem, the human birthplace of the blood atonement that one day would be shed. Due to the unique grain of the wood, it is impossible for any two of these cups to be exactly alike. They are all shaped the same, just like we are, but every single one of them is different. Because of the tree itself, the part of the tree, and the different grains in the wood, every single one of them has seen and unseen flaws and imperfections. Some have marks, some have cracks, some are darker than others, and no two of them are alike. The common element that brings all these cups into harmony with each other is the water they can hold. The water that symbolizes the blood Christ that shed from every pore in the Garden of Gethsemane.

In my opinion, this cup is the most important souvenir I can take home from the Holy Land, it may not be the most expensive but the most important. I made a covenant to “always remember Him”, and I don’t remember Him by looking at the olive wood carving that I have of Moses, nor do I remember Him by looking at my olive wood vase or candle-stick holder, or the nativity put on display each Christmas season. I have a plethora of cups. I cannot walk through my house without seeing these cups in nearly every room. They’re on my bookshelf, in the kitchen, in my bedroom, no matter wherever I go, I am reminded of the covenant I made to “always remember Him”. These cups have become the most important souvenir I can take home from the Holy Land. Every time I see these cups a memory comes into my heart and my mind, not just in being here or the group I was with, but these cups are help me remember Christ and His atonement.

Again, those great drops of blood Christ shed in the Garden of Gethsemane are symbolized in the water we drink in our sacrament meetings. We’re here at Calvary where the resurrection begins with His death, and then His resurrection from the tomb. Those two aspects of Christ’s life — the washing in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the anointing here at the Garden Tomb — are those two initiatory ordinances that allow us to participate in the life of Christ’s that we might come forth in the first resurrection. We have walked where Christ has walked, we know we need to walk as He walked, but we must come ‘unto Him’ walk to Him and walk with Him.

Those two initiatory ordinances represent the mission of Christ. This is why Christ said that “no man can come unto the Father but by me”. (**John 14: 6**) As you read in the scriptures and in the Book of Mormon you will see by virtue of the atonement and the resurrection everyone will be resurrected, and everyone will be brought back to the presence of God. It’s hard for me to take home a symbol of the resurrection, but one of these cups is more important to me than any other souvenir from this land of Israel.



My covenant is to “always remember Him that I might have His Spirit” to be with me. This is what I seek. It’s difficult to do that each day, but I do seek to remember Him.

This is our last stop. We’re through for the day. I thank all of you for coming on this tour to Egypt and Israel. I have learned a lot from you. You may not know it, but I have taken note of the things you say and the way you act — all of which has helped me to change or do things differently and to be better. Thank you for being part of my life. Hopefully, I might be a part of your life as well.

Know that I know the Church is the only authorized administrator of the Gospel. It has the authority to administer that Gospel. I know the Gospel is true. Jesus is the Christ. He lived here, and we walked the land where He walked, and here is where He died. It is not so important to know *where* He walked, but it is important to know *how* He walked. As a teacher and as a guide what I hope you will take home is knowing you can have just as great of a spiritual experience in your own sacrament meetings, and you can gain just as much knowledge by searching the scriptures as you can by being here. My hope is that the scriptures will open up for you as you read and study them. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.