

Interpreter

**A Journal of Latter-day Saint
Faith and Scholarship**

Spiritual Implications of the Timing of the Death of Jesus Christ

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Article Print

Pages 223–250

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ISSN 2372-1227 (print)
ISSN 2372-126X (online)

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Spiritual Implications of the Timing of the Death of Jesus Christ

C. Thomas Black

Abstract: *Centuries-long speculation continues regarding the circumstances surrounding the death of the Savior. Whether he died sooner than would have been expected, as some scholars believe, or lived longer than expected, statements from the scriptures and modern-day prophets indicate that the Lord died at the exact moment of his choice. According to the Gospels and historical accounts, that moment coincided with the sacrifice of the later of the two daily tamid sacrifices. The tamid had been instituted by Jehovah and symbolized the future atoning sacrifice of the Savior. Each of the other offerings throughout the sacrificial day between the two tamid sacrifices symbolized other qualities of the Lord. The proximity of his death to the Passover suggests an additional association between the two. Ritual prayers offered as the final tamid was being offered coincide further with the missions of the Savior. Jesus Christ chose the moment of his death to synchronize with these events as he symbolically fulfilled the ancient law of sacrifice.*

Few attempts have been made to integrate the spiritual aspects of the Savior's Atonement with the physical. God leaves nothing to chance, so the physical aspects must be inextricably intertwined with the spiritual. As Tad Callister notes of the Atonement, "Contrary to the thoughts of some, it was not mental suffering alone; it was intense, prolonged anguish, 'both body and spirit' (D&C 19:18; emphasis added). It was physical, intellectual, and emotional pain of the highest order, all wrapped into one."¹

1. Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 117.

This article is a companion to a previously published article regarding some pathophysiological aspects of the Lord's suffering as he completed his Atonement.² This article focuses on why the Lord died exactly when he did and offers some additional thoughts regarding how he may have manipulated his metabolism so that could happen. I will do so by addressing the following points:

- Significant and spiritually symbolic reasons linked to the sacrifices being carried out in the temple during his crucifixion gave symbolic meaning to Christ dying at the moment he did.
- The Lord's persecutors were powerless to take his life. With his command over life and death, Christ allowed his spirit to depart his mortal body only at the moment of his choosing.
- Despite his inherent ability to do so, Christ made no effort, either overt or covert, to mitigate his suffering from the effects of the trauma he sustained.
- It was necessary for Christ at some point during his ordeal to either hasten or prolong his time on the cross so that his death would occur at the appropriate moment.

Why the Lord Chose That Specific Moment to End His Mortal Life

Symbolic text alludes to the Savior throughout the Old Testament in laws, temple sacrifices, and prophecies. These are most clearly stated in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 but also occur in numerous places elsewhere.³ Innumerable animals were sacrificed to foreshadow the ultimate sacrifice by the Lord. We may reasonably assume that the manner of his death would resemble in some fashion the centuries of sacrifices decreed by the Savior himself.

How sacrificial offerings portend the Atonement of Jesus Christ

The first death after the Fall of Adam was of an animal or animals,

2. C. Thomas Black, "The Pathophysiology of the Death of Jesus the Christ," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 62 (2024): 439–506, journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-pathophysiology-of-the-death-of-jesus-the-christ/.

3. For a more exhaustive list, see Donald W. Parry, "The Atonement of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament," *Liahona*, April 2022, 40–43, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/liahona/2022/04/come-follow-me/18-the-atonement-of-jesus-christ-in-the-old-testament.

sacrificed by Jehovah to fulfill the Father's request that he make garments of skins to clothe Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21, Moses 4:27). "They received this clothing in a context of instruction on the Atonement, sacrifice, repentance, and forgiveness."⁴ Adam and Eve continued the practice of offering sacrifices by the shedding of blood. The Lord commanded that "they . . . should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord . . . [and they were informed that it was] a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father" (Moses 5:5, 7). The specific details by which sacrifices were to be offered became standardized later as part of the Law of Moses. Unfortunately, the tendency is that the more standardized a procedure becomes, the more people tend to forget its significance. Common symbols of our devotion, such as wearing the holy garment or partaking of the weekly Sacrament, must never be allowed to become rote. Mosiah lamented, "And many . . . types, and shadows showed he unto them, concerning his coming; and yet they hardened their hearts, and understood not that the law of Moses availeth nothing except it were through the atonement of his blood" (Mosiah 3:15). The Lord reprimanded the Israelites for dutifully carrying out sacrifices but forgetting their meaning.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. . . . Bring no more vain oblations. . . . And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. (Isaiah 1:11, 13, 15)

With few exceptions, the Israelites had forgotten the *why* of sacrifice but were meticulously immersed in the *how*.

Each of the sacrifices observed by the ancient Jews pointed toward Christ and his Atonement. An examination of these sacrificial offerings will better our understanding of the timing of the Lord's death because the Savior symbolically fulfilled *each of these sacrifices* as he died at the moment that ended the day of pre-Paschal sacrifices.

4. Carlos E. Asay, "The Temple Garment: 'An Outward Expression of an Inward Commitment,'" *Ensign*, August 1997, 18–23, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1997/08/the-temple-garment-an-outward-expression-of-an-inward-commitment.

The paschal lamb

Paul clearly identified the Lord as the paschal lamb and recognized the association of Christ's death with the annual Jewish Passover: "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). Christ is embodied in the Passover observance. The bitter herbs of the Passover Seder are reminiscent of the bitterness of the Israelites' bondage, but more especially the bondage of sin in general, and that Christ drank that bitter cup on our behalf. The unleavened bread is a reminder that Christ is the Bread of Life, without blemish (e.g., leaven). The blood on the lintels signified that because of the blood of Christ, the first-born lamb without blemish, death will pass over us.⁵ The paschal lamb is traditionally killed and consumed in its entirety the evening before the beginning of Passover, again symbolic of the death of the Savior. Initially, the sacrifice of lambs the evening before the Israelites left Egypt was performed out of obedience; those who chose not to be obedient lost their first-born sons to the destroying angel. From that time forward, however, the sacrifice of the paschal lamb was performed out of gratitude, but the death of the Savior was a "propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). As Bruce R. McConkie states, and as Callister reaffirms, "The atonement of Christ, being literally and truly infinite, applies to an infinite number of earths."⁶

The Savior's death and Atonement signified more than a commemoration of the Passover, however, since the paschal lamb did not constitute an offering for sin. Other sacrifices were performed daily at the temple. An examination of these sacrifices reveals at least three additional symbolically significant reasons for Christ to have died, not only on the specific date, but also at the precise time of day that he did — the two obligatory daily tamid offerings, the voluntary sacrifices, and the Eighteen Benedictions.

The continual (tamid) sacrifice (korban olah)

The paschal lamb and all temple sacrifices and oblations have reference to the Lord's Atonement, but the tamid is most comparable and of particular significance.

5. Valerie Durrant, "6 Passover Symbols That Might Change How You Look at Easter," *Ensign*, April 2018 (in digital version only), churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2018/04/6-passover-symbols-that-might-change-how-you-look-at-easter.

6. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 46, 87.

A communal atoning sacrifice

The commandment to perform the tamid was first given to Moses as recorded in Exodus 29:39, 41, 42 and repeated in Numbers 28:3, 4, 6, as follows:

This is the offering made by fire which ye shall offer unto the Lord; two lambs of the first year without spot day by day, for a continual burnt offering. The one lamb shalt thou offer in the morning, and the other lamb shalt thou offer at even. . . . It is a continual burnt offering, which was ordained in mount Sinai for a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord.

The tamid was a public offering intended as a communal rather than individual atoning sacrifice. Hasdai Crescas, a medieval Jewish theologian, compared the entire nation of Israel to her progenitor, Isaac, who had nearly been the prototypic sacrifice:

It appears that the intention of the two daily offerings, the morning offering and the evening offering, which take place at the times of change (from night to day and from day to night), is to indicate that this is an atonement for all Israel, so as to remove them from the governance of the servants [i.e., the constellations] and to distinguish them as governed by God. It is as if these daily offerings are in exchange for all Israel and, in offering them, the entirety of the people are drawn nearer to the worship of God. Therefore the daily offerings were lambs, which come from the ram, just as the nation as a whole is a descendant of Isaac. They were therefore purchased with the finances of the Temple treasury, which were public funds, as is recorded in tractate Shekalim.⁷

Rabbi Rabinowitz explains that the burnt sacrifice offered at Mount Sinai following the episode of the golden calf was the initial offering of the tamid (Numbers 28:6).⁸ Rashi, a medieval commentator on

7. Hasdai Crescas, *Light of the Lord (Or Hashem)*, trans. Roslyn Weiss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 162, download link: noachideblog.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/light_of_the_lord.pdf.

8. Yitzchak Zev Rabinowitz, "Thoughts for Your Table – Parshas Pinchas 5782 – Enthusiastic & Consistent," *Beth Israel Malden* (website), 23 Tammuz 5782 [22 July 2022], bethisraelmalden.org/2022/07/thoughts-for-your-table-parshas-pinchas-5782-enthusiastic-consistent/.

the Talmud and the Hebrew Bible, suggested that the tamid represented the continual covenant between Israel and Jehovah prior to the children of Israel receiving the Torah.⁹

Rabbi Pinchas Winston explains,

The Korban Tamid, the Continual Offering, [was] brought twice a day during Temple times. It was brought in the morning to atone for sins done the previous night, and at sunset, to atone for the sins since the morning Tamid.

It was 24-hour coverage, seven days a week. Whatever sins built up during the night, they were gone the next morning, each day. Whatever sins built up during the day were gone by sunset, each day.¹⁰

Despite possible assertions that the tamid was not intended for atonement, Jewish scholars assert that there is a clear element of atonement inherent in the rite.¹¹ The tamid represented both the complete submission of the people to the will of God and a collective expiation of their sins.¹² Its primary purpose was certainly to demonstrate the desire of the people to commune with God continually. Because, however, it is impossible to commune with God while tainted with sin, it was recognized that the tamid must also expiate sin.¹³

The most important sacrifice

The significance of the tamid cannot be overestimated. It was the most important atoning sacrifice performed at the temple.¹⁴ The other (musaf) sacrifices were clearly secondary.¹⁵

9. "Bamidbar 28:6," *The Torah with Rashi's Commentary*, ed. and trans. Yisrael Herczeg (Rahway, NJ: Artscroll / Mesorah, 1999), chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9956/showrashi/true#lt=primary.

10. Pinchas Winston, "Devarim – Chazon," *Perceptions*, Torah.org, 3 August 2022, torah.org/torah-portion/perceptions-5782-devarim-chazon/.

11. R. Gidon Rothstein, "Making Meaning of Sacrifice," *Torah Musings* (website), 24 November 2015, torahmusings.com/2015/11/making-meaning-of-sacrifice/.

12. Tracey R. Rich, "Qorbanot: Sacrifices and Offerings," *Judaism 101* (website), 2023, jewfaq.org/qorbanot.htm.

13. "Jewish Practices & Rituals: Sacrifices and Offerings (Korbanot)," *Jewish Virtual Library* (website), jewishvirtuallibrary.org/sacrifices-and-offerings-korbanot.

14. "Zevachim," *Mishnah*, 89a, sefaria.org/Zevachim.89a.3.

15. Harav Aharon Lichtenstein, "The Daily Sacrifices," *Torat Har Etzion* (website), 25 March 2018. etzion.org.il/en/holidays/17th-tammuz/daily-sacrifices#:~:text=Owing%20to%20its%20special%20nature,Temple%20and%20outside%20of%20it.

The tamid was so significant that Numbers 28:4, a one-verse summation of the ordinance, has been identified by some Jewish scholars as the single verse in the Torah that best defines the essence of Judaism.¹⁶

The tamid could be offered only within a temple.¹⁷ Between the destruction of the First Temple in 587 BC and the completion of the Second Temple in 516 BC, the tamid could not be performed.¹⁸ For the Jews, this loss was catastrophic.¹⁹ After the Second Temple was constructed, a 500-year reinstatement of the tamid ended with the destruction of the Second Temple in AD 70, a second catastrophic loss foretold by the Lord himself (Matthew 25:15). Jews believe that both temples were destroyed on the same day of the year, the ninth of the month of Av (Tisha B'av). This is considered to be the saddest day of the year for Jews and is observed annually as a day of mourning for these and other calamities that occurred on the same day. Since the destruction of the Second Temple, the Jews have been unable to offer the tamid, but its restitution is devoutly prayed for multiple times daily by Orthodox Jews.²⁰

16. An apocryphal but widely quoted Midrash (see Rabbi Doron Perez, "The Most Important Passuk in the Torah," *Mizrachi* (website), mizrachi.org/festivals/the-most-important-passuk-in-the-torah/) cites an anecdote attributed to Rabbi Ya'akov Ben Haviv from the sixteenth century. In summary, the Rabbi is purported to have asked, "What is the most important passuk [verse] in the Torah?" One sage, Ben Azai, said, "This is the book of the generations of Adam—on the day that G-d created man, He made him in His Image." Another, Ben Zoma, stated that it must surely be, "Shema Yisrael [Hear, Israel]." Ben Nanas believed it to be "Love your fellow man as yourself." Shimon Ben Pazi then offered his choice, "One lamb shall you offer in the morning, and the other lamb shall you offer at evening," which was accepted over the other suggestions since it points us to intentional, daily, consistent behavior—in this case, the offering of a sacrifice both morning and evening, day in and day out. Although the validity of the original source of this anecdote cannot be substantiated, it has been repeated often enough by Jewish scholars that its acceptance is warranted.

17. Rich, "Qorbanot."

18. Rich, "Qorbanot."

19. "17th of Tammuz-5 Tragic Events that Befell the Jewish People," *Torah-Box.net* (website), 23 August 2021, torah-box.net/jewish-life/jewish-holidays/fast-of-the-17th-of-tammuz/17th-of-tammuz-5-tragic-events-that-befell-the-jewish-people_309.html.

20. Rich, "Qorbanot."

Daniel prophesied of both suspensions of the daily sacrifice.

And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. (Daniel 11:31)

And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. (Daniel 12:11)

In doing so, he mentioned only the loss of the daily sacrifice, emphasizing the importance of the tamid over all others.

Lichtenstein points out that five calamities that befell ancient Israel are commemorated on the seventeenth of Tammuz. He then argues that, of the five,

most people [today] would have little difficulty in declaring the cessation of the daily sacrifice as the least terrible. After nearly two millennia we are used to living without the daily sacrifice and do not feel its absence. But even if we were to try to imagine ourselves in the situation of the people of Jerusalem at the time of the Destruction, there is no comparison between the cessation of the daily sacrifice — the halting of a positive practice — and the other four tragedies.²¹

The timing of the tamid

One section of the *Mishnah* explains how the tamid was to be carried out.²² Two lambs without blemish were slain daily and offered as burnt sacrifices. “Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually” (Exodus 29:38).²³

21. Lichtenstein, “Daily Sacrifices.”

22. “Tamid,” *Mishnah*, 1–7, sefaria.org/Mishnah_Tamid?tab=contents.

23. Matthew Henry, “A Commentary on the Holy Bible” (London: The London Printing and Publishing Company, 1761), [google.com/books/edition/Commentary_on_the_Holy_Bible_by_the_Rev/6xnGvrLWeD0C?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=%22The+daily+service+appointed%22+Henry&pg=PA233&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Commentary_on_the_Holy_Bible_by_the_Rev/6xnGvrLWeD0C?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=%22The+daily+service+appointed%22+Henry&pg=PA233&printsec=frontcover).

“The daily service appointed. A lamb was to be offered upon the altar every morning, and a lamb every evening, each with a meat-offering, both made by fire, as a continual burnt-offering throughout their generations, v. 38–41. Whether there were any other sacrifices to be offered or not, these were sure to be offered, at the public charge, and for the benefit and comfort of all Israel, to make atonement for their daily sins,

The first lamb was bound to the altar at about 6:00 am²⁴ and slain at 9:00 am.²⁵ The second was bound to the altar at noon and slain at about 3:00 pm²⁶ every day of the year without exception. As related by the New Testament writers, the timing of the Lord's crucifixion and death corresponds exactly to the timing of these two tamid sacrifices.

The traditional Sefard Shabbat liturgy contains the following in relation to the morning prayers and the Korban tamid:

The Tamid-offerings, two daily offerings of one lamb at a time, were offered once in the morning and once in the afternoon. The former was the first public-offering brought on the Altar each day. And the latter terminated the day's offerings. These animals were purchased from the annual half-shekel gifts of the people and were offered on behalf of the entire Jewish People.

A brief prayer was offered:

May it be Your will, Adonoy, our God and God of our fathers, to have compassion on us, to forgive us all our sins, [done unknowingly], to atone all our iniquities, [done knowingly], to pardon all our [malicious] transgressions, and may You build the Holy Temple quickly, in our days, that we may offer, before You, the daily burnt-offering to atone for us, as You wrote for us in Your Torah by the hand of Moses, Your servant, from the mouth of Your Reverence, as it is said: [Numbers 28:1–8 is then quoted].²⁷

and to be an acknowledgement to God of their daily mercies. This was that which the duty of every day required."

24. Sunrise in Jerusalem varies from 0630 in early April to 0600 in late April. The moment of dawn, when "there is light" or "the entire eastern sky [is] illuminated as far as Hebron" occurs is subjective. *Mishnah*: Tamid 3:2, sefaria.org/Mishnah_Tamid.3.2?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en.
25. Flavius Josephus. "Antiquities of the Jews," in *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, William Whiston, trans.(1895), XIV.4.3, gutenberg.org/files/2848/2848-h/2848-h.htm#link142HCH0004.
26. Alfred Edersheim, "A Night in the Temple," *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services as They Were at the Time of Jesus Christ* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1874), 7:143. classicchristianlibrary.com/library/edersheim_alfred/Edersheim-Temple.pdf. Although the time designated for the binding of the evening lamb is not stated, the times of the sacrifices are said to occur at the 3rd and the 9th hours. The first lamb was bound at least two hours beforehand, so it is assumed that the evening lamb was bound about the same length of time prior to the sacrifice, which would be during the 6th hour, or about noon.
27. Avraham Davis, "The Morning Prayers, Korban Tamid (Daily Offering),"

Lisle G. Brown followed the service of Zacharias the day he was struck dumb while officiating (Luke 1:5–23). He describes in detail how the priests who administered the tamid were chosen and what their duties entailed.

The priest's principal responsibility during the day was to conduct the sacrifices of two unblemished lambs, which were required to be offered continually under the law of Moses:

Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually. The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even: . . . for a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord. This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. (Exodus 29:38–42)

This sacrifice was called the *tamid*, a Hebrew word that means “standing,” “continual,” or “daily.” Clearly, the first *tamid* commenced the daily ministrations in the temple; the second ended the day's service.²⁸

From the Christian point of view, Jesus Christ was the prophesied lamb without blemish (1 Peter 1:19) who was slain for the sins of the world. In referencing the manner of his death, Nephi used the term *slain* (1 Nephi 10:11) as did others (Isaiah 53:7 [“slaughter”], Revelation 5:9, 12; 13:8). *Slain* is the past participle of the verb *to slay*, whose literal meaning is “to be killed violently or brutally,” and whose synonyms are “to butcher” or “to slaughter,” as were the sacrificial lambs and other animals each day. The tamid sacrifices of innocent lambs without blemish, which were violently killed, were a clear type of the Savior, who was sacrificed, just as the lambs were, for the sins of the people.

Christ, as Jehovah, instituted the practice of sacrifice by the

Shabbat Siddur Sefard Linear, The Metsudah Siddur (Brooklyn, NY: Metsudah Publications, 1981). [sefaria.org/Shabbat_Siddur_Sefard_Linear%2C_The_Morning_Prayers%2C_Korban_Tamid_\(Daily_Offering\).2?lang=bi](http://sefaria.org/Shabbat_Siddur_Sefard_Linear%2C_The_Morning_Prayers%2C_Korban_Tamid_(Daily_Offering).2?lang=bi).

28. Lisle G. Brown, “Tamid: Zacharias and the Second Temple,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 48 (2021): 347, journal.interpreterfoundation.org/tamid-zacharias-and-the-second-temple/.

shedding of blood when he made garments of skin for Adam and Eve and concluded the practice through the shedding of his own blood.

An all-encompassing burnt offering

The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* states, "*Tamid* is an abbreviated form for *olat tamid* ('daily burnt-offering')." ²⁹ While other sacrifices were only partially burned, the tamid was entirely burned ("olah"), symbolizing sanctification of the whole man in surrender to the Lord and complete submission to God's will. ³⁰ No other sacrifice that was performed at the temple did this. ³¹ Christians recognize this sanctification through surrender and submission as a symbolic type of Christ's submission to the will of his Father.

The tamid signified complete submission of the people to the Lord. Inasmuch as it was completely burned, it symbolized the totality of the Lord's sacrifice. Following his ordeal in the Garden, the Lord would have been left with insufficient readily available energy to maintain even basic body functions. Throughout his subsequent ordeals, he would have been oxidizing—burning—predominantly muscle and fat. In a highly symbolic fashion, Jesus himself became a "burnt offering," with the combustion occurring internally rather than externally. Perhaps the way the priests had been instructed to perform the tamid sacrifice for centuries was a type of the way the body of the Lord would itself be consumed.

No other sacrifices could begin until the morning tamid had been offered and no additional sacrifices were performed after the evening offering. ³² As such, the two tamid sacrifices represented the all-encompassing nature of God, in the words of Rabbi Osher Chaim Levene:

What matters is for the totality of the experience—from start to finish—to be constant. To be a continual and an unchanging whole. G-d is the Start of Everything. . . "You are

29. Arnost Zvi Ehrman, "Tamid," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Keter, 2007), 19:495, ketab3.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/encyclopaedia-judaica-v-19-som-tn.pdf.

30. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 2, trans. James Martin (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1885), 331–32, archive.org/details/BiblicalCommentaryOldTestament.KeilAndDelitzsch.6/01.BCOT.KD.PentateuchMoses.vol.1.Law./page/n847/mode/2up.

31. Tracey R. Rich, "Qorbanot: Sacrifices and Offerings," *Judaism 101* (website), 2023, jewfaq.org/qorbanot.htm.

32. Lichtenstein, "Daily Sacrifices."

the First. And you are the Last. And there is nothing except for our King, Redeemer and Savior” (Morning Prayers). The beginning and end of the Jewish day are signposted by reference to the tamid offering.³³

Christians will appreciate that these are a few of the many names or descriptions of the comprehensive nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending,” as referred to in the New Testament (Revelation 1:8).

Other (Musaf) Sacrifices

The following four other *korbanat* sacrifices took place between the morning and afternoon tamid sacrifices. These represent additional aspects of the Lord and his love for his people.

The gift, meal, or grain offering (korban minchah)

Leviticus 2:1–16 and 6:14–23 describe a bloodless offering of “the finest flour,” oil, frankincense, and salt. This offering was a portion of the fruit of an individual’s personal labor and property, acknowledging that all belongs to God in the first place and all that we can offer is our own labor (Exodus 23:16, Leviticus 22:25).³⁴ It is reminiscent of the sacrificial and personal nature of Christ’s Atonement having “[trod] the winepress alone” (Isaiah 63:3).

Flour and oil represented an offering of the daily sustenance of life but had additional spiritual connotations. Flour represented the Lord, who sustains life and is himself the Bread of Life (John 6:47–51, 58). Anointing with oil is a common biblical symbol of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; 1 John 2:20). Frankincense was included to give a “sweet savor” to an otherwise distinctly unsavory smell when non-animal offerings are burnt.³⁵ Salt was a required addition to a grain offering (Leviticus 2:13) and is elsewhere noted to

33. Rabbi Osher Chaim Levene, “Tamid: From Start to Finish,” Parshas Pinchas, *Torah.org* (website), July 5, 2023, torah.org/torah-portion/livinglaw-5767-pinchas/.

34. See N.R. Davies, “Korban Minchah: The Finest Flour (March 2011),” *Jewish Contemplatives* (blog), jewishcontemplatives.blogspot.com/2011/03/korban-minchah-finest-flour-march-2011.html.

35. Jonathan Grossman, “The Significance of Frankincense in Grain Offerings,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 138, no. 2 (2019): 285–296. [dx.doi.org/10.15699/jbl.1382.2019.516371](https://doi.org/10.15699/jbl.1382.2019.516371).

be a symbol of the covenant (Numbers 18:19, 2 Chronicles 13:5; also Doctrine and Covenants 101:39).

The peace offerings (korban shelamim)

The three types of peace offerings, seen in Psalm 23:5, Matthew 22:1–14, and Luke 14:15, were the thank-offering, which was a response to acts of divine beneficence; the votive-offering, which was prompted by a feeling of gratitude for the fulfillment of a petition; and the free-will offering, given completely voluntarily with the sole motive of spontaneous piety.³⁶

Peace offerings, as the name indicates, presupposed that the sacrificer was at peace with God; they were offered for the further realization and enjoyment of that peace. The characteristic rite was the sacrificial meal. A feast symbolized fellowship and friendship among all its partakers and providers, and also a state of joy and gladness.³⁷

Peace offerings were an expression of gratitude to Jehovah for his kindness and mercy, which are divine characteristics that Christ displayed throughout his earthly ministry and particularly through his unselfish sacrifice (Leviticus 3:1–17, 7:11–34).

The sin offering (korban chatat)

This offering was meant to atone for and to purge an unintentional or careless sin (Leviticus 4:1–35). It was an expression of sorrow for the error and a desire to be reconciled with God. The sin offering is reminiscent of the restitution that must be made for sins committed in ignorance (2 Nephi 9:25), by those lacking the capacity to distinguish right from wrong (Mosiah 3:11), and by those who have not reached the age of accountability (Mosiah 3:16). All such sins are covered by the Savior's Atonement.

The type of animal to be sacrificed for a sin offering depended on the social and economic status of the sinner offering the sacrifice:

- A high priest (Leviticus 4:3) or the entire community (Leviticus 4:14; Numbers 15:2–3) required a young bullock.
- A ruler required a young male goat (Leviticus 4:22–23).

36. Louis Grosman, "Peace Offering," *JewishEncyclopedia* (website), jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/11966-peace-offering.

37. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Sacrifices," *Bible Dictionary*, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bd/sacrifices.

- “Common people” required a female kid (Leviticus 4:27–28; Numbers 15:27) or a lamb (Leviticus 4:32).
- Individuals too poor to afford these options could substitute two turtle doves or young pigeons, one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering (Leviticus 5:7).
- Those too poor to afford even turtle doves could offer a tenth of an ephah of fine flour without perfume instead of an animal (Leviticus 5:11).

These and all other animals sacrificed on the altar were required to be without blemish.

The presumptuous sin, however, committed defiantly and without remorse, is specifically not covered by this offering (Numbers 15:30–31). The sin offering described in Leviticus 6:24–30 accomplished this cleansing.³⁸

The guilt or trespass offering (korban asham)

This offering was made to redress either a breach of trust or when one was unsure whether a sin had been committed (Leviticus 5:14–6:7, 7:1–7). It was made by someone who had committed a grievance against another but had since then developed the honest intent of reconciling with the wronged person.³⁹ Fulfilling this offering is a poignant conciliation made by the Lord to reunite himself with wayward humanity when we — and not he — were the cause of the initial estrangement.

The economics of sacrifice

The means of gathering funds to procure the sacrificial animals for the tamid, which was a communal offering, were based on Exodus 30:11–16 as an annual tax of one-half shekel for each male beginning at the age of twenty years.⁴⁰ This tax was the same for all men regardless of financial situation.⁴¹

The cost of the sacrifices of the privately owned animals or goods for musaf sacrifices was borne individually. Regardless of their failure

38. Joseph Jacobs, George A. Barton, M. Seligsohn, Emil G. Hirsch, “Sin Offering,” *JewishEncyclopedia* (website), jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13764-sin-offering.

39. Kaufmann Kohler, “Atonement,” *JewishEncyclopedia* (website), jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6934-guilt-offering.

40. Mishnah Shekalim, 4:1, sefaria.org/Mishnah_Shekalim.4.1?lang=bi.

41. “The Half-Shekel Offering,” *Temple Institute* (website), templeinstitute.org/half-shekel-offering/.

to appreciate the full meaning of the tamid and other burnt offerings, one must marvel at the willingness of these ancient people to sacrifice particularly precious animals that they had nurtured and fed and maintained unblemished. It is one thing for us in our day to donate tithing when we know that there are temples to be built and numerous other expenses for which the Church is necessarily responsible. It is quite another to place valuable goods on the altar and watch them simply burn. Imagine that in our day tithing is paid by throwing a cash donation into a flaming incinerator outside the meetinghouse and watching as it is consumed by fire. It might seem utterly senseless and wasteful to us, but these people accepted it as God's will. Their obedience is to be admired although their comprehension of the meaning of their actions was often lacking.

The Eighteen Benedictions

According to Jewish tradition, the performance of the tamid was accompanied by the recitation of blessings, one series of which was commonly known as the "Eighteen Benedictions." These were recited while the sacrifices were being offered in the temple.⁴² According to Instone-Brewer, it is likely that these prayers, as we know them today, are very nearly the same as those that were recited by the priests at the time of the Savior's death.⁴³

The fulfillment of prophecy sometimes borders on irony, and this is never more clearly demonstrated than in the case of the crucifixion and death of the Savior. With the exception of Prayers 4, 9, 14, and 16, each of the Eighteen Benedictions is directed toward Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament, who we know is Jesus.⁴⁴ Most of the

42. Cyrus Adler, Emil G. Hirsch, "Shemoneh 'Esreh," *JewishEncyclopedia* (website), jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13561-shemoneh-esreh.

43. David Instone-Brewer, "The Eighteen Benedictions and the Minim before 70 CE," *Journal of Theological Studies* 54, no. 1 (April 2003): 25–44, jstor.org/stable/23968967?seq=1.

44. The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued a doctrinal statement on the relationship between the Father and the Son, which states repeatedly that Jesus Christ is Jehovah: "The Father and the Son," *Improvement Era*, Aug. 1916, 934–42, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2002/04/the-father-and-the-son?lang=eng. This is not a concept unique to the Church of Jesus Christ as many Christian denominations believe the same thing. Referring to the Israelites being led by Moses from Egypt to the promised land, Paul states: "And [they] did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them [Jehovah]: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4).

fourteen prayers speak directly of his attributes.⁴⁵ It is supremely ironic that the high priest was praising the Lord and beseeching him for favor at the very moment that this same Lord was completing his Atonement on behalf of those same priests, who had just condemned him and demanded his crucifixion.

- Prayer 1 acknowledged Jehovah as he who bestows goodly kindness and is “the Creator” of all; it also acknowledged that he will send a Redeemer.
- Prayer 2 acknowledged the resurrection promised by the Messiah.
- Prayer 3, despite the derisive sign affixed to the cross above Christ’s head (Luke 23:38), sanctified the name of the Lord.
- Prayer 5 implored that their repentance would be accepted.
- Prayer 6 begged for forgiveness.
- Prayer 7 acknowledged the Lord as their Redeemer.
- Prayer 8 asked for the healing of their own wounds (reminiscent of the words in Isaiah 53:5, “with his stripes we are healed”), perhaps most poignantly, while they were in the middle of inflicting what may be the most grievous wounds imaginable upon their Lord.
- Prayer 10 pleaded for the Jews — the remaining remnant of the once large but now dispersed Israelites — to be gathered again into one body from the four corners of the earth.⁴⁶
- Prayer 11 pleaded for relief from the afflictions the Jews were suffering and for justice to be served. They also asserted their innocence.
- Prayer 12, conversely, pleaded for the destruction of the wicked.⁴⁷
- Prayer 13 begged for favor to be granted to the righteous and the pious, which the Jews imagined to be themselves, as they affirmed their trust in God.
- Prayer 15 beseeched the Almighty for the speedy

45. Adler, “Shemoneh ‘Esreh.”

46. This prayer recalls Luke 13:34, in which Christ laments the unwillingness of the Jews to be gathered by their Lord.

47. This despite the statement that they were “among those who are the more wicked part of the world” and that there was “none other nation on earth that would crucify their God” (2 Nephi 10:3).

appearance of the sprout (branch) of David (Jeremiah 23:5–6), who is the Messiah,⁴⁸ and for the salvation he would bring.

- Prayer 17 begged the Lord to accept their sacrifices to him and to make Jerusalem his abode.
- Prayer 18 summarized the previous prayers.

The Eighteen Benedictions would have been followed by additional praise to the Lord on the day before Christ's Sunday resurrection. The following words, spoken by the high priest in commemoration of the annual Passover Sabbath on that day, are particularly applicable to the Savior, who was symbolized by the paschal lamb:

And Thou hast given us, O Lord our God, in love [Sabbaths for rest,] set times and seasons for joy, [this Sabbath-day, the day of our rest, and] this day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the season of our deliverance, a holy convocation, a memorial of the exodus from Egypt.⁴⁹

On that same Passover Sabbath, the Lord visited the righteous ancestors of his accusers, who had languished in spirit prison:

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah. (1 Peter 3:18–20)

Modern-day revelation informs us that he brought to these captives the joyous news that they had finally been ransomed:

The hosts of the dead, both small and great . . . were gathered together . . . the just, who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality; And who had offered sacrifice in the similitude of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, and had suffered tribulation in their Redeemer's name. . . . While this vast multitude waited and conversed . . . the Son of God appeared, declaring liberty to the captives who had been faithful; . . . But his ministry among those who were dead was limited to the brief time intervening

48. Russell M. Nelson, "Why This Holy Land?" *Ensign*, December 1989, 15, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1989/12/why-this-holy-land.

49. Adler, "Shemoneh 'Esreh."

between the crucifixion and his resurrection. (Doctrine and Covenants 138:1–60, see especially 11–19, 27)

The long-awaited and jubilant deliverance from Egypt through the Exodus mentioned in the Passover prayer was a type of this even longer-awaited and immensely more exultant spiritual deliverance. It was a fitting conclusion to the symbolic sacrifice by the Savior, excruciatingly wrought over the preceding days.

Why the Lord died when he did

The Lord was fully cognizant of when the appropriate moment had arrived for him to die because he said, “It is finished” (John 19:30). Talmage wrote, in other words, “[The Lord] lived until all things were accomplished as had been appointed.”⁵⁰ As the final tamid sacrifice was being offered, and as Christ was approaching death, he could justifiably say: “It is finished.” In Greek, the word is *tetelestai*.

“It is finished!” is one word in the Greek text — *tetelestai*. The word was a common one and was used by merchants to mean “The price is all paid!” Shepherds and priests used it when they found a perfect sheep, ready for sacrifice; and Christ died as the perfect lamb of God. Servants, when their work was completed, would use this word when reporting to their masters. Christ, the obedient Servant, had finished the work the Father gave Him to do. Christ willingly and deliberately gave up His life; He laid down His life for His friends.⁵¹

In his Bible commentary, Matthew Henry summarized what the Lord may have been referring to when the Lord spoke of *It* as being finished:

Tetelestai—It is finished, a comprehensive word, and a comfortable one. (1.) . . . the malice and enmity of his persecutors had now done their worst; . . . (2.) . . . the counsel and commandment of his Father concerning his sufferings were now fulfilled; . . . (3.) . . . all the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, which pointed at the sufferings of the Messiah, were accomplished and answered. . . . (4.) . . . the

50. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1915), 662, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/jesus-the-christ/chapter-35.

51. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 264, archive.org/details/wiersbesexposito/0000wier_y6r0/page/264/mode/2up.

ceremonial law is abolished, and a period put to the obligation of it. The substance is now come, and all the shadows are done away. . . . (5.) . . . sin is finished, and an end made of transgression, by the bringing in of an everlasting righteousness. . . . (6.) . . . his sufferings were now finished, both those of his soul and those of his body. . . . (7.) . . . his life was now finished, he was just ready to breathe his last, (8.) . . . the work of man's redemption and salvation is now completed, at least the hardest part of the undertaking is over; a full satisfaction is made to the justice of God, a fatal blow given to the power of Satan, a fountain of grace opened that shall ever flow, a foundation of peace and happiness laid that shall never fail.⁵²

Henry's eight points of fulfillment may be more succinctly stated as:

1. The persecution directed against him.
2. His Father's will.
3. All Old Testament prophecies.
4. The sacrificial rituals that were shadows of his sacrifice.⁵³
5. The release of all who had been held captive by sin.
6. His mortal suffering.
7. His mortal ministry.
8. His Atonement.

The Lord met each of these eight aspects of completion sometime between entering the Garden of Gethsemane and his death. The fourth point, however, was so time-dependent that it could be fulfilled only at one particular moment. According to the law, the tamid could be offered at only two specific times of the day, the beginning and the conclusion of all daily sacrifices. To symbolically encompass all of the sacrifices that had for centuries been types of his ultimate sacrifice, timing was critical. The Lord was placed on the cross at the third hour

52. Matthew Henry, "Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible," (1706), at *Bible Study Tools* (website), biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/john/19.html.

53. Such terminology suggests to some a supersessionistic belief that the Lord has repudiated the ancient Israelite ceremonies and sacrifices, has rejected the Jews as his covenant people, and has replaced them with one or more Christian sects. The Church of Jesus Christ does not subscribe to this so-called "replacement theory." Neither the former laws nor rites were renounced, but they were fulfilled and amplified. The descendants of Abraham were and still are the Lord's chosen people, and he will reclaim as many of them as are willing, when he returns to earth as their—and our—Messiah.

(9:00 am), the moment at which the first atoning tamid sacrifice was slain. He then voluntarily prolonged his agony while all other sacrificial offerings were being carried out at the temple throughout the day. When these sacrifices had been completed for the day, at the ninth hour (3:00 pm, Matthew 27:46, 50, Mark 15:34, 37, Luke 23:44, 46), the second and final tamid sacrifice was slain. At that moment, the Lord allowed his spirit to depart his ruined body. This was the final thing of “all things” that had to be accomplished. By his suffering throughout the entire day of sacrifices, Christ symbolically fulfilled each of the five *korbanot* offerings, finally exclaiming, “It is finished” as the final tamid offering concluded the day of sacrifices.

It appears that it was important enough to the Lord that his death occur simultaneously with that final tamid sacrifice that he was willing to prolong his suffering to place a stamp of fulfillment on sacrifice by the shedding of blood.

When Should the Lord Have Died?

Evidence presented in my previous article suggests that Christ's physical body was brought to the verge of death in Gethsemane and that he survived only because he knew how to support a dying physical body.⁵⁴ Subsequently, he could have succumbed at any point during the scourging, while carrying the *patibulum*, or during the crucifixion — particularly when the agony of Gethsemane returned. His body had been pushed unimaginably beyond the limits of normal mortal endurance. I believe that intense physical exertion, hemorrhage, hypovolemia, hypothermia, hypoventilation, and any of numerous other physiologic extremes to which the Lord's body had been subjected, could have caused him to die before the symbolically appointed time without his own divine intervention.

The Lord was the creator of the universe, including perhaps the most intricate creation of all, the human central nervous system. He had recently demonstrated his mastery of human physiology by raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:43–44). We may reasonably assume that Christ was fully cognizant of physiologic methods by which he could assuage his suffering. Physicians have long known that certain pharmacologic agents will inhibit the transmission of pain along the entire sensory pain pathway, and these agents are easily

54. Black, “Pathophysiology,” journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-pathophysiology-of-the-death-of-jesus-the-christ/.

administered at any of several points, commencing at the nerve endings in the skin and other tissues, and ascending through the peripheral nerves to the spinal cord and on to the brain.⁵⁵ Likewise the areas of the brain that process the pain signals that reach them, including the somatosensory cortex, the thalamus, the hypothalamus, and the cerebral cortex,⁵⁶ are amenable to pain reduction by internally synthesized neurotransmitters including the opioid neuropeptides, endorphins, dynorphins, and enkephalins.⁵⁷ Although Christ could have caused the synthesis and secretion of such endogenous analgesic agents to attenuate his pain—and no mortal would have known he had done that—he and his Father would have known, and the measure of his Atonement would not have been full. The Lord would not have “drained the cup fully” and his Atonement would have been short of infinite. How immensely sobering it is to realize the restraint demonstrated by the Savior by not attenuating his suffering in the least.

Referring to the Lord’s final utterances moments before his death, John wrote enigmatically “Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled[,] . . . said, ‘It is finished’ and gave up the ghost” (John 19:28). It would be of immense value to understand what John meant by “all things” that were of such importance that the Lord should time his death to occur at that moment. Brown infers that Christ’s injuries were not severe enough for him to have died after only six hours on the cross so he purposely hastened his death after having fulfilled all Old Testament prophecies regarding his mission.⁵⁸ The Lord may have been talking about ending the practice of animal sacrifices (Hebrews 9:12). Many assume it meant “all that is required for the Atonement.”⁵⁹ His words may have signi-

55. Danielle Reddi, Natasha Curran, Robert C.M. Stephens, “An introduction to pain pathways and mechanisms,” *British Journal of Hospital Medicine*, 74 Suppl 12:C188–91 (December 2013), ucl.ac.uk/anaesthesia/sites/anaesthesia/files/IntrotoPainPathwaysandMechanisms.pdf.

56. A.I. Basbaum, H.L. Fields, “Endogenous pain control mechanisms: review and hypothesis,” *Annals of Neurology* vol. 4 (November 1978): 451, online library.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ana.410040511.

57. Cassidy Vuong, et al., “The Effects of Opioids and Opioid Analogs on Animal and Human Endocrine Systems,” *Endocrine Reviews*, vol. 31, no. 1 (1 February 2010): 98, academic.oup.com/edrv/article/31/1/98/2354848.

58. Raymond Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 1078, archive.org/details/deathofmessiahvo00raym/page/1078/mode/2up.

59. See for example, Alain A. Petion, “Words of Jesus: On the Cross,” *Ensign*, June 2003, 35, archive.org/details/Ensign_Magazine-2003-06/page/n35

fied the completion of his earthly mission.⁶⁰ His final act immediately before stating that “all things were now accomplished” was to arrange for his mother’s care (John 19:27).

The Lord could have precisely timed his death in three possible ways:

- He died sooner than his condition warranted (e.g., hastened his death).
- He died at the moment one would expect for his degree of injuries.
- He should have died later than he did (e.g., prolonged his suffering).

Each of these possible ways will now be considered.

The Lord hastened his death

The soldiers who came to expedite the deaths of the *cruciarrii* by breaking their legs reported to Pilate that Christ was already dead while the two malefactors still lived (John 19:31–33). Pilate, an experienced observer of scourging and crucifixion, marveled that Christ had died as soon as he had (Mark 15:44).

And Pilate marveled if, etc. — Wondered if he was dead, or wondered that he was so soon dead. It was not common for persons crucified to expire under two or three days, sometimes not until the sixth or seventh. Joseph had asked for the “body,” implying that he was dead. That he was, had been ascertained by the soldiers.⁶¹

Some commentators on the Lord’s death agree with Pilate’s surprise and believe that Christ did die sooner than a normal human being would have been expected to die under similar circumstances.⁶² The

/mode/2up; and Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 4:227–28.

60. John H. Groberg, “It Is Finished,” in *My Redeemer Lives!*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 1–26, rsc.byu.edu/my-redeemer-lives/it-finished.

61. Albert Barnes, “Mark 15:44,” *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1962), 177n44, archive.org/details/barnesnotesonnew0000unse/page/176/mode/2up.

62. J. Warner Wallace, “Why Jesus Died So Quickly On The Cross,” *Cold-Case Christianity* (blog), 5 April 2019, coldcasechristianity.com/2014/why-jesus-died-so-quickly-on-the-cross/. See also: “Crucifixion,” *The Cyclopedia*

inherent insinuation is that the Lord decreased the length of time he would spend on the cross to shorten the time of his suffering. The Lord, however, did nothing to mitigate his suffering. He conspicuously and repeatedly refused any means whereby the amount of agony he had to endure would be lessened. Mark records, "And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not" (Mark 15:23), and Matthew concurs (Matthew 27:34). Talmage reported,

Preparatory to affixing the condemned to the cross, it was the custom to offer each a narcotic draught of sour wine or vinegar mingled with myrrh and possibly containing other anodyne ingredients, for the merciful purpose of deadening the sensibility of the victim.⁶³

Christ's refusal to drink indicated his intention not to diminish the suffering he was already experiencing and what he knew he was yet to endure even more severely. Of course, on the march to Golgotha, Christ was physically unable to continue carrying the patibulum, so it was given to Simon to carry. It appears that the Lord used his divine power to sustain his life but not to reduce his suffering in a non-life-threatening situation.

Brown suggests that Christ's injuries were not severe enough for him to have died after only six hours on the cross, so he purposely hastened his death—but only after having fulfilled all Old Testament prophecies regarding his mission.⁶⁴

The Lord died at the expected moment

Perhaps Christ died at the precise moment at which the physical body of an equally traumatized mortal would have died, but that would be an improbable coincidence. Assuming that his death was foreordained to occur at the precise moment that it did, it is conceivable that circumstances could have been arranged such that the Lord would sustain precisely the amount of injury that would cause him to die at the exact moment he did. Holoubek and Holoubek believe that Christ died sooner than an observer might have expected but at the appropriate

of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, ed. James Strong and John McClintock (New York: Haper and Brothers, 1880), biblicalcyclopedia.com/C/crucifixion.html; Brown, "Death of the Messiah."

63. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1915), 654–55, archive.org/details/jesusthechrist1915.

64. Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1078.

moment based on his injuries, both apparent and hidden.⁶⁵ This idea is impossible either to verify or to disprove based on current scriptural and scientific information. It is, however, rather incongruent with the self-determinative nature the Lord displayed in all other instances in his life.

Alternatively, the Father may have orchestrated the Savior's death to occur at the moment it did. One online ministry proclaims, "This was no accident but was sovereignly arranged by God to show that Christ was the Passover Lamb once and for all."⁶⁶ We know, however, that the power to lay down and take up his own body was given to Christ and he "[trod] the winepress alone."

The Lord should have died sooner than he did

Christ did nothing partway during his life; on the contrary, he encouraged his followers to do more than the minimum so all doubt would be removed regarding their motivation. It was he who advised that "ye shall not resist evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also; And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also; And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain" (3 Nephi 12:39–41). To be efficacious, his sacrifice had to have surpassed anything imaginable. As Neal A. Maxwell described in unfathomable terms, it was "enormity multiplied by infinity."⁶⁷

The Lord's Atonement has been termed *infinite* (2 Nephi 9:7, 25:16; Alma 34:10, 12, 14).⁶⁸ Infinite may refer to many different aspects of what he experienced, but one very important aspect is the degree of suffering that he was required to endure before he could say, "It is finished" (John 19:30; JST Matthew 27:54). Callister says,

Not once did he don the bulletproof vest of divinity. That he also had godly powers did not make his suffering any less excruciating, any less poignant, or any less real. To the

65. Joe E. Holoubek, Alice Baker Holoubek, "A Study of Death by Crucifixion with Attempted Explanation of the Death of Jesus Christ," *The Linacre Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (February 1994): 18, epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1878&context=lnq.

66. "Faith Lesson from Gethsemane to Golgotha," point 5, *Holy Land Site* (website), holylandsite.com/jesus-path-to-the-cross.

67. Neil A. Maxwell, "Willing to Submit," *Ensign*, May 1985, 73, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1985/04/willing-to-submit.

68. Callister, *Infinite Atonement*, 58–60.

contrary, it is for this very reason that his suffering was more, not less, than his mortal counterparts could experience.⁶⁹

Less than the full measure demanded by the law of justice would not have sufficed, but perhaps he suffered even more.

The Lord Determined When His Spirit Would Leave His Body

John clearly states that Jesus's life was not taken from him; rather he yielded it up voluntarily (John 10:11, 15, 17–18). Despite the terminology generally used by commentators, neither the Jews nor the Romans "killed" the Savior. No one had that ability. According to the Lord's statement, "No man taketh [my life] from me" (John 10:18). The Lord alone controlled his fate. Although they did not cause his death, it was their intention to do so, they thought they had been successful, and they were unrepentant (Matthew 27:62–66).

We have no record that anything occurred to the Lord that was against his will. The New Testament records numerous occasions when religious and political leaders and Satan attempted to exert control over his actions, but the Lord always deftly assumed control. When the mob came to apprehend him, the Lord readily identified himself, boldly enough that "they went backward, and fell to the ground" (John 18:6). He then defused a tense situation by healing the severed ear of the high priest's servant (Luke 22:49–51). We would expect that, as a God, the Lord would never be taken by surprise but would always act and never be unwillingly acted upon. His physical death was always under his control.

Both Augustine and Thomas Aquinas stressed that Jesus died exactly when he intended.⁷⁰ Brown stated that Jesus did not die until all prophecies had been fulfilled.⁷¹ Jeffrey R. Holland agreed, saying, "When the uttermost farthing had then been paid, when Christ's determination to be faithful was as obvious as it was utterly invincible, finally and mercifully, it was 'finished.'"⁷² Christ had power over his own life

69. Callister, *Infinite Atonement*, 119.

70. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, Tractate 119:4, 6, *New Advent* (website), newadvent.org/fathers/1701119.htm; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, Q 47, A 1, Reply 2, *New Advent* (website), newadvent.org/summa/4047.htm.

71. Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1078.

72. Jeffrey R. Holland, "None Were with Him," *Ensign*, May 2009, 88, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2009/05/none-were-with-him.

and death, his body had already been mortally wounded, all prophecies had been fulfilled, and “all things were now accomplished,” so he was free to allow his spirit to depart his physical body and “give up the ghost.” How he may have done so was discussed previously.

Summary and Conclusions

Evidence has been presented to support the following points:

1. **Christ had sufficient cause to synchronize his death with a particular event.** All symbolism of the Old Testament, particularly that associated with the temple, had reference to the Savior’s atoning sacrifice. It is therefore appropriate that Christ intentionally timed his death to occur at the moment of the second tamid sacrifice on the evening prior to Passover, thus ending the 1,500-year practice of sacrifice by the shedding of blood. Since other sacrifices of various types, all of which had reference to the Savior, were performed throughout the sacrificial day, it was a singularly appropriate moment to fulfill the objectives for which sacrifices were offered, as well as to exemplify the sacrifice of the paschal lamb. The first and second tamid sacrifices powerfully bookended the totality of the symbolic fulfillment of all the sacrifices.
2. **Because Christ received no external assistance in carrying out the Atonement, any prolongation of his life was due to his own intervention.** The evidence suggests that not until the appropriate moment had arrived, the price had been fully paid, and his redeeming mission was complete, did the Savior voluntarily, actively, and abruptly withdraw his internal “life support” and “[give] up the ghost.” He then rapidly succumbed to one, or more likely all, of the accumulating physiologic abnormalities he had been so tenaciously keeping at bay for many hours.
3. **The Lord’s death occurred in two stages.** First, the Lord’s body was severely injured, both metabolically in the Garden of Gethsemane and soon after by physical torture. At some point, it became necessary for the Lord to consciously choose to support his failing physical body. Second, after a prolonged period of voluntary subjugation

to cruel mistreatment, the Lord released his spirit when the appropriate moment arrived.

4. **Christ did not mitigate his suffering.** During his ordeal in Gethsemane, the trials, his cruel mistreatment, or on the cross, Christ did not lessen his suffering. Although fully capable of doing so, he refrained from manipulating his internal pain mechanisms. Because of the Lord's nature, teachings, and past behavior, we may likewise be confident that he did not hasten his death but instead drained the bitter cup in its entirety.
5. **No mortal body could have survived what the Lord experienced.** Instead, as the designer of human physiology, and being capable of altering it at will, Christ prolonged his life by manipulating metabolic functions to the time of his choosing.
6. **Medical science can provide descriptions of the trauma the Lord likely experienced.** We may also gain some idea of the means by which he might have kept himself alive beyond the expectations of knowledgeable observers.

Christ had always been fully aware of the prophesied manner in which he must die, but he proceeded willingly regardless. We have a clearer understanding of why he did so, but we now also have a clearer understanding of how he may have accomplished it and when it would have occurred.

Contemporary forensic parlance uses the terms "means, motive, and opportunity" to suggest the likelihood that an observed event was intentional—in this case, the prolongation of his life.

- Christ possessed the means to do so because of his knowledge as creator of the world of how to preserve life by manipulating physiology.
- He had the unique opportunity as the only being capable of dying as a sinless sacrifice.
- He had the motive to coincide his death with the ancient Jewish symbolic ritual sacrifices, signifying their fulfillment,

and ending the practice of sacrifice by the shedding of blood.



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Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship is a peer-reviewed academic journal published by The Interpreter Foundation. Our mission is simple: Supporting The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through scholarship.