

To make it easy for them, however, he had written them to put up a signal for him when the train passed their little farm on the outskirts of town. If his family had forgiven him, they were to put up a white ribbon in the big apple tree near the tracks. If they did not want him back, they were to do nothing, and he would stay on the train, go west and probably become a hobo. As the train neared his home his suspense became so great, he could not bear to look out of the window. His companion changed places with him and said he would watch for the apple tree. In a minute, he put his hand on the young convict's arm. "There it is," he whispered, his eyes bright with sudden tears. "It's all right. The whole tree is white with ribbons." (*Reader's Digest*, March 1961.)

The most magnificent lesson ever taught respecting forgiveness was given by the Savior. Jesus was subjected by his enemies to what is considered to be the cruelest and most horrible form of death. Crucifixion is excruciatingly

painful, with the victim lingering on in increasing agony and torture for hours or even days. Yet, in spite of the humiliation and intense pain he suffered on Calvary's cross, Jesus, with compassion, in Godlike mercy, prayed for his tormentors, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34.)

Now, with the Savior's great lesson fresh in our memories, may each one of us purge from our hearts any feeling of hatred, envy, or bitterness, so that we may with a clear conscience and utmost confidence approach our Heavenly Father and ask for forgiveness of our shortcomings and mistakes. For which I humbly pray, and bear you my testimony that I know that the gospel is true, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**President David O. McKay:**

Elder Henry D. Taylor, Assistant to the Twelve, has just spoken to us. Elder William J. Critchlow, Jr., Assistant to the Twelve, will now speak to us.

## ELDER WILLIAM J. CRITCHLOW, JR.

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

President McKay, brethren and sisters:

Under the hands of President McKay, I was set apart an Assistant to the Twelve and was charged to be a special witness of Jesus Christ in all the world. These next few minutes give me an opportunity to be about the business of that charge.

Will Mary, the mother of the babe, Jesus, born in Bethlehem away from home, please come to the witness stand?

While she is coming to the stand, let me explain: I am pretending that you, under the sound of my voice, are another informal court of the people in which Jesus is on trial—should I say on trial again or still on trial?

In the minds of many people, Jesus is still on trial. Two-thirds of this earth's inhabitants are non-Christian. To them, he is not the Son of God. Among the skimpy Christian third are many who accept him merely as a great moralist, a great teacher, a great spiritual leader,

perhaps a prophet. To them, he is not the Son of God.

On trial 2,000 years ago, Jesus said: "I am"—the Son of God. (See Mark 14:61-62.) With cries of "Crucify him, crucify him," the earlier court of the people—the rabble—sealed his doom. (See *ibid.*, 15:14.)

If Jesus is not the Son of God, he did blaspheme; he also lied. Why not compound the charge of blasphemy with perjury? Add fraud, deceit, or whatever else you will, the truth must come out, for every knee must bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Son of God. (See Phil. 2:10-11.)

Let me pretend that I am counsel for the defense, calling witnesses to prove—*He is the Son of God*. Now please stretch your imagination and in your mind's eye see Mary on the witness stand. I shall now address her.

*Counsel:* Mary, when you were "... a virgin, espoused to . . . Joseph, of the House of David; . . ." an angel came

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unto you. Will you please tell the court what the angel said to you?

*Witness:* He said, ". . . Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God.

"And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: . . ." (See Luke 1:30-32.)\*

*Counsel:* Thank you, Mary, that will be all.

*Counsel:* My next witness is one John, descriptively cited in the scriptures as John the Baptist. Jesus came to Jordan to be baptized by John, and ". . . when he was baptized; . . . the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, . . ." John, you heard the voice. Please tell us what it said.

*Witness:* I heard "a voice . . . saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" (See Matt. 3:13-17.) "And I saw, and bare record that *this is the Son of God.*" (John 1:34.)

*Counsel:* My next witness may shock you as you see him come to the stand. He ". . . had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

". . . neither could any man tame him." Unclean spirits possessed him—spirits which undoubtedly were cast out of heaven with Lucifer, for they remembered Jesus. "But when he [the wild man] saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

"And cried with a loud voice, and said, . . ." the witness may now repeat what you said.

*Witness:* I said, ". . . *What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.*" And Jesus said to the spirit, ". . . Come out of the man, . . ." and many devilish spirits did come out, "And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them." (See Mark 5:2-12.)

*Counsel:* Thank you, sir, you may leave to go your way.

*Counsel:* Nathanael, a friend of Jesus, may now come to the witness stand. It is rumored about, that one Philip told you, Nathanael, about finding down in Nazareth the man that Moses and the prophets wrote about. Will you please confirm that rumor and relate your conversation with Philip?

*Witness:* I said, ". . . Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip answered me and said, ". . . Come and see." So I went to see, and I saw Jesus, and I said to him, ". . . *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.*" (See John 1:45-49.)

*Counsel:* Thank you, Nathanael; you are excused.

*Counsel:* Another very close friend of Jesus will now take the stand. Martha, will you please step up? Martha sorrowed because Jesus arrived at her home too late to heal her sick brother, Lazarus, who died and was laid away before Jesus arrived. Tell us, Martha, what Jesus said and did upon arrival.

*Witness:* He said, ". . . I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believeth thou this?" I ". . . saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that *thou art Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.*" Then at the cave where Lazarus lay, ". . . he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

"And he that was dead came forth, . . ." (John 11:25-44.)

*Counsel:* That will be all, Martha. You may step down.

*Counsel:* To ". . . be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach," Jesus "chose" and "ordained" twelve apostles. (See Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13.) Three of these apostles, Peter, James, and John, were given a marvelous experience which made them very special witnesses of the Lord in his day—and may I add, very special witnesses also—this day, in this court. Will the Apostle James be first—and will you please confine your testimony to that marvelous experience on the "high mountain" where Jesus, according to the record, "was transfigured before"

you and John and Peter? You may delete reference to Moses and Elias, whom you saw there. Just tell what the voice said about Jesus.

*Witness:* "... There was a cloud that overshadowed" us, "and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, *This is my beloved Son: hear him.*" (See Mark 9:2-7.)

*Counsel:* That will do, James. Thank you.

*Counsel:* Now will John, the beloved disciple, please come forward. While he is coming, may I say that this witness wrote a book with the apparent intent of revealing Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God. Am I right, John? Why did you write your book?

*Witness:* I wrote "... that ye might believe that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:31.)

*Counsel:* Anything else you would like to say, John?

*Witness:* Only this, "For God so loved the world, *that he gave his only begotten Son*, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.)

*Counsel:* Thank you, John. You may step down.

*Counsel:* The tall, rugged man now approaching the witness stand is the Apostle Peter, a man of action and few words. His testimony, like those of his associates, James and John, deserves profound consideration. When you hear it you will agree, I am sure. You may proceed, Peter. Need I say, be brief?—please.

*Witness:* Jesus once asked his disciples, saying, "... *Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*"

"And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets."

"... But whom say ye that I am?"

"*And [I] Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" (See Matt. 16:13-16.)

*Counsel:* Thank you, Peter. You are excused.

*Counsel:* My next witness begged for the privilege of testifying. He said that he might have some peace of mind were he accorded the privilege. Will the

centurion who assisted in the crucifixion of the Master—as a matter of duty—and who "stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost," please step up and repeat what you said when the Lord did give "up the ghost."

*Witness:* I said, "*Truly this man was the Son of God.*" (See Mark 15:39.)

*Counsel:* Thank you, Centurion. May God grant you peace of mind.

*Counsel:* From another quarter, I bring one more ancient witness—sorry time will only permit one. This witness is Nephi, a disciple of the Lord on the American continent among the Nephites and Lamanites. Nephi, like the Apostle John, also wrote a book to show that Jesus was the Son of God. He witnessed the appearance of our Lord upon the American continent after his resurrection, and he will now give a brief recital of that wonderful event.

*Witness:* I "... heard a voice as if it came out of heaven; ... it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; ...

"... and it said ...

"*Behold my Beloved Son, ... in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.*" (See 3 Nephi 11:3-7.) I also heard Jesus say, "*Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. ...*" (3 Nephi 9:15.)

*Counsel:* From still another quarter and from a much later time, I shall produce two very important witnesses. Sidney Rigdon, will you be first, and will you please relate the marvelous experience you had on February 16, 1832? Proceed with brevity, please.

*Witness:* "... while we were doing the work of translation, ...

"... the Lord touched the eyes of our understandings and they were opened, ...

"And we beheld the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father, ...

"... we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that *he is the Only Begotten of the Father—*" (See D&C 76:15-23.)

*Counsel:* That will do, Mr. Rigdon.

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**Counsel:** Will he who shared this marvelous experience with you please take the stand. It is with great pleasure that I present to the court the great American Prophet Joseph Smith, who went to the Lord in prayer and asked, . . . President Smith, this is your story; please take over and be brief.

**Witness:** "My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, . . .

"I kneeled down and began to offer up the desire of my heart to God. . . .

"I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, . . .

" . . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, . . . One of them spake unto me, . . . and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith 2:14-18.)

**Counsel:** That will be all, President Smith. Now, if you will step down, I will take your place and bear my humble witness:

To whom it may concern—and may it concern men everywhere:

Unlike the Prophet Joseph, I have never had the heavens opened to me nor have I in this mortal sphere, ever physically walked and talked with Jesus, yet I know that *he is the Christ—the Son of God*, and I know this because of the ministrations of the Holy Ghost unto me.

Now, may it please the Court, I rest my case. I have submitted twelve solid witnesses—all that my limited time will permit. If, after hearing their testimonies, there are those who are still reluctant to accept Jesus as the Son of God and who still prefer to accept his teachings as man-made philosophy rather than God's truth—they would do well to

ponder studiously the foregoing testimonies.

In early Israel, Moses established under God, a law of witnesses, namely:

"In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." (See Deut. 17:6.) This became the Jewish law in the days of our Lord. (2 Cor. 13:1.)

The early Common Law of England, after which our law is patterned, required twelve witnesses to the fact; also twelve jurors to the fact, and these jurors were supposed to know something about the case.

I have given you twelve witnesses. If you will accept them also as jurors, the verdict is plain—*Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*

Yes, he truly is—and in his name I rest my case. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**President David O. McKay:**

He to whom you have just listened is Elder William J. Critchlow, Jr., Assistant to the Twelve.

The Choir and Congregation will now sing "High On The Mountain Top," conducted by Elder Jay E. Welch.

After the singing, Elder Alma Sonne will speak to us.

The Choir and congregation joined in singing the hymn, "High On The Mountain Top."

**President David O. McKay:**

Elder Alma Sonne, Assistant to the Twelve, will now address us. He will be followed by Elder ElRay L. Christiansen.

## ELDER ALMA SONNE

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

My brethren and sisters, I desire an interest in your faith and prayers during the few minutes I stand here.

Yesterday in conference we sustained a great man to the holy apostleship, a man who has proved his worthiness and demonstrated his leadership not only in

this country but also in Canada and across the seas. I am sure I speak for the Assistants to the Twelve when I welcome into their ranks President Brockbank, a devoted servant, a great missionary, and one qualified to carry forward the work of the Lord.