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Abstract: The frequency with which the subject of resurrection is discussed, the wide range of details, and the high level of agreement among the many testimonies all show that the doctrine of the resurrection is a major teaching of the Book of Mormon. The extent of these teachings is in keeping with the prophecy of Enoch in Moses 7:62, which says that the record will come out of the earth, "to bear testimony of the Only Begotten, his resurrection from the dead, and also the resurrection of all men." The Book of Mormon shows that the prophets regarded the resurrection of the physical body as a reality that would unconditionally occur to every person regardless of individual worthiness. It is declared to have coverage as broad as death. The major effort of the prophets was to get people prepared spiritually. Redemption from the spiritual death that results from one's own sins received serious attention. The Book of Mormon declares that redemption from the effects of Adam's fall (both the physical and spiritual death) is absolute, unconditional, and automatically assured to all mankind by Jesus Christ without man's effort. Man's redemption from sins is available because of the atonement of Jesus Christ but requires individual repentance and obedience. Perhaps because of this individual responsibility the Book of Mormon does not teach how to perform a resurrection, but does teach how to repent.



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The Doctrine of the Resurrection as Taught in the Book of Mormon

Robert J. Matthews

It is clear to readers of the Book of Mormon that the resurrection of the dead is a deliberate and intentional theme—not merely an incidental concern, an implication, or a secondary concomitant result, but a major topic, forthrightly and vigorously presented as part of a divine plan.

Five thousand years ago the Lord revealed to the prophet Enoch what the fundamental message of the Book of Mormon would be. Neither history, culture, nor geography were to be emphasized. The book would testify of the Only Begotten and the Resurrection. Enoch's prophecy, found in Moses 7:62, is an excerpt from instruction about events to precede the second coming of the Lord in the last days: "And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men."

Although almost every prophet in the Book of Mormon makes some reference to the Resurrection (either of Jesus Christ or of mankind or both), they do not all engage in the same amount of detail concerning it. Some merely mention the Resurrection as an accepted fact. Others define various aspects or dimensions as to time, sequence, type of body, permanency, necessity, cause, and related things. At least one, Jacob, points out specifically the consequences to man if there were no resurrection. Most reiterate the general outline and main facts, yet several enlarge with precise detail upon some aspect that the others have spoken of only in broad terms. Though they expand on different points, they do it without contradicting one another. There is frequent evidence that the prophets, while speaking independently, were aware of what earlier and contemporary prophets had said. The Book of Mormon thus provides a large amount of information about the Resurrection, yet

in no single place in the book is there a comprehensive statement in which all of the details are given.

I have found it useful to analyze the teachings of several of the key doctrinal figures in the Book of Mormon and isolate each detail so as to observe exactly what each said or did not say about the Resurrection. It is rewarding to study the scriptures in this way, for such studies draw attention to the variety of individual contributions and illustrates clearly that additional concepts and clarifications are obtained as one progresses through the book. That the doctrinal emphasis of each writer may be different should probably not be interpreted to mean that each prophet knew only that portion of the doctrine which he chose to talk about, but rather that in the selection of materials that now constitute the Book of Mormon, reports of discourses were used that emphasize certain things. We do not have all of the writings or sermons of any one prophet; if we did, we would no doubt find that one rarely if ever says all that he knows about a subject on any one occasion.

The analysis shows that distribution of information about the Resurrection is rather uneven in the Book of Mormon. The entire book of 1 Nephi contains only one clear reference to the Resurrection, Lehi's statement as recorded by Nephi that after the Messiah "had been slain he should rise from the dead" (1 Ne. 10:11). There is no further explanation at that point.

There are other places in 1 Nephi where the forthcoming resurrection of Jesus from the dead could have been mentioned quite logically and conveniently but for some reason is not. For example, in 1 Nephi 11:32–34 the future death of Jesus on the cross is discussed, but his rising from the dead is not mentioned. Likewise, in 1 Nephi 19:10–13 the prophets Zenock, Neum, and Zenos are cited as bearing witness that the God of Israel would be taken by wicked men and be crucified and buried in a sepulchre, but no mention is made of his rising from the dead. We should not assume from these scant references that these ancient prophets did not know of the forthcoming resurrection of Jesus, but only that it was not specifically mentioned in this summation of their testimony. If we had the whole of their writings, we would find, no doubt, that they knew and taught that the Messiah would rise from the dead in a resurrected condition after his crucifixion and burial. Such a conclusion would be in harmony with Abinadi's statement that all of the ancient prophets taught "more or less" that God himself should come down in the form of a man and bring to pass the resurrection of the dead (Mosiah 13:34–35).

Since the single reference to resurrection in 1 Nephi 10:11 speaks only of Jesus rising from the dead, it follows that there is no

mention in 1 Nephi of the resurrection of all mankind. In fact, the word *resurrection* does not occur in 1 Nephi, nor is the subject discussed beyond the one reference that has been noted.

Although 1 Nephi does not deal at length with the Resurrection, such is not the case with the remainder of the Book of Mormon. The word *resurrection* or *resurrected* occurs 83 times in the words of many different speakers. The phrase *raised from the dead* or *rise from the dead* or some similar phrase occurs at least 13 times, *breaking the bands of death* at least 13 times, and *uniting of spirit and body* at least 4 times.

TEACHINGS OF LEHI, NEPHI, AND JACOB

Even though Nephi (c. 600 B.C.) gives few details about the Resurrection, he offers extensive doctrinal teachings and is a strong witness for Jesus Christ. In 2 Nephi 25 he affirms that the Only Begotten—the Messiah—will be crucified, “laid in a sepulchre for . . . three days,” and then “rise from the dead.” He specifies that this Messiah shall come “six hundred years from the time [Lehi] left Jerusalem,” and that “his name shall be Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (2 Ne. 25:12–14, 19). This is the only direct statement from Nephi about the Resurrection, and it is the first time in the Book of Mormon in which mention is made of the three days between Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Although Nephi’s own words about resurrection are relatively few, he included in 2 Nephi the more extensive resurrection comments of his father Lehi and his younger brother Jacob. In 2 Nephi 2, Lehi (c. 600 B.C.) discusses the purpose of creation, the cause and the results of the fall of Adam, the atonement of the Messiah, and the resurrection of all mankind. His coverage is philosophical in nature, and this discourse is a favorite of many students because of its doctrinal content. An analysis shows, however, that Lehi speaks mostly in broad, general terms, and in only one passage does he deal directly with the Resurrection. Two points are made concerning it:

The Messiah will lay down his life and take “it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead” (2 Ne. 2:8).

The Messiah will be the first of all mankind to rise in the Resurrection (2 Ne. 2:8–9).

There is no discussion by Lehi as to what resurrection means, or when it will occur. His contribution was for the most part in other doctrinal areas.

Jacob (c. 550 B.C.), the son of Lehi and brother of Nephi, gave an informative sermon that is recorded in 2 Nephi 9. In that sermon he said the following things relative to the Resurrection:

“Our flesh must waste away and die; nevertheless, in our bodies we shall see God” (2 Ne. 9:4).

The “great Creator” will come “in the flesh and die for all men” (2 Ne. 9:5).

Death has passed upon all flesh as part of “the merciful plan of the great Creator,” therefore a [bodily] resurrection is needed because the Fall brought death (2 Ne. 9:6). [Adam is not specifically mentioned by name but is implied because of the reference to the Fall.]

Because of the Fall, man is also “cut off from the presence of the Lord” (2 Ne. 9:6).

Without an “infinite atonement,” death of the body would be of endless duration and the flesh would return to “its mother earth, to rise no more” (2 Ne. 9:7).

If the flesh did not have a resurrection, the spirits of all men would degenerate into devils, forever miserable, having been cut off from God’s presence by the Fall (2 Ne. 9:8–9). [This passage attests to a crucial relationship between the spirit and the body, suggesting that the spirit cannot be saved without the body.]

The awful monster death captivates the bodies of mankind in the grave and captivates the spirits of many in hell. Spirits of the righteous go to paradise (2 Ne. 9:10–13).

“Because of the way of deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel,” the grave will deliver up its captives, hell will have to deliver up its captives, and paradise will deliver up its righteous spirits. This release from captivity is by the power of the resurrection, meaning that the spirits and the bodies of the all dead will be restored to each other and become living souls (2 Ne. 9:10–13).

Resurrection will come to all men and all will become immortal, according to the plan of God (2 Ne. 9:12–13).

Resurrected beings have a “perfect knowledge” of their righteousness or unrighteousness (2 Ne. 9:13–14).

When all have passed from death unto life and become immortal, they will appear at the judgment seat of God to be judged and assigned to a place prepared for them (2 Ne. 9:15–16).

God came into the world to suffer the pains of all “men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam” in order to bring about the resurrection and judgment of all men (2 Ne. 9:21–22).

The power of the Atonement is such that it will rescue all mankind from the awful monster death (both physical and spiritual deaths) and restore them to God for the Judgment. Those to be rescued include the people who have been taught and have obeyed, those who have rebelled, and those who were untaught (2 Ne. 9:23–26).

One quickly observes that Jacob is more explicit and detailed about the resurrection than any of his predecessors. He also informs his hearers at the beginning that much of what he is going to tell them he had learned from the instruction of an angel (2 Ne. 6:9, 11).

TEACHINGS OF KING BENJAMIN

Another important source of information pertaining to the Resurrection is a discourse by King Benjamin (c. 124 B.C.) recorded in Mosiah 3 and 4. Benjamin, like Jacob, announces that much of what he knows on this subject he learned from an angel (Mosiah 3:2; 4:1). The analysis shows that Benjamin is specific in many things about Jesus Christ but says little about the Resurrection itself. Yet his words are pertinent to our topic because they are necessary for the doctrinal understanding of why Jesus (whom Benjamin repeatedly calls the Lord Omnipotent) could bring about the resurrection of mankind. Several of Benjamin's declarations about the Redeemer constitute the first time these things are mentioned in the Book of Mormon. However, he mentions nothing either unique or distinct related to the Resurrection itself.

The significant things Benjamin teaches about Jesus Christ are as follows:

The Lord Omnipotent himself will come down to redeem mankind (Mosiah 3:5). [This is not a new concept to the Book of Mormon since both Nephi and Jacob had taught that the God of Israel, "the great Creator" would come and make the atonement (1 Ne. 19:7–10; 2 Ne. 9:5), but here the concept is given greater emphasis.]

He will bleed at every pore (Mosiah 3:7).

He will be "the Son of God, . . . and his mother shall be called Mary" (Mosiah 3:8).

He will be crucified (Mosiah 3:9).

"He [Christ] shall rise the third day from the dead" (Mosiah 3:10). [This is the second time this information is given in the Book of Mormon; Nephi (2 Ne. 25:13) being the first to mention it.]

Nothing would avail if there were not an atonement of his blood (Mosiah 3:15).

Little children are fallen by nature through Adam, but the blood of Christ atones for them if they die in infancy (Mosiah 3:16, 18).

Salvation comes through Christ; there is “no other name given” for salvation, “nor any other way nor means”; there is no other salvation, nor are there other conditions for salvation, except that which Christ provides (Mosiah 3:17; 4:8). [This is not the first time this concept is mentioned in the Book of Mormon (see 2 Ne. 25:20; 31:21), but here it is given greater emphasis.]

Although it is certainly implied, Benjamin does not say as categorically as does Jacob that every member of the human family will be raised from the grave. His message focuses on the power and goodness of God in redeeming mankind, but he does not define what redemption means in terms of the body’s physical resurrection.

TEACHINGS OF ABINADI

A major contributor to our knowledge of the Resurrection is Abinadi (c. 150 B.C.), whose words are recorded in Mosiah 13–16. A search reveals the following emphasis:

God himself will make the atonement for mankind, without which atonement no man could be saved (Mosiah 13:28, 32–33).

All the previous prophets have said “that God himself should come down, . . . take upon him the form of man,” and . . . “bring to pass the resurrection of the dead” (Mosiah 13:33–35).¹ [This God is identified as Christ in Mosiah 15:21].

Though crucified and slain, God will break the bands of death, gain victory over death, and have power to make intercession for man (Mosiah 15:7–9).

“The Son . . . hath power over the dead,” the bands of death will be broken, and he brings “to pass the resurrection of the dead” (Mosiah 15:20).

A first resurrection will occur of all the righteous who have lived from the beginning down to the resurrection of Christ (Mosiah 15:21–23). [Adam is not mentioned by name but is implied by the words *from the beginning*.]

Those who died in ignorance before Christ came will rise in the first resurrection, as will little children [who die] (Mosiah 15:24–25).

Those who wilfully rebel against God and who die in their sins will “have no part in the first resurrection” (Mosiah 15:26).

“If Christ had not risen from the dead, or . . . broken the bands of death,” there could not have been a resurrection [for mankind] (Mosiah 16:7).

“There is a resurrection; the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ” (Mosiah 16:8).²

Mortality will put on immortality, and then men will be judged according to their works in this life (Mosiah 16:10).

There is a resurrection to “endless life and happiness” and a “resurrection of endless damnation” (Mosiah 16:11).

Abinadi is the first in our present Book of Mormon to use the phrase *first resurrection*,³ *bands of death*, *victory over death*, *the grave has no victory*, and *death has no sting*. He also vigorously declares that God himself will come as Christ to make the Resurrection a reality, although he is not the first to make this declaration. Even though he explicitly mentions the *first resurrection*, he does not speak of another resurrection except by implication.

TEACHINGS OF AMULEK

Another who speaks very definitely about the Resurrection is Amulek (c. 80–70 B.C.). He defines certain aspects of the Resurrection more fully than is done in any other place and his precise language makes the following points unmistakably clear, leaving little if any room for alternate interpretation.

The wicked who reject the Son of God “remain as though there had been no redemption made except . . . the loosing of the bands of death.” That is, men will be resurrected even if they do not believe and obey the gospel (Alma 11:41).

“All shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged according to their works” (Alma 11:41–42).

The death of Christ will loose the bands of the temporal death [or death of the body], and all will be raised from the temporal death. The spirit and the body will be reunited. Every feature of the body will be in its proper place. This will come to every person regardless of age, sex, or worthiness (Alma 11:42–44).

Resurrected persons can die no more physically. The spirit and the body thus united will never again be divided (Alma 11:45).

The Atonement cannot be a human sacrifice or the sacrifice of a beast or fowl. It must be infinite and eternal [the sacrifice of a God] (Alma 34:9–14).

TEACHINGS OF ALMA

Alma (c. 80–70 B.C.) brings together some important concepts relating to the Resurrection. His particular brevity and logic tie down certain relationships between the fall of Adam and the

Resurrection that are important for a proper understanding, all being part of what Alma calls the “plan of God” for man’s salvation. We learn from Alma the following:

Alma speaks of the mysteries of God and says they can be known to man only by diligence and heed to the word of God. He implies that a knowledge of the Resurrection is one of the “mysteries of God” (Alma 12:8–12).

By Adam’s fall “all mankind became a lost and fallen people”; thus death came upon man because of Adam (Alma 12:22–24).

“If it had not been for the plan of redemption, which was laid from the foundation of the world, there could [be] no resurrection of the dead” (Alma 12:25, 30).

The longest discourse in the Book of Mormon on the Resurrection is Alma 40–42. It was given by Alma to answer doubts and questions expressed by his son Corianton. Part of what Alma said is by this time common knowledge in the Book of Mormon, but his discourse is important for its intensity and emphasis, as well as for the newly expressed concepts it contains. Alma explains some aspects of the Resurrection in greater detail than is found anywhere else in the Book of Mormon. He also again speaks of the Resurrection as one of the mysteries of God (Alma 40:3).

“There is no resurrection . . . until after the coming of Christ,” since Christ brings to pass the resurrection of the dead (Alma 40:2).

“There is a time appointed that all shall rise from the dead.” Man does not know all the times, but God knows. Whether all are resurrected at the same time or whether there is a second or a third time is not as important [to Alma] as is the fact that everyone will rise at some time (Alma 40:4–5).

There is a space of time between one’s death and one’s resurrection (Alma 40:6).

Since all do not die at the same time, there is no reason for all to rise at once. “All is as one day with God” (Alma 40:8).

Between death and resurrection the spirits of all mankind are in “paradise” or in “darkness” depending on their type of life while on earth (Alma 40:11–14).

Alma defines what is meant and also what is not meant by the term *first resurrection*. It does not mean the assignment of the spirit to a place awaiting the resurrection of the body. It does mean “the reuniting of the soul [spirit] with the body, of those [who had died] from the days of Adam down to the resurrection of Christ” (Alma 40:15–18).⁴

There is an order and sequence. Those who lived before Christ will be resurrected before those who live after the time of Christ (Alma 40:19).⁵

Alma gives his opinion that the bodies and spirits of the righteous will be reunited at the resurrection of Christ (Alma 40:20).

Three times Alma emphasizes that every limb, joint, hair, and portion of the physical body will, in the Resurrection, be restored to its proper order and natural frame (Alma 40:23; 41:2–4).

The Atonement brings to pass the Resurrection and the Resurrection brings all men back into the presence of God to be judged (Alma 42:23).

Alma is the only prophet in the Book of Mormon to identify the Resurrection as a mystery (which he does twice). He is also the only one to emphasize the space of time between death and the Resurrection. Also only he discusses a false notion held by some concerning what is meant by *first resurrection*. He seems to be the first also to suggest an order or sequence between those who lived before Christ and those who lived after. He defines the meaning of *first resurrection* but does not define a future or last resurrection.

Although we understand that the Resurrection involves both the body and the spirit, we tend to think of resurrection primarily in terms of the body. However, Jacob, Amulek, and Alma focus attention upon the fact that the Resurrection is absolutely essential to both the body and the spirit and that neither the body nor the spirit could be saved without the other or without the Resurrection. They indicate that the Resurrection is as much a benefit to the spirit as it is to the body.⁶ Resurrection is essential to the eternal welfare of the spirit, even though it already is immortal (Alma 42:9). Both body and spirit gain by the Resurrection, even though resurrection alone will not redeem the soul from unrepented sins.

As we have also noted earlier, Alma, Amulek, and Jacob each emphasize that all mankind, both the righteous and the wicked, will be restored to the presence of God for the Judgment after the Resurrection. They make the point plainly enough, but we are indebted to the additional commentary and explanation of Samuel the Lamanite (Hel. 14) and Moroni (Morm. 9).

TEACHINGS OF SAMUEL THE LAMANITE

Samuel the Lamanite (c. 6 B.C.) speaks of a condition that he calls a *second spiritual death*. Others have used the terms *second death* and *spiritual death*, meaning to be cut off from the presence of the Lord (2 Ne. 9:6; Alma 42:9) or to die as to things of righteousness

(Alma 12:16, 32; 40:26), as contrasted to the physical death, but Samuel speaks of (1) a spiritual death, (2) a physical death, and (3) a second spiritual death that comes only upon the wicked. The first two deaths he says came to us from Adam. The third we bring upon ourselves. An examination of Samuel's words as found in Helaman 14:15–18 shows the following:

It is expedient that Christ die to bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, "that thereby men may be brought into the presence of the Lord" (Hel. 14:15).

Christ's death brings to pass the Resurrection and redeems all mankind from what Samuel calls the "first death," the spiritual death (Hel. 14:16).⁷

"All mankind, by the fall of Adam being cut off from the presence of the Lord, are considered as dead, both as to things temporal and to things spiritual" (Hel. 14:16).

Christ's resurrection redeems all mankind [from Adam's fall] and brings "them back into the presence of the Lord" (Hel. 14:17).

Upon those who have sinned and not repented there will come "again a spiritual death, yea, a second death" pertaining to things of righteousness (Hel. 14:18–19).⁸

"There shall be no light upon the face of this land" from the time that Christ will die, "for the space of three days, to the time that he shall rise again from the dead" (Hel. 14:20).

Many saints are to come forth from their graves at the time of Christ's resurrection and "shall appear unto many" (Hel. 14:25).⁹

TEACHINGS OF MORONI

As stated earlier, Moroni (c. A.D. 400) emphasizes that because of the Resurrection all mankind will be brought back into the presence of God. His concise statement teaches the following:

God "created Adam, and by Adam came the fall of man" (Morm. 9:12).

"Because of the fall of man came Jesus Christ, . . . and because of Jesus Christ came the redemption of man" (Morm. 9:12).

"Because of the redemption of man, . . . they are brought back into the presence of the Lord" (Morm. 9:13).

"This is wherein all men are redeemed, because the death of Christ bringeth to pass the resurrection, which bringeth to pass a redemption from an endless sleep" of the physical body, and all mankind, small and great, will come forth and stand before the bar of God, "and then cometh the judgment" (Morm. 9:13–14).

Moroni also speaks of the day when his “spirit and body shall again reunite” before the Judgment Day (Moro. 10:34).

APPEARANCE OF THE RESURRECTED CHRIST

The strongest demonstration of a literal bodily resurrection from the dead is the appearance of Jesus Christ himself to the multitude, as recorded in 3 Nephi. The following points are found:

Jesus said to the multitude: “Thrust your hands into my side, and also . . . feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know I am the God of Israel, . . . and have been slain for the sins of the world” (3 Ne. 11:14).

The entire multitude came one by one and felt the hole in his side and the nail prints in his hands and feet. They saw with their eyes, felt with their hands, knew of a surety, and bore record (3 Ne. 11:15–16).

They fell at Jesus’ feet and worshipped him (3 Ne. 11:16–17).

There were about twenty-five hundred people in the multitude on this occasion (3 Ne. 17:25).

The prophecy of Samuel the Lamanite that many saints (in the Western Hemisphere) would rise from their graves after Jesus’ resurrection and appear to many people was literally fulfilled but had not been recorded. At Jesus’ command, this fact was entered into the record (3 Ne. 23:7–14).

The Book of Mormon mentions seven times that Jesus would be crucified (1 Ne. 11:26; 19:10, 13; Mosiah 3:9; 2 Ne. 6:9; 10:3; Ether 4:1). These prophecies do not specifically mention nails (although nails might be assumed necessary for crucifixion, especially if the Nephites had Psalm 22:16 and understood it). Furthermore, the prophecies recorded in the Book of Mormon do not mention a hole being made in Jesus’ side, as by the spear, related in John 19:34–36. However, when the resurrected Jesus came to the people in Bountiful as recorded in Third Nephi, he specifically asked them to feel the hole in his side and to feel the prints of the nails in his hands and his feet (3 Ne. 11:14–15).

Our present Book of Mormon record has no background statement to prepare the people for examining the nail holes or the hole in Jesus’ side. Yet, because we have but a small part of the actual record, we can assume that either the prophecy of a wound in his side was on the plates of brass or the Nephite prophets in the past had mentioned the nails and the side wound, or that Jesus himself explained to the multitude the significance of those wounds, including the wound in his side. Any or all three of these could be true. The purpose of this special “showing” of Jesus’ body was to provide

irrefutable evidence that the person they were seeing and touching was without doubt the crucified and resurrected Messiah, the God of Israel. The evidence would not have had that positive effect if the witnesses had not known beforehand and thus realized the significance of what they were seeing and touching.

SOME OBSERVATIONS

Although the Book of Mormon declares many things about the physical resurrection of the body, it does not define or distinguish between the quality of resurrected bodies. That is, it does not categorically state that the righteous have a better, more functional, or more glorious physical body than do the wicked. This clarification is made known to us in Doctrine and Covenants 76 and 88:21–33 and in 1 Corinthians 15. The Book of Mormon does not discuss degrees of glory. It does not deny the concept, it simply does not treat it. It appears that the Book of Mormon prophets deal with universals, speaking to all mankind. However, when they make distinctions as to eternal happiness and punishment, Book of Mormon prophets generally mention two basic categories: the most wicked and the most righteous.

The Book of Mormon testifies emphatically of Jesus Christ as the Only Begotten and Son of God in the flesh. It repeatedly states that because of the fall mankind is utterly unable to save itself (1 Ne. 10:6; Alma 34:9–12; 42:14–15). Yet it says that the Messiah, who was born to earth in the form of man, will be able to do it. The explanation as to how this is possible is that Jesus was not and is not a natural, normal human, but is “God himself” born of Mary, and is the Son of God “after the manner of the flesh” (1 Ne. 11:18, 21) and the “Only Begotten of the Father.” He is thus said to have a special supernatural power “given unto him from the Father” (Hel. 5:11; Morm. 7:5–6) that other men do not have. Giving his life was not “a human sacrifice” nor the “sacrifice of man,” but was “an infinite and eternal sacrifice” (Alma 34:10).

Because of this “power of the Father,” Jesus “broke the bands of death,” “gained the victory over the grave,” and brought “to pass the resurrection of the dead” by the means of an “infinite atonement.” His ability to overcome death is explicitly declared in Abinadi’s prophecy (Mosiah 15:1–8; 16:3–8), in Amulek’s teachings (Alma 34:9–12), and in Mormon’s explanation (Morm. 7:5–6). Because of this unique factor, Jesus was not dominated by death as is the remainder of mankind and thus was able to make the resurrection of the dead a reality.¹⁰

Nephi, Jacob, Jarom, Ammon, Aaron, Amulek, and Alma each wrote of what they call the plan of salvation, the plan of redemption, the great plan, or the plan of mercy. The importance to them of the concept of the plan is attested to by the frequency with which the term is used. In some form of this term the idea of the plan occurs at least twenty-seven times in the Book of Mormon.¹¹ The concept of a plan is important to our subject for at least two reasons. (1) These prophets saw the plan of salvation in the context of a unified and functional whole. The Creation, the Fall, the Atonement, the Resurrection, and the Judgment were each part of the foreordained plan of God rather than isolated, separate, independent, unrelated occurrences. (2) The prophets considered all of these events under the umbrella term of *redemption*, or *salvation*. Perhaps Nephi, Lehi, Benjamin, and others did not feel a need to specify certain details, since when they spoke of atonement or redemption, they meant the term to convey all that the plan includes.

In summary, what does the Book of Mormon teach about the doctrine of the resurrection? At least the following:

1. The fall of Adam brought both a physical and spiritual death upon Adam and all of his descendants.
2. Because of the fall, which entailed these two deaths, a means to bring mankind out of the grave and back into the presence of God was necessary.
3. If no redemption were made, the bodies of all men would return permanently to earth; the spirits of all men would become devils, forever miserable.
4. An infinite atonement was needed—something more than a human could accomplish—so God himself made the atonement. This he could do because he received supernatural power from the Father, by being his Only Begotten Son in the flesh.
5. The Messiah was the first to rise in the Resurrection.
6. Jesus rose from the grave on the third day after his death.
7. All mankind will be raised from the grave but not all at the same time.
8. There is a space of time between the time of death and the time of resurrection. During this time the spirit is either in paradise or in darkness.
9. Knowledge of the Resurrection and the conditions God has prepared for man in the afterlife is one of the “mysteries of God,” known only by revelation.

10. The first resurrection included the righteous from Adam to Christ, those who were not taught and who died in ignorance, and those who died as little children.
11. While the first resurrection is given priority and favored status in which the righteous will come forth, there is little direct reference to a second or last resurrection for the unrighteous, except by implication, since they are excluded from the first.
12. In the Resurrection every limb and joint and every part of the body will be restored to its proper frame.
13. All resurrected beings are immortal, their spirits and bodies reunited, never again to be divided.
14. Neither the spirit nor the body can be saved separately. The Resurrection is as much for the welfare of the spirit as it is for the body.
15. The spirit and the body are a unit, complementary to each other, and both need the Resurrection. Both were affected by the fall of Adam. Both benefit by the atonement of Christ.
16. The Resurrection conquers both deaths that came upon mankind by the fall of Adam, and therefore brings all mankind out of the grave and back into the presence of God.
17. The Resurrection places all mankind in a situation to be judged.
18. Those who have not obeyed the commandments of God when they had opportunity will be sent away from God's presence a second time and suffer a second spiritual death, although retaining their physical resurrected bodies.
19. The resurrected Jesus Christ personally appeared to about twenty-five hundred people in one group and invited them to feel his hands, feet, and side. They did so and knew for a surety he was the God of Israel who had been slain and had risen again. Others had taught of the Resurrection; Jesus *demonstrated* it.
20. After the resurrection of Jesus, many saints arose from their graves in America and appeared to many. This event had been prophesied of by Samuel, and the fulfillment was recorded at Jesus' special request.
21. The Book of Mormon does not seem to distinguish differences in quality between resurrected bodies.
22. The Book of Mormon says little about multiple or varying degrees of righteousness or wickedness. It seems to speak primarily of the extremes of wickedness and righteousness. The ultimate issue is mankind's response to the gospel of Jesus Christ.
23. The Book of Mormon teaches that the Creation, the Fall, death, the Atonement, the Resurrection, and the Judgment are all

necessary and are all part of the divine, merciful, and eternal plan of God. It ties all of these together rather than speaks of them as independent unrelated events. The Resurrection is shown to be a necessary part of the plan of redemption.

The frequency with which the subject is discussed, the wide range of details, and the high level of agreement among the many testimonies all show that the doctrine of the resurrection is a major teaching of the Book of Mormon. The extent of these teachings is in keeping with the prophecy of Enoch in Moses 7:62, which says that the record will come out of the earth, “to bear testimony of the Only Begotten, his resurrection from the dead, and also the resurrection of all men.” The Book of Mormon shows that the prophets regarded the resurrection of the physical body as a reality that would unconditionally occur to every person regardless of individual worthiness. It is declared to have coverage as broad as death. The major effort of the prophets was to get people prepared spiritually. Redemption from the spiritual death that results from one’s own sins received serious attention. The Book of Mormon declares that redemption from the effects of Adam’s fall (both the physical and spiritual death) is absolute, unconditional, and automatically assured to all mankind by Jesus Christ without man’s effort. Man’s redemption from sins is available because of the atonement of Jesus Christ but requires individual repentance and obedience. Perhaps because of this individual responsibility the Book of Mormon does not teach how to perform a resurrection, but does teach how to repent.

NOTES

¹Not much of this doctrine survives in our present Old Testament. Evidently this concept was much clearer in the record on the plates of brass, so as to enable Abinadi to say that “all the prophets” have “more or less” taught it (Mosiah 13:33–35).

²Note that in Mosiah 16:7–8 Abinadi uses the past tense and speaks as though the atonement and resurrection of Christ were already accomplished, in spite of the fact Abinadi spoke one hundred fifty years beforehand. He himself noted that he was “speaking of things to come as though they had already come” (Mosiah 16:6).

³Jacob speaks of the “first fruits,” but does not use the clear term *first resurrection* (Jacob 4:11).

⁴Book of Mormon usage of the term “first resurrection” is limited to those who lived before the time of Christ. Latter-day revelation has given more information, verifying that what Alma and Abinadi said about the first resurrection is correct but not complete. Latter-day revelation indicates that the first resurrection consists of several sessions. The first was at the resurrection of Christ (Matt. 27:52–54; Hel. 14:25; Mosiah 15:21); another will occur at Christ’s second coming (1 Thes. 4:16; D&C 88:96–98; 133:56). There have also been some resurrections of persons who lived and died between Jesus’ two comings—for example Peter, James, and Moroni (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 119; see also D&C 129). Resurrections occurring during the Millennium, being terrestrial, will also be considered “first resurrection” (D&C 76:71–80). The second or last resurrection occurs after the Millennium is over (D&C 76:81–85). Celestial and terrestrial resurrections occur in the first resurrection (D&C 45:54; 76:50–80). Celestial and perdition resurrections constitute the last resurrection (D&C 76:85; 88:32).

⁵Alma has an appreciation for an order or sequence in the Resurrection but does not explain fully what he means by it. His expression that those who live “before Christ” are resurrected before those who live “after Christ” (40:19) has to mean that the righteous who live before Christ will be resurrected before the *righteous* who live after the time of Christ. Whatever the extent of Alma’s knowledge on the subject, we know from latter-day revelation that all of the righteous will be resurrected before any of the wicked, as is evident from Doctrine and Covenants 76.

⁶This fact gives depth to our understanding of such passages as Doctrine and Covenants 45:17 and 138:50, wherein the thought is expressed that after death the spirit looks upon the absence of its body as a type of bondage. Likewise we learn from Doctrine and Covenants 93:33–34 that a fulness of joy can be obtained only when the spirit and the body are joined inseparably.

⁷Samuel uses “first death” in this instance in a different sense than does Amulek, who refers to the physical death of the body as the first death (Alma 11:45). This distinction is no substantive contradiction in doctrine, but care must be used that each be understood in the context in which he speaks. Samuel’s usage is consistent with Doctrine and Covenants 29:41.

⁸The conditions are implied, although not expressly so stated in these verses, that those who suffer the second spiritual death are they who were taught and had opportunity to repent but willfully rejected the plan of salvation. The concept of a second spiritual death for the wicked after the Resurrection, at the Day of Judgment, is entirely consistent and harmonious with all the other scriptures, but Samuel is the first in the Book of Mormon to use those exact words. He is consistent with Doctrine and Covenants 76:37.

⁹Although Samuel prophesied of this event and it was literally fulfilled, the record keepers neglected to record the fulfillment in the official record. When Jesus came, he called their attention to this oversight and commanded that the record be updated to show the fulfillment. See 3 Nephi 23:7–14.

¹⁰Jesus spoke of his unique power over death which he received from his Father: “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:26). And, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:17–18).

¹¹The following twenty-seven references to the divine plan are found in the Book of Mormon: the plan of the great Creator—2 Nephi 9:6; the eternal plan—Alma 34:16; the plan of redemption—Jacob 6:8; Alma 12:25, 26, 30, 32; 17:16; 18:39; 22:13–14; 29:2; 34:31; 39:18; 42:11, 13; the plan of salvation—Jarom 1:2; Alma 24:14; 42:5; the plan of restoration—Alma 41:2; the plan of the Eternal God—Alma 34:9; the plan of our God—2 Nephi 9:13; the great plan of happiness—Alma 42:8; the great plan of deliverance from death—2 Nephi 11:5; and the plan of mercy—Alma 42:15, 31.