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Lesson VI. The Effect of the Atonement

Editor(s): Mary Connelly Kimball

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concerning them. All that is immediately essential to the salvation of man is as clear as the waters of Galilee. To Adam, and to Eve his wife, be all honor and love, for the sacrifice they made, for the sorrow they endured, that man might be. It is for us to remember that

"Adam did fall by the partaking of the forbidden fruit, according to the word of God;—that by his fall all mankind became a lost and fallen people; * * * that if it had been possible for Adam to have partaken of the fruit of the tree of life at that time, there would have been no death.—Nevertheless there was a space granted unto man in which he might repent; therefore this life became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God; a time to prepare for that endless state* * * which is after the resurrection of the dead."f

With the doctrine of the fall so clearly stated in the Nephite revelation, one need not wonder that it is preserved in the Indian mythology.

OUTLINE.

A myth of certain South American tribes—Meaning of the myth—No explanation until the coming of the Book of Mormon—Brief review of previous lessons—The plan of redemption prepared from the foundation of the

world—The fall similarly provided for—The nature of the fall—The consequence had there been no fall—The effect of the fall—The purpose—of the fall—The lesson to us.

QUESTIONS

1. What strange myth is found among certain South American tribes?
2. What is apparent from this myth?
3. How is this myth to be explained?
4. Review briefly what has already been learned in this year's course?
5. When was the redemption planned?
6. What must happen before there could be a redemption?
7. When then was the fall prepared for?
8. What according to Nephite theology, was the nature of the fall?
9. Relate Lehi's testimony with the nature of the fall.
10. What would have been the effect had there been no fall?
11. What, then, was the specific purpose of the fall?
12. What was the condition of the world before the fall?
13. How does the Nephite doctrine help to explain Eve's wonderful exclamation?
14. What should be man's attitude toward his first parents?
15. What should man do in the light of the true doctrine of the fall?

LESSON VI.

THE EFFECT OF THE ATONEMENT

The fall of man, considered alone, was a calamitous event. Before the fall, there was no evil in the world; there was no sorrow; there was no death. Before the fall, the world was filled with physical happiness; there was no misery in it at all. Before the fall, man lived in a state of spiritual exaltation, too. He was subject to no fear, physical or spiritual. His experience comprehended only the things of God. He lived in daily—nay, hourly—communication with God. He walked and talked with God in the Earthly Paradise as

one man walks and talks with another. Both were immortal; both possessed eternal life. But with the fall, this paradisaical condition became changed. Instead of peace and friendliness came enmity and contention. By the side of happiness, joy, and life, were placed sorrow, misery and death. Man was no longer permitted to live in direct communion with God; he walked and talked with him no more in the Earthly Paradise, Instead, man was cast out of the garden of Eden. Cherubim with flaming swords were stationed to guard the way to the tree of life, that man might not par-

f Alma 12:22-24.

take of its fruit and live forever in his sin. The earth was cursed for man's sake. It brought forth weeds and noxious plants as well as wholesome herds and fruits. And man, too, was cursed. The earth was made to yield of her strength only to man's persistent labor. The days of man were numbered; at the end of his days he must die, and his body must see corruption. Moreover, having once been cast forth from the presence of God, he could no more regain that presence. He was spiritually dead. He could never live again physically. He could never live again spiritually. His immortal spirit must go on forever, shut out from the kingdom of God. Indeed, the fall of man, considered alone, was a dire, calamitous event.

However, it was not intended that the fall should be considered alone. The fall was part of a comprehensive, divine plan prepared for the salvation of man. In the previous lesson we learned that the fall of man was foreknown, and came about to accomplish a very definite purpose. It was stated, too, that as the fall was foreknown, so also was a redemption prepared from the foundation of the world. In this lesson we shall consider what the Nephite revelation taught concerning this redemption.

Chronologically, the earliest mention in the Book of Mormon of the redemption of man is that in the book of Ether. Through his great, immeasurable faith, the brother of Jared was permitted to see the Lord. Because thou knowest these things," said the Lord to him, "ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you. Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation

of the world to redeem my people."^a This vision occurred perhaps more than two thousand years before the Christ came to the Earth. During all the years of their national existence, the Jaredites were undoubtedly taught to look to the coming of their Lord to redeem them from the consequences of Adam's sin.

With the very beginning of the Nephite nation, too, the doctrine of the coming atonement was made the central theme of religious worship. Lehi was mocked by the Jews in Jerusalem because he testified "of the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world."^b Yet, Lehi did not desist from bearing his testimony. To his own posterity, he predicted that, "even six hundred years from the time that (he) left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews, even a Messiah; or, in other words, a Savior of the world * * * * Wherefore all mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state, and ever would be, save they should rely on this Redeemer."^c

The fact that a Savior should come to redeem mankind was revealed also to other Nephite prophets. The first Nephi was privileged to see in vision the life and labors of the chosen Redeemer. "And, I, Nephi," he testifies, "saw that He was lifted up upon the cross, and slain for the sins of the world."^d So, also, Alma assured his people that the Savior would be born of Mary, "she being a virgin," and that "He will take upon Him death, that He may loose the bands of death which bind His people."^e And by all the Nephite prophets it was taught that Messiah's sacrifice for

^bI Nephi 1:19.

^aEther 3:13, 14.

^cI Nephi 10:4-6.

^dI Nephi 11:13-33.

^eAlma 7:10-12.

sin would "answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit."

"Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah, who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise."^f

In the Nephite theology, then, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus was an act actually to be accomplished. There was no doubt, no question, concerning it in the teachings of the prophets. It was the great hope of the world, through the accomplishment of which man should be again restored to the presence of God. Such was the general doctrine.

That there must of necessity be an atonement was beautifully expounded by the High Priest Alma. Alma explains that according to justice, since man had sinned, he must pay the penalty therefor. Hence, "it was appointed unto man to die." Adam and Eve became cut off both temporally and spiritually from the presence of the Lord. Thereby, they became agents unto themselves. That is, from that time forth they must act upon their own free agency, to do good, or to do evil, as they should themselves choose. Now, to reclaim man from the temporal death, would thwart the great plan of happiness whereby the spirits of men might come to this earth to gain experience. But, since the spirit of man can never die, and since the fall brought upon man a spiritual as well as a temporal death, thus cutting him off forever from the presence of the

Lord, the principle of mercy demanded that man should be reclaimed from the spiritual death. Justice and mercy must then both be satisfied. "According to justice, the plan of redemption could not be brought about, only on conditions of repentance of men in this probationary state; * * * for except it were for these conditions, mercy could not take effect except it should destroy * * * justice." But, repentance could not come unto men, except there were a punishment, which also was eternal as the life of the soul should be affixed opposite to the plan of happiness, which was as eternal also as the life of the soul." And, "the plan of mercy could not be brought about, except an atonement should be made; therefore God Himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also."^g This explanation, though somewhat abstract, contains simply and in brief the philosophy of the atonement. "Whosoever, [now], will come, may come, and partake of the waters of life freely; and whosoever will not come, the same is not compelled to come; but in the last day, it shall be restored unto him, according to his deeds."

It remains now to consider more specifically the effects of the atonement, according to the Nephite theology. In the first place, it was understood by the Nephite prophets that the atonement of Jesus Christ would accomplish the unconditional general salvation of all mankind. It is this that Alma has in mind when he says that whosoever will come may come, and partake of the waters of life freely. So Nephi declares that the atonement will re-

^fII Nephi 2:6-8.

^gAlma, chp. 42.

deem all the children of men from the fall, and make them agents unto themselves.^h And so Mormon gave the assurance in his day that because of the redemption of man through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, all men are brought back to the presence of the Lord.

"Yea, 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, from which sleep all men shall be awoke by the power of God when the trumpet shall sound; and they shall come forth, both small and great, and all shall stand before his bar, being redeemed and loosed from this eternal band of death, which death is a temporal death."ⁱ

But the atonement has also a more far-reaching effect than merely to accomplish the redemption of man from the temporal death. It enables man to secure also spiritual salvation. In other words, every man through obedience to the commandments of the Lord may gain a spiritual exaltation since he has been released from the bands of death by the atonement of Messiah. It is this doctrine of individual salvation Nephi has in mind when he writes that Jesus "cometh into the world that he may save all men, if they will hearken unto his voice. * * * * But woe unto him that has the law given; * * * * and that wasteth the days of his probation, for awful is his state."^j So also Aaron taught the father of Lamoni: "Since man had fallen, he could not merit anything of himself; but the sufferings and death of Christ, atoneth for their sins, through faith and repentance, etc."^k And Helaman expounds the doc-

trine clearly. The death of the Christ brings to pass the resurrection, and redeems all mankind from the first death—the spiritual death. Moreover, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus "bringeth to pass the condition of repentance, that whosoever repenteth, the same is not hewn down and cast into the fire; but whosoever repenteth not, is hewn down and cast into the fire, and there cometh upon them again a spiritual death, yea, a second death, for they are cut off again as to things pertaining to righteousness."^l

One other effect of the atonement is made clear in the Book of Mormon. For ages it has been taught by sectarians that little children who die without baptism are consigned to hell. Since, however, the atonement brought about a general salvation this doctrine cannot be true. And Mormon explains to his son that little children are without sin. Through the atonement of Christ they are redeemed from the effects of the fall. Hence they are saved in Jesus Christ."^m

Thus, the doctrine of the redemption of man, and its far-reaching effects, were clearly and thoroughly understood by the Nephite prophets. When the Savior visited in person the Nephite church, he set the seal of his approval upon all that had been taught by the prophets. For he testified to the multitude assembled.

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world; and behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning."ⁿ

^hII Nephi 2:22-26.

ⁱMor. 9:12-13.

^jII Nephi 9:21-27.

^kAlma 22:14-16.

^lHela. 14:16-19.

^mMor. ch. 8.

ⁿIII Nephi 11:8-15.

OUTLINE.

The fall calamitous—The fall not to be considered alone—The atonement foreknown and understood—The testimony of the prophets—Alma's explanation of the atonement—The accomplishment of general salvation—Individual salvation—Little children without sin—The testimony of Jesus.

QUESTIONS.

1. In what sense was the fall of man a calamitous event?
2. Why was it not intended that the fall should be considered alone?
3. What did the brother of Jared learn concerning a redemption?
4. What was Lehi's testimony to the Jews concerning a redemption?
5. What did he predict to his own posterity?

6. Relate Nephi's vision, in which he saw the labors and sufferings of Jesus.

7. How would Messiah's sacrifice answer the ends of the law?

8. Discuss Alma's explanation of the necessity, and the philosophy, of an atonement.

9. How is the atonement effective upon all men?

10. What is meant by general salvation?

11. How does the atonement affect the individual life?

12. What is meant by individual salvation?

13. What effect has the atonement upon children?

14. What was the testimony of Jesus concerning children?

15. What testimony did Jesus bear to the Nephites concerning the atonement?

JUNIOR LESSONS.

The Life of the Savior.

LESSON V.

THE CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH OF THE SAVIOR.

When the Child was eight days old, he received the prophetic name, Jesus. When Jesus was forty days old, his mother, according to the Jewish law, went with him to the temple, to present him to the Lord, and to offer the prescribed sacrifices. The fact that her offering consisted of two turtledoves proves that Joseph and Mary were poor.^a (Read Luke 2:21-24.)

In the temple, at the time of this presentation, was a just and devout old man, by name Simeon, who had received the promise that he should not die before he had seen the "Lord's Christ." When the babe Jesus came into the temple, the spirit whispered to Simeon that this

was the world's Savior. The old man took the Child in his arms; blessed God, and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."^b

There was present, at the same time, a prophetess, a very old woman, named Anna, who, also, by the voice of the Spirit knew that the Child Jesus was the Christ. She "gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jeru-

^aLeviticus 12:8.

^bLuke 2:29-32.