



Type: Magazine Article

Lesson V. The Purpose of the Fall

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Source: *The Young Woman's Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 9 (September 1913),
pp. 564–567

Published by: Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association

Abstract: 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 preprepared 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.

GUIDE DEPARTMENT.

Teachings of the Book of Mormon

LESSON V.

THE PURPOSE OF THE FALL.

Among certain Indian tribes of South America there is current a strange myth. In the beginning, it is said, the earth and the sky were as one. Man abode within the earth, where was a realm of peace and joy. Disease and death were there unknown. Men lived forever knowing neither dread nor fear. While they were older in years and experience, yet they remained forever young. So it was also with the animals and the trees. These never sickened, nor died. Decay was unknown. Life was everlasting. One day the ruler of this happy realm wandered forth to the world outside. There he discovered the surface of the earth, ragged and torn, with hills and valleys and raging torrents, and nature at war with nature. There he discovered the dread thing in his own joyous realm unknown—decay and death. But there he found, too, what his own kingdom lacked—the sunshine of heaven. When this ruler returned to the world within, he explained to his people what he had found. Then he warned them that though sun-light was present in the world out-side, so also were age, decay, and death. the world of sunlight became attractive, however, to many who lived in the joyous realm. The dread of disease did not dishearten them; the fear of death did not intimidate them. Outweighing both dread and fear was the light. So

those venturesome ones, to whom the light was attractive, wandered out to the surface of the earth, and settled there. From them have sprung the present race of men, who know both the bitter and the sweet, both sickness and health, both death and life. But others still dwell in gladness in the joyous realm below.*

Some interesting things become apparent from this myth. First, it is evident that the American Indians knew of a life before the earth life, and believed in its reality. This fact has been set forth in a previous lesson also. Secondly, it is evident that the American Indians knew of a condition of life, at some early time; which can be best described by the term paradisaical. At that time, dread and fear were unknown to man. At that time there was neither sickness, nor decay, nor death nor evil in any form, to mar his eternal happiness. It was a time of blessed peace and joy. Thirdly, it is evident that the American Indians knew that there had been a departure from the condition of blessedness—a decline, if you will, a fall—and had full faith in the reality of that departure. Finally, it is evident that the American Indians believe that there are some—like to mortals but not subject to mortality—who still dwell in the

*Cited in Brinton's "The Myths of the New World," page 265.

joyous realm. There can be no doubt but that blended in this myth are the doctrines of the pre-existence of spirits, the earthly paradise, and the fall of man. But whence did the American Indian learn of these things? How is it, that these peculiar doctrines, which belong, it is said, to the Orient, are to be found in the home of the Red Man?

Until the Book of Mormon was revealed by the Prophet, Joseph Smith, no satisfactory answer could be given to these questions. Now, the answer is as clear as the sunlight sought by those early wanderers in the myth. We shall consider in this lesson what the Book of Mormon teaches concerning the fall of man.

What has been already learned in this course must not be forgotten. Remember that, in the Nephite theology, God was conceived to be the Creator of the world, and the Father of man in very deed. In the Nephite theology, it was taught that man existed in a spirit state before he came to this earth to assume a physical tabernacle; that his presence upon this earth is in fulfillment of a well-matured plan; that ultimately he will return to the kingdom of God. In the Nephite theology it was taught, that, not only is man the very son of God, but also he possesses in himself the attributes of God the Father, and may himself become God. The means by which man may become thus exalted is called the Gospel. It was taught in a fair degree of fulness to the Nephites. And in the Nephite theology it was declared that the fundamental principle of this gospel-plan of salvation was the principle of the atonement, "which was prepared from the foundation of the world for all mankind, which ever were ever since the fall of Adam, or who are, or who ever

shall be, even unto the end of the world; and this is the means whereby salvation cometh."^a

To the Nephites' then, the doctrine of the redemption of man was a doctrine planned, taught, and understood even before the physical man was formed. But the doctrine of the redemption pre-supposes the doctrine of the fall. Consequently, it was taught by the Nephites that the fall of man, like the atonement, was foreknown, and had its place in the eternal plan of salvation. Naturally, the question arises what did the Nephites teach concerning the fall? Particularly, what does Nephite revelation teach was the purpose of the fall?

In the first place, the Book of Mormon—which is the record of the Nephite revelation—teaches as does the Bible that the fall came about through man's partaking of the forbidden fruit.

"And I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read, must needs suppose, that an angel of God, according to that which is written,^b had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God. And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable, forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind. Wherefore he said unto Eve, yea, even, that old serpent who is the devil, who is the father of all lies; wherefore he said, Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. And after Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit, they were driven out of the garden of Eden to till the Earth. And they have brought forth children; yea, even the family of all the earth. And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh; wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened,

^a Mosiah 4:7, 8.

^b Lehi had with him the Plates of Laban, containing the sacred books of the Hebrews.

according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men. For he gave commandment that all men must repent; for he showed unto all men that they were lost, because of the transgression of their parents."^c

This explanation is simple and clear. Lehi understood that Adam and his wife, Eve, took into their immortal systems something which changed their immortality to mortality. They violated a law of the immortal life. The penalty, was death—death physical and spiritual. For, not only must Adam now lay down his physical body, which would suffer corruption, but also he must depart from the presence of God, never to return thereto until a suitable atonement should be made for his violation of the law of immortality. This is taught also in the Holy Bible.

The Nephite revelation contained in the Book of Mormon goes further. It declares what would have been the effect had there been no fall.

"And now, behold," continues Lehi, "if Adam had not transgressed, he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created, must have remained in the same state [in] which they were, after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin. But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things. Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they (may) have joy."^d

Here is interesting doctrine. There was a specific purpose in the fall. It was part of the plan divinely evolved for the salvation of man even as much as was any other doc-

trine of the Gospel. It was fore-known. It was foreordained. It was necessary. For, according to the doctrine here set forth by Lehi, man was placed upon the earth to receive for himself a physical body, and in that body to gain experience. But the original pair were sinless, deathless. All that was upon the earth was sinless, deathless. Like begets like. Immortality could not beget mortality. Hence, had there been no fall, all must have remained in the garden of Eden as it was on the eve of creation. "All things which were created, must have remained in the same state in which they were—and they must have remained forever—and they would have had no children." With the fall, however, came mortality. With mortality came the power to provide physical bodies. With the fall came the power to fulfill the plan of salvation. "Adam fell that men might be." Men, having been given physical existence, are provided also with the means of gaining salvation. They are taught both good and evil. It is made possible for them to gain joy—to regain the joyous realm." For, "men are, that they (may) have joy." In the light of Lehi's explanation we may understand better that wonderful exclamation of mother Eve's:

"Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient."^e

This, then, was the great purpose of the fall, as taught in the Nephite theology. It is a sublime doctrine. Some parts of it are, naturally enough shrouded in mystery. But those parts need not detain us. It will profit us nothing to speculate

^c2 Nephi 2:17-21.

^d2 Nephi 2:22-25.

^eMoses 5:11.

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-

fAlma 12:22-24.