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Lesson XII. The Intermediate State

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Abstract: Introduction—The Savior and the malefactor—The problem—The world's explanation—The plainness of Book of Mormon teachings—Alma to Corianton—An intermediate space—The times of resurrection—Spirits taken home—Home is paradise—The state of the righteous—The state of the wicked—Explanation of II Nephi 9:12, 13—Summary of doctrine—What Jesus did in paradise—The resurrection and the life.

2. How did the Nephites interpret this saying?
3. What was the attitude of the Nephite theology toward sin?
4. What was conceived to be the relation between sin and law?
5. What provisions were made that all might know the law?
6. What did Alma teach concerning each person's receiving the word of God?
7. Why did Alma wish that he were an angel?
8. Why was his wish wrong?
9. What provision had God already made that every nation might know His word?
10. How, then, should we look upon the world's great and good men?
11. How may we judge of the degree of faithfulness of a community?
12. Quote Alma to prove the above.
13. Who is to judge of man's desire for knowledge and of his faithfulness?
14. Quote passages to prove the above.
15. Relate Nephi's vision of the dire calamities to befall his people.
16. Compare Nephi's vision with the words of Amulek.
17. How does the devil reward?
18. How is righteousness rewarded?
19. What is meant by death and hell?
20. How will the unrighteous feel in the presence of righteousness?
21. Repeat the memory gem.

XII.

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

In the last moments of his mortal life, while He suffered exquisite agony on the cross, the Savior of the world delivered a strange message that has puzzled the learned of the world ever since. Two malefactors were crucified with the Lord. One of them cursed the suffering Jesus and reviled Him, railing at Him thus: "Art not Thou the Christ? Save Thyself and us." The other sinner, however, was a man in whom the fear of God had found lodgment. He rebuked his fellow, saying, "Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due rewards of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss." Then, having thus voluntarily confessed his misdeeds, the sinner addressed Jesus and said, "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." And Jesus, the great physician, comforted the malefactor thus: "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."^a

^aLuke 23:39-43.

In the Christian world, these strange, compassionate words spoken by the dying Savior have come to mean that if one would only confess the supremacy of Jesus, even on the deathbed, one should be saved without further ado in the kingdom of God. Paradise has been confused with heaven. It is argued that the believer goes immediately after death into the very presence of the Father. But another peculiar scripture upsets this doctrine. On the third day after His crucifixion, Jesus rose from death in immortality of life. In the garden near the empty tomb Mary Magdalene found Him in the early morning. When she recognized Him, she cried "Rabboni," and would have touched Him; but Jesus forbade her. "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father."^b Where, then, had Jesus been? Had He not kept His word to the malefactor? Had He failed on the terrible day of the crucifixion to meet the sinner in paradise? Modern Christian theol-

^bJohn 20:11-18.

ogy affords no satisfactory explanation of the problem.

In the Book of Mormon the matter is explained clearly and fully. It is a remarkable truth that every question with which the Book of Mormon deals is made so clear that the simplest layman may understand it. It is so here. We turn to the Book of Mormon to learn what Jesus meant when He said, "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

The great teacher Alma had a son named Corianton. Corianton was wayward. He did not always see clearly the way of the Lord. Alma labored with him with even more than the love of a father. Corianton was "worried concerning the resurrection of the dead." Alma proceeded to explain the doctrine to him. And in the course of that explanation, Alma revealed the key to the saying, "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

Alma and Corianton lived some eighty years before Christ. But Alma taught that there could be no resurrection until after the coming of Christ.^c He very rightly concluded, therefore, that "there must needs be a space betwixt the time of death, and the time of the resurrection."^d And this statement holds true, taught Alma, not only for those who died before the resurrection of Christ, the first-fruits, but for all men in all time. For, he argues, "whether there is more than one time for men to rise, it mattereth not; for all do not die at once: and this mattereth not; all is as one day, with God; and time only is measured unto men; therefore there is a time appointed unto men that they shall rise from the dead; and there is a space between the time of death and the resurrection."^e

^cAlma 40:2.

^dAlma 40:6.

^eAlma 40:8, 9.

This much is certain, then: no matter when a man dies, there is a certain period between the time of death and the resurrection. The question turns now upon this intermediate space of time. "What becometh of the souls of men," declares Alma, "is the thing which I have inquired diligently of the Lord to know; and this is the thing of which I do know."^f What is it that Alma knows with so much assurance? "Now concerning the state of the soul between death and the resurrection. Behold, it has been made known unto me, by an angel, that the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body; yea, the spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life."^g This, then, is what Alma knew. At death the spirit of man returns home. Home? Where is that home? Is it heaven? Is it the kingdom of God? The Book of Mormon teaches that it is a world of spirits. Moroni bade farewell to the world in these words: "I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and my body shall again unite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air."^h The intermediate space, between the time of death and the time of resurrection toward which Moroni looked forward was known to him as paradise.

So we learn that there is a space between death and the resurrection: that during that time the spirits of men are taken "home." What is the condition of departed spirits in the spirit-world?

We turn again to the explanation of Alma. In the world of spirits, we learn, "the spirits of those who are righteous, are received into a

^fAlma 40:9.

^gAlma 40:11.

^hMoro. 10:34.

state of happiness, which is called paradise; a state of rest; a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow." That is, already in paradise, the righteous reap the reward of their righteousness. They have restored and rewarded to them that which they gave in life. Their condition is one of blessedness.

On the other hand "the spirits of the wicked * * * * shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; * * * * Now this is the state of the souls of the wicked; yea, in darkness, and a state of awful, fearful, looking for the fiery indignation of the wrath of God upon them; thus they remain in this state, as well as the righteous in paradise, until the time of their resurrection."¹

¹Alma 40:12-14.

NOTE: In common parlance the word "paradise" has come to mean the world of spirits in general. Most of our writers and preachers use the word so. And there would seem to be excellent authority for such a use of the word paradise. Did not Jesus say to the sinner, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise?" And did not the prophet, Joseph Smith, say, "But what is hell? It is another modern term and is taken from hades. * * * * Hades, the Greek, or Shaole, the Hebrew: these two significations mean a world of spirits. Hades, Shaole, paradise, spirits in prison are all one; and it is a world of spirits." (History of Church, vol. 5, p. 425.) So, it would seem that any one of these words might be used to denote the world of spirits in general.

However, the prophet, Joseph Smith, said also in explanation of the Savior's words to the sinner on the cross, that, "there is nothing in the original word in Greek from which this was taken that signifies paradise; but it was—This day thou shalt be with me in the world of spirits." (History of the Church, vol. 5, p. 424.) Evidently the prophet made a difference between "paradise" and "the world of spirits."

Nor could we expect that the condition of the departed spirit would be otherwise than as here described. The great convert Amulek said in earlier days, "Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world." The spirit is the deathless part of the soul. Surely, it will not change its nature and its life-long habits in

How, then, are we to understand the statement that the words referring to the future spirit state are all one?

The explanation is given clearly in the chapter of the Book of Alma which we are now considering. Hell and paradise do both, correctly enough, designate the world of spirits; but specifically each one denotes a particular condition in that world. "The spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness which is called paradise." "The spirits of the wicked * * * shall be cast out into outer darkness" into a state of misery, which is called hell. There is, of course a world of spirits. In that world there are many degrees of happiness and misery, determined by the way in which the earth-life has been lived. Says the prophet, "The righteous and the wicked all go to the same world of spirits until the resurrection. The great misery of departed spirits in the world of spirits, where they go after death, is to know that they come short of the glory that others enjoy, and that they might have enjoyed themselves." (History of the Church, vol. 5, p. 425.)

If we wish to speak accurately, and we should all strive after accuracy, we should use the word paradise to designate only the state of happiness into which the spirits of the righteous are received in the world of spirits. There can be no wicked in paradise. This use of the word in English accords with the meaning of the word in the original:—the king's pleasure garden.

¹Alma 34:34.

the passing time of death. In the world of spirits, then, the spirits of the righteous naturally pass into a state of bliss; whereas the spirits of the wicked pass into a state of misery and woe. We can understand better now the passage explained in the preceding lesson, that death and hell must deliver up their dead.

The doctrine of the intermediate state, as set forth in the Book of Mormon, may now be briefly stated thus: At death the spirit of man does not fly directly to the bosom of God, and to eternal salvation and exaltation. There is an intermediate state between death and the resurrection. This intermediate state is called the world of spirits. At death, the spirits of the righteous pass into a state of happiness called paradise; the spirits of the wicked pass into a state of misery, which may be called hades. There the spirits enter already upon their reward for the life upon earth. In accordance with the doctrine of reward, the spirit enters upon a state of bliss if it has lived righteously upon the earth, or upon a state of misery if it has lived wickedly. In this state it continues until the body and the spirit are reunited in the resurrection. Then the man—the immortal soul—goes forward to the final judgment, to receive the decrees of a just God. It was in the world of spirits as here set forth that Jesus met the malefactor. He might truly say on the day of His resurrection that He had not yet ascended to His Father. He had been only in the intermediate state—in the world of departed spirits.

What did He there? Again the Book of Mormon makes clear an obscure passage in the Bible. Writing of the doctrine of salvation Peter says: "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 He also went and preached unto the spirits in prison."^k And in the following chapter, the chief apostle, says, "For, for this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."^l Jesus preached to the spirits in prison. He brought the gospel of redemption not only to the living but also to the dead. In the spirit-world the malefactor saw Him and heard Him. There the malefactor undoubtedly accepted Him as Lord and Savior. For repentance is a gift of God, and is granted also to the spirits in their spirit home. The Gospel is preached to them "that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." And as many as believe and accept the Gospel shall be saved. For them the second death shall have no terror. In this comprehensive doctrine are fulfilled the beautiful words of the Savior, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."^m

These are plain teachings of the Book of Mormon that make clear the doctrines of life and salvation

OUTLINE.

Introduction—The Savior and the malefactor—The problem—The world's explanation—The plainness of Book of Mormon teachings—Alma to Corianton—An intermediate space—The times of resurrection—Spirits taken home—Home is paradise—The state of the righteous—The state of the wicked—Explanation of II Nephi 9:12, 13—Summary of doctrine—What Jesus did in paradise—The resurrection and the life.

^kI Peter 3:18, 19.

^lI Peter 4:6.

^mJohn 11:25.

QUESTIONS.

1. Relate the story of the Savior's last moments on the cross.
2. What question arises from the words of the Savior to the malefactor?
3. How do we know that paradise is not the final heavenly home?
4. What is remarkable about the teachings of the Book of Mormon?
5. Why was Corianton worried about the resurrection?
6. In Alma's time, when should the resurrection occur?
7. Why, then, must there be a space between death and the resurrection?
8. Where do the spirits of men go after death?
9. What does Moroni teach that the "home" of the spirits is?
10. What, then, is the intermediate state?
11. What is the condition of the spirits of the righteous in the world of spirits?
12. What is the condition of the spirits of the wicked in the world of spirits?
13. Why are these conditions naturally to be expected?
14. State briefly the doctrine of the intermediate state.
15. What did Jesus do in the world of spirits?
16. Explain I Peter 4:6.
17. How does the principle of repentance apply to spirits?
18. How is Jesus the resurrection and the life?

JUNIOR LESSONS.

The Life of the Savior.

LESSON XI.

MIRACLES ON THE SEA OF GALILEE.

THE MISSION OF THE TWELVE.

It was in the summer time after Jesus' 31st birthday. The Savior was traveling through Galilee with his twelve apostles. During this time many mighty and wonderful works were performed. He had just finished a number of parables for the multitudes who sought him, and he no doubt felt that it would be well to let the people reflect for a time on the truths that he had taught. He therefore bade his disciples take him across the lake. On the way, while the Savior lay sleeping in the boat, a storm arose, and in a few moments the boat was in danger of sinking. (The Sea of Galilee, being so far below the level of the ocean, and under extreme conditions of temperature, is very subject to sudden fierce storms.) The disciples were frightened, and awoke Jesus. He immediately rebuked the

storm; the wind ceased; the waters became calm, and the danger was over. Then Jesus rebuked his disciples, "Why are ye fearful? Have ye not yet faith?" But his companions marveled to see that he possessed power over the elements. Thus did those who followed Him learn faith and confidence.^a

Jesus landed on the east side of the lake near the town Khersa. A man with unclean spirits who dwelt in the tombs, i. e., among the rocks where the dead were buried, came to the shore and worshiped Jesus. The spirits asked that they might not be tormented, but Jesus commanded them to come out of the man. A great herd of swine were feeding on a hill near by and the spirits begged to be allowed to enter the bodies of the swine. This Jesus permitted. The frightened animals

^aMark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25.