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Lesson XIV. The Salvation of the Dead

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Abstract: Salvation free—The atonement infinite—No law no condemnation—The heathen remembered—The heathen in the first resurrection—No unclean thing in the kingdom of heaven—None saved in sin—Knowledge of Jesus to spread—Every man has heard good and evil—None saved without repentance—Belief and baptism essential to salvation—No other name than that of Jesus—No other means—The great and last sacrifice—The second death—Condition of the dead—The mission of Elijah—The Nephites temple-builders—Summary.

fruits of the resurrection; 4. The Nephites were promised that the resurrected Christ should minister to them; 5. This promise was fulfilled, also the promise that the saints should rise with Jesus; 6. There are two resurrections—the first and the final; 7. These resurrections may also be called the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust; 8. The final resurrection shall be a resurrection of the unjust; 9. The resurrection is a literal re-clothing of the spirit in a physical body.

In view of the fact that the Nephites were taught so thoroughly all that pertains to the doctrine of the resurrection, it is small wonder that some knowledge of it has persisted in the traditions of the American Indians.

OUTLINE.

The traditional belief of the Indians—Christ shall rise—The bands of death shall be broken—The resurrection universal—Hope of the resurrection a source of joy—Christ the first-fruits of the resurrection—Promises of Christ's resurrection and their fulfilment—Saints arose with Christ—The first resurrection—The resurrection of the just and of the unjust—The final resurrection—The resurrection literal—Summary and conclusion.

QUESTIONS.

1. What belief concerning the future life is deeply-rooted and widespread among the American Indians?
2. How can it be shown that the Indians believed in a literal resurrection?
3. Whence might the Indians have learned of the resurrection?
4. When did the Nephites learn that Jesus should rise from death?
5. What should be the effect of Christ's resurrection?
6. Upon how many should the saving power of the resurrection be effective?
7. Why was the knowledge of the resurrection a source of joy to the Nephites?
8. Who was to be the first fruits of the resurrection?
9. Why could there be no resurrection before that of Christ?
10. What did the Nephites who lived before the time of Christ know of His life and ministry?
11. What promise of a personal ministry of Jesus was made to the Nephites?
12. What predictions had been made of a resurrection of saints at the time of Christ?
13. Relate how both these points were fulfilled.
14. How many resurrections are there?
15. Explain each time and kind of resurrection.
16. Show how the Nephites believed in a literal resurrection.
17. Give a brief resume of the doctrine of the resurrection as understood and taught by the Nephites.

LESSON XIV.

THE SALVATION OF THE DEAD.

It is doubtful whether there is in the Book of Mormon any other passage more beautiful in spirit and word than this:

"Behold, my beloved brethren, I say unto you, that the Lord God worketh not in darkness. He doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; for He loveth the world, even that He layeth down His own life, that He may draw all men unto Him. Wherefore He commandeth none that

they shall not partake of His salvation.

"Behold, doth He cry unto any, saying, Depart from me? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; but He saith, Come unto me all ye ends of the earth, buy milk and honey, without money and without price. Behold, hath He commanded any that they should depart out of the synagogues, or out of the houses of worship? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. Hath He commanded any that they should not partake of His salvation? Behold I say unto

you, Nay; but He hath given it free for all men; and He hath commanded His people that they should persuade all men to repentance."^a

This beautiful and generous thought lies at the foundation of the great plan of salvation. Paul defined the Gospel as "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." No one is to be excluded.

With so magnanimous a thought basic in the teachings of the Book of Mormon, it is interesting to learn how the Lord provided among the Nephites for their salvation. We have already learned much of what was expected of the living to whom the Gospel was taught. No fault can be found with the comprehensive and merciful way to heaven outlined for them. In this lesson we shall apply the teachings of the Book of Mormon to the doctrine of the salvation of the dead, to learn if possible whether or not the Nephites understood that the dead might also receive the blessings of the Gospel of the Lord.

We have learned from the Book of Mormon that the salvation of man is made possible only through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of the Father in heaven. Had there been no atonement, says the great Nephi,—and therefore no resurrection—"our spirits must [have] become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the eternal God, and became the devil; to rise no more."^b But there was an atonement. That atonement broke the bands of death. It made possible the resurrection of the body, and the resurrection of the spirit to the presence of God. But the fall of Adam brought an infinite condem-

nation. That is, everyone became subject to death, both temporal and spiritual, without exception. The atonement, therefore, to be effective must also be infinite. "Wherefore it must needs be an infinite atonement; save it should be an infinite atonement, this corruption could not put on incorruption."^c The atonement was really effective. It was an infinite atonement. Hence, the death and "resurrection of Christ redeemeth mankind, yea, even all mankind, and bringeth them back into the presence of the Lord."^d Thus, in the redeeming sacrifice of Christ, provision is made not only for those living at the time of the sacrifice, and thereafter, but also for those many millions who have died before the sacrifice was made. The atonement brought about the salvation of all mankind from the consequences of the fall.

Such a general salvation as this is required by the principle of justice. It would not be fair to hold Adam's children, throughout the ages, responsible for his offenses in the Garden of Eden. A just God would not—and could not— withhold the gift of redemption. Nay, more, while the eternal God has laid down certain laws for the government of His children upon the earth, He would not, and could not, hold them amenable to those laws if the laws were not taught to them. This principle is enunciated time and again in the Book of Mormon. It follows, therefore, that all those who die without the law will be saved through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

"Wherefore he has given a law; and where there is no law given, there is no punishment; and where there is no punishment, there is no condemnation; and where there is no condemna-

^aII Nephi 26:23-27.

^bII Nephi 9:8.

^cII Nephi 9:6-9.

^dHeb. 14:14-17.

tion, the mercies of the Holy One of Israel have claim upon them, because of the atonement; for they are delivered by the power of him."^e

And not only are those who die without the law delivered and saved, but they are remembered—the heathen with the Jew and the Gentile^f—and in their redemption they take part in the first resurrection.^g So, we learn as the first point of doctrine in this lesson, that the great atonement brings salvation to all men, black or white, bond or free, male or female, Jew or Gentile; and that since those who have died without the law are innocent of sin under the law, they are redeemed by the atonement, and will take part in the first resurrection. This may be called the principle of general salvation.

But the great atonement made possible not only the general salvation of mankind, but also the individual salvation of all men. That is to say, through the atonement of Jesus, all men are redeemed from the consequences of the fall, and have given them the gift of resurrection, but that general salvation does not provide for individual salvation. However, by the conditions of the atonement, it is possible for man to gain an individual exaltation in addition to general salvation. His exaltation will depend upon the degree of faithfulness with which he subscribes to the Gospel plan laid down by the Savior. Let us inquire into some of the conditions of individual salvation.

The Nephites were assured in very plain words "that no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of heaven," and that no one can call

himself saved unless he inherit the kingdom of heaven.^h "There can no man be saved except his garments are washed white; and he must be stripped of pride, of envy, of mockery, and of all forms of iniquity." For no one can be saved in sin.ⁱ In short, the Book of Mormon teaches clearly that no one can be saved in the kingdom of God without repentance from all evil.^j

Now, repentance is possible only after one knows the law. A knowledge therefore of the Gospel of the atonement must be imparted to men before they can be required to repent. The imparting of this knowledge the Nephite prophets provided for. "The time shall come," we read in the book of Mosiah, "when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. And behold, when that time cometh, none shall be found blameless before God, except it be little children, only through repentance and faith on the name of the Lord God Omnipotent."^k And Alma declared, "I know that good and evil have come before all men."^l

After securing general salvation as a gift from God, it becomes necessary, then, for man to subscribe to the laws of God in order to gain an exaltation. The initiatory law is stated thus:

"He commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in His name, having perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God. And if they will not repent and believe in His name, and be baptized in His name, and endure to the end, they must be damned."^m

^hAlma 11:36-41.

ⁱAlma 5.

^jAlma 5:31.

^kMos. 3:20, 21.

^lAlma 29:5.

^mII Nephi 9:23, 24; Mor. 9:22, 23.

^eII Nephi 9:25, 26; Alma 29:5; Mos. 3:11; Moro. 8:22.

^fII Nephi 26:32, 33.

^gMos. 15:24.

There is no other name given under heaven except that of Jesus Christ whereby man may be saved." And there is no other means provided under heaven except the Gospel of repentance whereby man may be saved.^o So, in spite of the fact that the atonement brings about a general salvation, no man can be saved in the kingdom of God who does not have faith in God, and in Jesus Christ His Son, and in the Holy Ghost, who does not repent of his sins even though they may have been committed in ignorance, and who does not receive baptism by the authority of the holy Priesthood. This condition is not impossible under the terms of the atonement; for, "it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice * * * * this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance."^p It is upon those only who do not believe, who do not repent, and who are not baptized, that the second death will have any effect.^q But "whosoever repenteth, and hardeneth not his heart, he shall have claim on mercy through mine only Begotten Son, unto a remission of his sins; and these shall enter into my rest."^r

Such are the conditions whereby one may gain an exaltation in the kingdom of God. Faith, repentance, baptism, these are required of all men. Yet it is declared that everyone shall have the opportunity of gaining an exaltation. Naturally, the question arises, What shall they

^oII Nephi 25:20; 31:21; Mos. 16:3; Alma 38:9; Hela. 5:9ff.

^pMos. 4:6-11.

^qAlma 34:8-17; Hela. 14:17, 18; Alma 42:11-17.

^rAlma 12:12-18; Hela. 14:18.

^sAlma 12:31-34.

do who died ignorant of the law? The atonement assures them a part in the plan of general salvation. But since everyone must repent and be baptized, how shall the dead who sinned ignorantly, or they who did not understand the Gospel in this life, observe the requirement? Surely some provision was made for them in the Nephite theology besides the assurance of a general salvation.

It cannot be consistently urged that those who died without the law will never be required to subscribe to the law. Such a belief would be subversive of the very principles set forth in this lesson. No scripture is more insistent upon the absoluteness of the doctrine that everyone who gains an exaltation must repent and be baptized than is the Book of Mormon. What provision was made, then for the unbaptized dead? Undoubtedly, the Nephites believed that the principles of the Gospel might be taught to the spirits in the spirit world. The whole tenor of the teachings set forth in this lesson points to that belief. Then, those who ignorantly sinned, would learn to know the law, would be sorry for their offense, would repent of it, and would accept the Gospel. There are not many passages in the Book of Mormon that speak directly to this point. But from the few that may be found it is quite evident that the Nephites must have understood that even the dead can repent and embrace the Gospel.

During His ministry among the Nephites, Jesus repeated and expounded to them the remarkable passage found in the last chapter of Malachi:

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and He shall turn the heart of the fathers to

the children and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."¹

Finally, it is worthy of note, that, whether or not they actually performed at any time the saving ordinances for the dead, the Nephites were a temple-building people. They had been in the new world only a short time when the first temple was built under the direction of Nephi. This temple was constructed "after the manner of the temple of Solomon."² It is to be presumed that the Nephite temple had in it a baptismal font, and other things described in the temple of Solomon. Probably, too, the font and other sacred things were used in the Nephite temple. After this first temple there were many others built by the Nephites.³ Indeed, it appears that in every new location, the Nephites made special preparation for the building of temples.⁴ We may be reasonably sure, therefore, that while the Book of Mormon does not mention specifically the saving ordinances for the dead, yet the Nephites understood well that the dead might repent in the spirit-world, and there embrace the Gospel of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

To sum up: The Book of Mormon teaches that salvation is free; that through the atonement of Christ all men will be saved from the consequences of the fall; that no one can be saved in sin; that to gain an exaltation everyone must believe and be baptized; that there is no other way; that the second death will come upon those who do not believe and who are not baptized; that, therefore, the Gospel must be preached to the unbaptized

dead; that the dead must be given the opportunity of repenting; that the Savior expounded the scripture predicting that the hearts of the fathers shall be turned to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers; that the Nephites were a temple-building people; that, therefore, the Nephites understood the doctrine of the salvation of the dead, even if they did not perform vicarious ordinances for the dead.

OUTLINE.

Salvation free—The atonement infinite—No law no condemnation—The heathen remembered—The heathen in the first resurrection—No unclean thing in the kingdom of heaven—None saved in sin—Knowledge of Jesus to spread—Every man has heard good and evil—None saved without repentance—Belief and baptism essential to salvation—No other name than that of Jesus—No other means—The great and last sacrifice—The second death—Condition of the dead—The mission of Elijah—The Nephites temple-builders—Summary.

QUESTIONS.

1. What is the price of salvation?
2. What is Paul's definition of the Gospel?
3. How is the salvation of man made possible?
4. Why must the atonement be "infinite"?
5. What is the general effect of the atonement?
6. How were the dead before Christ affected by the atonement?
7. Explain why justice demands an infinite atonement.
8. What is the relation between law and punishment?
9. Why do the heathen take part in the first resurrection?
10. How does the "general salvation" provide for the salvation of the dead?
11. How does the atonement make possible individual salvation?
12. What is the teaching of the Book of Mormon concerning the condition of those who inherit the kingdom of heaven?

¹III Nephi 25:5, 6.

²II Nephi 5:16.

³Mos. 1:18; Alma 10:2; 16:13; III Nephi 11:1.

⁴Hela. 3:9, 14.

13. How does the principle of repentance affect exaltation?

14. What is the initiatory law of the Gospel?

15. How many ways are provided whereby man may be saved?

16. What is the intent of the atonement?

17. Upon whom will the second death come?

18. How can those who died outside of the pale of the Church sub-

scribe to the laws and requirements of the Gospel?

19. What did the Nephites believe concerning the possibility of the dead's repenting?

20. What famous biblical passage did Christ explain to the Nephites?

21. Why did the Nephites build temples?

22. What, in brief, is the teaching of the Book of Mormon concerning the salvation of the dead?

JUNIOR LESSONS.

The Life of the Savior.

LESSON XIII.

THE TRANSFIGURATION; THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES. THE SEVENTIES, THE FINAL DEPARTURE FROM GALILEE; THE FEAST OF DEDICATION.

About one week after the events last mentioned in the preceding lesson, Jesus went into "a high mountain" to pray. He took with him Peter, James and John. While they were in the mountain, Jesus "was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light." Then Moses and Elijah appeared and conversed with Jesus about his future, especially about his coming death.

So glorious was this experience that the three apostles wanted to prolong it; and Peter proposed that they build three tabernacles on the mountain, one each for Moses, Elijah and Jesus.

While they were yet speaking, a cloud gathered about them and God spoke out of it, saying, "This is My beloved Son, hear Him." Thus did the Father again testify of the divine mission of Jesus. This experience was undoubtedly a great testimony to the disciples who were present.^a The command was

^aMatt. 17:1-13. Mark 9:2-12. Luke 9:28-36.

given that this incident should not be told until after the death of Jesus.

We are not certain where this holy event occurred, but it probably was on the beautiful snow-capped Mt. Hermon, which is in the country where Jesus was at the time.

On the next day, after they had come down from the mountain, multitudes of people sought Jesus. Again he performed great miracles, among which was that of the healing of the demoniac boy.^b Then Jesus passed on into Galilee, and probably remained in Capernaum. The opposition to him had grown very much during his journey in the north. The King had heard of the attempt to make Jesus King of the Jews, and he was both jealous and afraid. As a result, the life of Jesus was sought; and the Savior tried to keep the knowledge of his whereabouts from the people.

While in this retirement in Capernaum, a dispute arose among the Twelve as to who was the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. The

^bMark 9:14-29.