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A Nephite's Commandments to His Three Sons, III— Corianton. II—Concluded

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Abstract: The story of Alma the Younger's conversion. Just before he died, he delivered to his sons Helaman, Shiblon, and Corianton his "commandments," a father's advice and admonitions. Each son is different, and therefore Alma's advice was different for each of his sons. The fourth part concludes the discussion on Corianton.

A NEPHITE'S COMMANDMENTS TO HIS THREE SONS.

BY B. H. ROBERTS.

III—CORIANTON. II—CONCLUDED.

And now Alma comes to the doubts of his son and his errors in doctrine, and so simple are his teachings, so clear his reasoning upon the several doctrines, that I shall offer no apology for quoting his words *in extenso*.

CORIANTON'S DOUBTS CONCERNING THE COMING OF MESSIAH IN THE FLESH.

As was common to nearly all skeptics among the Nephites, Corianton had much doubt concerning the coming of Messiah in the flesh. How could his earthly advent be known so long before the event was to take place, was the question he had asked over and over again. This advent was predicted by the prophets among the Nephites with the greatest plainness. The prophecies were not veiled at all. The coming of Messiah to the Nephites was as much a common-place of prophetic history, as it is now of actual history. The very plainness of the prediction seemed to be a trial to their faith—so it seems in the case of Corianton, and to him Alma said:

And now, my son, I would say somewhat unto you concerning the coming of Christ. Behold, I say unto you, that it is he that surely shall come, to take away the sins of the world; yea, he cometh to declare

glad tidings of salvation unto his people. And now my son, this was the ministry unto which ye were called, to declare these glad tidings unto this people, to prepare their minds; or rather that salvation might come unto them, that they may prepare the minds of their children to hear the word at the time of his coming. And now I will ease your mind somewhat on this subject. Behold, you marvel why these things should be known so long beforehand. Behold, I say unto you, Is not a soul at this time as precious unto God, as a soul will be at the time of his coming? Is it not as necessary that the plan of redemption should be made known unto this people, as well as unto their children? Is it not as easy at this time, for the Lord to send his angel to declare these glad tidings unto us, as unto our children; or as after the time of his coming?

CORIAN'TON'S DOUBTS OF THE RESURRECTION.

Not only the coming of Messiah in the flesh tried the faith of Corianton, but another thing, which to this day is too much for the faith of many minds—the resurrection from the dead; the state of the souls of men between death and the resurrection, as also their place of residence, were among the more or less unessential questions which worried his youthful mind. On these subjects Alma said:

Now my son, here is somewhat more I would say unto thee; for I perceive that thy mind is worried concerning the resurrection of the dead. Behold, I say unto you, that there is no resurrection; or, I would say, in other words, that this mortal does not put on immortality; this corruption does not put on incorruption, until after the coming of Christ. Behold, he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead. But behold, my son, the resurrection is not yet. Now I unfold unto you a mystery; nevertheless, there are many mysteries, which are kept, that no one knoweth them, save God himself. But I show unto you one thing, which I have inquired diligently of God, that I might know; that is concerning the resurrection. Behold, there is a time appointed that all shall come forth from the dead. Now when this time cometh, no one knows; but God knoweth the time which is appointed. Now whether there shall be one time, or a second time, or a third time, that men shall come forth from the dead, it mattereth not; for God knoweth all these things; and it sufficeth me to know that this is the case; that there is a time appointed that all shall rise from the dead. Now there must needs be a space betwixt the time of death, and the time of the resurrection. And

now I would inquire what becometh of the souls of men from this time of death, to the time appointed for the resurrection? Now whether there is more than one time appointed 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. And now concerning this space of time. What becometh of the souls of men, is the thing which I have inquired diligently of the Lord to know; and this is the thing of which I do know. And when the time cometh when all shall rise, then shall they know that God knoweth all the times which are appointed unto man. 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. And then shall it come to pass that the spirits of those who are righteous, are received into a 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, etc. And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of the wicked, yea, who are evil; for behold, they have no part nor portion of the Spirit of the Lord; for behold, they chose evil works rather than good; therefore the spirit of the devil did enter into them, and take possession of their house; and these shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; and this because of their own iniquity; being led captive by the will of the devil.

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. Now there are some that have understood that this state of happiness, and this state of misery of the soul, before the resurrection, was a first resurrection. Yea, I admit it may be termed a resurrection; the raising of the spirit or the soul, and their consignation to happiness or misery, according to the words which have been spoken. And behold, again it hath been spoken, that there is a first resurrection; a resurrection of all those who have been, or who are, or who shall be, down to the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Now we do not suppose that this first resurrection which is spoken of in this manner, can be the resurrection of the souls, and their consignation to happiness or misery. Ye cannot

suppose that this is what it meaneth. Behold, I say unto you Nay; but it meaneth the re-uniting of the soul with the body of those from the days of Adam, down to the resurrection of Christ. Now whether the souls and the bodies of those of whom have been spoken, shall all be reunited at once, the wicked as well as the righteous, I do not say; let it suffice, that I say that they all come forth; or in other words, their resurrection cometh to pass before the resurrection of those who die after the resurrection of Christ. Now my son, I do not say that their resurrection cometh at the resurrection of Christ; but behold, I give it as my opinion, that the souls and the bodies are re-united, of the righteous, at the resurrection of Christ, and his ascension into heaven. But whether it be at his resurrection, or after, I do not say; but this much I say, that there is a space between death and the resurrection of the body, and a state of the soul in happiness or in misery until the time which is appointed of God that the dead shall come forth, and be reunited, both soul and body, and be brought to stand before God, and be judged according to their works; yea, this bringeth about the restoration of those things of which have been spoken by the mouths of the prophets. The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost, but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame. And now my son, this is the restoration of which has been spoken by the mouths of the prophets: And then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of God. But behold, an awful death cometh upon the wicked; for they die as to things pertaining to things of righteousness; for they are unclean, and no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of God; but they are cast out, and consigned to partake of the fruits of their labors or their works, which have been evil; and they drink the dregs of a bitter cup.

CORIANTON'S ERRONEOUS IDEAS ON "RESTORATION."

From what is said in the Book of Mormon, it is clear that Corianton had gone far astray on the subject of "restoration." He seems to have argued himself into the belief that "restoration," no matter through what labyrinths of sin man might wander—"restoration" would bring him back to innocency—the point from whence he started; and this erroneous view seems, in some way, to have led to the great sin of Corianton, for Alma says, in what connection the reader will see in the larger quotation on this subject—"Do not suppose because it has been spoken concerning restora-

tion, that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness." And again: "Do not risk one more offense against your God upon those points of doctrine, *which ye have hitherto risked to commit sin.*" And now Alma, at greater length, on "Restoration:"

And now my son, I have somewhat to say concerning the restoration of which has been spoken; for behold, some have wrested the scriptures, and have gone far astray because of this thing. And I perceive that thy mind has been worried also, concerning this thing. But behold, I will explain it unto thee: I say unto thee, my son, that the plan of restoration is requisite that all things should be restored to their proper order. Behold, it is requisite with the justice of God; for it is requisite and just, according to the power and resurrection of Christ, that the soul of man should be restored to its body, and that every part of the body should be restored to itself. And it is requisite with the justice of God, that men should be judged according to their works; and if their works were good in this life, and the desires of their hearts were good, that they should also, at the last day, be restored unto that which is good; and if their works are evil, they shall be restored unto him for evil; therefore all things shall be restored to their proper order; everything to its natural frame; mortality raised to immortality; corruption to incorruption; raised to endless happiness, to inherit the kingdom of God, or to endless misery, to inherit the kingdom of the devil, the one on one hand, the other on the other; the one raised to happiness according to his desires of happiness; or good, according to his desires of good; and the other to evil according to his desires of evil; for as he has desired to do evil all the day long, even so shall he have his reward of evil when the night cometh. And so it is on the other hand. If he hath repented of his sins, and desired righteousness until the end of his days, even so he shall be rewarded unto righteousness. These are they that are redeemed of the Lord; yea, these are they that are taken out, that are delivered from that endless night of darkness; and thus they stand or fall; for behold, they are their own judges, whether to do good or do evil. Now, the decrees of God are unalterable; therefore, the way is prepared, that whosoever will, may walk therein and be saved.

And now behold, my son, do not risk one more offense against your God upon those points of doctrine, which ye have hitherto risked to commit sin. Do not suppose, because it has been spoken concerning restoration, that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness. And now, my son, all

men that are in a state of nature, or I would say, in a carnal state, are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity; they are without God in the world, and they have gone contrary to the nature of God; therefore, they are in a state contrary to the nature of happiness. And now behold, is the meaning of the word restoration, to take a thing of a natural state, and place it in an unnatural state, or to place it in a state opposite to its nature? O, my son, this is not the case; but the meaning of the word restoration, is to bring back again evil for evil, or carnal for carnal, or devilish for devilish; good for that which is good; righteous for that which is righteous; just for that which is just; merciful for that which is merciful; therefore, my son, see that ye are merciful unto your brethren; deal justly, judge righteously, and do good continually; and if ye do all these things, then shall ye receive your reward; yea, ye shall have mercy restored unto you again; ye shall have justice restored unto you again; ye shall have a righteous judgment restored unto you again; and ye shall have good rewarded unto you again; for that which ye do send out shall return unto you again, and be restored; therefore, the word restoration more fully condemneth the sinner, and justifieth him not at all.

CORIAnton'S DOUBTS AS TO THE JUSTICE OF GOD IN THE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED.

It is but natural, perhaps, for those who fall under the condemnation of the law to doubt of its justice, and emphasize the beauties and blessedness of mercy. And, indeed, we all do pray for mercy, and love it, especially if we be the objects upon which it is to fall; and that same craving for mercy for ourselves should teach us, and doubtless it does teach us, to do the deeds of mercy. But it should ever be part of our consciousness upon this subject that justice itself with God, is oftentimes, and I might say always, but mercy in its sterner aspects. Corianton doubted of the justice of God in the punishment of the wicked, and thus Alma vindicated the justice of God, set forth the operations of both justice and mercy as manifested in the plan for man's redemption; and let me say, in parenthesis, that this passage is one of the noblest in all the literature of the Nephites that has so far come to us, and to the youth of The Church, I commend it:

And now, my son, I perceive that there is somewhat more which doth worry your mind, which ye cannot understand, which is concerning

the justice of God, in the punishment of the sinner; for ye do try to suppose that it is injustice that the sinner should be consigned to a state of misery. Now behold, my son, I will explain this thing unto thee; for behold, after the Lord God sent our first parents forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground, from whence they were taken; yea, he drew out the man, and he placed at the east end of the garden of Eden, Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the tree of life. Now we see that the man had become as God, knowing good and evil; and lest he should put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever, the Lord God placed Cherubim and the flaming sword, that he should not partake of the fruit; and thus we see, that there was a time granted unto man to repent, yea, a probationary time, a time to repent and serve God. For behold, if Adam had put forth his hand immediately, and partook of the tree of life, he would have lived for ever, according to the word of God, having no space for repentance; yea, and also the word of God would have been void, and the great plan of salvation would have been frustrated. But behold, it was appointed unto man to die; therefore as they were cut off from the tree of life they should be cut off from the face of the earth, and man became lost forever; yea, they became fallen man. And now we see by this, that our first parents were cut off both temporally and spiritually, from the presence of the Lord; thus we see they became subjects to follow after their own will. Now behold, it was not expedient that man should be reclaimed from this temporal death, for that would destroy the great plan of happiness; therefore, as the soul could never die, and the fall had brought upon all mankind a spiritual death as well as a temporal; that is they were cut off from the presence of the Lord; it was expedient that mankind should be reclaimed from the spiritual death; therefore as they had become carnal, sensual, and devilish, by nature, this probationary state became a state for them to prepare; it became a preparatory state. And now remember, my son, if it were not for the plan of redemption, (laying it aside,) as soon as they were dead, their souls were miserable, being cut off from the presence of the Lord. And now there was no means to reclaim men from this fallen state which man had brought upon himself, because of his own disobedience; therefore, according to justice, the plan of redemption could not be brought about, only on conditions of repentance of men in this probationary state; yea, this preparatory state; for except it were for these conditions, mercy could not take effect except it should destroy the work of justice. Now the work of justice could not be destroyed; if so, God would cease to be God. And thus we see that all mankind were fallen,

and they were in the grasp of justice; yea, the justice of God, which consigned them for ever to be cut off from his presence. And now 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. Now 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. Now, how could a man repent, except he should sin? How could he sin, if there was no law, how could there be a law, save there was a punishment? Now there was a punishment affixed, and a just law given, which brought remorse of conscience unto man. Now if there was no law given,—if a man murdered he should die, would he be afraid he would die if he should murder? And also, if there was no law given against sin, men would not be afraid to sin. And if there was no law given if men sinned, what could justice do, or mercy either; for they would have no claim upon the creature? But there is a law given, and a punishment affixed, and a repentance granted; which repentance, mercy claimeth; otherwise, justice claimeth the creature, and executeth the law, and the law inflicteth the punishment; if not so, the works of justice would be destroyed, and God would cease to be God. But God ceaseth not to be God, and mercy claimeth the penitent, and mercy cometh because of the atonement; and the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works; according to the law and justice; for behold, justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus, none but the truly penitent are saved. What! do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice? I say unto you, nay; Not one whit. If so, God would cease to be God. And thus God bringeth about his great and eternal purposes, which were prepared from the foundation of the world. And thus cometh about the salvation and the redemption of men, and also their destruction and misery; therefore, O my son, whosoever 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. If he has desired to do evil, and has not repented in his days, behold, evil shall be done unto him, according to the restoration of God. And now, my son, I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no more, and only let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall

bring you down unto repentance. O my son, I desire that ye should deny the justice of God no more. Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point, because of your sins, by denying the justice of God, but do you let the justice of God, and his mercy, and his long suffering, have full sway in your heart; but let it bring you down to the dust in humility.

After these instructions, corrections, warnings, exhortations and vindications of God in all his dealings with the children of men, Alma closes as he began, in the loving, sympathetic tones of the father:

“And now, O my son, ye are called of God to preach the word unto this people. And now, my son, go thy way, declare the word with truth and soberness, that thou mayest bring souls unto repentance, that the great plan of mercy may have claim upon them. And may God grant unto you even according to my words. Amen.”

HE LIVETH LONG WHO LIVETH WELL.

He liveth long who liveth well;
All else is life but flung away.
He liveth longest who can tell
Of true things truly done each day.

Then fill each hour with what will last;
Buy up the moments as they go;
The life above when this is past
Is the ripe fruit of life below.

HORATIUS BONAR.