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"That They Might Have Joy"

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Chapter 16

“THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE JOY”

Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy. (2 Nephi 2:25)

In his admonition to his son Jacob, Lehi spoke of the fall of Adam and contrasted Satan's plans with those of the Lord. Satan fell from heaven “and because he had fallen from heaven and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind” and set about tempting Eve to bring about the fall of mankind as well (2 Nephi 2:17-18). Had they not succumbed to Satan's will, Adam and Eve “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 might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:22-25).

From this, we learn that God's intent is that we have joy, while Satan wants us to become miserable like himself, this being part of the “opposition in all things” that resulted from the fall (2 Nephi 2:10-16; see also Moses 6:48). Lehi noted, for example, that Satan drags people “down to the eternal gulf of misery and woe” (2 Nephi 1:13; see also Helaman 5:12), represented by the filthy river in Lehi's tree of life vision (1 Nephi 8:26, 32; 15:27-30). But the atonement of Christ frees mankind from the fall (2 Nephi 2:26) and “they are free to choose liberty and eternal life through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death according to the captivity of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27).

This theme is frequently repeated in the Book of Mormon. Lehi's son Nephi alluded to it in 2 Nephi 28:19-23. Not surprisingly, it is not exclusive to the Book of Mormon. According

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to the pseudepigraphic *Life of Adam and Eve* 12:1; 16:3, Satan brought about the fall so that men would be like him.¹

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Jacob, recalling his father Lehi's words,² spoke of the "misery" of the devil (2 Nephi 9:46) and taught that the righteous "shall inherit the kingdom of God, which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world, and their joy shall be full forever" because they have been rescued from the devil "and that lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment" (2 Nephi 9:18-19; cf. verses 26-27, 43).

King Benjamin repeated Lehi's teachings when he assembled the people at the temple in Zarahemla:

I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness.

(Mosiah 2:41)

On the other hand, he noted, the wicked "shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and endless torment, whence they can no more return . . . and their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose

¹ Compare this with D&C 29:36-41, where we read that the devil, having fallen from heaven, became the cause of Adam's fall and expulsion from the garden of Eden.

² Jacob's discourses and writings frequently reflected his father's admonitions. See John A. Tvedtnes, "The Influence of Lehi's Admonitions on the Teachings of his son Jacob," in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/2 (Fall 1994).

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smoke ascendeth up forever and ever.” (Mosiah 3:25, 27)

From these statements, it is clear that happiness results from obedience to God’s commandments, while misery is a result of a guilty conscience. Alma explained the principle to his son Corianton, noting that the period between death and resurrection is one of separation into a “state of happiness” for the righteous and a “state of misery” for the wicked. Paradise, he said, was the “state of happiness,” while those who had been led captive by the devil were in “a state of awful fearful looking for the fiery indignation of the wrath of God upon them” (Alma 40:12-15; cf. 42:1; see Mormon 9:4). The resurrection, he taught, brought about a restoration. But, he cautioned,

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 . . . 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. (Alma 41:10-11; see Mormon 2:13)

Samuel the Lamanite used similar terminology when he told the Nephites in the city of Zarahemla, “Ye have sought for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head” (Helaman 13:38).

Alma knew firsthand the terrible pains of hell and the exquisite joy that comes from having one’s guilt removed through Christ (Alma 36:12-21). He taught that it is God who rescues us from the “state of endless misery and woe” (Alma 9:11). Elsewhere, we read that it is the strait and narrow path seen in Lehi’s vision (1 Nephi 8:20-24) that leads us “across that everlasting gulf of misery, which is prepared to engulf the wicked”

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(Helaman 3:29). In other passages, we find that it is the atonement of Christ that brings joy (Mosiah 3:3; 4:20; Alma 4:14; 19:6, 14; 22:15; 33:23. Cf. D&C 42:61; 51:19; 52:43; 93:33; 101:36; 138:11-17). This joy comes from obedience to God's will and by good works. Moroni wrote, "Greater is the value of an endless happiness than that misery which never dies" (Mormon 8:38).

CONCLUSION

The unrepentant will be cast out at the last day and "consigned to a state of endless misery" (Helaman 12:25-26; cf. Moses 7:37, 41; D&C 19:15-17, 33). Even though they "have joy in their works for a season," in the end "they are hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return" (3 Nephi 27:11). The end of all mankind is "to reap eternal happiness or eternal misery, according to the spirit which they listed to obey, whether it be a good spirit or a bad one" (Alma 3:26).

Joseph Smith summed up the Book of Mormon's teachings on this subject as follows:

Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof; if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God.³

³ Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1979), 255-256.