

The Great Plan of Redemption



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"For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity."

So wrote the wise "preacher", Solomon, 1,000 years before the ministry of our Lord Jesus as he considered the weak and mortal state of man. This sad commentary is all the more melancholy and disturbing when we realize just how little the condition of mankind has changed in 3,000 years. Still vexed by the vanity of human endeavor, troubled by the loneliness and emptiness of life, still fearful of the specter of approaching death, William Shakespeare repeats, through *MACBETH*, the dirge of Solomon and Every Man:

"Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more: it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

Because of this universal and perpetual need of mankind, a prophet in ages past, one well-acquainted with the redeeming power of Christ, expressed his burning desire to " ... declare unto every soul...the plan of redemption... ." Indeed, with the coming of Christ there is no longer need for empty or senseless lives, no need for despair and futility, certainly no need now to fear that temporal death which seeks out all men.

The immediate requirement for us each is to hear, understand and comply with God's great plan for our salvation. Revealed to man through the loving ministry of Jesus Christ, the plan of redemption has a host of witnesses. Through their witness runs a common thread: the pastoral writing or preaching of the Apostle Paul, or of Lehi, Alma, Amulek and Mormon, all bear testimony to each salient feature of God's plan for the redemption of mankind as revealed by His Only Begotten Son. Invariably each of them elaborates upon nine distinct components of God's message to mankind. We shall identify each of these basic elements of God's plan in light of the teachings of Jesus. Then we will examine the testimony of the Apostle Paul as he taught those in Bible lands and that of the great evangelist, Alma, as he taught those in the New World. His words are found in the Book of Mormon.

First, let us clearly identify why there exists the need of a special plan for the redemption of mankind. The Apostle Paul, speaking of Adam, said " ...as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). When Paul here speaks of sin he speaks not only of Adam's violation of God's command in the Garden, but he speaks also of two other aspects of sin: an absence of righteousness and an enmity toward God. These aspects of sin entered into man as he fell from his first estate and took upon himself a carnal nature. Benjamin said this " ...natural man is an enemy to God, and has been, from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever..." (Mos. 1:119). We can see that the "fall" brought to mankind not only mortality, toil, sickness, etc. but placed within us the very real potential for spiritual death as well. Hence, we see the need for a remarkable plan - one that would redeem us from the temporal death we suffer and, more importantly, the spiritual death we face - that we might dwell, at peace with ourselves, in the presence of God. Let us consider this singular plan.

Mankind, of himself, being weak, carnal and mortal, had no way of coming back into the presence of God, no way of rising from the inevitable grave and dissolution of these mortal elements. It was

essential that an atonement be made through an infinite sacrifice. Only through the sacrifice made by the very Son of God was the plan of redemption set into effect.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (Jn. 3:16:17).

"Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin..." (3 Ne. 4:51).

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:23-24).

"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..." (Al. 19:97).

2. Christ alone is this infinite sacrifice for sin prepared from the foundation of the world; " ...there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give

is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (Jn. 6:51).

"...Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past..." (Rom. 3:24-25).

"...there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ" (Al. 18:11).

3. Acceptance of Him as our Savior, evidenced by contrition, repentance and obedience brings into play the mercy of God, with its accompanying remission of sins, toward an unworthy mankind.

"...I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offering; and ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost...I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin: therefore whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the Kingdom of God." (3 Ne.4:49-51).

"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance... For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of..." (2 Cor. 7:9-10).

"Therefore, 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" (Al. 9:55).

It must be noted that this condition of repentance is for those who have opportunity to hear and understand the law of God. For little children and those who died without knowledge of the law, the mercy of Christ's atonement comes into play. "For behold that all little children are alive in Christ, and also all they that are without the law" (Moroni 8:25).

4. True belief in Christ as the Son of God and the Redeemer of mankind brings to man the promise of salvation.

Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth in me hath everlasting life (Jn. 6:47)."

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

"...begin to believe in the Son of God, that he will come to redeem his people, and that he shall suffer and die to atone for their sins...And behold, it will become a tree, springing up in you unto everlasting life" (Al. 16:196 & 199).

It must be recognized that a true belief in Christ will be evidenced by a continued obedience to His teachings and commandments until the end of our lives. The Master told us " ... except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (3 Ne.5:68). This is true of all the doctrine and commandments He has given to the children of men. Again, He tells us, "Behold, I am the law, and the light; look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live, for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life" (3 Ne. 7:10).

5. This life is the time allotted for man to make his preparations to meet God.

Jesus, himself, said "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (Jn. 9:4).

"But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; while it is said, Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts..." (Heb. 3:13-15).

"And we see that death come upon all mankind...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" (Al. 9:40 & 41)."

6. The eternal sacrifice made by the Son of God has loosed the bands of temporal death and all men shall be resurrected, or redeemed, from temporal death. This resurrection "...meaneth the reuniting of the soul with the body... (Al. 19:52).

Jesus said, "And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, I might draw all men unto me: that as I have been lifted up by men, even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me..." (3 Ne. 12:26-27).

"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive; but every man in his own order"...(1 Cor. 15:21-23).

Speaking of Christ, Alma said, "...he shall rise again from the dead, which shall bring to pass the

resurrection, that all men shall stand before him..."(Al. 16:197).

7. Resurrected mankind shall be brought back into the presence of God, who gave them life.

"And He (Jesus) did expound all things, even from the beginning until ... the great and last day, when all people, and all kindreds, and all nations and tongues shall stand before God..." (3 Ne. 11:30 & 32).

"For we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:10).

"...the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead: and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God..." (Al. 19:105).

8. Here man shall be judged with a righteous judgment by the words which Christ has given to them and according to their actions while in this life.

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (Jn. 12:48).

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that

he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

"And thus they are restored into his presence; to be judged according to their works; according to the law and justice..." (Al. 19:106).

9. Then the righteous who have truly believed in the Holy One of Israel shall inherit the kingdom of God, while those who have willfully rebelled against God shall reap damnation and suffer the second death.

"...the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (Jn. 5:28-29).

"...the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil..." (Rom. 2:5-9).

"...the time is at hand that all men shall reap a reward of their works, according to that which they

have been: if they have been righteous, they shall reap the salvation of their souls, according to the power and deliverance of Jesus Christ; and if they have been evil, they shall reap the damnation of their souls, according to the power and captivation of the devil" (Al. 7:42-44).

When Adam disobeyed the Lord he fell from high estate, but that fall has given to mankind a precious, yet dangerous, liberty: as nations and as individuals we are free to choose good or evil, blessing or cursing, life or death. The choices you make today affect all eternity, so build your life upon the certain promise of Jesus Christ, "...the way, the truth and the life..."