

“The Great Plan of Happiness”

Lesson
30
Summary

Alma 40 – 42

Scripture Summary:

Christ bringeth to pass the resurrection of all men—The righteous dead go to paradise and the wicked to outer darkness to await the day of their resurrection—All things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame in the resurrection.

In the resurrection men come forth to a state of endless happiness or endless misery—Wickedness never was happiness—Carnal men are without God in the world—Every person receives again in the restoration the characteristics and attributes acquired in mortality.

Mortality is a probationary time to enable man to repent and serve God—The fall brought temporal and spiritual death upon all mankind—Redemption comes through repentance—God himself atoneth for the sins of the world—Mercy is for those who repent—All others are subject to God’s justice—Mercy cometh because of the atonement—Only the truly penitent are saved. [About 73 B.C.]

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

In Judaism, Is There Life after Life? Alma teaches that there is no resurrection until after the coming of the Messiah. Judaism, nowadays, has virtually no belief in resurrection or life as such after death. To the Jews, the Messiah has not come; consequently, it is understandable that they do not have an active belief in the resurrection. There are, however, benedictions and other statements with words that seem to connect to a former belief in Resurrection.

Physical or Spiritual Resurrection? “. . . *Barukh mehayyeh ha-metim* (‘Blessed be . . . He Who revives the dead’) is therefore also known as *Tehiyyat ha-Metim* (‘Resurrection of the Dead’) . . .” “. . . the righteous of all generations will be reunited at the time of the resurrection of the dead during the messianic period.” “. . . They (Essenes) believed in reward and punishment; in immortality of the soul; but not in physical resurrection.” “Some rabbis believed in resurrection. That is that at a certain point in time God will bring everybody back to life and then the world will be a perfect place and physical life will go on indefinitely. This doctrine poses some obvious difficulties: the body actually decomposes after burial so how can it be reconstituted; furthermore what about overpopulation of the world? Those who believe in resurrection claim that anyway the whole process will be miraculous and the miracle will solve all the problems. Other rabbis however denied physical resurrection entirely and understood the afterlife to be a completely spiritual experience.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Without Revelation, Understanding of True Doctrines Change: “The argument about resurrection lasted well into the Middle Ages, and was one of the reasons for the sharp attacks against Maimonides. Many believed that he denied the doctrine and his views started a controversy that lasted for hundreds of years. In modern times most Jewish theologians do not subscribe to the doctrine of physical resurrection and movements such as Reform Judaism do not consider it to be a necessary belief for the Jew.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Biblical Teaching of Resurrection Denied: “The whole subject of (an) afterlife is not explicitly stated in the Bible and many scholars are of the opinion that belief in (an) afterlife was adopted by Jews during the Babylonian exile after the destruction of the First Temple when they came into contact with eastern religions such as Zoroastrianism.” “The Sadducees also rejected the Pharisaic belief in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, claiming that there is no basis for these beliefs in the Torah.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Justice and Mercy: There are numerous incidents in the scriptures that relate to the concepts of justice and mercy. Jews and Latter-day Saints have similar thoughts on these. “The word *zedakah* literally means ‘righteousness’ or ‘justice’; by their very choice of word the rabbis reveal a great deal of their attitude to the subject, for they see charity not as a favor to the poor but something to which they have a right, and the donor, an obligation.”

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Righteousness Equated with Justice and Mercy: “The Hebrew word for justice is *zedek*, and indicative of Judaism's attitude is the fact that another form of the same root *zedakah*, means ‘charity.’ For justice must be tempered with mercy and indeed the main attribute of God is His integration of justice and mercy. Yet another Hebrew word derived from the same root is *zaddik*, which means ‘righteous.’ The righteous man is one who is both just and merciful.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Repentance Requires Justice and Mercy: “A unique aspect of the Jewish faith is that although God rules the world with absolute justice, He is also merciful and forgives sins against Him. The doctrine of repentance is based on this belief.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Justice and Mercy Are Attributes of God: “. . . God, as depicted by the rabbis, embodies a combination of justice and mercy, of strict judgment and lenient compassion. This combination of justice and mercy in God is represented by the two names of God --- Elohim and YHWH. The former stands for justice and the latter for mercy. Though they may seem contradictory, one actually complements the other and, when there is a conflict between the two, God usually favors mercy.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*) For the Latter-day Saint, God the Father is Elohim (Justice) and His begotten Son is Jehovah, (Mercy).

What Do the Cherubim Represent? Since there is mention of Cherubim in the chapters being studied, I want to suggest a possible physical parallel with justice and mercy. “The Ark of the Covenant stood inside the Holy of Holies and contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments which were given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Hovering over the Ark were two cherubim, each 16-foot high, made of olive wood. Archaeologists believe that each of the cherubim was formed with a lion-like body, a man-shaped head, and two wings. The cherubim were believed to be servants of God whose main task was to guard the Ark.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

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Daniel Rona, born in Israel and living in Jerusalem has authored Old & New Testament and Book of Mormon Supplement Study Materials to be used in conjunction with the weekly LDS Gospel Doctrine Lesson study. NOTE: Three versions of the supplemental study materials are available *FREE* at www.HolyLandsRevealed.com. (Just click “LDS SUPPLEMENTS”)

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