

Summary Handout

The Plan of Salvation

Lesson

19

Summary

Scripture Summary:

Doctrine and Covenants 138:55–56; A vision, given to President Joseph F. Smith in Salt Lake City, Utah, on October 3, 1918. In his opening address at the eighty-ninth Semiannual General Conference of the Church, on October 4, 1918, President Smith declared that he had received several divine communications during the previous months. One of these, concerning the Savior's visit to the spirits of the dead while his body was in the tomb, he had received the previous day. It was written immediately following the close of the conference; on October 31, 1918, it was submitted to the counselors in the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve, and the Patriarch, and it was unanimously accepted by them. 53—60, The righteous dead of this day continue their labors in the world of spirits.

Abraham 3:22–23; Abraham learns about the sun, moon, and stars by means of the Urim and Thummim—The Lord reveals to him the eternal nature of spirits—He learns of pre-earth life, foreordination, the creation, the choosing of a Redeemer, and the second estate of man.

Alma 42; 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.

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

True Nature of God Diminished: As the true nature of God is seen to diminish in history, true religion fades away. By the time the Crusaders were approaching the Holy Land, a prominent Jewish philosopher, Moses Maimonides, began collecting the writings and interpretations of other Jewish sages to codify and centralize them. Maimonides included 'Thirteen Articles of Faith.' The first three articles declared that God cannot be explained. That published Jewish work (in most Judaic studies) eliminated reference to the anthropomorphic nature of God.

Thirteen Jewish Articles of Faith: (1) The existence of God, which is perfect; (2) God is 'one' in every sense of the word; (3) God has no body or physical attributes; (4) God is eternal; (5) God alone must be worshiped; (6) the prophecy of the Bible is true; (7) Moses was greater than any other prophet; (8) the entire Torah was given to Moses; (9) the Torah will never be superseded or abrogated; (10) God knows the actions of men; (11) God rewards and punishes; (12) the Messiah will ultimately come; and (13) the dead will be resurrected.

Meaning Lost on Resurrection/Death: The Jewish interpretation that God has no . . . physical attributes begs the question of what kind of resurrection there is. "The Talmud explains that there are three partners in the creation of a human being; the father and mother who supply the physical parts, and God, Who supplies the spirit. At death, God reclaims his part, and the spirit lives on even though the body has died. "The souls of the righteous enter paradise . . . [Garden of Eden] . . . 'there is no eating or drinking . . . no envy, hatred or competition . . . the righteous sit with crowns on their heads and delight in the splendor of 'God's presence' [Talmud]. The souls of the wicked enter hell . . . where they undergo purification before they too can enter paradise. (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

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. 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.*)

Scriptures Use Body Language: Remember that there are two things necessary to understand the scriptures, 1. the learning of the Jews and 2. the Holy Spirit that reveals the subtleties. Consider the scripturally described attributes of the Lord, his being, his body that he gave for us. Could Isaiah have been suggesting that everything around us, even "body language," refers to him? The Lord was called from the womb, a perfect body with attributes as eyes, ears, mouth, tongue, neck, heart, shoulder, hands, arms, belly, leg, knee, and foot.

References to Satan as a Personage Have Also Largely Disappeared: "In the Talmud, Satan is at times identified with the yezer ha-rah (the evil inclination), but he also assumes certain aspects of a fully personalized

entity. Thus, he is the angel of death, or he is the tempter lying in ambush not only for Job but also for Abraham and all the biblical personalities. Or he is the accuser, ha-mekatreg, constantly waiting for man to sin so as to bring down upon him the wrath of God. “The rabbis taught that one must therefore always be aware of the power of temptation, for the *yezer ha-ra* can grow and become a bad habit. At first it resembles the thread of a spider's web, the wise men tell us—fragile and barely visible. If not controlled it will become as strong as a stout rope. Judaism places a high value on the good that results from man's victory over his evil inclinations. ‘Who is mighty?’ ask the sages. ‘One who subdues his inclinations.’ (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Satan's Goal: The explainable concept of God and Satan have basically disappeared in modern Judaism. That, of course, would be Satan's main goal. Yet the concepts of good and evil are still basic to Jewish life. “Basic to Judaism is the firm belief that all of life is good. The Bible proclaims: ‘And God saw all that He had made and found it very good’ (Genesis 1:31). Yet how can we fit catastrophe, pain, moral evil and sin into God's design of Creation? The earlier books of the Bible deal very little with the problem of the existence of evil. In the later books, however, questions concerning the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous become familiar. The question appears in Jeremiah, in Isaiah, Job and Psalms, and various answers have been given by talmudists and philosophers. (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Differing Opinions of Good and Evil: “The rabbis . . . taught that as good derives from God who is merciful and loving, so does evil. This also removes any idea of separate gods. The rabbis say that just as a man blesses God for the good bestowed upon him, so must he bless Him for evil. To the vexing problem of the seemingly unjust distribution of good and evil the replies are varied. One answer is that it is beyond the understanding of man's mind. Another opinion states that the righteous, suffering in this world, might be receiving punishments for the sins of their ancestors, while the wicked may be prospering because of *zechut avot*, the merit of pious ancestors.

Widespread Explanation: “. . . the righteous receive their punishment for any small transgression so they can then enjoy their full reward in the world to come. The wicked are rewarded in this world for the slightest good deed but in the next world they will reap the full measure of punishment they deserve. The sufferings of the righteous are also a sort of test, ‘afflictions of love’ which develop in them patience and complete faith. The Book of Job and other biblical sources support this view. Evil initiated by man himself is considered the product of his evil inclination, the *yezer ha-ra*, . . . Yet, it is within man's power to restrain and redirect his evil inclination with the guidance of Torah . . . the only proven antidote. This self-control enables man to serve God with both his good and evil inclinations, helping him to live a good life, and to grow in holiness.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

God Forgives: On the subject of temptation and repentance, one of the most important theological doctrines of both the Bible and the Talmud is that if a sinner repents of his bad deeds, God will forgive him. (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Repentance Consists of Several Stages: “. . . firstly the sinner must reflect on his actions and realize that he has indeed done the wrong thing. He must then make up his mind never to do it again, and confess his sin. This confession is not made to any other human being but is made by the sinner directly to God. On this basis the two confessions *Ashamnu* and *Al-Het* were introduced into the prayers for the Day of Atonement which is a special occasion for repentance and forgiveness. However, even when a sinner has done all these things, his repentance is still not final until he has been exposed to the same temptation and withstood it. Of course he should not deliberately put himself on that spot again. (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Repentance Means Return: “Repentance in Hebrew is known as *teshuvah*, which literally means ‘return,’ and signifies a return to God. A person who repents his sins is known as a *ba'al teshuvah*. Many rabbis of the Talmud believed that the real *ba'al teshuvah* is greater even than a person who has never sinned and they furthermore said that when a person repents out of love of God (and not just out of fear of divine punishment), all the sins he had committed are considered to be *mitzvot*. This is perhaps the most comforting doctrine that Judaism has given to the world.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

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