



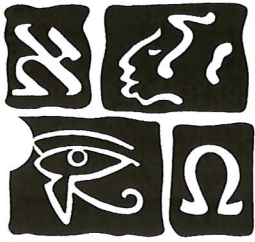
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FOUNDATION FOR ANCIENT RESEARCH AND MORMON STUDIES

Robert J. Matthews

Some Thoughts on the Atonement

Summary:

In a lecture given to the BYU religion faculty, Robert Matthews emphasizes the points of doctrine in the Book of Mormon and other standard works that elucidate the fall and atonement. He analyzes concepts in several different scriptural chapters and shows how they have points in common as well as areas of particular emphasis and clarification. He contrasts the classical Christian views of how Adam's transgression affects humankind with the teachings of ancient and modern revelation. He explains how the divine sonship of Jesus Christ enabled him to effect the atonement. Matthews notes that Christ's mission is intended to save us from both kinds of death (physical and spiritual); there is no viable replacement for the Savior's atonement.

Preliminary Report
Book of Mormon, Teachings

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SOME THOUGHTS ON THE ATONEMENT
Faculty Lecture, 17 February 1989

RJM

WHY I WANT TO GIVE THIS LECTURE

Last year I was planning to speak to you about the atonement, but at the last changed my mind, and it was just a year ago, almost to the day that I gave a talk in this room about the Doctrinal Framework of the Gospel, which hinted at the subject of organic evolution. I'm very glad I did that, since that subject is related to the atonement. But today I want to talk about some factors dealing precisely with the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Importance of Talking with the Faculty

Talking to you is more significant than giving a lecture to 1,000 other persons because of your influence and the number of people whom you will reach in your career. I have put more hours of thought, research and writing, and rewriting into this paper than anything else I have done in the past several years. There has been more thought and meditation and prayer than there has writing, which is no doubt a proper balance. What I say today are my own views, and I pray we will have the Holy Spirit to be with us.

Importance of the Subject

There once was a program on campus called the "Last Lecture Series." The idea was that if you had one last opportunity to deliver a lecture, what would you choose to say. For years I've mulled that in my mind, and wondered what I would select in such a setting. Probably it would be something about family and friends, and the blessing of working here in the company of good people--what President Howard W. Hunter referred to the other night as the "LDS environment." The subject of the atonement would also be very high on my priority list of last lectures. I can't think of anything I've tried harder to master and to understand and to develop the ability to explain.

To learn the charity, generosity, power to rescue, and the pardoning mercy of God, as set in order by the atonement, is the greatest of all studies.

General Lack of Understanding About the Atonement

As I have taught various subjects, I have encountered three large areas of misunderstanding among students. These are:

1. The Plates and Internal Structure of the Book of Mormon.
2. The Scattering and Gathering of Israel, and
3. The Fall and the Atonement.

Difficulties Experienced in Teaching the Atonement

Some difficulties I have experienced in teaching the atonement are: a lack of sufficient time to prepare, and a lack of time to deliver. An even greater difficulty is that most people are neither theologians nor doctrinally oriented. Many seem to have an objection to linking passages together to form a concept. They generally want it all said in one brief passage of scripture, rather than to build from point to point by bringing several passages together.

It seems to be the common mode of mankind not to search for careful, precise, and specific information about doctrinal items. This is not a doctrinal era in the Church, although we at BYU probably have a better opportunity to teach doctrine than is the case in most other places because of the student's capacity. However, it appears to me that many are content with casual, approximate information. Students sometime react negatively when the teacher expects and requires exact answers. It is easy to get what masquerades as exact answers on objective-type tests, but the minute a student is obliged to write his own essay-type answers, precision and correctness become rare, and that is when the teacher discovers just what the student really knows. If the teacher insists that the students get it right, using the words of the scripture, some of them get a little upset.

Nephi wrote his feelings about much of mankind:

. . . they will not search knowledge, nor understand great knowledge, when it is given unto them in plainness, even as plain as word can be (2 Nephi 32:7).

Many of the students now among us are the brightest and the most faithful youth we have ever seen, but it is not the common lot of mankind to search doctrine.

THE "VERY POINTS" OF DOCTRINE

I call your attention to some passages of scripture that I think speak of learning the gospel with precision rather than with approximation. The scripture calls these "points of doctrine."

Nephi said:

And at that day shall the remnant of our seed . . . come to the knowledge of their Redeemer and the **very points of his doctrine**, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved (1 Nephi 15:14).

And Alma said to his son:

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 (Alma 41:9).

And in Helaman 11:22-23 we read:

. . . they had peace in the seventy and eighth year, save it were a few contentions concerning **the points of doctrine which had been laid down by the prophets**.

And in the seventy and ninth year there began to be much strife. But it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi, and many of their brethren **who knew concerning the true points of doctrine**, having many revelations daily, therefore they did preach unto the people, insomuch that they did put an end to their strife in that same year.

And Jesus, as recorded in 3 Nephi 11:28, said:

There shall be no disputations among you concerning the **points of my doctrine**, as there have hitherto been.

And Jesus in 3 Nephi 21:6 declared that the gospel will be taught to the Gentiles so that

. . . they may repent and come unto me and be baptized in my name and know of **the true points of my doctrine**, that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel.

The same terminology appears also in the Doctrine and Covenants 10:62-63, wherein the Lord affirms that the Book of Mormon shall bring people to the "true points of my doctrine, yea and the only doctrine that is in me."

What is a "point of doctrine"? The dictionary defines a "point" as: a penetrating detail, a precise concept; a prominent or important item; the "telling part" of an argument or discussion; the salient feature; the precise thing; the "turning point." Such is the meaning of a "point" of doctrine as contrasted to a teaching that is vague, undefined, ambiguous, uncertain, fuzzy, foggy, obscure, and unfocused. As I reflect on the passages we have just read, I hear the Lord saying that he expects us to learn the very points of his doctrine; and that the Book of Mormon is the principal means that he has provided to accomplish it. The Book of Mormon cannot be the "most correct book on earth" and be wrong on the most important doctrines of the gospel.

It is my observation that the points of doctrine given to us in the Book of Mormon and other latter-day scripture will answer every doctrinal question that has been raised by the apostasy and which have been the focus of the great church councils from the Nicene Council to Vatican II.

USE OF RIGHT WORDS

If we use the right words it will help. We can avoid ambiguity. President Ezra Taft Benson has spoken on at least two occasions about the importance of using the right words. First from the Conference Report, 5 April 1987, pp. 105-106:

It is important that in our teaching we make use of the language of holy writ. Alma said, "I . . . do command you in the language of him who hath commanded me" (Alma 5:16).

The words and the way they are used in the Book of Mormon by the Lord should become our source of understanding and should be used by us in teaching gospel principles.

And at another time, as cited in The Book of Mormon, A Witness and A Warning, p. 70, President Benson said:

King Benjamin caused that his three sons "should be taught in all the language of his fathers" (Mosiah 1:2). They needed to understand and use the language of holy writ. If they didn't know the right words, they wouldn't know the plan (CR, October 1985, p. 48).

Along this same line, the First Presidency gave directions to Seminaries/Institutes and BYU in 1940. This was a sequel to the "Charted Course" which had been issued just two years earlier in 1938. Following is an excerpt from a letter of the First Presidency, 17 February 1940 to Franklin L. West, Commissioner of Education:

Teachers will do well to give up indoctrinating themselves in the sectarianism of the modern "Divinity School Theology." If they do not, they will probably bring themselves to a frame of mind where they will be no longer useful in our system. The most brilliant of them will find enough in the Gospel to tax all their brilliancy, even genius. The heights and depths of the Gospel have yet to be sounded.

The teachers will not teach ethics or philosophy, ancient or modern, pagan or so-called Christian; they will as already stated teach the Gospel and that only, and the Gospel as revealed in these last days.

In their teaching, the teachers will use the verbiage and terminology which have become classic in the Church. They will not use terms and concepts which, though in one sense, are susceptible of being applied to the Church and Church doctrines, yet which, in another sense, are completely misleading.

. . .
The *Gospel* should be spoken of as *the Gospel*, God's revealed truth.

In summarizing the instructions of the First Presidency, Commissioner West wrote to J. Wyley Sessions, Chairman of the Division of Religion at BYU:

In a general way, they said that we should use our own terminology and avoid as far as we can the terminology used by the sectarian churches. It was suggested that the . . . "Department of Sacred Scripture" might be called the "Department of Latter-day Scripture"; that the "Department of Practical Christianity" be called the "Department of Church Organization and Activities."

The foregoing is taken from Brigham Young University, the First Hundred Years, vol. 2, pp. 381-383.

The words of our current living Prophet, and also the words of the First Presidency nearly fifty years ago, remind us of Paul's instruction to the Corinthians, more than 1900 years ago:

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know of the things that are freely given to us of God.

13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:12-14).

It helps to use unmistakable terminology. When talking about the death of the body I often use the term mortuary death, or cemetery death. There is no mistaking what is meant.

It is a struggle to get students to use the language of the scriptures. Even returned missionaries often want to write lengthy explanations (part of which usually contains some incorrect doctrine) instead of using direct words and the terminology of the scriptures.

I find it is important also to make a distinction between spirit and spiritual. It is better to refer to the spirit creation rather than to call it the spiritual creation. Spirit is a better word in this case because it has a more definite and limited meaning. It can only mean the creation of spirits. We say the fall of Adam brought two kinds of death--physical death and spiritual death. If we have used the term "spirit" for the creation, it is easier to explain that spiritual death is a condition, not the actual death of the spirit being--a death as to righteousness; being separated from the presence of God--not the death of the spirit entity itself.

The word "spiritual" can refer to many categories. For example, the condition of man and animals in the Garden of Eden was physical--tangible, solid, real, but not mortal, therefore it is spoken of as a "spiritual" condition. If we use the word "spiritual" to refer to the creation of spirits, we add confusion if we use it again to refer to conditions in the Garden. But if we teach students to speak of the pre-mortal life as a "spirit" creation, we speak in plainer terms.

Likewise the resurrected body can be correctly spoken of as a "spiritual body," even though it is tangible and physical (see D&C 88:26-28). It is necessary for clarity that we make some very clear distinctions in our use of spirit and spiritual.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS TEACHERS

I think we need to understand the Fall and the Atonement in the way that the scriptures teach them, so that we can (1) teach the proper concepts to students with a clear and certain sound, (2) detect false doctrine and incorrect views when expressed by others, and , (3) benefit from the influence it will have on our own perspective, our zeal, and the way in which we proportion our own subject matter.

Nephi said he had great joy in proving what he knew about Christ:

Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ; for, for this end hath the law of Moses been given; and all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him.

And also my soul delighteth in the covenants of the Lord which he hath made to our fathers; yea, my soul delighteth in his grace, and in his justice, and power, and mercy in the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death.

And my soul delighteth in proving unto my people that save Christ should come all men must perish (2 Nephi 11:4-6).

Does it Matter?

Does it matter or will it matter much whether we are clear and precise, and whether or not we cover the salient points of the gospel? We need to do two things: (1) teach the right subject matter, and (2) teach it well, clarifying the right points.

If students don't learn correct doctrinal and historical information when at BYU, most of them may never get it straight or at least not for a long time. Furthermore, I do not want to harbor and accumulate wrong concepts in my own thinking that I will have to unlearn when I enter the spirit world. I want to make those adjustments now, in this life, and learn the very points of the doctrine of Christ from the scriptures, and from the Brethren and gain whatever correct information and view points I can about life here and hereafter.

In dealing with doctrinal topics we can benefit if we examine and compare several reliable sources. The key is to analyze. Frequently there are parts of one source that are sufficiently ambiguous that they could be interpreted in more than one way. The value of corroborating witnesses is that often a second or third source sheds enough light on a concept that it will delimit and define an otherwise ambiguous passage. We use the second or third witnesses to control our interpretation.

I have found it helpful to examine a passage and isolate every separate thought and idea in it. One way is to number every new element or thought. Then compare that with what seems like a parallel passage. It is startling how quickly that process can point up both the differences and the parallels.

VARIOUS DIMENSIONS OF THE ATONEMENT

The atonement of Jesus Christ has elements of love, and of service as well as dealing with the legality of a debt and a payment. It would be fractious to omit any part of these, because the doctrines of the gospel do not have much meaning in abstract theory apart and separate from people. Therefore we must have love for one another and teach the importance of service, and the condescension of God. If it were not for his love and condescension, Jesus would never have made the atonement. I like this statement from Nephi:

He doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; for he loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw all men unto him. Wherefore he commandeth none that they shall not partake of his salvation . . . for he doeth that which is good among the children of men (2 Ne. 26:24, 33).

On the other hand, without the doctrinal foundation, teaching about the atonement could degenerate into ethical and philosophical humanism. The divine element is preserved and kept in focus only by the doctrinal foundation of the great plan of redemption, which existed in the mind of God before the creation of the world, and which was carried out through the creation, the fall

of Adam, and the atonement of Jesus Christ. The plan of salvation is not limited to just the first principles and the temple ceremony. The plan of salvation includes and incorporates the whole transaction from grand premortal council, creation, fall, atonement, as well as all of the ordinances and principles, on through the resurrection, judgment and exaltation.

THE INHERITED EFFECTS OF THE FALL OF ADAM

Let's look at some of the precise things that are said about the effect the fall of Adam has had on mankind. It is necessary to have some idea of the Fall in order to appreciate the atonement. There are several specific places in the scriptures that deal with the fall of Adam (or the fall of man), and these are our best sources. Most of these are in the Book of Mormon, but there are some key passages also in the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price.

I see the chief sources as : 2 Nephi 2; 2 Nephi 9; Mosiah 12-16; Alma 34, Alma 42; Helaman 14; Mormon 9; D&C 29; Moses 5 and 6; and Romans chapter 5. There are of course many other individual passages, but these chapters have impressed me as being the most direct containing the very points of the doctrine. The prophets whose teachings are in these chapters are Lehi, Jacob, Benjamin, Abinadi, Amulek, Alma, Samuel the Lamanite, Moroni, Enoch, Paul, and Joseph Smith. They all teach the same basic doctrine (there is no contradiction), but they do not all emphasize the same particular things. Analyze their words; isolate and number the individual ideas, and you will find that each one clarifies some particular point more clearly than the other writers do. We will examine today only a few of these.

In 2 Nephi chapter 2 Lehi talks about the fall and atonement, from which I have isolated these six things:

1. Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden of Eden because they partook of the forbidden fruit (v. 19).
2. All mankind were "lost" because of the transgression of their parents (v. 21).

3. Without the fall, all things would have remained as they were created (v. 22).
4. Without the fall, Adam and Eve would have had no children (v. 23).
5. The Messiah came to redeem mankind from the fall (v. 26).
6. Because of the atonement of the Messiah mankind is free to act (v. 26).

What Lehi does not say about the fall and atonement in this chapter are the following:

1. He does not define death, and does not use the term "spiritual death."
2. He does not specifically mention physical death as distinct from spiritual death.
3. He does not define what he means by mankind being "lost."
4. He does not define or explain what made the Messiah able to redeem mankind, or how he would accomplish it.
5. He does not use words that refer directly to man's spirit.

We cannot suppose Lehi didn't know of these things; we simply have to be content that Lehi used broad terms, and these details are encompassed in his use of such words as fall, lost, and redemption.

This chapter, 2 Nephi 2, is one of the greatest philosophical statements about good, evil, law, agency, happiness, misery, God, man, and the devil, and is our plainest declaration that Adam and Eve would have had no children without the fall, but in speaking of those things Lehi leaves many of the details undefined.

Lehi's son Jacob, however, supplies some very pointed definitions, in 2 Nephi 9. He uses specific words like death of the body, resurrection, spirit, hell, grace, paradise, spiritual death, and infinite atonement.

Among other things, Jacob specifies the following:

1. An infinite atonement is needed to overcome the fall (v. 7).
2. Without an infinite atonement, there would be no resurrection of the bodies of men (v. 7).

3. Without an infinite atonement, the spirits of all men would become devils, forever miserable. (Not just subject to the devil, but actually become devils.) (v. 8-9).
4. Because of the atonement all mankind will be resurrected, meaning that each person's spirit will be restored to its own physical body again (v. 10-13).
5. After the resurrection of all mankind, all men will be judged of God (v. 15).
6. The Redeemer who dies for mankind is also the Creator. (Jacob says this, but does not dwell on it at length; it is not a major emphasis with him in this chapter.) (v. 5).
7. All of these things, says Jacob, are according to an eternal plan of the Creator (v. 6, 13).

Jacob may not have known any more about the plan of salvation than Lehi did, but he defined some of the points more distinctly. Yet Lehi covers some fundamental things that Jacob does not. We need both chapters.

King Benjamin in Mosiah 3, gives a lengthy statement about the fall and the atonement, citing words which he said he learned from an angel. Benjamin extensively and generously defines and identifies the Redeemer as follows:

1. The Lord God Omnipotent will come to dwell among men in a tabernacle of clay and be the Savior (v. 5-11).
2. Benjamin identifies the Redeemer as Christ, and he uses terms such as Jesus Christ, blood of Christ, Lord Jesus Christ (v. 8, 12, 18).
3. The Redeemer will bleed at every pore (v. 7).
4. He is the Creator (v. 8).
5. His mother will be named Mary (v. 8).
6. He will be crucified (v. 9).
7. He will rise from the dead the third day (v. 10).
8. His blood atones for the fall of Adam (v. 11).

9. Nothing would save man if it were not for the atonement of the Lord's blood (v. 15).
10. His blood redeems little children (v. 16).
11. There is no other way or means of salvation (v. 17).
12. Three times Benjamin mentions those who have fallen by reason of being descendants of Adam (Mosiah 3:11, 16, 19). He uses the words, "fallen by the transgression of Adam"; "as in Adam, or by nature, they fall," and also "the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam." Father Lehi implied this kind of inheritance from Adam, but Jacob and Benjamin are the ones who spell it out.

There are three other strong statements in the Book of Mormon to the effect that mankind inherits the effects of the fall of Adam. Note the expression of the Brother of Jared as he pled with the Lord for help:

Now behold, O Lord, and do not be angry with thy servant because of his weakness before thee . . . because of the fall our natures have become evil continually (Ether 3:2).

And Alma said:

Now we see that Adam did fall by the partaking of the forbidden fruit, according to the word of God; and thus we see, that by his fall all mankind became a lost and fallen people (Alma 12:22).

And from Samuel the Lamanite:

For all mankind, by the fall of Adam . . . are considered as dead both as to things temporal and to things spiritual (Helaman 14:16).

The matter of mankind inheriting the fall of Adam is a fundamental doctrine in the gospel, but to much of traditional Christianity it is a major stumbling block. Since the fourth century Catholic doctrine has held that because children inherit the fall from Adam they are thus born in sin. This is based primarily on Romans 5:12, and 5:19 which read:

12 Wherefore, 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.**

19 For as by one man's disobedience many **were made sinners**, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

These verses were wrongly interpreted by St. Augustine and others to mean that all mankind sinned in Adam, therefore children are born in original sin. This resulted in the development of a doctrine that baptism must be administered to infants since they by inheritance are legally sinners.

Some today, not feeling comfortable with the doctrine of the depravity of children, have rejected the concept of the fall altogether, and so speak glowingly of the inherent goodness of man. Either extreme position does some damage to the scriptures, especially the teachings of the Book of Mormon. The gospel takes a position between the two, not denying either, but showing how the matter is handled by the atonement.

This subject is dealt with by Mormon as follows:

. . . little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the **curse of Adam** is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them (Moroni 8:8).

Note that the fall of Adam or its influence--even a curse--is not denied, but its damning effect on little children is blocked by the intercessory power of the atonement. The curse is real, but the atonement prevents it from occurring. This is the same concept taught in Mosiah 3:16 in which King Benjamin explains the need for the atonement not only for adults, but also for children, because of the fall of Adam.

And even if it were possible that little children could sin they could not be saved; but I say unto you they are blessed; for behold, as in Adam, or by nature, they fall, even so the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins.

And in D&C 93:38:

Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God.

Because of this influence and power of the atonement, we have the Second Article of Faith: "Men will be punished for their own sins and not for Adam's transgression."

These scriptures say that if it were not for the atonement of Christ, all mankind, when we come into this world as infants would be lost, because of the fall of Adam. This is why the idea that calls for infant baptism is so erroneous--it sets aside the atonement of Christ as though it had no power.

Since the Bible is not clear on this very important provision of the atonement, we see the great need that exists for the teachings of the Book of Mormon in order to make known the "very points" of Christ's doctrine in a world that does not understand the work of Jesus Christ.

This subject is also dealt with in JST Matthew 18. The topic under discussion is concerning who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus tells the Twelve they must become as little children, and he places a child in their midst as an object lesson. Jesus then declares that his mission is to save mankind. The King James Version for Matthew 18:11 reads as follows:

For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

The JST adds a most important qualifier:

... and to call sinners to repentance; but these little ones have no need of repentance, and I will save them.

This significant clarification is in harmony with the teachings of the D&C and the Book of Mormon on the power that the atonement has to intercede for children against the transgression of Adam. Such a doctrine is much needed in traditional Christianity.

The correct doctrine is that mankind has inherited the effects of the fall, but not the sin. There is a grand difference between inheriting only the results or effects and not the sin itself. The element of accountability and responsibility for original sin is not required when one only has the effects. Thus, because of the atonement of Christ, babies are born innocent so far as the law of God is concerned, but babies inherit the effects of the fall inasmuch as they are out of the presence of God, and are subject to the physical, mortuary, cemetery death. And all mankind, though innocent at birth, are destined to die, and are unable to prevent death, or to reclaim even one soul

from death after it has occurred. Little children do not die because of any sin of their own--it is a biological inheritance from Adam.

Even Adam himself was not held responsible for his original transgression in the Garden of Eden, yet the results and effects of that sin passed upon him into mortality, to exactly the same extent that each of us has inherited the fall from Adam. Adam, in mortality was in just the same condition as we are in mortality. He was automatically covered by the atonement for the sin which brought the fall, and was held responsible to repent only for the transgressions he may have committed when in mortality. This is the plain teaching of Moses 6:51-54.

51 And [God] called upon our father Adam by his own voice, saying: I am God; I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh.

52 And he also said unto him: If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe **and repent of all thy transgressions**, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men, ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be given you.

53 And our father Adam spake unto the Lord, and said: Why is it that men must repent and be baptized in water? And the Lord said unto Adam: Behold I have forgiven thee thy transgression in the Garden of Eden.

54 Hence came the saying abroad among the people, that the Son of God hath atoned for original guilt, wherein the sins of the parents cannot be answered upon the heads of the children, for they are whole from the foundation of the world (Moses 6:51-54).

Please note that Adam was told he must repent of and be baptized for all transgressions in mortality, but he is already forgiven of the transgression in the Garden of Eden.

WHY THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST?

When the prophet Abinadi comes on the scene (Mosiah 12-16) he teaches the same doctrine as the earlier prophets, but with a little different emphasis and choice of words. The others had said once or twice that the Redeemer is also the Creator, and is the Lord Omnipotent, but Abinadi

hammers at it so emphatically that the reader cannot miss it. Abinadi cites the Ten Commandments which he says God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Mosiah 12:33-13:24) and then says:

1. God himself shall make an atonement for mankind (thus identifying the Savior as the God who gave Moses the commandments) (Mosiah 13:28).
2. Without the atonement which God himself shall make, man must perish (Mosiah 13:28).
3. There cannot anyone be saved without the redemption of God (Mosiah 13:32).
4. Moses prophesied that God would redeem his people (Mosiah 13:33).
5. All the prophets said more or less that God himself should come down and take upon him the form of man (Mosiah 13:34).
6. God himself should come down among men and redeem his people (Mosiah 15:1).
7. And thus God breaketh the bands of death (Mosiah 15:8).
8. After all this emphasis upon God himself being the Redeemer, Abinadi then identifies that Redeemer as Christ (Mosiah 15:21).

Abinadi wasn't the first to identify who Jesus is, but he certainly emphasized the fact that Christ is God more often and with more clarity than the others did. This got him into trouble for King Limhi reflecting on the condition of the people referred to the death of Abinadi and said:

And because he said unto them that Christ was the God, the Father of all things, and said that he should take upon him the image of man, and it should be the image after which man was created in the beginning: or in other words, he said that man was created after the image of God, and that God should come down among the children of men, and take upon himself flesh and blood, and go forth upon the face of the earth--

And now because he said this, they did put him to death (Mosiah 7:27-28).

Still later, the prophet Amulek speaks eloquently about the atonement of Jesus Christ. We will isolate only two items in Alma 34:9 and 10.

1. Amulek says that without an atonement all mankind must unavoidably perish (Alma 34:9). He does not define what "perish" means, but because we have read the words of Jacob in 2 Nephi 9:6-9, we know that "perish" means that the physical body would decay with never a chance for resurrection, and the spirit of each person would become a devil, forever miserable. Not just subject to the devil, but actually become a devil.
2. Next Amulek defines the atonement of Christ in a most remarkable manner: "It is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl, for it shall not be a human sacrifice, but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice" (Alma 34:10).

My guess is, that most of our people, on first try, would think of Jesus as a human sacrifice, or as the sacrifice of a man as contrasted to animals. But Amulek's words hold us to one single explanation. A human sacrifice would not have been adequate, and it would not have been infinite. Redemption required the sacrifice of a God.

We have come a long way in the "points of doctrine" since we started with 2 Nephi 2 eight pages ago. The writings of the prophets after Lehi and Nephi do not contradict anything said earlier, but they clarify, focus, and control our understanding and interpretation of what we read.

In the Book of Mormon Christ is God. He is not simply a mortal, a great teacher, a Friend of Mankind. He is God. I have been surprised that the Book of Mormon never defines Jesus as the firstborn spirit, man's Elder Brother. In the Book of Mormon, he isn't so much man's brother, he is man's God.

Why Jesus Must Be the Only Begotten of the Father in the Flesh

Since the fall of Adam has such a universal grasp on all mankind, with no exceptions, and since the effects of the fall are inherited and passed on to mankind from parents to children biologically in the process of birth into mortality, the Redeemer must be one who is capable of sinning, capable of dying both the spiritual death and the physical death, but One also who has power over death.

The Savior has to be in the unique condition of having inherited the effects of the fall like we have, without being dominated by it as we are.

If Jesus were completely mortal, he would have been dominated by both the physical and spiritual death and could not have brought about a physical resurrection or spiritual redemption for himself or anyone else.

Jesus said: "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (John 5:26).

And also:

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father (John 10:17-18).

I believe that this is being taught in Helaman 5:11: "He hath power given unto him from the Father to redeem them from their sins" I see this "power" as a biological inheritance from the Father, just as there was a biological inheritance from Adam. Jesus had them both. We have biological inheritance only from Adam.

This condition marks a very essential difference between Jesus and all other human beings. He was not a human sacrifice, he was the sacrifice of a God. If Jesus had been subject to death as we are, then in dying all he gave up was time, for eventually he would have died anyway. But the scriptures say he gave his life.

I think we have generally not taught clearly and impressively enough what power the fall of Adam has on mankind collectively and individually. If we sensed that sufficiently, we would cherish the atonement of Jesus Christ more deeply, both because of what he did for us, and also what it cost him to rescue us not only from our own sins, but to make a payment to satisfy the demands of a broken law in order that both mercy and justice can be satisfied. The Book of Mormon makes it clear, but if we get too involved in teaching the wars, the geography, and the culture, we might

cause the students to miss the main doctrinal message. A thing does not have to be evil to be wrong--it just has to divert our attention toward less important things.

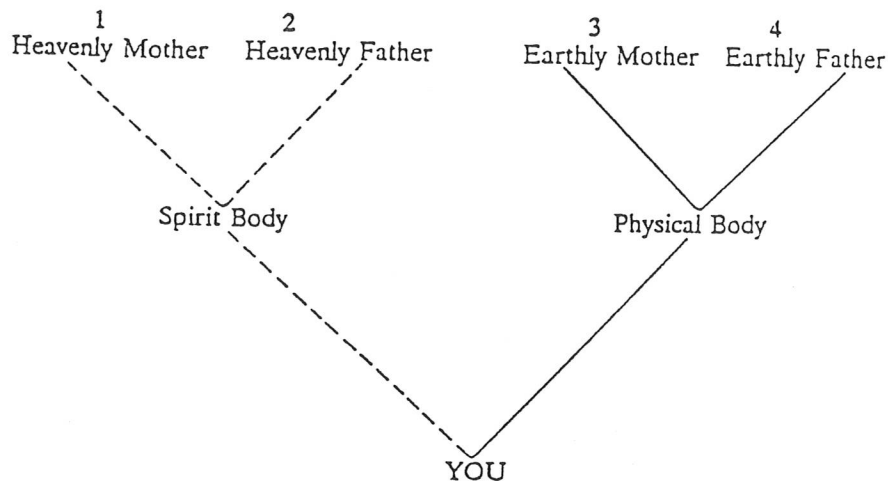
I see it as a "very point of doctrine" that we accept Jesus Christ as the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh, who would not have had to die physically or spiritually except as he willed to do so as part of the atoning sacrifice. He died a physical death on the cross, and also died a "spiritual death" in the Garden of Gethsemane (as well as on the cross) when he took upon himself the sins of all mankind. Note these words of President Brigham Young:

Why Jesus Sweat Blood

The greater the vision, the greater the display of the power of the enemy. And when such individuals are off their guard they are left to themselves, as Jesus was. For this express purpose the Father withdrew His spirit from His Son, at the time he was to be crucified. Jesus had been with his Father, talked with Him, dwelt in His bosom, and knew all about heaven, about making the earth, about the transgression of man, and what would redeem the people, and that he was the character who was to redeem the sons of earth, and the earth itself from all sin that had come upon it. The light, knowledge, power, and glory with which he was clothed were far above, or exceeded that of all others who had been upon the earth after the fall, consequently, at the very moment, at the hour when the crisis came for him to offer up his life, the Father withdrew Himself, withdrew His Spirit, and cast a veil over him. That is what made him sweat blood. If he had had the power of God upon him, he would not have sweat blood; but all was withdrawn from him, and a veil was cast over him, and he then plead with the Father not to forsake him. "No," says the Father, "You must have your trials, as well as others" (JD 3:205-206).

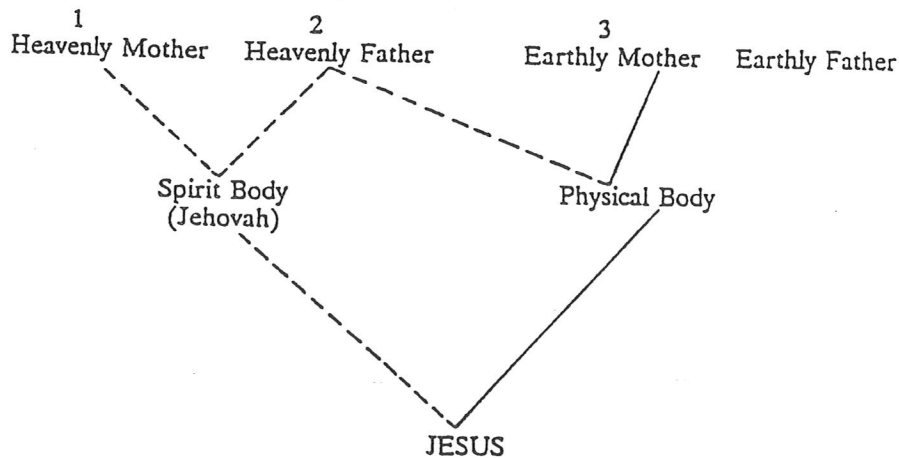
CHART SHOWING THE PARENTAGE OF MORTAL MAN AS COMPARED TO JESUS

Mortal Man:



There are four persons immediately involved in every mortal person's parentage.

Jesus:



There are three persons immediately involved in Jesus' parentage. The Father of his spirit body was also the Father of his physical body.

Because we are the spirit children of heavenly parents, we each have the spark of divinity within us. Consider the divinity of Jesus Christ not only for his spirit, but for his physical body. Think of what his status as Only Begotten in the flesh (D&C 93:11) does for Jesus genetically. Because of this, Jesus had power over death that none of us has. He had life in himself (John 5:26; 10:18; Hel. 5:11).

We have the scripture to teach us what would have become of mankind if there were no Christ--we (our spirits) would all have become devils, while our bodily elements would have forever returned to the earth with no hope of a resurrection. Jacob makes this clear. But what would have become of Jesus if having come to earth he had failed to go through with the atonement? The answer is equally clear. He would have become a son of perdition, the same as all the rest of mankind. There was a great deal resting on, depending upon, and hanging in the balance with the birth, life, suffering in Gethsemane, death on the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. President Brigham Young has said: "Had he [Jesus] refused to obey his Father, he would have become a son of perdition" (JD 10:324). Why is this so? Because an eternal law had been broken creating a debt no mortal could pay. Had Jesus sinned he would have lost his capacity to mend a broken eternal law. He and all mankind would have been left without a remedy.

AS IN ADAM ALL DIE, EVEN SO IN CHRIST SHALL ALL BE MADE ALIVE

I believe that our students do not understand the meaning of Paul's words, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). Most of them think it only pertains to the death of the body and the resurrection of the body. In truth, Paul's statement covers both deaths. As in Adam all die a physical and a spiritual death, so in Christ shall all be made alive, that is, redeemed from both the cemetery death and the spiritual death. The atonement is as broad as the fall.

Because of Adam, all mankind, with no exceptions, die two deaths, automatically, simply by being of the family of Adam. So in like manner, all mankind, with no exceptions, will be redeemed from those same two deaths. That is, every human being will be resurrected from the dead and every human being will be restored to the presence of God. All that was lost in the fall, will be restored by the atonement. I have found that our students do not understand that. There is a prevailing idea that the resurrection is free, but that only those who repent and obey the gospel will

ever return to the presence of God. We seemed to have missed a very essential point and fundamental concept of the atonement, and that is, that Jesus Christ has redeemed all mankind from all of the consequences of the fall of Adam

The scriptures teach that every person, saint or sinner, wicked or righteous, will return to the presence of God after the resurrection. It may be only a temporary reunion in his presence, but justice requires that all that was lost in Adam be restored in Jesus Christ. Every person will return to God's presence, behold his face, and be judged for his own works. Then, those who have obeyed the gospel can stay in his presence, all others will have to be shut out of his presence a second time, and thus die what is called a "second spiritual death."

See how clearly this is taught by Samuel the Lamanite:

15 For behold, he surely must die that salvation may come; yea, it behooveth him and becometh expedient that he dieth, to bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, that thereby men may be brought into the presence of the Lord.

16 Yea, behold, this death bringeth to pass the resurrection, and redeemeth all mankind from the first death--that spiritual death; for all mankind, by the fall of Adam being cut off from the presence of the Lord, are considered as dead, both as to things temporal and to things spiritual.

17 But behold, the resurrection of Christ redeemeth mankind, yea, even all mankind, and bringeth them back into the presence of the Lord.

18 Yea, and it bringeth to pass the condition of repentance, that whosoever repenteth the same is not hewn down and cast into the fire; and there cometh upon them again a spiritual death, yea, a second death, for they are cut off again as to things pertaining to righteousness (Helaman 14:15-18).

And by Moroni:

12 Behold, he created Adam, and by Adam came the fall of man. And because of the fall of man came Jesus Christ, even the Father and the Son; and because of Jesus Christ came the redemption of man.

13 And because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, they are brought back into the presence of the Lord; yea, this is wherein all men are redeemed, because the death of Christ bringeth to pass the resurrection, which bringeth to pass a redemption from an endless sleep, for which sleep all men shall be awakened by the power of God when the trump shall sound; and they shall come forth, both small and great, and all

shall stand before his bar, being redeemed and loosed from this eternal band of death, which death is a temporal death.

14 And then cometh the judgment of the Holy One upon them; and then cometh the time that he that is filthy shall be filthy still; and he that is righteous shall be righteous still; he that is happy shall be happy still; and he that is unhappy shall be unhappy still (Mormon 9:12-14).

These passages also give an insight to Jacob's words:

Wo unto all those who die in their sins; for they shall return to God, and behold his face, and remain in their sins (2 Nephi 9:38).

My repeated experience with students convinces me that we have not taught clearly this concept and doctrine that both Samuel and Moroni taught. And to the extent that we have not taught it, we have neglected a very important aspect of the Savior's atonement.

It seems almost universal among returned missionaries that they believe the resurrection is free because of Christ, but they have not realized that Jesus redeemed all mankind from the spiritual death also. We seem to have just left that part out.

President Joseph Fielding Smith has written on this topic, and in so doing he quoted what Elder Orson Pratt had said. Hence, this is a testimony from both of them:

Christ's sacrifice and death did two things for us: it brought unto us *unconditional salvation* and *conditional salvation*. Sometimes we refer to these as *general salvation* and *individual salvation*. I am going to read what Orson Pratt said in relation to this. It is one of the clearest statements I know about. It is very concise and well thought out.

"But universal redemption from the effects of *original sin*, has nothing to do with redemption from our *personal sins*; for the original sin of Adam and the personal sins of his children, are two different things.

"The children of Adam had no agency in the transgression of their first parents, and therefore, they are not required to exercise any agency in their redemption from its penalty. They are redeemed from it without faith, repentance, baptism, or any other act, either of the mind or body."

"*Conditional redemption* is also universal in its nature; it is offered to all but not received by all; it is a universal gift, though not universally accepted; its benefits can be obtained only through faith, repentance, baptism, the laying on of hands, and obedience to all other requirements of the gospel.

"*Unconditional redemption* is a gift forced upon mankind which they cannot reject, though they were disposed. Not so with conditional redemption; it can be received or rejected according to the will of the creature.

"Redemption from the original sin is without faith or works; redemption from our own sins is given through faith and works. *Both are the gifts of free grace*; but while one is a gift *forced* upon us unconditionally, the other is a gift merely *offered* to us conditionally. The redemption of the one is *compulsory*; the reception of the other is *voluntary*. Man cannot, by any possible act, prevent his redemption from the fall; but he can utterly refuse and prevent his redemption from the penalty of his own sins" (Doctrines of Salvation, 2:9-10; Elder Pratt is quoted from the Millennial Star, 12:69).

In a class, after we have read and discussed 2 Nephi chapters 2 and 9, I frequently quote Paul's statement "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," and ask: What death did Adam bring? Students seem to have no difficulty getting the idea that Adam brought two deaths--physical and spiritual, meaning death of the body and separation from the presence of God. Then I ask, "What did the atonement of Jesus bring?" They readily respond that it brought the resurrection from the grave, but they seem to have trouble getting the idea that Jesus also redeemed all mankind from the spiritual death, and that every one of us is going to be in the presence of God again, if only for the judgment. Most of them respond by saying that the atonement makes it possible for us to work out our salvation, by faith, repentance, and so forth. They leave part of Christ's redemption out of the discussion, and slide right past that, and seem to feel that no one is going to return to God's presence except the righteous. While that is true as far as permanently being in the presence of the Lord, I do not think we are justified in leaving out part of the redemption process. This is one of the "very points of doctrine" taught in the Book of Mormon, that a person ought to know.

I have frequently discussed these things in class and rehearsed the whole matter, and read and discussed, and asked questions. On the first exam about one-fourth of them get it right. We discuss it again, and on the next exam about one-half will remember. After more discussion, about three-fourths get it complete on the final. But there are still some who at the end of the semester have still not learned to use the right words, the Book of Mormon words, to explain the extent of the fall and the extent of the atonement.

WAS THERE AN ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATE PLAN OR AN ALTERNATE SAVIOR?

Whether there was an alternate plan or alternate Savior may seem like an unimportant or even an unnecessary question, but it has some strong implications. Judging from the general lifestyle of mankind, or even of churchkind, many people must feel that either salvation isn't worth struggling for, or else there is more than one way to get it. The real question is this: Is the gospel of Christ final, or is it slightly optional? Will the billions of people who have lived on the earth without a knowledge of Christ have to come to a knowledge of the very points of his doctrine before they can be saved? Is the gospel of Christ the Only Way, or just the best way--the quickest way? Is it one of several possible ways that could have been employed, or is it the only way? Let us remember that the creation of the world and the fall of Adam are part of the divine plan. Were there alternate ways by which man could become mortal and the system that was used on this earth simply one of them? Or is the gospel, from creation, to fall, to atonement, to redemption, to exaltation the only absolute and workable way?

What if Jesus had not come, or had come to earth and was not obedient to the end and had not made the atonement? Was there then an alternate plan, another savior, a back-up man?

Several years ago I was discussing this topic with a group of teachers, and I noted that they were strongly of the opinion that had Jesus failed, there was another way. They acknowledged the other way might have been harder, without him, but that man could eventually save himself without Jesus, had Jesus failed. Hence, although I don't think any of us had at that time searched out the logical extension of our thoughts, they were in effect saying that Jesus Christ was a convenience, but not an ultimate necessity. I countered by quoting Acts 4:12, where Peter said: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Their retort was that Peter said this after the atonement and resurrection of Christ

were accomplished facts, and therefore there is now no other way, but had Jesus failed to make the atonement, there would have to be an alternate way.

I was not as well acquainted then with the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses as I am now, and I had not thought out this subject, and so, while I protested their conclusion, I could not, in the moment of the encounter, think of a scriptural rebuttal. I was certain they were wrong, but I lacked immediate ammunition to refute them. I would now call your attention to the following items from the scripture.

The earliest chronological reference saying that there is no other name for salvation is Moses 6:52, wherein Enoch recounts a conversation between the Lord and Father Adam:

You must be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, . . . which is Jesus Christ, the only name which **shall** be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men.

Next we have 2 Nephi 25:20:

There is none other name given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ, whereby man can be saved.

Then 2 Nephi 31:21:

There is none other name given under heaven. This is the way; and there is none other way.

But the very clearest is King Benjamin, quoting the words of an angel from heaven, in Mosiah 3:17:

There **shall** be no other name nor any other way nor means, whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ.

Later King Benjamin gives some additional particulars:

This is the means whereby salvation cometh. And there is none other salvation save this which hath been spoken of; neither are there any conditions whereby man can be saved except the conditions which I have told you (Mosiah 4:8).

You will all recognize the value of these passages being spoken before the atonement had taken place. This gives them an additional force and focus than if they had been spoken afterwards. In my estimation, these are some of the "very points of doctrine" that are clarified in

the Book of Mormon and other latter-day scripture, if we just believe the scriptures mean what they say.

There are similar statements in Mosiah 5:8; Alma 38:9; and Helaman 5:9, but these passages do not add any new perspectives or details that the earlier ones which we have read did not also contain.

When Jesus came among the Nephites he was asked what the name of the church should be. His answer that the church should have his name and not the name of anyone else certifies that there is only one name for salvation (3 Nephi 27).

The name of Jesus Christ being the only name for salvation is also specified in D&C 18:23 and 109:4. All of this is in harmony with and gives substance to Jesus' words to Philip: "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6).

In my opinion, the kind of faith necessary for salvation, the kind of faith spoken of in the Lectures on Faith cannot be achieved if one views Jesus Christ and his excruciating atonement, bleeding at every pore, as simply an act of major convenience. As I read the Book of Mormon I get the message that the effects of the fall on mankind are so severe and dominating, coupled with our own sins, that unless we are redeemed by One more powerful than all mankind combined, we will not be redeemed at all. The power of self-redemption is not in fallen man. I believe that saving faith requires that a person be completely convinced that he is entirely dependent upon Jesus Christ and him only for every shred of salvation. Without him all is lost. The slightest reservation about the absolute necessity of Christ's atonement is injurious to one's spiritual health, and one's perfect faith and knowledge. I see no compromise on this point. Our relation to Christ is crucial, not casual. It is a necessity, not an option.

Sacred Hymns Reflect the Fall and Atonement

Our hymns reflect the doctrine of the fall and the atonement in both the legal and the service dimensions. Perhaps it would be well to call students' attention to this and thus enrich and reinforce our instruction on these subjects. For example, we find the following in the LDS Hymnbook (copyright 1985):

Behold the Great Redeemer die, a broken law to satisfy (#191).

For us the blood of Christ was shed, for us on Calvary's cross he bled, and thus dispelled the awful gloom, that else were this creation's doom (#173).

How infinite that wisdom, the plan of holiness, that made salvation perfect, and veiled the Lord in flesh, to walk upon his footstool, and be like man, almost, in his exalted station, and die, or all was lost (#175).

With faith in his atoning blood, our only access unto God; . . . a world to purchase and to save, and seal a triumph o'er the grave (#186).

He died in holy innocence, a broken law to recompense. . . . This sacrament doth represent His blood and body for me spent (#187).

He shed a thousand drops for you, a thousand drops of precious blood (#192).

His precious blood he freely spilt, his life he freely gave, a sinless sacrifice for guilt, a dying world to save. How great, how glorious, how complete, Redemption's grand design, where justice, love, and mercy meet in harmony divine(#195).

I marvel that he would descend from his throne divine, to rescue a soul so rebellious and proud as mine. . . . I think of his hands pierced and bleeding to pay the debt! Such mercy, such love, and devotion can I forget (#193)?

I believe in Christ, he ransoms me. From Satan's power he sets me free (#134).

Conclusion

We are only beginning to get acquainted with the laws that govern the salvation of man. The depths of his mercy is all but boundless. We are edified by these experienced words of President J. Reuben Clark, Jr.:

I believe that our Heavenly Father wants to save everyone of his children. I do not think he intends to shut any of us off because of some slight transgression. Some slight failure to observe some rule or regulation. There are the great elementals, of course, that we ought to observe but he is not going to be captious about the lesser things. I believe that his juridicial concept of his dealing with his children can be expressed in this way. In his justice and mercy he will give us the maximum reward for our acts and give us all that he can give. And in the reverse I believe that he will impose upon us the minimum penalty which it is possible for him to impose (Conference Report, 3 October 1953, p. 84).

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

RJM