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RESTORATION, REDEMPTION,
AND RESURRECTION: THREE R'S
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We have long heard of the “three R’s” of elementary education—reading, ’riting, and ’rithmetic. Similarly, a set of interrelated doctrines might be referred to as the three R’s of the Book of Mormon—restoration, redemption, and resurrection. In fact, we might add a fourth R, repentance, which is essential for the first two to function.

Material for this chapter is drawn primarily from two experiences recorded in the book of Alma. First, Alma and Amulek confronted a group of antagonistic lawyers in the wicked city of Ammonihah. Amulek’s response to Zeezrom’s hostile questioning is recorded in chapter 11. Then, as Alma the Younger neared the end of his life, he took time to give instructions to his three sons. Notice how he spent the most time with, and gave particularly profound teachings to, his wayward son Corianton—recorded in chapters 39–42. Apparently Alma agreed with the principle President Boyd K. Packer later enunciated—that “the study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior.”¹

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THE DOCTRINE OF RESTORATION

The doctrine of restoration found in the book of Alma is closely related to the specifically announced mission of the Book of Mormon—“the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ” (title page). It is His Atonement that makes restoration possible. When Latter-day Saints hear the term *restoration*, they typically think of the renewed revelation of the gospel and reestablishment of the Church on earth following an era of apostasy. However, *restoration* as taught in the Book of Mormon refers to different concepts.

To fully understand what restoration involves, we must realize that the scriptures speak of two kinds of death. Spiritual death, an alienation from God, is caused by sin. Physical or temporal death is the separation of the body from the spirit, introduced into the world by Adam’s transgression. We shall see how restoration overcomes both spiritual death, through the process of redemption, and physical death, through resurrection. This chapter will also show how repentance is the key to achieving the maximum blessings through both redemption and resurrection.

THE GIFT OF REDEMPTION

Zeezrom, a leader among the antagonistic lawyers in Ammonihah, asked a series of questions calculated to entrap Amulek. An obviously loaded question was, “Shall [God] save his people *in* their sins?” Amulek explained that this would be impossible because “no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of heaven” (Alma 11:34, 37; emphasis added). He later explained, “That same spirit [of the Lord or of the devil] which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life . . . will have power to possess your body in that eternal world” (Alma 34:34). Furthermore, Alma emphasized to Corianton that the principle of restoration definitely would not place persons who are carnal, evil, or devilish in a state opposite to their nature (see Alma 41:11–13). This agrees with the affirmation made by Jacob centuries earlier that following the Resurrection and Judgment, “they who are righteous shall be righteous still, and they who are filthy shall be filthy still” (2 Nephi 9:16).

A system of divine law explains why these teachings are true. Where

a law is given, we have the choice to obey or disobey, to be righteous or wicked. An oft-quoted latter-day revelation affirms that we can obtain a blessing only “by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:21). The opposite consequence, resulting from disobedience, is not mentioned as often. Nevertheless, Alma warned his disobedient son that “there is a law given and a punishment affixed” and that “the law inflicteth the punishment” on those who do not obey (Alma 42:22). Blessings bring happiness or joy, while punishments create sorrow or pain. Hence, Alma’s frequently cited affirmation is true—that “wickedness never was [nor can produce] happiness” (Alma 41:10). The following chart illustrates the effects of either obeying or disobeying God’s laws.

Thus, according to the principle of justice, punishment is the inevitable consequence of breaking the law. According to the companion principle of mercy, however, another person may pay the penalties

GOD’S LAWS

OBEY	DISOBEY
Righteousness	Wickedness
Blessings	Punishment
Happiness, joy	Sorrow, pain
Liberty	Captivity
Eternal life	Second death
Exaltation	Damnation

resulting from our sins if he is willing and able. Of course, Jesus Christ is that person. Not only God the Father loved the world, but the Son also loved us enough that He was willing to take upon Himself the punishments of all mankind (compare John 3:16 with D&C 34:3). He was able to do so for at least two reasons. His sinlessness gave Him power over spiritual death. Notice how He mentions this as He is pleading our cause: “Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased” (D&C 45:4). Also, because He was born

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of an immortal Father, He had power over physical death. Following His statement about “other sheep,” Jesus added the following: “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” (John 10:17–18). Thus, He was completely qualified to redeem us from both kinds of death.

The Bible Dictionary describes *redemption* as “the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ and our deliverance from sin” (Bible Dictionary, “Redemption,” 760). The biblical concept translated as *redemption* refers to the practice of purchasing a slave in order to free him from slavery. In this sense, Christ has purchased us through His atoning blood and frees us from our bondage to sin (see 1 Peter 1:18–19). Another definition of redemption might be “to repurchase something previously possessed and subsequently lost. . . . Redemption is thus God’s way of reclaiming his children from the fall of man by sacrificing Christ’s redeeming blood as reparation for their repossession.”²²

There are two important aspects of redemption. First, it unconditionally frees us from the binding or limiting consequences of the Fall. Second, it provides the means by which we can overcome the penalties from our own sins. Speaking of the Fall, Lehi declared: “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.” Lehi then testified that the Messiah would redeem us from the Fall and added, “Because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever. . . . 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 and power of the devil” (2 Nephi 2:25–27).

Because we are free to choose, redemption from the effects of our own sins must come with conditions attached. Alma explained: “And now, there was no means to reclaim men from this fallen state, which man had brought upon himself because of his own disobedience; therefore, according to justice, the plan of redemption could not be brought about, only on conditions of repentance of men in this probationary state, yea, this preparatory state; for except it were for these conditions, mercy could not take effect except it should destroy the work of justice.

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Now the work of justice could not be destroyed; if so, God would cease to be God” (Alma 42:12–13).

Alma then explained that because “all mankind were fallen,” they were “in the grasp of justice,” which “consigned them forever to be cut off from [God’s] presence.” He therefore concluded that the Atonement was necessary “to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also” (Alma 42:14–15). Still, Alma felt the need to ask his wayward son if mercy could rob justice. “Nay; not one whit,” he responded emphatically to his own question (Alma 42:25).

Amulek had similarly testified that the Atonement would “bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance. And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice” (Alma 34:15–16).

In his response to Zeezrom, Amulek had insisted that Christ would “come into the world to redeem his people” and to “take upon him the transgressions of those who believe on his name; and these are they that shall have eternal life, and salvation cometh to none else.” Because we are free to choose whether we will obey God’s commandments, “the wicked remain as though there had been no redemption made, except it be the loosing of the bands of death; for behold, the day cometh that all shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged according to their works.” Amulek reminded us that on that occasion we would “have a bright recollection of all our guilt” (Alma 11:40–43). In this same passage, Amulek clearly testified that Christ’s Atonement would also bring to pass the resurrection of our physical bodies.

THE REMARKABLE RESURRECTION

Physical death is overcome specifically through the wonderful blessing of the Resurrection. The Bible bears witness of this promise. Ezekiel’s vision of the “dry bones” that would live again suggests a very literal physical resurrection (see Ezekiel 37:1–14). The New Testament witnesses that Jesus was physically resurrected. He ate fish and honey in the presence of His disciples; as the Apostles handled His resurrected

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body, they could tell it was actually composed of “flesh and bones” (see Luke 24:36–43). In his great chapter on the Resurrection, the Apostle Paul taught: that which was “sown a natural body” will be “raised a spiritual body” (I Corinthians 15:44).

The Book of Mormon’s teachings are much clearer concerning the precise nature of the Resurrection. In his response to Zeezrom’s probing questions, Alma’s missionary companion Amulek testified: “The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time. . . . And even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame.” He explained that “this mortal body is raised to an immortal body, that is from death, even from the first death unto life, that they can die no more; their spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can no more see corruption” (Alma 11:43–45). Later, Alma bore the same testimony in almost identical language as he taught his son Corianton (see Alma 40:23).

Elder Orson Pratt pointed out, tongue in cheek, how taking these teachings too literally may result in strange conclusions:

We are in the habit of taking knives or razors and paring our nails every little while, so much so that we can safely say that in the course of a year we cut off or pare from our fingers and toes, as the case may be, perhaps an inch of nail, at this rate, a man who lives to be seventy-two years of age would pare off seventy-two inches of nail, which would be six feet. Now can we suppose than when a man rises from the dead that he will come forth with nails six feet long? (laughter.) I cannot conceive any such thing. . . . Then again, we are in the habit of having our hair shingled. . . . In the course of a year perhaps four or five inches of hair may be cut from the head and cast away. Now, in seventy-two years, if a man did not lose his hair altogether, he would perhaps cut off something like twenty-four feet of hair and beard. Can we suppose that in the resurrection we shall come forth with our hair and beard a rod long? I do not look for any such thing. . . . I look for a sufficient quantity of the

material once existing in the hair and beard to be restored to make one appear comely.³

The Book of Mormon provides another testimony of the Resurrection in an interesting and most significant way. It records that when the Savior appeared to the people gathered at the temple in ancient Bountiful, He invited them all to come forth “that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world” (3 Nephi 11:14). Because there were 2,500 present and because they came forth “one by one” (see 3 Nephi 11:15; 17:25), this process must have taken hours, even assuming that each person had only a few seconds with the Lord. Simply seeing Him was not enough to prove the Resurrection because a spirit can look like a tangible body (see Ether 3:6–16) and a body of flesh and bone can be believed to be a spirit (see Luke 24:36–39). The Master wanted the people to know without any doubt that even though He had been “slain,” He now possessed a resurrected body they could actually feel. Thus, these 2,500 witnesses make the Book of Mormon’s testimony of the Resurrection certain and convincing.

President Joseph F. Smith provided an interesting perspective of the process of restoration as it applies to the Resurrection: “The body will come forth as it is laid to rest, for there is no growth or development in the grave. As it is laid down, so will it arise, and changes to perfection will come by the law of restitution.” Specifically he taught that “every organ, every limb that has been maimed, every deformity caused by accident or in any other way, will be restored and put right. . . . Not that a person will always be marred by scars, wounds, deformities, defects or infirmities,” he clarified, “for these will be removed in their course, in their proper time, according to the merciful providence of God. Deformity will be removed; defects will be eliminated, and men and women shall attain to the perfection of their spirits.”⁴

Concerning those who die in childhood, President Smith explained, “We know our children will not be compelled to remain as a child in stature always,” adding, “for it was revealed from God, the fountain of truth, through Joseph Smith the prophet, in this dispensation, that in

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the resurrection of the dead the child that was buried in its infancy will come up in the form of the child that it was when it was laid down; then it will begin to develop. From the day of the resurrection, the body will develop until it reaches the full measure of the stature of its spirit, whether it be male or female.”⁵

Even though our resurrected bodies will be physically perfect, they will be adapted to the kingdom we qualify to inherit, although the scriptures do not specify the exact nature of these adaptations. Paul taught that there would be “celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial, and bodies telestial” (Joseph Smith Translation, 1 Corinthians 15:40). The great latter-day revelation known as the Olive Leaf taught that our bodies will be “quickened” by the glory we are worthy to receive and that we must live the celestial law if we hope to inherit that kingdom. The Lord then made the intriguing observation that those who will enter lesser glories will qualify for that which they were “*willing* to receive, because they were not *willing* to enjoy that which they might have received” (D&C 88:32; emphasis added).

What, then, does it mean to live the celestial law? A clue may be found in Christ’s teachings to the Nephites, which paralleled His well-known Sermon on the Mount. While it had been taught “thou shalt not kill,” He specified that “whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of [God’s] judgment” (3 Nephi 12:21–22). Similarly, the prevailing standard was “thou shalt not commit adultery,” but He taught that “whosoever looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery already in his heart” (3 Nephi 12:27–28). Since “honorable men” who will inherit the terrestrial glory (D&C 76:75) do not kill or commit adultery, Christ’s prohibition of anger and lustful thoughts suggest a higher, perhaps celestial, standard. We might similarly ask ourselves what is involved in truly being celestial parents, Church workers, and so forth. Even though the Resurrection is a gift guaranteed to all through the Atonement of Christ, we need to repent if we are not living up to the standards required for obtaining a celestial body.

REPENTANCE, THE KEY

We have seen that the Atonement of Christ redeems us unconditionally from the effects of Adam’s Fall. All will be resurrected. All will

be redeemed from the consequences of Adam's transgression. But to be redeemed from our own sins, we must repent because mercy cannot rob justice. Likewise, to receive the kind of resurrected body we want, we must repent and live according to the celestial law. Hence, repentance is the key to our receiving the greatest blessings of both redemption and resurrection. It is significant that each time Alma or Amulek spoke about every part of the body being restored to its perfect frame and to the spirit in the Resurrection, they also reminded us that we will be returned to the presence of God to be judged. They consistently linked the Resurrection and Judgment to the promised restoration (see, for example, Alma 11:40–45; 40:21–26; 41:2–6; 42:2–4; 42:23).

Because personal worthiness is the key to fully realizing the blessings of both redemption and resurrection, repentance could well be regarded as a fourth R of the Book of Mormon. The thrust of the teachings of both Alma and Amulek was that we must do something positive to escape the bondage of sin and qualify for the glorious restoration. For example, after Alma had warned Corianton that those who are carnal and sinful cannot be restored to a condition of happiness, he pointedly counseled: "Therefore, my son, see that you are merciful unto your brethren; deal justly, judge righteously, and do good continually; and if ye do all these things then shall ye receive your reward" (Alma 41:14). Amulek emphatically declared that "this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God"; he pleaded, "I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end" (Alma 34:32–33). Notice that this is the same passage where he taught that we will be influenced by the same spirit in eternity we have chosen to follow now (v. 34).

The scriptures clearly set forth the benefits of repentance. Isaiah testified that even though our "sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). Alma gratefully witnessed that when he recalled his own father's teachings about Jesus Christ and humbly turned to the Savior for help, "I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more," but rather, "my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!" He testified that exquisitely bitter pain had been replaced by exquisitely sweet joy (Alma 36:19–21). In our own day, the Lord has promised, "He that repents and

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does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven” (D&C 1:32). And again, “He who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more” (D&C 58:42).

The teachings of Amulek and Alma about the principle of restoration had a positive impact. The Book of Mormon indicates that Zeezrom the lawyer was converted, healed, and then baptized. He immediately began sharing with others what he had been taught (see Alma 15:6–12). He was also listed among those whom Alma took with him to preach to the Zoramites (see Alma 31:5–6). At the conclusion of his counsel to Corianton, Alma exhorted him: “And now, O my son, ye are called of God to preach the word unto this people . . . that thou mayest bring souls unto repentance” (Alma 42:31). Mormon’s abridgment continues: “And now it came to pass that the sons of Alma [not excluding Corianton] did go forth among the people, to declare the word unto them” (Alma 43:1). Two decades later, Corianton specifically was identified as assisting with the migration into the land northward (see Alma 63:10). I hope that the Book of Mormon’s teachings about restoration, redemption, resurrection, and repentance will have an equally salutary impact on the lives of Saints in the latter days.

NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer, “Little Children,” *Ensign*, November 1986, 17; see also Boyd K. Packer, “Washed Clean,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 9; Boyd K. Packer, “Do Not Fear,” *Ensign*, May 2004, 79.
2. Dennis L. Largey, ed., *Book of Mormon Reference Companion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 673, s.v. “redemption.”
3. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86), 16:356.
4. Joseph F. Smith, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, 1998), 91–92.
5. Smith, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*, 130.