

Redemption's Grand Design for Both the Living and the Dead

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Redemption is a golden thread running through the tapestry of scripture. If we follow it back, we find its origins in the ancient world. Today we often use the terms *save* and *redeem* interchangeably, and understandably so, because they both testify of Christ's role as Savior and Redeemer. But when we look more closely at the terms themselves and their Old Testament background, we find that redemption is a subset of salvation. Salvation can imply help and deliverance through any means. Redemption, however, is a particular kind of salvation.¹ It specifically means deliverance from bondage through the payment of a ransom price.² Redemption emphasizes both captivity and payment—that a person would remain in bondage or captivity without the intervention of a redeemer to provide a ransom. In the ancient Near East, people became slaves or were in bondage by selling themselves because of debt or by becoming prisoners of war. It was a widespread practice to be redeemed from captivity through the payment of a ransom price.

This ancient meaning of *redemption* becomes even more illuminating from a gospel perspective with the unique practice of redemption in Israel. While the ancient Israelites shared the general Semitic root term for "redeem" (*pādāh*) with their neighbors, they had another term for "redeem" (*gā'al*) that was unique to them. In Israelite practice, the *gō'ēl*, or "kinsman-redeemer,"

was a family member, specifically the oldest male member in an extended family.³ This background enlivens the description of the Lord as the Redeemer of Israel. Because of the covenants we make, he becomes our collective Father, seeking to rescue us and buy us out of bondage.

In the Old Testament world, covenants with the Lord were not sterile business formalities but adoptions.⁴ Entering into a covenant was not making a contract; it was becoming part of a family and often involved receiving a new name.⁵ This practice can be seen both in individuals receiving new names and also in taking on the Lord's name and becoming his: "O Israel, fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine" (Isaiah 43:1).

The golden thread of redemption is woven throughout the Doctrine and Covenants, and seen in this light, the deeper significance of *Redeemer* and *redemption* comes to life. First, the Saints are clearly understood as covenant Israel, the Lord's adopted people. The Lord speaks to them as he did to his ancient covenant people: "I am the Lord your God, even the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob. I am he who led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; and my arm is stretched out in the last days, to save my people Israel" (Doctrine and Covenants 136:21–22). The understanding that the Lord redeemed the children of Israel *because of* the covenants is a central gospel theme (see Exodus 6:2–8; Deuteronomy 7:8; 1 Nephi 17:40).⁶

In addition, the concept of the "redemption of Zion" found repeatedly in the Doctrine and Covenants is tied to the understanding of the Lord as the Redeemer of Israel, who restores things to their proper state. Both land that had been lost as well as people who were in captivity were restored by this kinsman-redeemer.

REDEMPTION OF THE LAND: REDEMPTION OF ZION

One prominent theme of redemption in the Doctrine and Covenants is the redemption of Zion. The loss and recovery of the "promised land" is both a biblical and latter-day concern. As the Saints were driven from Jackson County, Missouri, and as we go through our own times of extreme hardship and discouragement, it was, and is, important for the Saints to remember that the Lord is bound to act as our Redeemer just as he redeemed the children of Israel because of the covenant relationship that had been established.

In Deuteronomy the Lord's redemption of Israel is directly tied to the covenants made by the patriarchs: "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you, and *because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen*, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 7:7–8; emphasis added). In Leviticus this covenant memory had a specific tie to the promise of land: "Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land" (Leviticus 26:42).

In the Doctrine and Covenants we first see the Redeemer's responsibility for the restoration of land discussed in sections 100–105. The redemption of Zion is initially used to mean that Jackson County, Missouri, will be returned to the Saints. This idea of the land being returned to its proper state is one of the functions of the kinsman-redeemer in the Old Testament and among the Israelites. In these sections the Saints are gradually told that the Lord will redeem Zion, but it will be in his time and will require the Saints to receive an endowment from on high. In these revelations the physical sense of the kinsman-redeemer redeeming the land and restoring it to its proper owners is gradually developed into a long-term vision of the redemption of Zion as the Lord sanctifying and preparing his people. This spiritual vision of the redemption of Zion will also include a return of the land, but it is no longer the central feature of the message. The Lord still promises to redeem because of his covenant relationship with his people, but the developing vision of what is involved in redemption becomes more profound and personal.

The development of this doctrine begins during the troubles in October 1833 when the Saints are told, "Zion shall be redeemed, although she is chastened for a little season" (Doctrine and Covenants 100:13). How long this "little season" would be or what the chastening would include are not specified. In December of the same year, after the Saints were driven from their homes, the Lord explained that he would not forget his covenant promises. He promised that he would act to "redeem my vineyard; for it is mine" (101:56). The Lord gave this parable of the nobleman and the vineyard with olive trees "that you may know my will concerning the redemption of Zion" (v. 43).

In this parable the Jackson County Saints are told that they have a responsibility to do their part to reclaim the land. The servants are to be

gathered and to go “straightway unto the land of my vineyard, and redeem my vineyard; for it is mine” (Doctrine and Covenants 101:56). This command foreshadows the role of Zion’s Camp, initially understood by the participants to be about the physical redemption of the land. The Saints were told that their responsibility to participate in the redemption of the land also included legal petitions: “It is my will that they should continue to importune for redress, and redemption, by the hands of those who are placed as rulers and are in authority over you” (v. 76).

It is clear that the redemption of Zion is contingent not on the Lord’s willingness to fulfill his covenant role but on the obedience of Israel to its covenants. The Lord explains, “There is even now already in store sufficient, yea, even an abundance, to redeem Zion, and establish her waste places, no more to be thrown down, *were* the churches, who call themselves after my name, *willing* to hearken to my voice” (Doctrine and Covenants 101:75; emphasis added). This potential for redemption was not realized at this time because the covenant people who “call themselves after [the Lord’s] name,” as part of the new family relationship of the covenant, were not “willing to hearken to [his] voice.”

The relationship of covenant faithfulness and redeeming the land is emphasized in section 103. In February 1834 the Lord tells his people “how to act in the discharge of your duties concerning the salvation and redemption of your brethren, who have been scattered on the land of Zion” (v. 1). He explains that the blessings of redemption he offered would come after tribulations and would result in “your redemption, and the redemption of your brethren, even their restoration to the land of Zion, to be established, no more to be thrown down” (v. 13). Again he stresses that his redemption is contingent on their covenant faithfulness: “Nevertheless, if they pollute their inheritances they shall be thrown down; for I will not spare them if they pollute their inheritances” (v. 14).

The Lord’s voice as the Redeemer of Israel to his modern covenant people is that of assurance that redemption is in his hands. By referring to his acts as the Redeemer of Israel in biblical times, the Lord reinforces that his people need not fear they will be abandoned if they are faithful to their covenant relationships: “Behold, I say unto you, the redemption of Zion must needs come by power; therefore, I will raise up unto my people a man, who shall lead them like as Moses led the children of Israel. For ye are the children of Israel, and of the seed of Abraham, and ye must needs be led out of bondage by power, and with a stretched-out arm. And as your fathers were led at the first, even so shall the redemption of Zion be” (Doctrine

and Covenants 103:15–18). The direct parallels to the redemption of the covenant people in ancient times could not be more clear.

The spiritual dimension of redemption in the Lord's latter-day work can be seen in the context of the winter of 1833–34. Here, in sections 103 and 105, this pattern can be found in the Lord's specific directions for the gathering of Zion's Camp, which was to march to Jackson County. Those who participated, as was mentioned earlier, envisioned their actions as leading to the short-term physical redemption of the land. In section 103 Sidney Rigdon was told to "lift up his voice in the congregations in the eastern countries, in preparing the churches to keep the commandments which I have given unto them concerning the restoration and redemption of Zion" (103:29). Some of the Saints in the East, but not as many as were hoped for, gathered for this effort for the redemption of Zion.

Once Zion's Camp finally arrived in Missouri, they were taught that the redemption of Zion was not going to be what they had expected. Section 105 gives this further insight into the Lord's plans. First, the Lord expressed displeasure with the Saints collectively and explained that their own choices were keeping them from seeing the redemption of Zion: "Verily I say unto you who have assembled yourselves together that you may learn my will concerning the redemption of mine afflicted people—Behold, I say unto you, were it not for the transgressions of my people, speaking concerning the church and not individuals, they might have been redeemed even now" (vv. 1–2). He specifically explains that their lack of obedience, unity, and consecration prevent the redemption of Zion.

This is one of the most significant revelatory moments in early Church history because the Lord explains here that redemption is not simply to return to a place of God but to a state of being like God. Zion could not be redeemed by people who were not themselves redeemed from the natural man. The redemption of Zion required the redemption of people: "Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself" (Doctrine and Covenants 105:5). Zion is a people as much as a place. This principle had recently been reinforced in section 97, given in August 1833, where the Lord clearly explained, "This is ZION—THE PURE IN HEART" (v. 21). We are in bondage to our sins and weaknesses until we allow the Lord to redeem us through our faith, repentance, and covenant faithfulness. In Christ's atoning sacrifice, his ransom payment has been offered, but we experience redemption only when we choose to make and keep covenants. As we choose redemption, his

sanctifying power brings us out of bondage to the natural man and makes us Zion, the pure in heart.⁷

Given this more expansive, spiritual vision of the redemption of Zion, it is clear why the process of sanctifying the Church is ongoing. Section 105 also clarifies the role of the temple and temple covenants in allowing that redemption from our fallen state to take place:

Therefore, in consequence of the transgressions of my people, it is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season for the redemption of Zion—

That they themselves may be prepared, and that my people may be taught more perfectly, and have experience, and know more perfectly concerning their duty, and the things which I require at their hands.

And this cannot be brought to pass until mine elders are endowed with power from on high.

For behold, I have prepared a great endowment and blessing to be poured out upon them, inasmuch as they are faithful and continue in humility before me.

Therefore it is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season, for the redemption of Zion. (Doctrine and Covenants 105:9–13)

This section clearly connects our spiritual redemption as individuals and as a people with the endowment of “power from on high.” As we become the Lord’s covenant people even more and take his name upon us more fully, we experience a greater degree of redemption.

This is precisely the message of the parable given in section 101, and the Lord returns to the imagery here in section 105. He explains that his command to gather “the strength of my house” for “the redemption of my people” was not accomplished as it should have been because so many Church members were not obedient to the call to sacrifice and unite with Zion’s Camp: “the strength of mine house have not hearkened unto my words” (v. 16–17). However, despite the opportunity for collective redemption that was forfeited, the Lord recognizes those faithful members who did obey: “But inasmuch as there are those who have hearkened unto my words, I have prepared a blessing and an endowment for them, if they continue faithful” (v. 18). These blessings were richly poured out as the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the Seventy were soon selected from those who were choosing spiritual redemption through their faithfulness and obedience. From among these leaders, those who stayed faithful went on to receive their endowments in the Nauvoo Temple.

Section 105 emphasizes again how this revelation serves to shift an understanding of redemption from the focus on redeeming the land. In verse 34 the Lord commands: “And let those commandments which I have given concerning Zion and her law be executed and fulfilled, after her redemption.” This has been taken to mean the temporary suspension of requirements for the Church to collectively live the law of consecration the way it was earlier explained. The Lord’s desire for us to live the law of consecration as explained in the Doctrine and Covenants is clearly ongoing, but until we as a people are redeemed from our selfishness and jealousy through deeper conversion and sanctification, a specific institutional implementation of something like the law of consecration and stewardship or of a “United Order” serves little use.

The promise of the physical redemption of the land is real, and requests for its fulfillment can be seen in the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, in which Joseph pleads that the Lord will “redeem that which thou didst appoint a Zion unto thy people” (Doctrine and Covenants 109:51). There is also a prayer for the redemption of Jerusalem and the Jews (see vv. 62–63). These prayers can, perhaps, be seen as both temporal and spiritual in compass. It is clear that the discussion of redemption can be found in many other contexts in the Doctrine and Covenants, and this shared physical and spiritual dimension is an ongoing theme.

REDEMPTION OF THE BODY AND SPIRIT

Returning to the world of the ancient Near East, kinsman-redeemers in ancient Israel were responsible not only to redeem land but also to buy people out of bondage. As noted earlier, people in this ancient world could find themselves in bondage as slaves either because they were prisoners of war or because they had sold themselves, or been sold, to pay off a debt. The kinsman-redeemer would then repay that debt or ransom money and restore the one in bondage to his or her previous state. This social practice was then used by the prophets to explain the relationship between the covenant family of Israel and their adoptive Father and Redeemer, the Lord. Because of his covenant relationship with the house of Israel, Jehovah had become the *gō'ēl*, or Redeemer of Israel. Isaiah expresses this, saying: “Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel [Jacob] acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting” (Isaiah 63:16). Because of their covenant relationship,

Israel could rely on the Lord to act as their Kinsman-Redeemer, even when blood relations failed.

The imagery of physical and spiritual death as forms of bondage from which we are redeemed through the payment of Christ's atoning sacrifice is the central message of the gospel (see 3 Nephi 27:13–21; 2 Nephi 9:5–27). The Apostle Paul taught that “ye are not your own; . . . ye are bought with a price” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). The Book of Mormon prophets repeatedly emphasize that we have been redeemed from the captivity of the devil, “the bands of death,” and “the chains of hell” through the redemption of the Savior (see 1 Nephi 14:4–7; 2 Nephi 1:18; 2:27; Alma 5:7–10; 12:11; 13:30; 40:13; 3 Nephi 18:15). This emphasis on both bondage and payment is an essential point that makes the doctrine of redemption a particularly important witness to human captivity owing to the Fall and the role of Christ's atoning sacrifice to pay the price of our deliverance. If we were to see the terms *salvation* and *redemption* as simply interchangeable, we would miss this vital spiritual truth.

Both the physical and spiritual aspects of Christ's redemption addressed in other books of scripture can be found in revelations contained in the Doctrine and Covenants. Resurrection is explained as redemption of the body, and we also see how through covenant relationships Christ can act as our Redeemer from spiritual death. This spiritual redemption can be seen in regard to both the living and the dead. The Doctrine and Covenants's unique message is that the redemption of Christ can be extended to those in the spirit world through their repentance and forming covenant relationships with Christ. This additional insight into redemption is essential in understanding the work of temples and family history in the latter days.

Resurrection as redemption of the body. The redemption of all who have lived from the bondage of physical death is a key component of the good news of the gospel. Paul testified that “for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). Moroni taught that “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” (Mormon 9:13). Unlike spiritual redemption, this universal aspect of Christ's redemption does not require any personal covenant relationship with Christ. People do not have to choose to be redeemed physically.⁸

While the doctrine of the resurrection of the body is also found in the Bible, the further witness found in the Doctrine and Covenants and the

Book of Mormon is particularly important in our modern day because people are increasingly inclined not to believe in physical resurrection and not to see death as bondage. The Doctrine and Covenants reaffirms the doctrine of resurrection as physical redemption and further explains how it relates to our true nature and God's nature. In section 45, clarifying the revelation Christ gave to his disciples on the Mount of Olives, the Savior tells them they had "looked upon the long absence of [their] spirits from [their] bodies to be a bondage" (v. 17). Christ then promises that "day of redemption shall come" (v. 17). This same understanding of the separation of body and spirit as bondage can be found in section 93, where we learn about God's nature and our own: "The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy; and when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy" (vv. 33–34). The Restoration teaching of an embodied God helps us to appreciate the importance of physical redemption in allowing us to receive the joy that he experiences.

This emphasis on the bondage of physical death is particularly important in the vision of the spirit world in section 138. Here the faithful covenant Saints who lived before Christ's birth "were assembled awaiting the advent of the Son of God into the spirit world, to declare their redemption from the bands of death" (v. 16), and we find the same clear doctrine about the need for body and spirit to be united as was revealed in section 93. The Redeemer brings things to their proper state: "Their sleeping dust was to be restored unto its perfect frame, bone to his bone, and the sinews and the flesh upon them, the spirit and the body to be united never again to be divided, that they might receive a fulness of joy" (138:17). The separation of our spirits and bodies is a bondage that prevents us from enjoying the kind of life that God enjoys.

Yet it is not simply redemption from the bondage of physical death that will bring us this fullness of joy. In speaking to his disciples on the Mount of Olives, the Savior explains what full redemption will mean: "If ye have slept in peace blessed are you; for as you now behold me and know that I am, even so shall ye come unto me and your souls shall live, and your redemption shall be perfected" (Doctrine and Covenants 45:46). Having our souls live and our redemption perfected will require both physical and spiritual redemption. We will need to come unto Christ both as we stand before him at Judgment Day and also as we are perfected through our covenant relationship with him.

The Doctrine and Covenants clarifies that "the day of redemption" will be different for people depending on the extent they allowed Christ to

redeem them spiritually. As Moroni explained, resurrection is redemption from the bondage of physical death, but it also brings us to the presence of God for judgment: “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. 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 9:13–14). We become what we have chosen to become. The Doctrine and Covenants clarifies that our resurrected bodies will literally embody the choices that we have made in this life in response to Christ’s offer of spiritual redemption (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:21–31). Those who have chosen to be redeemed through making and keeping covenants will be free from all that keeps them away from being with and like God. Those who have refused to receive the redemption offered them through covenant relationships with the Redeemer will be left “to enjoy that which they are willing to receive” (v. 32).

Covenants, sanctification, and spiritual redemption. In teaching the people of Zarahemla, Alma explained that without Christ’s redemption people are “encircled about by the bands of death, and the chains of hell, and an everlasting destruction . . . await[s] them” (Alma 5:7). This metaphor of captivity is central to the ancient meaning of redemption. We are in bondage, and through the payment of a price we can be loosed from our chains and restored to our original status. The Doctrine and Covenants not only teaches about the redemption from the bands of death but also serves as an additional witness of how Christ’s Atonement becomes the payment to loose us from the chains of hell.

In these explanations, covenants and repentance allow us to choose spiritual redemption. Christ’s redemption price is universal: “He suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam” (2 Nephi 9:21). He has already paid this price, but the application of it is individual. We decide the degree to which we receive Christ’s gift. The revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants clarify that it is through our repentance and covenant faithfulness that he can act to redeem us from our spiritual bondage.

The Doctrine and Covenants emphasizes the universal offer of spiritual redemption through Christ; it witnesses that this message was taught in all dispensations. Adam and his family were kept from physical death “until I, the Lord God, should send forth angels to declare unto them repentance

and redemption, through faith on the name of mine Only Begotten Son” (Doctrine and Covenants 29:42). The gift of full redemption, being “raised in immortality unto eternal life,” was designed to be given to “even as many as would believe” (v. 43). The choice of faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost allows spiritual redemption to become active. Those who are not redeemed are not abandoned by the Redeemer, but they simply “cannot be redeemed from their spiritual fall, because they repent not” (v. 44). When we understand spiritual redemption as the conversion and sanctification that come from faith in Christ, we understand that he cannot redeem us *in* our sins, but only *from* them (see Helaman 5:10).

The Doctrine and Covenants’s accompanying message emphasizing the breadth of redemption clarifies that all those who are not capable of choosing spiritual redemption through Christ are not damned by their inability. The principle that “little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world through mine Only Begotten” (Doctrine and Covenants 29:46) helps us understand the great mercy of God in redeeming those who cannot choose to make and keep covenants, such as little children before the age of accountability and those with mental impairments. The Atonement of Christ allows all of us to be redeemed, but most of us are able and required to choose to make Christ our spiritual Father and Redeemer through covenant.

This message that we are free to choose Christ’s redemption is a stark contrast to the notion of total depravity, in which the Fall makes it impossible for people to choose good of their own accord. The Doctrine and Covenants confirms the important teaching of the Book of Mormon that it is actually the Atonement of Christ that redeems us from the bondage that we would have been in and makes it possible for us to choose between captivity and liberty (see 2 Nephi 2:26–27). In section 93 the Lord reaffirms this broad-ranging vision of redemption, declaring that “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” (v. 38). This redemption from the first death along with the physical redemption from the bonds of death are universal gifts that make right that which was lost in the Fall—our immortality and freedom from spiritual death—a loss brought about by Adam’s transgression.

In the Pearl of Great Price, the Lord teaches Adam: “I have forgiven thee thy transgression in the Garden of Eden. 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

6:53–54). Given this freedom to choose, made possible by Christ’s redemption, we are then accountable for our choices: “Thus saith the Lord; for I am God, and have sent mine Only Begotten Son into the world for the redemption of the world, and have decreed that he that receiveth him shall be saved, and he that receiveth him not shall be damned” (Doctrine and Covenants 49:5).

For Christ’s covenant people, the knowledge of how to receive spiritual redemption is a priceless gift to enjoy and to share. The mission of the Church to perfect the Saints, proclaim the gospel, redeem the dead, and care for the poor and needy is all a mission of redemption. As members, we are redeemed as we deepen our conversion and sanctification through faith and repentance. Through missionary work, we invite others to enter covenant relationships with Christ so they too may experience the spiritual redemption of forgiveness and sanctification. This prayer that others may enjoy redemption is echoed in the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple. Joseph pleads with the Lord that “all the scattered remnants of Israel, who have been driven to the ends of the earth, come to a knowledge of the truth, believe in the Messiah, and be redeemed from oppression, and rejoice before thee” (Doctrine and Covenants 109:67).

We see in this prayer how Joseph’s covenant faithfulness gives him confidence to call on his Redeemer: “O Lord, remember thy servant, Joseph Smith, Jun., and all his afflictions and persecutions—how he has covenanted with Jehovah, and vowed to thee, O Mighty God of Jacob—and the commandments which thou hast given unto him, and that he hath sincerely striven to do thy will” (v. 68). He prays that the Lord will convert those in opposition to the truth: “Have mercy upon all their immediate connections, that their prejudices may be broken up and swept away as with a flood; that they may be converted and redeemed with Israel, and know that thou art God” (v. 70). Joseph Smith is asking in confidence that the Lord will remember his faithful covenant people with redemption. Like him, we can also know that the Lord is faithful to his covenant relationship with us. We can have faith in the faithfulness of our Redeemer (see Hebrews 11:11–19). Because of the covenants that we have made, we are Christ’s spiritual children and are called by his name (see Mosiah 5:7–12), and the Lord has promised that he will redeem his people (see, for example, 2 Samuel 7:22–24).

This promise of redemption seen throughout the Old Testament and other books of scripture is reaffirmed in the Doctrine of Covenants. The Lord answered a question posed by Elias Higbee in section 113 about whom Isaiah was referring to when he said, “Put on thy strength, O Zion” (v. 7).

The Lord responded with a message that should give heart and courage to all who seek to make and keep covenants with him: “He [Isaiah] had reference to those whom God should call in the last days, who should hold the power of priesthood to bring again Zion, and the redemption of Israel; and to put on her strength is to put on the authority of the priesthood, which she, Zion, has a right to by lineage; also to return to that power which she had lost” (v. 8). The redemption of Israel is ongoing as people choose to “come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption” (Omni 1:26).

THE DAY OF REDEMPTION AND THE REDEMPTION OF THE DEAD

The Doctrine and Covenants provides a radically new perspective on the reach of Christ’s redemption. While Christianity has long given assent to the idea of the resurrection of the body, the good news of this universal redemption from physical death has at times been clouded by worries that only few would actually enjoy God’s presence in the next life. It has sometimes been feared that many, if not most, would be resurrected to suffer eternally. Those who had not heard of Christ and received baptism were presumed to be lost. Many who were basically good were not good enough and thus in danger of hellfire. The message of the Restoration contained in the Doctrine and Covenants is a joyful answer with an expansive vision of redemption.

We are taught in sections 76 and 88 that almost all will be redeemed by Christ from the hell of being separated from God and be able to enjoy the presence of God in some degree. We are also taught that these gradations of redemption are not due to any lack of power or desire on the part of the Redeemer, but only on the desire of individuals to be redeemed. The spiritual blessings of full redemption, being restored to the presence of God the Father in eternal life, will not be limited by a person’s earthly opportunities. The power of Christ to rescue people from spiritual bondage is not limited by when or where they were born. The covenants needed to allow Christ to be our spiritual Redeemer are available to all through the work of the temples.

Resurrection as the day of redemption. The gradations of redemption and resurrection become clear in the Doctrine and Covenants’s teachings on the degrees of glory. The sweeping vision in section 76 extends redemption to more than those in “heaven” because to some extent he redeems all who will

be in any of the degrees of glory. However, the fullness of the redemption that Christ offers is available only to those who enter into covenant relationships with him and are faithful to those covenants. Section 88 clarifies how the redemption of resurrection is for all, but how it literally differs in degrees of light and glory depends on how we respond to Christ's offer of spiritual redemption.

The foundation of the doctrine taught in section 88 is the explanation that Christ is our hope of redemption, "that through the redemption which is made for you is brought to pass the resurrection from the dead" (v. 14). This is tied to the basic principle that "the spirit and the body are the soul of man" (v. 15) and a corresponding explanation that Christ as the Redeemer restores things to their proper order: "And the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul. And the redemption of the soul is through him that quickeneth all things" (vv. 16–17). It is essential to remember that without the redemption of resurrection all would be eternally lost and in bondage to Satan, never to be restored to the presence of God (see 2 Nephi 9:6–9). It is sobering and humbling to remember that "the redemption of the soul is through him that quickeneth all things" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:17). Christ's ransom price was sufficient to compensate for the eternal suffering and banishment of all God's children. Because of Christ's redemption, all will be brought back into God's presence for judgment, and all but the sons of perdition will be able to remain in the light of one of the members of the Godhead in a kingdom of glory.

In the Doctrine and Covenants's description of resurrection as the "day of redemption," we see several important and interrelated points. Not all will be resurrected at the same time, and not all will be resurrected to dwell in the same degree of God's glory. Here is found the interwoven strands of human agency and the power of redemption. While the ransom price of Christ's Atonement was paid for the souls of all, body and spirit, not all will choose to receive and apply that payment. This is most tragically so with those sons of perdition who have received all and then completely reject and fight against that relationship.⁹ Speaking of these, Christ explains that they are "the only ones on whom the second death shall have any power; yea, verily, the only ones who shall not be redeemed in the due time of the Lord, after the sufferings of his wrath. For all the rest shall be brought forth by the resurrection of the dead, through the triumph and the glory of the Lamb, who was slain" (Doctrine and Covenants 76:37–39). This might be mistakenly understood as saying that the sons of perdition are not resurrected, but we do know that "the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal

death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death" (Alma 11:42). All will be resurrected and brought to stand before Christ at Judgment Day. However, in this very small group of individuals, physical immortality is coupled with the second death, meaning that they have chosen banishment from any degree of light and life that comes from God.

The positive corollary of this sorrowful vision is Christ's glorious proclamation that he "shall redeem all things, except that which he hath not put into his power" (Doctrine and Covenants 77:12). This means that the day of resurrection will be a day of redemption for all others, essentially all that have ever lived. As mentioned earlier, the "day of redemption" will be staggered, beginning with the righteous. We also learn that those who will be raised to telestial glory "shall not be redeemed from the devil until the last resurrection, until the Lord, even Christ the Lamb, shall have finished his work" (76:85). They will be redeemed from hell at the end of the Millennium and will be able to enjoy the presence of the Holy Ghost in the telestial kingdom, but they will not receive the fullness of redemption because they were not willing to receive the message of Christ's redemption and the gospel covenants offered them through the messengers in the spirit world (see 138:30–34).

Section 88 also gives an outline of the sequence of the "day of redemption," and in it we see degrees of spiritual redemption from captivity to darkness and spiritual death. The last group mentioned are the sons of perdition, "who shall remain filthy still" (v. 102). They are preceded by those "found under condemnation" who "live not again until the thousand years are ended" (vv. 100–101). The Resurrection begins with the covenant Saints from previous and current dispensations (see vv. 97–98). Then, after the resurrection of those who have already prepared to receive celestial glory, "cometh the redemption of those who are Christ's at his coming; who have received their part in that prison which is prepared for them, that they might receive the gospel, and be judged according to men in the flesh" (v. 99). Some may have taken this statement along with Doctrine and Covenants 76:71–74 to mean that those who do not receive the gospel during mortality will not be resurrected to celestial glory and eternal life.¹⁰ But we must remember that the Second Coming of Christ will take place at the beginning of the Millennium, and in some ways the work for the dead will still just be starting. The "first fruits" (88:98) of those who are Christ's covenant people will be able to receive their full redemption of a glorious resurrection at the time of his arrival. The resurrection and judgment of those who have not yet had a chance to become his covenant people must be delayed until they are ready.

The redemption of the dead. The Doctrine and Covenants's all-embracing vision of redemption can be seen in the Lord's explanation that after his Second Coming the Millennium will be the time when "the heathen nations be redeemed, and they that knew no law shall have part in the first resurrection; and it shall be tolerable for them" (45:54). The vexing problem of "what of those who have not heard?" is answered in the additional revelation of the Restoration. Christ is the Redeemer of Israel. Both ancient and modern Saints have taken him to be their spiritual Father and have become his spiritual children through covenant. Because of this covenant relationship, the spiritual redemption of conversion and sanctification can bring us out of bondage to sin and our fallen natures.

The percentage of people who have had access to the message of redemption and also the priesthood authority to make covenant relationships is, however, miniscule. Yet the plan of redemption was not designed for a tiny fraction of God's children. Well does the language of section 128 break into effusive praise at God's merciful and expansive plan to offer the power of Christ's redemption to all who have ever lived: "Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory! Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad. Let the earth break forth into singing. Let the dead speak forth anthems of eternal praise to the King Immanuel, who hath ordained, before the world was, that which would enable us to redeem them out of their prison; for the prisoners shall go free" (v. 22). Vicarious covenants made available in the holy temples will allow everyone who has ever lived the opportunity to receive the fullness of Christ's redeeming power.

The full scope of this wondrous love and mercy is revealed in section 138. President Joseph F. Smith was "reflecting upon the great atoning sacrifice that was made by the Son of God, for the redemption of the world; and the great and wonderful love made manifest by the Father and the Son in the coming of the Redeemer into the world; that through his atonement, and by obedience to the principles of the gospel, mankind might be saved" (vv. 2–4). President Smith knew the great ransom price that had been paid for the redemption of the world. He also knew that it was only by making and keeping covenants, "obedience to the principles of the gospel," that people could receive spiritual redemption in their lives.

The vision recorded in section 138 clarifies the universal message of scripture, the golden thread of redemption, and extends it to all who have ever lived. In the spirit world, Christ taught the Saints "the everlasting gospel, the doctrine of the resurrection and the redemption of mankind

from the fall, and from individual sins on conditions of repentance” (v. 19). These Saints had already made and kept their covenants, and they “rejoiced in their redemption, and bowed the knee and acknowledged the Son of God as their Redeemer and Deliverer from death and the chains of hell” (v. 23).

The vision did not end with this joyous encounter, but with a commission for those Saints in the spirit world and for us in mortality to share the blessings of redemption that we enjoy. They were to “carry the message of redemption unto all the dead” (v. 37). This message is shared with all, no matter how they have lived their lives: “Thus was the gospel preached to those who had died in their sins, without a knowledge of the truth, or in transgression, having rejected the prophets” (v. 32). By teaching the faithful covenant Saints directly in paradise and then organizing them to share this message with those in spirit prison, the Lord “made known among the dead, both small and great, the unrighteous as well as the faithful, that redemption had been wrought through the sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross” (v. 35). Through this teaching and the accompanying temple work, Christ’s redemption is made available to all. The Saints in the spirit world teach “faith in God, repentance from sin, vicarious baptism for the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, and all other principles of the gospel that were necessary for them to know in order to qualify themselves that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit” (vv. 33–34). The Redeemer paid the ransom price for all and stands ready to redeem all who will choose him as their Redeemer.

This work of redemption, while “wrought through the sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:35), requires that we choose to make and keep covenant relationships to allow Christ to act as our Redeemer. Those in the spirit world can exercise faith in the message of Christ’s redemption and begin to repent from their sins, but that is not enough: “They without us cannot be made perfect” (128:15). As spirits they can be taught about baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and temple covenants, but they cannot perform these ordinances. It is requisite that we who have become the Lord’s family, his covenant people, extend these redemptive blessings to others. So much is this vicarious work a part of our own process of spiritual redemption that the Lord taught that “they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect” (v. 15). This teaching has even further implications in the binding together of family ties that becomes part of exaltation as the fullness of redemption. Not only are we restored to God’s presence through

Christ's merciful redemption, but his redeeming power binds us together as husbands and wives, parents and children, throughout the generations (see 138:47–48). So this perfecting dimension of temple work includes being made whole as families forever but also becoming whole and spiritually refined now in mortality. The very act of temple service has a sanctifying and spiritually redeeming power.

As we become his covenant people, Christ gives us his name. This is an essential feature of a covenant in the ancient world and reflects the new nature and relationship that covenant creates. The ancient themes of a name conveying one's nature and of a covenant as the creation of family relationships are both well illustrated in Mosiah 5:7–8: "Because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ. . . . There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ." We are Christ's covenant family. He is our spiritual Father, and he is inviting us to take his name and his nature upon us. As we accept that invitation through our repentance and conversion, we receive his redemption. Only to the extent that we leave behind the natural man and become Saints through the Atonement of Christ is the redemption working in our lives (see 3:19).

As we recognize the ancient role of a name as part of the covenant, Joseph Smith's dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple becomes more meaningful. He prays for blessings "over thy people upon whom thy name shall be put in this house" (Doctrine and Covenants 109:26). Section 109 clearly connects the giving of the Lord's name to the temple: "And we ask thee, Holy Father, that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and *that thy name may be upon them*, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them" (v. 22; emphasis added). We learn here that part of being armed with God's power is connected with receiving his name more fully in the ordinances of the temple.¹¹ By arming us with that power and then asking us to dedicate ourselves to the redemption of all around us—members, nonmembers, and those who are dead—Christ is asking us to fully take his name upon us, to become as he is.

The Doctrine and Covenants's revelations about the redemption of the dead clarify how these ancient concepts of covenant, name, and redemption have direct meaning in living the gospel today. We can see from this understanding of Christ as the covenant Redeemer of Israel that our work in the temples allows us to become "Saviors on Mount Zion" not because we have redeemed the dead ourselves (Christ is their Redeemer) but because we are becoming like him in vicariously working for the redemption of others (see

Obadiah 1:17, 21). The sacrifice, mercy, and love manifest in the transcendent redemption wrought on our behalf calls us to lives of greater sacrifice and mercy to others. As we respond to his redeeming love with mercy toward others, we become redeemed. As we become instruments in his hands, we more fully take on Christ's name and nature as a kinsman-redeemer.

CONCLUSION: THE LORD WILL REDEEM HIS PEOPLE

The collective redemption of the covenant people can be seen in their singing the song of redeeming love as a people. We see this response to redemption in Alma 5: "And again I ask, were the bands of death broken, and the chains of hell which encircled them about, were they loosed? I say unto you, Yea, they were loosed, and their souls did expand, and they did sing redeeming love. And I say unto you that they are saved" (v. 9). The Doctrine and Covenants stands as a second witness to the Book of Mormon teaching about redeemed souls singing the song of redeeming love.

The Doctrine and Covenants explains that this joyous response to the experience of spiritual redemption will be found in the promises connected with the Millennium. We can see how the process of sanctification preceded this time when "my people shall be redeemed and shall reign with me on earth" (43:29) because his elect shall, in the Lord's words, "abide the day of my coming; for they shall be purified, even as I am pure" (35:21). With the return of the Savior and the resurrection of the just, the Saints will experience both spiritual and physical redemption.

Understanding the ancient relationship of covenant and redemption allows us to more fully appreciate the content of this millennial hymn. We are told that at this day

All shall know me, who remain, even from the least unto the greatest,
and shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and shall see eye to
eye, and shall lift up their voice, and with the voice together sing this
new song, saying:

The Lord hath brought again Zion;
The Lord hath redeemed his people, Israel,
According to the election of grace,
Which was brought to pass by the faith
And covenant of their fathers.
The Lord hath redeemed his people;

And Satan is bound and time is no longer.
The Lord hath gathered all things in one.
The Lord hath brought down Zion from above.
The Lord hath brought up Zion from beneath.
(Doctrine and Covenants 84:98–100)

The promised redemption and sanctification of Zion will be fully accomplished because the Lord remembers “the faith and covenant of their fathers.”

The Doctrine and Covenants testifies of Christ’s role as our Redeemer and of our place in the Father’s grand design for the redemption of his children. As the Redeemer of Israel, the Lord Jehovah spoke through his prophets in ancient days. With a more profound understanding of the ancient context of the biblical imagery used in modern scripture, we can more fully hear the Lord’s voice in the Doctrine and Covenants. Once we grasp the doctrine of redemption, our appreciation of this golden thread enriches our vision of the latter-day work. Without knowing its ancient meaning, the expression “redeeming the dead” misses some of the power and depth it could convey. Connected to the ancient biblical meaning, the message of the redemption of the dead, which is so central to the Restoration and the work of our dispensation, comes to life. Christ has paid an infinite price to redeem all of Heavenly Father’s children. The Restoration allows us to receive that gift and to offer it to all who have ever lived. With this understanding, we more deeply appreciate the privilege of making covenants and vicariously performing this work for our ancestors. These covenants make us part of the family of Christ and allow him to act on our behalf as the Kinsman-Redeemer of Israel.

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Jennifer C. Lane, “Redemption’s Grand Design for Both the Living and the Dead,” in *The Doctrine and Covenants, Revelations in Context*, ed. Andrew H. Hedges, J. Spencer Fluhman, and Alonzo L. Gaskill (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2008), 188–211.

NOTES

1. In the following section, I summarize my previous research on the Lord as the Redeemer of Israel. For a more in-depth discussion of these issues and a summary of the scholarship on renaming, covenants as family relationships, the role of the kinsman-redeemer, and Jehovah as the Redeemer of Israel in the Old Testament,

- see Jennifer C. Lane, "The Lord Will Redeem His People: Adoptive Covenant and Redemption in the Old Testament," in *Sperry Symposium Classics: The Old Testament*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 298–310. I have written elsewhere about adoptive covenant and redemption in the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and the Book of Abraham.
2. A brief overview of redemption in the Old Testament is provided by Helmer Ringgren, "Ga'al," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 2:354; Jeremiah Unterman, "Redemption (OT)," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:650–54; and J. Murray, "Redeemer; Redemption," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 4:61–63.
 3. While we may be most familiar with the *gō'el's* responsibilities as seen in the book of Ruth, the kinsman-redeemer was also responsible to buy back sold property; buy back a man who had sold himself to a foreigner as a slave; avenge blood and kill a relative's murderer; receive atonement money; and, figuratively, to be a helper in a lawsuit (see Ringgren, "Ga'al," 351–52). An excellent discussion of the role of the kinsman-redeemer can be found in Robert L. Hubbard, "The Go'el in Ancient Israel: Theological Reflections on an Israelite Institution," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 1 (1991): 3–19.
 4. On creating family relationships in covenants, see, for example, Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978), 266. He comments: "To see a great chief and eat in his place is to join his family, . . . the whole group related by blood or not which stood under the authority and protection of the father. One is united to him as a client to his patron who protects him and whom he serves. . . . *Covenant is something one makes by a rite, not something one is born to or forced into, and it can be described in family terms.* God is patron and father, Israel servant and son" (McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 266; emphasis added).
 5. The Hebrew word *šēm*, pronounced *shem*, usually translated "name," can also be rendered "remembrance" or "memorial," indicating that the name acts as a reminder to its bearers and others. The name shows both the true nature of its bearer and indicates his relationship to others. Central background on the role of names and renaming in showing new family relationships can be found in G. F. Hawthorne, "Name," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 3:481–83; and Bruce H. Porter and Stephen D. Ricks, "Names in Antiquity: Old, New, and Hidden," in *By Study and Also by Faith*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 1:501–22.
 6. While this concept is particularly clear and relevant in light of the additional truths of the Restoration, the biblical connections between covenant and redemption have been noticed by only a few scholars. See my discussion in "The Redemption of Abraham," in *The Book of Abraham: Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid (Provo, UT: Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts, 2005), 3:167–68.
 7. I discuss the theme of sanctification as redemption in more depth in "Choosing Redemption," in *Living the Book of Mormon: Abiding by Its Precepts*, ed. Charles Swift and Gaye Strathearn (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2007), 163–75.

8. They do not even need to want to be redeemed. Redemption from physical death requires no choice on our part, perhaps because our being in its bondage was not our choice. We are all in bondage to death because of the Fall, and we have all been redeemed through Christ's death and Resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 15:21–23).
9. Joseph Smith, Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by *Times and Seasons*, p. 616, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/>.
10. A careful reading of Doctrine and Covenants 76:71–74 reveals that this passage does not include a discussion about the timing when people in the terrestrial kingdom received the *gospel of Christ*, but when they received the “testimony of Jesus.” Their willingness to receive the “testimony of Jesus” but not the full gospel of Jesus Christ is what characterizes those in the terrestrial kingdom, not *when* they received what they were willing to receive. All those in the celestial kingdom receive both the “testimony of Jesus” and the gospel (including the ordinances of baptism and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost; see 76:51–52). All those in the terrestrial kingdom receive neither the testimony of Jesus nor the gospel of Christ (see v. 82). See Stephen Robinson and H. Dean Garrett, *A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001), 2:303–4, 314–19.
11. See David A. Bednar, “Honorably Hold a Name and Standing,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 97–98; and Dallin H. Oaks, “Taking upon Us the Name of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 81.