

Lesson Highlights

- Alma teaches Corianton about death and resurrection.
- Alma teaches that after we are resurrected, the righteous will be restored to happiness and the wicked will be restored to misery.
- Alma teaches Corianton about justice and mercy.

A study of this lesson will help us gain a greater understanding of life after death and the mercy that is available to us through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Next Week:

Lesson 31:

"Firm in the Faith of Christ",
Alma 43-52

Green Mountain 1st Ward
Lakewood, Colorado
Doug Simpson

Introduction



Often we draw diagrams to teach about the plan of salvation. However, if this is all we do to explain the plan, we fail to mention Jesus Christ, who plays the central role in the plan. We also fail to mention doctrines that are central to the plan, such as the Fall, the Atonement, and agency.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught: *"The Lord has described his plan of redemption as the Plan of Happiness. ... Conversationally, we reference this great design almost too casually at times; we even sketch its rude outlines on chalkboards and paper as if it were the floor plan for an addition to one's house. However, when we really take time to ponder the Plan, it is breathtaking and overpowering!"* ("Thanks Be to God," Ensign, July 1982, 51).

In this lesson some of Alma's counsel to his son Corianton will be discussed. In teaching Corianton, Alma referred to Heavenly Father's plan as "the plan of restoration" (Alma 41:2), "the great plan of salvation" (Alma 42:5), "the great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8); "the plan of redemption" (Alma 42:11), and "the great plan of mercy" (Alma 42:31). As Alma taught about the plan, he emphasized the centrality of the Fall, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and individual agency.

Alma taught Corianton about death and resurrection.

Chapters Alma 40-42 of the book of Alma continue Alma's counsel to his wayward son, Corianton. Alma saw that Corianton's misconduct was caused in part by a lack of testimony and a misunderstanding of some basic gospel doctrines. Alma helped Corianton understand what happens to us after death.

Alma 40:1; see also **Alma 41:1**; **Alma 42:1** Alma decided which subjects he should talk to Corianton about by "perceiving" his wayward son's concerns. We can easily see that he was inspired, relying on the Holy Ghost to help him know what Corianton was concerned about. Ponder how you can better perceive the needs of those you teach.

Alma 40:11-13 Alma relates what happens to our spirits between death and resurrection. They go to either paradise or spirit prison. The "outer darkness" in verse 13 refers to the place we usually call "spirit prison".

Alma 40:11-15, 21 contains Alma's description of paradise and spirit prison:

Paradise	Spirit Prison
State of happiness	State of misery
State of rest and peace	State of darkness with weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth
No troubles or sorrows	Awful, fearful waiting for the wrath of God

In 1918 President Joseph F. Smith received a revelation, now designated as D&C Section 138, that helps us understand more about the state of our spirits between death and resurrection. In this revelation, President Smith saw the Savior's ministry in paradise and the teaching of the gospel to those in spirit prison.

D&C 138:29-34, 57-59 President Smith learned that the spirits in spirit prison will be taught the gospel and that they will have the opportunity to repent before the final judgment.

Alma 40:21 Alma said that at an appointed time, we will be resurrected, brought before God, and judged.

Alma 40:21, 23 To be resurrected means that the spirit and body are reunited, and the body is restored to its "perfect frame."

Alma 40:5; see also Alma 11:42-44 Alma answers the question, "Who will be resurrected?", assuring us that all will be resurrected.

Alma 40:2-5, 8, 19-21 In these verses, Alma mentioned several things that he did not know about death and resurrection. From the fact that Alma testified of the doctrine of resurrection even though he did not know all the details about it, we learn that it is not necessary to understand every detail of a doctrine or event before receiving a testimony of its truthfulness.

“Fundamental to a man’s understanding about his identity and purpose upon this planet is to know that God has a plan of salvation also called a plan of happiness, a plan of mercy, etc. (Alma 24:14; 42:8; 42:15).”

—Neal A. Maxwell,
But For a Small Moment
 [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986], 62.

Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings of Alma to his son Corianton.

- What insights have you gained from studying Alma's teachings?
- What meaning do they have in your life?

Alma taught that after resurrection, the righteous will be restored to happiness; the wicked to misery.

Alma referred to resurrection as a restoration because the spirit and body are reunited and the body is restored to its “perfect frame” (Alma 40:23; Alma 41:2).

Alma 41:3-6 Further restoration will take place when we are resurrected and “judged according to [our] works”. The righteous will be restored to happiness, and the wicked will be restored to misery.

What does it mean to be restored unto good or evil? **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** stated, “*The resurrection is a restoration, both a restoration of body and spirit and a restoration to the individual of the same mental and spiritual acquirements and attitudes he had in this life*” (Mormon Doctrine, 2nd ed. [1966], 641).

Alma 41:7-8 here, Alma teaches that in a sense we are “[our] own judges”. That’s true in

Alma taught Corianton about justice and mercy.

Alma 42:1 Corianton, troubled by his father’s teachings, did not understand why “*the sinner should be consigned to a state of misery*”.

Alma 42:15 In response to this concern, Alma taught about the justice of God. He also taught that Jesus Christ atoned for the sins of the world “*to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice*”.

Alma 42:6-7, 10, 18 These verses help us to understand Alma’s teachings about justice. Gospel truths are listed below:

- Because of the Fall of Adam and Eve, we are in a fallen state. We are mortal ...subject to death... and imperfect. In this fallen state, we cannot dwell in the presence of God, who is immortal and perfect. Justice demands that we be cut off from God temporally and spiritually.
- When we sin, we separate ourselves further from God because “*no unclean thing can dwell with God*” (1 Nephi 10:21). Justice demands that we be punished for our sins.

Conclusion

How much insight comes to mankind through a clear understanding of death, the spirit world, and the resurrection as revealed through the scriptures? How much wisdom comes from a correct understanding of the doctrine of restoration? How much happiness comes from a calm and purposeful understanding of the doctrines of justice and mercy?

So often in life people go astray because of their own wants and desires. They choose to sin. This cannot be an excuse, for we have the light of Christ and we can receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Sometimes individuals sin due to the lack of understanding. Throughout the Book of Mormon, the prophets continually attempt to help the wayward by calling attention to God’s loving kindness in past ages and exhorting the people to remember the goodness of God in preserving them.

Alma taught this doctrine to his son Corianton. Remember that an appreciation of the doctrines, principles, and covenants associated with the blessings of God fills us with gratitude, and then our attitudes, desires, and behavior can change. The doctrines taught in these chapters can bring us into full accord with the plan of happiness, which gives one hope, the power to carry on, and the power to change.

that we choose whether to do good or evil and thus choose what we will be restored to after death.

Alma 41:10 Alma explained that Corianton could not be restored from sin to happiness because “*wickedness never was happiness*”.

Alma 41:10-13; Helaman 13:38 These verses explain why wickedness cannot bring happiness.

President Ezra Taft Benson said: “*While [people] may take some temporary pleasure in sin, the end result is unhappiness. ... Sin creates disharmony with God and is depressing to the spirit*” (Ensign, Nov. 1974, 65-66).

Alma 41:14-15 Alma said that Corianton needed to do good to have good restored to him.

Alma 42:14 What would happen to us if we were subjected only to justice?--we would be cut off from God forever.

Alma 42:15 An atonement was required to satisfy the demands of justice so we could return to dwell in Heavenly Father’s presence.

Mosiah 15:7-9 The Atonement of Jesus Christ “*appease[d] the demands of justice*” because Christ subjected Himself to death and took upon Himself the sins of all mankind.

Alma 42:23 Alma testified that “*mercy cometh because of the atonement*”.

Alma 42:13, 23, 27, 29-30 To be able to receive the fulness of God’s mercy, we must humble ourselves, repent, and become obedient. After receiving this counsel from his father, Corianton repented and returned to missionary service (Alma 43:1; Alma 49:30).

Lesson Supplement

Our Heavenly Father and Savior, Jesus Christ, mete out justice. They have made the laws upon which it operates. Mercy is ours to claim in repentance through the power of the Atonement. We must be willing to accept the goodness of God. Guilt can and will be swept away through repentance—we can and will be forgiven. Remember that guilt unto repentance is of the Lord but guilt beyond repentance is of the devil. The following story is related by **Boyd K. Packer**:

The Mediator

There once was a man who wanted something very much. It seemed more important than anything else in his life. In order for him to have his desire, he incurred a great debt.

He had been warned about going into that much debt, and particularly about his creditor. But it seemed so important for him to do what he wanted to do and to have what he wanted right now. He was sure he could pay for it later.

So he signed a contract. He would pay it off sometime along the way. He didn't worry too much about it, for the due date seemed such a long time away. He had what he wanted now, and that was what seemed important.

The creditor was always somewhere in the back of his mind, and he made token payments now and again, thinking somehow that the day of reckoning really would never come.

But as it always does, the day came, and the contract fell due. The debt had not been fully paid. His creditor appeared and demanded payment in full.

Only then did he realize that his creditor not only had the power to repossess all that he owned, but the power to cast him into prison as well.

"I cannot pay you, for I have not the power to do so," he confessed.

"Then," said the creditor, "we will exercise the contract, take your possessions, and you shall go to prison. You agreed to that. It was your choice. You signed the contract, and now it must be enforced."

"Can you not extend the time or forgive the debt?" the debtor begged. "Arrange some way for me to keep what I have and not go to prison. Surely you believe in mercy? Will you not show mercy?"

The creditor replied, "Mercy is always so one-sided. It would serve only you. If I show mercy to you, it will leave me unpaid. It is justice I demand. Do you believe in justice?"

"I believed in justice when I signed the contract," the debtor said. "It was on my side then, for I thought it would protect me. I did not need mercy then, nor think I should need it ever. Justice, I thought, would serve both of us equally as well."

"It is justice that demands that you pay the contract or suffer the penalty," the creditor replied. "That is the law. You have agreed to it and that is the way it must be. Mercy cannot rob justice."

There they were: One meting out justice, the other pleading for mercy. Neither could prevail except at the expense of the other.

"If you do not forgive the debt there will be no mercy," the debtor pleaded.

"If I do, there will be no justice," was the reply.

Both laws, it seemed, could not be served. They are two eternal ideals that appear to contradict one another. Is there no way for justice to be fully served, and mercy also?

There is a way! The law of justice can be fully satisfied and mercy can be fully extended—but it takes someone else. And so it happened this time.

The debtor had a friend. He came to help. He knew the debtor well. He knew him to be shortsighted. He thought him foolish to have gotten himself into such a predicament. Nevertheless, he wanted to help because he loved him. He stepped between them, faced the creditor, and made this offer.

"I will pay the debt if you will free the debtor from his contract so that he may keep his possessions and not go to prison."

As the creditor was pondering the offer, the mediator added, "You demanded justice. Though he cannot pay you, I will do so. You will have been justly dealt with and can ask no more. It would not be just."

And so the creditor agreed.

The mediator turned then to the debtor. "If I pay your debt, will you accept me as your creditor?"

"Oh yes, yes," cried the debtor. "You save me from prison and show mercy to me."

"Then," said the benefactor, "you will pay the debt to me and I will set the terms. It will not be easy, but it will be possible. I will provide a way. You need not go to prison."

And so it was that the creditor was paid in full. He had been justly dealt with. No contract had been broken.

The debtor, in turn, had been extended mercy. Both laws stood fulfilled. Because there was a mediator, justice had claimed its full share, and mercy was fully satisfied.

Each of us lives on a kind of spiritual credit. One day the account will be closed, a settlement demanded. However casually we may view it now, when that day comes and the foreclosure is imminent we will look around in restless agony for someone, anyone, to help us.

And, by eternal law, mercy cannot be extended save there be one who is both willing and able to assume our debt and pay the price and arrange the terms for our redemption.

Unless there is a mediator, unless we have a friend, the full weight of justice untempered, unsympathetic, must, positively must, fall on us. The full recompense for every transgression, however minor or however deep, will be exacted from us to the uttermost farthing.

But know this: Truth, glorious truth, proclaims there is such a mediator.

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5.)

Through Him mercy can be fully extended to each of us without offending the eternal law of justice. (Boyd K. Packer, *Memorable Stories and Parables of Boyd K. Packer* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997], 9.)