



# The IRON ROD



OUR CHARGE AS MISSIONARIES IS TO TEACH AND TESTIFY OF CHRIST AND THE RESTORATION AND INVITE ALL TO COME AND BE BAPTIZED UNTO REPENTANCE THAT THEY ALSO MAY BE PARTAKERS OF THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF LIFE.

## President's Message

April 1993

### The Plan

The Bible does not speak specifically about a divine plan. It is only through latter day revelation, particularly the Book of Mormon, that we have knowledge of the plan of salvation. That we know the plan is one of the great evidences of the latter day restoration through the prophet Joseph Smith.

The Book of Mormon prophets emphasized the importance of the plan of salvation and referred specifically to it 27 different times. They understood that the creation anticipates the fall, the fall requires the atonement and the atonement brings to pass the resurrection. The resurrection will bring all men back into the presence of God to be judged and rewarded. They recognized that these events are integral parts of the same plan and can only be understood when considered together. These teachings and the accompanying diagrams, parts of which are borrowed from others, show how the creation, the fall, the atonement, and the resurrection and judgement, constitute the doctrinal foundation of the plan of salvation.

Our present mortal world is a result of a three-step process:

1. Spirit creation - There is no detailed account given. However, we know the essential doctrine is that we are all spirit children of a perfected Father in Heaven, and our purpose is to become like Him.
2. Physical creation - consisted of six creative periods. It was a physical, tangible creation, but there was neither blood, death, reproduction nor sin. Plants and animals were created and placed on the earth first and man was the last and greatest act of creation.
3. The mortal, temporal, fallen world - Blood, death, reproduction and sin were introduced into the world. Man was the first to fall and become mortal. All other forms of life became mortal after man. The fall brought two kinds of death - the temporal or physical death and spiritual death, which is separation or alienation from the things of God.

As with the creation there are two aspects of the fall and two parts of the atonement. All mankind born into mortality inherit the effects or consequences of the fall of Adam. This includes both physical death, in that all will die, and spiritual death, because we are then separated from the presence of God. We do not inherit from Adam the sin or the responsibility for his fall.

However, because we are born into a sinful world, even so when we begin to grow up and become accountable, sin conceiveth in our hearts and we taste the bitter that we may know to prize the good. And it is given to us to know good from evil; wherefore we are agents unto ourselves (See Moses 6:55-56). We all experience another fall, or a second spiritual death because of our own sins.

In one of the great discourses in the Book of Mormon, Alma answers the doubts and questions expressed by his

son Corianton regarding the plan. Alma emphasizes the plan and makes his point in a masterful way by using interchangeably the terms "plan of restoration", "plan of happiness", "plan of redemption" and "plan of mercy." (See Alma 39-42).

The Atonement of Christ is central to the plan of salvation. It is intended to rescue us from sin and death. There are both conditional and unconditional aspects of the Atonement. All mankind, unconditionally and with no exceptions, will be redeemed from the physical and spiritual death caused by the fall of Adam. Everyone will be resurrected from the dead and everyone will be restored to the presence of God to be judged. The plan of restoration provides that whatever was lost in the fall of Adam is unconditionally and universally restored through the Atonement of Christ.

The conditional aspect of the atonement is also universal in nature in that it is offered to all. However, it will not be accepted by all and it will not be forced on them. Under the terms of the plan as set forth by the Father, only those who have faith unto repentance and are baptized by water and by the Spirit, qualify for mercy. Christ's suffering satisfies the demands of justice on behalf of the righteous and they are cleansed and perfected through his atonement. Therefore when they are restored to the presence of God to be judged they will be able to dwell with him, because they will be like him.

For others, the demands of justice will be satisfied through their own suffering. When they are brought into the presence of God they will not remain there nor will they want to because they could not be happy (See Alma 41:10-12). They will inherit a lesser place because they would not receive of the gift of grace conditionally offered to them by the atonement.

In this way as we exercise our own agency to do good or evil we become our own judges (Alma 41:7). The plan of restoration brings back evil for evil and good for good (Alma 41:13). That which we send out in this life whether it is good or evil is restored to us in the resurrection and judgement (Alma 41:15). In the end "every person receives again in the restoration the characteristics and attributes acquired in mortality." (See Headnote to Alma 41).

Therefore, only those who can live a celestial law will receive a celestial body in the resurrection and live in the celestial kingdom. It is the same with the terrestrial and telestial resurrections and judgement (See D&C 88:20-24). "Therefore all things shall be restored to their proper order." (Alma 41:2-4).

This is the plan. How wonderful to not only know the plan, but also as missionaries to be able to teach it to others.

With Love,

President Lunt