

Book of Mormon 30  
The Great Plan of Happiness  
(Alma 40-42)  
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here is inspirational background).

I. What do most people believe is the purpose for the existence of Earth and of Man?

A. One of the most prevalent ideas is that the Earth and Man are both just accidents. Somehow atoms accidentally combined to bring about the universe, the earth, and man himself.

B. A friend once said her church teaches that God created Earth and man because He likes stories.

C. Others simply have no idea the reason God created Earth and man, but they believe our present condition is the result of man's terrible and unexpected sin.

II. How blessed we are to understand God's true and beautiful purposes.

A. "For behold, this is my work and my glory --- to bring to pass the Immortality and Eternal Life of Man" (Moses 1:39).

B. To me, this is one of the most profound statements in all of scripture.

And we know that God's plans to fulfill this great purpose were careful and wise. Nothing which has occurred was unforeseen by an all-knowing God. Everything was planned for from the beginning.

"And thus **God bringeth about his great and eternal purposes, which were prepared from the foundation of the world.** And thus cometh about the salvation and the redemption of men, and their destruction and misery [for those who reject all of God's mighty efforts to exalt him]" (Alma 42:26). (Emphasis added).

III. Alma laid out many of the details of God's great plan of happiness.

A. As noted above, all things were planned before the creation itself.

1. After the fall of Adam and Eve, man was allowed a **probationary period to repent** (Alma 42:4).

2. Regardless of their beliefs or earthly deeds, all men will eventually arise in the resurrection (Alma 40:4).

"... there is a time appointed that all shall come forth from the dead."

3. Between the time of death and the resurrection there will be a place for righteous and unrighteous souls to be taught the truth, to have essential ordinance work done, and to await for the final judgment.

"...it has been made known unto me by an angel that the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body,... whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life.... the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow" (Alma 40:11-13).

"And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of the wicked, yea, who are evil --- for behold, they have no part nor portion of the Spirit of the Lord; for behold, they chose evil works rather than good; ... and these shall be cast out into outer darkness" They remain in this state, as well as the righteous in paradise, until the time of their resurrection. (Alma 40:14).

B. But the resurrection does not mean just the arising of the spirit; it means "the reuniting of the soul with the body ... (Alma 40:18). Furthermore, in the resurrection "all things [pertaining to the body] shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame" (40:23).

C. Both the righteous and the wicked will eventually be "brought to stand before God, and be judged according to their works." (Alma 40:21).

D. After Judgment, the righteous shall "shine forth in the kingdom of God" (Alma 40:25).

E. After Judgment, "an awful death cometh upon the wicked;" for "they are unclean, and no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of God but they are cast out, and consigned to partake of the fruits of their labors or their works, which have been evil; and they drink the dregs of a bitter cup." (Alma 40:26)

F. Since the time of Alma's discourse, additional revelation has come to the Saints. Chief among them is the revelation granted to President Joseph F. Smith of how those in spirit prison may be taught and ordinances performed for them, as recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 138.

#### IV. The amazing reality is **that God's plan is not only Just, but Merciful.**

A. It is requisite with the justice of God that men should be judged according to their works" (Alma 41:2).

B. But if [the unrighteous] "hath repented of his sins, and desired righteousness until the end of his days, even so he shall be rewarded unto righteousness" (Alma 41:6).

C. However this can only occur because God is also a God of mercy, and therefore He prepared for all, for all have sinned, to be cleansed through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

"... the plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also" (42:15).

D. God's plan is especially beautiful because it is one in which all that can possibly be done for the salvation of men is done, yet men's moral agency is never denied him.

"Therefore, O my son, whosoever will come may come and partake of the waters of life freely; and whosoever will not come the same is not compelled to come; but in the last day it shall be restored unto him according to his deeds" (42:27).

E. It is also a plan of great wisdom, for only those who have been cleansed and have become pure will dwell in God's Kingdom. **For if the unclean were allowed into God's Kingdom, God would either need to remove their free agency to keep order, or else His Kingdom would become a Kingdom of the wicked and evil. Neither are solutions of love or wisdom.**

#### V. Elder Gary Coleman shared his beautiful testimony of how an understanding the Plan of Happiness led to his conversion. He spoke of this at BYU's Easter Service, April 2012.

He told that he was raised in a very devout Catholic home. His sincere spiritual inclinations had led him to consider becoming a priest, and he was being invited to special retreats, etc., which would help prepare him for that event.

While a student at Washington State, however, he once noticed a poster announcing a lecture on the Mormons' View of Eternal Life. His interest in religion attracted him. He could not resist going near the building the night this lecture was to be given. But he hesitated to go in; for he had been taught it was a sin to even listen to the presentation of other religious ideas. He walked back and forth before the door leading into the lecture, struggling with whether he should enter. Finally he could not resist.

Upon the board he saw a diagram of the Plan of Salvation, with its outline of a pre-mortal existence, mortality, the Spirit World after death, and the Three Degrees of Glory after Resurrection. **He knew immediately that what he was seeing and hearing was true.**

Understanding the Lord's Great Plan of Happiness is what has led him and thousands to accept the Lord's true and beautiful gospel. For they recognize that it is a plan of wisdom and love. **They recognize that God, a Being of Justice and Love, would only devise that which is Beautiful, Just and Full of love.**

VI. There is a considerable difference between how Latter-day Saints and others perceive the ultimate breakdown of Heaven and Hell.

Do Mormons believe they are the only ones who will go to Heaven?

One Latter-day Saint missionary faced that accusation. His answer was that actually Mormons believe that nearly everyone else will go to Heaven, but only Mormons can go to Hell. (This is based on our understanding that only the sons of perdition will be cast into total darkness, not inheriting one of the Three Degrees of Glory. To be among that very small group one must first have a complete knowledge of God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, and the plan of salvation and deny it all. This could only apply to members of the Church).

Nearly every other faith, because they believe that only those who accept their faith will enter into Heaven, believe, therefore, in a very, very small Heaven and a very, very large Hell.

However, because the Latter-day Saints understand there will be teaching beyond this life and saving works to be done for those who died without hearing the truth; that there will be Three Degrees of Glory; and that only the Sons of Perdition will fail to inherit any of them; **we therefore know there will be a very, very large Heaven and a very, very small Hell.**

The wondrous news then, is **that Christ will be Victorious! Otherwise, "the whole earth will be wasted."**

VII. Now that these wonderful truths were understood, Corianton was called to teach them to others.

"And now, O my son, ye are called of God to preach the word unto this people. And now, my son, go thy way, declare the word with truth and soberness, that thou mayest bring souls unto repentance, that the **great plan of mercy** may have claim upon them" (Alma 42:31). (Emphasis added: note its other name).

Wonderfully, Corianton was deeply moved by these truths, repented, and courageously did go forth to share them with others (Alma 43:1; 49:30).

**We should recognize that one of the signs of true repentance is a deep desire to share [and the actuality of sharing], the wonderful news of Jesus Christ and His Marvelous Plan of Salvation to all we can reach.**

All have sinned; thus all should feel this deep responsibility and desire to bring Joy to others who are still burdened with sin.