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### **The Atonement of Jesus Christ**

It has often been repeated that the Atonement is the single most important event in the history of the world. This is true, but it is an understatement. The Atonement of Jesus Christ is not only central to the history of the world, but it is central to the Gospel, and central to the entire Plan of Salvation, for all of God's children, everywhere. Because it is so vitally important, it is the recurring and central message in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is a powerful witness of the Atonement. Along with the Bible, it bears strong testimony of Jesus Christ. This essay is my testimony of the Atonement. I feel that to sufficiently explain the Atonement, it is important to begin by explaining the Plan.

#### ***The Great Plan of Happiness***

Before the world was formed, God had a plan for the salvation and happiness of His children. We wanted to have a body, learn, and grow, to eventually become like our Heavenly Father. God's plan was to send us to live in a mortal world, where we would be tried and tested. We would be separated from God's presence and we would have to learn to choose for ourselves between right and wrong. We would have free agency. God would send a Savior to atone for our mistakes. He would be a perfect example to follow as we tried to do what was right and become like our Father.

Lucifer, one of God's children, had his own plan. His plan would take away our agency, and force us to obey. He would receive glory and power, and he wouldn't have to do any work for it. But Jesus Christ, God's chosen Son, said He would come down and be our Savior. He

loved His Father and all of us, and knew that God's plan was the only way we could hope to become like our Father. The Savior knew that His role would not be easy. He would have to be tempted and endure all things, and suffer to His very limits. Nevertheless, He was willing to sacrifice His will to the will of the Father, giving all glory to the Father. Lucifer fought against God's plan; there was a war in Heaven between followers of Lucifer and the followers of God and the Son. Lucifer lost and was cast out with his followers, even one third of God's children, and he became the devil.

So God's plan was chosen, and the earth was formed. Adam was created, then Eve, his wife. They were placed in the Garden of Eden. There they walked and talked with God.

### ***The Decision and the Fall***

Earth life is full of choices. Adam and Eve, our first mortal parents, were faced with a choice. God had told them not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Satan came, tempting them. Satan did not fully understand the Plan. He thought that if he could get them to partake of the fruit, God's plan would be foiled. Eve decided to partake of the fruit, and Adam did as well. It is debatable how much Adam and Eve knew before they ate the fruit, but it is possible that Eve understood that only by partaking of the fruit could they have the opportunity to become like God. Although God commanded them not to, eating from the tree was part of God's plan. From the scriptures, it seems that God wanted Adam and Eve to partake of the fruit. But He could not command them to partake, because God cannot command us to do things that take us farther away from His presence. Nevertheless, they partook of the fruit of the tree; and because of this choice, they had to leave the Garden of Eden. They left God's presence and came to this telestial earth. They became "fallen" creatures. Their bodies become mortal.

### ***Earth Life, Our Mortal Probation***

Life outside the Garden was not as easy, but where Adam and Eve found pains and sorrows, they also found great joy. In the Garden, they were innocent and carefree. They did not know pain and suffering. Therefore, if they felt happiness, they did not know it; they could not really have joy without first experiencing sorrow. Leaving the Garden gave them the opportunity to experience these things. Also, because they partook of the fruit, they gained understanding and could discern the difference between right and wrong. They could make educated choices. The great Fall was important to all of us, because had they remained in the Garden, they could not have had children, and God's plan for His children would have been at a standstill.

### ***The Law of Justice and the Plan of Mercy***

Men must choose between what is right and what is not, every day. Because men make mistakes, they become unclean. Because of their uncleanness, they cannot dwell in God's presence. The Law of Justice demands that they suffer the consequences of their actions. With the Law of Justice alone, there is no hope for men. All are lost, because all sin. Even God cannot set aside the Law of Justice.

But God does not intend for men to suffer. God's plan is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of men. His whole work and glory is to bring as many as possible back to His presence, and into eternal happiness, to immortality and eternal life, to exaltation.

That is why God's plan provided for a Savior. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to answer the ends of the Law. The Law of Justice was appeased, the requirements fulfilled. Freedom from the affixed punishment is offered to all who repent. Jesus took upon himself, and suffered for, all of our weaknesses and sins. He prayed for us, and bled in agony from every pore. He was crucified, the Lamb of God, as the perfect, infinite and eternal sacrifice. Only Jesus could do this

for us. He had been given this calling and power by God, and He had lived a perfect life. He was God's eldest Son in the spirit, and God's first-born Son in flesh.

Jesus was obedient to the will of the Father, and though He pled with the Father to "remove this cup" of pain and sorrow from Him, He humbly subjected himself to the will of the Father, to glorify God, and to give us, who are imperfect and weak, the opportunity to, in the end, obtain eternal life. This opportunity to obtain eternal life depends on our willingness to repent and obey the commandments. But if we do repent, it can become as though we had never sinned. Our sins can be swept away, leaving us clean and pure. We can return to dwell in God's presence.

### ***No Other Way Nor Means***

Jesus Christ is the Way: the only way whereby men can be saved and receive eternal life. No man comes to the Father except through Christ. There is no other path, no other way, no other means whereby salvation comes unto men. In the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we see the great love that our Father has for all of us, His children. He gave His Son to the world, to suffer pain, humiliation, and every sorrow, even to break the chains of death and hell. All those who repent are forgiven. We have been given so much, and we have so much to be thankful for. I am eternally grateful to God and to His Son, Jesus Christ, and for the Holy Ghost, who witnesses that they are real. Because of my mistakes, I am continually an "unprofitable servant," unworthy of redemption; but in Christ, there is mercy and relief.

Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, I can forsake my sins. I can overcome my weaknesses. I can return to God's presence. I can obtain exaltation and eternal life. I can know joy, and peace, and love. I can be happy, forever. All of these things are a part of my testimony of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and of His great Atonement. He is the Way.