

The meaning of the word “Redeem”

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But behold, the Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love. (2 Nephi 1:15)

This is one of the most important verses in the Book of Mormon, probably one of the most important in all the scriptures, because it defines the single most important doctrine of the gospel: Christ’s personal relationship with the righteous. That definition, of course, begins with the nature of Christ as Lord and Redeemer.

In this verse there are a number of key words in addition to the word “redeemed.” The entire concept is suspended on the past tense quality of the word “hath.” For Lehi the redemption has occurred in the past, but also continues as the vitality of his present and the hope of his future. (That, by the way, is the meaning of the word “hope,” in Moroni 7.)

To be redeemed, as Lehi uses the word, means: “I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love.” This is consistent with Job and many such testimonies in the Psalms, Isaiah, and the Book of Mormon, where to be redeemed means to be brought into the presence of Christ. As Job wrote:

Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold,...

The final phrase in our verse, “and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love,” is a reference to a physical embrace, a present and eternal relationship of friendship--a present “hope” which will mature into the very nature of our eternal being.

I believe that the concept and the realization of redemption are together the single most important doctrine of the gospel. It compasses all of our eternal relationships with the Saviour, as a flower compasses all of the promise of the seed and the plant from which it sprang; and as that same flower is the promise of fruit which produces more seed, and prefigures life in perpetuity. Redemption is the epitome of friendship, and the perpetual light of all that is life.

ABOUT “REDEEM”:

The word “redeem” has a number of different meanings in the scriptures, and the book in which one looks has a great deal to do with what it means. For example, the word “Redeemer” is found in all of the standard works except the New Testament. The reason is that the Old Testament concept of “redeemer” does not have an equivalent word in Greek. The words translated “redeem” from the Hebrew, and the words translated “redeem” from the Greek have different meanings. Both are valid in their own context, they just mean slightly different things. The word “redeem” in the Book of Mormon has a different meaning still which is clearly expressed in only one place in the Bible. That is the oldest use of the word “redeem” anywhere in the scriptures. It is in the Book of Job, as just quoted. From that reference in Job and from many such uses in the Book of Mormon, one can go back to the Bible, especially to the Psalms and Isaiah, and find many places where the word is used in that same way. But without the Book of Mormon as a key, one would not know that the most important scriptural meaning of the words “redeem,” and “Redeemer” is that one may come into the presence of Christ. In the following pages I have examined the different meanings of the word “redeem” and shown how they are used in the scriptures.

1. TO RANSOM

Strong’s Hebrew dictionary, word # 6299 gives the Old Testament meaning as, to deliver, ransom, redeem, or rescue.

Strong’s Greek words # 1805 and 3083 mean ransom, figuratively to rescue from loss or to improve opportunity, to redeem. Something to loosen with, i.e. a redemption price (figuratively the atonement): ransom.

Examples of that usage can be found in the following scriptures: Isaiah 52:3; 2 Nephi 2:25-26; Mosiah 16:52; D&C 76:84-85; 138:47-48.

2. There is another Hebrew definition which is much stronger. It means to pay the debt of a relative, and the family relationship is a necessary part of the meaning. i.e. pay the debts of a brother to get him out of prison - marry the widow of a brother to take care of her and her family. Boaz married Ruth according to his family rights to redeem her widowhood. (See, Strong’s Hebrew words # 1350 and 1353) Scriptures which use redeem in this way are: Job 19:23-27; Isaiah 48:17; D&C 93:38; 138:19, 35-37

3. Redeem is used in both the Old and the New Testaments to mean “to purchase” as one would purchase in the market place. (See Strong, Hebrew # 58)

Ephesians 1:7-9 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

D&C 101:80 And for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land, by the

hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood.

4. In the Book of Mormon the word "redeem" usually means to be brought into the presence of God, and therefore, the opposite of "second death" which means to be excluded from the presence of God. There is no place in BoM theology for the idea of "three degrees of glory." Either one is in the presence of God or one is not. If one is not, he is spiritually dead. If there are degrees of spiritual deadness, that is fine, but not important to the central theme of the Nephite prophets.

There is a close relationship between that idea of what redeem means and the Old Testament idea of kinship. No where is that relationship more clearly shown than in Job: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold," Job 19:25-27a

It should not be a surprise to note that of the 17 other times the word "Redeemer" is used in the Old Testament, all but 5 are in Isaiah, whose words Nephi cherished because he, like Nephi, had seen and testified of the Saviour. (see 2 Nephi 11:2-3, quoted below)

The phrase "plan of redemption" as used in the Book of Mormon, means the plan whereby men can be brought back into the presence of God. This plan works on four levels, all three are described in the Book of Mormon.

- 1) **"Preparatory redemption" in the pre-mortal existence, in Alma 13:1-3**
- 2) **Those who are, in this life, brought back into Christ's presence.** The Book of Mormon shows there were many. The four largest groups were the Lamanites converted by sons of Mosiah; 300 Lamanites who came to the prison of Nephi and Lehi; the 2,500 who saw the Saviour the first day of his visit and the many more who saw him thereafter; and the converts of Alma. One of my favorite passages of the Book of Mormon is Alma's reflection in Alma 36:22-26,

Yea, methought I saw, even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising their God; yea, and my soul did long to be there. But behold, my limbs did receive their strength again, and I stood upon my feet, and did manifest unto the people that I had been born of God. Yea, and from that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. Yea, and now behold, O my son, the Lord doth give me exceedingly great joy in the fruit of my labors; For because of the word which he has imparted unto me, behold, many have been

born of God, and have tasted as I have tasted, and have seen eye to eye as I have seen; therefore they do know of these things of which I have spoken, as I do know; and the knowledge which I have is of God.

3) **Those who are not redeemed in this world but who will be brought before the Saviour after their death.** It was a part of the covenant of the Father before the world was that every person who left his presence to come to this world would enter again the presence of the great god who created this world and gave them life. Some will come before the Saviour in that day, clean and pure and will stay with him. Others will come filthy, will recognize their filth and will go away, filthy still.

4) **Those who are redeemed eternally.** That is, those who are brought before the Saviour to be judged and demonstrate that they, by right, may stay in the presence of the gods forever.

Examples of each of these are as follows:

1) “Preparatory redemption in the pre-mortal existence, in Alma 13:1-3

v. 1 And again, my brethren, I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children; and I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people.

v. 2 And those priests were ordained after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption.

v. 3 And this is the manner after which they were ordained--being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such.

v. 4 And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren.

v. 5 Or in fine, in the first place they were on the same standing with their brethren; thus this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would not harden their hearts, being in and through the atonement of the Only Begotten Son, who was prepared--

v. 6 And thus being called by this holy calling, and ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of God, to teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest--

(Alma 13:1-6)

2) Those redeemed in this life:

Lehi in 2 Nephi 1:15 :

But behold, the Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love.

Jacob in 2 Nephi 2:2-4

v.2 Nevertheless, Jacob, my first-born in the wilderness, thou knowest the greatness of God; and he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain.

v.3 Wherefore, thy soul shall be blessed, and thou shalt dwell safely with thy brother, Nephi; and thy days shall be spent in the service of thy God. wherefore, I know that thou art redeemed, because of the righteousness of thy Redeemer; for thou hast beheld that in the fullness of time he cometh to bring salvation unto men.

v.3 And thou hast beheld in thy youth his glory; wherefore, thou blessed even as they unto whom he shall minister in the flesh; the Spirit is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. And the is prepared from the fall of man, and salvation is free.

Nephi, Jacob, and Isaiah in 2 Nephi 11:2-3

v.2 And now I, Nephi, write more of the words of Isaiah, for my soul delighteth in his words. For I will liken his words unto my people, and I will send them forth unto all my children, for he verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him.

v.3 And my brother, Jacob, also has seen him as I have seen him; wherefore, I will send their words forth unto my children to prove unto them that my words are true. Therefore, by the words of three, God hath said, I will establish my word. Nevertheless, God sendeth more witnesses, and he proveth all his words.

Nephi and many others in 2 Nephi 33:6-7

v.6 I glory in plainness; I glory in truth; I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell.

v. 7 I have charity for my people, and great faith in Christ that I shall meet many souls spotless at his judgment-seat.

Alma in Mosiah 27:23-28

v. 23 And it came to pass after they had fasted and prayed for the space of two days and two nights, the limbs of Alma received their strength, and he stood up and began to speak unto them, bidding them to be of good comfort:

v. 24 For, said he, I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit.

v. 25 And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and

daughters;

v. 26 And thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.

v. 27 I say unto you, unless this be the case, they must be cast off; and this I know, because I was like to be cast off.

v. 28 Nevertheless, after wading through much tribulations, repenting nigh unto death, the Lord in mercy hath seen fit to snatch me out of an everlasting burning, and I am born of God.

v. 29 My soul hath been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God. My soul was racked with eternal torment; but I am snatched, and my soul is pained no more.

(Mosiah 27:23-29)

King Lamoni in Alma 19:6-14

v. 6 Now, this was what Ammon desired, for he knew that king Lamoni was under the power of God; he knew that the dark veil of unbelief was being cast away from his mind, and the light which did light up his mind, which was the light of the glory of God, which was a marvelous light of his goodness--yea, this light had infused such joy into his soul, the cloud of darkness having been dispelled, and that the light of everlasting life was lit up in his soul, yea, he knew that this had overcome his natural frame, and he was carried away in God--

v. 7 Therefore, what the queen desired of him was his only desire. Therefore, he went in to see the king according as the queen had desired him; and he saw the king, and he knew that he was not dead.

v. 8 And he said unto the queen: He is not dead, but he sleepeth in God, and on the morrow he shall rise again; therefore bury him not.

v. 9 And Ammon said unto her: Believest thou this? And she said unto him: I have had no witness save thy word, and the word of our servants; nevertheless I believe that it shall be according as thou hast said.

v. 10 And Ammon said unto her: Blessed art thou because of thy exceeding faith; I say unto thee, woman, there has not been such great faith among all the people of the Nephites.

v. 11 And it came to pass that she watched over the bed of her husband, from that time even until that time on the morrow which Ammon had appointed that he should rise.

v. 12 And it came to pass that he arose, according to the words of Ammon; and as he arose, he stretched forth his hand unto the woman, and said: Blessed be the name of God, and blessed art thou. v. 13 For as sure as thou livest, behold, I have seen my Redeemer; and he shall come forth, and be born of a woman, and he shall redeem all mankind who believe on his name. Now, when he had said these words, his heart was swollen within him, and he sunk again with joy; and the queen also sunk down, being overpowered by the Spirit.

v. 14 Now Ammon seeing the Spirit of the Lord poured out according to his prayers upon the Lamanites, his brethren, who had been the cause of so much mourning among the Nephites, or among all the people of God because of their iniquities and their traditions, he fell upon his knees, and began to pour out his soul in prayer and thanksgiving to God for what he had done for his brethren; and he was also overpowered with joy; and thus they all three had sunk to the earth.

(Alma 19:6-14)

Moroni and Helaman in Alma 58:41

v. 41 And now, my beloved brother, Moroni, may the Lord our God, who has redeemed us and made us free, keep you continually in his presence; yea, and may he favor this people, even that ye may have success in obtaining the possession of all that which the Lamanites have taken from us, which was for our support. And now, behold, I close mine epistle. I am Helaman, the son of Alma.

(Alma 58:41)

Lehi and Nephi in Helaman 8:22-23

v. 22 Our father Lehi was driven out of Jerusalem because he testified of these things. Nephi also testified of these things, and also almost all of our fathers, even down to this time; yea, they have testified of the coming of Christ, and have looked forward, and have rejoiced in his day which is to come.

v. 23 And behold, he is God, and he is with them, and he did manifest himself unto them, that they were redeemed by him; and they gave unto him glory, because of that which is to come.

(Helaman 8:22-23)

The Brother of Jared in Ether 3:7-14

v. 7 And the Lord saw that the brother of Jared had fallen to the earth; and the Lord said unto him: Arise, why hast thou fallen?

v. 8 And he saith unto the Lord: I saw the finger of the Lord, and I feared lest he should smite me; for I knew not that the Lord had flesh and blood.

v. 9 And the Lord said unto him: Because of thy faith thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood; and never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast; for were it not so ye could not have seen my finger. Sawest thou more than this?

v. 10 And he answered: Nay; Lord, show thyself unto me.

v. 11 And the Lord said unto him: Believest thou the words which I shall speak?

v. 12 And he answered: Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie.

v. 13 And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you.

v. 14 Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters.

(Ether 3:7-14)

The Lord's promise to each person in D&C 93:1

v. 1 Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am;

(D&C 93:1)

3) Those who are not redeemed in this world but who will be brought before the Saviour after their death.

v. 8 Behold, will ye reject these words? Will ye reject the words of the prophets; and will ye reject all the words which have been spoken concerning Christ, after so many have spoken concerning him; and deny the good word of Christ, and the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and quench the Holy Spirit, and make a mock of the great plan of redemption, which hath been laid for you?

v. 9 Know ye not that if ye will do these things, that the power of the redemption and the resurrection, which is in Christ, will bring you to stand with shame and awful guilt before the bar of God?

(Jacob 6:8-9)

v. 15 For behold, he surely must die that salvation may come; yea, it behooveth him and becometh expedient that he dieth, to bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, that thereby men may be brought into the presence of the Lord.

v. 16 Yea, behold, this death bringeth to pass the resurrection, and redeemeth all mankind from the first death--that spiritual death; for all mankind, by the fall of Adam being cut off from the presence of the Lord, are considered as dead, both as to things temporal and to things spiritual.

v. 17 But behold, the resurrection of Christ redeemeth mankind, yea, even all mankind, and bringeth them back into the presence of the Lord.

v. 18 Yea, and it bringeth to pass the condition of repentance, that whosoever repenteth the same is not hewn down and cast into the fire; but whosoever repenteth not is hewn down and cast into the fire; and there cometh upon them again a spiritual death, yea, a second death, for they are cut off again as to things pertaining to righteousness.

v. 19 Therefore repent ye, repent ye, lest by knowing these things and not doing them ye shall suffer yourselves to come under condemnation, and ye are brought down unto this second death.

(Helaman 14:15-19)

4) Those who are redeemed eternally. That is, those who are brought before the Saviour to be judged and demonstrate that they, by right, may stay in the presence of the gods forever.

v. 12 Behold he created Adam, and by Adam came the fall of man. And because of the fall of man came Jesus Christ, even the Father and the Son; and because of Jesus Christ came the redemption of man.

v. 13 And 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, from which sleep all men shall be awakened by the power of God when the trump shall sound; and 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.

v. 14 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 9:12-14)

v. 21 And he that will hear my voice shall be my sheep; and him shall ye receive into the church, and him will I also receive.

v. 22 For behold, this is my church; whosoever is baptized shall be baptized unto repentance. And whomsoever ye receive shall believe in my name; and him will I freely forgive.

v. 23 For it is I that taketh upon me the sins of the world; for it is I that hath created them; and it is I that granteth unto him that believeth unto the end a place at my right hand.

v. 24 For behold, in my name are they called; and if they know me they shall come forth, and shall have a place eternally at my right hand.

v. 25 And it shall come to pass that when the second trump shall sound then shall they that never knew me come forth and shall stand before me.

v. 26 And then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, that I am their Redeemer; but they would not be redeemed.

v. 27 And then I will confess unto them that I never knew them; and they shall depart into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

v. 28 Therefore I say unto you, that he that will not hear my voice, the same shall ye not receive into my church, for him I will not receive at the last day.

(Mosiah 26:21-28)

v. 2 And now I, Mormon, speak unto you, my beloved brethren; and it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and his holy will, because of the gift of his calling unto me, that I am permitted to speak unto you at this time.

v. 3 Wherefore, I would speak unto you that are of the church, that are the peaceable followers of Christ, and that have obtained a sufficient hope by which ye can enter into the rest of the Lord, from this time henceforth until ye shall rest with him in heaven.

v. 4 And now my brethren, I judge these things of you because of your peaceable walk with the children of men.

(Moroni 7:2-4)

v. 29 For in mine own due time will I come upon the earth in judgment, and my people shall be redeemed and shall reign with me on earth.

v. 30 For the great Millennium, of which I have spoken by the mouth of my servants, shall come.

(D&C 43:29-30)

v. 14 Now, verily I say unto you, that through the redemption which is made for you is brought to pass the resurrection from the dead.

v. 15 And the spirit and the body are the soul of man.

v. 16 And the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul.

v. 17 And the redemption of the soul is through him that quickeneth all things, in whose bosom it is decreed that the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it.

v. 18 Therefore, it must needs be sanctified from all unrighteousness, that it may be prepared for the celestial glory;

v. 19 For after it hath filled the measure of its creation, it shall be crowned with glory, even with the presence of God the Father;

v. 20 That bodies who are of the celestial kingdom may possess it forever and ever; for, for this intent was it made and created, and for this intent are they sanctified.

v. 21 And they who are not sanctified through the law which I have given unto you, even the law of Christ, must inherit another kingdom, even that of a terrestrial kingdom, or that of a telestial kingdom.

v. 22 For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory.

v. 23 And he who cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom cannot abide a terrestrial glory.

v. 24 And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a telestial glory; therefore he is not meet for a kingdom of glory. Therefore he must abide a kingdom which is not a kingdom of glory.

v. 25 And again, verily I say unto you, the earth abideth the law of a celestial kingdom, for it filleth the measure of its creation, and transgresseth not the law--

v. 26 Wherefore, it shall be sanctified; yea, notwithstanding it shall die, it shall be quickened again, and shall abide the power by which it is quickened, and the righteous shall inherit it.

v. 27 For notwithstanding they die, they also shall rise again, a spiritual body.

v. 28 They who are of a celestial spirit shall receive the same body which was a natural body; even ye shall receive your bodies, and your glory shall be that glory by which your bodies are quickened.

v. 29 Ye who are quickened by a portion of the celestial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness.

v. 30 And they who are quickened by a portion of the terrestrial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness.

v. 31 And also they who are quickened by a portion of the telestial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness.

v. 32 And they who remain shall also be quickened; nevertheless, they shall return again to their own place, to enjoy that which they are willing to receive, because they were not willing to enjoy that which they might have received.

(D&C 88:14-32)

v. 58 The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God.

v. 59 And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall

receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation.

v. 60 Thus was the vision of the redemption of the dead revealed to me, and I bear record, and I know that this record is true, through the blessing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, even so, Amen.

(D&C 138:58-60)