Week 49 is scheduled for study Nov. 29-Dec. 5, 2021. One of the most important principles of these sections is that the offer of redemption is universally given to all of God's children.

Day 1

President M. Russell Ballard taught: "I invite you to thoroughly and thoughtfully read [Doctrine and Covenants 138]. As you do so, may the Lord bless you to more fully understand and appreciate God's love and His plan of salvation and happiness for His children."

Doctrine and Covenants 137 - Every soul will have the opportunity to choose celestial glory.

Let's take a look at Alvin Smith, Joseph Smith's oldest and deeply loved brother. Since Alvin died before the gospel of Christ was restored, the Smith family was taught what everyone was told at that time, that their brother/son was going to hell, because he hadn't been baptized. No one seemed to care what church provided the baptism, he just needed the ordinance to save him from hell. This doctrine, and the statements from preachers, whom they respected, caused a great deal of sorrow and hurt in the Smith family.

Now imagine the struggle the prophet had in the years that followed Alvin's death. Here Joseph had the gospel of Christ. He held the priesthood of God. He received

regular revelations about the eternities, and was visited by angelic messengers often. Yet for all this, there was silence from the heavens about the state of Joseph's beloved brother and Alvin's spiritual status before the Lord. You can imagine Joseph's surprise when, in 1838, he received the vision of the dead as the Saints were preparing for the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. Joseph saw Alvin in the celestial kingdom. What?! Everything he had been taught up to that time told him God would damn his brother because he hadn't been baptized! This serves as a reminder to all of us that the Restoration was, and is, an ongoing process. Joseph didn't have a perfect understanding of the plan of salvation at that time.

The last four verses of section 137 outline the Lord's kindness and mercy to His children. The Christian world believes that the only ones who can be saved in the kingdom of God in the hereafter are those who are baptized in this life. That leaves how many billions in how many nations of the earth without any way to be saved? These verses answer that question. Everyone and anyone who dies without the knowledge of the gospel, if, based on the Lord's knowledge of the intents of their heart and the works they perform, who would have accepted His gospel with all their hearts, will still be given the opportunity to enter into the celestial kingdom and be heirs to all His greatest blessings.

This means that where we are born, and when we are born in mortality isn't so much of a big deal as what we do with what we are given in this life. Our judgment will be based on our choices made around the circumstances of our life here on earth. We already know that all the ordinance work for every person will be done in the temples for all of God's children, so it isn't that they will be saved without having to make covenants. The Lord's requirements are the same for everyone in that regard.

Try to imagine how many millions of people down through the ages have lost loved ones to death without them being baptized first. How much unnecessary sorrow have people experienced because they were taught false doctrine? The doctrine in these verses shows us that God really is no respecter of persons. All of us will have equal opportunity to repent and accept the covenants of salvation before the day of resurrection.

Day 2

President M. Russell Ballard taught: "I invite you to thoroughly and thoughtfully read [Doctrine and Covenants 138]. As you do so, may the Lord bless you to more fully understand and appreciate God's love and His plan of salvation and happiness for His children."

Doctrine and Covenants 138:1-11, 25-30 - Reading and pondering the scriptures prepares me to receive revelation.

I've mentioned in other articles that the truths of the gospel are not usually all located in just one place within the scriptures and in the writings of the prophets. The truths are scattered throughout the scriptures and the prophets' writings. It is up to us to search out all we can on a subject then work to put them together for a greater understanding of that particular principle or doctrine.

Pondering is the act of seeking understanding. It happens after we have done the bulk of our research (yes, there is that academic word). Pondering is the act of trying to put all the pieces of doctrine together to gain a greater understanding of a principle or doctrine as a whole. It is in this process of trying to figure out how the gospel works on a particular point that the Spirit usually steps in, enlarges our understanding, and opens our spiritual eyes so we can comprehend things we hadn't considered before.

Satan has very carefully crafted today's society so as to prevent most quiet, tranquil atmospheres. This is what is required to receive revelation. Instead, he has filled our lives with noise, confusion, strife, and anything else that will drive away the Spirit. All this is done in an effort to prevent us from obtaining revelation from God. If we want revelation, we must seek out peace, quiet, and time to think and feel. All of these are needed for the Spirit to open our eyes and give us the time we need to comprehend and digest new information. Is it any wonder then that so many people receive their personal revelations in the dead of night, when they would prefer to be sleeping? The Spirit speaks to us whenever the conditions permit that communication. If we are too busy for Him during the day then He might need to get your attention when you would rather be sleeping. Many of the leaders of the Church sleep with paper and pencil next to the bed so they can write down what comes to them in their "sleeping" hours.

It is important to note here that we cannot dictate when and where the Spirit speaks to us. He speaks to us in the time and way in which the wisdom of God dictates it should happen. But we can create great opportunities for the Spirit to speak to us by creating

quiet time for contemplation and study. Often, it is in these quiet times that we receive our greatest insights.

Day 3

President M. Russell Ballard taught: "I invite you to thoroughly and thoughtfully read [Doctrine and Covenants 138]. As you do so, may the Lord bless you to more fully understand and appreciate God's love and His plan of salvation and happiness for His children."

Doctrine and Covenants 138:25-60 - The work of salvation is happening on both sides of the veil.

For today's lesson I will refer you to an article I wrote years ago on this very topic.

We Should Change How We Look at Mortality and the Spirit World

What exactly is the difference between mortality and the spirit world? It seems like a simple enough question to answer. All my life I have defined mortality as the period in eternity when we leave our Father in Heaven's presence ... Continue reading

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FHE/Personal Study

Doctrine and Covenants 138 - A little perspective

For almost four thousand years people had been waiting in the spirit world. Why? Because they couldn't progress until they could be resurrected or until they had a way to move from spirit prison into paradise. Making that last move required having the gospel preached to them and ordinances performed for them. None of these advancements were possible until the Savior was resurrected. His atonement for our sins wasn't complete until he, himself had received his glorified new body and had presented himself to the Father.

Once Christ moved into the next phase in his role as our Redeemer and Judge, all who had died from the days of Adam up to the meridian of time could now take the next step in their progression. Because Jesus had set up and organized his priesthood forces to preach the gospel to those who were captives of sin, they could now be taught and given the chance to repent and progress to the next step. Those who had been righteous during their lifetime could be judged and resurrected and begin the next phase in their own eternal progression.

All of these children of God had waited for the day of their release in one form or another. Some had waited for thousands of years, missing their body and longing for the day they could get it back and continue their journey toward godhood. These righteous were they who were gathered together waiting for the advent of the Savior. Did you note to yourself that they were perfectly aware of what was going on in mortality? They knew that the Savior's time on earth was almost over. They had gathered together in anticipation of his entrance into the Spirit world, rejoicing that their long wait was almost over. They were so eager to see their triumphant Savior come to liberate them. They were so privileged to be witnesses of his great triumph over sin and death!

I can only imagine their joy, awe, gratitude, and overwhelming love for their God when they saw him enter the spirit world as the victor, putting an exclamation point to everything they had lived for and put their faith in during their own mortal lives. He truly showed them in that moment that he was capable and willing to be the author and finisher of their faith. In him they had pinned all their hopes and dreams, and here he finally was, walking among them having paid the price for sin and giving them their

final assurance that their great reward was at hand with his own resurrection. What a privilege. What a blessing to be among such an assemblage of worthy men and women. In that congregation were all the ancient prophets, all the righteous women down through the ages, and every worthy covenant maker who had put their faith in Christ during their time on earth.

They looked forward to the coming of Jesus through the veil of death. We look forward to the coming of Jesus through the skies. They looked forward to his triumph over death. We look forward to his triumph over sin and evil in all their forms.

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print a PDF copy of the file.

The Vision of the Redemption of the Dead

Week 49