
ALMA 5-10

Book of Mormon, Adult Institute Class, Monday, 30 November 2009

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INTRODUCTION

This lesson is mostly comprised of three addresses Alma delivered as he began his focus on the ministry after relinquishing his position as chief judge. He embarked on a tour of the lands of the Nephites, preaching in each city. These chapters cover less than two years of Alma's efforts but provide some of the greatest doctrinal sermons he gave, reflecting his own personal experiences with the atonement. He preached first at home in Zarahemla, then traveled to nearby Gideon in the ninth year. Then in the tenth year, he went to Melek and Ammonihah, where he encountered both opposition and a great missionary companion.



The italicized heading preceding chapter 5 should probably read “Comprising chapters 5-8,” because all four chapters include “their cities and villages,” not just chapter 5 (in fact, it could easily be argued that it should be chapters 5-16, with the heading at chapter 9 a kind of sub-heading).

ALMA 5 PREACHING AT ZARAHEMPLA

- 1-2 Alma teaches the people of Zarahemla.
- 3-6 Remembering their fathers’ conversions.
- 7-13 They experienced a mighty change of heart.
- 14-25 We must experience that mighty change or be cast from the presence of God.
- 26-30 How to keep experiencing the mighty change.
- 31-36 God invites all to repent.
- 37-42 The two shepherds.
- 43-48 Alma testifies that his words are true.
- 49-52 The Spirit drives Alma to call the people to repentance.
- 53-56 Will you persist in your sins?
- 57- 60 Listen to the good shepherd.
- 61-62 Come and partake.

1 -2 ***first in the land of Zarahemla***. After stepping away from the office of chief judge, Alma now determined to teach the gospel throughout the land of the Nephites, starting with the capital city and his home, Zarahemla. Chapter 5 is that teaching, quoted from Alma’s “own record.”

3 ***consecrated by my father***. We may not know who ordained Alma₁, but Alma₂ clearly received the priesthood and the authority to act in the office of high priest under the hand of his father.

3-5 ***the land of Mormon***. When Alma had his visit from the angel, he was explicitly told to remember the captivity and deliverance of his father (Mosiah 27:16). This verse shows how well he did that—it was the first thing he mentioned in his discourse.

6 ***have you sufficiently retained in remembrance***. Alma turned the command he had received from the angel to the people—did they also remember? The most important thing was to remember God’s “mercy and long-suffering” and how he “delivered their souls from hell,” because that memory should stir them to action, to repentance.

7 ***changed their hearts...awoke unto God...illuminated by the light***. Though speaking of his fathers’ experience, Alma’s words are also self-reflective of his own angelic visitation, using similar wording as in Mosiah 27:23-29, where he awoke from his state of weakness (23), was “changed” (25) and saw “the marvelous light” (29).

9 ***the chains of hell***. This is the first occurrence of this phrase in the Book of Mormon, and Alma used it three times in this sermon, on two other occasions (Alma 12:11, 13:30). Ammon also used it once (Alma 26:14), independently of Alma, showing that they both perhaps got it from a common source. Though this phrase is not found in the Bible, there are references to related terms (e.g., 2 Peter 2:4).

11 ***Did he not speak the words of God, and my father Alma believe.*** Answering his own question about why these people had any cause for hope for salvation, he started by reminding them that Abinadi's words were from God, and Alma alone believed him.

12 ***a mighty change wrought in his heart.*** Alma's belief in Abinadi's words led to his own mighty change, an experience that isn't outlined in detail in scripture but which was probably the subject of discussion in the household of Alma.

13 ***a mighty change was also wrought in their hearts.*** The people who heard Alma's teachings experienced the same mighty change. See *Student Manual*, 178.

14 ***now behold, I ask of you.*** After laying out this recitation of his own father's experience and that of others among his hearers, he asks the punch line question—have you had this experience? He asks the question in three different ways, each reflecting an aspect of this experience: 1) "have ye spiritually been born of God?" Not physically born but reborn just the same, in order to become a son or daughter of God, part of his family. 2) "Have ye received his image in your countenances?" If we are converted, we do our best to emulate Christ, act like him, and be like him in every way. Alma's metaphor (and he is the only one in scripture to use this particular phrase), captures that emulation wonderfully. 3) "Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?" Hearts in the ancient world were the seat of "personality, and the intellect, memory, emotions, desires and will" (Ryken, 368). To be converted is to change every aspect of our lives to align with God's. When our thoughts, emotions, and even our desires match the Lord's, we truly have experienced a mighty change. See *Student Manual*, 179.

15 ***look forward with an eye of faith.*** Blessings of discipleship are both short- and long-term. The great blessings of resurrection and exaltation require faith in this life, because they are beyond the vision of our mortal lives.

16 ***can you imagine...the voice of the Lord.*** This is an important question. Many people struggle with forgiving themselves for sins near and in the distant past. To have faith that we can inherit eternal life, we have to be able to imagine the Lord saying, "Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness."

17-19 ***a remembrance of all your guilt.*** The opposite of the experience in verse 16 that we must experience is someone who does not strive to the "righteous works," who comes before God with a full recollection of their unrepentant sins. People in that condition cannot "look up, having the image of God engraven upon [their] countenances."

20 ***yielded yourselves to become subjects to the devil.*** To elect not to follow Christ is to choose to follow Satan. The book of Revelation portrays this particularly well, showing those who follow Christ in the temple in heaven, worshipping and receiving blessings, and those who follow Satan on earth suffering through plagues, trials, and more. As Mormon editorialized later in Alma's book, "And thus we see that the devil will not support his children at the last day, but doth speedily drag them down to hell" (Alma 30:60).

21 ***garments...cleansed from all stain, through the blood.*** In a paradoxical metaphor, Alma says that Christ's blood, which would typically stain a garment permanently (especially in that day), actually cleanses our garments. Verse 27 goes further, saying that his blood will make our garments

“white.” This demonstrates that his blood is powerful, because it can remove the stain of sin from our clothing and make us white and pure before God. No other blood in the world could do that.

22-25 Unrepentant souls, who have committed “all manner of wickedness,” will come with stained garments, since the atoning blood of Christ has never touched their garments. They will be “cast out,” not able to enter in the kingdom of God like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and other prophets.

26 ***sing the song of redeeming love.*** Alma hearkened back to Abinadi’s words (Mosiah 15:30), which was a quote from Isaiah 52:9, where the “waste places of Jerusalem” break out into songs of joy, because “the Lord hath comforted [consoled] his people.”

can ye feel so now? Even if we have experienced the mighty change at some point in our lives, we must continue to experience it regularly—even daily.

27 ***ye have been sufficiently humble.*** The first step to making any progress in our spiritual journey is humility, even as Christ humbled himself to come to Earth and atone for us, and taught us to be humble like little children (Matthew 18:4).

28-29 ***stripped of pride...stripped of envy.*** Kim Clark, the president of BYU-Idaho, spoke recently in a BYU devotional about this concept, using an example of stripping a piece of furniture. He described the work (“scraping and stripping and sanding”) that went into taking off the old finish to get down to bare wood, which then allowed them to put on a beautiful new finish, making the furniture look brand new (see <http://speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&id=1865&tid=5>). So it is with us, as we must work hard to strip off all the remnants of the natural man and the carnal world in order to be refinished in the image of God. See also Elder Jeffrey R. Holland’s comments in *Student Manual*, 180.

33 ***the arms of mercy are extended.*** Jacob was the first one to coin this beautiful image (Jacob 6:5). Perhaps more importantly to Alma, Abinadi used it (Mosiah 16:12), as did Mosiah (Mosiah 29:20).

34 ***the tree of life.*** Alma next referenced Lehi and Nephi and their vision of the tree of life (1 Nephi 8 and 11).

35-36 ***not be hewn down and cast into the fire.*** Yet a third reference to an early Nephite prophet, this time Jacob again (Jacob 5).

38 ***the good shepherd doth call you...in his own name.*** There is a fascinating affinity between both Almas and the apostle John in the New Testament. This is another example: the phrase “good shepherd” is only found in John’s writings outside of the Book of Mormon (John 10:11, 14). Alma uses it seven times in this discourse, starting here.

39 ***of what fold are ye?*** Returning to the logic of verse 20, Alma concludes that if we are not part of the fold of the good shepherd, we must then be of Satan’s fold.

40 ***good cometh from God...evil cometh from the devil.*** Quoting another early Nephite writer on the small plates, Amaleki in Omni 1:25, Mormon will much later use this concept in a sermon recorded by his son, Moroni (Moroni 7:12).

42 ***for his wages he receiveth death.*** Jesus rewards those with him with eternal life; Satan rewards his followers with death (cf. Romans 6:23).

45 ***I do know that these things...are true.*** Alma bore testimony that his words were from the correct source and that he has learned truth from God.

46 ***fasted and prayed many days.*** Though Alma gained an ‘instant testimony’ from the angel, he nevertheless struggled and put in great effort to gain a testimony of the Holy Ghost, through fasting and prayer.

the spirit of revelation. See *Student Manual*, 180-181.

48 ***Jesus Christ shall come.*** It would be less than a century before Jesus would walk the earth during his mortal sojourn, though more than a century until the Nephites would see the resurrected Lord among their own people. See also verse 50.

49 ***to preach unto all.*** Alma’s message is universal—to all ages and social statuses—repent and be born again.

51 ***the Spirit saith unto me...Go forth.*** Alma is not out preaching to the people because he thinks it’s a great idea or for any other personal reason. He is merely being obedient to God, who, through the Holy Ghost, commands him to go teaching.

52 ***hewn down and cast into the fire.*** Harkens back to the metaphor of Jacob 5.

53 ***setting your hearts upon the vain things of the world.*** Being stripped of pride and envy were given earlier as hallmarks of true followers of Jesus. Alma got very practical here and cited the bad examples of wearing costly apparel (a regular Book of Mormon manifestation of pride) and setting their hearts on the things of the world—meaning to think about them, get emotionally tied into them, and greatly desire them.

54 ***the persecution of your brethren.*** Alma is calling church members who are persecuting *other* church members to repentance.

55 ***turning your backs upon the poor.*** As King Benjamin taught (Mosiah 4), an essential part of our conversion is reaching out to those in need.

57 ***be ye separate.*** The Hebrew word for holy (*qados*) has the meaning of “set apart” or “separate.” In other words, to be holy is to set something apart from daily living for God. Alma’s request to “be ye separate” is a call to holiness. See *Student Manual*, 181-182.

58 ***written in the book of life.*** Though common in the New Testament and the Doctrine and Covenants, this is the only verse in the Book of Mormon that uses this phrase. This is actually another affinity with John, for except for one reference in Philippians, the only references to “the book of life” are in the book of Revelation (12 of them).

62 ***command unto you that belong to the church.*** Alma testified that his words were those of the Savior (“in the language of him who hath commanded me”), and thus a commandment to the Church, as well as an invitation to those not yet in the Church. His desire was for everyone to partake “of the fruit of the tree of life.”

ALMA 6 ZARAHEMLA ESTABLISHED, JOURNEY TO GIDEON

- 1-6 Alma establishes the church in Zarahemla.
- 7-8 Alma departs for Gideon.

1 **by laying on his hands.** This is the first Book of Mormon reference to this, in relation to the priesthood. Previous uses of the term had to do with grabbing someone to do them violence (e.g., 1 Nephi 17:48; Mosiah 13:2-3).

2-3 **who repented of their sins.** Repentance is the determining factor. Those who repented were baptized and “received into the church.” Those who did not repent “were rejected, and their names were blotted out.” By these actions, the church was purged of disobedience and strengthened by new converts.

5 **the word of God was liberal unto all.** Meaning, freely available.

6 **fasting and mighty prayer in behalf...of those who knew not God.** A common practice in the Book of Mormon was to fast and pray for those not yet in the Church.

7 **the city of Gideon.** Alma’s next destination was Gideon, which was a city on “the east of the river Sidon,” the opposite side from Zarahemla. It was in a valley also called Gideon, and named after the Gideon who tried to kill king Noah, helped lead the people away from Nephi to Zarahemla, and was finally slain by Nehor. Gideon is mentioned as a city of faithful people who rejected Khorihor (Alma 30) and figures in the war chapters (Alma 61-62). The final mention of Gideon, though, came from Samuel the Lamanite, who declared that by that day, Gideon was full of “wickedness and abominations” (Helaman 13:15).

8 **the spirit of prophecy...the testimony of Jesus Christ.** Cf. Revelation 19:10.

ALMA 7 PREACHING AT GIDEON

- 1-2 Alma is able to come because he is no longer chief judge.
- 3-5 Alma struggled to get Zarahemla on the right track.
- 6-9 The message of the talk is the life and mission of the Redeemer.
- 10-11a Jesus’ mortal ministry.
- 11b-13 Jesus atones for sins, pains, sicknesses, and infirmities.
- 14-16 Repentance and obedience leads to eternal life.
- 17-19 The people of Gideon are fulfilling Alma’s desires as a righteous people.
- 20-21 God does not dwell in unholy places.
- 22-24 How to fulfill our duty to God.
- 26-27 Alma leaves his blessing on the people.

1-2 **the first time that I have spoken unto you.** Alma’s time was completely occupied by his role as chief judge, so much that he could not fulfill his role as high priest. Resigning as chief judge allowed him for the first time to get out among the various areas and teach the Church members in each city.

3 **ye were not in the awful dilemma...at Zarahemla.** Alma expected that the church at Gideon would be stronger and more faithful than Zarahemla, and that is just what he found. Accordingly,

his discourse at Gideon has a different flavor, speaking less about judgment and more about the power of the mission of Christ and how his atonement can impact our lives in very specific ways. This is a talk for seasoned members, not those struggling to stay in the Church.

5 *after wading through much affliction and sorrow.* The changes Alma made in Zarahemla were painful and took their toll, but needed to be done. Anyone who has struggled to help someone through the process of repentance and especially watched someone fail in that process after trying but giving up can appreciate the sorrow Alma felt.

6 *I trust that ye...* Alma lists six things in this verse that are basically ‘the state of the church’ in his time. If they were in good shape on these six things, they were where the Lord wanted them to be.

- “not in a state of so much unbelief”
- “not lifted up in the pride of your hearts”
- “have not set your hearts upon riches”
- “do not worship idols”
- “do worship the true and the living God”
- “look forward for the remission of your sins”

7 *one thing which is of more importance.* A prophet can teach of many things, but Alma wanted the good people of Gideon to know the most important message he could deliver—“that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people.”

8 *the Spirit hath not said unto me.* Alma cautioned that he doesn’t believe Jesus will visit the Nephites as a mortal, because that is not something that he has been taught by the Holy Ghost. He does, however, leave the door open, because the Lord “hath power to do all things.”

9 *prepare ye the way of the Lord.* Anciently, before a king arrived at a place, a herald would precede him, declaring his coming and making sure all things were in order for his arrival. This might even involve road construction (see verse 19 below). John the Baptist had this role in the Old World, and Alma plays that role, at least partly, in the New.

10 *born of Mary, at Jerusalem.* Some have criticized the Book of Mormon for this statement, saying it is clearly a mistake. Obviously, we know today that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, about six miles from Jerusalem. But there is no conflict with that fact and Alma’s statement. First, Jerusalem here is defined as “the land of our forefathers,” not the city. Bethlehem was close enough to be included in the ‘land of Jerusalem.’ Second, neither Alma nor anyone in the land had ever seen Jerusalem or any other Old World location. It makes sense that they would generalize and associate Jerusalem, from which their ancestors had come, with the entire area. Third, calling the whole land “Jerusalem” is similar to how we might respond when someone from far away asks, ‘Where are you from.’ ‘Seattle,’ might be my response, because I know they wouldn’t know my true home town. But if I was talking to someone who lived in this area, I would never say I was from Seattle, for that would only cause confusion—it’s 20 miles away from actual home in Redmond.

11 *pains and afflictions and temptations.* Jesus’ mortal life was full of all the tests of mortality. Just because his father was the eternal God doesn’t mean he was spared from such challenges.

11b-13 Alma outlined several aspects of the atonement that Jesus would accomplish, beyond just atoning for sins:

- “take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.”
- “take upon him death” that he might overcome it.
- “take upon him their infirmities” that he might have mercy and “succor his people.”
- “take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions.”

See also *Student Manual*, 182-183.

14 **repent, and be born again.** Going back to the main theme in Alma 5, only here Alma didn’t develop it in the same way.

mighty to save. Both Isaiah (63:1) and Nephi (2 Nephi 31:19) had used this phrase previously.

15 **lay aside every sin, which easily doth beset you.** Many of us have ‘pet sins’ that are comfortable, familiar, and ongoing in our lives. Usually these are not serious from the world’s perspective. But Alma’s challenge is to rid ourselves of “every sin” at the time of our covenant of baptism and continually after that.

16 **he shall have eternal life.** If we can set aside all of our sin and keep God’s commandments, we are assured that we will one day hear the Lord assure us that eternal life is secured.

17 **I know that ye believe them...great is my joy.** Preaching in Gideon must have been completely different than preaching in Zarahemla. The people in Gideon readily accepted Alma’s words—as the Spirit told him—thus bringing him great joy.

19 **ye are making his paths straight.** This image is from Isaiah 40:3, which reads, “Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” Another translation could be, ‘in the wilderness, build a smooth roadway for God.’ The call in Isaiah is to clear or even build the path and make it smooth, pleasing, and agreeable—fit for the return of the king. As we serve in the kingdom of God, we are, in essence, building the road by which he will return one day to rule.

20 **he cannot walk in crooked paths.** Playing on the “straight” image, Alma contrasts the paths of the wicked, which are “crooked” (meaning twisted, distorted, or perverted) and where the Lord cannot walk.

22 **awaken you to a sense of your duty to God.** Alma’s logic is that God cannot walk in crooked paths or dwell in unholy places, thus our duty is to make our own paths straight so he can walk them with us, and our lives holy places so he can dwell there with us.

23-24 Alma’s laundry list of righteous attributes is a good checklist to review from time to time to assess how we are doing. Are we humble and submissive? Are we gentle, patient, long-suffering? Are we diligent in keeping the commandments? Do we pray for our needs and give thanks for our blessings? Do we exercise our faith, hope, and charity? Note that the *Student Manual* suggests these are responsibilities of Melchizedek priesthood holders (p. 183).

25 **keep your garments spotless.** As with other topics above, Alma gave the metaphor here but not in the same detail as in Alma 5. This could perhaps be because the people of Gideon did not need it or because this speech is more a summary than that in Alma 5 (See 8:1).

27 **may the peace of God rest upon you.** As many in the Church do today, Alma, as the visiting authority, concluded with a blessing pronounced on the people of Gideon. This blessing was for the

“peace of God” to be upon the people, their homes and lands, their flocks and herds, and their families. Compare Philippians 4:7 and Colossians 3:15.

ALMA 8 MELEK AND AMMONIHAH

- 1-2 Alma returns home for a rest.
- 3-5 Alma teaches with success at Melek.
- 6-10 Alma labors with no success at Ammonihah.
- 11-13 Being rejected, Alma leaves for Aaron.
- 14-17 An angel directs Alma to return.
- 18-21 Alma encounters Amulek who feeds him.
- 22-26 Alma blesses Amulek and his household.
- 27-32 Alma and Amulek teach the people together.

1 **returned to his own house at Zarahemla to rest.** The record doesn’t indicate how much of the ninth year was spent in this effort, but Alma may have been gone for quite some time.

3 **the tenth year.** The account of this year goes to the end of chapter 15.

into the land of Melek. Melek is not mentioned as a city, just a land. It was located “on the west of the river Sidon,” the same side as Zarahemla. However, it was “on the west, by the borders of the wilderness,” meaning over toward the western coast but still on the Zarahemla side of the wilderness leading toward the coastal areas. Melek later was the home of Amulek and Zeezrom (Alma 31:6), was the temporary residence of the people of Ammon (who vacated their assigned lands in Jershon because of war; Alma 35:13), and was the area to which Alma was journeying when he was never seen again (Alma 45:18). It was not mentioned again after that.

4-5 **the people came to him.** People from all over the land of Melek came to Alma and were baptized by him in large numbers. However, no record of his words was provided in the record.

6 **three days’ journey on the north.** Three days’ journey would probably be about 45-60 miles, taking Alma perhaps a weeks’ journey or more away from Zarahemla.

Ammonihah. Though it was a “great city” (Alma 16:9), it is portrayed only as a wicked city in the account. Imprisoning prophets and killing believers, the city of Ammonihah was completely destroyed by the Lamanites in 81 BC (Alma 25:2). It was rebuilt and fortified by Captain Moroni ten years later (Alma 49) but is not mentioned again after that.

During this visit, Alma and his companion, Amulek, delivered marvelous doctrinal teachings, in spite of the challenges and persecutions. The record of this visit goes from here to chapter 14, so split across two lessons.

7 **call their lands...after the name of him who first possessed them.** From this we learn that Ammonihah was named after its founder, but we know nothing else about this.

8-9 **Satan had gotten great hold.** The people of Ammonihah, far removed from the center of Nephite government in Zarahemla, had rejected the gospel and gone their own way, which included much wickedness.

10 **wrestling with God in mighty prayer.** Though faced with great opposition, Alma's reaction was to pray for the Spirit to be poured out on these people—a great lesson for all of us seeking to share the gospel.

11-12 **thou hast no power over us.** Knowing that Alma had given up the judgment seat, the people knew that Alma was only the high priest, and therefore could not legally do anything about the things he was teaching (not that Alma would force them to join the church even if he had the power to do so).

13 **he departed thence.** After being reviled, spit on, and cast out of the city, Alma left, intended to go to the nearby city of Aaron.

14 **weighed down with sorrow.** Alma was not happy to leave Ammonihah, for he was sorrowful about “the wickedness of the people.” He continued to think and anguish about this as he journeyed toward Aaron.

an angel of the Lord appeared. For at least the second time in his life, Alma saw an angel, but this time under very different circumstances.

15 **Blessed art thou, Alma.** A very different greeting than the one he experienced with the sons of Mosiah!

I am he that delivered it unto you. This was the same angel that made that first visit more than ten years previous. Then he came with condemnation and warning, now he comes with a call to “rejoice,” because Alma has “been faithful in keeping the commandments of God” since that other visit.

16 **return to the city of Ammonihah.** After what Alma had been through there, a command to return must have been a daunting assignment. Perhaps the memory of Abinadi going back to Nephi crossed Alma's mind, and he knew how that ended. The message was certainly similar to Abinadi's—“except they repent the Lord God will destroy them.”

17 **they do study...[to] destroy the liberty of thy people.** Being followers of Nehor (Alma 16:11) and Amlici, who had tried to be king (Alma 2), these people were surely at least trying to take away the rights of the people of God and perhaps even trying to overthrow the current system of government, in favor of something that supported their own philosophies.

18 **he returned speedily.** Alma didn't just go back at a leisurely pace—he returned with great speed, so obedient was he to the Lord.

entered the city by another way. The record doesn't say what way he went in the first time, but this time he enters by the south, going to a different part of town.

19-20 **I am a Nephite.** Upon entering the city, Alma asked a man for some food. His response, that he was a “Nephite” (which he later defines as a direct descendent of Nephi—Alma 10:2-3) shows that being a Nephite was fairly unique, or else why point it out?

an angel said in a vision: Thou shalt receive. See Alma 10:7.

21 **the man was called Amulek.** Amulek became a great missionary companion to Alma during this preaching mission, and later served in many capacities, such as among the Zoramites (Alma 30-35)

and the people of Ammon (Alma 35:1). He gave up everything to serve the Lord (Alma 15:16-18). But it is notable that both Alma and Amulek's conversions were triggered by angelic ministrations when they were in sin, and perhaps by the same angel.

23 *I am Alma, and am the high priest.* Interesting that Alma only introduced himself after he had eaten and blessed Amulek's household.

24-25 Alma recounted his first unsuccessful attempt to preach among the people of Ammonihah.

26 *I had fasted many days.* Whether Alma was traveling without purse or script and thus had not been fed or because he had chosen to fast on account of the people is not stated. Either way, Amulek's hospitality was the first time Alma had eaten in a long time.

27 *Alma tarried many days.* Since he returned to the city so quickly after the conversation with the angel, you'd think he'd start teaching immediately. The reason for the delay is not given. Perhaps Alma correctly sensed that Amulek's support would be a key to opening the door in the city, and so labored first to convert him.

29 *Go; and also say unto my servant Amulek.* The Spirit prompted that it was time to teach, but now Alma was not alone—he had the now-converted Amulek as his second witness.

31 *power given unto them.* Mormon pre-figures events in the next few chapters—that Alma and Amulek had power such that they could not be confined in prison or killed.

ALMA 9 ALMA TEACHES AT AMMONIHAH

- 1-7 The people of Ammonihah confront Alma as he begins to teach.
- 8-11 Alma reminds them of God's blessings in the past.
- 12-18 The people must repent or be destroyed, as even Lehi foretold.
- 19-24 The Nephites will be destroyed by the Lamanites if they are unrighteous.
- 25-29 The words of the angel; the Son of God will come and save the repentant.
- 30 Though Alma's brethren, they are lost and fallen.
- 31-34 The people are angry with Alma, but don't yet capture him.

1 *I, Alma.* Mormon starts this section of Alma and Amulek preaching at Ammonihah (through chapter 14) in the first person—he is quoting Alma's record. But it doesn't remain a direct quotation for the entire time, as Mormon adds editorial comments and background information, where needed. The sermons, though, appear to be directly from Alma's record.

2 *we shall believe the testimony of one man.* This challenge from the people is quickly resolved by the presence of Amulek, but the latter doesn't step forward right away, and Alma attempts to declare his message.

Who art thou? Not that they do not know his identity, but they are declining to submit to his authority. They also ask, "Who is God, that sendeth no more authority than one man...?" This hearkens back to the comments of king Noah in Mosiah 11:27.

4 *destroyed in one day.* Though the people said it in obstinacy, it ironically proved to be exactly what happened to their city (Alma 25:1-2).

7 **they stood forth to lay their hands on me.** This began to feel like a repeat of Alma's previous experience in the city. But for a reason Alma doesn't not explain, they did not yet attempt to take him, giving him and Amulek opportunity to deliver their message.

8-11 **how have ye forgotten.** Alma starts by reminding the people how great God's blessings have been to their fathers, including Lehi at the beginning down to their own parents and grandparents who were protected and preserved from the Lamanites and the wicked priests of Noah.

12 **repent, or he will utterly destroy you.** This was also Abinadi's message to Noah and his court. The day was past when the prophet could merely say, 'Repent and God will forgive.' Now repentance was the minimal requirement just to maintain their lives.

13 **he spake unto Lehi.** Alma quoted Lehi in 2 Nephi 1:20.

14 **The Lamanites have been cut off.** Alma's example that Lehi's words were true was the Lamanites, who were clearly cut off from the Lord's presence. Of course, somewhat paradoxically, at this very time, hundreds of Lamanites are being converted by Alma's friends, the sons of Mosiah, and their companions.

15-16 **more tolerable for them in this life than for you.** The Lamanites were indeed cut off from God, but it was the fault of choices made by their fathers, and the Lord had made covenants and promises about them that would offer more leniencies in judgment than what would be extended to the people of Ammonihah, who had no such traditions keeping them in ignorance.

17 **they will be brought to believe in his word.** Again, it was happening right as Alma was teaching, but he could not have known that. Still, there is a great future fulfillment that we are seeing in our day when millions of descendents of the Lamanites will join the Church.

18 **the Lamanites shall be sent.** Alma was very specific about the prophesied destruction. It would be by the hand of the Lamanites, would come as a surprise, and the result would be "utter destruction."

19-23 **they could fall into sins and transgressions.** Alma's bold point, which declares the mind of the Lord, was that God would rather destroy the Nephite civilization than have them fall into sin and transgression, for the Nephites had received great light and blessings.

25 **for this cause, that ye may not be destroyed.** Alma was clear that he and others (alluding to Amulek, no doubt) were sent by the voice of an angel to try and save the people of Ammonihah. Verses 25-28 are a quotation from the angel.

26-27 **the Son of God shall come.** The angel declared the imminent coming of Christ, who is filled with divine attributes and quick to hear and answer prayers. It is he who will redeem those who have faith, repent, and are baptized.

28 **all men shall reap a reward.** The righteous and the evil each have their own reward, according to the angel.

30 **ye are a lost and a fallen people.** This was a hard message for Alma to deliver and for them to hear. Though he called them "my beloved brethren," he quickly clarified that they were indeed his brethren and that he truly desired for them to be beloved, but because of their hard hearts, they were instead lost.

31-32 ***the people were wrath with me***. For most of his hearers, Alma's words caused anger, not humble self-reflection. They wanted to put Alma in prison, but were again prevented somehow from doing so.

33-34 ***Amulek went forth***. Stepping out of the crowd, Amulek stood to bear a second testimony, to confirm the truth of Alma's words.

ALMA 10 AMULEK TEACHES HIS NEIGHBORS

- 1-6a Amulek introduces himself, a descendent of Nephi, a successful man, but who had ignored the Lord until now.
- 6b-11 Amulek testifies of Alma's mission and his own experiences with an angel.
- 12-16 Lawyers try to trip Amulek up in his words.
- 17-21 Amulek condemns the lawyer's evil designs.
- 22-23 The prayers of the righteous can spare the wicked for a time.
- 24 The people are angry with Amulek.
- 25-27 Amulek declares that their wickedness will lead to destruction.
- 28-30 The people again cry out against Amulek, led by the lawyers.
- 31-32 Zeezrom, the leader of the lawyers against Amulek, is introduced.

2 ***I am the son of Giddonah***. Other than this verse, we know nothing about Amulek's ancestry, but what an intriguing glimpse we get here.

Aminadi who interpreted the writing which was upon the wall of the temple. Here is a story not in the Book of Mormon, but perhaps on the large plates, but a fascinating one, reminding us of the story in Daniel 5. Regardless, it was a story known to Amulek's neighbors, and established his identity with the crowd.

3 ***a descendant of Manasseh***. This is the only source that we have that Lehi was a descendant of Manasseh. The other reference, given by Nephi, is just that he is a descendant of Joseph (1 Nephi 5:14).

4 ***a man of no small reputation***. Amulek was a rich and successful businessman, which many social connections. In other words, he was a prominent citizen of Ammonihah.

5-6 ***I did harden my heart***. Amulek recounted that he had seen the power of God in delivering this people, but had hardened his heart and determined to ignore the Lord. He doesn't appear to have fought against it, as did Alma, but their backgrounds were similar in that they did not let God into their lives until an angel spoke to them.

6 ***the fourth day of this seventh month***. In a rare specific notation, Amulek refers to the exact date of his encounter with the angel. This is also the first time in the text that a specific date is mentioned. There are not enough mentions like this to reconstruct the Nephite calendar system (just as there are not enough in the Old Testament to understand that calendar), so we don't even have a way to reconcile the seventh month with our present calendar. Other references to dates are all in Alma or 3 Nephi prior to Christ's coming, perhaps indicating a more developed period of tracking dates after the reign of the judges.

7 *an angel of the Lord appeared unto me.* This is a longer version of Alma 8:20. Amulek was on his way to see a close relative, when the angel appeared and told him to take in Alma and feed him. Amulek mentioned no condemnation of his prior life by the angel, even though he himself spoke of his sins (verses 5-6).

8 *as I was going thither.* The timing is interesting. Alma “speedily” (8:18) obeyed and hurried back to the city. Amulek immediately turned back from his intended destination to head home, as the angel requested. As a result, he and Alma entered the city at the same moment, both following direction and promptings, which enabled Alma to fulfill his mission in this city.

8-9 *this same man who has been speaking.* Amulek confirmed that the person the angel declared to be a “holy man” was Alma, who just finished talking. He is forcing his audience to acknowledge that if they know him and believe him to be an honest man, then they must also accept Alma as a prophet of God.

10 *sent his angel...while this Alma hath dwelt at my house.* This verse documents a second appearance of the angel to Amulek. After Alma had been teaching Amulek and his family for some time, the angel came to testify that his words were true.

11 *he hath blessed mine house.* Alma literally left his blessing on Amulek’s house, but Amulek’s meaning in this phrase was more, since he had accepted Alma’s teachings and brought “the blessing of the Lord” on his house as well.

12 *more than one witness who testified.* They had already dismissed Alma as a lone testifier. Now Amulek’s testimony had given Alma a second witness, and a powerful one that invoked the words of an angel sent from God. This caused many of them “to be astonished.”

13-16 *them who thought to question them...lawyers.* Men skilled in the law and discussion but still hard of heart stepped forward to try and trip Alma and Amulek up in their words. Their purpose was not clarity, but “that they might deliver them to their judges...that they might be slain or cast into prison.”

17-18 *Amulek could know of their designs.* By the power of the Spirit, Amulek perceived the wicked intent of the lawyers and openly condemned them.

19-21 *well doth he cry unto this people.* Prophets and even angels were calling for repentance among the people, warning them of things to come. Amulek reminded them that Mosiah had said that when the majority of the people choose evil, “they would be ripe for destruction.”

22-23 *it is by the prayers of the righteous that ye are spared.* The Lord was withholding judgment upon the people, Amulek explained, because of the prayers of a few righteous. See *Student Manual*, 186.

24-27 *destruction of this people is...by the unrighteousness of your lawyers and your judges.* When people reacted to Amulek’s condemnation, saying he had spoken ill of their lawyers and judges, his response was even blunter—it was the lawyers and judges who were leading the way to destruction.

28-30 *Now we know that this man is a child of the devil.* Egged on by the lawyers and judges, the people condemned Amulek for both speaking against their law and their lawyers and judges.

31-32 **Zeezrom**. The most vocal of Amulek's opposition was Zeezrom. He was one of their most talented lawyers and made money by drumming up cases which he could argue, for he got paid by the case. Zeezrom started off as an enemy to the work but we will see in the next lesson that the Spirit was able to change him and make him another great missionary of Alma's day.

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