

LESSON 21
“Alma...Did Judge Righteous Judgment”
Mosiah 29; Alma 1-4

OVERVIEW:

Mosiah teaches principles of good government. Alma the Younger serves as Chief Judge and combats priestcraft. Amlici seeks to be king but is rejected by the voice of the people. The Church prospers but becomes prideful. Alma resigns the judgment seat to devote himself to the ministry.

(This was a system of government which might be called theodemocratic, in the sense that the voice of the people as well as the word and will of the Lord would form the basis for decisions made and laws instituted. Theocratic governments trace their origin to the earliest ages. “Adam, our father, the first man, is the presiding high priest over the earth for all ages. The government the Lord gave him was patriarchal, and from the expulsion from Eden to the cleansing of the earth by water in the day of Noah, the righteous portion of mankind were blessed and governed by a patriarchal theocracy. This theocratic system, patterned after the order and system that prevailed in heaven, was the government of God. He himself, though dwelling in heaven, was the lawgiver, judge and king. He gave direction in all things both civil and ecclesiastical; there was no separation of church and state as we now know it. All governmental affairs were directed, controlled, and regulated from on high. The Lord’s legal administrators on earth served by virtue of their callings and ordinations in the Holy Priesthood and as they were guided by the power of the Holy Ghost. Bruce R. McConkie, *New Witness*, p. 35.)

SCRIPTURES:

THE BOOK OF MOSIAH
CHAPTER 29

Mosiah proposes that judges be chosen in place of a king—Unrighteous kings lead their people into sin—Alma the younger is chosen chief judge by the voice of the people—He is also the high priest over the Church—Alma the elder and Mosiah die. [About 92—91 B.C.] (This begins a period when the people are governed by the rule of law and the voice of the people. See comments at the end of this chapter.)

1 NOW when Mosiah had done this he sent out throughout all the land, among all the people, desiring to know their will concerning who should be their king.

2 And it came to pass that the voice of the people came, saying: We are desirous that Aaron (Aaron must have been the eldest son since it appears that the right of kingship rested with him.) thy son should be our king and our ruler.

3 Now Aaron had gone up to the land of Nephi, therefore the king could not confer the kingdom upon him; ^aneither would Aaron take upon him the kingdom; neither were any of the ^bsons of Mosiah ^cwilling to take upon them the kingdom.

4 Therefore king Mosiah sent again among the people; yea, even a written word sent he among the people. And these were the words that were written, saying:

5 Behold, O ye my people, or my brethren, for I esteem you as such, I desire that ye should consider the cause which ye are called to ^aconsider—for ye are desirous to have a king.

6 Now I declare unto you that he to whom the kingdom doth rightly belong has declined, and will not take upon him the kingdom.

7 And now if there should be another appointed in his stead, behold I fear there would rise ^acontentions among you. And who knoweth but what my son, to whom the kingdom doth belong, should turn to be

angry and ^bdraw away a part of this people after him, which would cause wars and contentions among you, which would be the cause of shedding much blood and perverting the way of the Lord, yea, and destroy the souls of many people.

8 Now I say unto you let us be wise and consider these things, for we have no right to destroy my son, neither should we have any right to destroy another if he should be appointed in his stead.

9 And if my son should turn again to his pride and vain things he would recall the things which he had said, and claim his right to the kingdom, which would cause him and also this people to commit much sin.

10 And now let us be wise and look forward to these things, and do that which will make for the peace of this people.

11 Therefore I will be your king the remainder of my days; nevertheless, let ^aus appoint ^bjudges, to judge this people according to our law; and we will newly arrange the affairs of this people, for we will appoint wise men to be judges, that will judge this people according to the commandments of God.

12 Now it is better that a man should be ^ajudged of God than of man, for the judgments of God are always just, but the judgments of man are not always just.

13 Therefore, ^aif it were possible that you could have ^bjust men to be your kings, who would establish the ^claws of God, and judge this people according to his commandments, yea, if ye could have men for your kings who would do even as my father ^dBenjamin did for this people—I say unto you, if this could always be the case then it would be expedient that ye should always have kings to rule over you.

14 And even I myself have labored with all the power and faculties which I have possessed, to teach you the commandments of God, and to establish peace throughout the land, that there should be no wars nor contentions, no stealing, nor plundering, nor murdering, nor any manner of iniquity;

15 And whosoever has committed iniquity, him have I ^apunished according to the crime which he has committed, according to the law which has been given to us by our fathers.

16 Now I say unto you, that because all men are not just it is not expedient that ye should have a ^aking or kings to rule over you.

17 For behold, how much ^ainiquity doth one ^bwicked king cause to be committed, yea, and what great destruction!

18 Yea, remember king Noah, his ^awickedness and his abominations, and also the wickedness and abominations of his people. Behold what great destruction did come upon them; and also because of their iniquities they were brought into ^bbondage.

19 And were it not for the interposition of their all-wise Creator, and this because of their sincere repentance, they must unavoidably remain in bondage until now.

20 But behold, he did deliver them because they did ^ahumble themselves before him; and because they ^bcried mightily unto him he did deliver them out of bondage; and thus doth the Lord work with his power in all cases among the children of men, extending the arm of ^cmercy towards them that put their ^dtrust in him.

21 And behold, now I say unto you, ye cannot dethrone an iniquitous ^aking save it be through much contention, and the shedding of much blood.

22 For behold, he has his ^afriends in iniquity, and he keepeth his guards about him; and he teareth up the laws of those who have reigned in righteousness before him; and he trampleth under his feet the commandments of God;

23 And he enacteth laws, and sendeth them forth among his people, yea, laws after the manner of his own wickedness; and whosoever doth not obey his laws he ^acauseth to be destroyed; and whosoever doth rebel against him he will send his armies against them to war, and if he can he will destroy them; and thus an unrighteous ^bking doth pervert the ways of all righteousness.

24 And now behold I say unto you, it is not expedient that such abominations should come upon you.

25 Therefore, choose you by the ^avoice of this people, judges, that ye may be ^bjudged according to the ^claws which have been given you by our fathers, which are correct, and which were given them by the

hand of the Lord. (In the context of Mosiah's ancient world, we must also remember the nature of the king. The king was good because he was the conduit to the will of God. With the removal of the king, Mosiah was suggesting that the direct governing influence of God would be cut. If the king were no longer present to receive the will of God for the governing of the people, how would they know what was "right?" Mosiah's answer is that the measuring stick would now be the voice of the people rather than the voice of the king (as mouthpiece for God). Brant Gardner.)

26 Now it is not common that the ^avoice of the people desireth anything ^bcontrary to that which is right; (J. Reuben Clark said: "I have a complete confidence in the aggregate wisdom of the...people, *if they are given and made to understand the facts*. The wisdom of the mass is always greater than the wisdom of the individual or of the group. The few may be more subtle, more agile-minded, more resourceful; they may for a time push to the front and scamper ahead in the march; they may on occasion and for a time entice us down the wrong highway at the crossroads. But the great slow-moving, deliberate-thinking mass plods along over the years down the divinely appointed way. Led astray, they slowly, cumberously swing back to the right road, no matter what the toil or the sacrifice may be, and when they start the return, they crush whatever lies in their path. So has humanity come up through the ages." (*Prophets, Principles, and National Survival*, compiled by J. L. Newquist, p. 110)) but it is common for the lesser part of the ^cpeople to desire that which is not right; therefore this shall ye observe and make it your law—to do your business by the voice of the people. (Harold B. Lee said: "When election draws near we hear members say, 'Why doesn't the Church tell us how to vote?' I cannot think of anything that would bring about a greater wholesale apostasy than if we would assume to do that. I say, the Lord has told you how to vote. You read Section 134, verse 3, of the D&C, where the Lord said, We believe that all governments necessarily require civil officers and magistrates to enforce the laws of the same; and that such as will administer the law in equity and justice should be sought for and upheld by the voice of the people if a republic, or the will of the sovereign. "That is what the Lord said. Then I say to them, read Mosiah's wise counsel, when he said, (quotes Mosiah 29:25-26.) "I have said to them, 'If you do not know how to vote after you have read those two things, you are dumber than I think you are.' Any true Latter-day Saint can know how to vote." (*BYU Speeches of the Year*, 1965, p. 9))

27 And ^aif the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come upon you; yea, then is the time he will visit you with great destruction even as he has hitherto visited this land. (When the majority of the inhabitants of a nation turn from the God of Israel and worship instead the gods of wood and stone or riches and popularity – then that nation is said to have "ripened in iniquity" and is pursuing a course which will result in its eventual destruction. DCBM, 2:320. Using the voice of the people as the immediate measure of their actions does not mean that God is removed from the people, nor from his relationship to the people. Should they become people whose collective voice becomes contrary to the will of God, God will reassert himself by visiting "great destruction" upon them. The result of that great destruction is not mentioned, but may be presumed to be a removal of enough of the people that the righteous might once again come to the fore. Brant Gardner.)

28 And now if ye have judges, and they do not ^ajudge you according to the law which has been given, ye can cause that they may be judged of a higher judge. (Court of appeals.)

29 If your higher judges do not judge righteous judgments, ye shall cause that a small number of your lower judges should be gathered together, and they shall judge your higher judges, according to the voice of the people.

30 And I command you to do these things in the fear of the Lord; and I command you to do these things, and that ye have no king; that if these people commit sins and iniquities they shall be answered upon their own heads.

31 For behold I say unto you, the sins of many people have been ^acaused by the iniquities of their kings; therefore their iniquities are answered upon the heads of their kings.

32 And now I desire that this ^ainequality should be no more in this land, especially among this my

people; but I desire that this land be a land of ^bliberty, and ^cevery man may enjoy his rights and privileges alike, so long as the Lord sees fit that we may live and inherit the land, yea, even as long as any of our posterity remains upon the face of the land.

33 And many more things did king Mosiah write unto them, unfolding unto them all the trials and ^atroubles of a righteous king, yea, all the travails of soul for their people, and also all the murmurings of the people to their king; and he explained it all unto them.

34 And he told them that these things ought not to be; but that the burden should come upon all the people, that every man might ^abear his part. (We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, both in making laws and administering them, for the good and safety of society. D&C 134:1. D&C 98: 8 I, the Lord God, make you free, therefore ye are free indeed; and the law also maketh you free. 9 Nevertheless, when the wicked rule the people mourn. 10 Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men ye should observe to uphold; otherwise whatsoever is less than these cometh of evil.)

35 And he also unfolded unto them all the disadvantages they labored under, by having an unrighteous ^aking to rule over them;

36 Yea, all ^ahis iniquities and abominations, and all the wars, and contentions, and bloodshed, and the stealing, and the plundering, and the committing of whoredoms, and all manner of iniquities which cannot be enumerated—telling them that these things ought not to be, that they were expressly repugnant to the commandments of God.

37 And now it came to pass, after king Mosiah had sent these things forth among the people they were ^aconvinced of the truth of his words.

38 Therefore they relinquished their desires for a king, and became exceedingly anxious that every man should have an equal ^achance throughout all the land (J. Golden Kimball said: “I love God for one thing, if nothing else, that He gives to every one of His children, black or white, bond or free, an equal chance. I like equality of opportunity, and whenever parents make a favorite of a child, I feel sorry for the favorite. If you want to destroy your family show favoritism, and do not give every child an equal chance. We parents have got to learn that lesson. Not to favor the child because you love it, but favor each and every child alike, that is a sacred obligation. God does that with all of His children, and if there is any disadvantage or any wrong, we do it against each other, God does not.” (Conference Report, Apr. 1913, p. 88)); yea, and every man expressed a willingness to answer for his own sins.

39 Therefore, it came to pass that they assembled themselves together in bodies (The selection of judges may have been among families) throughout the land, to cast in their ^avoices concerning who should be their ^bjudges, to judge them according to the ^claw which had been given them; and they were exceedingly rejoiced because of the ^dliberty which had been granted unto them.

40 And they did wax strong in love towards Mosiah; yea, they did esteem him more than any other man; for they did not look upon him as a ^atyrant who was seeking for gain, yea, for that ^blucre which doth ^ccorrupt the soul; for he had not exacted riches of them, neither had he delighted in the shedding of blood; but he had established ^dpeace in the land, and he had granted unto his people that they should be delivered from all manner of bondage; therefore they did esteem him, yea, exceedingly, beyond measure.

41 And it came to pass that they did ^aappoint ^bjudges to rule over them, or to judge them according to the law; and this they did throughout all the land.

42 And it came to pass that Alma was appointed to be the first ^achief judge, he being also the ^bhigh priest (“This theocratic system, patterned after the order and system that prevailed in heaven, was the government of God. . . . He gave direction in all things both civil and ecclesiastical; there was no separation of church and state” (Bruce R. McConkie, *New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 35).), his father having conferred the office upon him, and having given him the charge concerning all the affairs of the church. (B. H. Roberts said: “It is difficult to determine with precision the entire character of the

constitution of the Nephite democracy. But from what is written in the Book of Mormon this much may be learned: The chief judge, elected by the people, was the supreme governor of the land, the chief executive. His oath of office bound him 'to judge righteously, and to keep the peace and the freedom of the people, and grant unto them the sacred privileges to worship the Lord their God; to support and maintain the laws of God all his days, and to bring the wicked to justice, according to their crimes.' (Alma 50:39) A similar oath was doubtless administered to the inferior judges. To a limited extent also legislative powers were granted to the chief judge, but these powers appear to have been limited to framing laws, which were not of force until ratified by the voice of the people. No limit seems to have been set to the term of office of the chief judge, but as the voice of the people placed him in office, the same power could also dismiss him from it; and it may be that the power of impeachment, vested in a certain number of inferior judges...extended to deposing even the chief judge. In any event it may be concluded that he held his position only during good behavior." (*New Witnesses For God*, vol. 2, p. 244))

43 And now it came to pass that Alma did ^awalk in the ways of the Lord, and he did keep his commandments, and he did judge righteous judgments; and there was continual peace through the land. 44 And thus *commenced the ^areign of the judges throughout all the land of Zarahemla, among all the people who were called the Nephites; and Alma was the first and chief judge. (With the establishment of the system of the judges, we encounter a new reckoning of time among the Nephites. This system would be in effect until the sign of the birth of Christ would be given, when they would begin reckoning their time from that point. DCBM, 2:320.)

45 And now it came to pass that his father died, being eighty and two years old, having lived to fulfil the commandments of God.

46 And it came to pass that Mosiah ^adied also, in the thirty and third year of his reign, being ^bsixty and three years old; making in the whole, five hundred and nine years from the time Lehi left Jerusalem.

47 And thus ended the reign of the kings over the people of Nephi; and thus ended the days of Alma, who was the founder of their church.

* Verse 44 [91 B.C.].

(This system initiated by Mosiah of judges, although not explicitly detailed in the Book of Mormon, may have followed the pattern that Moses used among the ancient Israelites. Mosiah may have gotten his ideas for a system of Judges from the Brass Plates. This same pattern was also used by the Anglo-Saxons which system was also used by the Founding Fathers of the United States of America.

According to W. Cleon Skousen, in his book *The 5000 Year Leap*, states the following:

As the Founders studied the record of the ancient Israelites they were intrigued by the fact that they also operated under a system of laws remarkably similar to those of the Anglo-Saxons. The two systems were similar both in precept and operational structure. In fact, the Reverend Thomas Hooker wrote the "Fundamental Orders of Connecticut" based on the principles recorded by Moses in the first chapter of Deuteronomy. These "Fundamental Orders" were adopted in 1639 and constituted the first written constitution in modern times. This constitutional charter operated so successfully that it was adopted by Rhode Island. When the English colonies were converted over to independent states, these were the only two states which had constitutional documents which readily adapted themselves to the new order of self-government. All of the other states had to write new constitutions. Here are the principal characteristics of the People's Law in ancient Israel which were almost identical with those of the Anglo-Saxons:

1. They were set up as a commonwealth of freemen. A basic tenet was: "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." (Leviticus 25:10) This inscription appears on the American Liberty Bell.

2. All the people were organized into small management units where the representative of each family had a voice and a vote. This organizing process was launched after Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, saw him trying to govern the people under Ruler's Law. When the structure was completed the Israelites were organized as follows: Moses as President with Aaron as Vice President over internal affairs and Joshua as Vice President over the Military. A Council of Seventy (a Senate). Elected Representatives (a Congress). Leaders over 1000 families, leaders [or judges] over 100 families, leaders over 50 families and leaders over 10 families. With over 3 million people with power to govern themselves.
3. There was specific emphasis on strong, local self government. Problems were solved to the greatest possible extent on the level where they originated.
4. The entire code of justice was based primarily on reparation to the victim rather than fines and punishment by the commonwealth. The one crime for which no "satisfaction" could be given was first-degree murder. The penalty was death.
5. Leaders were elected and new laws were approved by the common consent of the people.
6. Accused persons were presumed to be innocent until proven guilty. Evidence had to be strong enough to remove any question of doubt as to guilt. Borderline cases were decided in favor of the accused and he was released. It was felt that if he were actually guilty, his punishment could be left to the judgment of God in the future life. (Pages 15-17))

THE BOOK OF ALMA THE SON OF ALMA

The account of Alma, who was the son of Alma, the first and chief judge over the people of Nephi, and also the high priest over the Church. An account of the reign of the judges, and the wars and contentions among the people. And also an account of a war between the Nephites and the Lamanites, according to the record of Alma, the first and chief judge. (This was written by Mormon.)

CHAPTER 1

Nehor teaches false doctrines, establishes a church, introduces priestcraft, and slays Gideon—He is executed for his crimes—Priestcrafts and persecutions spread among the people—The priests support themselves, the people care for the poor, and the Church prospers. [About 91—90 B.C.]

1 NOW it came to pass that in the first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, from this time forward, king Mosiah having ^agone the way of all the earth, having warred a good warfare ("King Mosiah had fought against wickedness and battled Beelzebub all his days. He had been true and faithful to his trust to lead his people in paths of truth and righteousness. He had passed the tests of mortality. His salvation was secure. He was like his colleague on another continent, Paul the Apostle, who said just prior to his death: 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing' (2 Timothy 4:7-8).") (McConkie and Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, p. 3), walking uprightly before God, leaving none to reign in his stead; nevertheless he had established ^blaws, and they were acknowledged by the people; therefore they were obliged to abide by the ^claws which he had made.

2 And it came to pass that in the first year of the reign of Alma in the judgment-seat, there was a ^aman brought before him to be judged, a man who was large, and was noted for his much strength.

3 And he had gone about among the people, preaching to them that which he ^atermed to be the word of God, bearing down ^bagainst the church (This is the first time someone preached against the church.); declaring unto the people that every priest and teacher ought to become ^cpopular; and they ought ^dnot to labor with their hands, but that they ought to be supported by the people. (Hugh Nibley said: "Next

comes Nehor, the Great Liberal, 'declaring unto the people that every priest and teacher ought to become popular; and they . . . ought to be supported by the people' (Alma 1:3). This is a familiar 'liberal' paradox. The liberal is unpretentious and open-minded, just like everybody else--yet he forms a jealously guarded clique for the exploitation of the general public, and distinguishes sharply between the intellectual class to which he belongs as a special elite and the layman, who is expected to support him and to seek instruction at his feet." (*An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, p. 366))

4 And he also testified unto the people that ^aall mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they ^bneed not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had ^ccreated all men, and had also ^dredeemed ^eall men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life. (These teachings are contrary to the Atonement of Christ. He is preaching false doctrine.)

5 And it came to pass that he did teach these things so much that many did believe on his words, even so many that they began to support him and give him ^amoney.

6 And he began to be lifted up in the pride of his heart, and to wear very costly ^aapparel, yea, and even began to ^bestablish a ^cchurch after the manner of his preaching. (Nehor started his own church.)

7 And it came to pass as he was going, to preach to those who believed on his word, he met a man who belonged to the church of God, yea, even one of their ^ateachers; and he began to contend with him sharply, that he might lead away the people of the church; but the man withstood him, admonishing him with the ^bwords of God.

8 Now the name of the man was ^aGideon; and it was he who was an instrument in the hands of God in delivering the people of Limhi out of bondage.

9 Now, because Gideon withstood him with the words of God he was wroth with Gideon, and drew his sword and began to smite him. Now Gideon being ^astricken with many years, (Maybe around 50 years old.) therefore he was not able to withstand his blows, therefore he was ^bslain by the sword. (Although this is the crime for which Nehor is punished, Mormon mentions the other crimes since they significantly affect the entire society.)

10 And the man who slew him was taken by the people of the church, and was brought before Alma, to be ^ajudged according to the crimes (not just murder) which he had committed.

11 And it came to pass that he stood before Alma and pleaded for himself with much boldness.

12 But Alma said unto him: Behold, this is the first time that ^apriestcraft has been introduced among this people (Alma seems more concerned for the crime of priestcraft than for murder.). And behold, thou art not only guilty of priestcraft, but hast endeavored to enforce it by the sword; and were ^bpriestcraft to be enforced among this people it would prove their entire destruction. (Bruce R. McConkie said:

"Priesthood and priestcraft are two opposites; one is of God, the other of the devil. When ministers claim but do not possess the priesthood; when they set themselves up as lights to their congregations, but do not preach the pure and full gospel; when their interest is in gaining personal popularity and financial gain, rather than in caring for the poor and ministering to the wants and needs of their fellow men -- they are engaged, in a greater or lesser degree, in the practice of priestcrafts. Apostasy is born of priestcrafts (2 Ne. 10:5; 3 Ne. 16:10; D. & C. 33:4), for those who engage in them follow vain things, teach false doctrines, love riches, and aspire to personal honors. (Alma 1:12, 16.) Men are commanded to repent of their priestcrafts (3 Ne. 30:2), and eventually, in the millennial day, these great evils will be done away. (3 Ne. 21:19.)" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 593-4) In a talk given to seminary and institute instructors, Robert Millet, a co-author of *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon* stated: "There is a difference between developing and enjoying the needed rapport with our students on the one hand, and developing a following on the other.... We cannot always control how people feel toward us or what we teach, but we can strive to be certain that our own motives are pure. I cannot speak for anyone else, but I believe if I have begun to attract people to myself rather than to the Lord, that I need to undergo some serious introspection. My colleague Joseph McConkie observed to this group some years ago: 'Sometimes we get in our own way. We block the light because we are standing center stage when we should have

stepped to the side and just let the [message] speak for itself. We cause what I call a spiritual eclipse.’ (CES Symposium, 8-82, p. 1). If I am driven more by ego than by a desire to lead people to Christ; if my desires for acclaim are greater than my desires to love and serve the Lord and his children, then my eye is not single to the glory of God (Matt. 6:22-23; D&C 88:67-68), and I will obstruct the light that might have been seen and felt. If, on the other hand, I am humbled to be in the presence of my students, sobered by the sacred assignment to instruct them, and fully cognizant of and willing to trust in Him who [is] the real Teacher and Converter, then I will have the privilege of witnessing miracles, men and women coming unto Christ and being perfected in him.” (CES Symposium, Aug. 1993, p. 11 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, pp. 245-6)

13 And thou hast shed the ^ablood of a righteous man, yea, a man who has done much good among this people; and were we to spare thee his blood would come upon us for ^bvengeance. (President Charles W. Penrose, speaking of capital punishment, has said: “This divine law for shedding the blood of a murderer has never been repealed. It is a law given by the Almighty and not abrogated in the Christian faith. It stands on record for all time--that a murderer shall have his blood shed. He that commits murder must be slain. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. I know there are some benevolent and philanthropic people in these times who think that capital punishment ought to be abolished. Yet I think the Lord knows better than they. The law he ordained will have the best results to mankind in general.” (Answers to Gospel Questions, vol. 1, P. 189) Joseph Fielding Smith said: “There is a growing notion in the world today that it is adding a crime to a crime to take the life of those who deliberately murder--a cruel retaliation which cannot benefit the murdered person and likewise the murderer can reap no benefits therefrom. The real purpose which the Lord gave for the taking of life has long been forgotten. The taking of the life of the murderer was never intended to be a benefit to the murdered person or even a benefit to humanity. It was intended to be a benefit to the murderer himself. There are sins which cannot be forgiven, except by the guilty person paying a price by the shedding of his blood. Capital punishment was to benefit the guilty to obtain a better resurrection when the sin had been one unto death.” (Answers to Gospel Questions, vol. 3, p. 104))

14 Therefore thou art condemned to ^adie, according to the ^blaw which has been given us by Mosiah, our last king; and it has been ^cacknowledged by this people; therefore this people must ^dabide by the law.

15 And it came to pass that they took him; and his name was ^aNehor; (Hebrew for lights.) and they carried him upon the top of the hill Manti, and there he was caused, or rather did acknowledge, between the heavens and the earth, that what he had taught to the people was contrary to the word of God; and there he suffered an ignominious (Dishonorable, shameful) ^bdeath.

16 Nevertheless, this did not put an end to the spreading of priestcraft (“Priesthood and priestcraft are two opposites. . . . When [ministers'] interest is in gaining personal popularity and financial gain, . . . they are engaged, in a greater or lesser degree, in the practice of priestcrafts” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 593).) through the land; for there were many who loved the vain things of the world, and they went forth preaching ^afalse doctrines; and this they did for the sake of ^briches and honor.

17 Nevertheless, they durst not ^alie, if it were known, for fear of the law, for liars were punished; therefore they pretended to preach according to their belief; and now the law could have no power on any man for ^bhis belief.

18 And they durst not ^asteal, for fear of the law, for such were punished; neither durst they rob, nor murder, for he that ^bmurdered was punished unto ^cdeath. (Official Declaration, Millennial Star, 20 Jan 1890, 33-34: We solemnly make the following declarations, viz: That this Church views the shedding of human blood with the utmost abhorrence. That we regard the killing of a human being, except in conformity with the civil law, as a capital crime which should be punished by shedding the blood of the criminal, after a public trial before a legally constituted court of the land. The revelations of God to this Church make death the penalty for capital crime, and require that offenders against life and property shall be delivered up to and tried by the laws of the land. Charles W. Penrose: This divine law for shedding the blood of a murderer has never been repealed. It is a law given by the Almighty and not

abrogated in the Christian faith. It stands on record for all time—that a murderer shall have his blood shed. He that commits murder must be slain. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." I know there are some benevolent and philanthropic people in these times who think that capital punishment ought to be abolished. Yet I think the Lord knows better than they. The law he ordained will have the best results to mankind in general. (Penrose, Charles W., *Blood Atonement*, pp.25-26.)

19 But it came to pass that whosoever did not belong to the church of God began to persecute those that did belong to the church of God, and had taken upon them the name of Christ.

20 Yea, they did persecute them, and afflict them with all manner of words, and this because of their humility; because they were not proud in their own eyes, and because they did impart the word of God, one with another, without ^amoney and without price.

21 Now there was a strict law among the people of the church, that there should ^anot any man, belonging to the church, arise and persecute those that did not belong to the church, and that there should be no persecution among themselves.

22 Nevertheless, there were many among them who began to be proud, and began to contend warmly with their adversaries (The Spirit cannot and will not abide with those who seek by argument or heated discussion to establish the truth of spiritual matters. We teach and we testify. We bear witness. We speak with all the sobriety and sincerity we can muster. We plead with our listeners to give heed to our words, to ponder them, and to petition the heavens to ascertain the truth, but we do not contend. Those Church members who do not take the proper course in this regard – who argue endlessly and quarrel tirelessly – these lose the Spirit of God and become an easy prey to the arch-deceiver. Before they are aware, they lose their souls. DCBM, 3:8), even unto blows; yea, they would smite one another with their ^afists. ("Every time they persecute . . . this people, they elevate us, . . . and strengthen the hands and arms of this people. And every time they undertake to lessen our number, they increase it. . . . Righteousness and power with God increase in this people in proportion as the Devil struggles to destroy it" (Brigham Young, *Discourses*, 351).)

23 Now this was in the ^{*}second year of the reign of Alma, and it was a cause of much affliction to the church; yea, it was the cause of much trial with the church.

24 For the hearts of many were hardened, and their names were ^ablotted out, that they were remembered no more among the people of God (Spencer W. Kimball said: "The scriptures speak of Church members being 'cast out' or 'cut off,' or having their names 'blotted out.' This means excommunication. This dread action means the total severance of the individual from the Church. The person who is excommunicated loses his membership in the Church and all attendant blessings. As an excommunicant, he is in a worse situation than he was before he joined the Church. He has lost the Holy Ghost, his priesthood, his endowments, his sealings, his privileges, and his claim upon eternal life. This is about the saddest thing which could happen to an individual. Better that he suffer poverty, persecution, sickness, and even death. A true Latter-day Saint would far prefer to see a loved one in his bier than excommunicated from the Church. If the one cut off did not have this feeling of desolateness and barrenness and extreme loss, it would be evidence that he did not understand the meaning of excommunication. An excommunicant has no Church privileges. He may not ... partake of the sacrament, serve in Church positions, offer public prayers, or speak in meetings; he may not pay tithing except under certain conditions as determined by the bishop." (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 100)), and also many ^bwithdrew themselves from among them.

25 Now this was a great trial to those that did stand fast in the faith; nevertheless, they were ^asteadfast and immovable (To be immovable in righteousness is to be consistent when it comes to matters of values and faith and courage. To be immovable is to have an allegiance to principles that is independent of circumstance and situation. It is to be firm in one's commitment to the truth, steady in one's loyalty to eternal verities. DCBM 3:9) in keeping the commandments of God, and they bore with ^bpatience the persecution which was heaped upon them.

26 And when the priests left their ^alabor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left

their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God they all returned again diligently unto their labors; and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did all labor, every man^b according to his strength.

27 And they did^a impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the^b poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted; and they did not wear costly^c apparel, yet they were neat and comely.

28 And thus they did establish the affairs of the church; and thus they began to have continual peace again, notwithstanding all their persecutions. (One of the great lessons in the Book of Mormon is that one can be righteous in the face of gross wickedness. Thus one can stand in holy places and be not moved, can be at peace in a world of turmoil. DCBM, 3:10)

29 And now, because of the steadiness of the church they began to be exceedingly^a rich, having abundance of all things whatsoever they stood in need—an abundance of flocks and herds, and fatlings of every kind, and also abundance of grain, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious things, and abundance of^b silk and fine-twined linen, and all manner of good homely^c cloth.

30 And thus, in their^a prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were^b naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon^c riches; therefore they were^d liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no^e respect to persons as to those who stood in need. (Given that there are millions of hungry and naked and destitute souls in the world, how are disciples of Christ to live with themselves? How are we to handle the fact that there is only so much we can do, only so many we can assist and still manage to care for our own?...If every family contributed regularly to every needy cause, there would be insufficient money for the family to live. If every Christian man or woman gave themselves consistently to every project designed to alleviate suffering, there would be no time to earn a living or care for their own. True disciples pray for discernment and for discretion. They seek to be as generous and giving as is appropriate and practical. Even when we are not in a position to contribute dramatically to the alleviation of hunger in Africa or India, for example, there is still something we can do, something vital for those who aspire to discipleship. We can avoid as we would a plague the tendency to be indifferent, to ignore the problem because it is not in our own backyards. Further, we can teach our families or friends by precept and by example to use wisely the food and other resources we have been blessed to have. Even if we just become aware of suffering and pain, our heightened sensitivity helps us deal more tenderly, more charitably, with sufferers within our own limited reach. At least those are starting points. Robert Millet, *An Eye Single to the Glory of God*, p. 64-65)

31 And thus they did^a prosper (We are prospered when we enjoy his spirit and feel his presence. DCBM 3:11) and become far more wealthy than those who did not belong to their church. (George F. Richards said: “The Lord expects us when he blesses us with the good things of this earth to remember those who are not so fortunate. We are to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, comfort those who mourn, and minister unto those who are poor and needy, and thus become of that class to whom the Lord, when he shall come, shall say: ‘Come, ye blessed of the Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’” (*Conference Reports*, Oct. 1939, p. 109) John Taylor: “I will promise the Latter-day Saints that if they will go into these things allowing God to dictate in the interests of Israel and the building up of his Zion on the earth, and take themselves and their individual interests out of the question, feeling they are acting for him and his kingdom, they will become the wealthiest of all people, and God will bless them and pour out wealth and intelligence and all the blessings that earth can afford.” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 20, p. 164))

32 For those who did not belong to their church did indulge themselves in^a sorceries, and in^b idolatry or^c idleness, and in^d babblings, and in^e envyings and^f strife; wearing costly apparel; being^g lifted up in the pride of their own eyes; persecuting, lying, thieving, robbing (The catalog of differences between

churchmen and non-churchmen includes two terms that have come to have similar meanings in modern English: theft and robbery. The nature of the list of things the churchmen did not do is otherwise made up of fairly distinct items, so we cannot understand the listing of theft and robbery as parallels of similar terms for the purpose of emphasis. These two terms appear to indicate a more strict differentiation between what makes a theft (which may be impersonal – a theft may occur when no one is around) and a robbery (which requires the presence of the person being robbed, a very personal event). It is quite likely that Nephite law made a distinction between these two crimes. Such a distinction would follow known traditions: "...there was a big difference under the law of Moses, and in ancient Near Eastern criminal law generally, between being a "thief" and being a "robber." (Discussed in John W Welch, "Theft and Robbery in the Book of Mormon and Ancient Near Eastern Law," F.A.R.M.S. Wel-85a; summarized in "New Developments in Book of Mormon Research," Ensign, February 1988, p. 12. See also Bernard Jackson, Theft in Early Jewish Law [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975J.) A thief was an inside member of the community; he usually worked alone, and he stole things like chickens at night. A thief's criminal offense was not serious, and he was punished lightly, usually being required to return double that which he had stolen. A robber, on the other hand, was an outsider, literally an outlaw, living outside the community and outside the protection and rights of local law. Robbers hid out in the hills in bands, swearing oaths of secrecy and swooping down on villages, openly assassinating and plundering. Robbers were one of the greatest scourges of ancient civilization; sometimes in Egypt they occupied whole cities. Soldiers were sent out after them, and when they were caught, they were put to death on the spot-no trials were necessary. In both Greek and Hebrew the words "thief" and "robber" have very unique and different meanings. A thief is an embezzler or pilferer - one who steal by stealth. The robber's way is threat and violence; he is a plunderer who usually joins with others of his kind to prey upon the weak and unprotected. In Hebrew history the robber is a military problem, and may be executed on the spot when caught. The Old Testament translation accurately reflects this difference but the New Testament ignores it. This is clearly evidenced in the Strong's Greek Lexicon where the word *lestes* is defined as "a robber, plunderer, freebooter, brigand (not to be confused with a thief, one who takes property by stealth)." Brant Gardner), committing whoredoms, and murdering, and all manner of wickedness; nevertheless, the law was put in force upon all those who did transgress it, inasmuch as it was possible. (While the people are pure, while they are upright, while they are willing to observe law, the best results must follow the establishment and maintenance of a government like this; but, on the other hand, if the people become corrupt, if they give way to passion, if they disregard law, if they trample upon constitutional obligations, then a republican form of government like ours becomes the worst tyranny upon the face of the earth. An autocracy is a government of one man, and if be he a tyrant, it is the tyranny of one man; but the tyranny and irresponsibility of a mob is one of the most grievous despotisms which can exist upon the face of the earth. George Q. Cannon, JD 22:136.)

33 And it came to pass that by thus exercising the law upon them, every man suffering according to that which he had done, they became more still, and durst not commit any wickedness if it were known; therefore, there was much peace among the people of Nephi until the fifth year of the reign of the judges.

* Verse 23 [About 90 B.C.].

CHAPTER 2

Amlici seeks to be king and is rejected by the voice of the people—His followers make him king—The Amlicites make war on the Nephites and are defeated—The Lamanites and Amlicites join forces and are defeated—Alma slays Amlici. [87 B.C.]

1 AND it came to pass in the commencement of the *fifth year of their reign there began to be a contention among the people; for a certain ^aman, being called Amlici (In Hebrew, the very word *amliki* means something like “king” or “wanting to become king.” The Hebrew cluster *amlk* is found in many names associated with the Nehors, including Amalickiah and the Amalekites. Meridian Magazine.), he being a very cunning man, yea, a wise man as to the wisdom of the world, he being after the order of the man that slew ^bGideon by the sword, who was executed according to the law—

2 Now this Amlici had, by his cunning, ^adrawn away much people after him; even so much that they began to be very powerful; and they began to endeavor to establish Amlici to be a king over the people.

3 Now this was alarming to the people of the church, and also to all those who had not been drawn away after the persuasions of Amlici; for they knew that according to their law that such things must be established by the ^avoice of the people.

4 Therefore, if it were possible that Amlici should gain the voice of the people, he, being a wicked man, would ^adeprive them of their rights and privileges of the church; for it was his intent to destroy the church of God.

5 And it came to pass that the people assembled themselves together throughout all the land, every man according to his mind, whether it were for or against Amlici, in separate bodies, having much dispute and wonderful ^acontentions one with another.

6 And thus they did assemble themselves together to cast in their ^avoices concerning the matter; and they were laid before the judges.

7 And it came to pass that the ^avoice of the people came against Amlici, that he was not made king over the people.

8 Now this did cause much joy in the hearts of those who were against him; but Amlici did stir up those who were in his favor to anger against those who were not in his favor.

9 And it came to pass that they gathered themselves together, and did ^aconsecrate Amlici to be their king.

10 Now when Amlici was made king over them he commanded them that they should take up arms against their brethren; and this he did that he might subject them to him.

11 Now the people of Amlici were distinguished by the name of Amlici, being called ^aAmlicites; and the remainder were ^bcalled Nephites, or the people of God.

12 Therefore the people of the Nephites were aware of the intent of the Amlicites, and therefore they did prepare to meet them; yea, they did arm themselves with swords, and with cimeters, and with bows, and with arrows, and with stones, and with slings, and with all manner of ^aweapons of war, of every kind.

(Satan wasn't cast out of heaven for voting the wrong the way; most of the people did the first time. The second time Satan refused to accept the verdict. He was going to resort to violence with a third of the hosts of heaven; therefore, he was cast out in a twinkling. There was no war in heaven; the word that is used is *polemos*. Joseph Smith explains that very well. Satan was cast out for refusing to accept the popular vote. Hugh Nibley, TBM, 2:237)

13 And thus they were prepared to meet the Amlicites at the time of their coming. And there were appointed ^acaptains, and higher captains, and chief captains, according to their numbers. (Self-defense is as justifiable where war is concerned as where one man seeks the life of another, with the obvious conclusion that some wars are righteous and others are unrighteous. Righteous men are entitled, expected, and obligated to defend themselves; they must engage in battle when there is no other way to preserve their rights and freedoms and to protect their families, homes, land, and the truths of salvation which they have espoused. In many wars, perhaps most, both sides are equally at fault and neither is justified. But there have been and yet will be wars in which the balances of eternal justice will show that one side had the favor of Diety and the other did not. Bruce R. McConkie, MD, p. 826.)

14 And it came to pass that Amlici did arm his men with all manner of weapons of war of every kind; and he also appointed rulers and leaders over his people, to lead them to war against their brethren.

15 And it came to pass that the Amlicites came upon the hill Annihu, which was east of the ^ariver

Sidon, which ran by the ^bland of Zarahemla, and there they began to make war with the Nephites.

16 Now Alma, being the ^achief judge and the ^bgovernor of the people of Nephi, therefore he went up with his people, yea, with his captains, and chief captains, yea, at the head of his armies, against the Amlicites to battle. (Alma was the head of the government, the head of the church and the head of the army.)

17 And they began to slay the Amlicites upon the hill east of Sidon. And the Amlicites did contend with the Nephites with great strength, insomuch that many of the Nephites did fall before the Amlicites.

18 Nevertheless the Lord did strengthen the hand of the Nephites, that they slew the Amlicites with great slaughter, that they began to flee before them.

19 And it came to pass that the Nephites did pursue the Amlicites all that day, and did slay them with much slaughter, insomuch that there were ^aslain of the Amlicites twelve thousand five hundred thirty and two souls; and there were slain of the Nephites six thousand five hundred sixty and two souls.

20 And it came to pass that when Alma could pursue the Amlicites no longer he caused that his people should pitch their tents in the ^avalley of Gideon, the valley being called after that Gideon who was slain by the hand of ^bNehor with the sword; and in this valley the Nephites did pitch their tents for the night.

21 And Alma sent spies to follow the remnant of the Amlicites, that he might know of their plans and their plots, whereby he might guard himself against them, that he might preserve his people from being destroyed.

22 Now those whom he had sent out to watch the camp of the Amlicites were called Zeram, and Amnor, and Manti, and Limher; these were they who went out with their men to watch the camp of the Amlicites.

23 And it came to pass that on the morrow they returned into the camp of the Nephites in great haste, being greatly astonished, and struck with much fear, saying:

24 Behold, we followed the ^acamp of the ^bAmlicites, and to our great astonishment, in the land of Minon, above the land of Zarahemla, in the course of the land of ^cNephi, we saw a numerous host of the Lamanites; and behold, the Amlicites have joined them; (Amlici probably had made prior arrangements with the Lamanites to join with them.)

25 And they are upon our brethren in that land; and they are fleeing before them with their flocks, and their wives, and their children, towards our city; and except we make haste they obtain possession of our city, and our fathers, and our wives, and our children be slain.

26 And it came to pass that the people of Nephi took their tents, and departed out of the valley of Gideon towards their ^acity, which was the city of ^bZarahemla.

27 And behold, as they were crossing the river Sidon, the Lamanites and the Amlicites, being as ^anumerous almost, as it were, as the sands of the sea, came upon them to destroy them.

28 Nevertheless, the Nephites being ^astrengthened by the hand of the Lord, having prayed mightily to him that he would deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, therefore the Lord did hear their cries, and did strengthen them, and the Lamanites and the Amlicites did fall before them.

29 And it came to pass that Alma fought with Amlici with the sword, face to face; and they did contend mightily, one with another. (It's possible that the reason the Lamanites, which were a superior fighting force than the Nephites, fled, was because Alma had slain their king, which decided the battle.)

30 And it came to pass that Alma, being a man of God, being exercised with much ^afaith, cried, saying: O Lord, have mercy and ^bspare my life, that I may be an instrument in thy hands to save and preserve this people.

31 Now when Alma had said these words he contended again with Amlici; and he was strengthened, insomuch that he slew Amlici with the sword.

32 And he also contended with the king of the Lamanites; but the king of the Lamanites fled back from before Alma and sent his guards to contend with Alma.

33 But Alma, with his guards, contended with the guards of the king of the Lamanites until he slew and drove them back.

34 And thus he cleared the ground, or rather the bank, which was on the west of the river Sidon, throwing the bodies of the Lamanites who had been slain into the waters of Sidon, that thereby his people might have room to cross and contend with the Lamanites and the Amlicites on the west side of the river Sidon.

35 And it came to pass that when they had all crossed the river Sidon that the Lamanites and the Amlicites began to flee before them, notwithstanding they were so numerous that they could not be numbered.

36 And they fled before the Nephites towards the wilderness which was west and north, away beyond the borders of the land; and the Nephites did pursue them with their might, and did slay them.

37 Yea, they were met on every hand, and slain and driven, until they were scattered on the west, and on the north, until they had reached the wilderness, which was called Hermounts; (An Egyptian word meaning wild animal country.) and it was that part of the wilderness which was infested by wild and ravenous beasts.

38 And it came to pass that many died in the wilderness of their wounds, and were devoured by those beasts and also the vultures of the air; and their bones have been found, and have been heaped up on the earth. (The Amlicites had no where to go. They couldn't go home, and with the death of Amlici, the Lamanites didn't want them either.)

* Verse 1 [87 B.C.].

CHAPTER 3

The Amlicites had marked themselves according to the prophetic word—The Lamanites had been cursed for their rebellion—Men bring their own curses upon themselves—The Nephites defeat another Lamanite army. [87 B.C.]

1 AND it came to pass that the Nephites who were not ^aslain by the weapons of war, after having buried (The Nephites honored their own dead by burying them. They dishonored the dead of the enemy by casting their dead bodies into the river instead of burying them.) those who had been slain—now the number of the slain were not numbered, because of the greatness of their number—after they had finished burying their dead they all returned to their lands, and to their houses, and their wives, and their children. (No standing army.)

2 Now many women and children had been slain with the sword, and also many of their flocks and their herds; and also many of their fields of grain were destroyed, for they were trodden down by the hosts of men.

3 And now as many of the Lamanites and the Amlicites who had been slain upon the bank of the river Sidon were cast into the ^awaters of Sidon; and behold their bones are in the depths of the ^bsea, and they are many.

4 And the ^aAmlicites were distinguished from the Nephites, for they had ^bmarked themselves with red in their foreheads (In our day this might be body piercings, tattoos, extreme hairstyles. Young women, you do not need to drape rings up and down your ears. One modest pair of earrings is sufficient. . . . A young man . . . does not need tattoos or earrings on or in his body. The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve are all united in counseling against these things" (Gordon B. Hinckley, *New Era*, January 2001, 11).) after the manner of the Lamanites; nevertheless they had not shorn their heads like unto the Lamanites. (They wanted to make sure they weren't mistaken for Nephites.)

5 Now the heads of the Lamanites were shorn; and they were ^anaked, save it were skin which was girded about their loins, and also their armor, which was girded about them, and their bows, and their arrows, and their stones, and their slings, and so forth.

6 And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers, which was a ^acurse upon them because of their transgression and their rebellion against their brethren,

who consisted of Nephi, Jacob, and Joseph, and Sam, who were just and holy men.

7 And their brethren sought to destroy them, therefore they were cursed; and the Lord God set a ^amark upon them, yea, upon Laman and Lemuel, and also the sons of Ishmael, and Ishmaelitish women.

8 And this was done that their seed might be distinguished from the seed of their brethren, that thereby the Lord God might preserve his people, that they might not ^amix and believe in incorrect ^btraditions which would prove their destruction.

9 And it came to pass that whosoever did mingle his seed with that of the Lamanites did bring the same curse upon his seed.

10 Therefore, whosoever suffered himself to be led away by the Lamanites was called under that head, and there was a mark set upon him.

11 And it came to pass that whosoever would not believe in the ^atradition of the Lamanites, but believed those records which were brought out of the land of Jerusalem, and also in the tradition of their fathers, which were correct, who believed in the commandments of God and kept them, were ^bcalled the Nephites, or the people of Nephi, from that time forth—

12 And it is they who have kept the records which are ^atrue (Mormon's testimony of the truthfulness of the records he is abridging.) of their people, and also of the people of the Lamanites.

13 Now we will return again to the Amlicites, for they also had a ^amark set upon them; yea, they set the mark upon themselves, yea, even a mark of red upon their foreheads.

14 Thus the word of God is fulfilled, for these are the words which he said to Nephi: Behold, the Lamanites have I cursed, and I will set a mark on them that they and their seed may be ^aseparated from thee and thy seed, from this time henceforth and forever, except they repent of their wickedness and ^bturn to me that I may have mercy upon them.

15 And again: I will set a mark upon him that mingleth his seed with thy brethren, that they may be cursed also.

16 And again: I will set a mark upon him that fighteth against thee and thy seed.

17 And again, I say he that departeth from thee shall no more be called thy seed; and I will bless thee, and whomsoever shall be called thy seed, henceforth and forever; and these were the promises of the Lord unto Nephi and to his seed.

18 Now the Amlicites knew not that they were fulfilling the words of God when they began to mark themselves in their foreheads; nevertheless they had come out in open ^arebellion against God; therefore it was expedient that the curse should fall upon them.

19 Now I would that ye should see that they brought upon themselves the ^acurse; and even so doth every man that is cursed bring upon himself his own condemnation. (Neal A. Maxwell said: "On Judgment Day, not only will every knee bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ but also, as elaborating Book of Mormon prophets tell us, everyone, including those who have lived without God in the world, will also openly acknowledge that God is God and will confess before God that His judgments are just and merciful (see Mosiah 16:1; 27:31; Alma 12:15). Part of the basis for demonstrating the perfection of God's justice and mercy will thus be the cumulative record which we ourselves will have made (see Alma 41:7). Out of this we can be justly judged." (*Lord, Increase Our Faith*, p. 75))

20 Now it came to pass that not many days after the battle which was fought in the land of Zarahemla, by the Lamanites and the Amlicites, that there was another army of the Lamanites came in upon the people of Nephi, in the ^asame place where the first army met the Amlicites.

21 And it came to pass that there was an army sent to drive them out of their land.

22 Now Alma himself being afflicted with a ^awound did not go up to battle at this time against the Lamanites;

23 But he sent up a numerous army against them; and they went up and slew many of the Lamanites, and drove the remainder of them out of the borders of their land.

24 And then they returned again and began to establish peace in the land, being troubled no more for a

time with their enemies.

25 Now all these things were done, yea, all these wars and contentions were commenced and ended in the *fifth year of the reign of the judges.

26 And in one year were thousands and tens of thousands of souls sent to the eternal world, that they might reap their ^arewards according to their works, whether they were good or whether they were bad, to reap eternal happiness or eternal misery, according to the spirit which they listed to obey, whether it be a good spirit or a bad one. (That is, tens of thousands were ushered into that eternal world we know as the postmortal spirit world, there to undergo a “partial judgment,” a temporary consignment to paradise on the one hand or hell or outer darkness on the other. DCBM, 3:17. George Q. Cannon: I have come to the conclusion that if our eyes were open to see the spirit world around us, we should feel differently on this subject than we do; we would not be so unguarded and careless and so indifferent whether we had the spirit and power of God with us or not; but we would be continually watchful and prayerful to our Heavenly Father for His Holy Spirit and His holy angels to be around about us to strengthen us to overcome every evil influence. Gospel Truths, 1:82 Harold B. Lee quoting Parley P. Pratt said: In all ages and dispensations God has revealed many important instructions and warning to men by means of dreams. When the outward organs of thought and perception are released from their activity, the nerves unstrung, the whole of mortal humanity lies hushed in quiet slumbers in order to renew its strength and vigor, it is then that the spiritual organs are at liberty in a certain degree to assume their wanted functions, to recall some faint outline, some confused and half-defined recollections of that heavenly world, and those endearing scenes of their former estate from which they have descended in order to obtain and mature a tabernacle of flesh. Their kindred spirit, their guardian angels, then hover about them with the fondest affection, the most anxious solicitude. Spirit communes with spirit, thought meets thought, soul blends with soul, in all the raptures of mutual pure and eternal love. In this situation the spiritual organs [and if we could see our spirits, we would know that they have eyes to see, ears to hear, tongues to speak, and so on] are susceptible of converse with Deity, or of communion with angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. In this situation we frequently hold communion with our departed father, mother, brother, sister, son or daughter, or with the former husband or wife of our bosom whose affections for us, being rooted and grounded in the eternal elements, issuing from under the sanctuary of love's eternal fountain, can never be lessened or diminished by death, distance of space, or length of years. We may perhaps have had a friend of the other sex whose pulse beat in unison with our own—whose every thought was bright with aspirations, the hope of the bright future in union with our own, whose happiness in time or in eternity would never be fully consummated without that union. Such a one snatched from time in the very bloom of youth lives in the other sphere with the same bright hope—watching our every footstep in our meanderings through the rugged path of life with longing desires for our eternal happiness. When we begin to understand that beyond sight, as Brigham Young said, the spirit world is right here round about us, and if our spiritual eyes could be open, we could see others visiting with us, directing us. And if we will learn not to be so sophisticated that we rule out that possibility of impressions from those who are beyond sight, then we too may have a dream that may direct us as a revelation. BYU Devotional, 15 Oct 1952. If you live up to your privileges, the angels cannot be restrained from being your associates. Joseph Smith, TPJS, 226-27.)

27 For every man receiveth ^awages of him whom he listeth to ^bobey, (This is a phrase from King Benjamin's speech that Mormon includes here also.) and this according to the words of the spirit of prophecy; therefore let it be according to the truth. And thus endeth the fifth year of the reign of the judges.

* Verse 25 [87 B.C.].

CHAPTER 4

Alma baptizes thousands of converts—Iniquity enters the Church, and the Church's progress is hindered—Nephihah is appointed chief judge—Alma, as high priest, devotes himself to the ministry. [Between 86 and 83 B.C.]

1 NOW it came to pass in the *sixth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, there were no contentions nor wars in the ^aland of Zarahemla;

2 But the people were afflicted, yea, greatly afflicted for the loss of their brethren, and also for the ^aloss of their flocks and herds, and also for the loss of their fields of grain, which were trodden under foot and destroyed by the Lamanites.

3 And so great were their afflictions that every soul had cause to mourn; and they believed that it was the judgments of God sent upon them because of their wickedness and their abominations; therefore they were ^aawakened to a remembrance of their duty.

4 And they began to establish the ^achurch more fully; (On the one hand, the church began to be established more fully in the hearts and minds of the members; on the other, it began to have an influence on those not of the faith, such that in one year 3,500 persons came unto Christ through repentance and baptism. DCBM, 3:19) yea, and many were ^bbaptized in the ^cwaters of Sidon and were joined to the church of God; yea, they were baptized by the hand of Alma, (Though the record says that the converts were baptized by the hand of Alma, we would suppose that many of these were baptized by other legal administrators under Alma's direction, by virtue of the keys of the priesthood he held as president of the Church or presiding high priest. DCBM, 3: 19) who had been consecrated the ^dhigh priest over the people of the church, by the hand of his father Alma.

5 And it came to pass in the *seventh year of the reign of the judges there were about three thousand five hundred souls that united themselves to the ^achurch of God and were baptized. And thus ended the seventh year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi; and there was continual peace in all that time.

6 And it came to pass in the *eighth year of the reign of the judges, that the people of the church began to wax proud, because of their exceeding ^ariches, (Many people who remained faithful . . . while they were poor may be unable to stand when they are rich. Riches [have] a very corrupting effect upon the human heart, and it requires a very pure people to be as honest, virtuous, humble and upright when surrounded by luxury and wealth" (George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truth*, 525). The test of prosperity is one that the Nephites and many other of God's children, seem unable to meet. Wealth nearly always produces pride, which is the beginning of all other sins. Mae Blanch, *Studies in Scripture*, 7:291.) and their ^bfine silks, and their fine-twined linen, and because of their many flocks and herds, and their gold and their silver, and all manner of precious things, which they had obtained by their ^cindustry; and in all these things were they lifted up in the pride of their eyes, for they began to wear very costly ^dapparel. ("The worst fear I have about this people is that they will get rich in this country, forget God and His people, wax fat, and kick themselves out of the Church and go to hell. This people will stand mobbing, robbing, poverty and all manner of persecution and be true. But my greatest fear is that they cannot stand wealth." (Brigham Young, cited in Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, p.48) Orson Pratt said: "But there is danger...if we become lifted up in the pride of our hearts and think, because we have gathered an abundance of the wealth of this world, that we are a little better than our poor brother who labors eight or ten hours a day at the hardest kind of labor. Any person having the name of Latter-day Saint who feels that he is better than, and distinguishes himself from, the poor and supposes that he belongs to a little higher class than they, is in danger." (*Journal of Discourses* 17:31, as taken from *Pure In Heart*, p. 98))

7 Now this was the cause of much affliction to Alma, yea, and to many of the people whom Alma had consecrated to be ^ateachers, and ^bpriests, (Because there were no Levites in the colony of Lehi, we

assume that there was no Aaronic Priesthood among the Nephites, at least until the coming of Jesus to the Americas. The words priests and teachers thus appear to be descriptive of their ministerial duties in the higher priesthood rather than referring to offices in the Aaronic Priesthood. DCBM, 3:21. Doctrines of Salvation, 3:87, Promised Messiah, p. 427, New Witness, p. 311.) and ^celders over the church; yea, many of them were sorely grieved for the wickedness which they saw had begun to be among their people.

8 For they saw and beheld with great sorrow that the people of the church began to be lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and to set their ^ahearts upon riches and upon the vain things of the world, that they began to be scornful, one towards another, (Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 109.) and they began to persecute those that did ^bnot believe according to their own will and pleasure. (The central feature of pride is enmity – enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellowmen. Enmity means hatred toward, hostility to, or a state of opposition. It is the power by which Satan wishes to reign over us. Pride is essentially competitive in nature. We pit our will against God's. In addition, the proud make every man their adversary by pitting their intellects, opinions, works, wealth, talents, or any other worldly measuring device against others. God will have a humble people. Either we can choose to be humble or we can be compelled to be humble. Ezra Taft Benson, CR, April 1989, p. 3-7)

9 And thus, in this eighth year of the reign of the judges, there began to be great ^acontentions among the people of the church; yea, there were ^benvyings, and ^cstrife, and malice, and persecutions, and pride, even to exceed the pride of those who did not belong to the church of God. (Every moment of the day the mind must pick out and focus on one particular thing. All the rest becomes background. Who decides what the mind focuses on? You select it and it's up to you. The things you wish to focus on and dwell on are the things which you choose. Talk about this life becoming a time of probation! The choices you make every minute announce where your preferences are. They make clear where you stand, what your values are, and everything else. You give yourself away every hour of the day. It's marvelous because it goes on right to the end. As Nephi tells us, God prolongs our lives so we will have more chance to repent. That's the great blessing of it. You have to make a choice. It's not just the "two ways." The ancients used to talk about the "two ways." But the way of light and the way of darkness are before us at all times. You have the choice of the one or the other, and there is no middle way because they lead in opposite directions. As Heraclitus said, "The up road and the down road are one." They lead in opposite directions. Being on the up road depends on the way you are facing, whether you are going up or whether you are going down. To be righteous is to be facing up. You may be right at the bottom of the road and miserable rat. To be lost, to be wicked is to be facing down, no matter how high you may be. Hugh Nibley, TBM, 2:253)

10 And thus ended the eighth year of the reign of the judges; and the wickedness of the church was a great ^astumbling-block to those who did not belong to the church; and thus the church began to fail in its progress.

11 And it came to pass in the ^{*}commencement of the ninth year, Alma saw the wickedness of the church, and he saw also that the ^aexample of the church began to lead those who were unbelievers on from one piece of iniquity to another, thus bringing on the destruction of the people. (Spencer W. Kimball said: "...how much easier it is to understand and accept if the seeker after truth can also see the principles of the gospel at work in the lives of other believers. No greater service can be given to the missionary calling of this Church than to be exemplary in positive Christian virtues in our lives." (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 555 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p. 252))

12 Yea, he saw great inequality among the people, some lifting themselves up with their pride, despising others, turning their backs upon the ^aneedy and the naked and those who were ^bhungry, and those who were athirst, and those who were sick and afflicted.

13 Now this was a great cause for lamentations among the people, while others were abasing

themselves, succoring those who stood in need of their succor, such as imparting their substance to the ^apoor and the needy, feeding the hungry, and suffering all manner of ^bafflictions, for Christ's ^csake, who should come according to the spirit of prophecy;

14 Looking forward to that day, thus ^aretaining a ^bremission of their sins; being filled with great ^cjoy because of the resurrection of the dead, according to the will and power and ^ddeliverance of Jesus Christ from the bands of death.

15 And now it came to pass that Alma, having seen the afflictions of the humble followers of God, and the persecutions which were heaped upon them by the remainder of his people, and seeing all their ^ainequality, began to be very sorrowful; nevertheless the Spirit of the Lord did not fail him.

16 And he selected a wise man who was among the ^aelders of the church, and gave him power according to the ^bvoice of the people, that he might have power to enact ^claws according to the laws which had been given, and to put them in force according to the wickedness and the crimes of the people.

17 Now this man's name was ^aNephihah, and he was appointed ^bchief judge; and he sat in the judgment-seat to judge and to govern the people.

18 Now Alma did not grant unto him the office of being ^ahigh priest over the church, but he retained the office of high priest unto himself; but he delivered the judgment-seat unto ^bNephihah.

19 And this he did that he ^ahimself might go forth among his people, or among the people of Nephi, that he might ^bpreach the ^cword of God unto them, to ^dstir them up in ^eremembrance of their duty, and that he might pull down, by the word of God, all the pride and craftiness and all the contentions which were among his people, seeing no way that he might reclaim them save it were in bearing down in pure

^ftestimony (The teacher's divine commission has been clearly articulated by the scriptures and by living prophets. He or she is to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is to be taught out of the standard works and from the words of the living oracles. It is to be taught by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is to be applied to the life situations of the listeners, thus 'likening the scriptures unto the Saints. Finally, and as the capstone of the teaching enterprise, the teacher is to bear witness, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that what has been taught is true. Faith is developed and commitment is built as a result of testimony, pure and solid testimony. The Holy Ghost is the converter. The gospel teacher has much to do in preparation of the lesson, the search of the scriptures, the declaration of the truth; but the Holy Ghost is the converter. And the gospel teacher must never forget this. He or she must never seek to usurp the role of the Spirit nor upstage him whose influence results in renewal and righteousness. The person who bears pure testimony never seeks cheap substitutes for the Spirit. He never relies upon methodologies which might confuse sentimentality with spirituality, emotional display with edification. His witness is more than story, and his testimony is more than an expression of gratitude. He tries the virtue of the word of God, trusts in the power of the scriptures and the words of the prophets to penetrate to the heart of his listeners, and bears witness of his message with sincerity and with soberness. DCBM, 3:24. Henry B. Eyring: Those who have prepared carefully for the fast and testimony meeting won't need to be reminded how to bear testimony should they feel impressed to do it in the meeting. They won't give sermons or exhortations or travel reports or try to entertain as they bear witness. Because they will have already expressed appreciation to people privately, they will have less need to do it publicly. Neither will they feel a need to use eloquent language nor to go on at length. A testimony is a simple expression of what we feel. The member who has fasted both for the blessing of the poor and for the companionship of the Spirit will be feeling gratitude for the love of God and the certainty of eternal truth. Even a child can feel such things, which may be why sometimes the testimony of a child so moves us and why our preparation of fasting and prayer produces in us childlike feelings. That preparation for the fast and testimony meeting is a covenant obligation for members of the Church. Ensign, Nov 1996, 32, M. Russell Ballard: We often hear some members, and especially children, bear their testimonies, listing things for which they are thankful: their love of family, the Church, their teachers, their friends. For them, the gospel is something that they are grateful for because it makes them feel happy and secure. This is a good beginning, but testimonies need to be much more. They need to be anchored very early to

the first principles of the gospel. A testimony of the reality of Heavenly Father's love, of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and of the effect of His Atonement on every son and daughter of God brings about the desire to repent and live worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost. It also brings a confirmation to our soul of the Restoration of the gospel in these latter days. Real testimony of these precious truths comes as a witness by the Holy Ghost after sincere and dedicated effort, including teaching in the home, prayer, scripture study, service to others, and diligent obedience to Heavenly Father's commandments. To gain and forever hold on to a testimony of gospel truths is worth whatever price in spiritual preparation we may be required to pay. My experience throughout the Church leads me to worry that too many of our members' testimonies linger on "I am thankful" and "I love," and too few are able to say with humble but sincere clarity, "I know." As a result, our meetings sometimes lack the testimony-rich, spiritual underpinnings that stir the soul and have meaningful, positive impact on the lives of all those who hear them. Our testimony meetings need to be more centered on the Savior, the doctrines of the gospel, the blessings of the Restoration, and the teachings of the scriptures. We need to replace stories, travelogues, and lectures with pure testimonies. Those who are entrusted to speak and teach in our meetings need to do so with doctrinal power that will be both heard and felt, lifting the spirits and edifying our people. You will remember at the heart of King Benjamin's powerful sermon to his people was his personal witness of the Savior, who at that time had yet to be born into mortality. At one point in the king's sermon, when he had just borne witness to the people, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy ... because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come" (Mosiah 4:3). And that is because the Spirit cannot be restrained when pure testimony of Christ is borne. CR, Oct 2004, 42-43) against them.

20 And thus in the commencement of the ninth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, Alma delivered up the judgment-seat to ^aNephihah, and confined himself wholly to the ^bhigh priesthood of the holy order of God, (Melchizedek Priesthood) to the ^ctestimony of the word, according to the spirit of revelation and prophecy.

* Verse 1 [86 B.C.]; Verse 5 [85 B.C.]; Verse 6 [84 B.C.]; Verse 11 [83 B.C.].