

LESSON 24
“Give Us Strength According to Our Faith...In Christ”
Alma 13-16

OVERVIEW:

Alma gives a powerful discourse on the priesthood and foreordination. Alma, Amulek, and other believers are persecuted for their righteousness. Zeezrom is healed and baptized. The words of Alma are fulfilled as the Lamanites destroy Ammonihah.

SCRIPTURES:

THE BOOK OF ALMA
THE SON OF ALMA
CHAPTER 13

Men are called as high priests because of their exceeding faith and good works—They are to teach the commandments—Through righteousness they are sanctified and enter into the rest of the Lord—Melchizedek was one of these—Angels are declaring glad tidings throughout the land—They will reveal the actual coming of Christ. [About 82 B.C.]

1 (This verse belongs with the previous verse as one paragraph.) AND again, my brethren, I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children; and I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ^aordained priests, (Bruce R. McConkie: “Book of Mormon prophets gave the title priest to officers known in this dispensation as high priests. That is, they were priests of the Melchizedek Priesthood, or as Alma expressed it, ‘the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son.’ (Alma 13:1-20.) Since there was no Aaronic Priesthood among the Nephites in Alma’s day (there being none of the lineage empowered in pre-meridian times to hold that priesthood), there was no need to distinguish between priests of the lesser and greater priesthoods.” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 599)) after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son, (D&C 107: 1 THERE are, in the church, two ^apriesthoods, namely, the Melchizedek and ^bAaronic, including the Levitical Priesthood. 2 Why the first is called the ^aMelchizedek Priesthood is because ^bMelchizedek was such a great high priest. 3 Before his day it was called the ^aHoly Priesthood, after the ^bOrder of the Son of God. 4 But out of ^arespect or ^breverence to the name of the Supreme Being, to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name, they, the church, in ancient days, called that priesthood after Melchizedek, or the Melchizedek Priesthood. The Book of Mormon designates what in this dispensation we have been instructed to call the Melchizedek Priesthood as “the holy order,” “the holy order of God,” “the order of his Son,” or in some instances just “the order.” DCBM 3:93) to teach these things unto the people.

2 And those priests were ordained after the ^aorder of his Son, (The holy priesthood is administered to the children of men according to different orders. As Joseph Smith taught, “All priesthood is Melchizedek, but there are different portions or degrees of it.” TPJS, p. 180. The preparatory gospel (law of Moses) operates under that order we know as Aaronic. The fullness of the everlasting gospel operates under different orders. The Church operates under an ecclesiastical order of offices, quorums, and councils. In our day one enters into the patriarchal order in holy temples through entering into the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. Bruce R. McConkie, CR, Oct 1977, p. 50. In addition, one enters into the holy order of God through proving worthy of all the blessings of the temple, through eventually receiving what the scriptures call the fullness of the priesthood. President Ezra Taft Benson thus explained: “To enter into the order of the Son of God is equivalent today of entering into the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood which is only received in the house of the Lord.” Ensign, Aug 1985, p. 8 DCBM, 3:93-94.) in a ^bmanner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to

his Son for redemption.

3 And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being ^acalled and ^bprepared from the ^cfoundation of the world (As in the Grand Council in Heaven Christ was called and ordained to his earthly ministry, so were all who minister in his name first called in heavenly councils, where they too were ordained to labors that would be theirs in mortality. TPJS, p. 365. None were called to offices for which they had not been properly prepared. In teaching this principle, Alma’s reference is to men like Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and many other faithful priesthood holders of the earth’s early history. Modern revelation uses as illustrations Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Wilford Woodruff. These, we were told, were “among the noble and great ones who were chosen in the beginning to be rulers in the Church of God. Even before they were born, they with many others, received their first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to come forth in the due time of the Lord to labor in the vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men. DCBM, 3:94.) according to the ^dforeknowledge of God, (“Brigham Young and Willard Richards explained that the general principle of election means that God elected or chose certain individuals in our premortal state to receive certain blessings, or to perform certain works, while in mortality (HC 4:258) According to the Book of Mormon, one great foreordained appointment or blessing was to receive the Melchizedek priesthood (Alma 13:3-9). Since we know that the greatest of all the gifts or blessings which God can bestow is eternal life (D&C 14:7), it follows that the greatest foreordained calling or appointment that could be received in the premortal existence was to eternal life. (*Book of Mormon Symposium Series*, edited by PR Cheesman, MS Nyman, and CD Tate, Jr., 1988, Hel 3 – 3 Ne 8, p. 115) Bruce R. McConkie: “Since men are foreordained to gain exaltation, and since no man can be exalted without the priesthood, it is almost self-evident that worthy brethren were foreordained to receive the priesthood. And so we find Alma teaching that those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood in this life were ‘called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God.’ (Alma 13:1-12.) And Joseph Smith said, ‘Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world,’ and this includes all who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, ‘was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was. I suppose that I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council.’ (*Teachings*, p. 365.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 329) Neal A. Maxwell: “Yet, though foreordination is a difficult doctrine, it has been given to us by the living God, through living prophets, for a purpose. It can increase our understanding of how crucial this mortal second estate is and encourage us in good works. This precious doctrine can help us go the second mile because we are doubly called. When we mortals try to comprehend rather than to accept foreordination, finite minds are trying to comprehend omniscience. A full understanding is impossible; we simply have to trust in what the Lord has told us, knowing that we are not dealing with guarantees from God, but extra opportunities and heavy responsibilities.” (*Things As They Really Are*, p. 24) Spencer W. Kimball: “Remember, in the world before we came here, faithful women were given certain assignments while faithful men were foreordained to certain priesthood tasks. While we do not now remember the particulars, this does not alter the glorious reality of what we once agreed to.” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 316 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p. 267)) on account of their exceeding faith and good works; (Those designated in heavenly councils as “noble and great” had proven themselves even in the pre-earth estate. To suppose that in our spirit existence prior to mortal birth we walked exclusively by sight, never having to exercise faith, is to misunderstand the purpose of that existence as a training ground for mortality. Those born into this life with the gift of faith merited that blessing, for we are told that there is a law “irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated.” D&C 130:20. Good works were also requisite for such high and holy foreordinations. Surely there is no better preparation for exercising faith and doing good works in the second estate than actually exercising faith and doing good works in the first. DCBM, 3:94-95.) in the first place (first estate) being left to ^echoose good or evil; (This phrase affirms the existence of good, evil, and agency in our first estate. The scriptural declaration that God

gave us agency in that estate also attests to the existence of good and evil, for without these agency would have been a needless gift. DCBM, 3:95) therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great^f faith, are^e called with a holy calling, (Foreordinations to the higher priesthood.) yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such. (“All doctrines, ordinances, and powers associated with the gospel of Jesus Christ assume force and meaning only in and through Christ's atoning sacrifice. Such was the plan prepared before the foundation of the earth. Men are called to receive the priesthood to assist in the redemption of souls. They are called to preach and make available what Paul described as the ‘ministry of reconciliation’ (2 Corinthians 5:18). They are called to bless lives-to lighten burdens, to strengthen the feeble knees and lift up the hands that hang down-just as their Master, the great high priest, is called upon to do. The priesthood bearers before and after Christ are thus involved in the work of his ministry. Their work is preparatory. They, like the preeminent forerunner, John the Baptist, prepare the way of the Lord. Those prophets and priests who labored before the meridian of time sought to prepare mankind for the coming of the Redeemer. In the words of Elder Bruce R. McConkie: ‘They could preach redemption; they could foretell its coming; but their work was preparatory only. Redemption itself would come through the ministry of Him of whom they were but types and shadows.’ (*Promised Messiah*, p. 451.) Those who have lived since that time seek to instruct and warn and exhort mankind-all in preparation for his second advent, that final redemption of the earth and its inhabitants.” (McConkie and Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, p. 95) I fear there are many among us who because of the faithfulness in the spirit world were called to do a great work here, but like reckless spendthrifts they are exercising their free agency in riotous living and are losing their birthright and the blessings that were theirs had they proved faithful to their calling. Hence as the Lord has said, there are many called but few are chosen. Harold B. Lee, *Decisions for Successful Living*, p. 168-69.)

4 And thus they have been^a called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and^b blindness of their minds, (The voice of the Spirit speaks to us in our hearts and minds. Gospel understanding can be neither heartless nor mindless. Neither feeling nor intellect, standing alone, is sufficient to bring the understanding and faith essential to salvation. Thus in the pre-earth life those who rejected the fullness of gospel blessings did it as it is done in mortality, that, is by ignoring the feelings of their hearts and by closing the windows of their minds to light and truth. DCBM, 3:96) while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great^c privilege as their brethren. (We would suppose that in our pre-earth existence all persons had the opportunity to exercise faith and involved themselves in works of righteousness. Those so doing obtained a birthright to the blessings of the priesthood as Abraham’s seed. Before the day of judgment, that opportunity will again be extended, and again it will become the privilege of those men exercising faith and doing works of righteousness to have the priesthood conferred upon them. DCBM, 3:95.)

5 Or in fine, in the first place (first estate) they were on the^a same standing with their brethren; (All men in the pre-existence could have received the priesthood if they had been worthy in their first estate. God gave his children their free agency even in the spirit world, by which the individual spirits had the privilege, just as men have here, of choosing the good and rejecting the evil, or partaking of the evil to suffer the consequences of their sins. Because of this, some even there were more faithful than others in keeping the commandments of the Lord. Some were of greater intelligence than others, as we find it here, and were honored accordingly...The spirits of men had their free agency, some were greater than others, and from among them the Father called and foreordained his prophets and rulers...The spirits of men were not equal. They may have had an equal start, and we know they were all innocent in the beginning; but the right of free agency which was given to them enabled some to outstrip others, and thus, through the eons of immortal existence, to become more intelligent, more faithful, for they were free to act for themselves, to think for themselves, to receive the truth or rebel against it. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:58-59) thus this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would not harden their hearts, being in and through the atonement of the Only

Begotten Son, who was prepared—

6 And thus being called by this holy calling, and ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of God (There are two meanings of the title high priest. First, high priest is one of the ordained offices in the Melchizedek Priesthood. Second, God's chief representative on earth, the one who holds the highest spiritual position in his kingdom in any age, is called the high priest. This special designation of the chief spiritual officer of the Church has reference to the administrative position which he holds rather than to the office to which he is ordained in the priesthood. MD, p. 355-56. DCBM, 3:96), to teach his commandments (The Melchizedek Priesthood, Joseph Smith taught, "is the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation and every important matter is revealed from heaven. TPJS, p. 166-67, DCBM, 3:97) unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his ^arest—

7 This high priesthood being after the order of his Son, which order was from the foundation of the world; or in other words, being ^awithout beginning of days or end of years, (Joseph Smith: "The Priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years. The keys have to be brought from heaven whenever the Gospel is sent. When they are revealed from heaven, it is by Adam's authority." (*Teachings*, p. 157)) being prepared from ^beternity to all eternity, according to his ^cforeknowledge of all things— (Why were some spirits sent to earth among the Amalekites, the Assyrians, and the Babylonians, while others at the same moments found birth in the house of Israel? Why was Antipas sent as the son of a debauched and evil Herod, while John the Baptist came into the home of a priestly Zacharias and a saintly Elisabeth? All of these things operate by law; they are the outgrowth of long years of personal preparation in preexistence on the part of each individual; they come to pass according to the laws that the Lord has ordained. This second estate is a continuation of our first estate; we are born here with the talents and capacities acquired there. Abraham was one of the noble and great spirits in the premortal life. He was chosen for his mortal ministry and position before he was born, and as with the father of the faithful so with all of the spirits destined to be born as his seed. The greatest and most important talent or capacity that any of the spirit children of the Father could gain is the talent of spirituality. Most of those who gained this talent were chosen, before they were born, to come to earth as members of the house of Israel. They were foreordained to receive the blessings that the Lord promised to Abraham and to his seed in all their generations. This foreordination is an election, Paul tells us, and truly it is so, for those so chosen, selected, or elected become, in this life, the favored people. Though all mankind may be saved by obedience, some find it easier to believe and obey than others. Hence the concept, taught by Jesus, that his sheep know his voice and will not follow the dissident voices of the world. (Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, p.512 p.513))

8 Now they were ^aordained after this manner—being called with a holy calling, and ordained with a holy ordinance, and taking upon them the high priesthood of the holy order, which calling, and ordinance, and high priesthood, is without beginning or end—

9 Thus they become ^ahigh priests forever, after the order of the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, who is without beginning of days or end of years, who is full of ^bgrace, equity, and truth. And thus it is. Amen.

10 Now, as I said concerning the holy order, or this ^ahigh priesthood, there were many who were ordained and became high priests of God; and it was on account of their exceeding ^bfaith and ^crepentance, and their righteousness before God, they choosing to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish;

11 Therefore they were called after this holy order, and were ^asanctified, and their ^bgarments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb. (By the magnifying of our callings, that is, by serving faithfully where and as we are called to serve, we sanctify ourselves. Sanctification is the process of becoming clean, pure, and spotless before the Lord. That process involves faithful service, which in turn is essential to the remission of sins and the refining of our souls. Applying this principle, James wrote that "if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth

the sinner from the errors of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” James 5:19-20. James’s point is that the sins being hidden are those of the minister, not just those of the one being ministered to. Commenting on this verse, Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written: “By reclaiming an erring brother, we save both him and ourselves. Our sins are hidden (remitted) because we ministered for the salvation and blessing of another member of the kingdom. In principle this special reward for Christ’s ministers applies also to those who preach the gospel and bring souls into the kingdom. The minister is rewarded with salvation and, of necessity, in the process, is freed from his own sins.” DNTC, 3:279. Men are entrusted with the priesthood so that they may serve and bless others. Through faithfulness in this divine investiture of authority they sanctify their own souls, that they lay up the blessings of heaven in store, that they perish not, but bring salvation to their own souls. D&C 4:1-4. DCBM, 3:98-99.)

12 Now they, after being ^asanctified (Sanctification is a state of saintliness, a state attained only by conformity to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. The plan of salvation is the system and means provided whereby men may sanctify their souls and thereby become worthy of a celestial inheritance. MD, p. 73, 675. DCBM, 3:99) by the ^bHoly Ghost, having their garments made white, being ^cpure and spotless before God, could not look upon ^dsin save it were with ^eabhorrence; (This passage indicates an attitude which is basic to the sanctification we should all be seeking, and thus to the repentance which merits forgiveness. It is that the former transgressor must have reached a point of no return to sin wherein there is not merely a renunciation but also a deep abhorrence of the sin – where the sin becomes most distasteful to him and where the desire or urge to sin is cleared out of his life. Surely this is what is meant, in part at least, by being pure in heart! And when we read in the Sermon on the Mount that the ‘pure in heart’ shall see God, it gives meaning to the Lord’s statement, made through the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1832, that presently impure people can perfect themselves and become pure: Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will. (D&C 88:68. Spencer W. Kimball, the Miracle of Forgiveness, p. 354-55) and there were many, exceedingly great many, (When the righteous in paradise – those assured a glorious resurrection – assembled to greet the Christ during his short ministry among them, they constituted an “innumerable company” (see D&C 138:12). The number of the faithful Saints who lived from the time of Adam to the time when Christ visited the world of the spirits appears to have been appreciably greater than we have generally supposed. Though it is true that the gate is strait and the way of holiness is narrow, the “few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14) presumably a relative expression, may well total in real terms, a large number of our Father’s children who will go on to exaltation in the highest heaven. There is no ceiling on the number of saved beings; God desires to save all who will be saved. DCBM, 3:99-100) who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God.

13 And now, my brethren, I would that ye should humble yourselves before God, and bring forth ^afruit meet for repentance, that ye may also enter into that rest.

14 Yea, humble yourselves even as the people in the days of ^aMelchizedek, (It was revealed to Joseph Smith that Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek. (D&C 84:14) Depicting that event, Joseph Smith recounted: “Abraham says Melchizedek, I believe all that thou hast taught me concerning the priesthood and the coming of the Son of Man; so Melchizedek ordained Abraham and sent him away. Abraham rejoiced, saying, Now I have a priesthood. TPJS, p. 322-23. Joseph Smith also learned by revelation that it was because Melchizedek was such a great high priest – that is, because he so closely emulated Christ – that the priesthood was named after him among the ancient Saints. How appropriate that Alma should say of Melchizedek that “none were greater”! (Alma 13:19) DCBM, 3:101.) who was also a high priest after this same order which I have spoken, who also took upon him the high priesthood forever. (God swore an oath that Christ should be a priest forever; that is, though our Lord had possessed the priesthood in pre-existence, he would receive it anew in mortality and would have it forever – in time and in eternity. And this sets the pattern for all who becomes sons of God and

joint-heirs with Christ. DNTC, 3:173, DCBM, 3:102).

15 And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid ^atithes; yea, even our father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all he possessed. (Joseph L. Wirthlin: A tithe is one-tenth of the wage earner's full income. A tithe is one-tenth of the professional man's net income. A tithe is one-tenth of the farmer's net income, and also one-tenth of the produce used by the farmer to sustain his family which is a just and equitable requirement, as others purchase out of their income such food as is needed to provide for their families. A tithe is one-tenth of the dividends derived from investments. A tithe is one-tenth of net insurance income less premiums if tithing has been paid on the premiums. CR, Apr 1953, 98)

16 Now these ^aordinances were given after this ^bmanner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a ^ctype of his order, or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord.

17 Now this Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem; (Which later became Jerusalem) and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination; yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness;

18 But Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood according to the ^aholy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore he was called the prince of peace, for he was the king of Salem; and he did reign under his father. (The people were so righteous that they were translated and joined the heavenly city of Enoch.)

19 Now, there were ^amany before him, and also there were many afterwards, but ^bnone were greater; therefore, of him they have more particularly made mention. (This phrase indicates that the story of Melchizedek is written down. The "they" are the ones who have written the religious histories. When Alma makes the statement that "they" "have more particularly made mention" of Melchizedek, we have yet another confirmation that the material available to the Nephites concerning Melchizedek is greater than what remains available today. "In these verses (v. 17-19) Alma establishes Melchizedek as a type for Christ, noting the following parallels: First, like Christ, he was a king. The very name of this great high priest - Melchizedek, 'king of righteousness', perhaps more correctly, 'my king is righteousness' - affirms and testifies of the goodness and power of the coming Messiah. Righteousness is also a name-title of Christ (see Moses 7:45). As Melchizedek ruled his kingdom in righteousness, so Christ will eventually rule and reign upon this earth, doing so with the unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth, possessing an everlasting dominion without compulsory means (see D&C 121:46). Second Melchizedek ruled over the city of Salem (a name which means 'peace') [Salem later was named Jerusalem.]. In like manner, Christ will reinstitute the glory of David's day when naught is known but peace among the Lord's people. Third, both Melchizedek and Christ were known as the 'great high priest.' In Old Testament times the primary duty of the priest was to offer sacrifice at the altar and to act as mediator between God and men. It was by virtue of the priestly functions that the nations of Israel were reconciled to their God. 'Through the ministrations of the priesthood the people of Israel were instructed in the doctrine of sin and its expiation, in forgiveness and worship. In short, the priest was the indispensable source of religious knowledge for the people, and the channel through which spiritual life was communicated.' (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia 4: 2439.) Fourth, both were men of 'mighty faith' who taught 'repentance' to their people. Of Melchizedek we read, 'his people wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven' (JST, Genesis 14:34). And of course the same will be true of all who sustain Christ and his teachings in righteousness. Fifth, both bore the title Prince of Peace, being teachers of that gospel by which peace and joy come. Sixth, of Melchizedek we read, 'and he did reign under his father,' as does Christ, who professes no authority save that of his Father (see John 5:30). Seventh, though there were many prophets before Melchizedek and many after him, Alma described the king of Salem by saying 'none were greater.' Thus this great prophet, priest, and king stood as a classic type of the Promised Messiah, of whom it is true not only that none were greater, but also that none have

been as great.” (McConkie and Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, pp. 102-3))

20 Now I need not rehearse the matter; what I have said may suffice. Behold, the ^ascriptures are before you; if ye will ^bwrest (twist or distort) them it shall be to your own destruction.

21 And now it came to pass that when Alma had said these words unto them, he stretched forth his hand unto them and cried with a mighty voice, saying: ^aNow is the time to repent, for the day of salvation draweth nigh;

22 Yea, and the voice of the Lord, by the ^amouth of angels, doth declare it unto all nations; (Angels speak to all nations about Christ. There may be other records to come forth proclaiming Christ.) yea, doth declare it, that they may have glad tidings of great joy; yea, and he doth sound these glad tidings among all his people, yea, even to them that are scattered abroad upon the face of the earth; wherefore they have come unto us.

23 And they are made known unto us in ^aplain terms, that we may understand, that we cannot err; and this because of our being ^bwanderers in a strange land; therefore, we are thus highly favored, for we have these glad tidings declared unto us in all parts of our vineyard.

24 For behold, ^aangels are declaring it unto many at this time in our land; and this is for the purpose of preparing the hearts of the children of men to receive his word at the time of his coming in his glory.

25 And now we only wait to hear the joyful news declared unto us by the mouth of angels, (One wonders whether the choirs that heralded the birth of Christ to shepherds of Bethlehem might also have borne their angelic witness in heavenly strains of music to congregations of the faithful wherever they were found throughout the world. DCBM, 3:105.) of his coming; for the time cometh, we ^aknow not how soon. Would to God that it might be in my day; but let it be sooner or later, in it I will rejoice.

26 And it shall be made known unto ^ajust and holy men, by the mouth of angels, at the time of his coming, that the words of our fathers may be fulfilled, according to that which they have spoken concerning him, which was according to the spirit of prophecy which was in them.

27 And now, my brethren, I ^awish from the inmost part of my heart, yea, with great ^banxiety even unto pain, that ye would hearken unto my words, and cast off your sins, and not ^cprocrastinate the day of your repentance;

28 But that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and ^awatch and pray continually, that ye may not be ^btempted above that which ye can bear, (“Too often people have taken license with the following words of Paul the Apostle: ‘There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it’ (1 Corinthians 10:13). They have falsely supposed that they could hurl themselves into the path of sin, enter into forbidden territory, or wander briefly from that road which is strait and narrow-and then be divinely delivered from spiritual destruction. Such people are deceived. They have bought into another of Satan’s lies. Unless they repent, they will lose their souls. We cannot repeatedly tempt God and expect him to keep us from the effects of our shortsightedness. Rather, as Alma here teaches, we must be vigilant, ever watchful, careful and cautious so as not to slip into sin. The promise of the Almighty is that there is no situation out of which God cannot deliver us and no temptation that he cannot empower us against-if we are seeking with all our heart to avoid the taints of the world, if we are striving to navigate the gospel path with fidelity and devotion.” (McConkie and Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, p. 106-107) Joseph Smith: All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not. The devil has no power over us, only as we permit him. The moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes power. TPJS, 181, 187, 189.) and thus be ^cled by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, ^dmeeek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering; (These are the character traits that cause us to be led by the Spirit.)

29 ^aHaving faith on the Lord; having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life; having the ^blove of God always in your hearts, that ye may be lifted up at the last day and enter into his ^crest.

30 And may the Lord grant unto you repentance, that ye may not bring down his wrath upon you, that ye may not be ^abound down by the chains of ^bhell, (The opposite of being led by the Spirit.) that ye may not suffer the second ^cdeath.

31 And Alma spake many more words unto the people, which are not written in ^athis book.

CHAPTER 14

Alma and Amulek are imprisoned and smitten—The believers and their holy scriptures are burned by fire—These martyrs are received by the Lord in glory—The prison walls are rent and fall—Alma and Amulek are delivered and their persecutors are slain. [About 82—81 B.C.]

1 AND it came to pass after he had made an end of speaking unto the people many of them did believe on his words, and began to repent, and to search the ^ascriptures.

2 But the more part of them were desirous that they might destroy Alma and Amulek; for they were angry with Alma, because of the ^aplainness of his words unto Zeezrom; and they also said that Amulek had ^blied unto them, and had reviled against their law and also against their lawyers and judges.

3 And they were also angry with Alma and Amulek; and because they had ^atestified so plainly against their wickedness, they sought to ^bput them away privily. (With as little trouble as possible.)

4 But it came to pass that they did not; but they took them and bound them with strong cords, and took them before the chief judge of the land.

5 And the people went forth and witnessed against them—testifying that they had reviled against the law, and their lawyers and judges of the land, and also of all the people that were in the land; and also testified that there was but one God, and that he should send his Son among the people, but he should ^anot save them; and many such things did the people testify against Alma and Amulek. Now this was done before the chief judge of the land. (Alma 1:12 But Alma said unto him: Behold, this is the first time that priestcraft has been introduced among this people. And behold, thou art not only guilty of priestcraft, but hast endeavored to enforce it by the sword; and were priestcraft to be enforced among this people it would prove their entire destruction. Alma's fear was that Nehor would "prove their entire destruction." Alma clearly saw Nehor's religious ideas as so divisive that the social fabric would be irreparably torn. We see in Ammonihah a very clear demonstration that Alma's fears were well founded. In Alma, the differences in ideas not only result in the persecution of Alma and Amulek, but of all those who believed the words of Alma and Amulek.)

6 And it came to pass that Zeezrom was astonished at the words which had been spoken; and he also knew concerning the ^ablindness of the minds, which he had caused among the people by his ^blying words; and his soul began to be ^charrowed up under a ^dconsciousness of his own guilt; yea, he began to be encircled about by the pains of hell. (Zeezrom is realizing that he caused the people's blindness of mind and hardness of heart.)

7 And it came to pass that he began to cry unto the people, saying: Behold, I am ^aguilty, and these men are spotless before God. And he began to plead for them from that time forth; but they reviled him, saying: Art thou also possessed with the devil? And they spit upon him, and ^bcast him out from among them, and also all those who believed in the words which had been spoken by Alma and Amulek; and they cast them out, and sent men to cast stones at them.

8 And they brought their wives and children together, and whosoever believed or had been taught to believe in the word of God they caused that they should be ^acast into the fire; and they also brought forth their records which contained the holy scriptures (This is one of the evidences in the Book of Mormon that many (if not most) of the believers had scriptural records. Though there may have been only one set of metal plates (such as the brass plates), surely hundreds and thousands of other sets of records, copies – less durable but more accessible – could be found among the descendants of Lehi. DCBM, 3:109.), and cast them into the fire also, that they might be ^bburned and destroyed by fire. (This terrible event

was foretold by Abinadi: Mosiah 17:12-15: 12 But the priests lifted up their voices against him, and began to accuse him, saying: He has reviled the king. Therefore the king was stirred up in anger against him, and he delivered him up that he might be slain. 13 And it came to pass that they took him and bound him, and scourged his skin with faggots, yea, even unto death. 14 And now when the flames began to scorch him, he cried unto them, saying: 15 Behold, even as ye have done unto me, so shall it come to pass that thy seed shall cause that many shall suffer the pains that I do suffer, even the pains of death by fire; and this because they believe in the salvation of the Lord their God. God is not the author of evil, yet within limits and bounds he allows it to exist. This is done so that the righteous might merit the fulness of his glory and that the wicked, the workers of evil, might in like fashion merit the fulness of his wrath. Suffering sanctifies the souls of the faithful. The inflicting of that suffering soils all that is decent and makes the perpetrator a fit companion to the devil, to merit as *he* has merited and to be rewarded as *he* will be rewarded. Mocking and scourging, bonds and imprisonment, flight and refuge destitution and torment have been the common lot of Saints in all ages. Yet that God who is not unmindful of the sparrow that falls has witnessed it all-he "having provided some better things for them through their sufferings, for without sufferings they could not be made perfect" DCBM, 3:109)

9 And it came to pass that they took Alma and Amulek, and carried them forth to the place of ^amartyrdom, that they might witness the destruction of those who were consumed by fire.

10 And when Amulek saw the pains of the women and children who were consuming in the fire, he also was pained; and he said unto Alma: How can we witness this awful scene? Therefore let us stretch forth our hands, and exercise the ^apower of God which is in us, and save them from the flames.

11 But Alma said unto him: The Spirit constraineth me that I must not stretch forth mine hand; for behold the Lord receiveth them up unto himself, in ^aglory; and he doth suffer that they may do this thing, or that the people may do this thing unto them, according to the hardness of their hearts, that the ^bjudgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just; and the ^cblood of the ^dinnocent shall stand as a witness against them, yea, and cry mightily against them at the last day. (Spencer W.

Kimball: "Now, we find many people critical when a righteous person is killed, a young father or mother is taken from a family, or when violent deaths occur. Some become bitter when oft-repeated prayers seem unanswered. Some lose faith and turn sour when solemn administrations by holy men seem to be ignored and no restoration seems to come from repeated prayer circles. But if all the sick were healed, if all the righteous were protected and the wicked destroyed, the whole program of the Father would be annulled and the basic principle of the Gospel, free agency, would be ended. If pain and sorrow and total punishment immediately followed the doing of evil, no soul would repeat a misdeed. If joy and peace and rewards were instantaneously given the doer of good, there could be no evil -- all would do good and not because of the rightness of doing good. There would be no test of strength, no development of character, no growth of powers, no free agency, no controls. Should all prayers be immediately answered according to our selfish desires and our limited understanding, then there would be little or no suffering, sorrow, disappointment, or even death; and if these were not, there would also be an absence of joy, success, resurrection, eternal life, and godhood. ("Tragedy or Destiny,"

Improvement Era, March 1966, pp. 180, 210 as taken from Daniel Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 206) Marion D. Hanks: "The right question to ask is not why good people have trials, but how shall good people respond when they are tried?...God does not deny us the experience we came here to have. He does not insulate us from tribulation or guarantee immunity from trouble. Much of the pain we suffer and inevitably impose upon others is self-induced through our own bad judgment, through poor choices... But much that happens to us in this life we cannot control; we only respond." (*Ensign*, Nov. 1992, p. 64 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p. 269))

12 Now Amulek said unto Alma: Behold, perhaps they will burn us also.

13 And Alma said: Be it according to the will of the Lord (Like Abinadi). But, behold, our work is not finished; therefore they burn us not.

14 Now it came to pass that when the bodies of those who had been cast into the fire were consumed, and also the records which were cast in with them, the chief judge of the land came and stood before Alma and Amulek, as they were bound; and he smote them with his hand upon their ^acheeks, and said unto them: After what ye have seen, will ye preach again unto this people, that they shall be cast into a ^blake of fire and brimstone?

15 Behold, ye see that ye had not power to save those who had been cast into the fire; neither has God saved them because they were of thy faith. And the judge smote them again upon their cheeks, and asked: What say ye for yourselves?

16 Now this judge was after the order and faith of ^aNehor, who slew Gideon.

17 And it came to pass that Alma and Amulek answered him ^anothing; and he smote them again, and delivered them to the officers to be ^bcast into prison.

18 And when they had been cast into prison three days, there came many ^alawyers, and judges, and priests, and teachers, who were of the profession of Nehor; and they came in unto the prison to see them, and they questioned them about many words; but they answered them nothing.

19 And it came to pass that the judge stood before them, and said: Why do ye not answer the words of this people? Know ye not that I have ^apower to deliver you up unto the flames? And he ^bcommanded them to speak; but they answered nothing. (This was a severe test.)

20 And it came to pass that they departed and went their ways, but came again on the morrow; and the judge also smote them again on their cheeks. And many came forth also, and smote them, saying: Will ye stand again and judge this people, and condemn our law? If ye have such great power why do ye not ^adeliver yourselves?

21 And many such things did they say unto them, gnashing their teeth upon them, and spitting upon them, and saying: How shall we look when we are damned? (Heber C. Kimball got a look at what the spirits of the damned look like. He was attacked by evil spirits and later gave a vivid description of their appearance: "I was struck with great force by some invisible power, and fell senseless to the floor. The first thing I recollected was being supported by Elders Hyde and Richards, who were praying for me... Elders Hyde and Richards then assisted me to get on the bed... when a vision was opened to our minds, and we could distinctly see the evil spirits, who foamed and gnashed their teeth at us. We gazed upon them about an hour and a half (by Willard's watch). We were not looking towards the window, but towards the wall. Space appeared before us, and we saw the devils coming in legions, with their leaders, who came within a few feet of us. They came towards us like armies rushing to battle. They appeared to be men of full stature, possessing every form and feature of men in the flesh who are angry and desperate; and I shall never forget the vindictive malignity depicted on their countenances as they looked me in the eye... We distinctly heard those spirits talk and express their wrath and hellish designs against us. However, the Lord delivered us from them, and blessed us exceedingly that day" (Smith and Sjodahl, *D & C Commentary*, p. 514))

22 And many such things, yea, all manner of such things did they say unto them; and thus they did ^amock them for many days. And they did withhold food from them that they might hunger, and water that they might thirst; and they also did take from them their clothes that they were naked; and thus they were ^bbound with strong cords, and confined in ^cprison.

23 And it came to pass after they had thus suffered for many days, (and it was on the twelfth day, in the tenth month, *in the tenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi) that the chief judge over the land of ^aAmmonihah and many of their teachers and their lawyers went in unto the prison where Alma and Amulek were bound with cords.

24 And the chief judge stood before them, and smote them again, and said unto them: If ye have the ^apower of God deliver yourselves from these bands, and then we will believe (Of one thing we have perfect assurance – the last thing wanted by those who demand signs is signs; the last thing wanted by those who demand evidence is evidence. DCBM, 3:113) that the Lord will destroy this people according to your words.

25 And it came to pass that they all went forth and smote them, saying the same words (We note with interest that the junior devils can but echo the words of their master. There is no evidence of freedom of thought among the legions of hell. DCBM, 3: 113), even until the last; and when the last had spoken unto them the ^apower of God was upon Alma and Amulek, and they rose and stood upon their feet. (Now they're going to get it!)

26 And Alma cried, saying: How long shall we suffer these great ^aafflictions, O Lord? O Lord, ^bgive us strength according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto ^cdeliverance. And they broke the cords with which they were bound; and when the people saw this, they began to flee, for the fear of destruction had come upon them.

27 And it came to pass that so great was their fear that they fell to the earth, and did not obtain the outer door of the ^aprison; and the earth shook mightily, and the walls of the prison were rent in twain, so that they fell to the earth; and the chief judge, and the lawyers, and priests, and teachers, who smote upon Alma and Amulek, were slain by the fall thereof. (There was a rush and there was an earthquake. You notice that miracles are in the timing, not in the event. This was earthquake country. It's not surprising that there was an earthquake, but just at that moment was when it was helpful. They all made a rush for the gate, so naturally they crowded the exit. They jammed the exit, nobody could get out, the gate collapsed, and they were all killed there. The only safe people were Alma and Amulek who stayed behind. The people tried to get as far from them as they could. Hugh Nibley. TBM, 2:350.)

28 And Alma and Amulek came forth out of the prison, and they were not hurt; for the Lord had granted unto them ^apower, according to their faith which was in Christ. And they straightway came forth out of the prison; and they were ^bloosed from their ^cbands; and the prison had fallen to the earth, and every soul within the walls thereof, save it were Alma and Amulek, was slain; and they straightway came forth into the city.

29 Now the people having heard a great noise came running together by multitudes to know the cause of it; and when they saw Alma and Amulek coming forth out of the prison, and the walls thereof had fallen to the earth, they were struck with great fear, and fled from the presence of Alma and Amulek even as a goat fleeth with her young from two lions; and thus they did flee from the presence of Alma and Amulek.

* Verse 23 [81 B.C.].

CHAPTER 15

Alma and Amulek go to Sidom and establish a church—Alma heals Zeezrom, who joins the Church—Many are baptized and the Church prospers—Alma and Amulek go to Zarahemla. [About 81 B.C.]

1 AND it came to pass that Alma and Amulek were commanded to depart out of that city; and they departed, and came out even into the land of Sidom; and behold, there they found all the people who had departed out of the land of ^aAmmonihah, who had been ^bcast out and stoned, because they believed in the words of Alma. (Those who believed Alma and Amulek left Ammonihah so that there wouldn't be any righteous people left to be destroyed by the Lamanites.)

2 And they related unto them all that had happened unto their ^awives and children, and also concerning themselves, and of their ^bpower of deliverance.

3 And also Zeezrom lay sick at Sidom, with a burning fever (It is a false idea that the Saints will escape all the judgments, whilst the wicked suffer; for all flesh is subject to suffer, and the righteous shall hardly escape; still many of the Saints will escape, for the just shall live by faith; yet many of the righteous shall fall prey to disease, to pestilence, etc., by reason of the weakness of the flesh, and yet be saved in the Kingdom of God. So that it is an unhallowed principle to say that such and such have transgressed because they have been preyed upon by disease or death, for all flesh is subject to death; and the Savior has said, "Judge not, lest ye be judged." TPJS, p. 162-63), which was caused by the great

tribulations of his mind on account of his ^awickedness, (Boyd K. Packer: “I recently asked a doctor of family medicine how much of his time was devoted purely to correcting physical disorders. He has a large practice, and after thoughtfully considering, he answered, ‘Not more than 20 percent. The rest of the time I seem to be working on problems that very much affect the physical well-being of my patients but do not originate in the body.’ These physical disorders,” the doctor concluded, ‘are merely symptoms of some other kind of trouble.’... There is another part of us, not so tangible, but quite as real as our physical body. This intangible part of us is described as mind, emotion, intellect, temperament, and many other things. Very seldom is it described as spiritual. But there is a *spirit* in man; to ignore it is to ignore reality. There are spiritual disorders, too, and spiritual diseases that can cause intense suffering. The body and the spirit of man are bound together. Often, very often, when there are disorders, it is very difficult to tell which is which.” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1977, p. 59 as taken from the BOM Institute Manual, 1981, p. 240) The physical and the spiritual are inseparably connected. We cannot do despite to the spiritual without at the same time damaging the physical. When a person sins against light – when he or she wantonly goes at cross purposes to the ways of the Lord and sets at naught honor and decency and conscience and principles – that person does damage to the soul, of which the physical body is an integral part. When Jesus of Nazareth commanded the infirm of body to rise up, and further declared, “Thy sins be forgiven thee,” his enemies accused him of blasphemy. The Master asked simply: “Does it require more power to forgive sins than to make the sick rise up and walk?” (JST, Luke 5:23) That is to say, the same power by which death is rebuked or ailments cured is able to rebuke the evil one and cure a sin sick soul. In like manner, if one has the faith to be healed physically, he has the faith by which that cleansing and healing power can work a spiritual miracle and purify him from the stains of sin. DNTC, 3:275.) for he supposed that Alma and Amulek were no more; and he supposed that they had been slain because of his iniquity. And this great sin, and his many other sins, did harrow up his mind until it did become exceedingly sore, having no deliverance; therefore he began to be scorched with a burning heat.

4 Now, when he heard that Alma and Amulek were in the land of Sidom, his heart began to take courage; and he sent a message immediately unto them, desiring them to come unto him.

5 And it came to pass that they went immediately, obeying the message which he had sent unto them; and they went in unto the house unto Zeezrom; and they found him upon his bed, sick, being very low with a burning fever; and his mind also was ^aexceedingly sore because of his iniquities; and when he saw them he stretched forth his hand, and besought them that they would heal him.

6 And it came to pass that Alma said unto him, taking him by the hand: ^aBelievest thou in the power of Christ unto salvation?

7 And he answered and said: Yea, I believe all the words that thou hast taught.

8 And Alma said: If thou believest in the redemption of Christ thou canst be ^ahealed. (We just need to repent to be saved.)

9 And he said: Yea, I believe according to thy words.

10 And then Alma cried unto the Lord (We would assume that we are given but a glimpse of the whole story here. Surely Alma did more on this occasion than offer a sincere prayer; we would suppose that he laid his hands on the head of Zeezrom and (assisted by Amulek) in behalf of this faithful person exercised the powers of the priesthood he held. DCBM, 3:116), saying: O Lord our God, have ^amercy on this man, and ^bheal him according to his faith which is in Christ. (Is faith the power that does that, or is it Jesus Christ or what? Well, faith is the power that plugs us in; it’s not the power that heals. It plugs us into the circuit, so to speak. The power is always there; we are surrounded by an enormous amount of power all the time. By applying faith we make it accessible to us; we make it useful to us. We are able to plug in, to use a vulgar expression, but that’s the sort of thing you do. You open your mind to faith, and then you are able to do it. Hugh Nibley, TBM, 2:352)

11 And when Alma (Remember that Alma had done the same things as Zeezrom, teaching against the Church. But Alma knew better, because his father was the head of the Church.) had said these words, ^aZeezrom leaped upon his feet, and began to walk; and this was done to the great astonishment of all the

people; and the knowledge of this went forth throughout all the land of Sidom.

12 And Alma baptized Zeezrom unto the Lord; and he began from that time forth to preach unto the people. (“That Zeezrom proves himself in the eyes of his mentor, Alma, is confirmed by the fact that he regularly appears in the accounts of Alma’s ministry as one of his most trusted and reliable companions and fellow servants. Years after the events in Ammonihah and Sidom, when Alma undertakes one of the most difficult challenges of his life’s ministry—the conversion of the Zoramites—Zeezrom is chosen along with Ammon, Aaron, Omner, Amulek, and two of Alma’s sons to be a part of this seasoned missionary force (see Alma 31:6).” (*Heroes From the Book of Mormon*, pp. 118-9))

13 And Alma established a church in the land of Sidom, and consecrated ^apriests and ^bteachers (In our day we would say “ordained priests and teachers.” Literally, to consecrate is to “set apart,” or to “make holy.” We note that both the priests and the teachers were given the authority to baptize. As we have discussed in this work, so far as we know there was no Aaronic Priesthood among the Nephites (because there were no Levites), at least until the coming of the resurrected Lord to them in the meridian of time. Thus priests and teachers among the Nephites held the Melchizedek Priesthood, and the words priests and teachers describe their ministerial duties, not the offices to which they were ordained. DCBM, 3:117) in the land, to baptize unto the Lord whosoever were desirous to be baptized.

14 And it came to pass that they were many; for they did flock in from all the region round about Sidom, and were baptized.

15 But as to the people that were in the land of Ammonihah, they yet remained a hard-hearted and a stiffnecked people; and they repented not of their sins, ^aascribing all the power of Alma and Amulek to the devil; for they were of the profession of ^bNehor, and did not believe in the repentance of their sins. (The people of Ammonihah are ripening in iniquity and are prepared to be destroyed. Next chapter they are all wiped out.)

16 And it came to pass that Alma and Amulek, Amulek having ^aforsaken all his gold, and silver, and his precious things, which were in the land of Ammonihah, for the word of God, he being ^brejected by those who were once his friends and also by his father and his kindred;

17 Therefore, after Alma having established the church at Sidom, seeing a great ^acheck, yea, seeing that the people were checked as to the pride of their hearts, and began to ^bhumble themselves before God, and began to assemble themselves together at their ^csanctuaries to ^dworship God before the ^ealtar, ^fwatching and praying continually, that they might be delivered from Satan, and from ^gdeath, and from destruction—

18 Now as I said, Alma having seen all these things, therefore he took Amulek and came over to the land of Zarahemla, and took him to his ^aown house, and did administer unto him in his tribulations, and ^bstrengthened him in the Lord.

19 And thus ended the tenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.

CHAPTER 16

The Lamanites destroy the people of Ammonihah—Zoram leads the Nephites to victory over the Lamanites—Alma and Amulek and many others preach the word—They teach that after his resurrection Christ will appear to the Nephites. [About 81—78 B.C.]

1 AND it came to pass in the *eleventh year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, on the fifth day of the second month, there having been much peace in the land of Zarahemla, there having been no wars nor contentions for a certain number of years, even until the fifth day of the second month in the eleventh year, there was a cry of war heard throughout the land.

2 For behold, the armies of the Lamanites had come in upon the wilderness side, into the borders of the land, even into the city of ^aAmmonihah, and began to slay the people and destroy the city.

3 And now it came to pass, before the Nephites could raise a sufficient army to drive them out of the

land, they had ^adestroyed the people who were in the city of Ammonihah, and also some around the borders of Noah, and taken others captive into the wilderness. (The Lamanites didn't stay and fight. This was a slave raid.)

4 Now it came to pass that the Nephites were desirous to obtain those who had been carried away captive into the wilderness.

5 Therefore, he that had been appointed chief captain over the armies of the Nephites, (and his name was Zoram (Which means "refreshing rain."), and he had two sons, Lehi and Aha (a leader in war))—now Zoram and his two sons, knowing that Alma was high priest over the church, and having heard that he had the spirit of prophecy, therefore they went unto him and desired of him to know whither the Lord would that they should go into the wilderness in search of their brethren (This is to be a search and rescue mission, not a search and destroy mission), who had been taken captive by the Lamanites.

6 And it came to pass that Alma ^ainquired of the Lord concerning the matter. And Alma returned and said unto them: Behold, the Lamanites will cross the river Sidon in the south wilderness, away up beyond the borders of the land of ^bManti. And behold there shall ye meet them, on the east of the river Sidon, and there the Lord will deliver unto thee thy brethren who have been taken captive by the Lamanites.

7 And it came to pass that Zoram and his sons crossed over the river Sidon, with their armies, and marched away beyond the borders of Manti into the south wilderness, which was on the east side of the river Sidon.

8 And they came upon the armies of the Lamanites, and the Lamanites were scattered and driven into the wilderness; and they took their brethren who had been taken captive by the Lamanites, and there was not one soul of them had been lost that were taken captive. And they were brought by their brethren to possess their own lands.

9 And thus ended the eleventh year of the judges, the Lamanites having been driven out of the land, and the people of Ammonihah were ^adestroyed; yea, ^bevery living soul of the Ammonihahites was ^cdestroyed, and also their ^dgreat city, which they said God could not destroy, because of its greatness.

10 But behold, in ^aone day it was left desolate; and the ^bcarcasses were mangled by dogs and wild beasts of the wilderness.

11 Nevertheless, after many days their ^adead bodies were heaped up upon the face of the earth, and they were covered with a shallow covering. And now so great was the scent thereof that the people did not go in to possess the land of Ammonihah for many years. And it was called Desolation of ^bNehors; for they were of the profession of Nehor, who were slain; and their lands remained desolate. ("The desolation of the city of Ammonihah is an important part of the message of the Book of Mormon. Ammonihah and Nehor are symbols-history as prophecy. Ammonihah and Nehor were to the nation of the Nephites what the Book of Mormon is to us—a warning voice! They were types casting shadows upon the cities of Zarahemla, Moroni, Moronihah, Gilgal, Onihah, Mocum, Jerusalem, Gadiandi, Gadiomnah, Jacob, Gimginno, Jacobugath, Laman, Josh, Gad, and Kishkumen, all of which, like Nehor, had the blood of the prophets and the Saints upon their hands, and all of which were destroyed before the coming of Christ to the Nephites in the meridian dispensation (see 3 Nephi 8, 9). How perfect the type—Ammonihah, a city pretending religion, a religion perfectly tolerant of any action save it be the preaching of the gospel of repentance! To preach repentance, to testify of Christ, to speak of the necessity of good works—these were sins too grievous to be borne. Their effect was to unite in wrath and bitterness the diversified factions within the congregations of this ever-tolerant religion. These missionaries of righteousness must be mocked, ridiculed, beaten, and imprisoned. Their adherents must be stoned, driven from the community, or burned at the stake. Such were the seeds they planted and such was the harvest they reaped in the desolation of Nehors. We are left to wonder to what extent Ammonihah is a prophetic foreshadowing of that which the scriptures denominate as the 'desolation of abomination' (D&C 84:114, 117; D&C 88:85), events that will precede and attend the coming of our Lord and Master that will bring again that peace once known to the faithful of the Nephite nation.")

(McConkie and Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, p.119) The Desolation of Abomination is prophesied to occur twice. The first occurrence took place when the Romans sieged Jerusalem in AD 70. The second Desolation of Abomination will occur prior to the Second Coming when Jerusalem is again taken siege by her enemies. The ensuing battle will be so great that the dead will leave a great odor on the land, just as occurred with the Desolation of Nehors. Ezekiel describes it as follows, I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it The valley of Hamon-gog. And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land (Ez 39:11-12.)

12 And the Lamanites did not come again to war against the Nephites *until the fourteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. And thus for three years did the people of Nephi have continual peace in all the land.

13 And Alma and Amulek went forth preaching repentance to the people in their ^atemples, and in their ^bsanctuaries, and also in their ^csynagogues, (The word synagogue is Greek for “the place where you assemble, a church.”) which were built after the manner of the Jews. (Formal worship among the Nephites before the coming of Christ appears to have been carried out in instructional meetings in the synagogue under the direction of ordained teachers, ritual offerings at the altar of sacrifice, either at the temple or at sanctuaries, under the direction of those holding the office of priest; and the same essential system of temple worship known in the Old World. When large congregations met together for instruction, it was at either the sanctuary or the temple. DCBM, 3:121.)

14 And as many as would hear their words, unto them they did impart the word of God, without any ^arespect of persons, continually.

15 And thus did Alma and Amulek go forth, and also many more who had been chosen for the work, to preach the word throughout all the land. And the establishment of the church became general throughout the land, in all the region round about, among all the people of the Nephites.

16 And there was ^ano inequality among them; the Lord did pour out his Spirit on all the face of the land to prepare the minds of the children of men, or to prepare their ^bhearts to receive the word which should be taught among them at the time of his coming— (As there was a spirit that went forth to prepare the way before the appearance of Christ to the Nephites, so there is a spirit that must go forth to prepare the way before his final return. “I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.” (Joel 2:28-31) And again: “Hearken and hear, O ye inhabitants of the earth. Listen, ye elders of my church together, and hear the voice of the Lord: for he calleth upon all men, and he commandeth all men everywhere to repent. For behold, the Lord God hath sent forth the angel crying through the midst of heaven, saying: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight, for the hour of his coming is nigh.” (D&C 133:16-17) Even before the first missionaries of this dispensation went forth, the Lord declared, “The field is white already to harvest” (D&C 4:4), which we would interpret to mean that the hearts and minds of many have been prepared for this day and this hour. The seed of the gospel will take root and will grow into the mighty oak of the millennial day. DCBM, 3:121-122)

17 That they might not be hardened against the word, that they might not be unbelieving, and go on to destruction, but that they might receive the word with joy, and as a ^abranch be grafted into the true vine, that they might enter into the ^brest of the Lord their God.

18 Now those ^apriests who did go forth among the people did preach against all ^blyings, and ^cdeceivings, and ^denvyings, and ^estrifes, and malice, and revilings, and stealing, robbing, plundering, murdering, committing adultery, and all manner of lasciviousness, (All the vices of the flesh, all the seeds of carnality, all that is impure or unclean must be done away, for all such hinder the pure flow of

intelligence from God to man. Having escaped the corruption that is in the world, we are then, by diligence, to obtain faith and add to our faith virtue, “and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:5-8) That is, we are, through Christ, to replace the “works of the flesh” with the “fruit of the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:19-25) DCBM, 3:122) crying that these things ought not so to be—

19 Holding forth things which must shortly come; yea, holding forth the ^acoming of the Son of God, his sufferings and death, and also the resurrection of the dead.

20 And many of the people did inquire concerning the place where the Son of God should come; and they were taught that he would ^aappear unto them ^bafter his resurrection; and this the people did hear with great joy and gladness.

21 And now after the church had been established throughout all the land—having got the ^avictory over the devil, and the word of God being preached in its purity in all the land, and the Lord pouring out his blessings upon the people—thus ended the fourteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.

* Verse 1 [81 B.C.]; Verse 12 [About 78 B.C.].

Additional Reading:

JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATION
GENESIS 14: 25-40

Melchizedek's great ministry is mentioned; the powers and blessings of the Melchizedek Priesthood are described. (compare Genesis 14)

25 *And Melchizedek lifted up his voice and blessed Abram.*

26 *Now Melchizedek was a man of faith, who wrought righteousness; and when a child he feared God, and stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire.*

27 *And thus, having been approved of God, he was ordained an high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch,*

28 *It being after the order of the Son of God; which order came, not by man, nor the will of man; neither by father nor mother; neither by beginning of days nor end of years; but of God;*

29 *And it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name.*

30 *For God having sworn unto Enoch and unto his seed with an oath by himself; that every one being ordained after this order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course;*

31 *To put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God; to do all things according to his will, according to his command, subdue principalities and powers; and this by the will of the Son of God which was from before the foundation of the world.*

32 *And men having this faith, coming up unto this order of God, were translated and taken up into heaven.*

33 *And now, Melchizedek was a priest of this order; therefore he obtained peace in Salem, and was called the Prince of peace.*

34 *And his people wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken, separating it from the earth, having reserved it unto the latter days, or the end of the world;*

35 *And hath said, and sworn with an oath, that the heavens and the earth should come together; and the sons of God should be tried so as by fire.*

36 *And this Melchizedek, having thus established righteousness, was called the king of heaven by his people, or, in other words, the King of peace.*

37 *And he lifted up his voice, and he blessed Abram, being the high priest, and the keeper of the storehouse of God;*

38 *Him whom God had appointed to receive tithes for the poor.*

39 *Wherefore, Abram paid unto him tithes of all that he had, of all the riches which he possessed, which God had given him more than that which he had need.*

40 *And it came to pass, that God blessed Abram, and gave unto him riches, and honor, and lands for an everlasting possession; according to the covenant which he had made, and according to the blessing wherewith Melchizedek had blessed him.*

(The accepted Hebrew meaning of Melchizedek may then be taken as king of righteousness or peace. But, students of language suggested that the word is a title rather than a name, a title implying a high position of spiritual leadership. Linguists, dissecting the word and finding the syllable “el” in it, the Hebrew for God, interpret Melchizedek to mean a servant or king of the supreme God, a “King-priest.” Paul tells the Hebrews to “consider how great this man was. (Heb 7:4) Through the ages Melchizedek has been a somewhat mystical figure, but one to whom the highest respect is given. John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, p. 231-32. Through the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we find that the people who many call the Essenes desired to move away from wickedness and establish a singular community of righteousness. Their organization had a shadow of biblical organization. Their leader was called the “Teacher of Righteousness” and he had two assistants. There was also a council of “Twelve Overseers.” They had an order following the righteous king which is said in Hebrew, “Melech Zedek.” *Old Testament Supplemental Study Materials*, p. 15)

Is Shem Melchizedek?

In ancient Jewish traditions Melchizedek is often thought to be Shem, the son of Noah. Melchizedek is a title meaning “king of righteousness,” even though it is also used as a proper name. A modern writer examined the question of whether Shem and Melchizedek could be the same person and concluded that, while we cannot say for sure, the possibility is clearly there. He said: Let us examine first what we know about Shem. Although the Bible names Shem as the eldest son of Noah (Gen 5:32), modern-day revelation places Japeth as the eldest (Moses 8:12). Both reports, however, are harmonious in naming Shem as the progenitor of Israel and in the fact that the priesthood descended through Shem to all the great patriarchs after Noah. In this patriarchal order of priesthood, Shem stands next to Noah. He held the keys to the priesthood and was the great high priest of his day. Living contemporary with Shem was a man known as Melchizedek, who was also known as the great high priest. The scriptures give us the details of Shem’s birth and ancestry but are silent as to his ministry and later life. Of Melchizedek, however, the opposite is true. Nothing is recorded about his birth or ancestry, even though the Book of Mormon states that he did have a father. Concerning his ministry and life we have several interesting and important facts. All of this provokes some questions and calls for answers. Were there two high priests presiding at the same time? Why is the record silent concerning Shem’s ministry? Why is nothing known concerning Melchizedek’s ancestry? Because of this state of knowledge on our part many Saints and gospel scholars have wondered if these men were the same person. The truth is, we do not know the answer. But an examination of the scriptures is fascinating, because it seems to indicate that these men may have been one and the same. For example, here is the case for their oneness; 1. The inheritance given to Shem included the land of Salem. Melchizedek appears in scripture as the king of Salem, who reigns over this area. 2. Shem, according to later revelation, reigned in righteousness and the priesthood came through him. Melchizedek appears on the scene with a title that means “king of righteousness.” 3. Shem was the great high priest of his day. Abraham honored the high priest Melchizedek by seeking a blessing at his hands and paying him tithes. 4. Abraham stands next to Shem in the patriarchal order of

the priesthood and would surely have received the priesthood from Shem; but D&C 84:5-17 says Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek. 5. Jewish tradition identifies Shem as Melchizedek. 6. President Joseph F. Smith's remarkable vision names Shem among the great patriarchs, but no mention is made of Melchizedek. 7. Times and Seasons speaks of Shem who was Melchizedek. [15 Dec 1844, p. 746] On the other hand, there is a case for their being two distinct personalities. Many persons believe D&C 84:14 is proof that there are perhaps several generations between Melchizedek and Noah. The scripture says, "Which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah." If it does turn out that Shem and Melchizedek are the same person, this scripture should prove no stumbling block, because it could be interpreted to mean that priesthood authority commenced with Adam and came through the fathers, even till Noah and then to Shem. Alma E. Gygi, Is it Possible That Shem and Melchizedek Are the Same Person? Ensign, Nov 1973, p. 15-16.

Ether 12: 12-13: 12 For if there be no ^afaith among the children of men God can do no ^bmiracle among them; wherefore, he showed not himself until after their faith. 13 Behold, it was the faith of Alma and Amulek that caused the ^aprison to tumble to the earth.