

**LESSON 27**  
**“All Things Denote There Is A God”**  
**Alma 30-31**

**OVERVIEW:**

Korihor leads away the hearts of many in Zarahemla. Korihor is taken before Alma, who testifies of Christ's coming. Alma leads a mission to reclaim the apostate Zoramites. The reason Mormon chose to include the teachings of Korihor is because he knew that we would have such teachings in our day. This chapter shows us how to counteract the teachings of humanists by bearing testimony of the truth and of the divinity of Christ.

The Savior declared that one of the signs preceding his return to the earth in the latter days would be the prevalence and proliferation of false teachings: "For in those days there shall also arise false Christs, and false prophets, [who] shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant" (Joseph Smith-Matthew 1:22). Alma 30-31 describe just such a condition occurring among the Nephites about 74 years prior to the Savior's appearance in ancient America. Because God foresaw the flood of falsehood that would cover the earth in the latter days, he specifically designed the Book of Mormon to help. The lessons learned from Korihor and the Zoramites in Alma 30-31 can help protect us from deception. W. Jeffrey Marsh, Meridian Magazine, Lesson 27.

**SCRIPTURES:**

THE BOOK OF ALMA  
THE SON OF ALMA  
CHAPTER 30

*Korihor, the antichrist, ridicules Christ, the atonement, and the spirit of prophecy—He teaches that there is no God, no fall of man, no penalty for sin, and no Christ—Alma testifies that Christ shall come and that all things denote there is a God—Korihor demands a sign and is struck dumb—The devil had appeared to Korihor as an angel and taught him what to say—He is trodden down and dies. [About 74 B.C.]*

1 BEHOLD, now it came to pass that after the <sup>a</sup>people of Ammon were established in the land of Jershon (Mormon is returning to the story he started in Alma 28:2-7. Jershon is between the land of the Lamanites and the land of the Zoramites.), yea, and also after the Lamanites were <sup>b</sup>driven out of the land, and their dead were buried by the people of the land—

2 Now their dead were not numbered because of the greatness of their numbers; neither were the dead of the Nephites numbered—but it came to pass after they had buried their dead, and also after the days of <sup>a</sup>fasting, and <sup>b</sup>mourning, and prayer, (and it was in the sixteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi) there began to be continual peace throughout all the land.

3 Yea, and the people did observe to keep the commandments of the Lord; and they were strict in observing the <sup>a</sup>ordinances of God, according to the law of Moses; for they were taught to <sup>b</sup>keep the law of Moses until it should be fulfilled. (Mention of the law of Moses so closely to the burial of their dead may be referring the Mosaic mourning and funeral rites still practiced by the Nephites.)

4 And thus the people did have no disturbance in all the sixteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. (Whenever a people live the gospel, whenever they live in harmony with the statutes and ordinances God has given them, whenever they follow the light of their consciences and subscribe to the rules and standards established for those of the household of faith, they come to know the peace of

the Spirit. Keeping the commandments brings the quiet assurance that one's course in life is pleasing in the sight of God, a consciousness of victory over self which we know as spirituality. "Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me." D&C 19:23, DCBM, 3:200.)

5 And it came to pass that in the commencement of the seventeenth year of the reign of the judges, there was continual peace. (Korihor breaks the period of peace.)

6 But it came to pass in the \*latter end of the seventeenth year, there came a man into the land of Zarahemla, and he was <sup>a</sup>Anti-Christ, for he began to preach unto the people <sup>b</sup>against the prophecies which had been spoken by the prophets, concerning the coming of Christ. ("Here we find an interesting definition of an anti-Christ: one who defies and denies the prophecies concerning the coming of Christ. This definition would, of course, pertain primarily to those who lived before the meridian of time. In our day we would speak of an anti-Christ as one who denies the divine birth of Jesus; who downplays the significance of his teachings; who claims that Jesus' sufferings, death, and resurrection have no significance for mankind. Many in this dispensation have been seduced into the damnable heresy that Jesus was merely a good man, a brilliant speaker, and a loving and tender example of mercy and forgiveness--these things alone. The restored gospel--especially as made known through the Book of Mormon--testifies that Jesus Christ was and is divine, that he is God." (McConkie and Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, p. 201) "By Joseph Smith's day the idea of an antichrist had evolved into the idea of an Anti-Christ. The word *antichrist* is the Bible term for the false teachers in the Church who taught a false Christ instead of a true Christ. the Greek preposition *anti*, roughly translated, means *instead of*. It also carries the meaning of "face to face" or mirror image. The image in the mirror, looking back at you, is face to face with you. It looks like you. Yet it has no substance. It is a counterfeit of you, in a sense. It only appears to be you. So when John in his epistles spoke of antichrists, he was speaking of the belief of the Gnostics that God is a substanceless spirit rather than a resurrected being. (See 1 Jn. 2:18-22; 1 Jn. 4:1-3; 2 Jn. 1:7.) Such a god is like the image in the mirror--really nothing, a counterfeit. Through the centuries thereafter, the term *antichrist* became *Anti-Christ*, and by Joseph Smith's day it referred to those who opposed Christ." (Glenn L. Pearson and Reid E. Bankhead, *Building Faith with the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986], 74 - 75.))

7 Now there was no law against a <sup>a</sup>man's <sup>b</sup>belief; for it was strictly contrary to the commands of God that there should be a law which should bring men on to unequal grounds. (Hugh Nibley: "It was under the protection of this Bill of Rights that the infamous Korihor was able to carry on with perfect impunity. Only a miracle stopped him... What were all those leading authorities so helpless against? Against abridging the right of free speech and freedom of religion as 'laid down by the commandments of God' (cf. Alma 30:7). These are the words of the Book of Mormon... No one will deny that the smart-aleck criticism of Alma and his friends was bad, unfair, foolish, and injurious. What could be done about it? The answer is always the same. One replies by preaching the gospel with increasing fervor, and that is what the young Alma learned for himself. (Quoting Brigham Young) Do not you wish sometimes you had some power to pinch their ears? Do not you wish you had power to stop them in their mad career? Let the Lord Almighty do this..." "A principle as strong as that of free agency itself exists from eternity to eternity." (*Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints*, p. 423 - 424) Neal A. Maxwell: "Clever but pathetic Korihor surely has his modern counterparts, especially in today's settings in which so many people are especially free to choose for themselves. In his time (as in ours), 'there was no law against a man's belief; for it was strictly contrary to the commands of God...' (Alma 30:7-9.) Soon we may see such situations in which there will be 'no laws against a man's belief,' but also few laws against a man's behavior." (*Plain and Precious Things*, p. 69))

8 For thus saith the scripture: <sup>a</sup>Choose ye this day, whom ye will serve. (Joshua 24:17. In the brass plates.)

9 Now if a man desired to serve God, it was his privilege; or rather, if he believed in God it was his privilege to serve him; but if he did not believe in him there was no law to punish him.

10 But if he <sup>a</sup>murdered he was punished unto <sup>b</sup>death; and if he <sup>c</sup>robbed he was also punished; and if he stole he was also punished; and if he committed <sup>d</sup>adultery he was also punished; yea, for all this wickedness they were punished.

11 For there was a law that men should be judged according to their crimes. Nevertheless, there was no law against a man's belief; therefore, a man was punished only for the crimes which he had done; therefore all men were on <sup>a</sup>equal grounds.

12 And this <sup>a</sup>Anti-Christ, whose name was Korihor, (and the law could have no hold upon him) began to preach unto the people that there should be <sup>b</sup>no Christ. ("We did not borrow the Book of Mormon from the ancients; they wrote it to us. We are the audience Mormon and Moroni addressed as they chose what was to be included in this scriptural record. They told us the story of Korihor because they knew that we would have our Korihors. The Korihor of the Book of Mormon story is but the prototype of our modern anti-Christ. As the modern man of faith is in the image and likeness of his ancient counterpart, believing and testifying of those truths of which the ancients believed and testified, so the modern anti-Christ but echoes the arguments and sophistry used to beguile the souls of men anciently. Invariably, Korihors are articulate and carry with them an air of sophistication. They thrive on controversy, debate, and contention, yet inevitably their popularity rests in their appeal to the carnal nature of man." (Millet & McConkie, *Sustaining and Defending the Faith*, p. 96) Ezra Taft Benson: "...the Book of Mormon exposes the enemies of Christ. It confounds false doctrines and lays down contention. (See 2 Nephi 3:12.) It fortifies the humble followers of Christ against the evil designs, strategies, and doctrines of the devil in our day. The type of apostates in the Book of Mormon is similar to the type we have today. God, with his infinite foreknowledge, so molded the Book of Mormon that we might see the error and know how to combat false educational, political, religious, and philosophical concepts of our time." (*Conference Report*, Apr. 1975, pp. 94-95) And after this manner did he preach, saying:

13 O ye that are bound down under a <sup>a</sup>foolish and a vain hope, why do ye yoke yourselves with such foolish things? ("Korihor claims the protection of law in a free nation to teach the doctrines of disbelief, disrespect, and disobedience. He attempts to convince people that they are in bondage, for if he can successfully do so they will naturally turn to him as a liberator or redeemer. His then is a liberation movement. He is going to free them from the burden of commandments and gospel commitments. Whereas the gospel declares that the knowledge of revealed truths brings freedom, Korihor contends that freedom really means being without the constraints of righteousness...Korihor sought to 'lift up their heads in their wickedness (v. 18),' that is, to come out of the closet and take pride in those things that are an offense to God." (Millet & McConkie, *Sustaining and Defending the Faith*, pp. 88-9) Ezra Taft Benson: "One of Satan's frequently used deceptions is the notion that the commandments of God are meant to restrict freedom and limit happiness. Young people especially sometimes feel that the standards of the Lord are like fences and chains, blocking them from those activities that seem most enjoyable in life. But exactly the opposite is true. The gospel plan is the plan by which men are brought to a fullness of joy. The gospel principles are the steps and guidelines which will help us find true happiness and joy." (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p. 357 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p. 297)) Why do ye look for a Christ? For no man can <sup>b</sup>know of anything which is to come. (Neal A. Maxwell: "In sum, many maintain that we simply cannot know the future; that angels do not minister to man; and furthermore that we cannot accept the word of those who testify otherwise! For some this amounts to an article of faith: 'We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural; it is either meaningless or irrelevant to the question of the survival and fulfillment of the human race. As non-theists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity.... No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.' (Humanist Manifesto II, Encyclopedia of American Religions: Religions Creeds, J. Gordon Melton, ed. [Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1988], p. 641.) Fortunately, as Latter-day Saints we know better, having been blessed with the witness of the Spirit." (*A Wonderful Flood of Light*, p. 75) "Many in the world hold back from making the 'leap of faith' because they have already jumped to the Korihor conclusions, such as 'God never was nor ever

will be; there is no redeeming Christ; man cannot know the future; man cannot know of that which he cannot see; whatsoever a man does is no crime; and death is the end.' One basic limitation of worldly wisdom is its lack of longitudinality and of precious perspective. Worldly wisdom cannot 'see afar off,' and without a spiritual memory and spiritual will, past mistakes are repeated and folly is resumed!' (*Church News*, Aug 22, 1992, "Vital Truths are Expressed in Life")

14 Behold, these things which ye call prophecies, which ye say are handed down by holy prophets, behold, they are foolish traditions of your fathers.

15 How do ye know of their surety? Behold, ye cannot know of things which ye do not <sup>a</sup>see; therefore ye cannot know that there shall be a Christ. (What Korihor is saying is that a person can't know of things unless he knows them by his physical senses. A similar belief of many today.)

16 Ye look forward and say that ye see a remission of your sins. But behold, it is the effect of a <sup>a</sup>frenzied mind; (Hugh Nibley: "Now many of my friends think like this, that Mormons must be deranged. We have a professor from Hebrew University who is here (at BYU) now. He thinks that anybody must be crazy who can believe in an angel. That's just impossible; there's something wrong there. He just can't get it through his head, although there it is. That's why he is so interested in being here with people who actually believe it. 'But behold, it is the effect of a frenzied mind'" (*Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, lecture 54, p. 423)) and this derangement of your minds comes because of the traditions of your fathers, which lead you away into a belief of things which are not so. (For Korihor, there is no coming Christ, and what is more, the idea that we might need one is merely "the effect of a frenzied mind." In this statement we hear a precursor of Karl Marx's description of religion as the "opiate of the masses.")

17 And many more such things did he say unto them, telling them that there could be no atonement made for the sins of men, but every man <sup>a</sup>fares in this life according to the management of the creature; (Korihor was a secular humanist, as was Nehor, his predecessor. He believed that if success came it was because the individual had earned it. If progress was made it was because of hard work, consistent effort, and fulfillment of one's goals. The humanist focuses upon man: Man is the measure; all things rotate around man; man is the center of the universe; man has the power to solve his own problems, the power to make himself happy, the power to do anything he sets his mind to. Humanism points toward man's genius, toward man's strength, toward man's works and accomplishments. It is an anti-Christian philosophy and is thus false, devilish, and destructive. It draws man's attention away from the one source which could bring liberation from this world's woes and give satisfaction and happiness in the world to come. It deflects one's vision away from Christ and away from that grace or enabling power which comes from him. DCBM, 3:204) therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength; (Neal A. Maxwell: "Some who do not acknowledge God-and, for that matter, some who do-proceed through life insensitively. Like Korihor, they apparently believe that in this life we fare only according to the individual management of the creature, and that everyone conquers according to his genius or strength (see Alma 30:17). To the 'strong,' this seems ideal, but what of the conquered and subdued? Injustice multiplies like insects in the sunshine." (*A Wonderful Flood of Light*, p. 85)) and <sup>b</sup>whatsoever a man did was <sup>c</sup>no crime.

18 And thus he did preach unto them, leading away the hearts of many, causing them to lift up their heads in their wickedness, yea, leading away many women, and also men, to commit whoredoms—telling them that when a man was dead, that was the end thereof. (Joseph F. Smith: "Some people cannot think of anything else but annihilation. What a glorious prospect for the sinner! Then he could say, 'Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die, and next day we will be annihilated, and that will be the end of our sorrow and of God's judgment upon us.' Do not flatter yourselves that you are going to get out of it so easy. This Book of Mormon is replete all the way through with the testimonies of the servants of God that men are born to be immortal; that after the resurrection their bodies are to live as long as their spirits, and their spirits cannot die. They are immortal beings, and they are destined, if they commit the unpardonable sin, to be banished from the presence of God and endure the punishment of the devil and his angels throughout all eternity. I think the wicked would prefer annihilation to the suffering

of such punishment. That would be an end to punishment--an end to being. This view cannot be reconciled with the word of God.” (*Collected Discourses 1886-1898*, ed. by Brian Stuy, vol. 4, Joseph F. Smith, Jan. 20, 1995))

19 Now this man went over to the land of <sup>a</sup>Jershon also, to preach these things among the people of Ammon, who were once the people of the Lamanites. (Korihor may have thought that since these people had just recently been converted, that maybe they could be converted again to a different religion. He didn't count on the fact that they were converted to the true religion.)

20 But behold they were more wise than many of the Nephites; for they took him, and bound him, and carried him before Ammon, who was a <sup>a</sup>high priest over that people.

21 And it came to pass that he caused that he should be carried out of the land. And he came over into the land of Gideon, and began to preach unto them also; and here he did not have much success, for he was taken and bound and carried before the high priest, and also the chief judge over the land.

22 And it came to pass that the high priest said unto him: Why do ye go about perverting the ways of the Lord? Why do ye teach this people that there shall be no Christ, to interrupt their rejoicings? Why do ye speak against all the prophecies of the holy prophets? (It wasn't Korihor's beliefs that were illegal, but his divisive preachings.)

23 Now the high priest's name was Giddonah. And Korihor said unto him: Because I do not teach the foolish traditions of your fathers, and because I do not teach this people to bind themselves down under the foolish ordinances and performances which are laid down by ancient priests, to usurp power and authority over them, to keep them in ignorance, that they may not lift up their heads, but be brought down according to thy words.

24 Ye say that this people is a free people. Behold, I say they are in bondage. Ye say that those ancient prophecies are true. Behold, I say that ye do not know that they are true.

25 Ye say that this people is a guilty and a fallen people, because of the transgression of a parent. Behold, I say that a child is not guilty because of its parents. (“This argument is called a straw man. That is, he attributed to Giddonah something that Giddonah does not believe—the idea that children inherit guilt through Adam's transgression. Korihor knows that he cannot fight truth fairly and come off victorious, so he attributes bad doctrine to Giddonah, a straw man to which he can give a good verbal licking. “The straw man device seems to be a mandatory ploy in attacks on the doctrines of the Church...It is usually necessary to prop the straw man up by quoting some Mormon leader as having made some supporting comment. The rule here is to never quote anyone still living, and the longer they have been dead the safer you are.” (Millet & McConkie, *Sustaining and Defending the Faith*, p. 90) This is a remarkable tactic that is still used in anti-Mormon literature today. The intent of the technique is to create a question in the mind of the listener by creating an apparent contradiction between two concepts that the listener holds to be true. The speaker may then suggest that it is impossible to believe both simultaneously, and therefore accuse the religion of fundamental inconsistency for allowing such a contradiction. Most of the contradictions are as simplistic as the one Korihor presents. While it sounds contradictory on the surface, it relies on its superficiality. In this particular case, Korihor does not understand that the mission of the Savior was to create a condition where the power of the Atonement would create a situation where we were again accountable for our own sins. Since Korihor does not believe in, nor truly understand the Atonement, he creates this argument by oversimplifying his subject. Brant Gardner.)

26 And ye also say that Christ shall come. But behold, I say that ye do not know that there shall be a Christ. And ye say also that he shall be slain for the <sup>a</sup>sins of the world—

27 And thus ye lead away this people after the foolish traditions of your fathers, and according to your own desires; and ye keep them down, even as it were in bondage, that ye may glut yourselves with the labors of their hands, that they durst not look up with boldness, and that they durst not enjoy their rights and privileges.

28 Yea, they durst not make use of that which is their own lest they should offend their priests, who do

yoke them according to their desires, and have brought them to believe, by their traditions and their dreams and their whims and their visions and their pretended mysteries, that they should, if they did not do according to their words, offend some unknown being, who they say is God—a being who <sup>a</sup>never has been seen or known, who <sup>b</sup>never was nor ever will be. (If there is no God, then there is no sin. Korihor is trying to justify his sinful actions by saying there is no sin.)

29 Now when the high priest and the <sup>a</sup>chief judge saw the hardness of his heart, yea, when they saw that he would <sup>b</sup>revile even against God, they would not make any reply to his words; (Joseph Smith: “Let the Elders be exceedingly careful...Remember that your business is to preach the Gospel in all humility and meekness, and warn sinners to repent and come to Christ. *Avoid contentions and vain disputes with men of corrupt minds, who do not desire to know the truth.* Remember that ‘it is a day of warning, and not a day of many words.’ If they receive not your testimony in one place, flee to another, remembering to cast no reflections, nor throw out any bitter sayings. If you do your duty, it will be just as well with you, as though all men embraced the Gospel.” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 43, italics added)) but they caused that he should be bound; and they delivered him up into the hands of the officers, and sent him to the land of Zarahemla, that he might be brought before Alma, and the chief judge who was governor over all the land. (Korihor is probably of little consequence in the history of the Nephites.

Unlike Nehor, we have no organized movement that may be attached to Nehor. Korihor’s philosophies had some acceptance in his first city, but absolutely none in Jershon nor Gideon. Korihor’s greatest value comes in Mormon’s construction of his story. Literarily, Korihor serves two functions. First, he serves as a contrast to the success of the mission to the Lamanites. The proximate discussion of these two “missions” allows Mormon to show the power of God in the conversion of the Lamanites, but the failure of a mirrored mission to convert the Nephites. Secondly, it allows Mormon to present two figureheads in direct contrast. Alma stands for the gospel, and Korihor for the opposite philosophy. Mormon can use this individual situation to extrapolate the situation into the more universal conflict between the gospel and all detractors. Mormon constructs a great contrast between the sons of Mosiah and Korihor, and then uses Korihor as a way to show the superiority of the Lord over those who would claim he does not exist. Brant Gardner)

30 And it came to pass that when he was brought before Alma and the chief judge, he did go on in the same manner as he did in the land of Gideon; yea, he went on to <sup>a</sup>blaspheme.

31 And he did rise up in great <sup>a</sup>swelling words before Alma, and did revile against the <sup>b</sup>priests and teachers, accusing them of leading away the people after the silly traditions of their fathers, for the sake of glutting on the labors of the people. (Korihor is accusing church leaders of Priestcraft.)

32 Now Alma said unto him: (This may be where Alma and Korihor are arguing their cases before the judge for the judge’s decision.) Thou knowest that we do not glut ourselves upon the labors of this people; for behold I have <sup>a</sup>labored even from the commencement of the reign of the judges until now, with mine <sup>b</sup>own hands for my support, notwithstanding my many travels round about the land to declare the word of God unto my people.

33 And notwithstanding the many labors which I have performed in the church, I have never received so much as even one <sup>a</sup>senine for my labor; neither has any of my brethren, save it were in the judgment-seat; and then we have received only according to law for our time.

34 And now, if we do not receive anything for our labors in the church, what doth it profit us to labor in the church save it were to declare the truth, that we may have rejoicings in the <sup>a</sup>joy of our brethren?

35 Then why sayest thou that we preach unto this people to get gain, when thou, of thyself, knowest that we receive no gain? And now, believest thou that we deceive this people, that <sup>a</sup>causes such joy in their hearts?

36 And Korihor answered him, Yea.

37 And then Alma said unto him: Believest thou that there is a God?

38 And he answered, Nay.

39 Now Alma said unto him: Will ye deny again that there is a God, and also deny the Christ? For

behold, I say unto you, I know there is a God, and also that Christ shall come. (Alma here demonstrates the one thing that the believer can and should do in the face of opposition and challenge; bear fervent witness and leave the rest to God. Alma knows and he knows that he knows, and that is all that matters. He feels neither threatened nor overly troubled by an unbeliever, except as the unbeliever imposes his skepticism upon the innocent and the unwary. DCBM, 3:210)

40 And now what evidence have ye that there is no <sup>a</sup>God, or that Christ cometh not? I say unto you that ye have none, save it be your word only. (“As to the Korihors, we need not assume the burden of proof that is rightly theirs. If they assert we are without God, without prophets, and without revelation, it is for them to prove it. We await that proof as have the Saints of God from the days of Adam.” (Millet & McConkie, *Sustaining and Defending the Faith*, p. 94) Alma takes Korihor’s own philosophy and catches him in a trap of his own making. Korihor teaches that we can know only what we can see. (See Alma 30:15.) But when questioned, Korihor categorically denies that he believes there is a God. Alma then asks, ‘What evidence have ye that there is no God, or that Christ cometh not? I say unto you that ye have none, save it be your word only.’ (Alma 30:40.) It is an inspired insight on Alma’s part. Korihor is not consistent in his own thinking. If we truly can know only those things for which we have empirical evidence, then we cannot teach there is no God unless we have evidence for that belief. And Korihor has no evidence. Korihor will consider only evidence that can be gathered through the senses. In such a system, it is much easier to prove there *is* a God than to prove there is not a God. To prove there is a God, all it takes is for one person to see, hear, or otherwise have an experience with God, and thereafter the existence of God cannot be disproved. But here is what it would take to *prove* there is no God...for Korihor to say that there is no God, based on the very criteria he himself has established, he would have to perceive every cubic meter of the universe simultaneously. This creates a paradox: In order for Korihor to prove there is no God, *he would have to be a god* himself! Therefore, in declaring there is no God, he is acting on ‘faith,’ the very thing for which he so sharply derides the religious leaders! No wonder Mormon chose to detail the story of Korihor. It teaches a great lesson for our day. No matter how clever, how sophisticated the philosophies of an anti-Christ may seem, they are not true. They are riddled with contradictions, errors, and false assumptions. The gospel, on the other hand, is truth—truth that has stood the test of centuries, truth that can withstand rational examination, truth that is pragmatic and practical, truth that can be confirmed through personal experience. A believer need not apologize for his or her beliefs, for these beliefs withstand every scrutiny much more efficiently than do the doctrines of Satan.” (N. Gerald Lund, *Ensign*, July 1992, p. 16))

41 But, behold, I have all things as a <sup>a</sup>testimony that these things are true; (“Now, we ask, have the united efforts of all the Korihors the world has ever known successfully proved that there is no God? Have they proved that Jesus was not the Christ, the promised Messiah? Where is the man that can refute the testimony of those humble shepherds who heard the heavenly host sing, and who found the infant child wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger? Who is it that can come forth and refute the testimony of the wise men who followed the star and paid homage to the Christ child? Who is it that can discredit the testimony of John that the heavens were opening to him and that he heard a voice saying ‘This is my beloved Son’?...Who with authority can deny such a testimony? Can the combined wisdom of the ages refute the reality of the resurrection? How can anyone prove that Christ did not break the bands of death? ... And what of the testimony of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon that the heavens were opened to them...What evidence does one present to an unbiased jury to prove that on a beautiful spring morning in the year of 1820 the heavens were not opened, that the Father and the Son did not appear to the youthful Joseph Smith? How does one disprove the testimony of a prophet? We accept the feelings of the Spirit or we reject them, but we do not argue them. The Sadducees and Pharisees taunted Jesus for proof, yet when it was presented in overwhelming abundance they continued to disbelieve. Be assured that when such people seek proof, that proof is the last thing in the world that they really want. As to the Korihors, we need not assume the burden of proof that is rightly theirs. If they assert we are without a God, without prophets, and without revelation, it is for them to prove it. We await that proof as have the

Saints of God from the days of Adam.” (Millet & McConkie, *Sustaining and Defending the Faith*, pp. 92-3) Jeffrey R. Holland: “Korihor's arguments sound very contemporary to the modern reader, but Alma used a timeless and ultimately undeniable weapon in response—the power of personal testimony.” (*Christ and the New Covenant*, p. 121)) and ye also have all things as a testimony unto you that they are true; and will ye deny them? Believest thou that these things are true?

42 Behold, I know that thou <sup>a</sup>believest, but thou art possessed with a <sup>b</sup>lying spirit, and ye have put <sup>c</sup>off the Spirit of God that it may have no place in you; but the devil has power over you, and he doth carry you about, working devices that he may destroy the children of God. (“How interesting is Alma’s insight! Alma tells us that Korihor in fact believes that which he is denying. He indicates that Korihor is little more than a wooden puppet, one dressed as a spiritual liberator, dancing and singing as his strings are pulled by the devil himself. And how appropriate that he now demand a sign, for we know that it is the ‘wicked and adulterous’ (Matt 16:4) that seek after signs. ‘The Lord said to me in a revelation,’ Joseph Smith reported, ‘that any man who wanted a sign was an adulterous person.’” (Millet & McConkie, *Sustaining and Defending the Faith*, pp. 92-3))

43 And now Korihor said unto Alma: If thou wilt show me a <sup>a</sup>sign, that I may be convinced that there is a God, yea, show unto me that he hath power, and then will I be convinced of the truth of thy words. (Korihor is banking on the prevalence of an important principle – that generally speaking God does not give signs to the unfaithful. Anti-Christians know this. They know, as does their master, that signs follow faith, that the heavens seldom if ever vouchsafe the miraculous and the wondrous in behalf of the unbelieving. And thus when no sign is given they feel that they have evidence for their own position. Unfortunately for this strategy, as in the case of Sherem, an exception is made; a sign is granted, a condemnatory sign. DCBM, 3:211)

44 But Alma said unto him: Thou hast had signs enough; (Korihor already had signs of the existence of God, but because he did not have the Spirit, he could not or would not believe them.) will ye tempt your God? Will ye say, Show unto me a sign, when ye have the testimony of <sup>a</sup>all these thy brethren, and also all the holy prophets? The scriptures are laid before thee, yea, and all things denote there is a God; yea, even the <sup>b</sup>earth, and <sup>c</sup>all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its <sup>d</sup>motion, yea, and also all the <sup>e</sup>planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator. (Ronald Reagan has been quoted as saying, “sometimes when I’m faced with an atheist, I am tempted to invite him to the greatest gourmet dinner that one could ever serve. And when we have finished eating that magnificent dinner to ask him if he believes there’s a cook.” (*Quote Book #4*, compiled by James H. Patterson, p. 5) “It is also recognized by a majority of the great scientists that there is a God and that he is the source of truth. As Albert Einstein said, ‘The harmony of natural law reveals an intelligence of such superiority that compared with it all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection’ (“Search for Truth” 7). Similarly, the great space scientist Wernher von Braun has written, “Anything as well ordered And perfectly created as is our earth And universe must have a Maker A Master Designer Anything so orderly, so perfect, So precisely balanced, so majestic as This creation can only be the product of a Divine Idea... ‘There must be a Maker; there can be no other way’ (“Creation” 21)” (*Book of Mormon Symposium Series*, edited by PR Cheesman, MS Nyman, and CD Tate, Jr., 1988, p. 348) “A believing British scientist has observed the following of our especially situated planet: “[Just a bit nearer to the sun, and Planet Earth's seas would soon be boiling; just a little farther out, and the whole world would become a frozen wilderness.] . . . If our orbit happened to be the wrong shape . . . then we should alternately freeze like Mars and fry like Venus once a year. Fortunately for us, our planet's orbit is very nearly a circle. The 21 percent of oxygen is another critical figure. Animals would have difficulty breathing if the oxygen content fell very far below that value. But an oxygen level much higher than this would also be disastrous, since the extra oxygen would act as a fire-raising material. Forests and grasslands would flare up every time lightning struck during a dry spell, and life on earth would become extremely hazardous.” (*Book of Mormon Symposium Series: First Nephi*, edited by PR Cheesman, MS Nyman, and CD Tate, Jr., 1988, p. 7) Gordon B. Hinckley: “Can



any man who has walked beneath the stars at night, can anyone who has seen the touch of spring upon the land doubt the hand of divinity in creation? So observing the beauties of the earth, one is wont to speak as did the Psalmist: 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.' (Ps. 19:1-2) All of beauty in the earth bears the fingerprint of the Master Creator." (*Conference Report*, Apr. 1978, p. 90)

James E. Talmage: "The existence of God is scarcely a question for rational dispute; nor does it call for proof by the feeble demonstrations of man's logic, for the fact is admitted by the human family practically without question, and the consciousness of subjection to a supreme power is an inborn attribute of mankind...Even the atheist feels, in the more solemn moments of his life, a yearning of the soul toward a spiritual Parent, as naturally as his human affections turn toward the father who gave him mortal life. The atheism of today is but a species of paganism after all." (*The Articles of Faith*, p. 29, 46)

D&C 88: 7 Which truth shineth. This is the <sup>a</sup>light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was <sup>b</sup>made. 12 Which <sup>a</sup>light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to <sup>b</sup>fill the immensity of space—13 The <sup>a</sup>light which is in all things, which giveth <sup>b</sup>life to all things, which is the <sup>c</sup>law by which all things are governed, even the <sup>d</sup>power of God who <sup>e</sup>sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. 42 And again, verily I say unto you, he hath given a <sup>a</sup>law unto all things, by which they move in their <sup>b</sup>times and their seasons; 43 And their courses are fixed, even the courses of the heavens and the earth, which comprehend the earth and all the planets. 44 And they give <sup>a</sup>light to each other in their times and in their seasons, in their minutes, in their hours, in their days, in their weeks, in their months, in their years—all these are <sup>b</sup>one year with God, but not with man. 45 The earth <sup>a</sup>rolls upon her wings, and the <sup>b</sup>sun giveth his light by day, and the moon giveth her light by night, and the stars also give their light, as they roll upon their wings in their glory, in the midst of the <sup>c</sup>power of God. 47 Behold, all these are <sup>a</sup>kingdoms, and any man who hath <sup>b</sup>seen any or the least of these hath <sup>c</sup>seen God <sup>d</sup>moving in his majesty and power.)

45 And yet do ye go about, leading away the hearts of this people, testifying unto them there is no God? And yet will ye deny against all these <sup>a</sup>witnesses? And he said: Yea, I will deny, except ye shall show me a sign. (The Prophet Joseph Smith observed, "I will give you one of the Keys of the mysteries of the Kingdom. It is an eternal principle, that has existed with God from all eternity: That man who rises up to condemn others, finding fault with the Church, saying that they are out of the way, while he himself is righteous, then know assuredly, that that man is in the high road to apostasy; and if he does not repent, will apostatize, as God lives. The principle is as correct as the one that Jesus put forth in saying that he who seeketh a sign is an adulterous person; and that principle is eternal, undeviating, and firm as the pillars of heaven; for whenever you see a man seeking after a sign, you may set it down that he is an adulterous man. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith, pp. 156-157.))

46 And now it came to pass that Alma said unto him: Behold, I am grieved because of the hardness of your heart, yea, that ye will still resist the spirit of the truth, that thy soul may be destroyed.

47 But behold, it is <sup>a</sup>better that thy soul should be <sup>b</sup>lost than that thou shouldst be the means of bringing many souls down to destruction, by thy lying and by thy flattering words; ("While we possess a substantial number of words that Alma spoke during the trial of Korihor (Alma 30), because of the nature of the legal interchange, we would normally expect to find nothing linked to Alma's three-day ordeal. But one matter reaches back to that experience: the idea that one soul perishes so that others may live. To illustrate, when the angel of the Lord scolded Alma and his friends, the angel specifically said to Alma: "If thou wilt of thyself be destroyed, seek no more to destroy the church of God" (Alma 36:9). This thought led Alma not only to be "racked with eternal torment" because of all his "sins and iniquities" (vv 12-13) but apparently to conclude that he "had murdered many of [God's] children, or rather led them away unto destruction" (v 14). In the case of Korihor, Alma tried to warn him simply to repent and not to seek a sign from God. "I am grieved," said Alma to Korihor, "that ye will still resist the spirit of the truth, that thy soul may be destroyed. But behold, it is better that thy soul should be lost than

that thou shouldst be the means of bringing many souls down to destruction" (Alma 30:46-47). Clearly, Alma had once faced the possibility that his own life might have been taken to preserve others; and his own experience of coming face to face with this reality seems to underlie his appeal to Korihor not to "resist the spirit of the truth" (v 46)." (S. Kent Brown. "Alma's Conversion: Reminiscences in his Sermons." Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds., *Alma, the Testimony of the Word* [Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1992], 151 - 152.) therefore if thou shalt deny again, behold God shall smite thee, that thou shalt become dumb, that thou shalt never open thy mouth any more, that thou shalt not deceive this people any more.

48 Now Korihor said unto him: I do not deny the existence of a God, but I do not believe that there is a God; and I say also, that ye do not know that there is a God; and except ye show me a sign, I will not believe. (C.S. Lewis said: "Wherever there have been thinking men both views turn up. And note this too. You cannot find out which view is the right one by science in the ordinary sense. Science works by experiments. It watches how things behave. Every scientific statement in the long run, however complicated it looks, really means something like, 'I pointed the telescope to such and such part of the sky at 2:20 A.M. on January 15<sup>th</sup> and saw so-and-so' or, 'I put some of this stuff in a pot and heated in to such-and-such a temperature and it did so-and-so.' Do not think I am saying anything against science: I am only saying what its job is. And the more scientific a man is, the more (I believe) he would agree with me that this is the job of science – and a very useful and necessary job it is too. But why anything comes to be there at all, and whether there is anything behind the things science observes – something of a different kind – this is not a scientific question. If there is 'Something Behind,' then either it will have to remain altogether unknown to me or else make itself known in some different way. The statement that there is any such thing, and the statement that there is no such thing, are neither of them statements that science can make. And real scientists do not usually make them. Mere Christianity, p. 32 Revelations from God through his prophets and through scripture reveal to us many things about the universe that cannot be observed in a scientific way. However, God will confirm to us that the knowledge he has given to us by the prophets and the scriptures is true. That confirmation can come to our spirits through the Holy Ghost if we sincerely ask for it. LaMar Garrard, *Studies in Scripture*, 8:12.)

49 Now Alma said unto him: This will I give unto thee for a sign, that thou shalt be <sup>a</sup>struck dumb, according to my words; and I say, that in the name of God, ye shall be struck dumb, that ye shall no more have utterance.

50 Now when Alma had said these words, Korihor was struck dumb, that he could not have utterance, according to the words of Alma.

51 And now when the chief judge saw this, (Now the chief judge intervenes to determine what judgment should be given.) he put forth his hand and wrote unto Korihor (It looks like Korihor was also deaf.), saying: Art thou convinced of the power of God? In whom did ye desire that Alma should show forth his sign? Would ye that he should afflict others, to show unto thee a sign? Behold, he has showed unto you a sign; and now will ye dispute more?

52 And Korihor put forth his hand and wrote, saying: I know that I am dumb, for I cannot speak; and I know that nothing save it were the <sup>a</sup>power of God could bring this upon me; yea, and I always <sup>b</sup>knew that there was a God.

53 But behold, the devil hath <sup>a</sup>deceived me; for he <sup>b</sup>appeared unto me in the <sup>c</sup>form of an angel, (Joseph Fielding Smith: "There is no doubt about Satan having great power and that he can appear as an angel of light. In this form he appeared on the banks of the Susquehanna River to oppose the restoration of keys, and was detected by Michael, and his plans were thwarted. Jacob, son of Lehi, in his teachings, stated that if there had been no atonement, our spirits '...must have become like unto him [Satan], and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents, who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness.' Korihor, who tried to deceive the

Nephites, admitted that Satan appeared to him as an angel and told him what to teach the people.” (Answers to Gospel Questions, vol. 1, p. 178) Bruce R. McConkie: “Lucifer does not come personally to every false prophet, as he did to Korihor, any more than the Lord comes personally to every true prophet, as he did to Joseph Smith. Such an appearance--either of God on the one hand or of Satan on the other--is, however, the end result of full devotion to the respective causes involved. In each instance an earthly representative, by obedience to the laws that are ordained, may see the face of the master he serves.” (Millennial Messiah, p. 72) Korihor is not only Anti-Christ, but he is here Anti-Alma. We have noted that it is no coincidence that Korihor is presented right after the successful mission of the sons of Mosiah. At this point the literary parallelism shifts away from the sons of Mosiah and directly to Alma. The confrontation between Alma and Korihor is here presented as a linked opposition. Both Alma and Korihor were believers in something, both had a visitation by an angel, both were converted by that experience, and both preached to the people the gospel learned in that experience. Korihor and Alma are too similar to be accidental. They have only one fundamental difference, and that is that Alma is converted to true, and Korihor to error. That conclusion is powerfully underlined in the curse Korihor receives because of his continued demand for a sign. Brant Gardner. and said unto me: Go and reclaim this people, for they have all gone astray after an unknown God. And he said unto me: There is <sup>d</sup>no God; yea, and he taught me that which I should say. And I have taught his words; and I taught them because they were pleasing unto the <sup>c</sup>carnal mind; and I taught them, even until I had much success, insomuch that I verily believed that they were true; and for this cause I withstood the truth, even until I have brought this great <sup>f</sup>curse upon me. (True prophets of God, on the other hand, never lead people astray. "The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray," Wilford Woodruff declared. "It is not in the programme. It is not in the mind of God." (See Excerpts from Wilford Woodruff's comments regarding Official Declaration #1 in the D&C.) W. Jeffrey Marsh, Meridian Magazine, Lesson 27.)

54 Now when he had said this, he besought that Alma should pray unto God, that the <sup>a</sup>curse might be taken from him.

55 But Alma said unto him: If this curse should be taken from thee thou wouldst again lead away the hearts of this people; therefore, it shall be unto thee even as the Lord will.

56 And it came to pass that the curse was not taken off of Korihor; but he was <sup>a</sup>cast out, and went about from house to house begging for his food. (As a lawyer, he depended on his eloquent speech to make his living. Now without a voice, he had no means of earning money.)

57 Now the knowledge of what had happened unto Korihor was immediately published throughout all the land; yea, the proclamation was sent forth by the chief judge to all the people in the land, declaring unto those who had believed in the words of Korihor that they must speedily repent, <sup>a</sup>lest the same judgments would come unto them.

58 And it came to pass that they were all convinced of the wickedness of Korihor; therefore they were all converted again unto the Lord; and this put an end to the iniquity after the manner of Korihor. And Korihor did go about from house to house, begging food for his support.

59 And it came to pass that as he went forth among the people, yea, among a people who had separated themselves from the Nephites and called themselves <sup>a</sup>Zoramites, being led by a man whose name was Zoram—and as he went forth amongst them, behold, he was run upon and trodden down, even until he was <sup>b</sup>dead.

60 And thus we see (A teaching moment for Mormon.) the end of him who <sup>a</sup>perverteth the ways of the Lord; and thus we see that the devil will not <sup>b</sup>support his children at the last day, but doth speedily drag them down to <sup>c</sup>hell. (“The conclusion to our story holds no surprises, for there is a consistency in such things. To those who lift up their heel against the Lord’s anointed in our day, he has said: ‘Those who swear falsely against my servants, that they might bring them into bondage and death—Wo unto them; because they have offended my little ones they shall be severed from the ordinances of mine house. Their basket shall not be full, their houses and their barns shall perish, and they themselves shall be

despised by those that flattered them.’ (DC 121:18-20)” (Millet & McConkie, *Sustaining and Defending the Faith*, pp. 92-3)

\* Verse 6 [74 B.C.].

## CHAPTER 31

*Alma heads a mission to reclaim the apostate Zoramites—The Zoramites deny Christ, believe in a false concept of election, and worship with set prayers—The missionaries are filled with the Holy Spirit—Their afflictions are swallowed up in the joy of Christ. [About 74 B.C.] (In the original 1830 edition, there was no break in the chapter. These were intended to be one story. We move from one dissenter, to a city of dissenters.)*

1 NOW it came to pass that after the end of Korihor, Alma having received tidings that the Zoramites were perverting the ways of the Lord, and that Zoram, who was their leader, was leading the hearts of the people to <sup>a</sup>bow down to dumb <sup>b</sup>idols, his heart again began to <sup>c</sup>sicken because of the iniquity of the people.

2 For it was the cause of great <sup>a</sup>sorrow to Alma to know of iniquity among his people; therefore his heart was exceedingly <sup>b</sup>sorrowful because of the separation of the Zoramites from the Nephites.

3 Now the Zoramites had gathered themselves together in a land which they called <sup>a</sup>Antionum, which was east of the land of Zarahemla, which lay nearly bordering upon the seashore, which was south of the land of <sup>b</sup>Jershon, which also bordered upon the wilderness south, which wilderness was full of the Lamanites.

4 Now the Nephites greatly feared that the Zoramites would enter into a <sup>a</sup>correspondence with the Lamanites, and that it would be the means of great loss on the part of the Nephites.

5 And now, as the <sup>a</sup>preaching of the <sup>b</sup>word had a great tendency to <sup>c</sup>lead the people to do that which was just (The Holy Ghost bears witness of such testimonies (see D&C 100:5-8). The impact is profound. "Who among us," Dr. Robert L. Millet, Dean of Religious Education at BYU asked, "who heard the final apostolic witness of Elder Bruce R. McConkie will ever be the same?" Elder McConkie, very humbly and simply bore such a pure testimony of the Savior that those who hear it or read it today, years later, are still stirred. He said, "...As pertaining to Jesus Christ, I testify that He is the Son of the Living God and was crucified for the sins of the world. He is our Lord, our God, and our King. This I know of myself independent of any other person. I am one of His witnesses, and in a coming day I shall feel the nail marks in His hands and in His feet and shall wet His feet with my tears. But I shall not know any better than I know now that He is God's Almighty Son, that He is our Savior and Redeemer, and that salvation comes in and through His atoning blood and in no other way." (Conference Report, April 1985, p. 12.))—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God. (Ezra Taft Benson: "The gospel is the only answer to the problems of the world. We may cry peace. We may hold peace conferences. And I have nothing but commendation for those who work for peace. But it is my conviction that peace must come from within. It cannot be imposed by state mandate. It can come only by following the teachings and the example of the Prince of Peace." (*Title of Liberty*, pp. 213-4 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p. 303) Boyd K. Packer: "True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior. The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior." (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1986, p. 20 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p. 303) Who can measure the power of the word of God as delivered directly by him, as declared by angels, as contained in scriptures, or as spoken by the power of the Holy Ghost? Here Alma declares that the word is the most powerful instrument for change known to mortal man – stronger than intellectual persuasion or military might.

The word heals the wounded soul, nourishes that soul, cuts through falsehood and leads one to Christ, is the foundation for faith, and results in firmness and steadfastness in the faith. DCBM, 3:215-16. Do not expect the world's solutions to the world's problems to be very effective. Such solutions often resemble what C.S. Lewis wrote about those who go dashing back and forth with fire extinguishers in times of flood. Only the gospel is constantly relevant, and the substitute things won't work. Ensign, May 2004, 45.)

6 Therefore he took Ammon, and Aaron, and Omner; and Himni he did leave in the church in Zarahemla; but the former three he took with him, and also <sup>a</sup>Amulek and Zeezrom, who were at <sup>b</sup>Melek; and he also took two of his sons. (With the exception of Alma's sons, each of these men had been outside the church and were converted. Their experience is helpful here in helping to convert the Zoramites.)

7 Now the eldest of his sons he took not with him, and his name was Helaman; but the names of those whom he took with him were <sup>a</sup>Shiblon and <sup>b</sup>Corianton; and these are the names of those who went with him among the <sup>c</sup>Zoramites, to preach unto them the word.

8 Now the Zoramites were <sup>a</sup>dissenters from the Nephites; therefore they had had the word of God preached unto them. (Those once enlightened who fall away become bitter enemies of the church.)

9 But they had <sup>a</sup>fallen into great errors, for they would not observe to keep the commandments of God, and his statutes, according to the law of Moses. (We cannot always tell... whether specific sacrificial rites performed in Israel were part of the Mosaic system or whether they were the same ordinances performed by Adam and Abraham as part of the gospel law itself. Further, it appears that some of the ritualistic performances varied from time to time, according to the special needs of the people and the changing circumstances in which they found themselves. Even the Book of Mormon does not help us in these respects. We know the Nephites offered sacrifices and kept the law of Moses. Since they held the Melchizedek Priesthood and there were no Levites among them, we suppose their sacrifices were those that antedated the ministry of Moses and that, since they had the fullness of the gospel itself, they kept the law of Moses in the sense that they conformed to its myriad moral principles and its endless ethical restrictions. We suppose this would be one of the reasons why Nephi was able to say, "The law hath become dead unto us." (2 Nephi 25:25) There is, at least, no intimation in the Book of Mormon that the Nephites offered the daily sacrifices required by the law or that they held the various feasts that were part of the religious life of their Old World kinsmen. Bruce R. McConkie, Promised Messiah, p. 427)

10 Neither would they observe the <sup>a</sup>performances of the church, to continue in prayer and supplication to God daily, (They did not pray daily) that they might not enter into temptation.

11 Yea, in fine, they did pervert the ways of the Lord in very many instances; therefore, for this cause, Alma and his brethren went into the land to preach the word unto them.

12 Now, when they had come into the land, behold, to their astonishment they found that the Zoramites had built synagogues (Since the Zoramites did not participate in the rituals or practices of the law of Moses, this was not a Jewish synagogue in the same way they were used in the Old World. Rather, this is a generic building used as a meeting place.), and that they did gather themselves together on one day of the week, which day they did call the day of the Lord; and they did <sup>a</sup>worship after a manner which Alma and his brethren had never beheld;

13 For they had a place built up in the center of their synagogue, a place for standing, which was high above the head; and the top thereof would only admit one person.

14 Therefore, whosoever desired to <sup>a</sup>worship must go forth and stand upon the top thereof, and stretch forth his hands towards heaven, and cry with a loud voice, saying:

15 Holy, holy God; we believe that thou art God, and we believe that thou art holy, and that thou wast a <sup>a</sup>spirit, and that thou art a spirit, and that thou wilt be a spirit forever.

16 Holy God, we believe that thou hast separated us from our brethren; and we do not believe in the tradition of our brethren, which was handed down to them by the childishness of their fathers; but we believe that thou hast <sup>a</sup>elected us to be thy <sup>b</sup>holy children; ("Although the Zoramites used the

terminology of election, what they really fostered was the idea of elitism, which almost always has at its heart a disdain for others. True election promotes a genuine concern for the welfare of others. Elitism seems to cause people to forget God six out of seven days because it turns them selfishly inward. But the true doctrine of election promotes a daily desire for communion with deity and a search for the divine within us.” (*Book of Mormon Symposium Series, “Helaman Through 3 Nephi 8”* edited by PR Cheesman, MS Nyman, and CD Tate, Jr., 1988, p. 118)) and also thou hast made it known unto us that <sup>c</sup>there shall be <sup>d</sup>no Christ.

17 But thou art the same yesterday, today, and forever; and thou hast <sup>a</sup>electd us that we shall be saved, whilst all around us are elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell; for the which holiness, O God, we thank thee; and we also thank thee that thou hast elected us, (“Joseph Smith clearly identified why self-righteousness is so dangerous: it prevents repentance and keeps a person from developing the love of God. In an 1842 discourse, he said, ‘All the religious world is boasting of its righteousness—it is the doctrine of the devil to retard...our progress by filling us with self-righteousness.’ (Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Ensign*, Feb. 1987, p. 20) Hugh Nibley: “These lessons have always been hard for the Latter-day Saints to learn, and it is clear from the words of Brigham Young that we still have a long way to go. There are a few absolute and categorical ‘Thou Shalt Nots’ in the scriptures which we are far from taking to heart: we have been told that under no circumstances are we to contend, accuse, coerce, aspire, or flatter. These practices will be readily recognized as standard procedure in getting to the top in our modern competitive society. What all of them have in common is a feeling of self-righteousness. Next to covetousness it was self-righteousness against which Joseph and Brigham most urgently warned the Saints. ‘Let not any man publish his own righteousness,’ said the Prophet Joseph (not even, one might add, in testimony meeting). ‘Don’t be limited in your views with regard to your neighbor’s virtue, but beware of self-righteousness, and be limited in the estimate of your own virtues. . . . You must enlarge your souls towards each other. . . . As you increase in innocence and virtue, as you increase in goodness, let your hearts expand, let them be enlarged towards others. . . . You must not be contracted, but you must be liberal in your feelings.’ ‘Christ was condemned by the self-righteous Jews because He took sinners into His society.’ ‘All the religious world is boasting of righteousness: it is the doctrine of the devil to retard the human mind, and hinder our progress, by filling us with self-righteousness. . . . We are full of selfishness; the devil flatters us that we are very righteous, when we are feeding on the faults of others.’” (*Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints*, pp. 225-6)) that we may not be led away after the foolish traditions of our brethren, which doth <sup>b</sup>bind them down to a belief of Christ, which doth lead their hearts to wander far from thee, our God.

18 And again we thank thee, O God, that we are a chosen and a holy people. Amen. (The time will come when there will be a surrender of every person who has ever lived on this earth...and it will be an unforced surrender, an unconditional surrender. When will it be for you?... It is not if you will capitulate to the great truth; it is when, for I know that you cannot indefinitely resist the power and pressure of truth. Spencer W. Kimball, *Ensign*, September 1978, p. 8)

19 Now it came to pass that after Alma and his brethren and his sons had heard these prayers, they were astonished beyond all measure.

20 For behold, every man did go forth and offer up these same <sup>a</sup>prayers. (Charles W. Penrose: “It seems that many who have accepted the Christian religion...act as if they expected to be heard because of their many words. They also use what here are called vain repetitions. Now, prayer is not acceptable for its rhetoric. It is that which comes from the heart, the sincere sentiment, the secret feeling, which ascends to our Father and which He, who sees in secret, will reward openly. It is not a multitude of words and repetitions that is pleasing to the Lord, but the earnest desire of a humble heart. And this will be answered, no matter how broken or ungrammatical the language may be. On the other hand, no matter how flowery the language of the petition may be, if it does not convey the feelings of the heart, it is not true prayer.” (*Collected Discourses*, vol. 2, Charles W. Penrose, March 22, 1891))

21 Now the place was called by them Rameumptom, which, being interpreted, is the holy stand.

("Rameumptom" was the name given by the Zoramites to the elevated place in their synagogues whence they offered up their vain-glorious and hypocritical prayers. Alma states that the word means a holy stand. It resembles, in its roots, Hebrew and also Egyptian in a remarkable manner. *Ramoth*, high (as Ramoth Gilead), elevated, a place where one can see and be seen; or, in a figurative sense, sublime or exalted. *Mptom* has probably its roots in the Hebrew word translated threshold, as we are told that the Philistines' god, Dagon, has a threshold in Ashdod (See 1 Sam. 5:41 Sam. 5:4 1 Sam. 5:4-5 ). Words with this root are quite common in the Bible. Thus we see how Rameumptom means a high place to stand upon, a holy stand." (George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, edited and arranged by Philip C. Reynolds, 7 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1955-1961], 4: 80.) While many words and names found in the Book of Mormon have exact equivalents in the Hebrew Bible, certain others exhibit Semitic characteristics, though their spelling does not always match known Hebrew forms. For example, "Rabbanah" as "great king" (Alma 18:13) may have affinities with the Hebrew root /rbb/, meaning "to be great or many." "Rameumptom" (Alma 31:21), meaning "holy stand," contains consonantal patterns suggesting the stems /rmm/ramah/, "to be high," and /tmm/tam/tom/, "to be complete, perfect, holy." (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1-4 vols., edited by Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 181.))

22 Now, from this stand they did offer up, every man, the selfsame prayer unto God, thanking their God that they were chosen of him, and that he did not lead them away after the tradition of their brethren, and that their hearts were not stolen away to believe in things to come, which they knew nothing about.

23 Now, after the people had all offered up thanks after this manner, they returned to their homes, <sup>a</sup>never speaking of their God again until they had assembled themselves together again to the holy stand, to offer up thanks after their manner. (Neal A. Maxwell, "True Christian soldiers are more than weekend warriors." (*Ensign*, Nov. 1996, p. 22) Joseph Smith: "I love that man better who swears a stream as long as my arm yet deals justice to his neighbors and mercifully deals his substance to the poor, than the long, smooth-faced hypocrite." (*History of The Church*, vol. 5, p. 401) Neal A. Maxwell: "(quoting Alma 31:23) Values that are unassimilated into home life obviously fail to touch the major portion of our lives and, therefore, cannot help us either in that most important laboratory of all, the laboratory of our families. But when our homes help us to be compassionate and selfless...then we have a school on whose graduates all of society depends." (*That My Family Should Partake*, p. 151))

24 Now when Alma saw this his heart was <sup>a</sup>grieved; for he saw that they were a wicked and a perverse people; yea, he saw that their hearts were set upon gold, and upon silver, and upon all manner of fine goods.

25 Yea, and he also saw that their hearts were <sup>a</sup>lifted up unto great boasting, in their pride.

26 And he lifted up his voice to heaven, and <sup>a</sup>cried, saying: O, how long, O Lord, wilt thou suffer that thy servants shall dwell here below in the flesh, to behold such gross wickedness among the children of men?

27 Behold, O God, they <sup>a</sup>cry unto thee, and yet their hearts are swallowed up in their pride. Behold, O God, they cry unto thee with their mouths, while they are <sup>b</sup>puffed up, even to greatness, with the vain things of the <sup>c</sup>world.

28 Behold, O my God, their costly apparel, and their ringlets, and their <sup>a</sup>bracelets, and their ornaments of gold, and all their precious things which they are ornamented with; and behold, their hearts are set upon them, and yet they cry unto thee and say—We thank thee, O God, for we are a chosen people unto thee, while others shall perish. ("Our society may well be as guilty as the wealthy Zoramites of using fashion as 'the science of appearances, inspiring us with the desire to seem rather than to be' (Edwin Hubbell Chapin). In our day the costly apparel syndrome may be identified as one aspect of the modern-day term 'conspicuous consumption.' The word *conspicuous* alludes to the visual side of vanity—the need to be seen, to be recognized. *Consumption* refers to that which we take in or that which we consume. Conspicuous consumption may be defined as that which we take to ourselves in order to be recognized and approved by others. By its very definition, the person trapped in conspicuous consumption,

especially as it applies to 'costly apparel,' must be focused on the opinions of others, because what is 'in' today may be 'out' tomorrow. Vanity then becomes its own punishment, because there is never time to be satisfied—the eyes and opinions of others can turn so quickly to embrace someone else. For us, the disease that afflicted the Zoramites encompasses more than clothing. It can include cars, houses, boats, diplomas, and anything else that has a foundation where the need for the approval of man carries more weight than the need to be accepted by God.” (K. Douglas Bassett, *Doctrines of the Book of Mormon*, 1991 Sperry Symposium, pp. 18-19) Hugh Nibley: “The wickedest people in the Book of Mormon are the Zoramites, a proud, independent, courageous, industrious, enterprising, patriotic, prosperous people who attended strictly to their weekly religious duties with the proper observance of dress standards. Thanking God for all he had given them, they bore testimony to his goodness. They were sustained in all their doings by a perfectly beautiful self-image. Well, what is wrong with any of that? There is just one thing that spoils it all, and that is...they are really thinking of something else. ‘Behold, O my God, their costly apparel... all their precious things...their hearts are set upon them, *and yet* they cry unto thee and say--We thank thee, O God, for we are a chosen people unto thee, while others shall perish.’ (Alma 31:27, 28; italics added.)” (*Old Testament and Related Studies*, p. 222))

29 Yea, and they say that thou hast made it known unto them that there shall be no Christ.

30 O Lord God, how long wilt thou suffer that such wickedness and infidelity shall be among this people? O Lord, wilt thou give me strength, that I may <sup>a</sup>bear with mine infirmities. For I am infirm, and such wickedness among this people doth pain my soul.

31 O Lord, my heart is exceedingly sorrowful; wilt thou comfort my soul <sup>a</sup>in Christ. O Lord, wilt thou grant unto me that I may have strength, that I may suffer with patience these <sup>b</sup>afflictions which shall come upon me, because of the iniquity of this people. (Neal A. Maxwell: Why is non-endurance a denial of the Lord? Because giving up is a denial of the Lord's loving capacity to see us through "all these things"! Giving up suggests that God is less than He really is... So much of life's curriculum consists of efforts by the Lord to get and keep our attention. Ironically, the stimuli He uses are often that which is seen by us as something to endure. Sometimes what we are being asked to endure is His "help" – help to draw us away from the cares of the world; help to draw us away from self-centeredness; attention-getting help when the still, small voice has been ignored by us; help in the shaping of our souls; and help to keep the promises we made so long ago to Him and to ourselves... Whether the afflictions are self-induced, as most of them are, or whether they are of the divine-tutorial type, it matters not. Either way, the Lord can help us so that our afflictions, said Alma, can be “swallowed up in the joy of Christ” (Alma 31:38). Thus, afflictions are endured and are overcome by joy. The sour notes are lost amid a symphony of salvational sounds. Our afflictions, brothers and sisters, may not be extinguished. Instead, they can be dwarfed and swallowed up in the joy of Christ. This is how we overcome most of the time – not the elimination of affliction, but the placing of these in that larger context. BYU Fireside, 2 Dec 1984)

32 O Lord, wilt thou comfort my soul, and give unto me success, and also my fellow laborers who are with me—yea, Ammon, and Aaron, and Omner, and also <sup>a</sup>Amulek and Zeezrom and also my <sup>b</sup>two sons—yea, even all these wilt thou comfort, O Lord. Yea, wilt thou comfort their souls in Christ.

33 Wilt thou grant unto them that they may have strength, that they may <sup>a</sup>bear their afflictions which shall come upon them because of the iniquities of this people.

34 O Lord, wilt thou grant <sup>a</sup>unto us that we may have success in bringing them again unto thee in Christ. (President Boyd K. Packer has said, "Letters come from those who have made tragic mistakes. They ask, 'Can I ever be forgiven?' The answer is yes! The gospel teaches us that relief from torment and guilt can be earned through repentance. Save for those few who defect to perdition after having known a fulness, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no offense exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness. 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' That is, Isaiah continued, 'if ye be willing and obedient.'" (Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 22.))

35 Behold, O Lord, their <sup>a</sup>souls are precious, (“In a modern revelation the Lord explained that 'the worth



of souls is great in the sight of God' (D&C 18:10). Latter-day Saints are fond of quoting this verse and then skipping down the scriptural page to those verses that speak further of the joy that comes from bringing the blessings of the gospel into the lives of many. The question might be asked: Why is the worth of souls great? ... We might respond that as children of the Man of Holiness we have marvelous possibilities. As sons and daughters of God, we are possessed (although now in rudimentary form) of the attributes of godliness. The Lord provides an additional answer from scripture: 'For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him. And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance. And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth! Wherefore, you are called to cry repentance unto this people.' (D&C 18:11-14.) Simply stated, the soul is of infinite worth. We are not our own. We have been bought with an infinite price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), even with 'the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot' (1 Peter 1:19)." (Robert L. Millet, *An Eye Single to the Glory of God*, pp. 34-35) and many of them are our brethren; therefore, give unto us, O Lord, power and wisdom that we may bring these, our brethren, again unto thee.

36 Now it came to pass that when Alma had said these words, that he <sup>a</sup>clapped his <sup>b</sup>hands upon all them who were with him (This must have been a setting apart. "The text of Alma 8:30 indicates that Amulek had previously enjoyed the Holy Ghost. The same gift must also have been enjoyed previously by the others. We should assume, then, that Alma was able to bless his brethren in this particular instance with a special manifestation of God's goodness." (Sidney B. Sperry, *Book of Mormon Compendium*, chap. 28).) And behold, as he clapped his hands upon them, they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

37 And after that they did separate themselves one from another, <sup>a</sup>taking no thought for themselves what they should eat, or what they should drink, or what they should put on.

38 And the Lord provided for them that they should hunger not, neither should they thirst; yea, and he also gave them strength, that they should suffer no manner of <sup>a</sup>afflictions, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ. Now this was according to the prayer of Alma; and this because he prayed in <sup>b</sup>faith.

(James E. Faust: "I humbly come to this pulpit today to speak about a sure cure for heartache, disappointment, torment, anguish, and despair. The psalmist stated, 'He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.' (Ps 147:3) The healing is a divine miracle; the wounds are a common lot of all mankind. Shakespeare has said, 'He jests at scars that never felt a wound.' (*Romeo and Juliet*, II.ii.1.) It seems that no one escapes the troubles, challenges, and disappointments of this world. ... Someway, somehow, we must find the healing influence that brings solace to the soul. Where is this balm? Where is the compensating relief so desperately needed to help us survive in the world's pressures? The onsetting comfort in large measure can come through increased communion with the Spirit of God. This can bring spiritual healing. ... We find solace in Christ through the agency of the Comforter, and he extends this invitation to us: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' (Matt. 11:28.) The Apostle Peter speaks of 'casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.' (1 Pet. 5:7.) As we do this, healing takes place, just as the Lord promised through the prophet Jeremiah when he said, 'I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. ... I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.' (Jer. 31:13, 25.) In the celestial glory, we are told, 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.' (Rev. 21:4.) Then faith and hope will replace heartache, disappointment, torment, anguish, and despair, and the Lord will give us strength, as Alma says, that we 'should suffer no manner of afflictions, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ.' (Alma 31:38.) Of this I have a testimony, and I so declare it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen." (*Conference Report*, May 1992, p. 6) Neal A. Maxwell: "Jesus, who bore the greatest and heaviest burdens, knows how to help His followers absorb afflictions in a unique way: 'And the Lord provided for them that they should hunger not, neither should they thirst; yea, and he also gave them strength, that they should suffer no manner of afflictions, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ.

Now this was according to the prayer of Alma; and this because he prayed in faith.' (Alma 31:38.) Even so, we will not be free of affliction. But we will be given help in bearing affliction, especially if our wills are swallowed up in the will of the Father and Christ. Being swallowed up in the will of God can help us cope not only with afflictions but even with death (see Mosiah 16:8; Alma 22:14). It is noteworthy that this particular prophet, Alma, while trying to reactivate people, was efficient, because he was determined to 'try the virtue of the word of God,' the very approach which has 'a great tendency to lead the people to do that which [is] just' (Alma 31:5). Having faith in Jesus includes having faith in the assurance that our trials and difficulties 'are but for a small moment,' even when at the moment they seem to us to be extended and unremitting (D&C 122:4). Faith includes having faith in God's timing. As we see the valiant reach breaking points without breaking, it inspires the rest of us to trust in the divine design in our own circumstances, which may not be immediately apparent to us during our trials: 'Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God . . . and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation' (D&C 58:3)." (*If Thou Endure It Well*, p. 118))