

Comments on Alma 35

This chapter gives us the history of the results of the missionary work among the Zoramites (v. 1-13), and informs us what Alma's reaction to it, and the general condition of the Nephites (v. 14-16).

1 Now it came to pass that after Amulek had made an end of these words, they withdrew themselves from the multitude and came over into the land of Jershon. 2 Yea, and the rest of the brethren, after they had preached the word unto the Zoramites, also came over into the land of Jershon.

v1-2 After they finish preaching to the Zoramites, saying all there was to say, the missionaries all travel over into the land of Jershon, where the converted Lamanites are living.

It is plain from the subsequent verses that none of the Zoramites, not even the more penitent ones, left with the missionaries.

3 And it came to pass that after the more popular part of the Zoramites had consulted together concerning the words which had been preached unto them, they were angry because of the word, for it did destroy their craft; therefore they would not hearken unto the words. 4 And they sent and gathered together throughout all the land all the people, and consulted with them concerning the words which had been spoken. 5 Now their rulers and their priests and their teachers did not let the people know concerning their desires; therefore they found out privily the minds of all the people. 6 And it came to pass that after they had found out the minds of all the people, those who were in favor of the words which had been spoken by Alma and his brethren were cast out of the land; and they were many; and they came over also into the land of Jershon. 7 And it came to pass that Alma and his brethren did minister unto them.

v3-7 The nonbelievers are in the majority among the Zoramites, and they are angry about the missionary efforts of Alma and the others because it upsets the system they are enjoying (v. 3). The priests, teachers, and leaders covertly find out who the believers are (v. 4-5) and expel them from their lands. The believers follow after the missionaries to the land Jershon (v. 6) where they are accepted and ministered to (v. 7).

v3 "the more popular part", this likely means the majority of the population, and not the more socially powerful or more charismatic persons in the population. Since the believers are ultimately expelled, one would assume they were in the minority as if they were in the majority then how could they be forced to leave when they outnumber the opposition?

8 Now the people of the Zoramites were angry with the people of Ammon who were in Jershon, and the chief ruler of the Zoramites, being a very wicked man, sent over unto the people of Ammon desiring them that they should cast out of their land all those who came over from them into their land. 9 And he breathed out many threatenings against them. And now the people of Ammon did not fear their words; therefore they did not cast them out, but they did receive all the poor of the Zoramites that came over unto them; and they did nourish them, and did clothe them, and did give unto them lands for their inheritance; and they did administer unto them according to their wants.

10 Now this did stir up the Zoramites to anger against the people of Ammon, and they began to mix with the Lamanites and to stir them up also to anger against them. 11 And thus the Zoramites and the Lamanites began to make preparations for war against the people of Ammon, and also against the Nephites. 12 And thus ended the seventeenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. 13 And the people of Ammon departed out of the land of Jershon, and came over into the land of Melek, and gave place in the land of Jershon for the armies of the Nephites, that they might contend with the armies of the Lamanites and the armies of the Zoramites; and thus commenced a war betwixt the Lamanites and the Nephites, in the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges; and an account shall be given of their wars hereafter.

v8-13 The Zoramites are angry that the repentant Lamanites have accepted their refugees, so they tell them to expel them as well (v. 8). The repentant Lamanites ignore the Zoramites and do just the opposite with the refugees (v. 9), so the Zoramites threaten them with violence and combine with the hardened Lamanites to start contentions again (v. 10-11). The repentant Lamanites and all that are with them move out of Jershon and the Nephite armies move in and a war commences with the Lamanites (v. 12-13).

v10-11 This is precisely what Alma was trying to avoid, cf. 31:1-5. While he did win over some of the Zoramites to repentance, the majority of them end up stirring up problems. Alma must have been very upset by this, as his preaching back-fired.

14 And Alma, and Ammon, and their brethren, and also the two sons of Alma returned to the land of Zarahemla, after having been instruments in the hands of God of bringing many of the Zoramites to repentance; and as many as were brought to repentance were driven out of their land; but they have lands for their inheritance in the land of Jershon, and they have taken up arms to defend themselves, and their wives, and children, and their lands.

15 Now Alma, being grieved for the iniquity of his people, yea for the wars, and the bloodsheds, and the contentions which were among them; and having been to declare the word, or sent to declare the word, among all the people in every city; and seeing that the hearts of the people began to wax hard, and that they began to be offended because of the strictness of the word, his heart was exceedingly sorrowful. 16 Therefore, he caused that his sons should be gathered together, that he might give unto them every one his charge, separately, concerning the

things pertaining unto righteousness. And we have an account of his commandments, which he gave unto them according to his own record.

v14-16 Alma and the others all return to Zarahemla after their missionary labors among the Zoramites. The Zoramites who did repent joined the Nephites and even joined the ranks of the Nephite army to defend themselves from the Lamanites and apostate Zoramites (v. 14).

Alma is very upset about the condition of the Nephites, seeing them grow hardhearted and seeing war spread (v. 15), so he gathers his sons to give them his final instructions before leaving to preach again (v. 16, cf. 43:1-2).

Alma's disgust over the condition of the Lamanites is what ultimately drives him to wander off into the wilderness to never be heard of again, cf. 45:18. After spending so much time preaching to the Nephites to get them to repent he is weighed down entirely too much by their lack of penitence, so he leaves them.

v16 The contents of chapters 36-42 are taken from Alma's own writings, so Mormon simply copies them.

Copyright © 2024 by S. Kurt Neumiller <kurt.neumiller@gmail.com>. All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any means for commercial gain without the express written consent of the author. Digital or printed copies may be freely made and distributed for personal and public non-commercial use.