

Comments on Helaman 15

In this chapter Samuel continues his preaching to the Nephites by contrasting them (v. 1-3, 14-17) and the Lamanites (v. 4-13) with respect to their relationship with God when it comes to apostasy.

The message is similar to that of 2 Ne. 5:19-25 and Alma 8:14-24.

1 AND now, my beloved brethren, behold, I declare unto you that except ye shall repent your houses shall be left unto you desolate. 2 Yea, except ye repent, your women shall have great cause to mourn in the day that they shall give suck; for ye shall attempt to flee and there shall be no place for refuge; yea, and wo unto them which are with child, for they shall be heavy and cannot flee; therefore, they shall be trodden down and shall be left to perish. 3 Yea, wo unto this people who are called the people of Nephi except they shall repent, when they shall see all these signs and wonders which shall be showed unto them; for behold, they have been a chosen people of the Lord; yea, the people of Nephi hath he loved, and also hath he chastened them; yea, in the days of their iniquities hath he chastened them because he loveth them.

v1-3 Samuel warns the Nephites to repent or they will be annihilated (v. 1). Even women with children will not be spared as there will be no refuge whatsoever (v. 2). This affliction is cast on the Nephites because the Lord has blessed them so abundantly and they have ignored Him, even after all of the blessings, signs, prophecies, and chastisements (v. 3).

v1 "your houses shall be left unto you desolate", this is typical Semitic imagery for having your whole family line ended, cp. 1 Sam. 2:27-34, Isa. 5:9. If you are left without any children, for whatever reason, then your house is left empty.

Not leaving any posterity is the worst covenant curse possible in a temporal setting. Hence the promises to Abraham and his predecessors pertaining to the preservation of his lineage.

v2 The imagery here of pregnant women being consigned to destruction is twofold. The first is the society they are living in is so corrupt that the others do nothing to care for these pregnant women in times of trouble. The second is that mercy no longer has a place in how the Lord deals with these people. The society has become so hideously corrupt that pregnant women, whom to the Semitic mind are naturally most

merciful and most self-sacrificing because of their motherhood (cf. Isa. 49:15), are so wicked that they don't even deserve mercy.

v3 "all these signs and wonders", i.e., the signs of Christ's birth and death as discussed in the preceding chapter.

4 But behold my brethren, the Lamanites hath he hated because their deeds have been evil continually, and this because of the iniquity of the tradition of their fathers. But behold, salvation hath come unto them through the preaching of the Nephites; and for this intent hath the Lord prolonged their days.

5 And I would that ye should behold that the more part of them are in the path of their duty, and they do walk circumspectly before God, and they do observe to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments according to the law of Moses. 6 Yea, I say unto you, that the more part of them are doing this, and they are striving with unwearied diligence that they may bring the remainder of their brethren to the knowledge of the truth; therefore there are many who do add to their numbers daily. 7 And behold, ye do know of yourselves, for ye have witnessed it, that as many of them as are brought to the knowledge of the truth, and to know of the wicked and abominable traditions of their fathers, and are led to believe the holy scriptures, yea, the prophecies of the holy prophets, which are written, which leadeth them to faith on the Lord, and unto repentance, which faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart unto them-- 8 Therefore, as many as have come to this, ye know of yourselves are firm and steadfast in the faith, and in the thing wherewith they have been made free. 9 And ye know also that they have buried their weapons of war, and they fear to take them up lest by any means they should sin; yea, ye can see that they fear to sin--for behold they will suffer themselves that they be trodden down and slain by their enemies, and will not lift their swords against them, and this because of their faith in Christ. 10 And now, because of their steadfastness when they do believe in that thing which they do believe, for because of their firmness when they are once enlightened, behold, the Lord shall bless them and prolong their days, notwithstanding their iniquity--

11 Yea, even if they should dwindle in unbelief the Lord shall prolong their days, until the time shall come which hath been spoken of by our fathers, and also by the prophet Zenos, and many other prophets, concerning the restoration of our brethren, the Lamanites, again to the knowledge of the truth-- 12 Yea, I say unto you, that in the latter times the promises of the Lord have been extended to our brethren, the Lamanites; and notwithstanding the many afflictions which they shall have, and notwithstanding they shall be driven to and fro upon the face of the earth, and be hunted, and shall be smitten and scattered abroad, having no place for refuge, the Lord shall be merciful unto them. 13 And this is according to the prophecy, that they

shall again be brought to the true knowledge, which is the knowledge of their Redeemer, and their great and true shepherd, and be numbered among his sheep.

v4-13 This is a brief history (v. 4), current accounting (v. 5-10), and the future prediction (v. 11-13) of the Lamanites.

v4-10 The blessings on the Nephites are in sharp contrast the way the Lord has dealt with the Lamanites. The Lord has punished them because of the traditions of wickedness passed down through their generations. But, salvation has come to them, and He will now prolong their days (v. 4). Now the majority of the Lamanites have a godly walk (v. 5) and are working to proselyte those who do not (v. 6).

Those Lamanites who do repent and are converted to the Lord do so zealously and have their hearts completely changed (v. 7-8). So much so that they bury their weapons of war and would rather be massacred than take them up again (v. 9, cp. Alma 24). Thus, once the Lamanites are converted to the Lord they are unwavering in the faith. Because of this the Lord will preserve their generations (v. 10).

v11-13 Even if the Lamanites fall into apostasy the Lord will prolong their days as has been spoken of by all the prophets (v. 11). These prophets predicted things concerning the Lamanites in the latter-days, and while they will suffer terribly, the Lord will be merciful to them by preserving their lineage (v. 12) until they are ultimately restored to the knowledge of their Redeemer (v. 13).

v13 "Redeemer...shepherd...sheep", we commonly equate this kind of imagery with the NT, but it has its origin in the OT, cf. Isa. 40:11, Isa. 48:17.

14 Therefore I say unto you, it shall be better for them than for you except ye repent. 15 For behold, had the mighty works been shown unto them which have been shown unto you, yea, unto them who have dwindled in unbelief because of the traditions of their fathers, ye can see of yourselves that they never would again have dwindled in unbelief. 16 Therefore, saith the Lord: I will not utterly destroy them, but I will cause that in the day of my wisdom they shall return again unto me, saith the Lord.

17 And now behold, saith the Lord, concerning the people of the Nephites: If they will not repent, and observe to do my will, I will utterly destroy them, saith the Lord, because of their unbelief notwithstanding the many mighty works which I have done among them; and as surely as the Lord liveth shall these things be, saith the Lord.

v14-17 Unlike the Lamanites (as in v. 11-13), when the Nephites fall into apostasy the Lord will not prolong their days (v. 14). Had the Lamanites seen the many signs and received the great blessings the Nephites had they never would fall away (v. 15). Thus, the Lord will not utterly destroy the Lamanites (v. 16), but He will utterly destroy the Nephites (v. 17).

Copyright © 2020 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.