

Book of Mormon 26
Converted Unto the Lord
Alma 23-29
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here is inspirational background)

I. One of the **greatest examples of conversion** to Christ was that of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies who buried their weapons and covenanted never to take up arms again, even in self-defense (Alma 24:16-17).

A. The cost of this covenant was enormous, for multitudes were in fact butchered (Alma 24:19-27; 27:3).

"...and if our brethren destroy us, behold, we shall go to our God and shall be saved" (Alma 24:16). Amazingly, they "praised God even in the very act of perishing under the sword---" (Alma 24:23).

B. This is truly a powerful righteous example. But can that example have anything to do with us in our modern lives?

1. We may never have to sacrifice our lives, but sometimes we are asked to sacrifice something just as dear --- our reputations.

In fact, that is what we do when we take upon ourselves the name of Jesus the Christ and acknowledge we are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints --- generally an unpopular, even a mocked faith.

My son John was on a bus with other high school students years ago. When they passed two LDS missionaries on bicycles, one of the other students stood up and yelled, "There go the Morons!" Often our faith is mocked.

C. However, we must bury our swords of anger, remaining "unashamed," and bear the precious burden of our beautiful, but still terribly misunderstood faith.

1. Neither should we shrink from its burden. We must carry the mandate laid out for us in the very beginning of the Doctrine and Covenants.

"And if [any] desire to take upon them my name with full purpose of heart, they are called to go into all the world to preach my gospel unto every creature" (D&C 18:28). We are warned this mandate comes with a cost, but also a great promise. "No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing, persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country and sounded in every ear; till the purposes of God shall be accomplished and the great Jehovah shall say the work is done."

II. **There are physical evidences which support the story of the People of Ammon.**

A. While I keep my ears open for evidences supporting the Book of Mormon from all sources, I find some of the strongest evidences are coming now from North America, particularly from earthworks left by its ancient inhabitants.

These ancient people are given the general name of the Mound builders because they left many thousands of earthen structures throughout the Eastern half of the United States in particular. (See E.G. Squier and E.H. Davis, *Ancient Monuments of The Mississippi Valley*, which included surveys of many of these mounds and was published by the Smithsonian Institution in the late 1800s).

These mounds are built just like the Book of Mormon describes them. Some are dated to the time of the Jaredites and others to the time of the Nephites/Lamanites. But often one culture built upon the remains of the previous one.

B. A few years ago, after reading the chapters in Alma and Helaman which speak of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies being given an inheritance among the Nephites, I had the opportunity to visit southern Ohio with my son David, where a great number of Moundbuilder sites are located. We found an area which we felt had many interesting parallels to what could have been a peaceful place for such people as the Anti-Nephi-Lehies. But what struck me most strongly were two mounds which were found to contain buried weapons at a nearby site.

One was in Mound City, Ohio. When excavators dug into this mound, they found bushels of deliberately broken up weapons. Also fascinating was a nearby mound contained broken smoking pipes.

While these were probably not the original sites used by the converted Lamanites who buried their weapons before they moved to Nephite lands, **they were evidence that here lived a people who deliberately buried their weapons.**

I could not help but think of that beautiful covenant made by these true followers of Christ. "We will hide away our swords [and all the weapons which were used for the shedding of man's blood,' Alma 24:17], yea, even we will bury them deep in the earth, that they may be kept bright, as a testimony that we have never used them, at the last day:"

Even if this is not the actual site of the People of Ammon, it provides a real historical confirmation of the practice of burying weapons for the sake of peace.

III. This reminds us we can bury our own swords of conflict and make our own sacrifices for the sake of peace. Doing so will definitely bring, eventually, a more precious life.

A. As I pointed out in an Ensign article, ["A Book about God's Love," *The Ensign*, June 1988, p. 44.] Christ was differentiated from Satan in these specific ways: Satan is the slanderer; Christ is the coverer.

B. That is, Christ bore other men's sins as His own in order to bring about righteousness. By accepting others' faults as His own, He covered others. The word "atonement" means "to cover."

I sincerely believe we are meant to follow His example.

IV. The blessings which come from living like Christ is also verified in the lives of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies.

A. They found an increase in love.

1. "we can witness of their sincerity, because of their love towards their brethren and also towards us. For behold, they had rather sacrifice their lives than even to take the life of their enemy; ... because of their love towards their brethren.... Has there been so great love in all the land... Nay" (Alma 26:31-33).

B. They found an increase in knowledge.

1. "But [while keeping the law of Moses], they did look forward to the coming of Christ, considering that the law of Moses was a type of his coming, ... Now they did not suppose that salvation came by the law of Moses; but the law of Moses did serve to strengthen their faith in Christ and thus they did retain a hope through faith, unto eternal salvation, relying upon the spirit of prophecy, which spake of those things to come" (Alma 25:15-16).

C. So these people were blessed with the spirit of prophecy --- understanding how the Mosaic Law that they kept pointed to Christ. Most persons in Judea had remained blind to the true meaning of those very same witnesses.

V. The Anti-Nephi-Lehies received other specific blessings from the Lord.

A. They were taken by the Nephites to live with them in their midst, and received a choice place for their inheritance (Alma 27). The Nephites provided security and protection for them, without their need to take up weapons again. These were indeed choice blessings. We realize how precious those blessings were when we see that the Nephites suffered terrible loss of life as a consequence (Alma 28). The Nephites also laid down their lives for their friends.

B. The story of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, of their conversion and their willingness to sacrifice even their lives for their love of Christ, is very touching and testimony strengthening.

There are ways we can follow that example. One is to accept the position of "loser" in times of conflict and controversy in order to keep peace. In the end we become the greatest winner.

VI. The Lord has promised that if we bring but one soul unto Him, great will be our joy in Heaven. We see this in the sons of Mosiah and Ammon, as they express, in rapture, the joys they all found.

A. So great was Ammon's joy, he shared a beautiful longing that everyone be so blessed.

“O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people. Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth” (Alma 29:1-2).

B. While having that longing, he realized that the ways of the Lord were wiser --- that all men must come to seek and find truth for themselves (verses 8-9).

C. He glories, nevertheless, “that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance; and this is my joy” (verse 9).

D. Furthermore, he rejoices as much in the missionary successes of his brothers, the sons of Mosiah, as in his own. His was not a competitive spirit.

“I do not joy in my own success alone, but my joy is more full because of the success of my brethren, ...” (verse 14).

E. Finally, in rapture, he rejoices in the ultimate blessings to both the laborers and those gathered in.

“God grant unto these my brethren, that they may sit down in the kingdom of God; yea, and also all those who are the fruit of their labors that they may go no more out, but that they may praise him forever. And my God grant that it may be done according to my words, even as I have spoken.” (verse 17).

Anyone who has engaged in missionary work and brought forth fruit knows of the joys of which Ammon speaks. We do not have to await a reward in the next life. We know joy now.