

BOOK OF MORMON LESSON #18

“God himself . . . shall redeem his people”

BY Ted l. gibbons

Mosiah 12-17

**Quote of the week:**

It is not sufficient that we should treasure the book of Mormon, nor that we testify that it is of God. We must know its truths, incorporate them into our lives, and share them with others. I [feel] an overwhelming love for the people and an urgent desire that all would comprehend the value of the Book of Mormon. (Elder Richard G. Scott, C.R., Oct. 1988, pp. 89,90)

**INTRODUCTION:** In Isaiah 6 (or 2 Nephi 16), Isaiah responds to the question of the Lord, “Whom shall I send and who will go for us?” with the familiar phrase, “Here am I; send me.” Knowing the difficulty and danger of the work, and understanding something of the disinterest of his people, he nevertheless offered himself for a most dangerous assignment: “Here am I; send me.”

We know that the Savior said similar words when the Father asked for someone to undertake the awful burden of the atonement (see Moses 4:1; Abr. 3:27). I believe that there were a great many others who in the pre-mortal life or in mortality must have responded in a similar way.

- # To the question, Who will take a final message of repentance to the world before the great flood? Noah must have said, *Here am I; send me!*
- # When the Lord sent forth a pre-mortal call for someone to preach repentance to the Jews and prepare the way for the Savior, John the Baptist no doubt offered himself with this same sentiment: *Here am I; send me!*
- # To the question, Who will warn Jerusalem of its danger before the Babylonian destruction? Lehi and Jeremiah and others must have said, *Here am I; send me!*
- # When the survival of the Jews was at stake, and someone was needed to visit the king and plead for relief, Esther in essence said to her cousin Mordecai, *Here am I; send me!*
- # And when the time came for someone to warn the court and people of King Noah, Abinadi stepped forth: *Here am I; send me!*

What is it about this message—this warning—that impels disciples to lay their life on the line, and to come forth from obscurity and safety and to hazard everything? The story of Abinadi before Noah will offer at least some answers to this question. As you read this lesson and study and ponder the associated scriptures, watch for indications about Abinadi’s reasons for placing his life on the altar of his faith by agreeing to preach truth to a truly despotic king and his wicked followers.

**ABINADI CALLS NOAH AND HIS PRIESTS TO REPENTANCE,  
EXHORTS THEM TO KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS, AND TEACHES  
OF THE ATONEMENT (Mosiah 12, 13)**

Abinadi came twice to the court of Noah. The context makes it seem that he must have gone into hiding after his first visit. The “Lord delivered him out of their hands” (Mos. 11:26) when they first sought to take away his life, but “they sought from that time forth to take him.” (Mos. 11:29) When he came back with a second warning because they had ignored the first, he “came among them in disguise,” hoping to have time to deliver his message before they learned his identity, I suppose. But he was apprehended and taken before the king and then the priests for a Nephite inquisition. In fact, Abinadi indicated, “I have suffered myself that I have fallen into your hands.” (Mosiah 17:9)

The priests asked him a number of questions, to which he responded in a way that astonished them (see Mos. 12:19). Finally one of them asked this question, and it is this question (and only this one) from among many questions that was engraven in the plates which would later become the Book of Mormon. Clearly there is something here we are supposed to learn. Here is the question:

What meaneth the words which are written, and which have been taught by our fathers, saying: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth; Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion; Break forth into joy; sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem; The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the

salvation of our God? (Mos. 12:20-24)

Perhaps in part the purpose of the question was to point out that Abinadi's message did not fit the pattern described by Isaiah. His second message contained apparently nothing of *beauty, good tidings, peace, or good tidings of good*. Abinadi had very little to say about *lifting up the voice, about singing, about joy, comfort, redemption, or salvation*. His message was about *judgement*.

Abinadi answered this question at some length in Mosiah 15:13-18. But before we discuss that answer, let us consider the nature of the imagery Isaiah is using. In the day in which Isaiah wrote this passage, messages were often carried by runners, men who sprinted from place to place with documents of importance. Carrying a message of victory—a message of good tidings—was a great honor. Consider the following example:

In 490 BC the Athenians had miraculously defeated a much stronger force of invading Persians on the Plains of Marathon. Pheidippides was selected to carry the good news back to Athens. The fleet runner ran the grueling 25 miles as fast as he could. Upon reaching the walls of the Acropolis, Pheidippides cried out, "Rejoice, we conquer!" and promptly fell dead. (*Webster's Word Histories*, Mirriam-Webster, Inc., 1989, p. 291; for an additional example, see 2 Sam. 18, 19-28)

The allusion in Isaiah's description is to the *beautiful feet* of such men, men who would *run* with the most important message ever carried in the history of the world. This also would be a message worth dying for, as Abinadi shows us.

As Abinadi answered this question, he made reference to "those who have published peace" (Mos. 15:14,15), "those that are still publishing peace" (Mos. 15:16), "those who shall hereafter publish peace" (Mos. 15:17), and to the Savior himself.

And behold, I say unto you, this is not all. For O how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that is the founder of peace, yea, even the Lord, who has redeemed his people; yea, him who has granted salvation unto his people; For were it not for the redemption which he hath made for his people, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, I say unto you, were it not for this, all mankind must have perished. (Mos. 15:18,19)

All those who have carried this message of peace and hope and joy and salvation have *beautiful feet*. Perhaps one of the great compliments you could pay to any missionary would be to make the observation that he or she has *beautiful feet!*

All this was lost on the priests of Noah, of course. *They had really ugly feet!* No matter what they said to Abinadi, they did not know the commandments and they did not keep them. No doubt they had written copies of them, but that was not enough. The commandments can never have the ability to purify and exalt us, and we can never *know* them until they are written in the right place.

And now I read unto you the remainder of the commandments of God, for I perceive that *they are not written in your hearts*; I perceive that ye have studied and taught iniquity the most part of your lives. (Mos. 13:12, *emphasis added*)

So Abinadi taught them the commandments. He quoted the first 2 of the 10 commandments and challenged the priests with them.

Have ye done all this? I say unto you, Nay, ye have not. And have ye taught this people that they should do all these things? I say unto you, Nay, ye have not. (Mos. 12:37)

Noah at this point had had all the fun he could stand. He was not inclined to tolerate this kind of disrespect from anyone. “Away with this fellow,” he said, “and slay him; for what have we do with him, for he is mad.” (Mos. 13:1)

On at least four occasions in the scriptures it appears that the Lord has protected his messengers (with the beautiful feet) so that they could deliver his message.

1. When the Sanhedrin caught Stephen and accused him of blasphemy, they “saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.” (Acts 6:15)
2. When Laman and Lemuel attempted to kill Nephi by throwing him into the sea, he said, “Touch me not, for I am filled with the power of God, even unto the consuming of my flesh; and whoso shall lay his hands upon me shall wither even as a dried reed; and he shall be as naught before the power of God, for God shall smite him. (1 Nephi 17:48)
3. When Lehi and Nephi were in the Lamanite prison, and enemies came to slay

them, “they did shine exceedingly, even as the faces of angels.” (Hel. 5:36)

4. And it also happened to Abinadi. “Touch me not, for God shall smite you if ye lay your hands upon me, for I have not delivered the message which the Lord sent me to deliver; neither have I told you that which ye requested that I should tell; therefore, God will not suffer that I shall be destroyed at this time. . . . Now it came to pass after Abinadi had spoken these words that the people of king Noah durst not lay their hands on him, for the Spirit of the Lord was upon him; and his face shone with exceeding luster . . . (Mos. 13:3,5)

Whereupon, Abinadi quoted the remainder of the 10 commandments to them and taught them of the purpose of the Law of Moses (see Mosiah 13:11-24, 27-35). Abinadi explained that no one could be saved by the Law of Moses.

And now, did they understand the law? I say unto you, Nay, they did not all understand the law; and this because of the hardness of their hearts; for they understood not that there could not any man be saved except it were through the redemption of God. (Mos. 13:32)

## **2. ABINADI QUOTES ISAIAH, TESTIFIES OF THE ATONEMENT, AND EXHORTS NOAH’S PRIESTS TO TEACH THE PEOPLE THAT REDEMPTION COMES THROUGH CHRIST (Mosiah 14-16)**

Notice who Abinadi quoted in Mosiah 14 to show that even the prophets who lived the Law of Moses spoke of the atonement. Nephi must have referred to such passages as these when he recorded

. . . but that I might more fully persuade [Laman and Lemuel] to believe in the Lord their Redeemer I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning. (1 Nephi 19:23)

Review Mosiah 14:2-12 and note (Mark? Highlight?) the things that Isaiah knew about the atoning sacrifice of the Savior. I have recorded some below, along with a suggestion or two about what some of them might mean.

- # (14:2) He will grow up as a tender plant (He will need care and protection like any child)

- # (14:2) He will not be of a form or beauty to attract us (like a root out of dry ground, Isaiah says. Have you ever pulled a carrot from an unwatered garden plot?)
- # (14:3) He will be despised and rejected
- # (14:3) He will be a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief
- # (14:3) We hid our faces from him (most of the multitudes turned away)
- # (14:3) We did not understand what he could do for us
- # (14:4) He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows
- # (14:5) He was wounded for our transgressions
- # (14:5) With his stripes we are healed
- # (14:7) He was oppressed and afflicted but he did not cry out
- # (14:8) He was cut off from the living (the crucifixion)
- # (14:9) He made his grave with the wicked and with the rich (he was crucified between two thieves and was laid in the tomb of a rich man)
- # (14:10) After he shall have performed the atonement, he shall see his seed (in the Spirit World he saw the multitude of those who would believe in him)

The Savior, as a member of the Godhead, knows each of us personally. Isaiah and the prophet Abinadi said that when Christ would “make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed” (Isa. 53:10; compare Mosiah 15:10). Abinadi explains that “his seed” are the righteous, those who follow the prophets (see Mosiah 15:11). In the garden and on the cross, Jesus saw each of us and not only bore our sins, but also experienced our deepest feelings so that he would know how to comfort and strengthen us (Merrill J. Bateman, “The Power to Heal from Within,” Ensign, May 1995, 14).

- # (14:10) He shall prolong his day (he will be resurrected)
- # (14:11) God shall see the suffering of this Son and the demands of justice will be satisfied
- # (14:11,12) He will bear the iniquities of many (all) people

What are the results of the Savior’s willingness to atone for us? Abinadi speaks of them in Mosiah 15:7-9, 19-25.

- # (15:8) He breaks the bands of death and brings about the resurrection
- # (15:8) He has power to make intercession for the sons of men
- # (15:9) He is filled with compassion and mercy

- # (15:9) He stands between us and the demands of justice
- # (15:9) He has satisfied the demands of justice
- # (15:19) He saves all mankind from perishing
- # (15:23) The righteous are raised to dwell with God and have eternal life
- # (15:25) Little children have eternal life

For the time being, there is a probation granted in which men can repent or not according to the knowledge they have and the desires of their hearts. But a time will come it will be too late to choose.

The time shall come when all shall see the salvation of the Lord; when every nation, kindred, tongue, and people shall see eye to eye and shall confess before God that his judgments are just. And then shall the wicked be cast out, and they shall have cause to howl, and weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth; and this because they would not hearken unto the voice of the Lord; therefore the Lord redeemeth them not.  
(Mosiah 16:1,2)

How much better it will be for us if we learn to kneel from love and gratitude rather than fear and condemnation!

The issue that will determine our final state is not what we were or what we intend one day to be, but what we are. Thus, if we are repentant and obedient, no matter what may have transpired previously in our lives, the Lord promises to turn scarlet sins to white and crimson colored sins to wool (see Isaiah 1:18); to never mention our sins to us again (see Ezek. 18:21,22); to subdue our sins and throw them into the depths of the sea (see Micah 7:19); to blot out like a thick cloud our transgressions (Isaiah 44:22); and to not remember our sins (see Isaiah 43:25). This, he has promised, he will do as often as we truly repent (see Mosiah 26:30). But if we are encompassed in sin, and if we do not repent, we have no promises at all.

But remember that he that persists in his own carnal nature, and goes on in the ways of sin and rebellion against God, remaineth in his fallen state and the devil hath all power over him. Therefore, he is as though there was no redemption made, being an enemy to God; and also is the devil an enemy to God. (Mosiah 16:5)

**3. ABINADI SEALS HIS TESTIMONY OF THE SAVIOR WITH HIS LIFE**  
(Mosiah 17)

A careful reading of Mosiah 17:1,2 makes it clear that Abinadi heard the impassioned plea of Alma to spare him (Abinadi). It was only after Alma had been cast out and men sent to slay him (Mosiah 17:3) that guards surrounded Abinadi and took him away to his martyrdom. We have often commented that Abinadi may have died without the awareness of a single convert. But he must have had some hope. Hearing the words of Alma and seeing his ejection from the *fraternal order of wicked priests* (FOOWP), Abinadi may have believed that some good would come of his mission. And indeed it did.

My colleague Andrew Horton has made a careful study of this matter and concluded that as a direct result of the ministry of Abinadi which was carried on by Alma the Elder and his descendants, 23,707 people united with the Church, and, in addition to this, thirteen other large groups of people (whose numbers are not specified) were converted. As you might have guessed, neither Noah nor any of his priests are included in this number.

Their charge against Abinadi was *false doctrine*. The king and his priests must have been feverish to find something—anything—to give a semblance of legality to their judgement.

And after three days [it took *three days* to come up with this?], having counseled with his priests, he caused that he should again be brought before him. And he said unto him: Abinadi, we have found an accusation against thee, and thou art worthy of death. For thou hast said that God himself should come down among the children of men; and now, for this cause thou shalt be put to death unless thou wilt recall all the words which thou hast spoken evil concerning me and my people. (Mosiah 17:6-8)

Notice the deliverance they offered Abinadi. He would be put to death for teaching what they determined to be false doctrine, unless he would take back “all the words which [he had] spoken evil concerning” Noah and his people. (Mosiah 17:8)

### **CONCLUSION:**

Abinadi had beautiful feet—he was *running* with the most important message in the world. In reality it *was* a message of *beauty, good tidings, peace, lifting up the voice, singing, joy, comfort, redemption, and salvation*. The words he had spoken were a package, the warnings and the promises, and he could not recall any of them. I can see him in my mind’s eye, standing before the king and his court, erect,



defiant, powerful, fearless, attended no doubt by a multitude of unseen beings cheering and rejoicing as he spoke:

I say unto you, I will not recall the words which I have spoken unto you concerning this people, for they are true; and that ye may know of their surety I have suffered myself that I have fallen into your hands, and I will suffer even until death, and I will not recall my words, and they shall stand as a testimony against you. (Mosiah 17:9,10)

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