

**BM#25 "They Taught with Power and Authority of God"  
Alma 17-22**

- I. Introduction
- II. Alma 17
- III. Alma 18
- IV. Alma 19
- V. Alma 20
- VI. Alma 21
- VII. Alma 22
- VIII. Conclusions

Since the organization of the Church on April 6, 1830, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, have been given the responsibility to share the truths of the gospel with others. Joseph Smith's brother, Samuel Smith, was one of the first to be called to serve a mission for the newly restored church. He placed several copies of the Book of Mormon, but returned feeling that he had not been successful. It was later learned that through his efforts, both Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, early leaders in the church came into the Church along with others. (see *Church History in the Fulness of Times*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1988, 75).

Many missionaries have since followed in Samuel's footsteps. Today, the number of full-time missionaries serving throughout the world is approximately 75,000. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has from its earliest beginning been missionary-minded.

The early members of the Church of Jesus Christ in the meridian of time were counseled, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Whether they serve on a full-time mission or as members in their communities, they seek to share the truths that have blessed their lives with others. Few, however, have ever volunteered to serve a mission as difficult or dangerous as a mission to the Lamanites.

Alma 17:13-15

**13 ...for they supposed that great was the work which they had undertaken.**

14 And assuredly it was great, for they had undertaken to preach the word of God to a wild and a hardened and a ferocious people; a people who delighted in murdering the Nephites, and robbing and plundering them; and their hearts were set upon riches, or upon gold and silver, and precious stones; yet they sought to obtain these things by murdering and plundering, that they might not labor for them with their own hands.

15 Thus they were a very indolent people, many of whom did worship idols, and the curse of God had fallen upon them because of the traditions of their fathers; notwithstanding the promises of the Lord extended unto them on the conditions of repentance.

Not only were they an idol worshipping people, but as we learned earlier, "the Lamanites knew nothing concerning the Lord, nor the strength of the Lord, therefore, they depended upon their own strength" (Mosiah 10:17).

The four sons of Mosiah II sought to bring the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ to these people. Having received permission from their father, and probably their mother, and having renounced the opportunity to succeed their father as king of the land, they, and those whom they had selected to go with them, travelled to the land of the Lamanites. (see Mosiah 28:5-8; Mosiah 29:3.) These initial chapters, Alma 17-22, along with Alma 18-26, record their experiences.

Outline of Alma 17-22:

"Alma 17:1-18. The sons of Mosiah preach the gospel to the Lamanites.

"Alma 17:19-39; Ammon serves and teaches King Lamoni. The king and queen and many of the Lamanites are converted.  
18; 19

"Alma 20-22. Ammon is led by the Spirit to deliver his brethren from prison. Lamoni's father is converted. (*Book of Mormon Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 112).

## II. Alma 17

The Superscription, prior to Alma 17, states,

"An account of the sons of Mosiah, who rejected the rights to the kingdom for the word of God, and went up to the land of Nephi to preach to the Lamanites; their sufferings and deliverance--according to the record of Alma. Comprising chapters 17 to 26 inclusive." (*The Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981, 250).

Thomas R. Valletta states,

"The superscription to Alma 17 was part of the ancient record translated by the Prophet Joseph Smith and dictated by him to his scribe (see also, for example, 2 Nephi, Mosiah 9 and Alma 36).

"This [superscription, or preface,] is part of the 1830 edition...Mormon specifies that, while it discusses the sons of Mosiah, it comes from Alma's record. A similar preface appears before our chapter 21; although its source is not cited, it must also be from Alma's record. These prefaces inform us that Alma's record contains either insertions or copies of other source records. The two separate headings give accounts from two separate sub-records contained in the large record of Alma. It is also possible that the 'record' was oral rather than written" (Gardner. *Second Witness*, 4:259).

"The italicized words, "Comprising chapters 17 through 27" were not part of the ancient record but were added later to printed editions of the Book of Mormon." (*The Book of Mormon Study Guide: Start to Finish*. Thomas R. Valletta, General Editor. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2015, 418).

As Alma was traveling from the land of Gideon to the land of Manti, he met the sons of Mosiah traveling towards the land of Zarahemla. (see Alma 17:1). One can only imagine the joy of the reunion between the brothers and Alma. They had not seen each other for fourteen years. You will recall that the five of them, in their youth, had been among the unbelievers and had participated in persecuting the members of the Church. An angel had appeared unto them and issued a call to repentance. (see Mosiah 27:11-16.) Since that call,

each had done all they could in order to fully repent from the harm they had caused and had individually undergone a mighty change of heart.

Alma 17:2-3

**2 Now these sons of Mosiah were with Alma at the time the angel first appeared unto him; therefore Alma did rejoice exceedingly to see his brethren; and what added more to his joy, they were still his brethren in the Lord; yea, and they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; and they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.**  
**3 But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God.**

The qualities they had developed enabled them to qualify as members of His Church and to be among his servants. As individuals, they had developed an increased closeness with the Lord. They had: (1) "Waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth;" (2) They were "men of sound understanding" meaning thoughtful and reflective in all their actions; (3) "Searched the scriptures diligently" by striving to understand the word of the Lord and to apply these teaching in their lives; and, (4) Had "given themselves to much prayer and fasting." As a result of their faithful obedience to the commandments and daily application of their knowledge they had gained, they were blessed to receive the gifts of "prophecy" and "revelation." This enabled them as they went forth to teach, and they did so "with power and authority of God" (Alma 17:2-3).

As the sons of Mosiah served the Lord, "they had many afflictions; they did suffer much, both in body and in mind, such as hunger, thirst and fatigue, and also much labor in the spirit." (Alma 17:5). Laboring in the spirit infers they "wrestled [plead] with God in mighty prayer, that he would pour out his Spirit upon the people" (Alma 8:10). As the servants of the Lord manifest his/her determination and desire to do the will of the Lord, in spite of the challenges and adversity that may come upon them, and as they continue to petition the Lord on behalf of the people whom he/she is called to serve, their humble

petition is then granted by the Lord. These efforts stated even before they began their journey to the land of the Lamanites.

Alma 26:23-26

23 Now do ye remember, my brethren, that [when] we said unto our brethren in the land of Zarahemla, we go up to the land of Nephi to preach unto our brethren, the Lamanites, and they laughed us to scorn?

24 For they said unto us: Do ye suppose that ye can bring the Lamanites to the knowledge of the truth? Do ye suppose that ye can convince the Lamanites of the incorrectness of the traditions of their fathers, as stiffnecked a people as they are; whose hearts delight in the shedding of blood; whose days have been spent in the grossest iniquity; whose ways have been the ways of a transgressor from the beginning? Now my brethren, ye remember that this was their language.

25 And moreover they did say: Let us take up arms against them, that we destroy them and their iniquity out of the land, lest they overrun us and destroy us.

26 But behold, my beloved brethren, we came into the wilderness not with the intent to destroy our brethren, but with the intent that perhaps we might save some few of their souls.

They did begin their journey to the land of Nephi where the Lamanites dwelt.

Alma 17:9

9 And it came to pass that they journeyed many day in the wilderness, and they fasted much and prayed much that the Lord would grant unto them a portion of his Spirit to go with them, and abide with them, that they might be an instrument in the hands of God to bring, if it were possible, their brethren, the Lamanites, to the knowledge of the truth,...

Alma 26:27

27 Now when our hearts were depressed, and we were about to turn back, behold, the Lord comforted us, and said: Go amongst thy brethren, the Lamanites, and bear with patience thine afflictions, and I will grant unto you success.

Even after they had begun their journey, they became depressed, and were about to turn back. Their mission almost ended before it began. How pleased the devil would have been had the four sons of Mosiah, and those who were with them, had turned around and given up regarding serving a mission to the Lamanites. Satan is always pleased when the servants of the Lord become discouraged and give up. He knows then that the work they would have accomplished will be delayed yet another day. The sons of Mosiah, however, did not turn around and go home. They proceeded further and then the Lord blessed them. As we read in Ether 12:4, "ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith."

Alma 17:10-12

**10 And it came to pass that the Lord did visit them with his Spirit, and said unto them: Be comforted. And they were comforted.**

**11 And the Lord said unto them also: Go forth among the Lamanites, thy brethren, and establish my word; yet ye shall be patient in long-suffering and afflictions, that ye may show forth good examples unto them in me, and I will make an instrument of thee in my hands unto the salvation of many souls.**

**12 And it came to pass that the hearts of the sons of Mosiah, and also those who were with them, took courage to go forth unto the Lamanites to declare unto them the word of God.**

What a blessing it must have been for them to hear the voice of the Lord, either in person or spoken from heaven, confirming their budding faith, that the Lord would be with them in their missionary efforts. It would not be easy, they are warned, but if they bore with patience their afflictions, they would be successful in bringing souls unto Him.

They finally arrived at the borders of the land of the land of the Lamanites. But before they separated themselves and departed one from another, Ammon administered to them.

Alma 17:18

**18 Now Ammon being the chief among them,...he did administer unto them,...[that is he] blessed them**

according to their several stations, having imparted the word of God unto them...before his departure; and thus they [each] took their several journeys throughout the land.

Alma 17:19

**19 And Ammon went to the land of Ishmael, the land being called after the sons of Ishmael, who also became Lamanites.**

Bryan Richards states,

"To perform missionary work alone is certainly not the typical pattern [of today]. The text does not give us an indication why they didn't travel in pairs, but a couple of reasons may be that they could cover more ground and that they would be less threatening to the Lamanites if they came alone. The problem is that it would take great courage to walk into a Lamanite city with no companion, knowing that you are completely at the mercy of the people you meet." ([www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-17](http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-17)).

Alma 17:20

**20 And as Ammon entered the land of Ishmael, the Lamanites took him and bound him, as was their custom to bind all the Nephites who fell into their hands, and carry them before the king; and thus it was left to the pleasure of the king to slay them, or to retain them in captivity, or to cast them into prison, or to cast them out of his land, according to his will and pleasure.**

The four options the king had were: (1) "Slay them;" (2) "Retain them in captivity;" (3) "Cast them into prison;" and (4) "Cast them out of his land" (Alma 17:20).

King Lamoni inquires of Ammon how long he intends to dwell in the land. His reply is "Yea, I desire to dwell among this people for a time; yea, and perhaps until the day I die" (Alma 17:23). His initial reply is completely honest; his additional comment is only truthful if you consider that at any time his life could end, although he had been promised protection by the Lord.

The response of the king is that he very pleased, and Ammon's bands are loosed. The king then offers "one of his daughters to wife." Ammon declines, but states his willingness to be the king's servant. Ammon is assigned, with other servants, to watch over the king's flocks. While initially Ammon had reason to rejoice, he is not aware, however, that King Lamoni has exercised a fifth option. By making him a shepherd to the king's flocks, if any of the flock is lost, he will then to be put to death!

Ammon and the other servants take the flock to the "waters of Sebus" to get water. At this time a certain number of Lamanities, obviously unfriendly to the king, scatter the king's flocks. (see Alma 17:26-27.)

Alma 17:28-29 [underline added]

**28 Now the servants of the king began to murmur, saying: Now the king will slay us, as he has our brethren because their flocks were scattered by the wickedness of these men. And they began to weep exceedingly, saying: Behold, our flocks are scattered already.**

**29 Now they wept because of their fear of being slain. Now when Ammon saw this his heart was swollen within him with joy; for, said he, I will show forth my power [of God] unto these my fellow-servants, or the power [of God] that is within me, in restoring these flocks unto the king, that I may win the hearts of these my fellow-servants, [and save their lives], that I may lead them to believe in my words.**

Ammon, by manifesting to the servants and to the king the power of God that was within him, including the protection of his life, he would drive off those who attacked the flocks of the king. Ammon told the other servants to gather the flocks that were scattered and he would go and face the men who were responsible. (see Alma 17:31-34.)

Alma 17:35

**35 Therefore, they [renegades] did not fear Ammon, for they supposed that one of their men could slay him according to their pleasure, for they knew not the Lord had promised Mosiah that he would deliver his sons out of their hands; neither did they know anything concerning the Lord; therefore they delighted**

**in the destruction of their brethren; and for this cause they stood to scatter the flocks of the king.**

Neither these men nor the servants, realized the power and protection that Ammon enjoyed at the hand of the Lord. He was about to give a demonstration of this power as a means of his being able to teach the king and his people regarding the truths of the gospel.

Ammon proceeded from a distance with his sling to "slew a certain number of them insomuch that they began to be astonished at his power; nevertheless they were angry because of the slain of their brethren, and they were determined that he should fall...they [now]came forth with clubs to slay him" (Alma 17:36).

F. Burton Howard states,

"When I was young, the thing that impressed me most about Ammon was that he bravely defended the flocks of King Lamoni and cut off the arms of renegade Lamanites who tried to scatter those flocks. That was the kind of story that personified what I thought a missionary or great religious leader should be. But the fact that people perform brave acts or achieve victory in battle does not impress me now as much as it did before. There are more far-reaching lessons to be learned. Ammon remains one of my heroes, even though I see him with different eyes. Today, I see heroism as being something different from bravery. It is that quality which makes one courageous when it matters. It is doing what one must do when temptation, or discouragement, or illness, or personal inconvenience suggest otherwise. It is always predicated on faith." ("Ammon: Reflections on Faith and Testimony," in *Heroes From the Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995, [Seventh Printing, 1998], 121).

Alma 17:37-38

**37 ...behold, every man that lifted his club to smite Ammon, he smote off their arms with his sword; for he did withstand their blows by smiting their arms with the edge of his sword, insomuch that they began to be astonished, and began to flee before him; yea, and they were not few in number; and he caused them to flee by the strength of his arm.**

**38 Now six of them had fallen by the sling, but he slew none save it were their leader with his sword; and he smote off as many of their arms as were lifted against him, and they were not a few.**

Following the watering of the flocks, the servants gathered up "the arms which had been smitten off by the sword of Ammon,...and they were carried in unto the king for a testimony of the things which...had [been]done" (Alma 17:39).

Robert D. Hales states,

"What did Ammon say? 'Be of good cheer' (Alma 17:31). Now, we may read this as a story about some shepherd trying to round up some missing sheep, but the message is much more powerful and significant than that...Ammon not only led the force to recapture the sheep, he drove away the evil men who caused the problems; and his heroic efforts persuaded the king to follow him and to follow the Savior. Ammon teaches us that no matter our circumstances, we can be an example to others, we can lift them, we can impress them to seek righteousness, and we can bear testimony to all the power of Jesus Christ." ("When Thou Art Converted, Strengthen Thy Brethren," in *Ensign*, May 1997, 82).

This incident of Ammon at the waters of Sebus exemplifies one who had been placed in a most difficult position where his failure would not only result in the loss of his life and those of his fellow servants, but the opportunity to bring those of King Lamoni's kingdom the gospel of Jesus Christ. Like David of old, he stood firm and through the power of the Lord saved not only his life, that of others, and most important, kept alive the opportunity to bring the word of God to a fallen people. It was a pivotal moment in Ammon's life. It stands as powerful example to each of us of his courage, determination, and trust in the Lord.

### **III. Alma 18**

Upon the return of the servants, the king requests a meeting with them.

Alma 18:2-3

**2 And when they had testified to the things which they had seen, and he [king] had learned of the faithfulness of Ammon in preserving his flocks, and**

also of his great power in contending against those who sought to slay him, he was astonished exceedingly, and said: Surely, this is more than a man. Behold, is not this the Great Spirit who doth send such great punishments upon this people, because of their murders?

3 And they answered the king, and said: Whether he be the Great Spirit or a man, we know not; but this much we do know, that he cannot be slain by the enemies of the king; neither can they scatter the king's flocks when he is with us, because of his expertness and great strength; therefore, we know that he is a friend to the king. And now, O king, we do not believe that a man has such great power, for we know that he cannot be slain.

The servants, and now the king, were impressed with the great strength and power Ammon had displayed as he defended the king's flocks from the robbers. Because "the Lamanites knew nothing concerning the Lord, nor the strength of the Lord" (Mosiah 10:11), they could not determine the source of Ammon's strength and power. They assumed that he was the Great Spirit himself, "who doth send such great punishments upon this people, because of their murders...[or] he has come down at this time to preserve your lives, that I might not slay you as I did your brethren. [As King Lamoni declared], Now this is the Great Spirit of whom our fathers have spoken" (Alma 18:2,4).

Alma 18:5-6

5 Now this was the tradition of Lamoni, which he had received from his father, that there was a Great Spirit. Notwithstanding they believed in a Great Spirit, they supposed that whatsoever they did was right; nevertheless, Lamoni began to fear exceedingly, with fear lest he had done wrong in slaying his servants;

6 For he had slain many of them because their brethren had scattered their flocks at the place of water;...

Bryan Richards states,

"Mormon's commentary contrasts the belief system of the Nephites and Lamanites. For the Nephites, inherent in their belief of God was the strict requirement to keep the commandments according to the Law of Moses. Under the

Lamanite tradition, they also believed in a God [Great Spirit], but that didn't mean that they were bound to live by a specific code of behavior. Rather, they supposed that whatsoever they did was right. This is a religion of convenience. This doctrine does not make the individual accountable for their actions and is similar to the doctrine of the Nehors by which all mankind should be saved at the last day (Alma 1:4). It is also similar to many religions of today which are quick to acknowledge God but slow to require their congregations to live according to the Law of the Lord."

([www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-18](http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-18)).

Bryan Richards continues,

"It was [Ammon's] hope to establish a relationship of trust with the king and his servants. Nevertheless, he was not anxious to seek the praise of the king for his bravery. He did not go into Lamoni and say, 'Look what I did for you!' Instead, he was strict to observe King Lamoni's commandments to the last detail.

"The lessons learned are that 1) Before teaching an investigator, one must first establish a relationship of trust, 2) Humility has a great effect on the investigator, and 3) Integrity and obedience will demonstrate one's good intentions." ([www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-18](http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-18)).

The king now inquires as to where Ammon is. He learns that he is fulfilling another assignment he had been given to prepare the king's horses in preparation for a feast he was attending given "by the father of Lamoni, who was the king over all the land" (Alma 18:8-9). The king, now sure that Ammon is the Great Spirit, is fearful of requesting his presence.

Alma 18:12-13

**12 And it came to pass that when Ammon had made ready the horses and the chariots for the king and his servants, he went in unto the king, and he saw that the countenance of the king was changed; therefore he was about to return out of his presence.**

**13 And one of the king's servants said unto him, Rabbanah, which is, being interpreted, powerful or great king, considering their kings to be powerful;**

**and thus he said unto him: Rabbanah, the king desireth thee to stay.**

George Reynolds and Jeanne Sjordahl state,

"*Rabbanah* is a wonderful word. Translated it means *powerful*, or *great king*. In applying that name to Ammon, the servants of Lamoni did not know that in reality he was a prince, the son of the mighty king of the Nephites. But after Ammon's miraculous exploits at the Waters of Sebus, they regarded him, as did their master, *something more than a man.*" (*Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.3. Amplified and Arranged by Philip C. Reynolds and David Sjordahl King. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1977, 265*).

Ammon remains. He asked the king, "What wilt thou that I should do for thee, O King? And the king answered him not for the space of an hour,..." (Alma 18:14). Later, Ammon asked him again, "What desireth thou of me? But the king answered him not" (Alma 18:15).

Alma 18:16-17

**16 And it came to pass that Ammon, being filled with the Spirit of God, therefore he perceived the thoughts of the king. And he said unto him: Is it because thou hast heard that I defended thy servants and thy flocks, and slew seven of their brethren with the sling and with the sword, and smote off the arms of others, in order to defend thy flocks and thy servants; behold, is it this that causeth thy marvelings?**

**17 I say unto you, what is it, that thy marvelings are so great? Behold, I am a man, and am thy servant; therefore, whatsoever thou desireth which is right, that will I do.**

The Encyclopedia of Mormonism states,

**"Discernment, Gift of.** The gift of discernment consists of the spiritual quality or skill of being able to see or understand, especially that which is hidden or obscure...

"Not only can the power of discernment distinguish good from evil (Moro.7:12-18), the righteous from the wicked (D&C 101:95), and false spirits from divine (D&C 46:23), but in more sensitive operations can also make known even

'the thoughts and intents of the heart' of other persons (Heb.4:12; D&C 33:1)." (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Vol.1.* Edited by Daniel H. Ludlow. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992, 384).

Alma 18:18-19

**18 Now when the king had heard these words, he marveled again, for he beheld that Ammon could discern his thoughts; but notwithstanding this, king Lamoni did open his mouth, and said unto him: Who art thou? Art thou that Great Spirit, who knows all things?**  
**19 Ammon answered and said unto him: I am not.**

The king is astonished for he was sure Ammon is the Great Spirit. If he isn't, then where does he get his power? If Ammon will tell him the source of his power, he will give him "whatsoever thou desireth...and if needed, I would guard thee with my armies, but I know that thou art more powerful than all they; nevertheless, whatsoever thou desireth of me I will grant it unto thee" (Alma 18:21).

Alma 18:22-23

**22 Now Ammon being wise, yet harmless [not desirous of taking advantage of the king], he said unto Lamoni: Wilt thou hearken unto my words, if I tell thee by what power I do these things? And this is the thing that I desire of thee.**  
**23 And the king answered him, and said, Yea, I will believe all thy words. And thus he was caught with guile.**

Daniel H. Ludlow states,

"Possible meaning of the word 'guile.' Although the word *guile* is frequently used to mean 'deceitful cunning' or 'trachery,' it can also denote the use of strategy. It is evidently used in the latter sense in Alma 18:23; in other words, Ammon *planned* or *used strategy* in arranging the questions he asked King Lamoni." (*A Companion To Your Study Of The Book of Mormon.* Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, 207).

The king expressed a desire to know the source of the power Ammon held. This was of great joy to Ammon. He now had the opportunity to teach the king regarding the truth of God

and his power. Ammon does this by asking King Lamoni a series of questions:

"Ammon: Believest thou that there is a God?  
(Alma 18:24).

"King: I do not know what that meanest? (Alma 18:25).

"Ammon: Believest thou that there is a Great Spirit?  
Alma 18:26).

"King: Yea. (Alma 18;27).

"Ammon: This is God. (Alma 18:28).

Believest thou that this Great Spirit, who is God,  
created all things which are in heaven and in the  
earth? (Alma 18:28).

"King: Yea, I believe that he created all things which are  
in the earth; but I do not know the heavens.  
(Alma 18:29).

"Ammon: The heavens is a place where God dwells and all his  
holy angels. (Alma 18:30).

"King: Is it above the earth? (Alma 18:31).

"Ammon: Yea, and he looketh down upon all the children of  
men; and he knows all the thoughts and intents of  
the heart; for by his hand were they all created  
from the beginning. (Alma 18:32).

"King: I believe all these things which thou hast spoken.  
Art thou sent from God? (Alma 18:33).

"Ammon: I am a man; and man in the beginning was created  
after the image of God, and I am called by his Holy  
Spirit to teach these things unto this people, that  
they may be brought to a knowledge of that which is  
just and true. And a portion of that Spirit  
dwelleth in me, which giveth me knowledge, and also  
power according to my faith and desires which are  
in God. (Alma 18:34-35).

Alma 18:36-39

36 Now when Ammon had said these words, he began at the creation of the world, and also the creation of Adam, and told him all the things concerning the fall of man, and rehearsed and laid before him the records and the holy scriptures of the people, which had been spoken by the prophets, even down to the time that their father, Lehi, left Jerusalem.

37 And he also rehearsed unto them (for it was unto the king and to his servants) all the journeying of their fathers in the wilderness, and all their sufferings with hunger and thirst, and their travail, and so forth.

38 And he also rehearsed unto them concerning the rebellions of Laman and Lemuel, and the sons of Ishmael, yea, all their rebellions did he relate unto them; and he expounded unto them all the records and scriptures from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem down to the present time.

39 But this is not all; for he expounded unto them the plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world; and he also made known unto them concerning the coming of Christ, and all the works of the Lord did he make known unto them.

Gerald Hansen, Jr. states,

"Ammon's teaching methods were not elaborate or excessive. He started on Lamoni's level with questions about very basic gospel principles. He then explained the doctrines of salvation--the Creation and the Fall--expounded the scripture of ancient history, and finished with the plan of redemption. He used the scriptures from both the Old and New Worlds as his basic source (Alma 18:36-39)." ("The Book of Alma as a Prototype," in *The Book of Mormon: Alma, The Testimony Of The Word, Vol.6*. Edited by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992, 269).

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet add,

"What do you teach a person who has no knowledge of God or the gospel and yet has consented to listen and believe? Where do you start? What principles do you emphasize? The way in which Ammon taught King Lamoni constitutes a classic response to such questions. Ammon taught him what we have

come to know as the three pillars of eternity--the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement. These three doctrines, which are inseparably associated one with the other, constitute the foundation upon which all other gospel principles must rest." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.3.* Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991, [3<sup>rd</sup> Printing, 1993], 135).

Alma 18:40-42

**40 And it came to pass that after he had said all these things, and expounded them to the king, that the king believed all his words.**

**41 And he began to cry unto the Lord, saying: O Lord have mercy; according to thy abundant mercy which thou hast had upon the people of Nephi, have upon me and my people.**

**42 And now, when he had said this, he fell unto the earth, as if he were dead.**

The experience of King Lamoni is similar to the experience of Alma, the younger. After he heard the words of the angel telling him, "go thy way, and seek to destroy the church no more," (Mosiah 27:16), "the astonishment of Alma was so great that he became dumb, that he could not open his mouth; yea, ...,he became weak, even that he could not move his hands;...and [he] was carried helpless [by those that were with him" (Mosiah 27:19).

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet state,

"From what we can deduce from scriptural writ, it appears that a trance is a state in which the body and its functions become quiescent in order that the full power of the Spirit may be centered on the revelations of heaven. Freed from the fetters of a mortal body, man's spirit can be ushered into the divine presence; it can hear what otherwise could not be heard and see what otherwise could not be seen--even the visions of eternity and even the Almighty himself." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.3.* Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991, [3<sup>rd</sup> Printing, 1993], 140).

Alma, the younger reported his experience during the three day trance which he had. "Nevertheless, after wading through much tribulation, repenting nigh unto death, the Lord in mercy hath seen fit to snatch me out of an everlasting burning, and I am born of God" (Mosiah 27:28).

Alma 18:43

**43 And it came to pass that his servants took him and carried him in unto his wife, and laid him upon a bed; and he lay as if he were dead for the space of two days and two nights; and his wife, and his sons, and his daughters mourned over him, after the manner of the Lamanties, greatly lamenting his loss.**

#### **IV. Alma 19**

After two days, they are ready to prepare the body of King Lamoni for burial. The queen requests a meeting with Ammon.

Alma 19:4

**4 And she said unto him; The servants of my husband have made it known unto me that thou art a prophet of a holy God, and that thou hast power to do many mighty works in his name.**

The queen requests that Ammon go in and see her husband. "Some say he is not dead, but others say he is dead and he stinketh, and that he ought to be placed in the sepulcher; but as for myself, to me he doth not stink" (Alma 19:5).

Marion D. Hanks states,

"The love of this faithful wife for her beloved husband seems typical to me of the love which we will obtain in the heavenly kingdom and which should characterize our relationships with those dear to us." (*Conference Report*, April 1957, 129).

Alma 19:6

**6 Now, this was what Ammon desired, for he knew that king Lamoni was under the power of God; he knew that the dark veil of unbelief was being cast away from his mind, and the light which did light up his mind, which was the light of the glory of God, which was a marvelous light of his goodness---yea, this light had infused such joy into his soul, the cloud of darkness having been dispelled, and that the light of everlasting life was lit up in his soul, yea, he knew that this had overcome his natural frame, and he was carried away in God---**

Neal A. Maxwell states,

"These transcending truths do bring us a stunning perspective, a 'knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come.' (D&C 93:24.) These transcending truths restructure our understanding of ourselves and of the universe and bring within our view resplendent reality...When encountered, their sudden richness is so breathtaking and light-intensive that, like radioactive materials, they must be handled with great care. They both light up the mind and infuse joy into the soul. (Alma 19:6.)" (*Meek and Lowly*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1987, [Second Printing, 1987], 46).

During these states of trance, as previously noted by McConkie and Millet, "the full power of the Spirit may [then] be centered on the revelations of heaven" (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.3*, 140). Light is infused into both the mind and the soul.

Alma 19:8-10

**8 And he [Ammon] said unto the queen: He is not dead, but he sleepeth in God and on the morrow he shall rise again; therefore bury him not.**

**9 And Ammon said unto her: Believest thou this? And she said unto him: I have had no witness save thy word, and the word of our servants; nevertheless I believe that it shall be according as thou hast said.**

**10 And Ammon said unto her: Blessed art thou because of thy exceeding faith; I say unto thee, woman, there has not been such great faith among all the people of the Nephites.**

The faith the queen exhibits is similar to the faith of little child. She believes Ammon to be "a prophet of a holy God" (Alma 19:4), based solely on "the word of our servants" and that is sufficient for her to trust in his words. It is desirable that each of us had the faith and trust in the Lord she exhibits.

The queen goes to her husband's bedside and waits on the fulfillment of Ammon's words. The next day, he arose and spoke to his wife:

Alma 19:12-13

**12 ...as he arose, he stretched forth his hand unto the woman, and said, Blessed be the name of God, and blessed art thou.**

**13 For as sure as thou livest, behold, I have seen my Redeemer; and he shall come forth, and be born of a woman, and he shall redeem all mankind who believe on his name..**

Having pronounced these words, the king, "his heart...swollen within him,...he sank again with joy; and the queen also sank down, being overpowered by the Spirit" (Alma 19:13). In turn, Ammon "fell upon his knees, and began to pour out his soul in prayer and thanksgiving to God for what he had done for his brethren; and he was also overpowered with joy; and thus they all three had sunk to the earth" (Alma 19:14).

Also, the servants who were present, "began to cry unto God, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them also, [for they had testified to the king of the power of Ammon and] they did call upon the name of the Lord, in their might, even until they had all fallen to the earth,..." (Alma 19:15-16).

A "Lamanitish woman whose name was Abish was present. She had been converted unto the Lord for many years...and had never having made it known...[seeing] all the servants of Lamoni...the queen and the king, and Ammon [all fallen to the ground]knew that it was the power of God" (Alma 19:16-17). She believed this event would convince the people of the power of God, and so she ran from house to house telling the people what had occurred.

Camille Fronk states,

"Visions are not idly given by the Lord but reserved for specific purposes. One of the Lord's purposes for visions is 'preparing men for salvation.' The case of Abish cannot be seen as an exception, for she was prepared to help her people come to a knowledge of salvation. When she witnessed the condition of the king's court, she recognized the power of God and knew what she must do. Her testimony as a Lamanite strengthened the testimony of Ammon, a Nephite foreigner, and satisfied the law of witnesses (D&C 6:28)."  
("Show Forth Good Examples in Me," in *Studies in Scripture, Vol.7, 1 Nephi to Alma 29*. Edited by Kent P. Jackson. Salt

Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1987, [Second printing, 1988], 327).

When the multitude gathered, and they saw the king, the queen and the servants, and then also saw Ammon, a Nephite, laying on the ground, they believed that they were dead. Some felt that a great evil had come upon the king and his house for allowing a Nephite to remain in the land. Others blamed the king himself because he had killed his servants who had allowed the flocks to be scattered at the water of Sebus. They also rebuked Ammon for slaying those who had scattered the kings flocks. (see Alma 19:18-21.)

In anger, a brother of one who had been killed by Ammon, took his sword to kill Ammon, but "as he lifted the sword to smite him, behold, he fell dead" (Alma 19:22).

Mormon, the abridger of the records of Alma, states,

Alma 19:23

**23 Now we see that Ammon could not be slain, for the Lord had said unto Mosiah, his father: I will spare him, and it shall be unto him according to thy faith-- therefore, Mosiah trusted unto the Lord. [see also Mosiah 28:7; Alma 17:35.]**

Initially the reaction to the death of the Lamanite was fear, but it then turned to a division among the people regarding Ammon.

Alma 19:24-26

**24 And it came to pass that when the multitude beheld that the man had fallen dead, who lifted the sword to slay Ammon, fear came upon them all, and they durst not put forth their hands to touch him or any of those who had fallen; and they began to marvel again among themselves what could be the cause of this great power, or what all these things could mean.**

**25 And it came to pass that there were many among them who said that Ammon was the Great Spirit, and others said he was sent by the Great Spirit.**

**26 But others rebuked them all, saying that he was a monster, who had been sent from the Nephites to torment them.**

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet state,

"It is obvious from this account that many perceive the doings and handiwork of God and understand his ways; others are absolutely oblivious to what is divine and can neither recognize nor believe a heavenly manifestation." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.3.* Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991, [3<sup>rd</sup> Printing, 1993], 144).

This is further evidence that heavenly manifestations serve to strengthen the faith of those who have a believing spirit, while those who do not have the prerequisite faith, are unable to discern the divine and thus remain in spiritual darkness.

Alma 19:28

**28 And thus the contention began to be exceedingly sharp among them. And while they were thus contending, the woman servant who had caused the multitude to be gathered together came, and when she saw the contention which was among the multitude she was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto tears.**

Neal A. Maxwell states,

"Another special challenge we face from time to time is having good motives and good intentions—even good actions misfire. Abish, the 'Lamanitish woman' (Alma 19:16-17), was not the first nor the last Church member to think an opportunity to be present and, therefore, to act on the impulse to do good. Confusion and contention followed her deed, as did tears from conscientious Abish. Vindication was nearly immediate in her case, but it is much slower in coming at other times.

"If our motives and actions are good, we should be able to endure some misunderstanding, but the pain and frustration of it will be real because we really care. Time and truth can cause lower courts of opinion to reverse themselves, hopefully soon. But if not, we will come to that final gate where Jesus Christ is the gatekeeper and 'employeth no servant there.' The gospel guarantees ultimate, not proximate, justice." (*Wherefore, Ye Must Press Forward.* Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1977, 115-116).

Alma 19:29-30

**29 And it came to pass that she [Abish] went and took the queen by the hand, that perhaps she might raise her from the ground; and as soon as she touched her hand she arose and stood upon her feet, and cried with a loud voice, saying: O blessed Jesus, who has saved me from an awful hell! O blessed God, have mercy on this people!**

**30 And when she had said this, she clasped her hands, being filled with joy, speaking many words which were not understood; and when she had done this, she took the king, Lamoni, by the hand, and behold he arose and stood upon his feet.**

As the king arises, he rebukes the people for their contention, and then began "to teach them the words which he had heard from Ammon; and as many as heard his words believed, and were converted unto the Lord. But there were many among them who would not hear his words; therefore they went their way" (Alma 19:31-32).

When the truths of the gospel are taught, those who are sensitive to the whispering of the Spirit, are convinced of the truth of the message. In turn, those who have "hardened their hearts against the Holy Spirit" (2 Nephi 33:2), they do not hear the whispering and thus turn away. These are among those who "Having eyes, see...not? and having ears, hear...not?" (Mark 8:18).

Alma 19:33-34

**33 And it came to pass that when Ammon arose he also administered unto them, and also did all the servants of Lamoni; and they did all declare unto the people the selfsame thing--that their hearts had been changed; that they had no more desire to do evil.**

**34 And behold, many did declare unto the people that they had seen angels and had conversed with them; and thus they had told them things of God, and of his righteousness.**

Bryan Richards states,

"[A]fter the sermon of King Benjamin...the people responded, 'we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the

Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually (Mosiah 5:2). Once one has really made the transition from the carnal to spiritual, the carnal desires leave. This is part of being born again and is the state of purity which the righteous seek. As with all things we must become like God who cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance (Alma 45:16).

"This purity comes through the light of God which Lamoni first tasted while under the influence of the Spirit, the light...did light up his mind, which was the light of the glory of God, which was a marvelous light of his goodness (vs.6)" ([www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-19](http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-19)).

Alma 19:35

**35 And it came to pass that there were many that did believe in their words; and as many as did believe were baptized; and they became a righteous people, and they did establish a church among them.**

Like all who receive a witness of the spirit, they must then be taught the principles of the gospel including faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism by one who holds authority of God, and then the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. As they attend the church, they receive further instruction in order to strengthen their budding testimony. As they take upon them sacred covenants, and endure to the end, they then receive eternal life.

Alma 19:36

**36 And thus the work of the Lord did commence among the Lamanites; thus the Lord did begin to pour out his Spirit upon them; and we see that his arm is extended to all people who will repent and believe on his name.**

How great must have been Ammon's joy as the Church of God is now established among the people of King Lamoni. The word of God has found a place to grow among the Lamanites.

## VI. Alma 20

King Lamoni, having felt the spirit, wants his father to meet Ammon. He invites him to journey to the land of Nephi to meet his father. (see Alma 20:1.)

Alma 20:2-3

**2 And the voice of the Lord came to Ammon, saying:  
Thou shalt not go up to the land of Nephi, for behold,  
the king will seek thy life; but thou shalt go to the  
land of Middoni; for behold, thy brother Aaron, and  
also Muloki and Ammah are in prison.**

The names of the four sons of Mosiah II are "Ammon, Aaron, Omni and Himni" (Mosiah 27:34), so we may assume that Moloki and Ammah are numbered among "those whom they had selected to go [with them] up to the land of Nephi" (Mosiah 28:1).

Who is entitled to hear the voice of the Lord?

David A. Bednar states,

"The spirit of revelation is available to every person who receives by proper priesthood authority the saving ordinances of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost--and who is acting in faith to fulfill the priesthood injunction to 'receive the Holy Ghost.' This blessing is not restricted to the presiding authorities of the Church; rather, it belongs to and should be operative in the life of every man, woman, and child who reaches the age of accountability and enters into sacred covenants. Sincere desire and worthiness invite the spirit of revelation into our lives." ("Spirit of Revelations," in *Ensign*, May 2011, 87).

Though King Lamoni knows the strength of Ammon, he offers him his support for the king in Middoni is his friend. He will petition the king in Middoni regarding the release of Ammon's brethren. King Lamoni then asked Ammon, "Who told thee that thy brethren were in prison?" (Alma 20:4).

Alma 20:5-6

**5 And Ammon said unto him: No one hath told me, save it be God; and he said unto me--Go and deliver thy brethren, for they are in prison in the land of Middoni.**

**6 Now when Lamoni had heard this he caused that his servants make ready his horses and his chariots.**

Even though Lamoni holds the power of an earthly king, he had learned there is a King in Heaven whose word and power are even greater. He also knows that when God speaks, his servants obey.

As King Lamoni and Ammon are traveling to Middoni, they met King Lamoni's father. His father immediately begins by questioning his son's absence from the feast and then asks, "Weither are thou going with this Nephite, who is one of the children of a liar?" (Alma 20:10).

Lamoni responds by telling his father the reason for his absence at the feast, and all that had occurred in his kingdom. (see Alma 20:11-12.)

Alma 20:13-14

**13 And now when Lamoni had rehearsed unto him all these things, behold, to his astonishment, his father was angry with him, and said: Lamoni, thou art going to deliver these Nephites, who are sons of a liar. Behold, he robbed our fathers; and now his children are also come amongst us that they may, by their cunning and their lyings, deceive us, that they again may rob us of our property.**

**14 Now the father of Lamoni commanded him that he sould slay Ammon with the sword. And he also commanded him that he should not go to the land of Middoni, but that he should return with him to the land of Ishmael.**

Lamoni must now choose. Will he obey his father, who is the King of all the land of the Lamanites? Or, trust in his friendship with Ammon? Each of us must make choices in our lives that will have far reaching effect upon our future. Will we stand up for what is right and what we know is true, or will we surrender to what is popular and convenient?

Alma 20:15 [underline added]

**15 But Lamoni said unto him: I will not slay Ammon, neither will I return to the land of Ishmael, but I go to the land of Middoni that I may release the brethren of Ammon, for I know that they are just men and holy prophets of the true God.**

Henry B. Eyring states,

"The restored gospel of Jesus Christ gives us help in knowing how to qualify for the strength of the Lord as we deal with adversity...

"We need strength beyond ourselves to keep the commandments in whatever circumstances life brings to us. For some it may be poverty, but for others it may be prosperity. It may be the ravages of age or the exuberance of youth. The combination of trials and their duration are as varied as are the children of our Heavenly Father. No two are alike. but what is being tested is the same, at all times in our lives and for every person: will we do whatsoever the Lord our God will command us?" ("In the Strength of the Lord," in *Ensign*, May 2004, 16-17).

King Lamoni responds to his sons words with increased anger and homicidal rage. He draws his sword and is prepared to kill his son.

Alma 20:17-18

**17 But Ammon stood forth and said unto him: Behold, thou shalt not slay thy son; nevertheless, it were better that he should fall than thee, for behold, he has repented of his sins; but if thou shouldst fall at this time, in thine anger, thy soul could not be saved.**

**18 And again, it is expedient that thou shouldst forbear; for it thou should slay thy son, he being an innocent man, his blood would cry from the ground to the Lord his God, for vengeance to come upon thee; and perhaps thou wouldst lose thy soul.**

Ammon protects Lamoni from the rage of his father, and then proceeds to teach him the consequences that would occur to him if he were to kill his son. To commit murder is to commit a sin for which there is no "forgiveness in this

world, nor in the world to come" (Doctrine and Covenants 42:18).

King Lamoni's father recognizes that if he were to kill his son, he would "shed innocent blood," he then turns his anger upon Ammon and seeks to kill him! "Ammon withstood the king's blows, and [then he] smote his arm that he could not use it" (Alma 20:20). When Lamoni's father realizes that Ammon has the power to kill him, he pleads that his life be spared. (see Alma 20:21).

Alma 20:22-23

**22 But Ammon raised his sword, and said unto him; Behold, I will smite thee except thou wilt grant unto me that my brethren may be cast out of prison.**  
**23 Now the king, fearing he should lose his life, said: If thou wilt spare me I will grant unto thee whatsoever thou wilt ask, even to half of the kingdom.**

Ammon is not interested in worldly treasure; he has come to bring souls unto God. Ammon repeats his desire to the king regarding the release of his brethren and adds, "be not displeased with him [Lamoni], but grant that he may do according to his own desires in whatsoever thing he thinketh, then will I spare thee; otherwise I will smite thee to the earth" (Alma 20:24).

Alma 20:26-27

**26 And when he [Father of Lamoni] saw that Ammon had no desire to destroy him, and when he also saw the great love he had for his son Lamoni, he was astonished exceedingly, and said: Because this is all that thou hast desired, that I would release thy brethren, and suffer that my son Lamoni should retain his kingdom, behold, I will grant unto you that my son may retain his kingdom from this time and forever; and I will govern him no more--**  
**27 And I will also grant unto thee that thy brethren may be cast out of prison, and thou and thy brethren may come unto me, in my kingdom; for I shall greatly desire to see thee. For the king was greatly astonished at the words which he had spoken and also at the words which had been spoken by his son Lamoni, therefore he was desirous to learn them.**

Clyde J. Williams states,

"It is significant that it was not Ammon's strength or his ability to speak which had the greatest effect upon Lamoni's father. Rather, it was the great love Ammon showed for Lamoni, even being willing to defend him from physical harm, which so deeply affected Lamoni's father...Love has the effect of opening the hearts of individuals. In the Lord's instructions through the prophet Joseph Smith, we are taught that love is among those characteristics which qualify one for the work of teaching the gospel (see D&C 4:5). The more we allow love to permeate our service to the Lord the more successful our efforts will be" ("Instruments in the Hands of God: The Message of Alma 17-27," in *The Book of Mormon: Alma, The Testimony Of The Word, Vol.6*. Edited by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992, 101).

King Lamoni and Ammon continued on their way to Middoni. They were able to secure the release of Ammon's brethren.

Alma 20:29-30

**29 And when Ammon did meet them he was exceedingly sorrowful, for behold they were naked, and their skins were worn exceedingly because of being bound with strong cords. And they also had suffered hunger, thirst, and all kinds of afflictions; nevertheless they were patient in all their sufferings.**

**30 And, as it happened, it was their lot to have fallen into the hands of a more hardened and more stiff-necked people; therefore they would not hearken unto their words, and they had cast them out, and had smitten them, and had driven them from house to house, and from place to place, even until they had arrived in the land of Middoni; and there they were taken and cast into prison, and bound with strong cords, and kept in prison for many days, and were delivered by Lamoni and Ammon.**

Byran Richards states,

"The word of the Lord came to this band of missionaries before they started and told them that they would suffer many hardships. Their instructions were to be patient in their afflictions, that ye may show forth good examples

unto them in me (Alma 17:11). Aaron, Muloki, and Ammah are following that counsel to the very letter.

"The main reason patience is such a virtue is that so few people have it. Few of us look forward to the opportunity to develop this painfully obtained quality. The principle being taught is that trials are an opportunity to be a good example, to demonstrate inner strength, and to learn how to endure to the end. Paul said, 'we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost...' (Rom 5:3-5). Paul could authoritatively speak on tribulations and suffering. He had been treated just as harshly as had Aaron, Muloki, and Ammah (see 2 Cor 11:23-27). He stressed how important it was that the ministers of the gospel should be a good example in their afflictions, Giving no offense in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses (2 Cor 5:3-4). ([www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-20](http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-20)).

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet state,

**"A more hardened and...stiffnecked people.** That is, they had fallen into the hands of the Amalekites and the Amulonites (see Alma 21:1-4). We know that Amulon was one of the wicked priests of Noah (Mosiah 23:32). The present text is silent as to the identity of Amaleki." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.3*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991, [3<sup>rd</sup> Printing, 1993], 149-150).

## **VI. Alma 21**

Superscription prior to Chapter 21 states,

"An account of the preaching of Aaron and Muloki, and their brethren, to the Lamanites. *Comprising chapters 21 to 26 inclusive.*" (*The Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981, 261).

Thomas R. Valletta states,

"The superscription to Alma 21 was part of the ancient record translated by the Prophet Joseph Smith and dictated

by him to his scribe. (see also, for example, 2 Nephi, Mosiah 9, and Alma 36).

"The italicized words 'Comprising chapters 21 through 26' were not part of the ancient record but were added later to printed editions of the Book of Mormon." (*The Book of Mormon Study Guide: Start To Finish*. Thomas R. Valletta, General Editor. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2015, 433-434).

When Ammon and his brethren had initially separated to teach the Lamanites, Aaron had gone to a land which the Lamanites called Jerusalem. It was so named after the land of their fathers. Within the land was a city also named Jerusalem. While the Lamanites were hardened regarding spiritual matters, the Amalekites and the Amulonites were even more resistant. Their influence upon the Lamanites had resulted in their increased wickedness and abominations. (see Alma 21:1-3.)

Daniel H. Ludlow states,

"The Amalekites are mentioned for the first time in Alma 21:2; the exact source of their name is never made clear in the Book of Mormon. The Amulonites mentioned here are the descendants and the followers of Amulon, the wicked priest of King Noah (Mosiah 23:31-35); Mosiah 24:3-4.) Both of these groups believe in the 'order of the Nehors' (Alma 21:4; Read also Alma 1:2-6; 15-16), and they were so hardened in wickedness that only one Amalekite and n Amulonites were converted by the four sons of Mosiah and their companions (Alma 23:14)." (*A Companion To Your Study Of The Book Of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, 208).

Joseph Smith states,

"Behold the words of the Savior: 'If the light which is in you become darkness, behold how great is that darkness. Look at the descanters.'" (*Teaching of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, [1977], 124).

Alma 21:5-6

**5 Therefore, as Aaron entered into one of their synagogues to preach unto the people, and as he was**

speaking unto them, behold there arose an Amalekite and began to contend with him, saying: What is tht thou hast testified? Hast thou seen an angel? What do not angels appear unto us? Behold are not this people as good as thy people?

6 Thou also sayest, except we repent we shall perish. How knowest thou the thought and intent of our hearts? How knowest thou that we have cause to repent? How knowest thou that we are not a righteous people? Behold, we have built sanctuaries, and we do assemble ourselves to worship God. We do believe that God will save all men.

Susan Easton Black states,

"The order of Nehors [see Alma 21:4] believed that meeting together constituted a worship of God (see Alma 21:6). They held that God would save all men (see Alma 21:6) and denied the coming of Jesus Christ, for they did not believe that future events could be known (see Alma 21:7-8). (*400 Questions and Answers about the Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Covenant Communications Inc., 2011, 156).

The argument of the Amalekite man highlights the "order of the Nehors." They are as good as the Nephites for they believe that God will save all men. You can't know the thoughts and intents of a person's heart thereby denying there is a God who knows all our thought and feelings and can make those known to his servants. Just by the fact that they have built a sanctuary and gathered to worship God is sufficient evidence of their belief in God. They do not recognize the need for repentance or a redeemer, as they believed all would receive eternal life.

Alma 21:7-8

7 Now Aaron said unto him: Believest thou that the Son of God shall come to redeem mankind from their sins?

8 And the man said unto him: We not believe that thou knowest any such thing. We do not believe in these foolish traditions. We do not believe that thou knowest of things to come, neither do we believe that thy fathers and also that our fathers did know concerning the things which they spake, of that which is to come.

The position of the descanter is that if he does not know regarding things to come, no one else does either. If no one can know of things to come, then all they have is the immediate present. Without sin and accountability, they believe they are free to live their life as they please, without consequences for their actions.

Alma 21:9-10

**9 Now Aaron began to open the scriptures unto them concerning the coming of Christ, and also concerning the resurrection of the dead, and that there could be no redemption for mankind save it were through the death and sufferings of Christ, and the atonement of his blood.**

**10 And it came to pass as he began to expound these things unto them they were angry with him, and began to mock him; and they would not hear the words which he spake.**

Bryan Richards states,

"Satan would much rather have people believe in a religion that teaches that all are saved than they have no religion at all. Those without religion often turn to God at some point looking for answers to the meaning of life. [In contrast to those to whom]...having a religion is like having a car, a family, or a dog--it doesn't matter what kind it is as long as you have one...A perfunctory, superficial religion, on the other hand fosters spiritual complacency and keeps the individual from searching for more. Such is the religion of the Amalekites."

[www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-21](http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-21)).

Aaron departed from the city of Jerusalem, and went to a "village which was called Ani-Anti, and there he found Muloki preaching the word unto them, and also Ammah and his brethren. And they contended with many about the word" (Alma 21:11).

Alma 21:12

**12 And it came to pass that they saw that the people would harden their hearts, therefore they departed and came over into the land of Middoni. And they did preach the word unto many, and few believed on the words which they taught.**

Joseph Smith reminded the missionaries,

"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...If they receive not your testimony in one place, flee to another,...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." (*History of the Church, Vol.1.* Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Second Edition Revised, 1969], 468).

It is disappointing for missionaries when the people reject their message regarding Jesus Christ and the restoration of his Church. Each missionary must learn to be patient and to persevere in their efforts to find those who would be receptive to the message they bring. Some are called to plant the seeds, while others are call to reap the harvest. If no seeds were planted, there would be no souls to harvest. In the eyes of the Lord, both the one who plants and the one who reaps, are equally blessed for their obedience.

It is at this time while they are in the land of Middoni that the three missionaries are cast into prison. After suffering for a period of time, they are then freed by the intervention of King Lamoni and Ammon (see Alma 20:28.) Upon their release, they continued their missionary efforts.

Alma 21:16-17

**16 And they went forth whithersoever they were led by the Spirit of the Lord, preaching the word of God in every synagogue of the Amalekites, or in every assembly of the Lamanites where they could be admitted.**

**17 And it came to pass that the Lord began to bless them, insomuch that they brought many to the knowledge of the truth; yea, they did convince many of their sins, and of the traditions of their fathers, which were not correct.**

To be guided by the spirit is a very special experience, one that requires an obedient heart and listening ear. In order to be led by the spirit, one must be diligent in keeping the commandments. Next, one must seek the spirit through prayer and fasting. Then, when the whispering of the spirit is felt, one acts according to its direction. In this manner, the Lord is able to direct his servants to specific individuals who are in need of his guidance and direction. He is also able to identify those who will be most receptive to the message of the gospel.

Harold B. Lee states,

"I must go on many occasions, as did Nephi of old, being led by the spirit, not knowing beforehand the things I should do (1 Ne 4:6). Yes, though the night be dark, 'I do not ask to see the distant scene—one step [is] enough for me.'" (*Conference Report*, April 1970, 125-126).

King Lamoni and Ammon return to the land of Ishmael. The King Lamoni directs the people to build synagogues where they may have the opportunity of worship and be taught the truths of the gospel. He also announced to his people that they were free "from the oppression of the king, his father," for he had been granted the right to "reign over the people who were in the land of Ishmael, and in all the land round about." (Alma 21:21). He also declared that they "might have the liberty of worshiping the Lord their God according to their desires,..." (Alma 21:22).

Camile Fronk states,

"Never before had such a change come upon his people, and all have been initiated by a visit from a Nephite. Lamoni as king could have been jealous of Ammon and his ability to garner such obedience and respect among the Lamanite people. But there is no sign of such a feeling, only love and compassion for Ammon...Lamoni forbids Ammon to serve him and asked him to preach to his people instead. (Alma 21:19, 23.) It is rare to see one of such authority and position as Lamoni be as accepting and reachable before one so traditionally inferior." ("Show Forth Good Examples in Me," in *Studies in Scripture, 1 Nephi to Alma 29, Vol.7*. Edited by Kent P. Jackson. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1987, [Second Printing, 1988], 327-328).

Alma 21:23

**23 And Ammon did preach unto the people of king Lamoni; and it came to pass that he did teach them all things concerning things pertaining to righteousness. And he did exhort them daily, with all diligence; and they gave heed unto his word, and they were zealous for keeping the commandments of God.**

Ammon will continue to remain in the land of Ishmael and teach and strengthen the people of Lamoni in the Lord.

## **VII. Alma 22**

Aaron and his brethren leave the land of Middoni and are "led by the Spirit to the land of Nephi, even to the house of the king...the father of Lamoni" (Alma 22:1). They express appreciation to him for his part in their release from the prison in Middoni, and offer to be his servants. (see Alma 22:2-3). The king declines their offer to be his servants, but "insists ye shall administer unto me; for I have been somewhat troubled in mind because of the generosity and the greatness of the words of thy brother Ammon;..." (Alma 22:3)

Initially the king requests Ammon come to see him, but when he learns that Ammon has been called by "the Spirit of the Lord...to teach the people of Lamoni" (Alma 22:4), he then directs his questions to Aaron.

Alma 22:5-6

**5 Now the king said unto them: What is this that ye have said concerning the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, this is the thing which doth trouble me.**

**6 And also, what is this that Ammon said--If ye will repent ye shall be saved, and if ye will not repent, ye shall be cast off at the last day?**

Aaron does not answer directly the king's questions, but instead proceeds to determine his belief in God. Once he confirms that the king does believe in the Great Spirit or God, and that "he created all things both in heaven and in earth," (Alma 22:10), he teaches him the three principles of eternity: The Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"The three pillars of eternity, the three events, preeminent and transcendent above all others, are the creation, the fall and the atonement. These three are the foundations upon which all things rest. Without any one of them all things would lose their purpose and meaning, and the plan and the designs of Deity would come to naught."  
 ("The Three Pillars of Eternity," in *Brigham Young University 1981 Speeches*. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 17 February 1981).

**"Chart 1: Three Pillars of Eternity. [Alma 22]**

Creation	Fall	Atonement of Jesus Christ
<p><b>Verses 10-11. God created the heavens and the earth.</b></p> <p><b>Verse 12. God created man in His own image.</b></p>	<p><b>Verses 12-13. Because of transgression, man is fallen and is in a carnal state.</b></p> <p><b>Verse 14. Fallen man cannot "merit anything of himself."</b></p>	<p><b>Verse 13. The plan of redemption was prepared during the premortal existence for all who would believe on His name.</b></p> <p><b>Verse 14. "The sufferings and death of Christ atone for [our] sins, through faith and repentance."</b></p> <p><b>Verse 14. Christ's Atonement breaks the bands of death (all will be resurrected).</b></p>

Reference: *The Book of Mormon Study Guide: Start to Finish*. Thomas R. Valletta, General Editor. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2015, 438).

Alma 22:12-14

**12 And it came to pass that when Aaron saw that the king would believe his words, he began from the creation of Adam, reading the scriptures unto the**

king--how God created man after his own image, and that God gave him commandments, and that because of transgression, man had fallen.

13 And Aaron did expound unto him the scriptures from the creation of Adam, laying the fall of man before him, and their carnal state and also the plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, through Christ, for all whosoever would believe on his name.

14 And since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself; but the sufferings and death of Christ atone for their sins, through faith and repentance, and so forth; and that he breaketh the bands of death, that the grave shall have no victory, and that the sting of death should be swallowed up in the hopes of glory; and Aaron did expound all these things unto the king.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet state,

"These three doctrine [the Creation, the Fall and the Atonement], which are inseparably associated with one another, constitute the foundation upon which all other gospel principles must rest. Indeed, any principle that cannot comfortably rest on the foundation of these doctrines (or be tied to it) has no place in the teachings in God's kingdom." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.3*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991, [3<sup>rd</sup> Printing, 1993], 135).

The witness of the Holy Ghost has been given to King Lamoni's father regarding the truthfulness of Aaron message.

Alma 22:15

15 And it came to pass that after Aaron had expounded these things unto him, the king said: What shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken? Yea, what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be cast off at the last day? Behold, said he, I will give up all that I possess, yea, I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy.

Neal A. Maxwell states,

"...The submission of one's will is placing on God's altar the only uniquely personal thing one has to place there. The many other things we 'give' are actually the things He has already given or loaned to us. However, when we finally submit ourselves by letting our individual wills be swallowed up in God's will, we will really be giving something to Him! It is the only possession which is truly ours to give. Consecration thus constitutes the only unconditional surrender which is also total victory." (*If Thou Endure It Well*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996, 54).

We too must ask ourselves, "Am I willing to give up all my sins that I may have the greater blessings of the gospel in my life, each day? How important is it to me to have the Spirit of the Lord to guide and direct me? Has the world become so much of my life that the things of the spirit have little meaning or value to me? It is not too late. Change, while it will require effort, can occur with the help of the Savior.

Aaron begins to teach King Lamoni's father the first principles of the Gospel, Faith, and Repentance.

Alma 22:16

**16 But Aaron said unto him: If thou desirest this thing, if thou wilt bow down before God, yea, if thou wilt repent of all thy sins, and will bow down before God, and call on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive, then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.**

We begin with a humble and sincere prayer, seeking forgiveness from our sins. We believe and trust that God will hear and give us an answer to our prayer. If we can exercise, as it were a particle of faith, we shall receive the direction we desire.

Alma 22:18

**18 O God, Aaron hath told me that there is a God; and if there is a God, and if thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee, and that I may be raised from the dead, and be saved at the last day. And now when the**

**king had said these words, he was struck as if he were dead.**

Ezra Taft Benson states,

"Each of us must surrender our sins if we are to really know Christ. We do not know Him until we become like Him. There are some, like this king, who must pray until they, too, have a 'wicked spirit rooted' from them so they can find the same joy." (*Come Unto Christ*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983, 51).

The king's sincere petition to God, combined with his willingness to repent of his sins, resulted in his being placed into a spiritual trance that he may be more perfectly instructed from on high.

When the servants saw that he had fallen to the ground as if he were dead, they ran to tell their queen. She upon, seeing her husband dead and the Nephites standing around him, as if they had been the cause of his death, ordered the servants to kill them. When they questioned her direction due to the power of these men, the queen then ordered them to go and call the people that they may kill them. (see Alma 22:19-21.)

Alma 22:22-23

**22 Now when Aaron saw the determination of the queen, he, also knowing the hardness of the hearts of the people, feared lest that a multitude should assemble themselves together, and there should be a great contention and a disturbance among them; therefore he put forth his hand and raised the king from the earth, and said unto him: Stand. And he stood upon his feet, receiving his strength.**

**23 Now this was done in the presence of the queen and many of the servants. And when they saw it they greatly marveled, and began to fear. And the king stood forth, and began to minister unto them, insomuch that his whole household were converted unto the Lord.**

A multitude had gathered in response to the queen's request and, upon seeing Aaron and his brethren, were antagonistic toward them. The king spoke to the multitude and they were calmed regarding their feelings toward the Nephite brethren. (see Alma 22:24-25.)

Alma 22:26

**26 And it came to pass that when the king saw that the people were pacified, he caused that Aaron and his brethren should stand forth in the midst of the multitude, and that they should preach the word unto them.**

It is not enough that the King and his household had accepted the word of God from Aaron and his brethren, he desires that all under his reign have the opportunity to receive these wonderful blessings in their lives.

In Alma 22:27-35, Mormon places in his abridged narrative information regarding the geography of the Book of Mormon lands.

Bryan Richards states,

"Few Book of Mormon subjects have been more debated and more confusing than the extrapolation of geographic sites from the words of Mormon. Numerous books and papers have been written by great scholars--all coming to different conclusions...If Mormon wanted us to know the exact locations of cities, etc., he would have been more descriptive." ([www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-22](http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-22)).

Harold B. Lee states,

"Don't be concerned over Book of Mormon geography. Some say the Hill Cumorah was in southern Mexico (and someone pushed it down still farther) and not in western New York. Well, if the Lord wanted us to know where it was or where Zarahemla was, He'd have given us latitude and longitude, don't you think? And why bother our heads trying to discover with archaeological certainty the geographical locations of the cities of the Book of Mormon like Zarahemla?"

"The witness of the Book of Mormon is not found in the ruins of Central and South America. They may be outward evidences of a people long since disappeared. The real witness is that which is found in the Book of Mormon itself." (*The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*. Edited by Clyde J. Williams. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996, 155-156).

Gordon B. Hinckley adds,

"Unbelievers may doubt the First Vision and say there were not witnesses to prove it. Critics may scorn every divine manifestation incident to the coming forth of this work as being such an intangible nature as to be unprovable to the pragmatic mind, as if the things of God could be understood other than by the Spirit of God. They may discount our theology. But they cannot in honesty dismiss the Book of Mormon. It is here. They can feel it. They can read it. They can weigh its substance and its content. They can witness its influence..." (*Be Thou an Example*. Deseret Book Co., 1981, 103-104).

The debate regarding the geography of the Book of Mormon will continue, until the Lord reveals through his prophet, the exact locations of the various sites. Until then, it is in our best interests to focus our attention on the plain truths of the Book of Mormon and its teachings regarding our coming to Christ.

### **VIII. Conclusions**

We applaud the diligence the four sons of Mosiah II, and those with them, exercised in serving their mission to the Lamanites. They were guided, directed, and protected by the Lord so that the work among the Lamanites could go forth.

Alma, Chapter 17, begins with the reunion between Alma, the younger, and the four sons of Mosiah II. As youth they had been rebellious, but now repentant, separately they had accomplished a great work for the Lord. As the four sons of Mosiah II, and those with them, began their mission to the Lamanites, they had faced both scorn and discouragement. They were "about to turn back," however, the Lord gave them strength to continue accompanied by his word, "I will give you success" (Alma 26:27). We learn first of Ammon's mission to the land of Ishmael and King Lamoni. Ammon served as the king's servant. His responsibility, with other servants, was to protect the king's flocks from the renegade Lamanites who attempted to scatter and then steal the flocks at the waters of Sebus. (see Alma 18:7.) Ammon's defense of the flocks and his disarming the intruders, brought him favor with the king's servants and later with the king himself.

In Alma, Chapter 18 the king, upon hearing the report of his servants, is impressed with Ammon's actions and concluded he was the Great Spirit. Through the power of discernment, Ammon knew the king's thoughts and was able to teach him regarding the truths of the gospel. The king is overcome by the witness of the Spirit and goes into a trance.

In Alma, Chapter 19 the queen sees Ammon as "a prophet of a holy God" (Alma 19:4). She trusts Ammon when he tells her that the king is not dead. As the king arises, as Ammon said he would, he speaks words that are full of the Spirit. Overcome by the powerful manifestation of the Spirit, the king, the queen, and Ammon fell to the earth as if they were dead. Abish, a previously converted follower, knows they are not dead but are overcome by the Spirit. She seeks to bring others to the truth, so she proceeds to spread the word to others in the community. They come to the king's palace. Upon seeing the presence of a Nephite, they are divided as to what has occurred. One man, angry at Ammon who had previously killed his brother at the waters of Sebus, attempted to kill him, and he dies instead. Abish, disappointed at the actions of the people, goes and takes the hand of the queen and lifts her up. The king and Ammon also arise and through their testimony, the household of the king are converted to the gospel.

Alma, Chapter 20, begins with King Lamoni inviting Ammon to go with him to visit his father. Ammon learns, through the Spirit, that his brethren are in prison and he is to go to Middoni and free them. Lamoni agreed to the change in plans and goes with Ammon to assist him in the release of his brethren. On the way, they meet Lamoni's father. Lamoni tells him of the spiritual events that have occurred and the King becomes angry. He also directs his son to kill the Nephite. Ammon refuses and his father takes his sword and is ready to kill his son. Ammon intervenes and stops the king from killing his son, who then turns his anger on Ammon. Ammon disables him and threatens his life unless he spares his brethren from prison. The king in fear of his life offers to do as Ammon requests, including giving him "even half of his kingdom" (Alma 20:22). Ammon is not interested in worldly wealth and declines but requests that his son, King Lamoni, be given total freedom over his own kingdom. The king upon seeing that Ammon is only concerned about his brethren and his son, accepts Ammon's request. They travel to Middoni and arrangements are made for the

freedom of his brethren from prison. Ammon is greatly touched when he sees the suffering which his brethren have experienced. (see Alma 20:29.)

Alma 21 begins with the missionary experiences of Aaron and his brethren prior to their imprisonment. Aaron teaches in a synagogue in a city named Jerusalem. Those in attendance are mainly of the order of Nehor. Aaron attempts to teach them the gospel truths, however, a debate occurs and despite his efforts there is no interest in his message. He leaves and goes to other places with little interest from the citizens. He meets with his brethren, and they go throughout the land and teach in synagogues. To every place they go, they are admitted and teach the Amalakites and Lamanites. Only among the Lamanites do they experience success. (see Alma 21:17.) When they arrive in Middoni they are placed in prison.

Alma, Chapter 22 tells of Aaron and his brethren teaching King Lamoni's father. He is receptive to the message. Upon feeling the spirit he is willing to "give up all that I possess, yea, I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy" (Alma 22:15). Following the teachings of Aaron, he offers a prayer to know the truths Aaron has taught and states, "I will give away all my sins to know thee" (Alma 22:18). He was then taken in a spiritual trance. Upon the word of the servants, the queen believes that her husband is dead, and orders the servants to kill Aaron and his brethren. They decline having observed his power, and the queen ordered them to call others to come and kill them. Aaron takes the king by the hand and raises him up. While we do not know the words he spoke, they were convincing to the members of his household of the truthfulness and "his entire household were converted to the Lord" (Alma 22:23). Those who had gathered from the outside were antagonistic towards Aaron and his brethren when they saw them, but the king spoke to them and they were calmed. Upon the king's request, Aaron and his brethren began to teach those who were gathered.

In the next lesson [BM#26], we will continue to address the missionary efforts of the four sons of Mosiah, and their brethren who came with them, among the Lamanites. It is astonishing to note the commitment the Lamanite converts make to the gospel as they embrace its teachings.