

## **BM#33 "A Sure Foundation" - Helaman 1-5**

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### **I. Introduction**

Kathryn Jenkins Gordon states,

"Mormon abridged the book of Helaman from what was probably a huge collection of historical records; they were the large plates that detailed the wars and contentions of the Nephites and the prophecies of those who lived just prior to the birth of the Savior. The book of Helaman is extremely instructive in the way in which it demonstrates the stark contrast between righteousness and wickedness...[We learn] that evil works can destroy entire societies but that the devotion of righteous people can cause the demise of evil." (Scripture Study Made Easy: The Book of Mormon. American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, Inc., 2015, 429).

As we proceed, it is important to understand that the Helaman who is referenced is the grandson of Alma, the younger, and the son of Helaman, who was the prophet and the military leader of the two thousand stripling warriors. Upon his death, Helaman gave the records to his brother, Shiblon. (see Alma 63:1.) Upon Shiblon's death, he gave the records to his nephew, or the son of his brother, Helaman, possibly since his brother, Coriantumr had gone north to deliver supplies and not returned. (see Alma 63:10-11.) For clarity, Helaman, son of Helaman, will be referred to as Helaman II.

Outline of Helaman 1-5:

"A. Chapter 1: Three sons of Pahoran I contend for the judgeship. Pahoran II named chief judge. He is murdered by Kishkumen. Pacumeni appointed by chief judge. Lamanites led by Nephite dissenter, Coriantumr, capture Zahahemla and slay Pacumeni, but the

Nephite Commander, Moronihah, with skillful strategy captures the Lamanite armies and retakes Nephite capital city.

"B. Chapter 2: Helaman II appointed chief judge. Gadianton and Kishkumen plot death of Helaman, but Kishkumen is detected and slain as he attempts to murder the chief judge. Gadianton band escapes Helaman's men.

"C. Chapter 3: Dissension in Nephite Church. Many Nephites migrate an exceedingly great distance unto the land northward. These migrants live in tents and in cement house. They encourage growth of trees for timber. Many records are kept. Gadianton band gives trouble. Church prospers under Helaman II's judgeship. Helaman II dies and is succeeded by his son, Nephi.

"D. Chapter 4: Nephite dissenters stir up Lamanites, who capture Zarahemla and adjacent lands. Moronihah, the Nephite commander, and Nephi and Lehi [his brother], call upon the Nephites to repent of their sins. Nephites, weak because of transgressions are able to recover but one-half of their property and lands.

"E. Chapter 5: Nephite government and law perverted. Nephi yields judgment seat to Cezoram so as to preach to his people. Lehi also preaches. They convert eight thousand Lamanites. Cast into prison by Lamanite army. Great spiritual manifestations. Converted Lamanites restore Nephite lands." (Sidney B. Sperry. *Book of Mormon Compendium*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968, 372-373).

## **II. Helaman 1**

52 B.C. begins with the death of Pahoran who had served as the chief judge. Three of his sons, Pahoran II, Paanchi, and Pacumeni, "each contend for the judgment seat; therefore, they did cause three divisions among the people" (Helaman 1:4).

Helaman 1:5-6

**5 Nevertheless, it came to pass that Pahoran [II] was appointed by the voice of the people to be chief judge and a governor over the people of Nephi.**

**6 And it came to pass that Pacumeni, when he saw that he could not obtain the judgment-seat, he did unite with the voice of the people.**

We learn that Pacumeni, unable to win on his own, supports his brother, Pahoran II. The second brother, Paanchi, refused to support his brother and was ready to "flatter away the people [who supported him and] to rise up in rebellion against [his] brothers" (Helaman 1:7). For his actions, he was to be put to death. (see Helaman 1:8.)

Byran Richards states,

"Paanchi's punishment seems harsh. He was condemned to death for his *intent* to commit treason in stirring up rebellion among the Nephites. However, in light of recent events among the Nephites, such a crime threatened the very fiber of their society. The decades of warfare had been because of those who had rebelled from the Nephites: the Zoramites, Amalickiah, Morianton, the king-men, etc. Paanchi's rebellion could easily have led to a tragedy with the Lamanites and more costly warfare. His sentence was necessary to cleanse the inner vessel. Unfortunately, his death was not enough to cleanse Zarahemla from wickedness." ([www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-1](http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-1)).

Helaman 1:9-11

**9 Now when those people who were desirous that he [Paanchi], should be their governor saw that he was condemned unto death; therefore they were angry, and behold they sent forth one Kishkumen, even to the judgment-seat of Pahoran [II], and murdered Pahoran [II] as he sat upon the judgment-seat.**

**10 And he was pursued by the servants of Pahoran [II]; but behold, so speedy was the flight of Kishkumen that no man could overtake him.**

**11 And he went unto those that sent him, and they all entered into a covenant, yea, swearing by their everlasting Maker, that they would tell no man that Kishkumen had murdered Pahoran [II].**

The chief-judge and governor of the land, Pahoran II had been assassinated by a hired killer while he served in office. The hired killer, Kishkumen, and those who had hired him now entered into covenant, by oath, to conceal his wickedness.

Bryan Richards states,

"Many are the characteristics of Gadiantonism, or secret combinations, but one of the most typical is the covenant not to disclose wrong-doing. If any group covenants to conceal the wickedness of another member, the group qualifies as a secret combination. They have combined to be secret. Such covenants of secrecy are part of Satan's imitation act. He thereby imitates the covenants of sacredness which are part of the Lord's plan."  
([www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-1](http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-1)).

Helaman 1:13

**13 And now behold, Pacumeni was appointed, according to the voice of the people, to be a chief judge and a governor over the people, to reign in the stead of his brother, Pahoran [II]; and it was according to his right. And all this was done in the fortieth year of the reign of the judges; and it had an end.**

Pacumeni, is now the chief-judge and governor over the Nephites, replacing his brother, Pahoran II, who had been assassinated in office.

The forty and first year, begins with the Lamanites gathering to come to battle with the Nephites. They were led by Coriantumr, "a descendant of Zarhahemla; and he was a dissenter from among the Nephites;" (Helaman 1:15). Once again, war with the Lamanites was stirred up by a dissenter of the Nephites. And the Nephites had been weakened militarily by dissention from within which made them vulnerable to attack by the Lamanites. (see Helaman 1:18.) The "king of the Lamanites...was Tubaloth, who was the son of Ammoran, [sent Coriantumr] forth [that] he should gain power over the Nephites--" (Helaman 1:16).

Coriantumr came with such strength and great speed that there "was no time for the Nephites to gather together their armies" (Helaman 1:19). Coriantumr marched to the

center of the land and took the city of Zarahemla and killed Pacumeni.

Helaman 1:24

**24 And [Coriantumr] supposing that their greatest strength was in the center of the land, therefore he did march forth, giving them no time to assemble themselves together save it were in small bodies; and in this manner they did fall upon them and cut them down to the earth.**

At first glance, it appears that finally the Lamanites were going to be successful in defeating the Nephites and putting them into bondage.

Helaman 1:25-26

**25 But behold, this march of Coriantumr through the center of the land gave Moronihah great advantage over them, notwithstanding the greatness of the number of Nephites who were slain.**

**26 For behold, Moronihah had supposed that the Lamanites durst not come into the center of the land, but that they would attack the cities round about in the borders as they had hitherto done; therefore Moronihah had caused that their strong armies should maintain those parts round about by the borders.**

Moronihah sent Lehi to head off the Lamanite army, before they got to the land of Bountiful. Upon meeting Lehi in battle, the Lamanites retreated back to the land of Zarahemla, only to find Moronihah preventing their retreat. (see Helman 1:28-29.)

Helaman 1:30-33

**30 And it came to pass that Moronihah did head them in their retreat, and did give unto them battle, insomuch that it became an exceedingly bloody battle; yea, many were slain, and among the number who were slain Coriantumr was also found.**

**31 And now, behold the Lamanites could not retreat either way, neither on the north, nor on the south, nor on the east, nor on the west, for they were surrounded on every hand by the Nephites.**

32 And thus had Coriantumr plunged the Lamanites into the midst of the Nephites, insomuch that they were in the power of the Nephites, and he himself was slain, and the Lamanites did yield themselves into the hands of the Nephites.

33 And it came to pass that Moronihah took possession of the city of Zarahemla again, and caused that the Lamanites who had been taken prisoners should depart out of the land in peace.

Using military strategy, Moronihah was able to turn potential defeat into victory. He arranged for Lehi and his forces to head off Coriantumr and the Lamanite army and then he prevented their retreat from the rear.

Upon the defeat of the Lamanite forces, Moronihah, took possession of the city of Zarahemla. Like his father, Moroni, the Lamanite prisoners who would enter into an oath of non-aggression were allowed to return to their land. Those who refused, we may assume, were put to death.

Susan Easton Black states,

"Those who sought power in high places resorted to murder to gain that power. In so doing, they weakened the internal structure of the Nephite government, giving the Lamanites a decided advantage over the Nephites (see Hel. 1:18-20). The violent acts of murder by those in secret combinations were hard to prevent because the Nephites themselves were in a degraded state..

"The Gadianton band never succeeded in their plans to overthrow the government when the Nephites were experiencing periods of spiritual growth in their society." (*400 Questions and Answers about the Book of Mormon*. American Fork: Covenant Communications, Inc., 2011, 168),

Jeffrey R. Holland assured the members in Brazil,

"their faith and devotion to the gospel will make a nationwide difference in difficult times. 'The prayers of the righteous few can have a wonderfully disproportionate impact on the rest of a population who may be struggling.'" ("Brazil's Rich History a prelude to future growth," in *LDS Church News*, Week of May 29, 2016, 5).

It may be in the future that the righteousness of the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, will save the United States from being overcome by her enemies.

### **III. Helaman 2**

As we begin the forty-second year, Helaman [II], the son of Helaman, is appointed by the voice of the people to fill the judgement-seat.

Helaman 2:3

**3 But behold, Kishkumen, who had murdered Pahoran [II], did lay [in] wait to destroy Helaman also; and he was upheld by his band, who had entered into a covenant that no one should know his wickedness.**

George Reynolds states,

Kishkumen is "an assassin and leading man among the Gadianton robbers at the time of the organization of the marauding bands." (**Kishkumen**. *A Dictionary of the Book of Moromn*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1892, [Fourth Edition, 1954], 146).

Like Cain who had risen up and killed his brother, Able, (Genesis 4:8), we learn from modern revelation that Cain acted under the influence of Satan for the purpose that he might "murder and get gain" (PGP, Moses 5:31).

Helaman 1:4-5

**4 For there was one Gadianton, who was exceedingly expert in many words, and also in his craft, to carry on the secret work of murder and robbery; therefore he became the leader of the band of Kishkumen.**

**5 Therefore he did flatter them, and also Kishkumen, that if they would place him in the judgment--seat he would grant unto those who belonged to his band that they should be placed in power and authority among the people; therefore Kishkumen sought to destroy Helaman [II].**

Under the surface of the Nephite nation is a secret combination or a group of individuals whose goal is to overthrow the government so they may then put one of their

own in power. This group, under the direction of Gadianton, of whom Kishkumen is a member, sought murder that that they might obtain power and authority over the people. The ultimate leader of their group is Satan, whose desire is the destruction and bondage of all of God's children. The ultimate leader of the righteous is Jesus Christ, who under the direction of His Father, seeks to bless and protect all of God's children from evil, as they are obedient to His commandments. As we have been taught, when the people are righteous they prosper and are protected from destruction. When they become wicked and ignore the covenants they have made, they are vulnerable for destruction.

As Kishkumen comes to the judgment-seat for the purpose of killing Helaman II, a servant of Helaman having gained knowledge of the plot, and "knowing that it was the object of all those who belonged to his band to murder, and to rob, and to gain power, (and this was their secret plan, and their combination)..." (Helaman 2:8), "...did stab Kishkumen even to the heart, that he fell dead without a groan" (Helaman 2:9).

After the servant reported to Helaman II, what he had done, the order was given to send "forth [men] to take the band of robbers and secret murderers, that they might be executed according to the law", [but they] had fled (Helaman 2:10-11).

Mormon adds this startling statement,

Helaman 2:13

**13 And behold, in the end of this book [of Nephi] ye shall see that this Gadianton did prove the overthrow, yea, almost the entire destruction of the people of Nephi.**

We may ask, how is it possible that a secret band of robbers and murders, could become so powerful that they could threaten the destruction of an entire nation? The greatest threat to a nation is often not from forces from without. A threat to a nation from outside often results in the majority of its citizens rallying to the support its troops and to focus upon the destruction of the nation's enemy. The greatest threat to a nation is often from within.

Kenneth Farland states,

"My college majors were history, government, and economics. I taught in all these fields and I've been a very ardent student of them ever since. Now it's appalling that since the dawn of history no less than 22 civilizations have risen and fallen. And when you go to look for the reasons and classify the reasons, they are monotonous in their similarities...Will you think about this? These are the reasons why all these previous civilizations failed:

- "1. They lost their religious convictions and flouted basic morality.
- "2. They became obsessed with sex.
- "3. They debased their money to its intrinsic value and let inflation run rampant.
- "4. Honest work ceased to be a virtue.
- "5. Respect for law disintegrated and violence became an accepted method of achieving individual and group desires...
- "6. They reached the point where the citizens were no longer willing to be soldiers and fight for the defense of their nation and their heritage. They resorted to paid mercenaries or tried to buy off their attacker."  
("America's Opportunity," quoted by Charles C. Pugh III in *Celebrating July 4<sup>th</sup>: Remembering Divine Judgment* at [www.warrenaplogeticscenter.org/resources/articles/miscellaneous/](http://www.warrenaplogeticscenter.org/resources/articles/miscellaneous/)).

How similar these six characteristics are to our own day. It gives one cause to ponder and to wonder if it could also happen to our nation?

Ezra Taft Benson states,

"Our nation will continue to degenerate unless we read and heed the words of the God of this land, Jesus Christ, and quit building up and upholding the secret combinations which the Book of Mormon tells us proved the downfall of both previous American civilizations [Nephites and Jaredites-Moroni 9:22-24]." (*A Witness and a Warning*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1988, 6).

#### IV. Helaman 3

From the forty and third year to the forty and fifth year, there was only minimal contention among the people of Nephi. However, the peace did not last.

Helaman 3:3-5

**3 And it came to pass in the forty and sixth, yea, there was much contention and many dissensions; in the which there were an exceedingly great many who departed out of the land of Zarahemla, and went forth unto the land northward to inherit the land.**

**4 And they did travel to an exceedingly great distance, insomuch that they came to large bodies of water and many rivers.**

**5 Yea, and even they did spread forth into all parts of the land, into whatever parts it had not been rendered desolate and without timber, because of the many inhabitants who had before inherited the land.**

**6 And now no part of the land was desolate, save it were for timber; but because of the greatness of the destruction of the people who had before inhabited the land it was called desolate.**

George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl state,

"the Nephites, like the Jews from whom their fathers came, could not remain long in peace. They began to quarrel among themselves and with their neighbors. You will remember that the Jews were constantly at war, or were threatened with invasion by other ambitious nations. This trait of being subject to pride and uneasiness became quite evident in the Forty-sixth year of the Judges...[and they] traveled a very great distance, and eventually came to a land of large bodies of water and of many rivers...

"The land covered by large bodies of water was land called *Desolation*. Before the time of the Nephites it was thickly inhabited by the Jaredites. In the days of the latter people Bountiful formed its southern border. The two lands apparently joined at the Isthmus of Panama. It is generally supposed to have embraced within its borders the region known to moderns as Central America. Its capital was a city of same name, probably built in later years, as it is never

spoken of but by Mormon in the account of the long series of wars in which he took such a prominent part.

"The word *desolation* connotes a place or country wasted or forsaken, destitute of inhabitants; deserted, laid waste; in a ruinous condition. But the inspired historian who wrote this account says that 'no part of the land was desolate, save it were for timber; but because of the greatness of the destruction of the people who had before inhabited the land it was called desolate [Helaman 3:6].'" (*Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 5. Amplified and Arranged by Philip C. Reynolds. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1977, 206-207*).

Helaman 3:7

**7 And there being but little timber upon the face of the land, nevertheless the people who went forth became exceedingly expert in the workings of cement; therefore they did build houses of cement, in the which they did dwell.**

John W. Welch states,

"Recent research shows that cement was in fact extensively used in Mesoamerica beginning largely at this time. One of the most notable uses of cement is in the temple complex at Teotihuacan, north of present-day Mexico City. According to David S. Hyman, the structural use of cement appears suddenly in the archaeological record. Its earliest sample 'is fully developed product.' the cement floor slabs at this site 'were remarkably high in structural quality.' Although exposed to the elements for nearly two thousand years, they still 'exceed many present-day building code requirement.'

"The presence of expert cement technology in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica is a remarkable archaeological fact, inviting much further research. Cement seemed to take on significant roles in Mesoamerican architecture close to the time when the Book of Mormon says this development occurred. It is also a significant factor in locating the Book of Mormon lands of Zarahemla and Desolation, for Zarahemla must be south of areas where cement was used as early as the middle of the first century B.C. Until samples of cement are found outside the southwest areas of North America, one may reasonably assume that Book of Mormon lands were not far

south of the sites where ancient cement is found. "  
(*Reexploring The Book of Mormon*. Edited by John W. Welch. Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah. Deseret Book Co., and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1992, 213).

Helaman 3:12

**12 And it came to pass that there were many of the people of Ammon, who were Lamanites by birth, did also go forth into this land.**

Over time, the migration of the people of Nephi from the land south to the land north involved a great number of people.

Helaman 3:14

**14 But behold, a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, yea, the account of the Lamanites and of the Nephites...cannot be contained in this work.**

As with the words of Jesus which could not be contained "even [in] the world itself" (John 21:25), so it is that not "more than a hundredth part of the Lamanites and the Nephites, could not be contained in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon does, however, contain sufficient information to assist us in learning from their experiences which in many ways parallel our own.

Helaman 3:20-21

**20 Nevertheless Helaman [II] did fill the judgment-seat with justice and equity; yea, he did observe to keep the statutes, and the judgments, and the commandments of God; and he did do that which was right in the sight of God continually; and he did walk after the ways of his father, insomuch that he did prosper in the land.**

**21 And it came to pass that he had two sons. He gave unto the eldest the name of Nephi, and unto the youngest, the name of Lehi. And they began to grow up unto the Lord.**

It is apparent that despite the migration of many of the Nephites to the lands northward, a substantial number of people remained in the land southward, specifically in the

land and city of Zarahemla, that the seat of the government remained in Zarahemla. After the initial assassination attempt on Helaman II's life, he had continued to reign in righteousness before the people. We learn the names of his two sons, Nephi and Lehi.

George Reynolds and Jeanne Sjodahl state,

"In Nephi we have one of the greatest prophets that ever trod the earth or to whom the God of our Salvation revealed His glorious will. He lived during the greater portion of the first century before Christ and disappeared from the knowledge of mankind but a short time before the advent of the Messiah in Bethlehem. He is first referred to in the Book of Mormon (44 B.C.) as the oldest of Helaman's two sons, Lehi being the younger. These two brothers appear to have been inseparable during their life; they are almost always mentioned as associated in the great and oftentimes perilous labors of the ministry undertaken for the Salvation of either Nephites or Lamanites." (*Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 5. Amplified and Arranged by Philip C. Reynolds. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1977, 215*).

Finally by the end of the forty and eighth year, "the wars and contentions began to cease in a small degree...in the forty and ninth year...there was continual peace, all save it were the secret combinations which Gadianton the robber had established..." (Helaman 3:22-23).

M. Russell Ballard states,

"The Book of Mormon teaches that secret combinations engaged in crime present a serious challenge, not just to individuals and families but to entire civilizations. Among today's secret combinations are gangs, drug cartels, and organized crime families. The secret combinations of our day function much like the Gadianton robbers of the Book of Mormon times. They have secret signs and code words. They participate in secret rites and initiation ceremonies. Among their purposes are to 'murder, and plunder, and steal, and commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness, contrary to the laws of their country and also the laws of their God' (Hel. 6:23).

"If we are not careful, today's secret combinations can obtain power and influence just as quickly and just as

completely as they did in the Book of Mormon times. Do you remember the pattern? The secret combinations began among the 'more wicked part' of society, but eventually 'seduced the more part of the righteous' (3 Nephi 1:30), until the whole society was polluted." ("Standing for Truth and Right," in *Ensign*, November 1997, 38).

Helaman 3:24-26

**24 And it came to pass that in this same year there was exceedingly great prosperity in the church, insomuch that there were thousands who did join themselves unto the church and were baptized unto repentance.**

**25 And so great was the prosperity of the church, and so many blessings which were poured out upon the people, that even the high priests and the teachers were themselves astonished beyond measure.**

**26 And it came to pass that the work of the Lord did prosper unto the baptizing and uniting to the church of God, many souls, yea, even tens of thousands.**

Just as the work of Satan and his secret combinations were present among the people, so were the blessings of the gospel. At this time, "many souls, yea, even tens of thousands" (Helaman 3:26), took the opportunity to make the necessary changes in their lives and became members of the Church of God.

Helaman 3:29-30

**29 Yea, we see that whosoever will may lay hold upon the word of God, which is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil, and lead the man [or woman] of Christ in a strait and narrow course across the everlasting gulf of misery which is prepared to engulf the wicked--**

**30 And land their souls, yea, their immortal souls, at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven, to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and with Jacob, and with all our holy fathers, to go no more out.**

The temptations of the devil are all around us in the world in which we live. The blessings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are also available for us to partake. Will we choose the short-term pleasure and happiness that Satan promises

or will we choose the long-term eternal happiness that Our Father in Heaven guarantees if we will be faithful? We must decide whom we will follow.

Beginning in the forty and ninth year, pride began to be manifest by those who professed membership in the church of God. As a result of the pride, "the more humble part of the people...[suffered] great persecutions, and [had] to wade through much afflictions. (see Helaman 3:33-34.)

Helaman 3:35

**35 Nevertheless they [the more humble] did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts to God.**

Some within the kingdom become divided in their loyalty to whom they served. As a result, they began to lose sight of the giver of all blessings. They began to believe that the material wealth they had obtained was solely the result of their own intellect and efforts. Their focus was now outward and temporal.

Others never lose sight of their God nor their willingness, even in the face of persecution and ridicule, to be faithful to their witness of the truth. They continue day after day to become more like their Savior in word and deed. They know and are sure whom they love and desire to become like. As a result, they become sanctified and purified as they have yielded "their hearts to God" (Helaman 3:35).

Helaman 3:37

**37 And it came to pass in the fifty and third year of the reign of the judges, Helaman [II] died, and his eldest son Nephi began to reign in his stead. And it came to pass that he did fill the judgment-seat with justice and equity; yea, he did keep the commandments of God, and did walk in the ways of his father.**

Nephi now joins those in his family who had previously served as the chief-judge and governor of the Nephites,

(Alma, the younger and his grandson, Helaman II" (John W. Welch and J. Gregory Welch. *Charting the Book of Mormon*. Provo, Utah: Foundation of Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham University, 1999, Chart 13). Nephi, the son of Helaman II, and great grandson of Alma, the younger, now served his nation. He had been elected to this office by the majority of the people who had sustained him as their political leader. He served concurrently as the Prophet of the Church of God.

#### **V. Helaman 4**

We began the fifty and fourth year, with "many dissensions in the church, and there was also a contention among the people, insomuch as there was much bloodshed. And the rebellious part were slain and driven out of the land, and they did go unto the king of Lamanites. And they did endeavor to stir up the Lamanites to war against the Nephites" (Helaman 4:1-3). The cycle of prosperity and dissention and war, followed by repentance is a constant theme throughout Book of Mormon history.

Bryan Richards states,

"Mormon's purpose in abridging the plates is not to give us a long description of every war which occurred among the Nephites. Chapter 4 chronicles a war which was about as extensive as the ones described in Alma 43 to Alma 62. In fact, never had the Lamanites had such military success, capturing the land of Zarahemla and also all the land southward...[Mormon] abridges the current war into less than a chapter because he has already taught us the major lessons to be learned [in the previous war chapters]" ([www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-4](http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-4)).

Bryan Richards reminds us,

When the Nephites are at war, it "is only because they have become sufficiently wicked that the Lord was forced to scourge them with the Lamanite armies in fulfillment of the word of the Lord to Nephi, '[the Lamanites] shall have no power over thy seed except they shall rebel against me also. And if it so be that they rebel against me, they shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in the ways of remembrance' (1 Ne.2:23-24)."

([www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-4](http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-4)).

The Lamanites did come to battle against the Nephites. As a result of the Nephites wickedness, the Lamanites, "did commence the work of death; yea, insomuch...they succeeded in obtaining possession of the land of Zarahemla; yea, and also all the lands, even unto the land which was near the land Bountiful" (Helaman 4:5).

Helaman 4:8-10

**8 And thus those dissenters of the Nephites, with the help of a numerous army of the Lamanites, had obtained all the possession of the Nephites which was in the land southward..**

**9 And it came to pass in the sixtieth year..Moroni had did succeed with his armies in obtaining many parts of the land;...**

**10 And it came to pass in the sixty and first year...they succeeded in regaining even the half of all their possessions.**

How tragic this war had been for the Nephites. They lost half of all their possessions of land and "the great slaughter which was among them, would not have happened had it not been for their wickedness and their abominations which was among them; yea, and it was among those also who professed to belong to the church of God" (Helaman 4:11 underline added).

There is a direct correlation between the wars of the Nephites and the righteousness of their people. Only when they are more righteous, did they have peace and prosperity. It is also an important reminder to us if we are to have peace in our nation.

Harold B. Less states,

"Unfortunately, some are among us who claim to be Church members but are somewhat like the scoffers in Lehi's vision--standing aloof and seemingly inclined to hold in derision the faithful who choose to accept Church authorities as God's special witnesses of the gospel and His agents in directing the affairs of the Church.

"There are those in the Church who speak of themselves as liberals who, as one of our former presidents has said, 'read by the lamp of their own conceit.' (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, p.373.) One time I asked one of our Church

educational leaders how he would define a liberal in the Church. He answered in one sentence: 'A liberal in the Church is merely one who does not have a testimony.' (*Stand Ye in Holy Places*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, 352-353).

Richard D. Draper adds,

"For the most part, the Church today finds itself in much the same circumstances as those in the beginning of the book of Helaman. It is wealthy and growing rapidly. Are we in danger? The Book of Mormon suggests that the only real danger to the Church itself is not an outward foe but rather a more powerful and far more devastating enemy within--pride. It grows in the hearts of those who profess to be Saints. It is little wonder that President Benson has warned us against pride. Will we heed the warning or become as the Nephites of old?" (Richard D. Draper. FARMS: Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Vol. 3, No. 2, Fall-1994, p.32).

Helaman 4:12

**12 And it was because of the pride of their hearts, because of their exceeding riches, yea, it was because of their oppression to the poor, food from the hungry, withholding their clothing from the naked, and smiting their humble brethren upon the cheek, making a mock of that which was sacred, denying the spirit of prophecy and of revelation, murdering, plundering, lying, stealing, committing adultery, rising up in great contentions, and deserting away into the land of Nephi, among the Lamanites--**

These words are not describing the actions of the Lamanites, but the members of the church of God! How is it possible that the actions of those within the Church are in direct contradiction to the teachings of the Church. They knew and had made covenants, but their actions do not reflect their core beliefs. I believe, for most of us, this change is gradual and its foundation is our disobedience to the commandments. Gradually, Satan leads us down the path, ever further from the beliefs and principles we previously had embraced, until we are securely numbered among his servants.

Helaman 4:13

**13 And because of this great wickedness, and their boastings in their own strength, they were left in there own strength; therefore they did not prosper, but were afflicted and smitten, and driven before the Lamanites, until they lost possession of almost all their lands.**

The unrighteousness of the citizens again resulted in the loss of their land. Only if they would repent, would the triumph of the Lamanites over them end.

Helaman 4:15-16

**15 And it came to pass that they did repent, and inasmuch as they did repent they did begin to prosper. 16 For when Moronihah saw that they did repent he did venture to lead them forth from place to place, and from city to city, even until they had regained the one-half of their property and the one-half of all their lands.**

Their military leader, Moronihah, was able, upon the repentance of the people, to gain back from the Lamanites one-half of all the property and lands previously lost, but only one--half! There was a price to be paid for their disobedience. All was not restored to them.

In the following verses the Nephites began to remember. They saw: (1) "They had been a stiffnecked people [slow to remember or obey the Lord]"; (2) "They had set at naught [worthless, useless] the commandments of God"; (3) "Trampled under their feet...laws...and saw their laws had become corrupted"; (4) [Became] wicked even like the...Lamanites"; (5) "Began to disbelieve in the spirit of prophecy and in the spirit of revelation"; (6) "The Spirit of the Lord did no more preserve them, [as] it had withdrawn from them because the Lord doth not dwell in unholy temples--"; and (7) "The strength of the Lamanites was as great as their [own] strength" (Helaman 4:21-26).

The Book of Mormon Student manual [1981] states,

"Mormon, the true prophet-historian that he is, herein gives one of the most important keys to understanding the history of the covenant people. When they are faithful and

obedient, even the mightiest empires of the world cannot succeed in overthrowing them...

"But let the people turn from the Lord, let them fall into apostasy and wickedness, and the source of their strength and power withdraws...[Whenever] the Lord did cease to preserve them by his miraculous and matchless power' v.25), and, they became easy prey to those who were their enemies." (*Book of Mormon Student manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979, [Second Edition, Revised, 1981], 356).

Neal A. Maxwell asks "What leads a people to become weak?",

"Alas, gross, individual selfishness is finally acculturated. Then societies can eventually become without order, without mercy, without love, perverted, and past feeling (see Moro.9)). Society thereby reflect a grim, cumulative tally which signals a major cultural decline. This happened anciently when a people actually became 'weak, because of their transgression' (Hel.4:26). Speaking behaviorally, when what was once the lesser voice of the people becomes more dominant, then the judgments of God and the consequences of foolish selfishness follow (see Mosiah 29:26-27).

"Cultural decline is accelerated when single-interest segments become indifferent...This drift is facilitated by the indifference or indulgents as society is led carefully down to hell (see 2 Ne. 28:21)." ("Repent of [Our] Selfishness," in *Ensign*, May 1999, 23-24).

Will we be more wise than the Nephites in the choices we make because we have their records to forewarn us? If not, we will reap similar consequences for our choices.

## **VI. Helaman 5**

Helaman 5:1-2

**1 And it came to pass that in this same year, behold, Nephi delivered up the judgment-seat to a man whose name was Cezoram.**

**2 For as their laws and their governments were established by the voice of the people, and they who chose evil were more numerous than they who chose**

**good, therefore they were ripening for destruction, for the laws had become corrupted.**

Robert J. Matthews states,

"In other words, in a democracy or a republic when the majority of the people desire wickedness and become more numerous than they who choose righteousness, the people can no longer be governed by law or by justice. This principle applies to our own form of constitutional government. We who live in the United States tend to feel that we would always be protected by the Constitution. However, some experienced political scientists and jurists have said that if the day ever comes that the majority favor that which is morally wrong, we as a people would not be safe—even with the Constitution.

"John Adams often expressed his conviction that a nation's liberty is ultimately dependent upon the morality of the people. President Adams is quoted as saying: '[The Constitution] was made only, for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other [W.O. Nelson. *The Charter of Liberty*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1987, 101)." ("Patterns of Apostasy in the Book of Mormon," in *The Book of Mormon: Helaman Through 3 Nephi 8, According To Thy Word*. Edited by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992, 72-73).

Helaman 5:4

**4 And it came to pass that Nephi had become weary because of their [Nephites] iniquity; and he yielded up the judgment-seat, and took it upon him to preach the word of God all the remainder of his days, and his brother Lehi also, all the remainder of his days;**

Once again the Nephites had turned to wickedness. This prompted Nephi, like his great-grandfather Alma, the younger, to give up the judgment-seat and spend full-time in the ministry calling the people to repentance.

Helaman II had taught his sons important principles that we could also apply in our lives to assist us to increase our spirituality. They include: (1) "Keeping the commandments of God"; (2) The importance of a good name. "I have given you the names of our first parents who came out of the land of

Jerusalem;...that when you remember your names ye may remember them;...[and] remember their works...that they were good"; (3) "Ye should do good, that it may be said of you,...even as it has been said and written of them"; (4) "Not do things that ye may boast, but that ye may do these things to lay up for yourselves a treasure in heaven...that ye may have that precious gift of eternal life"; (5) "Remember...there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, who shall come; yea, remember that he cometh to redeem the world"; (6) "Remember...that the Lord will surely come to redeem his people, but...not come to redeem them in their sins, but to redeem them from their sins"; (7) He has power to "redeem them from their sins because of [their] repentance"; and (8) "He hath sent his angels to declare the tidings of the conditions of repentance, which bringeth unto the power of the Redeemer, unto the salvation of their souls" (Helaman 5:6-11).

Helaman II concluded his recorded remarks to his young sons, Nephi and Lehi, with this important truth.

Helaman 5:12

**12 And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.**

Richard G. Scott reminds us,

"Anchor your life in Jesus Christ, your Redeemer. Make your Eternal Father and his Beloved Son the most important priority in your life--more important than life itself, more important than a beloved companion or children or anyone on earth. Make their will your central desire. Then all that you need for happiness will come to you." ("The Power of Correct Principles," in *Ensign*, May, 1993, 34).

Helaman 5:14-16

14 And they [Nephi and Lehi] did remember his [their father's] words; and therefore they went forth, keeping the commandments of God, to teach the word of God among all the people of Nephi, beginning at the city Bountiful.

15 And from thenceforth to the city of Gid; and from the city of Gid to the city of Mulek;

16 And even from one city to another, until they had gone forth among all the people of Nephi who were in the land southward; and from thence into the land of Zarahemla, among the Lamanites.

Bryan Richards reminds us,

"The land of Zarahemla was never the province of the Lamanites. However, Nephi and Lehi are preaching while Zarahemla is still under Lamanite military occupation. Moronihah was only successful in obtaining one-half of the cities lost, and most of these were further north in the land of Bountiful (see Hel 4:16-19). This means that the heart of Nephite lands including their capital city were still under Lamanite occupation.

[www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-5](http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-5)).

Helaman 5:17-19

17 And it came to pass that they did preach with great power, insomuch that they did confound many of those dissenters who had gone over from the Nephites, insomuch that they came forth and did confess their sins and were baptized unto repentance, and immediately returned to the Nephites to endeavor to repair unto them the wrong which they had done.

18 ...they had power and authority given unto them that they might speak, and they also had what they should speak given unto them—

19 Therefore they did speak unto the great astonishment of the Lamanites, to the convincing them, insomuch that there were eight thousand of the Lamanites who were in the land of Zarahemla and round about baptized unto repentance, and were convinced of the wickedness of the traditions of their fathers.

Not only did Nephi and Lehi experience phenomenal success with the Nephite dissenters, but they were also successful

in bringing eight thousand Lamanites to the truths of the gospel. They were truly instruments in the hands of the Lord as "they had what they should speak given unto them" (Helaman 5:18). When the Holy Ghost bears witness to the listener, the words penetrate their heart. The power of these words cannot be denied by the receptive listener.

Satan cannot allow the work of the Lord to progress for it is contrary to his work of destruction and bondage. It is, therefore, expected, that with the success that Nephi and his brother were experiencing, Satan would then do all he could to stop their work from continuing.

Helaman 5:20-22

**20 And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi did proceed from thence to go to the land of Nephi.**

**21 And it came to pass that they were taken by an army of Lamanites and cast into prison; yea, even in that same prison in which Ammon and his brethren were cast by the servants of Limhi.**

**22 And after they had been cast into prison many days without food, behold, they [prison guards] went forth into the prison to take them that they might slay them.**

It is important to remember that the Lord did not intervene immediately. "They had been cast into prison many days without food," (Helaman 5:22). There is only one way to stop a servant from God from continuing to spread their message of hope and change, it is to kill them. Satan did not want to only stop the work from spreading, he wanted to kill the messengers. First their imprisonment, then their death.

As the prison guards came forth to put Nephi and Lehi to death, "they were encircled about as if by fire, even insomuch that they durst not lay their hands upon them for fear they...should be burned." To the astonishment of the guards, "Nephi and Lehi...were as standing in the midst of fire and were not burned" (Helaman 5:23).

Nephi and Lehi noting that the guards dared not to touch them as a result of the pillar of fire that encircled them, they decided to speak to them. They began, "Fear not, for behold, it is God that has shown unto you this marvelous thing, in which is shown unto you that ye cannot lay your

hands on us to slay us." Their remarks were followed by the earth shaking the walls of the prison, but they did not fall. Along with the guards were also "Lamanites and Nephites who were dissenters." All were then overshadowed by "a cloud of darkness and an awful solemn fear came upon them." Above the cloud of darkness that overshadowed them, they heard a voice saying, "Repent ye, repent ye and seek no more to destroy my servants whom I have sent unto you to declare good tidings" (Helaman 5:24-29).

Helaman 5:30

**30 And it came to pass when they heard this voice, and beheld that it was not a voice of thunder, neither was it a voice of a great tumultuous noise, but behold, it was a still voice of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper, and it did pierce even to the very soul--**

We recall that the Prophet Elijah, after the display of nature through the wind and earthquake, heard "a still small voice" which was then followed by an inquiry of the Lord (1 Kings 19:11-13).

Following the voice which "did pierce even to [their] very soul," the earth shook and the walls trembled again, but the cloud of darkness did not disperse (Helaman 5:31).

Helaman 5:32

**32 And behold the voice came again, saying: Repent ye, repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; and seek no more to destroy my servants. And it came to pass that the earth shook again, and the walls trembled.**

The voice speaks a third time, this time it spoke unto them "marvelous words which cannot be uttered by man;" followed by the trembling of the walls and the shaking of the earth. (see Helaman 5:33.)

During this event, the spectators are unable to move as a result of the cloud of darkness and their accompanying fear. One of the Nephite dissenters, who had been a member of the church, was able to see through the darkness and saw the bright faces of Nephi and Lehi. Their faces glowed with the light and it appeared that they were talking to

someone. At the urging of this Nephite, the others did look and then they were also able to see the faces of Nephi and Lehi. (see Helaman 5:34-37.)

Helaman 5:38-39

**38 And they [those in the jail] said unto the man {Nephite}: Behold, what do all these things mean, and who is it with whom these men do converse?**

**39 Now the man's name of Aminadab. And Aminadab said unto them: They do converse with the angels of God.**

The guards and prisoners inquired of Aminadab regarding the removal of the cloud of darkness. He instructs them:

Helaman 5:41-42

**41 And Aminadab said unto them: You must repent, and cry unto the voice, even until ye shall have faith in Christ, who was taught unto you by Alma, and Amulek, and Zeezrom; and when ye shall do this, the cloud of darkness shall be removed from overshadowing you.**

**42 And it came to pass that they all did begin to cry unto the voice of him who had shaken the earth; yea, they did cry even until the cloud of darkness was dispersed.**

Daniel H. Ludlow states,

"The Book of Mormon did not expressly give the identity of the people who are in the prison at the time of miraculous manifestation mentioned in Helaman 5. However, a clue as to who these people were is given by Aminadab when he said unto them, 'You must repent, and cry unto the voice, even until ye shall have faith in Christ, who was taught unto you by Alma, and Amulek, and Zeezrom.' The only time Alma and Amulek and Zeezrom were on a missionary trip together was to the apostate Zoramites who were then living in the land of Antionum. (See Alma 31:1-8.) The Zoramites later fled from this area and joined with the Lamanites in the greater land of Nephi, and from this statement by Aminadab we learn they have now occupied the land of Lehi-Nephi, which had just been deserted by Limhi and his people. Again, the Book of Mormon proves to be a very complex book but also a wonderfully consistent one." (*A Companion To Your Study Of The Book Of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, 241).

Patricia T. Holland states regarding the removal of the darkness in our lives,

"If in my heart I go to God the moment I feel even the slightest intimation of fear (or darkness or worry) instead of waiting to let it accumulate, if I speak to God even as my most trusted friend, my wisest counselor, and stay there in my heart or on my knees talking to him long enough, I can always see a ray of light at the edge of those dark shadows. Most often I can then leave his presence with my heart singing. This does not mean that my troubles have dissolved--they probably haven't--but I somehow have the power to see above and around and through those clouds of darkness with greater calm and peacefulness. I know that he will, with time, help me to dissipate them completely.

"Out of sorrow and despair we are, through the comforting, protecting grace of God, lifted out of our weakness to the very summit of spiritual, peaceful transcendence that, without the 'Father of all comfort' could only be dreamed about from afar." ("The Comfort Wherewith We Are Comforted," in *On Earth As It Is In Heaven*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1989, 40).

At this time the cloud of darkness is dispersed, and all are surrounded within a pillar of fire that does not burn them, with Nephi and Lehi in the midst of them "and they were filled with that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. And behold, the Holy Spirit of God did come down from heaven, and did enter into their hearts, and they were filled as if with fire, and they could speak forth marvelous words" (Helaman 5:44-45).

Helaman 5:46-49

**46 And it came to pass that there came a voice unto them, yea, a pleasant voice, as if it were a whisper, saying:**

**47 Peace, peace be unto you, because of your faith in my Well Beloved, who was from the foundation of the world.**

**48 And now, when they heard this they cast up their eyes as if to behold from whence the voice came; and behold, they saw the heavens open; and angels came down out of heaven and ministered unto them.**

**49 And there were about three hundred souls who saw and heard these things;...**

These three hundred would now go and do as "they were bidden to go forth and marvel not, neither should they doubt" (Helaman 5:49).

Helaman 5:50-52

**50 And it came to pass that they [300 converts] did go forth, and did minister unto the people, declaring throughout all the regions round about all the things which they had heard and seen, insomuch that the more part of the Lamanites were convinced of them, because of the greatness of the evidences which they had received.**

**51 And as many as were convinced did lay down their weapons of war, and also their hatred and the tradition of their fathers.**

**52 And it came to pass that they did yield up unto the Nephites the lands of their possession.**

What a marvelous turn of events. Satan had Nephi and Lehi in prison and the guards had come to put them to death. Instead, through the Lord's intervention, all who were present are taught by the Holy Ghost, their hearts are changed and they become converted to the gospel. Then, they go forth among their brethren, and through the same spirit, they too are converted to the gospel and return to the Nephites all the lands they had taken. This is one of the great missionary experiences recorded in the pages of the Book of Mormon.

Byran Richards states,

"Moronihah had spent years trying to recover the cities lost to the Lamanites. His hard work had resulted in the regaining of half of all their possessions (Hel 4:10). What happened to the other half? They remained under Lamanite control until Nephi and Lehi had performed this great work among them. After converting to the Lord, the Lamanites willingly gave up...[the lands they had taken]. This is probably the best example in the Book of Mormon of the principle taught in Alma, 'the preaching of the word had a...more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else' (Alma 31:5)."  
[www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-5](http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-5)).

Ezra Taft Benson states,

"The gospel is the only answer to the problems of the world. We may cry peace. We may hold peace conferences. And I have nothing but commendation for those who work for peace. But it is my conviction that peace must come only by following the teachings and the example of the Prince of Peace." (*Title of Liberty*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1964, 213-214).

## **VII. Conclusions**

Again we have been enlightened and gained new insights regarding the teachings of the Book of Mormon in these pages. We see more clearly their application in our lives.

In Helaman, Chapter 1, we learned that contention among the Nephite citizens empowered the Lamanites in their preparation for war. It was the beginning of secret combinations that resulted in the assassination of the chief judge, Pahoran II. As a result of the contention and disruption in the government, the Lamanites were able to move swiftly and take the city of Zarahemla which was the center of the government. Fortunately, Moronihah, the Nephite Military General, took advantage of the Lamanites through strategy and the Lamanites were defeated. We were reminded that the righteousness of the people can bless the entire nation.

Helaman, Chapter 2, began with a plot to kill Helaman II, who had succeeded Pahoran II and Pacumeni, as the chief judge and governor of the Nephites. The foiled plot resulted in the death of Kishkumen, who had previously killed Pahoran II. He was a member of the Gadianton robbers, a secret combination. We learn that the power of the Gadianton robbers would "prove almost the overthrow, yea, almost the entire destruction of the people of Nephi" (Helaman 2:13).

In Helaman, Chapter 3, many citizens leave Zarahemla and migrate northward. Due to the decrease in timber, cement is used to build their houses. There is also a time of great prosperity and many thousands join the church of God. Pride again becomes rampant and resulted in the persecution of many of the humble members of the church. Helaman II dies and his son, Nephi, is sustained as the Chief judge and Governor of the land.

In Helaman, Chapter 4, again many dissenters sought to stir up the Lamanites to war. As a result of the Nephite wickedness, the Lamanites came against the Nephites in war. As a result of this war, the Lamanites gained all the lands of the Nephites in the land southward. It is the cause of great slaughter and loss of land. The Nephites repented, and the military were able to gain half of the lands they had lost, but only one-half. The Nephites began to remember their foolish actions and their accompanying results.

Spencer W. Kimball states,

"When you look in the dictionary for the most important word, do you know what it is? It could be remember.' Because all of [us] have made covenants our greatest need is to remember. That is why everyone goes to sacrament meeting every Sabbath day--to take the sacrament and listen to the priests pray that [we]'...may always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given [us]'...Remember is the word." ("Circles of Exaltation." Address to Religious Educators, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, June 28, 1968, 8).

The important question we each must answer is "will we remember?" Will we be more wise than the Nephites?

In Helaman, Chapter 5, Nephi, like Alma, the younger, gave up the judgment-seat, and devoted his full time to the ministry. (see Helaman 5:4.) He was aided by his brother, Lehi. They traveled throughout the church and taught the word of God to the people. Through their efforts, eight thousand Lamanites were converted to the gospel.

As a result of their success, Nephi and Lehi were put into prison by the Lamanites and after suffering without food, the guards came to put them to death. Through a series of miraculous events within the prison, 300 souls were converted to the gospel. They now went forth to teach the Lamanites the gospel. Their preaching touched the lives of the Lamanites and brought about the restitution of all the lands the Lamanites had taken from the Nephites. This experience is one of the greatest missionary events recorded in the Book of Mormon.

We are greatly blessed to have the Book of Mormon. As we prayerfully read its pages, we may know for ourselves its truthfulness. It can change our lives for the good.

In our next lesson [BM#34], we will specifically address the cycle in the Book of Mormon that "results in righteousness to wickedness and back to righteousness." (*Book of Mormon Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 150). Our focus will be upon Helaman, Chapters 6-12.