

BM#34 "How Could You Have Forgotten Your God"
Helaman 6-12

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I. Introduction

There is a cycle within the Book of Mormon that is easily identified. It is frequently referred to as the "Pride Cycle." It consists of four distinct phases. They are: (1) "Righteousness and Prosperity"; (2) "Pride and Wickedness"; (3) "Destruction and Suffering"; and, (4) "Humility and Repentance" (*Book of Mormon Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 151).

In these chapters we will observe the application of this cycle in the lives of the Nephites. We will also note the changes that occurred as the Nephites became wicked and the Lamanites became righteous. We will also want to better understand how this occurred so that we can avoid making similar mistakes.

Outline of Helaman 6-12:

- "A. Helaman 6 Converted Lamanites send missionaries with great power and authority to preach to Nephites. Peace, freedom, and prosperity among both Nephites and Lamanites. Cezoram and son murdered. Nephites become wicked again. Gadianton robbers perpetrate murders and works of darkness. Righteous Lamanites hunt Gadianton band and preach to more wicked part of them. Nephites support Gadianton band which gains control of government.

- "B. Helaman 7-9 Nephi's prayer and the episode of the

chief judge's death. Nephi and five others accused. Their innocence established and the murderer made known.

"C. Helaman 10-12 Voice of God come to Nephi as he ponders wickedness of his people. Great powers of sealing given Nephi. These are used to bring his people to repentance through a famine. Nephites begin to prosper. Gadianton band revived in great strength and defies Nephite armies. A commentary on human frailty, God's goodness and power, blessings of the penitent, judgment of men according to their works, etc. [in Chapter 12], presumably by Mormon." (Sidney B. Sperry. *Book of Mormon Compendium*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968, 374, Letters changed).

II. Helaman 6

This chapter begins with the statement that in the sixty and second year of the reign of the judges, "the Lamanites had become, the more part of them, a righteous people, insomuch that their righteousness did exceed that of the Nephites, because of their firmness and their steadiness in the faith" (Helaman 6:1).

Many of the Nephites, on the other hand, "had become hardened and impenitent [without regret, shame, or remorse] and grossly wicked, insomuch that they did reject the word of God and all the preaching and prophesying which did come among them" (Helaman 6:2]. In the meantime, the members of the church rejoiced in response to "the conversion of the Lamanites" (Helaman 6:3).

With the exception of the missionary service by the four sons of Mosiah, for the most part the Lamanites had been unreceptive to the efforts of the Nephites to teach them the truths of the gospel. Now, it is the Lamanites who are teaching the wicked Nephites.

The Lamanites taught the Nephites the principles of the gospel beginning with faith and repentance. "Many did preach with exceedingly great power and authority, unto the

bringing down many of them into the depths of humility, to be the humble followers of the God and the Lamb" (Helaman 6:5).

Pride Cycle 1: Righteousness and Prosperity

As a result of their efforts,

Helaman 6:7-8

7 And behold, there was peace in all the land, insomuch that the Nephites did go into whatsoever part of the land they would, whether among the Nephites or the Lamanites.

8 And it came to pass that the Lamanites did also go, whithersoever they would, whether it were among the Lamanites or among the Nephites;...

Bryan Richards states,

"Never in Nephite history had the trade barriers been completely broken down as at this time. As soon as the righteousness of the Lamanites opened up all the Lamanite markets, the Nephite merchants were there to buy and sell...Their increase in trade had strengthened their economy until 'they became exceedingly rich, both the Lamanites and the Nephites' (v.9)"

www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-6).

Helaman 6:10

10 Now the land south was called Lehi, and the land north was called Mulek, which was after the son of Zedekiah; for the Lord did bring Mulek into the land north, and Lehi into the land south.

George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl state,

"To the ancient Nephites the whole of North America was known as the land of Mulek, and South America as the Land of Lehi. The reason why these names were so given was because the Lord brought Mulek to the land North, and Lehi into the Land South when He led them from Judea to this greater Land of Promise. From the days of the first Mosiah to the Christian era, South America was divided into two grand divisions. They were the Land of Zarahemla and the Land of Nephi. During this period, except in times of war,

the Lamanites occupied the Land of Nephi, and the Nephites inhabited the Land of Zarahemla." (*Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 5). Amplified and Arranged by Philip C. Reynolds. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1977, 249).

Pride Cycle 2: Pride and Wickedness

Helaman 6:9, 17

9 And it came to pass that they became exceedingly rich, both the Lamanites and the Nephites;

17 For behold, the Lord had blessed them so long with the riches of the world that they had not been stirred up to anger, to wars, nor to bloodshed; therefore they begin to set their hearts upon their riches; yea, they began to seek to get gain that they might be lifted up one above another; therefore they began to commit secret murders, and to rob and to plunder, that they might get gain.

Hugh Nibley states,

"The sequence is a natural one: with easy wealth comes the feeling of superiority which makes people status-conscious; and with a feeling of status comes a desperate need to acquire the one thing that will give status; and with the recognition of the all-importance of that one thing, any scruples that may stand in the way of its acquisition are pushed aside, even murder being permissible as long as one is not found out." Determined to "get gain" at any price, the Nephites soon learned that the quickest way to get rich with a minimum risk and the best way to avoid the inconvenience of the law was to belong to a protective society." ("Good People and Bad People," in *Since Cumorah*, Vol. 7. John W. Welch, General Editor. Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah: Deseret Book Co., and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1967, [Second Edition, 1988], 364).

Bryan Richards states,

"The adage, 'it is not money which is the root of all evil, but *the love of money* which is the root of all evil' (see 1 Tim. 6:10.), applies perfectly to the Nephites. Their riches would not have been a problem had they not set their hearts upon them. This is a great lesson and warning for

the latter-day saints."
(www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-6).

Helaman 6:18

18 And now behold, those murderers and plunders were a band who had been formed by Kishkumen and Gadianton. And now it had come to pass that there were many, even among the Nephites, of Gadianton's band. But behold, they were more numerous among the more wicked part of the Lamanites. And they were called Gadianton's robbers and murderers.

The secret protective society is known as "Gadianton's robbers and murderers." Initially they flourished among the Lamanites, but note the contrast as to how the Lamanites dealt with Gadianton's robbers and murderers and how the Nephites dealt with them.

Helaman 6:20-21

20 And now it came to pass that when the Lamanites found that there were robbers among them they were exceedingly sorrowful; and they did use every means in their power to destroy them off the face of the earth. 21 But behold, Satan did stir up the hearts of the more part of the Nephites, insomuch that they did unite with those bands of robbers, and did enter into their covenants and their oaths,...

The Lamanites sought to destroy them out of their midst, while the Nephites did unite with them. Mormon teaches us that the source of the covenants and oaths ever since he "did entice our first parents to partake of the forbidden fruit; who did plot with Cain...[to] murder his brother Abel, [and] it should not be known unto the world; that same being who put it into the hearts of the people to build a tower sufficiently high that they might get to heaven; [who] spread[s] the works of darkness and abominations over all the face of the land, until he dragged the people down to an entire destruction, and to an everlasting hell; behold, it is he who is the author of all sin. And behold, he doth carry on his works of darkness and secret murder...from generation to generation according as he can get hold upon the hearts of children of men" (Helaman 6:26-30).

The result of the work of Satan had a great effect upon the Nephites.

Helaman 6:31, 34-35

31 And now behold, he had got great hold upon the hearts of the Nephites; yea, insomuch that they had become exceedingly wicked; yea, the more part of them had turned out of the way of righteousness, and did trample under their feet the commandments of God, and did turn unto their own ways, and did build up unto themselves idols of their gold and their silver.

34 And thus we see that the Nephites did begin to dwindle in unbelief, and grow in wickedness and abominations, while the Lamanites began to grow exceedingly in the knowledge of their God; yea, they did began to keep his statutes and commandments, and to walk in truth and uprightness before him.

35 And thus we see that the Spirit of the Lord began to withdraw from the Nephites, because of the wickedness and the hardness of their hearts.

While the Nephites were becoming even more wicked, as they become concentrated in their effort to worship their "idols of gold and their silver, the Lamanites in turn increased their worship of their God. As a result of their joint actions, the spirit withdrew from the Nephites and "the Lord began to pour out his Spirit upon the Lamanites" (Helaman 6:36).

Helaman 6:37

37 And it came to pass that the Lamanites did hunt the band of robbers of Gadianton; and they did preach the word of God among the more wicked part of them, insomch that this band of robbers was utterly destroyed from among the Lamanites.

As a result of the increased spirit among the Lamanites they sought to destroy the Gadianton robbers from among them and in turn preached the word of God to all.

Helaman 6:38-40

38 And it came to pass on the other hand, that the Nephites did build them [Gadianton robbers] up and

support them, beginning at the more wicked part of them, until they had overspread all the land of the Nephites, and had seduced the more part of the righteous until they had come down to believe in their works and partake of their spoils, and to join with them in their secret murders and combinations.

39 And thus they did obtain the sole management of the government, insomuch that they did trample under their feet and smite and rend and turn their backs upon the poor and the meek, and the humble followers of God.

40 And thus we see that they were in an awful state, and ripening for an everlasting destruction.

With the withdrawal of the spirit of God, due to the wickedness and abominations of the Nephites, the spirit of Satan was rampant throughout the land of the Nephites. They were ripening for the next phase of the "Pride Cycle": destruction and suffering.

III. Helaman 7

This chapter begins with Nephi and Lehi returning from the land north where they had preached "the word of God unto them, and did prophesy many things unto them; And they did reject all his words, insomuch that he could not stay among them, but returned again unto the land of his nativity" (Helaman 7:2-3).

As Nephi saw the wickedness of the people and that the Gadianton robbers had "the power and authority of the land; laying aside the commandments of God,...doing no justice unto the children of men" (Helaman 7:4), his heart was grieved. From his tower by the highway to the chief market, he poured out his heart to the Lord, stating,

Helaman 7:8-9

8 ...if my days could have been in those days [when my father Nephi first came out of the land of Jerusalem], then would my soul have had joy in the righteousness of my brethren.

9 But behold, I am consigned that these are my days, and that my soul is filled with sorrow because of this the wickedness of my brethren.

As he spoke these words a group of people overheard his plea with the Lord and his "mourning for the wickedness of his people" (Helaman 7:11).

Pride Cycle 3: Destruction and Suffering

Prior to the destruction and suffering of the people, the Lord called prophets to give a warning voice to the people. If they heeded the words of the prophet, the Lord may see fit to rescind the punishment. If they instead rejected the warning voice of the prophet, the destruction and suffering of the people was imminent.

Nephi upon seeing the people gathered, speaks to them from his tower. His message is direct.

"Why have ye gathered yourselves together? That I may tell you of your iniquities?...ye ought to marvel because ye are given away that the devil has got so great hold upon your hearts...O repent ye, repent ye! Why will ye die?...instead of gathering you, except ye will repent,...he shall scatter you forth that ye shall become meat for dogs and wild beasts...O, how could you have forgotten your God in the very day that he has delivered you?...behold, it is to get gain, to be praised of men, yea, and that ye might get gold and silver. And ye have set your hearts upon the riches and vain things of this world, for the which ye do murder, and plunder, and steal, and bear false witness against your neighbor, and do all manner of iniquity...For if ye will not repent, behold, this great city, and also all those great cities which are round about...shall be taken away that ye shall have no place in them; wo [judgment/punishment] be unto you because of this great abomination which has come among you; and ye have united yourselves unto it, yea, to that secret band which was established by Gadianton!...wo shall come unto you because of that pride which ye have suffered to enter your hearts, which has lifted you up beyond that which is good because of your exceedingly great riches!...wo be unto you because of your wickedness and abominations!...And except ye repent ye shall perish; yea, even your lands shall be taken from you, and ye shall be destroyed from off the face of the earth...I know that these things are true because the Lord God has made them known unto me, therefore I testify that they shall be" (Helaman 7:13, 15, 17, 19-21, 25-29).

This is a call to repentance by the Prophet Nephi to the Nephite people. He outlines their iniquities, including the

support of the Gadianton robbers. He issues them a call to repentance, and then tells them what will occur to their nation if they do not heed the voice of warning by the Lord.

Bryan Richards states,

"Nephi's testimony is not merely a personal opinion. He is not guessing about what the Nephites are doing in secret. Nor is his testimony his own fabrication. His testimony is of the Lord. This is the kind of witness and testimony which is irrefutable. We would do well to follow his example in our own testimonies by acknowledging the source of spiritual knowledge. This will always strengthen the spirit and validity of the witness."

www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-7).

IV. Helaman 8

Helaman 8:7-9

7 And it came to pass that thus they did stir up the people to anger against Nephi, and raised contentions among them; for there were some who did cry out; Let this man alone, for he is a good man, and those things which he saith will surely come to pass except we repent;

8 Yea, behold, all the judgments will come upon us which he has testified unto us; for we know that he has testified aright unto us concerning our iniquities. And behold they are many, and he knoweth as well as things which shall befall us as he knoweth of our iniquities;

9 Yea, and behold, if he had not been a prophet he could not have testified concerning those things.

There were in attendance judges and members of the Gadianton's secret band. They sought to stir up the people who were gathered and were against the words spoken by Nephi. There were yet others in the crowd, who knew the truthfulness of Nephi's words. To their credit, they did not remain silent, but spoke up.

These individuals are an important reminder to each of us that the words of truth can only be given voice when there are those who refuse to be silent and are willing to share their witness. Otherwise, only the voice of evil is heard.

Nephi proceeded to speak further to the gathering.

He reminded them of the effect of one man, Moses who was given power by God, and "the Israelites, who were our fathers, came through [the Red Sea] upon dry ground, and the waters closed upon the armies of the Egyptians and swallowed them up? (Helaman 8:11). If God has given power to Moses, then why could he not give me power "whereby I may know concerning the judgments that shall come upon you except ye repent? (Helaman 8:12). If you deny my words, then ye also deny the words of Moses who bore testimony concern the coming of the Son of God and that "as many as should look upon that serpent should live, even as many as should look upon the Son of God [as symbolized by the brazen serpent in the wilderness. vs.14] with faith, having a contrite spirit, might live, even unto that life which is eternal." (Helaman 8:14-15).

Helaman 8:16-17, 19

16 And now behold, Moses did not only testify of those things [the coming of the Son of God], but also all the holy prophets from his days even to the days of Abraham.

17 Yea, and behold, Abraham saw of his coming, and was filled with gladness and did rejoice;...

19 And now I would that ye should know, that even since the days of Abraham there have been many prophets that have testified [of] these things:...

Nephi provided the names of other prophets since Abraham who have testified of the coming of Christ. These included: Zenos, Zenock, Ezias, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lehi, Nephi, and, "also almost all of our fathers, even down to this time; yea, they have testified of the coming of Christ, and have looked forward, and have rejoiced in his day which is to come. And behold, he is God, and he is with them, and he did manifest himself unto them, that they were redeemed by him; and they gave unto him glory, because of that which is to come." (Helaman 8:19-23).

D. Kelly Ogden and R. Val Johnson state,

"If they weren't aware of Christ's impending mortal ministry, it was because they were unacquainted with God's word. An in-depth study of the Book reveals this to be

true. So clear are the revelations that the Nephites should have known the name by which the Messiah would be called in mortality, when he would be born, where he would be born, the name of his mother, many details of his ministry, how he suffered and died, and that his resurrection would break the bands of death for all mankind. More importantly, they should have understood how his atonement could reconcile them to God and what they had to do to receive that marvelous gift. All this was known and taught by the prophets on what we know today as the American continent." ("All the Prophets Prophesied of Christ," in *Ensign*, January 1994, 31).

Nephi concludes his warning by stating,

Helaman 8:25-26

25 But behold, ye have rejected the truth, and rebelled against your holy God; and even at this time, instead of laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven, wherein nothing doth corrupt, and where nothing can come which is unclean, ye are heaping up for yourselves wrath against the day of judgment. 26 Yea, even at this time ye are ripening, because of your murders and your fornication and wickedness, for everlasting destruction; yea, and except ye repent it will come unto you soon.

At the conclusion of Helaman, Chapter 8 and continuing through Chapter 9, Nephi demonstrates the power of revelation. His purpose is to provide irrefutable testimony that may serve to convince the faithful of the truthfulness of his testimony.

He tells the group who are assembled that their chief judge has been murdered and lies in his own blood. The murderer is his brother who desires to have the judgeship. They are both members of the Gadianton band. Five members run to the office of the chief judge. (see Helaman 8:27-9:1.)

V. Helaman 9

As the five proceeded, they state,

Helaman 9:2

2 Behold, now we will know of a surety whether this man is a prophet and God hath commanded him to prophesy such marvelous things unto us. Behold, we do not believe that he hath; yea, we do not believe that he is a prophet; nevertheless, if this thing which he has said concerning the chief judge be true, that he be dead, then will we believe that the other words which he has spoken are true.

When they arrived, the chief judge was dead and in fear that the other judgments Nephi had made were also true, they fell to the earth. When the people gathered upon hearing of the death, they saw the five unconscious, and believed that "God had smitten them [so] they could not flee from us," they bound them and put them in prison. The following day, when the people gathered to mourn the death of the chief judge, they asked about the five who had gone to confirm Nephi's words. When the five were brought forth from prison, it was the same five that had gone to verify Nephi's prophecy. (see Helaman 9:3-15.)

They now accused Nephi of having committed this ruse for the purpose of converting "us unto his faith" (Helaman 9:16). Nephi is bound and brought to stand before the people. They demand that he acknowledge his guilt and offer him money and tell him his life will be spared if he confesses. He again confronted them for he knew that these corrupt judges were knowledgeable of the truth and sought only to destroy Nephi.

Helaman 9:21-22

21 ...O ye fools, ye uncircumcised of heart, ye blind, and ye stiffnecked people, do ye know how long the Lord your God will suffer you that ye shall go on in this your way of sin?
22 O ye ought to begin to howl and mourn, because of the great destruction which at this time doth await you, except ye shall repent.

He now gave a second sign that would declare his innocence. They were to go to the home of Seantum, the brother of Zeezoram and ask him if Nephi has agreed with him regarding the murder of his brother. He will say, "No."

They are to then ask him if he murdered his brother? He will respond in fear and then if you will check the skirts of his cloak, you will find blood. He will tremble, look pale and they shall know he is guilty. Then he will confess his murder of his brother, and that Nephi knew nothing regarding this matter. (see Helaman 9:25-36.)

Helaman 9:37

37 And it came to pass that they went and did, even according as Nephi had said unto them. And behold, the words which he had said were true; for according to the words he did deny; and also according to the words he did confess.

Under Jewish law, the sole confession of Seantum, would not have been admissible. However, were exceptions provided in the law if exact circumstances were satisfied.

John W. Welch states,

"Thus, one can with reasonable confidence conclude that in the biblical period the normal two-witness rule could be overridden in the special case of a self-incriminating confession, if the confession occurred outside of court, or if God's will was evidenced in the matter by ordeal, lots, or otherwise in the detection of the offender, and if corroborating physical evidence of the crime could be produced. Seantum's self-incriminating confession satisfies all three requirements precisely, and thus his conviction was ensured." ("The Case of An Unobserved Murder," in 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, 244)

Nephi and the five who were found at the site of the chief judge's death were released. (see Helaman 9:38). The response of the people to Nephi's prophecy was positive.

Helaman 9:39-41

39 And there were some of the Nephites who believed on the words of Nephi; and there were some also, who believed because of the testimony of the five, for they had been converted while they were in prison.

40 And now there were some among the people, who said that Nephi was a prophet.

41 And there were others who said: Behold, he is a god, for except he was a god he would not know of all things. For behold, he has told us the thoughts of our hearts, and also has told us things; and even he has brought into our knowledge the true murderer of our chief judge.

Neal A. Maxwell states,

"Hence omniscience is one of the characteristics of the living God. As we read in Helaman 9:41, 'Except he was a god he could not know of all things.' 'And now, behold, you have received a witness; for if I have told you things which no man knoweth have you not received a witness?' (D&C 6:24)" (*Things As They Really Are*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978, 22).

VI. Helaman 10

Helaman 10:1-2

1 And it came to pass that there arose a division among the people, insomuch that they divided hither and thither and went their ways, leaving Nephi alone, as he was standing in the midst of them.

2 And it came to pass that Nephi went his way towards his own house, pondering upon the things which the Lord had shown unto him.

Gordon B. Hinckley states,

"Ponder. 'What do we mean by 'ponder'? Well, I think it simply means kind of quietly thinking things through. Ponder what you have read. Ponder your life. Are you worthy, are you living the commandments...?" (*LDS Church News*, Week of January 6, 1996, Salt Lake City, Utah).

Richard G. Scott adds,

"The Book of Mormon then teaches a most impressive lesson concerning how we can learn truth: 'And it came to pass that Nephi went his way towards his own house, pondering upon the things which the Lord had shown unto him' (Helaman 10:2). As is characteristically the case, the pondering opened a channel of communication that brought additional

understanding and truth to Nephi. In this particular instance, because of Nephi's valiant testimony, it allowed the Lord to confer upon him the sealing power. He later used that power to bring many of the Nephites and Lamanites to repentance and salvation." ("Nephi, Son of Helaman," in *Heroes From the Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995, [Seventh Printing, 1998], 152).

We learn that while Nephi was "pondering in his heart, behold, a voice came unto him saying:" (Helaman 10:3)

Nephi is blessed "for those things which thou hast done;" for he had "with unwearyingness declared the word, which I have given unto thee, unto this people. His focus has not been the preservation of his own life, but "hast sought [instead to do] my will, and to keep my commandments" (Helaman 10:4). As a result of Nephi's unwearyingness, "behold, I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will" (Helaman 10:5).

D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner state,

"Nephi demonstrated his absolute and uncompromising loyalty to the Savior of whom he prophesied. His life modeled the pattern of behavior of those who have their callings and election made sure, as revealed by Joseph Smith: 'When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve Him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and election made sure.' Nephi did have his calling and election made sure." (*Verse By Verse The Book of Mormon*, Vol. 2. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2011, 96).

The Lord gives unto Nephi the authority to exercise special power over the people. This includes: (1) To "smite the earth with famine,...with pestilence, and destruction, according to the wickedness of the people" (Helaman 10:6); (2) "Power to seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever...loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Helaman 10:7); (3) "To rent temple in twain" (Helaman 10:8); (4) "Cast down [mountain] and become smooth" (Helaman 10:9), and (5) "Say that God smite this people, it shall come to pass" (Helaman 10:10).

This special authority, or the sealing power of the Lord, has been given to only a select number of individuals upon the earth. These individuals include, Elijah [We learn from latter-day revelation that Elijah held the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood and was the last prophet to do so before the time of Jesus Christ. (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. 172)]; Peter (Matthew 16:19; D&C 128:10); Joseph Smith (D&C 110:13-16; 132:46-47); and each of the Prophets and Presidents of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This power enables the administration of sacred sealing ordinances, including eternal marriage, that can only be performed in the Holy Temples of the Lord.

D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner ask,

"With whom can God trust this awesome sealing power, which extends through all the universe and through all eternity? It is [only] granted to those who, like Nephi, obey and serve the Lord with unwearyingness, selflessness, and diligence; to those who are totally committed to building the kingdom of God above all things; to those who covenant and dedicate themselves to promote God's work and glory." (*Verse By Verse The Book of Mormon*, Vol.2. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2011, 98).

Helaman 10:11

11 An now behold, I command you, that ye shall go and declare unto this people, that thus saith the Lord God, who is the Almighty: Except ye repent ye shall be smitten, even unto destruction.

W. Ralph Pew states,

"And characteristic of his complete submission to the will of God, Nephi did not go to his house to relax...rather, he immediately stopped his journey home and returned to preach repentance to the multitudes." ("Yield Your Heart to God," in *The Book of Mormon: Helaman Through 3 Nephi 8, According To Thy Word*, Vol.7. Edited by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992, 217).

Helaman 10:14-15, 17-18

14 Therefore Nephi did declare unto them the word of the Lord, saying: Except ye repent, thus saith the Lord, ye shall be smitten even unto destruction.

15 And it came to pass that when Nephi had declared unto them the word, behold, they did still harden their hearts and would not hearken unto his words; therefore they did revile against him, and did seek to lay their hands upon him that they might cast him into prison.

17 And it came to pass that thus he did go forth in the Spirit, from multitude to multitude, declaring the world of God, even until he had declared it unto them all, or sent it forth among all the people.

18 And it came to pass that they would not hearken unto his words;...

All have the power of free agency. This power enables each of us to choose freedom from sin and eternal joy or captivity by the devil resulting in eternal misery and bondage. The Lord, through his prophet Nephi, was willing to give his children the opportunity of eternal life if they would heed the voice of His prophet and repent, but they would not listen.

VII. Helaman 11

We begin this chapter with contention among the Nephites having reached the point that there were wars throughout all the land.

Helaman 11:2

2 And it was this secret band of robbers who did carry on this work of destruction and wickedness...

Nephi turns to the Lord on behalf of the people and states,

Helaman 11:4-5

4 O Lord, do not suffer that this people shall be destroyed by the sword; but O Lord, rather let there be a famine in the land, to stir them up in remembrance of the Lord their God, and perhaps they will repent and turn unto thee.

5 And so it was done, according to the words of Nephi... and the work of destruction did cease by the sword but became sore by famine.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet state,

"Famine is one of heaven's most eloquent sermons. When virtually all else has failed to get the attention of the rebellious and turn them to God, famines have succeeded. Famines can strip men of every sense of self-sufficiency and turn their eyes and ears to the voice of heaven. (See Isaiah 51:19; Jeremiah 14:13-18; Amos 4:6.) In this story it seems that Nephi felt that the people simply did not see the connection between devastating war and their sinful ways." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol.3. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991, [3rd Printing, 1993], 390).

Helaman 11:6

6 ...For the earth was smitten that it was dry, and did not yield forth grain in the season of the grain; and the whole earth was smitten, even among the Lamanites as well as among the Nephites, so that they were smitten that they did perish by thousands in the more wicked parts of the land.

Bryan Richards states,

"Remarkably, the Lord is able to be selective with his punishments. Wars, famines, and plagues affect the lives of everyone in society, but the wicked are the first to go...

"The same process of selective destruction will attend the Second Coming. All will be affected by the great destructions that have been prophesied, but the destroying angels specifically target the wicked."

(www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-11).

Joseph Smith states,

"The destroying angel will...exercise his tremendous mission upon the children of disobedience; and destroy the workers of iniquity, while the Saints will be gathered out from among them, and stand in holy places ready to meet the Bridegroom when he comes." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, [1977], 92).

The famine lasted for approximately two years. [Seventy-fourth to the seventy-sixth year of judges].

Helaman 11:9

9 And it came to pass that the judges did say unto Nephi, according to the words which had been desired. [in response to the voice of the people vs.8] And it came to pass that when Nephi saw that the people had repented and did humble themselves in sackcloth, he cried again unto the Lord, saying;

Helaman 11:11-12, 15

11 Now, O Lord, because of this their humility wilt thou turn away thine anger, and let thine anger be appeased in the destruction of those wicked men whom thou hast already destroyed.

12 O Lord, wilt thou turn away thine anger, yea, thy fierce anger, and cause that this famine may cease in this land.

15 Yea, O Lord, and thou seest that they have repented, because of the famine and the pestilence and destruction which has come unto them.

In response to the promise the Lord made with Nephi that because he would ask for nothing that was not righteous, his prayer was heard.

Pride Cycle 4: Humility and Repentance

Helaman 11:17-19

17 And it came to pass that in the seventy and sixth year the Lord did turn away his anger from his people, and caused that rain should fall upon the earth, insomuch that it did bring forth her fruit in the season of her fruit. And it came to pass that it did bring forth her grain in the season of her grain.

18 And behold, the people did rejoice and glorify God, and the whole face of the land was filled with rejoicing; and they did no more seek to destroy Nephi, but they did esteem him as a great prophet, and a man of God, having great power and authority given unto him from God.

19 And behold, Lehi, his brother, was not a whit behind him as to things pertaining to righteousness.

And the cycle repeats.

Pride Cycle: 1. Righteousness and Prosperity

Helaman 11:21

21 And it came to pass that in the seventy and sixth year did end in peace. And the seventy and seventh year began in peace; and the church did spread throughout the face of all the land; and the more part of the people, both the Nephites and the Lamanites, did belong to the church; and they did have exceedingly great peace in the land; and thus ended the seventy and seventh year.

As widespread as the famine had been upon the land, now there is peace. Both the Nephites and the Lamanites were converted or returned to activity in the church, thereby repenting of their prior wickedness.

Pride Cycle: 2. Pride and Wickedness

Helaman 11:24, 26

24 And it came to pass that in the eighteth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, there were a certain number of the dissenter from the people of Nephi, who had some years before gone over unto the Lamanites, and taken upon themselves the name of Lamanitess, and also a certain number who were real descendants of the Lamanites, being stirred up to anger by them, or by those dissenters, therefore they commenced a war with their brethren.

26 And thus in time, yea, even in the space of not many years, they became an exceedingly great band of robbers; and they did search out all the secret plans of Gadianton; and thus they became robbers of Gadianton.

In just four short years, [Seventy-sixth year to the Eightieth year of the judges], since the famine had ended, a group of people had again turned from peace to

wickedness. Their model for their wickedness had been the "secret plans of Gadianton" (Helaman 11:26).

Helaman 11:32, 34

32 And it came to pass that thus ended this year [Eighty and first year]. And the robbers did still increase and wax strong, insomuch that they did defy the whole armies of the Nephites, and also of the Lamanites; and they did cause great fear to come unto the people upon all the face of the land.

34 Now this great evil, which came unto the people because of their iniquity, did stir them up again in remembrance of the Lord their God.

The period of destruction and suffering was close at hand. For a brief period [one year] the people had been stirred up again in remembrance of the Lord, only to once again, "forget the Lord their God" which was shortly thereafter followed by their beginning to wax strong in iniquity" (Helaman 11:36).

Helaman 11:36-37

36 And in the eighty and second year they began again to forget the Lord their God. And in the eighty and third year they began wax stronger in iniquity. And in the eighty and fourth year they did not mend their ways.

37 And it came to pass in the eighty and fifth year they did wax strong and stronger in their pride, and in their wickedness; and thus they were ripening again for destruction.

Webster's New World Dictionary Third College Edition states,

"wax. To grow gradually larger,...increase in strength, intensity, volume,..." (*Webster's New World Dictionary, Third College Edition*. New York: Prentice Hall, 1988, [1994], 1511).

The formula for wickedness as exemplified by the people of Nephi is: (1) Forget the Lord; (2) Wax [increase] strong in iniquity; (3) Increase in pride; and, (4) Choose wickedness over righteousness.

In the seventy and sixth year (vs.17), the Lord lifted the famine as a result of the repentance of the people. Just four years later, Eightieth year (vs.24), the Gadianton robbers had been revived and again wrecked havoc upon the land. Two years later, Eighty-second year (vs.36), the people had begun again to forget the Lord their God. They "did not mend their ways," or made no effort toward repenting of their iniquity. Two years later, Eighty-fifth year (vs.37), they had become so entrenched in pride and wickedness, that they were once again ripening for destruction (see vs.37).

In just nine short years, the people of Nephi had gone from a famine being lifted; to peace and repentance; to righteousness; only to be followed by pride and wickedness, and then again becoming again ripe for destruction and suffering. The "Pride Cycle" among the people was being repeated. The question we must ask is, "Can we learn from their history, and make the necessary changes in our lives, or, Will we also reap their sorrow?" Only time will tell.

VIII. Helaman 12

Chapter 12 is a commentary by Mormon who abridged the record. It is an effort on his part to highlight the knowledge he would have us gain and the lessons he would have us learn. He is acutely aware, however, that despite his efforts, like the Nephites and Lamanites, we may also ignore the words of the Lord and his prophets and choose wickedness over righteousness.

Helaman 12:1-2

1 And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.

2 Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people,...in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and trample under their feet the Holy One--yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity.

Brigham Young stated two years after the arrival of the members of the church in the Salt Lake valley,

"The worst fear that I have about this people is that they will get rich in this country, forget God and His people, wax fat, and kick themselves out of the Church and go to hell. This people will stand mobbing, robbing, poverty, and all manner of persecution, and be true. But my greatest fear for them is that they cannot stand wealth; and yet they have to be tried with riches, for they will become the richest people on this earth." (Quoted in Bryan S. Hinckley. *The Faith of Our Pioneer Fathers*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956, 13).

Helaman 12:3

3 And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death and with terror, and with famine and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him.

Mormon notes that the greatest hindrance we have to our salvation is the problem of not remembering the Lord.

Henry B. Eyring states,

"How can we remember even a part of all God has done for us?..."

"The Holy Ghost brings back memories of what God has taught us. And one of the ways God teaches us is with His blessings; and so, if we choose to exercise faith, the Holy Ghost will bring God's kindnesses to our remembrance.

"You could test this in prayer today. You could follow the command 'Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things.' (D&C 59:7)." ("Recognize, Remember, and Give Thanks," in *Ensign*, August, 2013, 4).

By following these instructions, we will become more grateful for the blessings we have and be better able to remember the Lord God who has given them to us.

Helaman 12:4

4 O how foolish, and how vain and how evil, and devilish, and how quick to do iniquity, and how slow to do good, are the children of men; yea, how quick to hearken unto the words of the evil one, and to set their hearts upon the vain things of the world!

James E. Faust states,

"The relationship of money to happiness is at best questionable. Even the *Wall Street Journal* acknowledged, 'Money is an article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven, and as a universal provider of everything except happiness.' Henrik Ibsen wrote, 'Money may buy the husk of many things, but not the kernel. It brings you food, but not the appetite; medicine, but not health; acquaintances, but not friends; servants, but not faithfulness; days of joy, but not peace or happiness.'" (*To Reach Even Unto You*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 8).

Helaman 12:5-6

5 Yea, how quick to be lifted up in pride; yea, how quick to boast, and do all manner of that which is iniquity; and how slow are they to remember the Lord their God, and to give ear unto his counsels, yea, how slow to walk in wisdom's paths!

6 Behold, they do not desire that the Lord their God, who hath created them, should rule and reign over them; notwithstanding his great goodness and his mercy towards them, they do set at naught his counsels, and they will not that he should be their guide.

Reed Smoot states,

"In these days of distorting the plain words of scripture, of atheistic teachings, of chaotic social propaganda, and of general economic uncertainty, it may be well for us, in our private contemplation, to give at least a passing heed to the conditions cited in the Book of Mormon, and for us to seek more earnestly than ever to remember God, that his blessings and protecting care may come to us still more abundantly in our time of special need, such as seems to be upon us today. Though the efforts of men may be frustrated, God's promise does not fail wherein he says to those who

draw near to him: 'I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you.' (Leviticus 26:9.) It is our own responsibility, individually as well as collectively, to thereby gain our own welfare, and the welfare of others, under our divine call in this age." (*Conference Report*, April, 1934, 39).

Stephen D. Nadauld states,

"The age-old problem described so well by prophets in the Book of Mormon and reiterated by modern prophets seems to be one of pride. Pride in its many forms is the great challenge from within. Mormon expressed it so well when he said, 'Behold, they do not desire that the Lord their God, who hath created them, should rule over them' (Hel.12:6). Once rooted in a person's heart, pride sets the stage for spiritual downfall: unrighteous thoughts that spring up from within can lead to an unwillingness to be submissive or to follow counsel. For some, personal prosperity reinforces the notion that they are doing fine on their own. Others begin to feel that rules can be tailored a little to meet their personal desires. Sound teachings become old-fashioned, and leaders start to seem out of touch, unfeeling, or too old. None of these thoughts happen overnight but come gradually as humility and meekness are eroded by possessions, status, and prosperity. Pride causes a harden heart and spiritual deafness, both of which can ultimately lead to a host of more serious sins. In the worst case, a person may go beyond self-destructive behavior and become an enemy to God, desiring to fight openly against His teachings." ("Pride: A Challenge from Within," in *Ensign*, July, 1996, 16).

These qualities are often recognizable in others, but less frequently within ourselves. It requires a constant vigil on our part if we are to avoid the maladies of "forgetting" and "pride" so common in our materialistic world.

Helaman 12:7-8

7 O how great is the nothingness of the children of men; yea, even they are less than the dust of the earth.

8 For behold, the dust of the earth moveth hither and thither, to the dividing asunder, at the command of our great and everlasting God.

Daniel H. Ludlow clarifies,

"This statement should not be interpreted that Mormon believes that men are worth less than the dust of the earth. Rather, Mormon is saying that men sometimes appear to be less wise than the dust of the earth. When the Lord tells the dust of the earth to move, it obeys, whereas when the Lord tells men to do something, they frequently do not obey." (*A Companion To Your Study Of The Book Of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, 246).

Helaman 12:14-15

14 Yea, if he say unto the earth--Thou shalt go back, that it lengthen out the day for many hours--it is done;

15 And thus according to his word the earth goeth back, and it appeareth unto man that the sun standeth still; yea, and behold, this is so; for surely it is the earth that moveth and not the sun.

Joseph Fielding Smith states,

"The knowledge of astronomy was well developed among the ancients upon the American continent...

"We know, then, that the prevalent notion in the world today that the ancients from the dawn of history to the days of Galileo believed that the earth is flat and the center of the universe, around which the sun and stars revolve, is a most stupendous error. The ignorance made manifest in the days of Galileo and Columbus, and for centuries preceding their time, was the result of apostasy from the rebellion against the truth which in the beginning was plainly revealed from the heavens." (*The Progress of Man*. Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1952, 184-185).

Helaman 12:18

18 And behold, if a man hide up a treasure in the earth, and the Lord shall say--Let it be accursed, because of the iniquity of him who hath hid it up-- behold, it shall be accursed.

Bryan Richards states,

"Mormon is not referring to a hypothetical situation. The prophet Samuel the Lamanite had prophesied that men would hide things in the earth but never find them again because of a curse from the Lord (Hel.13:18). This prophecy was fulfilled as recorded by Mormon, 'And these Gadianton robbers, who were among the Lamanites, did infest the land, insomuch that the inhabitants thereof began to hide up their treasures in the earth; and they became slippery, because the Lord had cursed the land, that they could not hold them, nor retain them again' (Mormon 1:18)."
(www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-12).

Helaman 12:23-24

23 Therefore, blessed are they who will repent and hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; for these are they that shall be saved.
24 And may God grant, in his great fullness, that men might be brought unto repentance and good works, that they might be restored unto grace for grace, according to their works.

In Verse 24, Mormon makes it clear, to those who assume otherwise, that there is a connection between grace and works. Some are under the assumption that all that is necessary in order to gain salvation is to confess Jesus Christ and through his grace alone, they will be saved. Others are of the opinion that works alone is the determining factor in receiving salvation. Mormon makes it clear that both grace and works are necessary.

Stephen E. Robinson clarifies,

"Theologically, the grace of God is his goodwill toward us, his predisposition to act in our best interest even before we can earn or even deserve such consideration...

"Nevertheless, the term *grace* is sometimes used in a different sense to describe a quality that is responsive or reactive to human behavior. When spoken of in this sense, God's favor or grace is not a preexisting given but is something that can be sought after, increased, decreased, or even lost completely...John explains that believers receive grace for grace, or in other words they receive increased favor from God as they react positively

(graciously) to grace already received. (See John 1:16; see also D&C 93:12, 19-20). Paul even warns the Galatians against falling from grace through their own foolishness. (See Gal.1:6; 5:4)." (*Believing Christ*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992, 63-64).

Helaman 12:25-26

25 And I would that all men might be saved. But we read that in the great and last day there are some who shall be cast out, yea, who shall be cast off from the presence of the Lord;
26 Yea, who shall be consigned to a state of endless misery, fulfilling the words which say: They that have done good shall have everlasting life; and they have that have done evil shall have everlasting damnation. And thus it is. Amen.

With these words, Mormon concludes his commentary regarding the preceding chapters. It is his desire that each of us will make the changes necessary in our lives, including accepting Jesus Christ as Our Savior and Redeemer and then embracing those directives that will enable us to change our nature and become like He is. Mormon also understood that because of the free agency of man, that not all would choose Jesus Christ and his gospel. They would rebel, align themselves with Satan, and thereby lose their reward.

IX. Conclusions

For so long in the history of the Book of Mormon, the Nephites have exemplified righteousness. This is not true during this lesson. We are also introduced to the "Pride Cycle" and its four phases. These phases are noted throughout the lesson.

Helaman, Chapter 6, states that many of the Nephites have become wicked, while the most part of the Lamanites have become righteous. We learn that the Nephites developed a love of money which replaced their love of God. While the Lamanites drove the Gadianton robbers from their land, the Nephites embraced them. Even the more righteous Nephites were caught up in obtaining idols of gold and silver.

In Helaman, Chapter 7, Nephi and his brother, Lehi, returned from the land northward as their teachings were

rejected by the people. Nephi offered a prayer to the Lord which was overheard by the citizens and they gathered around his home to hear his prayer on their behalf. He feared for his people for they had forgotten God and his blessings, sought to get gain and, they sought the praises of man.

In Helaman, Chapter 8, we learn that many who heard Nephi's prayer and call to repentance denied his message, but there were those who spoke up for the truths he was declaring. Nephi, in order to confirm his power and authority to the people, told them of the death of the chief judge. Five individuals went to the office of the chief judge in order to confirm Nephi's words.

Helaman, Chapter 9, the death of the chief judge is confirmed, however, the five are overcome with fear that other prophecies of Nephi may also be true. They are then arrested for the murder. When the services for the chief judge are held, the five are brought forth as the perpetrators. Those who had heard Nephi's words, state the five are innocent and had only come to confirm Nephi's words. Nephi is then arrested for the death of chief judge. Nephi then offers another prophecy to confirm his innocence. He tells them to go to the home of the chief judge's brother and confront him. He will deny and then confess his guilt and state that Nephi had nothing to do with the chief judge's death. As a result of Nephi's prophecy, the five who were held in prison are converted and also many who heard his second prophecy regarding the chief judge's brother confess that Nephi is a prophet.

Helaman, Chapter 10, we are taught the importance of "pondering" and that as we do so the Lord may then reveal more of his truths to us. We learn that Nephi's calling and election is made sure as a result of the valiancy. He is given the sealing power by the Lord. Nephi was instructed to travel throughout the land and call the people to repentance. Many refused to hear his words.

In Helaman, Chapter 11, with authority from the Lord, Nephi uses the sealing power he holds to create a famine in the land that will bring the people to repentance. The famine lasts for approximately two years. As a result of the repentance of the people, the Lord, at Nephi's request, ends the famine. Unfortunately, the repentance of the people does not last, and the band of Gadianton robbers

begins to thrive among the people. In just nine short years, the people had again returned to wickedness and were ripe for destruction.

Helaman, Chapter 12, is a commentary by the prophet Mormon who abridged the plates. He notes the effect prosperity has upon the members of the Church as the love of money leads them to become prideful, leading them to wickedness. Henry B. Eyring reminds us that we can combat the pitfalls of prosperity by seeking the help of the Holy Ghost. He will help us remember our blessings from the Lord and our gratitude to Him. (see Henry B. Eyring. "Recognize, Remember, and Give Thanks," in *Ensign*, August 2013, 4). Mormon reminds again along with no remembering, the sin of pride. Pride is one of the maladies that leads an individual to increased wickedness. We learn of the nothingness of man in comparison to the dust of the earth. For unlike man, the dust of the earth is steadfast in its obedience to the word of the Lord where man often is not. Mormon concludes his commentary by reminding each of us the blessing we may receive of everlasting life or damnation, dependent upon the goodness we have chosen to do during this life.

Our next lesson [BM#35] will focus upon the words Samuel, the Lamanite, delivered from the wall to the Nephites. These include the warning to the Nephites of their destruction unless they repent as well as the signs that will signify to those living in ancient America, the birth and death of the Savior of the world.