

## **BM#35 "Repent and Return unto the Lord" - Helaman 13-16**

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### **I. Introduction**

As noted in our last lesson, the Nephites had become wicked, while the Lamanites were righteous. We also noted that the Book of Mormon is not about "Good guys" versus "Bad guys." Instead it is about a group of people who choose to enter into a covenant with the Lord and seek to become like Him. When they accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and Redeemer; Exercise faith and repent from their sins; Are baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and Strive to live a life of obedience, they are blessed as individuals, and as a people. This includes having the Spirit of the Lord in their lives. This is the current state of the Lamanites.

When an individual or a group of people, rebels against the words of the Lord's prophets; Chooses to live lives of wickedness, and persecute the poor and the needy, they become ripe for destruction. The Spirit of the Lord is grieved and withdraws from them. This is the current state of the Nephites.

In the eyes of the Lord, all are welcome into his kingdom. They enter by their willingness to make and keep sacred covenants and striving to pattern their lives after Jesus Christ. They become one with the Lord in heart and mind. Covenant keeping and worthy lives are the criteria, not progenitors. It was Jesus who told the Jews, "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matthew 3:9). His meaning was that they would enter the kingdom of God, not based on their lineage, but by their willingness to recognize Jesus as the Christ and to mold their lives to become like Him.

The main individual of our focus is a Lamanite who came to the land of Zarahemla. He is referred simply as Samuel, the Lamanite.

George Reynolds states,

**"Samuel The Lamanite.** The conditions of society in the days of Samuel was somewhat peculiar (B.C. 6). The Nephites and the Lamanites had, so far as righteousness was concerned, to a great extent changed places...

"Such was the conditions of affairs when the Lamanite prophet, Samuel, appeared among the citizens of Zarahemla and for many days preached repentance in their midst. Their eyes were blind and their ears were deaf, sin filled their souls and in their anger they cast him out...As he was preparing to return to his own country a holy angel visited him and proclaimed the voice of the Lord; that voice said that he should turn back and prophesy to the people of Zarahemla the things that should come into his heart.

"He returned to the city but was refused admission at its gates...the prophet had the word of the Lord burning within him and could not be restrained. He mounted the walls of the city and from his conspicuous vantage ground, with outstretched hands and loud voice, he proclaimed to the wicked the unwelcomed tidings of their coming destruction...this great body of the populace grew more enraged at the want of success that attend their murderous efforts. They called upon their captains to seize and bind him...he cast himself down and fled to his own country where he began to preach and prophesy among his own people. And from that time the voice of Samuel was never again heard among the children of Nephi but in later years Jesus, Nephi, Mormon and others quoted his prophecies or referred to his testimony." (*A Dictionary of the Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1892, {1954}, 244-245).

Outline of Helaman 13-16:

"Helaman 13-15: Prophecy of Samuel, the Lamanite, to the Nephites, Proclaims judgments upon fourth generation of Nephites. Land to be cursed. He prays for people to repent. He predicts signs to be shown at Christ's birth five years distant. Also the signs to be given at his death. Christ to redeem all mankind. Remnant of the Lamanites to be saved. Nephites to be utterly destroyed unless they repent.

"Helaman 16: Some Nephites believe Samuel and join Church, but others reject and attempt to assault him. Escapes and returns to own country. Nephite skepticism concerning coming of Christ." (Sidney B. Sperry. *Book of Mormon Compendium*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968, 374).

## II. Helaman 13

As noted in the introduction, "one Samuel, a Lamanite, came into the land of Zarahemla, and began to preach to the people...they did cast him out, and he was about to return to his own land...[however] the voice of the Lord came unto him, that he should return again and prophesy unto the people [the] things [that] should come into his heart" (Helaman 13:2-3). (see George Reynolds, *A Dictionary of the Book of Mormon*, 244-245.)

George Reynolds describes the Nephites,

"[They] were puffed up with worldly pride, were full of vain boastings, envying, strifes, malice, persecutions, murders and all manner of iniquities. They cast out, stoned and slew the servants of the God while they encouraged, exalted and rewarded the false teachers who flattered them in their vileness. They reveled in all the luxury that the fatness of the land brought forth; they were ostentatious in the use of gold and silver and precious things but their hearts never turned in thankfulness to the great Giver of all those bounties." (*A Dictionary of the Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1892, [1954], 244).

In many ways, the conditions are similar to Abinadi's mission to the wicked people of King Noah, and Alma, the younger's mission to the wicked people of Ammonihah. Both were cast out, and each returned to deliver their message. Alma, the younger immediately returned after being directed to do so by an angel of God (see Alma 8:14-15.)

Given the spiritual condition of the Nephites, at this time, it is not surprising they would reject a prophet of God.

Helaman 13:4-5

4 And it came to pass that they would not suffer that he should enter into the city; therefore he went and got upon the wall thereof, and stretched forth his hand and cried with a loud voice, and prophesied unto the people whatsoever things the Lord put into his heart.

5 And he said unto them: Behold, I, Samuel, a Lamanite, do speak the words of the Lord which he doth put into my heart; and behold he hath put it into my heart to say unto this people that the sword of justice hangeth over this people; and four hundred years pass not away save the sword of justice falleth upon this people.

Nephi had previously told the Nephites, "behold, my brethren that it shall be better for the Lamanites than for you except ye shall repent. For behold, they are more righteous than you, for they have not sinned against the greater knowledge which ye have received;" (Helaman 7:23-24). The Nephites had been given much concerning the revealed truths of the gospel, therefore, when they sinned they were sinning against a greater light, and their punishment was consequently greater.

The words of Samuel, the Lamanite, continued,

Helaman 13:6, 8, 10

6 Yea, heavy destruction awaiteth this people, and it surely cometh unto this people, and nothing can save this people save it be repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, who surely shall come into the world, and shall suffer many things and shall be slain for his people.

8 Therefore, thus saith the Lord; Because of the hardness of the hearts of the people of the Nephites, except they repent I will take away my word from them, and I will withdraw my Spirit from them, and I will suffer them no longer, and I will turn the hearts of their brethren against them.

10 Yea, I will visit them in my fierce anger, and there shall be those of the fourth generation who shall live, of your enemies, to behold your utter

**destruction; and this shall surely come except ye repent, saith the Lord; and those of the fourth generation shall visit your destruction.**

The judgments pronounced by the Lord would come upon the Nephites unless they repent. They included: the loss of the Lord's guidance and direction as given by revelation; the withdrawal of his Spirit which would result in an even greater degree of influence by Satan, and they would "be smitten...with the sword and with famine and with pestilence" (Helaman 13:9).

Helaman 13:11

**11 But if ye will repent and return unto the Lord your God I will turn away mine anger, saith the Lord; yea, thus saith the Lord, blessed are they who will repent and turn unto me, but wo unto him that repenteth not.**

The mercy of the Lord and his forgiveness were extended to the people, if they would repent; if not, they would be destroyed. He also stated that Zarahemla and Gideon, and also a number of other cities, would be destroyed as a result of the wickedness and abominations of their people. (see Helaman 13:12, 15-16.)

Helaman 13:18

**18 And it shall come to pass, said the Lord of Hosts, yea, our great and true God, that whoso shall hide up treasures in the earth shall find them again no more, because of the great curse of the land, save he be a righteous man and shall hide it up unto the Lord.**

Bryan Richards states,

"For their wicked greediness and love of money, the Lord promised them a punishment worse than poverty. At least when you are poor, you know you don't have any money. Imagine how frustrated the money grubbing Nephite must have been to return to the site of their hidden treasure only to find it gone! They must have exclaimed, 'I know I left it here someplace!' Samuel [later] prophesied that this curse would help them remember 'then shall ye lament, and say: O that I had repented...then [our riches] would not have become slippery that we should lose them; for behold our riches are gone from us' (vs.32-33)...Their pain must have been

exquisite as their most beloved possessions became inextricably unattainable."

([www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-13](http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-13)).

Helaman 13:21-22

**21 Behold ye, the people of this great city, and hearken unto my words; yea, hearken unto the words which the Lord saith; for behold, he saith that ye are cursed because of your riches, and also are your riches cursed because ye have set your heart upon them, and have not hearkened unto the words of him who gave them unto you.**

**22 Ye do not remember the Lord your God in the things with which he hath blessed you, but ye do always remember your riches, not to thank the Lord your God for them; yea, your hearts are not drawn out unto the Lord, but they do swell with great pride, unto boasting, and unto great swelling, envyings, strifes, malice, persecutions, and murders, and all manner of iniquities.**

Hugh Nibley states,

"The Prophet Samuel the Lamanite sets forth the interesting rule that when 'the Economy' becomes the main and expressing concern of a society--or in the routine Book of Mormon phrase, when 'they begin to set their hearts upon their riches'--the economy will self-destruct. This is how he puts it: 'Ye do always remember your riches;...your hearts are not drawn out unto the Lord, but they do swell with great pride,...your hearts are not drawn out unto the Lord, but they do swell with great pride,...envyings, strifes, malice, persecutions and murders, and all manner of iniquities' (Helaman 13:22). Note well the sequence of folly: first we are well pleased with ourselves because of our wealth, then comes the game of status and prestige, leading to competitive maneuvers, hatred, and dirty tricks, and finally the ultimate solution. Where wealth guarantees respectability, principles melt away as the criminal element rises to the top: 'For this cause hath the Lord God caused that a curse should come upon the land, and also upon your riches' (Helaman 13:23)." (*The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, Vol.8. John W. Welch, General Editor. Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah: Deseret Book Co., and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1989, 349).

Helaman 13:24-25

**24 Yea, wo unto this people, because of this time which has arrived, that ye do cast out the prophets, and do mock them, and cast stones at them, and do slay them, and do all manner of iniquity unto them, even as they did of old time.**

**25 And now when ye talk, ye say: If our days had been in the days of our fathers of old, we would not have slain the prophets; we would not have stoned them, and cast them out.**

Spencer W. Kimball states,

"You folk in the Church and out of the Church heard a prophet of God bear testimony that this was the only true and living Church upon the earth. Did you listen, or do you also build sepulchers for the dead prophets and tombs for those who have passed away long ago and disregard the living ones? I bear witness to you that the Prophet of God who bore testimony to you on Friday morning is the recognized head of God's kingdom here upon this earth, and you would do well to listen and to accept it in your hearts." (*Conference Report*, October, 1949, 123).

If we will not obey the word of the living prophets, we would not have obeyed the words of the dead prophets for both speak the word of the Lord as given for their current times. Faith comes when we obey without being able to see the future, rather than by looking backward to events historically confirmed.

Helaman 13:26-27

**26 Behold ye are worse than they; for as the Lord liveth, if a prophet come among you and declareth unto you the word of the Lord, which testifieth of your sins and iniquities, ye are angry with him, and cast him out and seek all manner of ways to destroy him; yea, you will say that he is a false prophet, and that he is a sinner, and of the devil, because he testifieth that your deeds are evil.**

**27 But behold, if a man shall come among you and shall say: Do this, and there is no iniquity; do that and ye shall not suffer; yea, he will say, Walk after the pride of your own hearts; yea, walk after the pride of your eyes, and do whatsoever your heart desireth--and**

**if a man shall come among you and say this, ye will receive him, and say that he is a prophet.**

Here Samuel the Lamanite contrasts the words of a true prophet compared to a false prophet. A true prophet will always tell that people what they **need to hear** as opposed to a false prophet who tells the people what they **want to hear**. While it is difficult for most people to hear what they need to do to improve, a true prophet cares too much for the people to tell them otherwise. A false prophet does not care about the people, but is only concerned about his own popularity and, therefore, he is willing to say whatever he believes the people want to hear.

Helaman 13:29

**29 O ye wicked and ye perverse generation; ye hardened and ye stiffnecked people, how long will ye suppose that the Lord will suffer you? Yea, how long will ye suffer yourselves to be led by foolish and blind guides? Yea, how long will ye choose darkness rather than light?**

As a people, we are often prone to put off and delay the difficult. We look for excuses to ease our conscience so that we can continue to delay facing the truth. At times, we fool ourselves into believing that the Lord in his mercy will not require our complete repentance. When we think such thoughts, we are playing into the hands of Satan. It is he who is the originator of delays. He seeks to lull us in our sins by whispering that we need not repent. He tells us that our behavior is not really as bad as others. We must not fool ourselves. God is merciful and He is forgiving, but we must now make the effort to set things right in our lives. Otherwise, we may miss our opportunity to repent and our judgment will be sure.

Helaman 13:37-38

**37 Behold, we are surrounded by demons, yea, we are encircled about by the angels of him who hath sought to destroy our souls. Behold, our iniquities are great, O Lord, canst thou not turn away thine anger from us? And this shall be your language in those days.**

**38 But behold, your days of probation are past; ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation until it**

**is everlasting too late, and your destruction is made sure; yea, for ye have sought all the days of your lives for that which ye could not obtain; and ye have sought for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head.**

It was Amulek who had previously given the Zoramites this important warning.

Alma 34:33

**33 And now, as I have said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed.**

Henry B. Eyring states,

"Upon hearing President Kimball's description of the effort repentance requires, those who are now in serious sin will have a thought delivered to their minds that goes something like this: 'Well, if it is that difficult to repent, I might as well go on in sin. Later, when I need forgiveness, I'll just go through that once.'

"That is so unwise. Let me tell you why. First, people who postpone repentance may run out of time. And second, they will find more misery in more sin, not the happiness they hope for but can't find. Remember the warning from Samuel the Lamanite [see Helaman 13:38]." (*To Draw Close To God*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1997, 65).

Helaman 13:38

**38 ...for ye have sought all the days of your lives for that which ye could not obtain; and ye have sought for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head.**

It seems important to underline this counsel by Samuel the Lamanites, so that we do not seek happiness by doing

iniquity. This counsel is similar to the words of truth Alma, the younger, taught his son, Corianton, "Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10); and Mormon, "it was rather the sorrowing of the damned, because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin" (Mormon 2:13).

Neal A. Maxwell states,

"Henry Fairlie has written perceptively in his book, *The Seven Deadly Sins Today* concerning how 'the lustful person will usually be found to have a terrible hollowness at the center of his life' and about 'the desert he has made of himself and his life.' (Washington, D.C.: New Republic Books, 1978, P. 187.) 'Lust,' wrote Fairlie, 'is not interested in its partners, but only in the gratification of its own craving...Lust dies at the next dawn, and when it returns in the evening, to search where it may, it is with its own past erased.' (Ibid., P. 175.)

"Those so drained by sensuality do, in fact, seek to compensate for their loneliness by sensations. However, in the arithmetic of appetite, anything multiplied by zero still totals zero! But the senseless search goes on, just as Samuel the Lamanite bemoaned, 'for ye have sought all the days of your lives for that which ye could not obtain...for happiness in doing iniquity.' (Hel.13:38; see also Alma 41:10; Morm.2:13.)

"So it is that sexual immorality finally causes the isolation of the individual from God, from others, and yes, even from oneself!

"So it is that the laughter of the world is merely loneliness pathetically trying to reassure itself. Immorality is not the verification of one's existence; instead, it is the shrinking of one's significance!" ("Cleanse Us from All Unrighteousness," in *Ensign*, February, 1986, 19).

Samuel, the Lamanite has delivered a powerful call of repentance to those gathered at the wall of Zarahemla. He has more from the Lord to share with them.

### **III. Helaman 14**

Samuel, the Lamanite gives them the signs that will accompany both the birth and death of the Son of God upon the earth. These include: (1) "For five years more cometh...then cometh the Son of God to redeem all those who shall believe on his name" (Helaman 14:2); (2) "At the time of his coming...there shall be great lights in heaven, insomuch that in the night before he cometh there shall be no darkness, insomuch that it shall appear unto man as if it was day. Therefore, there shall be one day and a night and a day, as if it were one day and there were no night" (Helaman 14:3-4); (3) "It [night with no darkness] shall be the night before he is born" (Helaman 14:4); (4) "There shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld" (Helaman 14:5); (5) "There shall be many signs and wonders in heaven" (Helaman 14:6); and, (6) "Ye shall all be amazed, and wonder, insomuch that ye shall fall to the earth" (Helaman 14:7).

**Chart 1: Prophecy of the Savior's Birth - Helaman 14:2-7**

Prophecy of the Savior's Birth	Fulfillment
<b>Helaman 14:2</b>	<b>Birth in five years</b> <b>3 Nephi 1:13</b>
<b>Helaman 14:3-4</b>	<b>No darkness the night before the birth</b> <b>3 Nephi 1:15</b>
<b>Helaman 14:5</b>	<b>New star</b> <b>3 Nephi 1:21</b>
<b>Helaman 14:6</b>	<b>Many signs and wonders in heaven</b> <b>Helaman 16:13;</b> <b>3 Nephi 2:1</b>
<b>Helaman 14:7</b>	<b>All people amazed and fall to the earth</b> <b>3 Nephi 1:16-17</b>

Reference: *The Book of Mormon Student Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009, 283).

Samuel, the Lamanite, taught the Nephites the following qualities to direct them to the Savior. These include: (1) "[To] believe in God that they shall have everlasting life" (Helaman 14:8); (2) "Repent and [receive] remission [of sins]" (Helaman 14:9, 13); and, (3) "Ye are free...to act for yourselves" (Helaman 14:30).

**Chart 2: Prepare for the Savior - Helaman 14**

Scripture	Teaching
<b>Helaman 14:8</b>	<b>Believe in God</b>

Helaman 14:9, 13	Repent and be forgiven through Christ
Helaman 14:30	You are free to act for yourself

Reference: *The Book of Mormon Student Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009, 283).

Helaman 14:10-11

10 And now, because I am a Lamanite, and have spoken unto you the words which the Lord hath commanded me, and because it was hard against you, ye are angry with me and do seek to destroy me, and have [previously] cast me out from among you.

11 And ye shall hear my words, for, for this intent have I come up upon the walls of this city, that ye might hear and know of the judgments of God which do await you because of your iniquities, and also that ye might know the conditions of repentance.

Samuel, the Lamanite, is fully aware that he is speaking to a hostile audience. They had previously cast him out of their city, and if he were not on the wall of the city, they would have put him in prison and then killed him. He has come to warn them so that they might avoid the destruction that will come upon them. If they will repent the destruction will be stayed.

Prior to giving the Nephites the signs and wonders that will occur at the time of the Savior's death, he confirms why he must die.

Helaman 14:15-18

15 For behold, he surely must die that salvation may come; yea, it behooveth him and becometh expedient that he dieth, to bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, that thereby men may be brought into the presence of the Lord.

16 Yea, behold, this death bringeth to pass the resurrection, and redeemeth all mankind from the first death--that spiritual death; for all mankind, by the fall of Adam being cut off from the presence of the Lord, are considered as dead, both as to things temporal and to things spiritual.

17 But behold, the resurrection of Christ redeemeth mankind, yea, even all mankind, and bringeth them back into the presence of the Lord.

18 Yea, and it bringeth to pass the condition of repentance, that whosoever repenteth the same is not hewn down and cast into the fire; but whosoever repenteth not is hewn down and cast into the fire; and there cometh upon them again a spiritual death, yea, a second death, for they are cut off again as to things pertaining to righteousness.

The reason for Christ's death is two-fold: First, in order to free all of God's children from the temporal or physical death that came as a result of Adam's transgression and is inherited by all mankind. Secondly, to overcome the spiritual death, that is the separation of mankind from the presence of God.

Christ overcame the temporal death by physically paying for Adam's transgression. Due to his divine parentage, and his sinless mortal life, as the Son of God he had the power over his death. He inherited the power over death and the ability to resurrect himself, as well as all of God's children from his Father. His gift of resurrection extends freely to all mankind. The scriptures record, "For as in Adam all die, even in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Christ overcame the spiritual death by suffering for the sins of mankind. Overcoming the separation of man from God, however, is conditional upon each individual accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior and Redeemer and pledging their obedience to the principles and ordinances of His gospel including personal repentance from their sins. In this manner, "men and women...become clean from sin and overcome the spiritual death...Those who willfully rebel against the light and truth of the gospel will suffer spiritual death. This death is often called the second death" (**Death, Spiritual.** *The Guide to the Scriptures.* Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, Inc., 2001).

Russell M. Nelson states,

"Therefore, spiritual (or the second) death becomes a matter of great importance to us while we sojourn here in mortality. Even the Savior cannot save individuals in their sins. He will redeem them from their sins, but then only

though [their] repentance. Only rarely may we be responsible for physical death, but we are solely responsible for spiritual death.

"Whether spiritual death be numbered as the second or the first death is incidental. The real object is to avoid it." (*The Gateway We Call Death*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1995, 14).

Samuel, the Lamanite now prophesied regarding the signs of Savior's death. These include: (1) "In that day the he shall suffer death the sun shall be darkened and refuse to give his light unto you; and also the moon and the stars; and there shall be no light upon the face of this land, even from the time that he shall suffer death, for the space of three days, to the time that he shall rise again from the dead"; (2) "At the time that he shall yield up the ghost there shall be thundering and lightening for the space of many hours"; (3) "And the earth shall shake and tremble; and the rocks which are upon the face of this earth, which are both above the earth and beneath, which ye know at this time are solid, or the more part of it is one solid mass, shall be broken up; Yea, they shall be rent in twain, and shall ever after be found in seams and in cracks, and in broken fragments upon the face of the whole earth, yea, both above the earth and beneath"; (4) "And behold, there shall be great tempests, and there shall be many mountains laid low, like unto a valley, and there shall be many places which are now valleys which shall become mountains whose height is great"; (5) "And many highways shall be broken up, and many cities shall become desolate"; and, (6) "And many graves shall be opened, and shall yield up many of their dead; and many saints shall appear unto many" (Helaman 14:20-25).

**Chart 3. Prophecy of the Savior's Death - Helaman 14:20-25**

Prophecy of the Savior's Death	Fulfillment	
<b>Helaman 14:20, 27</b>	<b>Sun darkened for three days</b>	<b>3 Nephi 8:19-23</b>
<b>Helaman 14:21</b>	<b>Thunder, lighting, earthquakes</b>	<b>3 Nephi 8:6-7</b>
<b>Helaman 14:22</b>	<b>Earth broken up</b>	<b>3 Nephi 8:12, 17-18</b>
<b>Helaman 14:23</b>	<b>Great tempests; mountains laid low and valleys become</b>	<b>3 Nephi 8:5-6</b>

	<b>mountains</b>	
<b>Helaman 14:24</b>	<b>Highways and cities destroyed</b>	<b>3 Nephi 8:8-11, 13-14</b>
<b>Helaman 14:25</b>	<b>Graves open and resurrected Saints Minister to people</b>	<b>3 Nephi 23:9-13</b>

Reference: *The Book of Mormon Student Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009, 283).

Helaman 14:26-28

**26 And behold, thus hath the angel spoken unto me; for he said unto me that there should be thunderings and lightnings for the space of many hours.**

**27 And he said unto me that while the thunder and the lightning lasted, and the tempest, that these things should be, and that darkness should cover the face of the whole earth for the space of three days.**

**28 And the angel said unto me that many shall see greater things than these, to the intent that they might believe that these signs and these wonders should come to pass upon all the face of this land, to the intent that there should be no cause for unbelief among the children of men--**

These signs and wonders shall have such magnitude and effect upon the people that they will erase all doubt from their minds that these signs are those that would accompany the death of the Savior. All will know in ancient America that the Son of God had died.

Samuel reminded the people assembled at Zarahemla that because they "are free, [and]...permitted to act for themselves [that] whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself; and whosoever doth iniquity, doeth it unto himself" (Helaman 14:30). He also stated, it has been 'given unto you that ye might know good from evil, and he has given unto you that ye might choose life or death; and ye can do good, and be restored unto that which is good, or have that which is good restored unto you; or ye can do evil, and have that which is evil restored unto you" (Helaman 14:31).

It is through our thoughts, words and actions, that we determine our own destiny following our mortal death. It is important that we carefully consider our daily choices.

#### **IV. Helaman 15**

Helaman 15:1, 3

**1 And now, my beloved brethren, behold, I declare unto you that except ye shall repent your houses shall be left unto you desolate.**

**3 Yea, wo unto this people who are called the people of Nephi except they shall repent when they shall see all these signs and wonders which shall be showed unto them; for behold, they have been a chosen people of the Lord; yea the people of Nephi hath he loved, and also hath he chastened them; yea, in the days of their iniquities hath he chastened them because he loveth them.**

Given the current state of wickedness that prevailed among the Nephites, the only hope for them is to repent, otherwise the destruction that is prophesied to occur on the Western hemisphere at the time of the death of the Savior would be so great that they will be consumed by its effects. It is because of the love which the Lord has for his children that he chastene them, so that they could repent from their iniquities and become further refined. As the Nephites repented, they once again received the promised blessings from the Lord and would not suffer the promised destruction.

Brigham Young states,

"Though our chastisements are often hard to be borne those who bear them patiently, willingly, and submissively, will find that they yield the Gospel fruits of righteousness insomuch that they will know how to be Saints indeed." (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol.3. London: Latter-day Saints' Depot, 1854-86, 54).

Ezra Taft Benson continues,

"We should learn to accept counsel. All of us need counsel. Sometime there is need for reprimanding. I do not suppose that any of us who served for any length of time have not

been on the receiving end of some pointed counsel that was for our benefit." (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988, [5<sup>th</sup> Printing, 1993], 332-333).

Samuel, the Lamanite, stated the qualities of the Lamanites that have brought the Lord's blessings upon them. These include: (1) "[Act]in the path of their duty"; (2) "Do walk circumspectly [consider circumstances before acting] before God"; (3) "Keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments...;" (4) "Striving with unwearied diligence [to]...bring...brethren to the knowledge of the truth"; (5) "[As] brought to a knowledge of the truth...[it] bringeth a change of heart unto them" and, 6) "[They] are firm and steadfast in the faith" (Helaman 15:5-8). He adds the following promise of the Lord to the Lamanites,

Helaman 15:12-13

**12 Yea, I say unto you, that in the latter times the promises of the Lord have been extended to our brethren, the Lamanites; and notwithstanding the many afflictions which they shall have, and notwithstanding they shall be driven to and fro upon the face of the earth, and be hunted, and shall be smitten and scattered abroad, having no place for refuge, the Lord shall be merciful unto them.**

**13 And this is according to the prophecy, that they shall again be brought to the true knowledge, which is the knowledge of their Redeemer, and their great and true shepherd, and be numbered among his sheep.**

Bryan Richards reminds us,

"Significantly Latter-day Saints shall have a role in assisting the Lamanites to achieve their destiny. Note the words of Nephi when the Gentiles would take the Book of Mormon to the remnant of his people:

2 Nephi 30:5-6

**5 And the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among them, wherefore, they shall be restored unto the knowledge of their fathers, and also to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was had among their fathers.**

**6 And then shall they rejoice; for they shall know that it is a blessing unto them from the hand of God; and their scales of darkness shall begin to fall from**

**their eyes; and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a pure and delightsome people.**

[www.gosepeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-15](http://www.gosepeldoctrine.com/contents/Helaman-15)).

Let us not forget that the Title Page of the Book of Mormon contains these words, "Written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile..." (Title Page, *The Book of Mormon*). One of the purposes of the Book of Mormon was to bless the Lamanites during the latter days.

Samuel, the Lamanite had these words of reminder to the wicked Nephites,

Helaman 15:14, 17

**14 Therefore I say unto you, it shall be better for them than for you except ye repent.**

**17 And now behold, saith the Lord, concerning the people of the Nephites: If they will not repent, and observe to do my will, I will utterly destroy them, saith the Lord, because of their unbelief notwithstanding the many mighty works which I have done among them; and as surely as the Lord liveth shall these things be, saith the Lord.**

The voice of warning had gone forth from the Lord's appointed servant. If the Nephites failed to heed the warning delivered by Samuel, the Lamanite their fate was sealed and their destruction would follow.

## **V. Helaman 16**

Helaman 16:1-3

**1 And now, it came to pass that there were many who heard the words of Samuel, the Lamanite, which he spoke upon the walls of the city. And as many as believed on his word went forth and sought for Nephi; and when they had come forth and found him they confessed unto him their sins and denied not, desiring that they might be baptized unto the Lord.**

**2 ...and they cast stones at him upon the wall, and also many shot arrows at him as he stood on the wall; but the Spirit of the Lord was with him, insomuch that**

**they could not hit him with their stones neither with their arrows.**

**3 Now when they saw that they could not hit him, there were many who did believe on his words, insomuch that they went away unto Nephi to be baptized.**

All who were gathered at the city wall heard the message of Samuel, the Lamanite. Three groups may be identified. The first group were those who were sensitive to the Spirit of the Lord, and recognized the truth of the prophet's words. They then sought Nephi, the Lord's local representative, confessed their sins and entered the waters of baptism. The second group, recognized intellectually that when the arrows and stones did not hit him while he stood on the wall, it must be that he was being protected by the Lord. They also left the gathering to find Nephi in order to further pursue their inquiry regarding this experience. Led by the spirit or by intellectual curiosity, both groups found their way to the Lord's servant. The last group did not feel the spirit nor address their curiosity for they already had formulated an answer.

Helaman 16:6

**6 But the more part of them did not believe in the words of Samuel; therefore when they saw that they could not hit him with their stones and their arrows, they cried unto their captains: Take this fellow and bind him, for behold he hath a devil; and because of the power of the devil which is in him we cannot hit him with our stones and our arrows; therefore take him and bind him, and away with him.**

Isn't that the same explanation his critics would offer regarding the miracles that Jesus would perform?

Matthew 12:22-24

**22 Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb [not speak]: and he healed him, insomuch that [he who was]...blind and dumb [then] both spake and saw.**

**23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?**

**24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of devils.**

Like the Pharisees of the future, the Nephites sought to deny the power of Samuel's message by attributing his protection to the devil, thereby discounting any truth to his words. Following the delivery of his message, Samuel, the Lamanite, "cast himself down from the wall, and did flee out of their lands, yea, even unto his own country, and began to preach and to prophesy among his own people. And behold, he was never heard of more among the Nephites;" (Helaman 16:7-8).

Samaul, the Lamanite, departed from the land of Zarahemla in "the eighty and six year of the reign of the judges" (Helaman 16:9). Over the next three years, we read the following regarding the people of Nephi.

87<sup>th</sup> year: "more part of the people remaining in their pride and wickedness, and lesser part walking more circumspectly before God" (Helaman 16:10).

88<sup>th</sup> year: same conditions existed. (see Helaman 16:11.)

89<sup>th</sup> year: "but little alteration in the affairs of the people, save it were the people began to be more hardened in iniquity, and do more and more of that which was contrary to the commandments of God" (Helaman 16:12).

90<sup>th</sup> year: "...[the scriptures] began to be fulfilled...there were great signs given unto the people, and wonders; and the words of the prophets began to be fulfilled. And angels did appear unto men, wise men, and did declare unto them glad tidings of great joy;...Nevertheless, the people began to harden their hearts--**all save it were the most believing part of them**--both of the Nephites and also of the Lamanites, and began to depend upon their own strength and upon their own wisdom,..." (Helaman 16:13-15).

As many of the Nephites and Lamanites began to harden their hearts, they made the following statements: (1) "Some things they have guessed right, among so many; but behold, we know that all these great and marvelous works cannot come to pass which have been spoken"; (2) "It is not reasonable that such a being as a Christ shall come; if so, and he be the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth,

as it has been spoken, why will he not show himself unto us as well as unto them who shall be at Jerusalem?" (3) "We know this is a wicked tradition...handed down unto us by our fathers, to cause us that we should believe in some great and marvelous things which should come to pass, but not among us, but in a land which is far distant, a land which we know not; therefore they can keep us in ignorance, for we cannot witness with our own eyes that they are true"; (4) "They will by the cunning and the mysterious arts of the evil one, work some great mystery which we cannot understand, which will keep us down to be servants unto them, for we depend upon them to teach us the word; and thus will they keep us in ignorance...all the days of our lives"; and, (5) "Many more things did the people imagine up in their hearts which were foolish and vain...for Satan did stir them up to do iniquity continually" (Helaman 16:16-22).

It is tragic when a people allow Satan to have such a great hold upon them. Because of their disobedience to the commandments, they do not have the spirit of Lord to be with them and, therefore, they are not receptive to the whispering of the Spirit. Relying only on their intellect, they discount the fulfillment of signs and wonders that have been prophesied. When they do acknowledge them, they attribute their source to the devil, rather than God. They do not seek to know spiritual truth on their own by study and praying, yet they attribute a desire to keep them in ignorance to their teachers. It is this kind of confusion that allows the work of Satan to thrive.

Joseph Fielding Smith states,

"The worship of reason, of false philosophy, is greater now than it was [in the past]. Men are depending upon their own research to find out God, and that which they cannot discover and which they cannot demonstrate to their satisfaction through their own research and their natural senses, they reject. They are not seeking for the Spirit of the Lord; they are not striving to know God in the manner in which he had marked out by which he may be known; but they are walking in their own way, believing in their own man-made philosophies, teaching the doctrines of devils and not the doctrines of the Son of God." (*Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol.3. Compiled by Bruce R. McConkie. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956, [18<sup>th</sup> Printing, 1978], 275).

Dallin H. Oaks offers the following counsel to the honest seeker of divine truth,

"God reveals Himself and His eternal truths--the spiritual food that the scriptures call the bread of life and the living water--to those who seek, who serve, who keep His commandments, and who wait and listen in humility for His teaching. Study and reason are appropriate to begin the process, but 'the things of God cannot be learned solely by study and reason.'" ("Nourishing the Spirit," in *Ensign*, December, 1998, 9).

We would each do well to ponder and prayerfully seek to know the divine truths that God has restored in these latter days. Like the Nephites, our very salvation depends upon our coming to a knowledge of the truth, and then applying these principles in our lives daily.

Delbert L. Stapley states,

"This account of wickedness and contentions among the Nephites prior to the Lord's birth in the meridian of time is duplicated in the wickedness, contentions, and deceptions of our day as we approach the second coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Prophecies concerning these days are also being fulfilled and Satan is stirring up the hearts of men to do iniquity continually; and to thwart, if possible, faith in the great event of Christ's second coming to earth, which I testify is sure to come to pass. Satan is alert and active. We must be more alert and perceptive of the false and insincere schemes of his agents among us." (*Conference Report*. October, 1961, 21-22).

The similarity with the prophecies of Samuel, the Lamanite and those that will precede the Lord's Second Coming are noteworthy.

**Chart 4: Prophecies recorded in Helaman 13-16  
and Prophecies regarding the Second Coming**

Prophecies and Events Recorded in Helaman 13-16	Prophecy or Event	Signs & Events Precede Second Coming
<b>Helaman 16:1, 3, 6, 10</b>	<b>Strong righteous minority</b>	<b>1 Nephi 14:12; Jacob 5:70</b>
<b>Helaman 16:13-14</b>	<b>Spiritual outpourings and</b>	<b>Joel 2:28-30; D&amp;C 45:39-42</b>

	<b>miracles</b>	
<b>Helaman 13:22; 16:12, 22-23</b>	<b>Great wickedness</b>	<b>2 Timothy 3:1-5; D&amp;C 45:39-42</b>
<b>Helaman 13:2, 6, 8, 10-11; 14:9, 11; 15:1-3, 17; 16:2</b>	<b>Rejection of the Lord's prophets and their call to repentance</b>	<b>D&amp;C 1:14-16</b>
<b>Helaman 15:4-11</b>	<b>Conversion of many Lamanites</b>	<b>D&amp;C 49:24</b>
<b>Helaman 14:3-4</b>	<b>Prospect of a night with no darkness</b>	<b>Zechariah 14:7; See also Teaching of the Prophet Joseph Smith, [1976], 287</b>
<b>Helaman 14:5-6, 20</b>	<b>Prophecies of signs and wonders in the heavens</b>	<b>Joel 2:3-31; D&amp;C 45:40</b>
<b>Helaman 16:13-18</b>	<b>Denial of signs, wonders, and Christ's coming</b>	<b>2 Peter 3:3-4; D&amp;C 45:26</b>
<b>Helaman 14:21, 23, 26</b>	<b>Prophecies of great storms and other natural destruction</b>	<b>Revelation 16:18, 21; D&amp;C 88:88-90</b>
<b>Helaman 14:24; 15:1</b>	<b>Prophecy of the destruction of the wicked</b>	<b>Isaiah 26:21; Malachi 4:1; D&amp;C 1:9; 133:41</b>

Reference: *Book of Mormon Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 159).

Ezra Taft Benson states,

"In the Book of Mormon we find a pattern for preparing for the Second Coming. A major portion of the book centers on the few decades just prior to Christ's coming to America. By careful study of that times period, we can determine why some were destroyed in the terrible judgments that preceded His coming and what brought others to stand at the temple in the land of Bountiful and thrust their hands into the wounds of his hands and feet...Can anyone doubt that this book was meant for us and that in it we find great power, great comfort, and great protection." ("The Book of Mormon-Keystone of Our Religion," in *Ensign*, November, 1986, 6-7).

## VI. Conclusions

Our focus has been the four chapters that contain the message of the Lord to the Nephites as delivered by Samuel, the Lamanite. For many of us, these may be among the most important to us in the Book of Mormon. Why? Because, as many have noted, there is a direct similarity between the wickedness, contention, and deceptions of this time period and the events of our day as we draw near to the second coming of Jesus Christ. The wickedness in our world will continue to increase. The distance between the philosophy of the world and the faith of the believer will continue to widen. It is not unlikely that persecution of the believer will be part of this divergence. It is, therefore, extremely important for each of us to fortify our faith and strengthen our testimony so that we may be able to stand steadfast and immovable during the times which lie ahead. If we fail to keep the commandments and ignore the teachings of the prophets, we too will reap the destruction promised the unrepentant of the Nephites.

In Helaman, Chapter 13, Samuel, the Lamanite calls the Nephites to repentance. Only their complete repentance will stay the Lord's hand from promised destruction. Their treasures, upon which they have set their hearts, will become slippery and they will not be able to hold on to them. They rejected the words of the prophets, but embraced those who flatter them with falsehoods. They have sought to find "happiness in iniquity" (Helaman 13:38), yet as Alma, the younger previously taught, "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). Samuel, the Lamanite warned them not to procrastinate their day of repentance. Neither should we.

Helaman, Chapter 14, contains Samuel, the Lamanite prophesied not only regarding the birth and death of the Lord, but also steps to prepare us for these events. He also taught them regarding the importance of the Savior's death for only he had the power to free us from the effects of the temporal or physical death, and to provide a way for us to be able to overcome spiritual death.

In Helaman, Chapter 15, we are reminded that the purpose of the Lord chastening us is to inspire us to repent of our sins and to help us to become more refined as we seek to become like Him. We also learn that it will be better for

the Lamanites than for the Nephites if they do not repent, for they had rebelled against the greater light.

In Helaman, Chapter 16, we learn of the response to Samuel, the Lamanite by three groups of people. One group is receptive and follows the promptings of the spirit. The second group acts in response of the soldiers not being able to hit him with their stones or arrows. They seek direction from the prophet Nephi. The third group, attributed Samuel's safety to the devil, and thereby dismissed any inquiry on their part to explore the experience further. As the time drew nearer for the signs to be given as prophesied by Samuel, the Lamanite, the Nephites became every more hardened and wicked. Except for a small number of people, the words of Samuel did not affect the lives of the greater number for change. It is a divine truth, that man cannot know the things of God by their intellect only. It requires also a humble and obedient heart that is sincerely seeking in order to discover the truths of God.

In our next lesson [BM#36], we will address the events leading up to the appearance of Jesus Christ following his death and resurrection to those in ancient America. The events are similar to those of our day as we too learn to endure faithfully in times of trial and temptation as we prepare for the Second Coming of Our Lord and Savior.