

Introduction

At this crucial point in Nephite history, the wicked outnumbered the righteous. Their laws became so corrupted that they had little effect for good. Like his great-grandfather Alma, Nephi gave up his position as chief judge and devoted himself full-time to the Lord's work (see Alma 4:15–20). During this period of spiritual darkness, the people were “ripening for destruction” (Helaman 5:2). Nephi and his brother Lehi worked diligently to stem the tide of iniquity and turned many back to the Lord.

Commentary

Helaman 5:2. “The Voice of the People”

- When the people desired a king 62 years previously, Mosiah counseled that government should be by “the voice of the people” (Mosiah 29:26), stating it was not common for the majority of the people to desire unrighteousness. Government by the voice of the people was preferred to a monarchy in which an unrighteous king might lead them to destruction. At this time prior to the Savior's coming, however, the Nephites “who chose evil were more numerous than they who chose good” (Helaman 5:2). This corruption proved the truth of Mosiah's caution that should this ever occur, “then is the time that the judgments of God will come upon you; yea, then is the time he will visit you with great destruction” (Mosiah 29:27). This warning was fulfilled with the destruction preceding the Savior's appearance (see 3 Nephi 8–11).

The Lord declared this principle true in our day as well: “When the wicked rule the people mourn” (D&C 98:9).

Helaman 5:5–7. “Remember Your Names”

- Helaman had a special way of transferring his heritage to his sons—he named them after their noble ancestors to help his sons remember their righteous works. The following insight by Elder Carlos E. Asay (1926–99) of the Presidency of the Seventy helps us appreciate what this meant to Nephi and Lehi:

“Though all of Adam's children may not have received names of significance, many have, and it has made a difference. It made a difference in the lives of Helaman's sons, Nephi and Lehi. . . . [See Helaman 5:5–7.]

“The record attests that Nephi and Lehi did pattern their lives after their forebears or namesakes and did bring honor to the names given them” (*Family Pecan Trees: Planting a Legacy of Faith at Home* [1992], 66–67).

- President George Albert Smith (1870–1951) provided a modern illustration of the profound influence that a good name may have upon a person:

“One day . . . I lost consciousness of my surroundings and thought I had passed to the Other Side. I found myself standing with my back to a large and beautiful lake, facing a great forest of trees. . . .



“I began to explore, and soon I found a trail through the woods which seemed to have been used very little, and which was almost obscured by grass. I followed this trail, and after I had walked for some time and had traveled a considerable distance

through the forest, I saw a man coming towards me. I became aware that he was a very large man, and I hurried my steps to reach him, because I recognized him as my grandfather. In mortality he weighed over three hundred pounds, so you may know he was a large man. I remember how happy I was to see him coming. I had been given his name and had always been proud of it.

“When Grandfather came within a few feet of me, he stopped. His stopping was an invitation for me to stop. Then—and this I would like the boys and girls and young people never to forget—he looked at me very earnestly and said:

“‘I would like to know what you have done with my name.’

“Everything I had ever done passed before me as though it were a flying picture on a screen—everything I had done. Quickly this vivid retrospect came down to the very time I was standing there. My whole life had passed before me. I smiled and looked at my grandfather and said:

“I have never done anything with your name of which you need be ashamed.’

“He stepped forward and took me in his arms, and as he did so, I became conscious again of my earthly surroundings. My pillow was as wet as though water had been poured on it—wet with tears of gratitude that I could answer unashamed.

“I have thought of this many times, and I want to tell you that I have been trying, more than ever since that time, to take care of that name. So I want to say to the boys and girls, to the young men and women, to the youth of the Church and of all the world: Honor your fathers and your mothers. Honor the names that you bear, because some day you will have the privilege and the obligation of reporting to them (and to your Father in heaven) what you have done with their name” (“Your Good Name,” *Improvement Era*, Mar. 1947, 139).

Helaman 5:9. “No Other Way Nor Means Whereby Man Can Be Saved”

- Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles used Helaman 5:9 to teach that only the miraculous Atonement makes salvation possible:

“Full repentance is absolutely essential for the Atonement to work its complete miracle in your life. By understanding the Atonement, you will see that God is not a jealous being who delights in persecuting those who misstep. He is an absolutely perfect, compassionate, understanding, patient, and forgiving Father. He is willing to entreat, counsel, strengthen, lift, and fortify. He so loves each of us that He was willing to have His perfect, sinless, absolutely obedient, totally righteous Son experience indescribable agony and pain and give Himself in sacrifice for all [see Helaman 5:9]. Through that atonement we can live in a world



where absolute justice reigns in its sphere so the world will have order. But that justice is tempered through mercy attainable by obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

“Which of us is not in need of the miracle of repentance? Whether your life is lightly blemished or heavily disfigured from mistakes, the principles of recovery are the same. The length and severity of the treatments are conditioned to fit the circumstances. Our goal surely must be forgiveness. The only possible path to that goal is repentance, for it is written:

“There is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 101; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 75).

HELANAN 5:9–11

Compare Elder Richard G. Scott’s statement regarding the saving power of the Atonement to Helaman’s teachings to his sons.

Helaman 5:9–14. Remember

- President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) taught of the great importance that memory plays in our spirituality: “When you look in the dictionary for the most important word, do you know what it is? It could be *remember*. Because all of you have made covenants—you know what to do and you know how to do it—our greatest need is to remember. That is why everyone goes to sacrament meeting every Sabbath day—to take the sacrament and listen to the priests pray that they ‘may always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them.’ Nobody should ever forget to go to sacrament meeting. *Remember* is the word. *Remember* is the program” (“Circles of Exaltation” [address to Church Educational System religious educators, June 28, 1968], 5).

Helaman 5:12.  **A Strong Foundation**


• Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy vividly illustrated the necessity of strong foundations for long-term safety and survival:



“Someone once said you can’t visually tell the difference between a strand of cobweb and a strand of powerful cable—until stress is put on the strand. Our testimonies are that way, and for most of us, the days of stress for our testimonies have already begun. It may not be the death of a loved one. We might not yet have been asked to give up something that is really precious to us, though the time for such a test may well come to us by and by. Our current stress is more likely to come in the form of overpowering temptations, which show us that a shallow acceptance of the gospel does not have the power to cope with the full fury of the powers of darkness. Perhaps there is a mission call to a place of illness and disappointment, when we had planned on a mission to a place of unbounded opportunity. Or perhaps there are too many questions to which our limited knowledge simply has no answer, and those who claim to know more than we do taunt us with what appears to be a persuasive certainty.

“When those times come, our testimonies must be more than the cobweb strands of a fair-weather faith. They need to be like strands of cable, powerful enough to resist the shafts of him who would destroy us. In our days of stress and trouble, we must be built ‘upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, . . . that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, . . . and his

mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you, . . . because of the rock upon which ye are built.’ (Helaman 5:12.)” (*The Believing Heart*, 2nd ed. [1990], 21–22).

Helaman 5:12.  **The Mighty Storm of Satan “Shall Beat upon You”**

• President Spencer W. Kimball described the modern storms Satan sends upon Heavenly Father’s children today:

“We, too, are faced with powerful destructive forces unleashed by the adversary. Waves of sin, wickedness, immorality, degradation, tyranny, deceitfulness, conspiracy, and dishonesty threaten all of us. They come with great power and speed and will destroy us if we are not watchful.

“But a warning is sounded for us. It behooves us to be alert and to listen and flee from the evil for our eternal lives. Without help we cannot stand against it. We must flee to high ground or cling fast to that which can keep us from being swept away. That to which we must cling for safety is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is our protection from whatever force the evil one can muster. An inspired Book of Mormon prophet counseled his people: ‘Remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo’ (Hel. 5:12)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1978, 6; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 6).

HELAMAN 5:22–25

Compare Helaman 5:22–25 with 2 Nephi 1:15 and Alma 34:15–16. How is Christ’s love manifest in these experiences?

Helaman 5:35–41. Aminadab and a “Cloud of Darkness”

• We are told in the record that Aminadab “was a Nephite by birth, who had once belonged to the church of God but had dissented from them” (Helaman 5:35). His reactions, as recorded in Helaman 5:35, show that he still had some knowledge of what one must do to repent and turn to the Lord. Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy gave the following explanation:

“To find the way back, as Aminadab [remembered], one must repent and pray until doubt and darkness disappear and important things can be seen again. . . .

“. . . It is possible to return. It is possible for those who have ceased to pray, to pray again. It is possible for those who are lost to find their way through the dark and come home.

“And when they do, they will know, as I know, that the Lord is more concerned with what a man is than with what he was, and with where he is than with where he has been” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 99–100; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 77–78).

Helaman 5:50–52; 6:1–8. A Dramatic Transformation

• The power and impact of Nephi and Lehi’s mission among the Lamanites were dramatic. Following their successful mission, notice the following first-time experiences that occurred in the history of the majority of the Lamanites:

1. The majority of the Lamanites were converted to the gospel (see Helaman 5:50).
2. The Lamanites laid down their weapons and their hatred and false traditions (see Helaman 5:51).
3. They freely yielded up the land that belonged to the Nephites (see Helaman 5:52).
4. The majority of the Lamanites became more righteous than the Nephites (see Helaman 6:1).
5. The Lamanites began to preach the gospel to the Nephites (see Helaman 6:4).
6. There was peace in all the land (see Helaman 6:7).
7. The Lamanites and Nephites had open travel and free trade with one another (see Helaman 6:8).

Helaman 6:17. Setting Hearts upon Riches

• President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency taught that worldliness is an obstacle to inspiration



and spirituality: “God is forgotten out of vanity. A little prosperity and peace, or even a turn slightly for the better, can bring us feelings of self-sufficiency. We can feel quickly that we are in control of our lives, that the change for the better is our own doing, not that of a God who communicates to us through the still, small voice of the Spirit. Pride creates a noise within us which makes the quiet voice of the Spirit hard to hear. And soon, in our vanity, we no longer even listen for it. We can come quickly to think we don’t need it” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 16; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 16).

HELANMAN 6:21, 26–31

What is the motive of Lucifer and his followers? How can that motivate us to stay near our Father in Heaven?

Helaman 6:18–40. The Evils of Secret Combinations

• Helaman chapter 6 provides several insights into secret combinations, including how they work, what motivates them, and how they come to power:

1. Their two objectives are to get gain and power; then they glory in it (see Helaman 6:17; Ether 8:22; Moses 5:31).

2. Secret combinations require general wickedness to survive (see Helaman 6:21, 31, 38).
3. Secret combinations thrive on secrecy, violation of which is a capital offense (see Helaman 5:22; 6:22; Moses 5:29, 50).
4. Secret combinations involve formal covenant making (see Helaman 6:22; Moses 5:30–31).
5. They use murder, violence, threat of violence, plunder, vice, whoredoms, and flattery to get gain and power (see Helaman 2:4–5; 6:17, 23).
6. Secret combinations operate on laws contrary to the laws of the country (see Helaman 6:23).
7. Satan is the grand conspirator and author (see Helaman 6:26–30).
8. Participants have court trials for their own people—not according to the laws of the land but according to their own set of laws (see Helaman 6:23–24).
9. They seek to take governmental power as rapidly as possible (see Helaman 2:5; 6:39).
10. Participants seek to overthrow freedom for others but seek to maintain freedom for themselves (see Ether 8:25; Moses 5:28–33).
11. Secret combinations cause the destruction of nations (see Alma 37:21, 26, 29; Helaman 2:13; Ether 8:21–22).
12. Secret combinations are abominable in God’s sight (see 3 Nephi 9:9; Ether 8:18).

Helaman 8:14–15. “The Brazen Serpent”

• As a witness against wickedness and as a testimony of Christ, Nephi referred to an incident in the Old Testament when the children of Israel were being



plagued by “fiery flying serpents” (1 Nephi 17:41; Numbers 21:6–9). The prelude to the Israelites’ trouble was speaking evil of God and His prophet (see Numbers 21:5), just as the corrupt judges of Nephi’s day were doing. The lifting up of a brass serpent by Moses was a type (a symbolic representation) of the

crucifixion of Christ. When the people looked upon the brass serpent, they were healed.

Nephi’s use of this story emphasizes that we “should look upon the Son of God with faith” and live (Helaman 8:15; see also John 3:14–15). Through the atoning sacrifice of Christ, the poisonous venom of Satan was overcome for all who would repent. He then reminded the people that all of the prophets had testified of Christ (see Helaman 8:16–23).

- Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles further clarified the symbolism of the brazen serpent retold in the Book of Mormon:

“Divinely deliberate and serious symbolism is involved. Without this needed elaboration, the Old Testament episode of the fiery serpents does not give us a fulness of spiritual insight that can clearly be ‘for our profit and learning.’ (1 Nephi 19:23.) The symbolic emphasis in this episode is upon both the necessity and the simpleness of the way of the Lord Jesus. Ironically, in Moses’ time many perished anyway. The promise for the future is as follows: ‘And as many as should look upon that serpent should live, even so as many as should look upon the Son of God with faith, having a contrite spirit, might live, even unto that life which is eternal.’ (Helaman 8:15. See also 1 Nephi 17:41; Alma 37:46.)

“Thus, now we have the verified and amplified analogy, thanks to the precious and plain things given to us in ‘these last records.’

“The whole episode points toward the need to look upon Jesus Christ as our Lord, likewise a simple but unwaivable requirement. How plain and precious in any age!” (*Plain and Precious Things* [1983], 22).

HELAMAN 8:16–25

From Helaman 8 and Doctrine and Covenants 6:9; 11:9; 15:6; 16:6, what is every prophet’s message? How do you respond to the message?

Helaman 9:36–41. The Omniscience of God

• Upon seeing Nephi’s knowledge of secret and hidden things, there were those who wanted to proclaim him to be God. This is understandable given the universal acknowledgment of certain characteristics of God. Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught that omniscience is one of the characteristics of God:

“The Lord in a revelation for John Whitmer spoke of that which was in the latter’s heart, which only the Lord and John Whitmer knew, witnessing that God was omniscient concerning the needs of that individual. (D&C 15:3.)

“Paul said to the saints at Corinth, ‘And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.’ (1 Corinthians 3:20.) In the period just before the flood God saw not only the wickedness of man in the earth, but he saw also ‘every imagination of the thoughts’ of men’s hearts. (Genesis 6:5.) He knows ‘the things that come into your mind.’ (Ezekiel 11:5.) Jesus himself said before we pray, ‘Your father knoweth what things ye have need of.’ (Matthew 6:8.) Indeed, as Nephi said, ‘God . . . knoweth all things, and there is not anything save he knows.’ (2 Nephi 9:20.)

“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* [1978], 22).

Points to Ponder

- Helaman used the examples of their first fathers, Lehi and Nephi, to strengthen his sons Nephi and Lehi. Who in your family has influenced you for good? What was it about them that made an impact on you?
- What impressions have you given others about your family name by the life you have lived so far?
- What are some of the foundations you are building your life upon? Do you need to make any adjustments? What foundation is the most important to you?
- What are some of the obstacles to spirituality that existed in Nephi’s time that are similar to obstacles you face today?

Suggested Assignments

- Research your family history and discover who the first-generation converts in your family were. Talk to members of your family and collect the stories of their faith and conversion for your own personal history.
- Have a discussion with a friend or family member about how you might better keep the commandments, live the principles of the gospel, and stay close to your Father in Heaven in a world that is increasingly filled with wickedness.



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