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Characters and Teachings of the Book of Mormon: Lesson 25—Alma and Amulek

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LESSON DEPARTMENT

Theology—Characters and Teachings of The Book of Mormon

Lesson 25—Alma and Amulek

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(Text: The Book of Mormon: Alma, Chapters 9-16)

For Tuesday, October 5, 1954

Objective: To show how Alma and Amulek, in preaching repentance to the inhabitants of Ammonihah, were sustained by the Lord.

Alma Preaches Repentance

ACCORDING to instructions from an angel, the same one who had appeared to Alma at the time of his conversion, he went a second time before the people of Ammonihah. Immediately they opposed him. “. . . Who is God . . .” they scoffed, “. . . that sendeth no more authority than one man among this people, to declare unto them the truth of such great and marvelous things?” (Alma 9:6).

Alma boldly testified of their sins and called upon them to repent, saying: “. . . O ye wicked and perverse generation, how have ye forgotten the tradition of your fathers; yea, how soon ye have forgotten the commandments of God. . . . Yea, and if it had not been for his matchless power, and his mercy, and his long-suffering towards us, we should unavoidably have been cut off from the face of the earth. . . .” (Alma 9:8, 11).

Alma commanded them to repent if they expected to inherit the kingdom of God, and warned of imminent destruction if they refused, quoting the words God spoke to Lehi:

. . . Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper in the land? . . . Inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord” (Alma 9:13).

He pointed out to them how this prophecy had been verified among the Lamanites. However, Alma declared that despite the fact that the Lamanites had been cursed, the Lord would show mercy to them and lengthen their period of survival in the land because it was their traditions which had kept them in ignorance. He prophesied that the day would come when this veil of ignorance would be lifted and they would receive the gospel. If, however, the people of Ammonihah re-

fused to repent, they were told that their days would not be prolonged, but the Lord would use the Lamanites to scourge them and they should be visited with utter destruction.

After reminding his listeners of the blessings, both spiritual and temporal, which the Lord had always given to the Nephites when they had been obedient, Alma testified that the time drew near that the Son of God would come and redeem all those who would repent and come unto him, but that the wicked who would not repent must pay the price of their sins.

The inhabitants of Ammonihah were stirred to intense anger at being told that they were “. . . a hard-hearted and a stiff-necked people . . . a lost and a fallen people . . .” (Alma 9:31, 32). In their wrath they sought to imprison Alma, but the Lord did not suffer this trial to come to him at this time.

Testimony of Amulek

Amulek stood before the people and testified of the truth of the words of Alma. He pointed out that he, Amulek, was a descendant of Lehi who came through the loins of Manasseh, son of Joseph who was sold into Egypt, and that he was a man of influence and wealth. However, he did not try to hide the fact that in his life he had been wicked and had rebelled against God. Amulek said: “. . . I was called many times and I would not hear . . .” (Alma 10:6). He then recounted in detail how it happened that he had become Alma's close companion. (The text Alma 10:7-11 might be read by a class member.)

At this point it appeared that some good might come as the result

of the teachings of Alma and Amulek for the record states that “. . . the people began to be astonished . . .” (Alma 10:12) but, as is so often the case, Satan, using wily and unscrupulous men, blinded the eyes of the people.

It was customary for lawyers and judges to be paid according to the work they did and, if they could stir up trouble, they made additional money. Since the lawyers had been elected by majority vote, the people respected them. When the lawyers began to question Amulek, the people, therefore, were swayed by their words and commenced to turn against him. His reproof of their representatives served to increase their antagonism. Amulek warned that unless they repented, and if they cast out the righteous from among them, the Lord would smite them with famine, pestilence, and the sword. “. . . they cried out, saying: This man doth revile against our laws which are just, and our wise lawyers whom we have selected” (Alma 10:24), and they called him a child of the devil.

Amulek, perceiving that the lawyers were trying to ensnare him said:

. . . O ye wicked and perverse generation, ye lawyers and hypocrites, for ye are laying the foundation of the devil; for ye are laying traps and snares to catch the holy ones of God . . . I say unto you, that the foundation of the destruction of this people is beginning to be laid by the unrighteousness of your lawyers and your judges (Alma 10:17, 27).

Zeezrom was one of the most brilliant of these lawyers, a man “. . . expert in the devices of the devil . . .” (Alma 11:21). He cross-questioned Amulek adroitly but

without ensnaring him, for God was with his servant. Amulek then gave a comprehensive and powerful testimony concerning Christ and his mission. The record states that:

. . . when Amulek had finished these words the people began again to be astonished, and also Zeezrom began to tremble (Alma 11:46).

Alma Expounds Plan of Redemption

As Alma spoke to Zeezrom, establishing the words of Amulek, Zeezrom became aware that Alma and Amulek knew the thoughts and intents of his heart. He inquired after more knowledge concerning the kingdom of God. His heart was touched, even though Alma told him plainly of his wickedness.

Alma explained how all men must appear before the judgment seat of God and be judged according to their works. Our thoughts, our words, and our work will all condemn us, if we have deviated from the path of righteousness. When men meet their God face to face before the judgment bar, they will then know of his justice and mercy. The wicked will undergo a second death, “. . . he shall die as to things pertaining unto righteousness.” This Alma called a spiritual death, the second death. (See Alma 12:16, 32.)

It is evident from Alma's remarks that this life is a probationary state, a time when men may prepare for that endless state which is after the resurrection of the dead. (See Alma 12:24.) Alma also taught the people concerning the holy order of the Son of God, and of Melchisedek and Abraham. After calling the people to repentance, Alma asked them to look forward to the coming of the

Savior. He declared that his coming was not far distant, that the precise time would be revealed to just and holy men.

Persecution of Alma and Amulek and Their Followers

Many of the people believed the words of Alma and Amulek, but the greater part of them rejected the message and sought the prophets' lives. The unbelievers bound Alma and Amulek with cords and took them before the chief judge. Their enemies testified against them.

Zeezrom was shocked at the evil he had caused. He was under a heavy burden of guilt and was tortured with the pains of hell. He pled with the people for Alma and Amulek saying, “. . . Behold, I am guilty, and these men are spotless before God . . .” (Alma 14:7).

But the people refused to listen. They reviled Zeezrom and spat upon him. Moreover, they cast out all the men who believed in the words which had been spoken and stoned them:

And they brought their wives and children together, and whosoever believed or had been taught to believe in the word of God they caused that they should be cast into the fire; and they also brought forth their records which contained the holy scriptures, and cast them into the fire also, that they might be burned and destroyed by fire (Alma 14:8).

And it came to pass that they took Alma and Amulek, and carried them forth to the place of martyrdom, that they might witness the destruction of those who were consumed by fire. And when Amulek saw the pains of the women and children who were consuming in the fire, he also was pained; and he said unto Alma: How can we witness this awful scene? Therefore let us stretch forth our hands, and exercise the power of God which is in us, and save them from the flames (Alma 14:9-10).

Alma forbade, saying that the Spirit dictated otherwise to him, and that the Lord received them unto himself in glory. Amulek then suggested that perhaps he and Alma would also become martyrs. “. . . Be it according to the will of the Lord. But, behold, our work is not finished; therefore they burn us not” (Alma 14:13).

When the bodies of those who had been cast into the fire were consumed, and also the records which were cast in with them, the chief judge of the land came and stood before Alma and Amulek, as they were bound; and he smote them with his hand upon their cheeks, and said unto them: “. . . After what ye have seen, will ye preach again unto this people, that they shall be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone? Behold, ye see that ye had not power to save those who had been cast into the fire; neither has God saved them because they were of thy faith . . . (Alma 14:14-15).

Alma and Amulek refused to answer. They were imprisoned and questioned, but still remained silent. The chief judge and his co-workers gnashed their teeth at the silence of their prisoners and spat upon them and asked: “. . . How shall we look when we are damned?” (Alma 14:21). For days these rulers starved them, mocked them, and left them naked and bound.

After the lapse of many days, the chief judge and many of their teachers and lawyers came again to the prison. The chief judge, on this occasion, upbraided Alma and Amulek as follows: “. . . If ye have the power of God deliver yourselves

from these bands . . .” (Alma 14:24).

Power of God Comes Upon Alma and Amulek

After the last one had said the same words and smote them “. . . the power of God was upon Alma and Amulek, and they rose and stood upon their feet.” And Alma cried, saying: “. . . How long shall we suffer these great afflictions, O Lord? O Lord, give us strength according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto deliverance” (Alma 14:25-26). And God heard and answered the plea of his servants. The shackles were loosened. They stood as free men before their oppressors.

“The fear of destruction” came upon their oppressors who sought safety in flight. But there was no safety for their tormentors. “. . . the earth shook mightily, and the walls of the prison were rent in twain . . .” (Alma 14:27) and the chief judge, the lawyers, priests, and teachers were buried beneath the debris. Alma and Amulek, alone, came forth unharmed.

The people of Ammonihah, hearing the noise and seeing Alma and Amulek walking out of the prison uninjured, fled in terror.

Alma and Amulek in Sidom

Obedient to divine instructions, Alma and Amulek went to Sidom where, to their joy, they discovered the people who had been cast out of Ammonihah and stoned. Zeezrom was there also. He lay sick with a burning fever, the result of his mental torment and anguish over his past sins. At Zeezrom's request, Alma and Amulek came to his

home, and, by the power of their Priesthood, healed him.

“. . . Alma cried unto the Lord, saying: O Lord our God, have mercy on this man, and heal him according to his faith which is in Christ Zeezrom leaped upon his feet, and began to walk” (Alma 15:10, 11). The knowledge of this miracle soon spread throughout the land. Zeezrom was baptized and went forth to preach the gospel to the people.

Alma founded a Church organization at Sidom. He ordained priests and teachers to preside over it and to teach the members. He gave them authority to baptize whosoever wished baptism. The record states that “. . . they were many; for they did flock in from all the region round about Sidom, and were baptized” (Alma 15:14). After Alma had established the Church at Sidom, he took Amulek with him to his house in Zarahemla.

Destruction of Ammonihah

The inhabitants of Ammonihah, however, did not repent of their sins. “. . . it came to pass in the eleventh year of the reign of the judges . . . there was a cry of war heard throughout the land. For behold the armies of the Lamanites had come in upon the wilderness side, into the borders of the land, even into the city of Ammonihah, and began to slay the people and destroy the city” (Alma 16:1-2).

The prophecies of Alma and Amulek were fulfilled, for:

. . . the people of Ammonihah were destroyed; yea, every living soul of the Ammonihahites was destroyed, and also their great city, which they said God could not

destroy, because of its greatness. But behold, in one day it was left desolate. . . (Alma 16:9-10).

So terrible was the destruction that ordinary burial of the inhabitants was impossible. The Nephites piled their bodies in great heaps and provided them with a shallow covering. For many years the scent was so repulsive that no one tried to rebuild the city. Because these people of Ammonihah followed the teachings of Nehor, the place was known as the “Desolation of Nehors.”

Peace Restored

After the annihilation of Ammonihah, peace was restored throughout the land. Alma and Amulek went about among the people encouraging them to understand and live the true principles of the gospel. Many others assisted in the work and the establishment of the Church became general throughout all the land. The people looked forward to the coming of their Savior.

And many of the people did inquire concerning the place where the Son of God should come; and they were taught that he would appear unto them after his resurrection; and this the people did hear with great joy and gladness (Alma 16:20).

Questions for Discussion

1. What instances are given of Alma and Amulek using the power of the Priesthood?
2. What three things in our lives will condemn us if our hearts are hardened when we are brought before the judgment bar of God? (See Alma 12:14.)
3. What were the teachings of Alma in regard to the plan of redemption?