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## The Book of Mormon: Alma's Last Words

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# Guide Lessons For October

## LESSON 1

### Theology and Testimony

(First Week in October)

BOOK OF MORMON: ALMA'S LAST WORDS

This lesson covers the material to be found in Alma, Chapters 37-44, inclusive.

#### Outline

- I. Alma gives the "sacred things" to Helaman.
  1. Admonition to his son Helaman.
  2. The articles delivered to Helaman.
    - a. The Brass Plates.
    - b. The Small Plates of Nephi.
    - c. The Large Plates of Nephi.
    - d. The Twenty-four Plates of the Jaredites.
    - e. The Interpreters of the Jaredites.
    - f. The Liahona.
- II. Alma instructs his son Shiblon.
  1. Commendation of him.
  2. Warnings. (See especially 38:14—compare with Luke 18:9-14.)
- III. Alma instructs Corianton.
  1. In respect to sin and the attitude toward sin.
  2. In respect to the resurrection.
  3. In respect to the justice of God in "punishment."
- IV. Lamanites war against Nephites.
  1. Purpose of each people.
  2. Leaders of each army—how equipped.
  3. The battle and surrender.

#### Notes

1. It may not be out of place here to repeat in another form what we said as we began our lessons last year. Let us remind ourselves of

one point, at least, namely: that the *Book of Mormon* throws light on life today, because it deals with God's point of view concerning the conduct of the human spirit.

Some literature is ephemeral, some permanent. That is to say, some writings have to do only with things of the moment; others, with the eternal struggle of the soul in its effort to reach the higher good.

We heard a noted scholar of the New Testament not long ago say that he had tried to make a lecture of high worth out of the writings of one of the philosophers of the Middle Ages. He could not do so, however, because there was nothing in them that reflected light on anything today. With any of the *Gospels* or the letters of the apostles in the *New Testament* he found it otherwise. Well, the *Book of Mormon* is like the *New Testament* in that it throws light on the affairs of men today.

Human nature has the habit of acting very much the same way in every age. People may live in tents one century, in log houses another, and in palaces in still another; or they may use the foot runner to deliver their messages one period, the steamship in another period, and the wireless in a third—it does not matter, for under the skin they are all the same.

Now, the *Book of Mormon* is full of light on situations that arise in human life in the second quarter of the twentieth century. Some of Alma's teachings to his son serve to show what we mean.

Corianton wants to know how it is that in the year seventy before

Christ Alma can teach the message of the resurrection from the dead. Alma makes this answer: "Is not a soul at this time as precious unto God as a soul will be at the time of His coming? Is it not necessary that the plan of redemption should be made known unto this people as well as unto their children? Is it not as easy at this time for the Lord to send His angel to declare these glad tidings unto us as unto our children, or as after the time of His coming?"

That is a tremendous thought and beautifully put. Few people, even in our own times, look upon the immense value of a human soul. That is chiefly because they allow trifles to come between the thought and the object. We too often think of a man's or a woman's faults instead of his or her virtues, of what a person is, not of what he may become. And in our own commercial age, the age of the machine, our measure of human value frequently is in terms of what he has, rather than of what he is.

Well, a passage like that of the great Alma brings us back to the thought that in God's eyes a human soul is the most precious thing in the world. Try it in your own experience, and see whether it is illuminating on modern life or not. Does it throw any light on whether a married couple should have children or practice artificial birth control? Does it throw any light on the question of child labor? Does it tell us how to treat criminals, in or out of prison? Does it throw any light on whether or not we should use persuasion in our dealings with our own children and others? These are modern problems.

To be sure, this thought is given also in the *New Testament*, but that does not do away with its force in the *Book of Mormon*. The point is, that the Nephite Record is a work

that is enlightening today, notwithstanding it was written hundreds of years ago—which shows that it is a book of permanent, rather than temporary, worth.

2. It will be remembered by those who followed the lessons last year that we referred occasionally to matters in the *Book of Mormon* which pointed to its divine origin. One of these we find in the present lesson on the Prophet Alma.

In the admonitions of Alma to his son there are some expressions which, when viewed as those of an elderly, experienced man, are in perfect keeping with that fact, but which, when viewed as the utterance of a young farmer twenty-four years old, are altogether out of character.

The prophet Alma speaks of the records of his nation as having "enlarged the memory of this people." That is charged with too much experience for Joseph Smith at the time he translated the *Book of Mormon*. The phrase we have already quoted from Alma about the value of human souls is another to the same effect. Then take this sentence from his instructions to Corianton: "Go no more after the lusts of your eyes, but cross yourself in all these things. \* \* Oh, remember, and take it upon yourself to cross yourself in these things." That is not only a good thought, but it is by no means a commonplace expression of it—too little common to be the work of an uneducated young man.

"All is as one day with God," is another of Alma's fine phrases, "and time only is measured unto men." Here is one more that vies with one in the *Old Testament* about the "way of the transgressor" being "hard": "Wickedness never was happiness." How did a youth without experience ever come to say a thing like that? Again: "For that which ye do send out shall return

unto you again." That is in the same class of expressions which can come only out of a large experience of life—which Joseph Smith did not have at the time he published the *Book of Mormon*.

Nor is that all. Look at the fine distinctions in doctrine that are to be found in this part of Alma.

"The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul"—says Alma. Here is advanced the doctrine of a literal resurrection. Where did Joseph Smith get it? Certainly not out of the sects of his day, for they believed that only the spirit survived death, and that in unembodied form. Elsewhere the Nephite prophet declares there are various periods of resurrection. Where did the modern seer get that? Then notice the very subtle distinctions drawn in the forty-first chapter, verses twelve to fifteen. Such a refined distinction could be the

result only of a mental discipline that Joseph Smith did not have at twenty-five years of age.

#### Questions

1. What "wise purpose" did Alma have in mind in speaking of the records he was delivering to his son Helaman?

2. Explain what he means in verse six of chapter thirty-seven, when he speaks of "small and simple things."

3. What "small and simple things" in your own life, in your community, or in your Church may be said to be pregnant with "great things?"

4. How many sons of Alma are spoken of here? Was the conduct of them all satisfactory to Alma? Can you account for Corianton's "affair?"

5. What difference does it make whether a nation keeps a written record or not?

## LESSON 2

### Work and Business

#### TEACHER'S TOPIC FOR OCTOBER

(This topic is to be given at the special teachers' meeting the first week in October.)

#### THE RELIEF SOCIETY

##### *A Great Cause*

An opportunity of great magnitude to belong to an organization of 63,000 enrolled members of same faith.

#### *Lesson Work:*

Practical adult education.

Three courses comparable to college and university courses—Literary, Theology, Social Service.

Every member an instructor in some way.

#### *Visiting Teaching:*

Training Class.

Delivers a message to each home.

Represents the president.

Must be prepared on topic.

Number of teachers, 20,000.

(a) Collections for charity; amount delivered intact.

(b) Work and Business Day.

Social benefits.

Opportunity for service.

#### *Social Welfare:*

Financial activity—collected during 1929:

Charity Funds, \$ 88,896

General Funds. 128,628

Annual Dues, 23,000

Other Receipts, 67,569

Practically every dollar handled by visiting teachers without a loss; collected and disbursed in locality in which it was gathered, except one-half amount for general dues.

Distribution of Charity—Method:

Bishop, Ward President, Social Service Aid.