

June 24–30: Alma 13–16, “Enter Into the Rest of the Lord”

Review

Alma and Amulek were teaching the people in Ammonihah who were “after the order and faith of Nehor”

Alma 1:3-4

[3] And he had gone about among the people, preaching to them that which he termed to be the word of God, bearing down against the church; declaring unto the people that every priest and teacher ought to become popular; and they ought not to labor with their hands, but that they ought to be supported by the people.

[4] And he also testified unto the people that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life.

One of the lawyers, Zeezrom, recognizing his sinful practices and asks if he could be redeemed. This led Alma and Amulek teaching the plan of salvation to the people of Ammonihah

Priesthood

At this point Alma teaches them about the power, depth, and breadth of the priesthood.

Alma 13:1-2

[1] And again, my brethren, I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children; and I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people.

[2] And those priests were ordained after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption.

Why does the Lord ordain priests after His holy order?

(to teach these things unto the people)

When did the Lord start ordaining priests?

(when the Lord God gave these commandments [Adam])

Abraham was one of those ordained after the holy order of Christ. He said this:

Abraham 1:2

I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be

ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers

Alma 13:3

[3] And this is the manner after which they were ordained -- being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such.

When were these high priests “called and prepared” to receive the priesthood?

(from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God)

Joseph Smith

“Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was.” (TPJS, pg. 365)

How did they demonstrate in their per-mortal life that they were worthy to be foreordained to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood?

(this is the manner after which they were ordained
first they were called and prepared from the foundation of the world
on account of their exceeding faith and good works
in the first place... having chosen good
exercising exceedingly great faith
called with a holy calling)

James J. Hamula

"Their valiance and nobility were demonstrated in the pre-earth struggle with Satan. There, 'being left to choose good or evil,' they '[chose] good' and exhibited 'exceedingly great faith' and 'good works.' Such are the traits that are now needed to sustain the work of God in the earth and to save the souls of men from the intensifying wrath of the adversary." (CR, Oct.2008)

What is the purpose of the “holy calling”?

(which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such)

Elaine S. Dalton

"You are not ordinary men. Because of your valiance in the premortal realms, you qualified to be leaders and to possess priesthood power. There you exhibited 'exceeding faith and good works,' and you are here now to do the same." (CR, Oct. 2011)

Alma 13:4-6

[4] And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren.

[5] Or in fine, in the first place they were on the same standing with their brethren; thus this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would not harden their hearts, being in and through the atonement of the Only Begotten Son, who was prepared—

[6] And thus being called by this holy calling, and ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of God, to teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest --

With this calling and ordination to priesthood, what are these men expected to do?

(teach his commandments unto the children of men)

Spencer W. Kimball

“Before we came here, faithful women were given certain assignments while faithful men were foreordained to certain priesthood tasks. While we do not now remember the particulars, this does not alter the glorious reality of what we once agreed to. You are accountable for those things which long ago were expected of you just as are those we sustain as prophets and apostles!” (CR, Oct. 1979)

Neal A. Maxwell

"Premortality is not a relaxing doctrine. For each of us, there are choices to be made, incessant and difficult chores to be done, ironies and adversities to be experienced, time to be well spent, talents and gifts to be well employed.... Whether foreordination for men, or foredesignation for women, those called and prepared must also prove 'chosen, and faithful.'" (CR, Oct 1985)

What reason does Alma give for some receive this calling while others do not?

(on account of their faith
the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds)

D&C 121:34-35

[34] Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen?

[35] Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men

Alma 13:10-12

[10] Now, as I said concerning the holy order, or this high priesthood, there were many who were ordained and became high priests of God; and it was on account of their exceeding faith and repentance, and their righteousness before God, they choosing to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish;

[11] Therefore they were called after this holy order, and were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb.

[12] Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceedingly great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God.

What blessings await those who “work righteousness” with “exceeding faith and repentance”?

(called after this holy order, and were sanctified)

Bruce R. McConkie

"There are no blessings reserved for apostles that are not freely available to all the elders of the kingdom; blessings come because of obedience and personal righteousness, not because of administrative positions....

"Blessing three: We can be sanctified by the Spirit, have dross and evil burned out of us as though by fire, become clean and spotless, and be fit to dwell with gods and angels.

"The Holy Ghost is the Sanctifier. Those who magnify their callings in the priesthood 'are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies' (D&C 84:33). They are born again; they become new creatures of the Holy Ghost; they are alive in Christ.

"Of such faithful persons among the ancients, Alma says: '... [they] were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb.'" (CR, Oct. 1977)

What are some of the fruits of being sanctified?

(pure and spotless before God
could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence
enter into the rest of the Lord)

Alma uses Melchizedek as an example

Alma 13:17-19

[17] Now this Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem; and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination; yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness;

[18] But Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore he was called the prince of peace, for he was the king of Salem; and he did reign under his father.

[19] Now, there were many before him, and also there were many afterwards, but none were greater; therefore, of him they have more particularly made mention.

How does the example of Melchizedek counter the teachings of Nehor?

(having exercised mighty faith - received the office - did preach repentance - did establish peace in the land)

Afflictions

In chapter 14 we are given one of the most vivid examples of how the Lord will allow terrible things to happen to good people.

Alma 14:1-5

[1] And it came to pass after he had made an end of speaking unto the people many of them did believe on his words, and began to repent, and to search the scriptures.

[2] But the more part of them were desirous that they might destroy Alma and Amulek; for they were angry with Alma, because of the plainness of his words unto Zeezrom; and they also said that Amulek had lied unto them, and had reviled against their law and also against their lawyers and judges.

[3] And they were also angry with Alma and Amulek; and because they had testified so plainly against their wickedness, they sought to put them away privily.

[4] But it came to pass that they did not; but they took them and bound them with strong cords, and took them before the chief judge of the land.

[5] And the people went forth and witnessed against them -- testifying that they had reviled against the law, and their lawyers and judges of the land, and also of all the people that were in the land; and also testified that there was but one God, and that he should send his Son among the people, but he should not save them; and many such things did the people testify against Alma and Amulek. Now this was done before the chief judge of the land.

Why do you think the people of Ammonihah were so angry with Alma and Amulek?

(they were angry with Alma, because of the plainness of his words also... because they had testified so plainly against their wickedness)

They were after the Order of Nehor so they practiced priestcrafts. The truth destroyed their craft

The people of Ammanihah kill the wives and children of all the men who believed Alma and Amulek.

Alma 14:8-10

[8] 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.

[9] 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.

[10] 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.

What did Amulek believe could be done to save the people?

(exercise the power of God which is in us)

And Alma did have the power to save them but the Spirit constrained him.

Alma 14:11-13

[11] But Alma said unto him: The Spirit constraineth me that I must not stretch forth mine hand; for behold the Lord receiveth them up unto himself, in glory; and he doth suffer that they may do this thing, or that the people may do this thing unto them, according to the hardness of their hearts, that the judgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just; and the blood of the innocent shall stand as a witness against them, yea, and cry mightily against them at the last day.

[12] Now Amulek said unto Alma: Behold, perhaps they will burn us also.

[13] And Alma said: Be it according to the will of the Lord. But, behold, our work is not finished; therefore they burn us not.

What two reasons does Alma give for being constrained by the Spirit from saving the people?

(the Lord receiveth them up unto himself, in glory
the innocent shall stand as a witness against them)

What can we learn about afflictions given that the Lord allowed this terrible thing to happen?

When it comes to hardships and tragedies, even as terrible as this, we have to trust the Lord because we do not have an eternal perspective but he does.

After being persecuted in prison for many days, Alma and Amulek were finally delivered by the power of God

Alma 14:24-26

[24] And the chief judge stood before them, and smote them again, and said unto them: If ye have the power of God deliver yourselves from these bands, and then we will believe that the Lord will destroy this people according to your words.

[25] And it came to pass that they all went forth and smote them, saying the same words, even until the last; and when the last had spoken unto them the power of God was upon Alma and Amulek, and they rose and stood upon their feet.

[26] 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. And they broke the cords with which they were bound; and when the people saw this, they began to flee, for the fear of destruction had come upon them.

Alma prayed “How long shall we suffer these great afflictions”
Then “give us strength according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto deliverance”

A question I have is 'why deliver Alma but not the women and children?'

This reminds me of Joseph Smith in Liberty jail:

D&C 121:1,3,5

[1] O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?

[3] Yea, O Lord, how long shall [thy people] suffer these wrongs and unlawful oppressions, before thine heart shall be softened toward them, and thy bowels be moved with compassion toward them?

[5] Let thine anger be kindled against our enemies; and... with thy sword avenge us of our wrongs.

Lord's reply to Joseph Smith :

D&C 121:7-9

[7] My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

[8] And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.

[9] Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands.

Here we have three examples where we see great afflictions among people who put there faith in the Lord and clearly the Lord could have intervened because of the level of their faith

Women and children of Ammonihah – The Lord let's the evil people proceed.

Promises Eternal blessing for those who died

Alma and Amulek – The Lord immediately delivers them from their oppressors

Joseph Smith – The Lord does not immediately deliver him from his oppressors. He reminds Joseph of his blessing and promises more if he endures his afflictions well

What can we learn about afflictions based on the response by the Lord in these cases?

Let's read what happened to the people of Ammonihah shortly after they performed this honorable act

Alma 16:2,9-11

[2] 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.

[9] And thus ended the eleventh year of the judges, the Lamanites having been driven out of the land, and 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.

[10] But behold, in one day it was left desolate; and the carcasses were mangled by dogs and wild beasts of the wilderness.

[11] Nevertheless, after many days their dead bodies were heaped up upon the face of the earth, and they were covered with a shallow covering. And now so great was the scent thereof that the people did not go in to possess the land of Ammonihah for many years. And it was called Desolation of Nehors; for they were of the profession of Nehor, who were slain; and their lands remained desolate.

The land was called the Desolation of Nehors (the anti-Christ confronted by Alma in chapter 1) and abandon for many years.