

June 3–9: Mosiah 29–Alma 4, “They Were Steadfast and Immovable”

Nephites Granted Self-Governance

In Mosiah 29 we have the account of King Mosiah giving his people their freedom to self-govern.

It seems obvious to us, but Mosiah needed to explain to his people why a monarchy is bad for the people. He begins by telling them a monarchy could be good if they could be sure that they would always have a righteous king

Mosiah 29:12-13

12 Now it is better that a man should be judged of God than of man, for the judgments of God are always just, but the judgments of man are not always just.

13 Therefore, if it were possible that you could have just men to be your kings, who would establish the laws of God, and judge this people according to his commandments, yea, if ye could have men for your kings who would do even as my father Benjamin did for this people—I say unto you, if this could always be the case then it would be expedient that ye should always have kings to rule over you.

What could be a good result of having a king as long as he is righteous?

(who would establish the laws of God, and judge this people according to his commandments)

Alma the Elder said something similar to his people in the land of Helam

Mosiah 23:8

If it were possible that ye could always have just men to be your kings it would be well for you to have a king.

Can you name some righteous kings that have established laws and judgements according to the commandments of God?

(Benjamin, Melchizedak, Enoch)

But righteous kings are rare and Mosiah describes the iniquity that a wicked king can cause his people to commit.

Mosiah 29:16-18

16 Now I say unto you, that because all men are not just it is not expedient that ye should have a king or kings to rule over you.

17 For behold, how much iniquity doth one wicked king cause to be committed, yea, and what great destruction!

18 Yea, remember king Noah, his wickedness and his abominations, and also the wickedness and abominations of his people. Behold what great destruction did come

upon them; and also because of their iniquities they were brought into bondage.

They had learned from king Noah and from kings in the Old Testament that a monarchy can destroy a people by leading them to commit iniquities.
Can you name anyone who refused to be king even though the people wanted a king?

(sons of Mosiah, Nephi, Alma, Bro. Jarad & sons)

Why do you think that they refused?

Recall that Alma the Elder refused to be king in Helam. Lets read what he told his people.

Mosiah 23:13

And now as ye have been delivered by the power of God out of these bonds; yea, even out of the hands of king Noah and his people, and also from the bonds of iniquity, even so I desire that ye should stand fast in this liberty wherewith ye have been made free, and that ye trust no man to be a king over you.

Mosiah gives the people the opportunity to choose their own leaders. But with this freedom comes a warning

Mosiah 29:25-27

25 Therefore, choose you by the voice of this people, judges, that ye may be judged according to the laws which have been given you by our fathers, which are correct, and which were given them by the hand of the Lord.

26 Now it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right; but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right; therefore this shall ye observe and make it your law—to do your business by the voice of the people.

27 And if the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, 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 even as he has hitherto visited this land.

What did the people know about the laws that existed while Mosiah was king?

(the laws which have been given you by our father, which are correct, and which were given them by the hand of the Lord)

It is essential that a free people have just laws and that those laws are properly enforced.

Joseph Smith

"The Constitution of the United States is a glorious standard; it is founded in the wisdom of God. It is a heavenly banner; it is to all those who are

privileged with the sweets of its liberty, like the cooling shades and refreshing waters of a great rock in a thirsty and weary land. It is like a great tree under whose branches men from every clime can be shielded from the burning rays of the sun...; the Constitution of the United States is true." (History of the Church, 3:304)

How would they know, and how can we know, when people are in danger of losing their freedom and that the judgments of God are at hand?

(if the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity)

They had the example of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Jaridites. We also know of the example of the destruction of the Nephites.

Quentin L. Cook

“There has always been an ongoing battle between people of faith and those who would purge religion and God from public life. Many opinion leaders today reject a moral view of the world based on Judeo-Christian values. In their view there is no objective moral order. They believe no preference should be given to moral goals.

“Still, the majority of people aspire to be good and honorable. The Light of Christ... informs their conscience.... This is why many will accept moral values even when founded on religious convictions which they do not personally support....

“In our increasingly unrighteous world, it is essential that values based on religious belief be part of the public discourse.... Religious faith is a store of light, knowledge, and wisdom and benefits society in a dramatic way when adherents engage in moral conduct because they feel accountable to God.” (CR, Oct. 2010)

Let’s read how the Nephites reacted to Mosiah’s message of self-governance

Mosiah 29:37-42

37 And now it came to pass, after king Mosiah had sent these things forth among the people they were convinced of the truth of his words.

38 Therefore they relinquished their desires for a king, and became exceedingly anxious that every man should have an equal chance throughout all the land; yea, and every man expressed a willingness to answer for his own sins.

39 Therefore, it came to pass that they assembled themselves together in bodies throughout the land, to cast in their voices concerning who should be their judges, to judge them according to the law which had been given them; and they were exceedingly rejoiced because of the liberty which had been granted unto them.

40 And they did wax strong in love towards Mosiah; yea, they did esteem him more than any other man; for they did not look upon him as a tyrant who was seeking for gain, yea, for that lucre which doth corrupt the soul; for he had not exacted riches of

them, neither had he delighted in the shedding of blood; but he had established peace in the land, and he had granted unto his people that they should be delivered from all manner of bondage; therefore they did esteem him, yea, exceedingly, beyond measure.

41 And it came to pass that they did appoint judges to rule over them, or to judge them according to the law; and this they did throughout all the land.

42 And it came to pass that Alma was appointed to be the first chief judge, he being also the high priest, his father having conferred the office upon him, and having given him the charge concerning all the affairs of the church.

How did the Nephites react to Mosiah's message of self-governance?

(became exceedingly anxious that every man should have an equal chance every man expressed a willingness to answer for his own sins rejoiced because of the liberty which had been granted unto them)

How did they feel about king Mosiah granting them an "equal chance" under the law?

(he had... delivered [them] from all manner of bondage; therefore they did esteem him, yea, exceedingly, beyond measure)

How does this help us to understand the importance of liberty and what we must do to gain and retain it?

Nehor and Priestcrafts

In the Book of Alma we immediately begin to see some struggles in the new church and the new government. We start with the story of Nehor who practiced priestcraft.

First, what is priestcraft?

2 Nephi 26:29

Priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion.

Dallin H. Oaks

"Priestcraft is the sin committed by the combination of a good act--such as preaching or teaching the gospel--and a bad motive. The act may be good and visible, but the sin is in the motive. On earth, the wrong motive may be known only to the actor, but in heaven it is always known to God." (Pure in Heart, pg. 16)

Alma 1:2-6

2 And it came to pass that in the first year of the reign of Alma in the judgment-seat, there was a man brought before him to be judged, a man who was large, and was

noted for his much strength.

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.

5 And it came to pass that he did teach these things so much that many did believe on his words, even so many that they began to support him and give him money.

6 And he began to be lifted up in the pride of his heart, and to wear very costly apparel, yea, and even began to establish a church after the manner of his preaching.

What principles did Nehor argue should be incorporated into the church?

(declaring unto the people that every priest and teacher ought to become popular; and they ought not to labor with their hands
in the end, all men should have eternal life)

L. Tom Perry

"Nehor's words appealed to the people, but his doctrine, while popular to many, was incorrect. As we face the many decisions in life, the easy and popular messages of the world will not usually be the right ones to choose, and it will take much courage to choose the right." (CR, Oct. 1993)

Nehor had a confrontation with Gidion and killed him. Nehor was brought to trial before Alma, convicted, and sentenced to die. But the death of Nehor did not stop his false teachings.

Alma 1:16

16 Nevertheless, this did not put an end to the spreading of priestcraft through the land; for there were many who loved the vain things of the world, and they went forth preaching false doctrines; and this they did for the sake of riches and honor.

Why do you think that someone "who [loves] the vain things of the world" would want priestcrafts to flourish?

Let's read how priestcrafts contrast with the way that the church was established

Alma 1:26

26 And when the priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God they all returned again diligently unto their labors; and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did all labor, every man according to his strength.

27 And they did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted; and they did not wear costly apparel, yet they were neat and comely.

28 And thus they did establish the affairs of the church; and thus they began to have continual peace again, notwithstanding all their persecutions.

How do you think the Church's process of calling members to serve minimizes the problem of priestcrafts?

We learn that everyones work is important
The rights and authority are with the position, not the person
We often move in and out of high-visibility callings
Our callings are successful when we strive to serve others and not ourselves

Contention

It seems that the growth of the church fostered contention a persecution towards it. Soon contentions developed inside the church as well

Alma 1:19-24

19 But it came to pass that whosoever did not belong to the church of God began to persecute those that did belong to the church of God, and had taken upon them the name of Christ.

20 Yea, they did persecute them, and afflict them with all manner of words, and this because of their humility; because they were not proud in their own eyes, and because they did impart the word of God, one with another, without money and without price.

21 Now there was a strict law among the people of the church, that there should not any man, belonging to the church, arise and persecute those that did not belong to the church, and that there should be no persecution among themselves.

22 Nevertheless, there were many among them who began to be proud, and began to contend warmly with their adversaries, even unto blows; yea, they would smite one another with their fists.

23 Now this was in the second year of the reign of Alma, and it was a cause of much affliction to the church; yea, it was the cause of much trial with the church.

24 For the hearts of many were hardened, and their names were blotted out, that they were remembered no more among the people of God. And also many withdrew themselves from among them.

The church had a “strict law” against persecuting anyone, wether in or out of the church

Why did church members began to break the “strict law” against persecutions and began to contend with their adversaries?

(there were many among them who began to be proud)

How should we react when people teach evil against the things we hold sacred?

Follow the example of Jacob

Jacob 7:10-12

10) And I said unto him: Believest thou the scriptures? And he said, Yea.

11) And I said unto him: Then ye do not understand them; for they truly testify of Christ. Behold, I say unto you that none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ.

12) And this is not all—it has been made manifest unto me, for I have heard and seen; and it also has been made manifest unto me by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, I know if there should be no atonement made all mankind must be lost.

He used the scriptures and his testimony to counter Sherem's attacks

Later we are told how Alma reacted to the persecutions and contentions in and out of the church

Alma 4:19

And this he did that he himself might go forth among his people, or among the people of Nephi, that he might preach the word of God unto them, to stir them up in remembrance of their duty, and that he might pull down, by the word of God, all the pride and craftiness and all the contentions which were among his people, seeing no way that he might reclaim them save it were in bearing down in pure testimony against them.

Don't engage

Marvin J Ashton

"We have no time for contention. We only have time to be about our Father's business. Contend with no man. Conduct yourselves as gentlemen with calmness and conviction....

"There never has been a time when it is more important for us as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to take a stand, remain firm in our convictions, and conduct ourselves wisely under all circumstances. We must not be manipulated or enraged by those who subtly foster contention over issues of the day." (CR, April 1978)

Amlici Seeks to be King

Just 5 years into their new government Amlici, who believed like Nehor, attempted to overthrow the new government and be anointed king

Alma 2:1-7

1 And it came to pass in the commencement of the fifth year of their reign there began to be a contention among the people; for a certain man, being called Amlici, he being a very cunning man, yea, a wise man as to the wisdom of the world, he being after the order of the man that slew Gideon by the sword, who was executed according to the law—

2 Now this Amlici had, by his cunning, drawn away much people after him; even so much that they began to be very powerful; and they began to endeavor to establish Amlici to be a king over the people.

3 Now this was alarming to the people of the church, and also to all those who had not been drawn away after the persuasions of Amlici; for they knew that according to their law that such things must be established by the voice of the people.

4 Therefore, if it were possible that Amlici should gain the voice of the people, he, being a wicked man, would deprive them of their rights and privileges of the church; for it was his intent to destroy the church of God.

5 And it came to pass that the people assembled themselves together throughout all the land, every man according to his mind, whether it were for or against Amlici, in separate bodies, having much dispute and wonderful contentions one with another.

6 And thus they did assemble themselves together to cast in their voices concerning the matter; and they were laid before the judges.

7 And it came to pass that the voice of the people came against Amlici, that he was not made king over the people.

Note that without freedom they would lose the church

(would deprive them of their rights and privileges of the church; for it was his intent to destroy the church of God)

What were the self-governing Nephites able to do to stop Amlici from overthrowing their freedom?

(they did assemble themselves together to cast in their voices concerning the matter)

Robert D. Hales

"The general lack of respect for religious viewpoints is quickly devolving into social and political intolerance for religious people and institutions.

"As we face increased pressure to bow to secular standards, forfeit our religious liberties, and compromise our agency, consider what the Book of Mormon teaches about our responsibilities. In the book of Alma we read of Amlici, 'a very cunning' and 'wicked man' who sought to be king over the people and 'deprive them of their rights and privileges,' which 'was alarming to the people of the church.'...

"As disciples of Jesus Christ we have a responsibility to work together with like-minded believers, to raise our voices for what is right." (CR, April

2015)

At first they were able to stop Amlici by the voice of the people.

But the voice of the people was not enough to stop those who wanted a king so they broke away from the majority and anointed Amlici to be their king. Then these Amlicites came to war against the rest of the Nephites but were defeated and retreated.

Alma sent spies after them, who learned they had made a pact with Lamanites and both were marching to Zarahemla. The Nephites intercepted them and drove them back. And Alma himself kills Amlici. Soon after the Lamanites attacked again, but driven back.

Prosperity Leads to Pride

In the early years of the church the members worked hard to do the will of the Lord and this obedience led to prosperity

Alma 1:27-31

27 And they did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted; and they did not wear costly apparel, yet they were neat and comely.

28 And thus they did establish the affairs of the church; and thus they began to have continual peace again, notwithstanding all their persecutions.

29 And now, because of the steadiness of the church they began to be exceedingly rich, having abundance of all things whatsoever they stood in need—an abundance of flocks and herds, and fatlings of every kind, and also abundance of grain, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious things, and abundance of silk and fine-twined linen, and all manner of good homely cloth.

30 And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need.

31 And thus they did prosper and become far more wealthy than those who did not belong to their church.

The Lord is able to bless the church temporal ‘because of the steadiness of the church’

What do you think Mormon means by “the steadiness of the church”?

James E. Faust

"In the first chapter of Alma in the Book of Mormon we find an instructive sequence of events outlining the way by which the Lord's church is established. Beginning with verse 26 we read.... Let us take note of this

process:

First, the doctrines are taught

Second, members esteem each other as themselves

Third, they all labor; they work and earn that which they receive

Fourth, they impart of their substance to the less fortunate; they serve one another

Fifth, they discipline their own appetites while at the same time caring appropriately for their own needs

"Now, listen to the declaration of the prophet... 'And now, because of the steadiness of the church they began to be exceeding rich, having abundance of all things whatsoever they stood in need' (Alma 1:29).

"This mighty change happened, not because the people were given things, but rather because they were taught and began to help themselves and to care for those who were less fortunate. It was when they gave of themselves in the Lord's way that their circumstances began to improve." (CR, Oct. 1991)

The great destruction in the land which resulted from the treason of Amlici caused the people outside and inside the church to be humble. The church prospered under these humbling circumstances.

Alma 4:1-5

1 Now it came to pass in the sixth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, there were no contentions nor wars in the land of Zarahemla;

2 But the people were afflicted, yea, greatly afflicted for the loss of their brethren, and also for the loss of their flocks and herds, and also for the loss of their fields of grain, which were trodden under foot and destroyed by the Lamanites.

3 And so great were their afflictions that every soul had cause to mourn; and they believed that it was the judgments of God sent upon them because of their wickedness and their abominations; therefore they were awakened to a remembrance of their duty.

4 And they began to establish the church more fully; yea, and many were baptized in the waters of Sidon and were joined to the church of God; yea, they were baptized by the hand of Alma, who had been consecrated the high priest over the people of the church, by the hand of his father Alma.

5 And it came to pass in the seventh year of the reign of the judges there were about three thousand five hundred souls that united themselves to the church of God and were baptized. And thus ended the seventh year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi; and there was continual peace in all that time.

What was it that "awakened [them] to a remembrance of their duty" and turn again to the gospel of Christ?

(so great were their afflictions that every soul had cause to mourn they believed that it was the judgments of God)

Henry B. Eyring

"Confronting death and difficulty does return memory and therefore gratitude to righteous people as well as the wicked. But there must be another way to remember, one we can choose. There is. A servant of God named King Benjamin taught it to his people and to us.

"He taught them that none of us is above another because we are all dust, to which God has given life and then sustained it. He described a fact which is true for every human being: unforgiven sin will bring us unending torment. And he described the gift we all have been offered: those whose faith in Jesus Christ leads them to repentance and forgiveness will live in never-ending happiness.

"King Benjamin's teaching had a miraculous effect. Gratitude for what they had led to faith unto repentance. That led to forgiveness. That produced new gratitude." (CR, Oct. 1989)

But what always seems to happen when the cause of humility centers on afflictions and destruction?

pride cycle: humble -> prosper -> pride -> destruction -> humble

And under these prosperous circumstances it did not take long for pride to overtake them.

Alma 4:6-12

6 And it came to pass in the eighth year of the reign of the judges, that the people of the church began to wax proud, because of their exceeding riches, and their fine silks, and their fine-twined linen, and because of their many flocks and herds, and their gold and their silver, and all manner of precious things, which they had obtained by their industry; and in all these things were they lifted up in the pride of their eyes, for they began to wear very costly apparel.

7 Now this was the cause of much affliction to Alma, yea, and to many of the people whom Alma had consecrated to be teachers, and priests, and elders over the church; yea, many of them were sorely grieved for the wickedness which they saw had begun to be among their people.

8 For they saw and beheld with great sorrow that the people of the church began to be lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and to set their hearts upon riches and upon the vain things of the world, that they began to be scornful, one towards another, and they began to persecute those that did not believe according to their own will and pleasure.

9 And thus, in this eighth year of the reign of the judges, there began to be great contentions among the people of the church; yea, there were envyings, and strife, and malice, and persecutions, and pride, even to exceed the pride of those who did not belong to the church of God.

10 And thus ended the eighth year of the reign of the judges; and the wickedness of

the church was a great stumbling-block to those who did not belong to the church; and thus the church began to fail in its progress.

11 And it came to pass in the commencement of the ninth year, Alma saw the wickedness of the church, and he saw also that the example of the church began to lead those who were unbelievers on from one piece of iniquity to another, thus bringing on the destruction of the people.

12 Yea, he saw great inequality among the people, some lifting themselves up with their pride, despising others, turning their backs upon the needy and the naked and those who were hungry, and those who were athirst, and those who were sick and afflicted.

What problems arose because of the pride in the church?

Persecution of non-believers (v 8),
Contentions, etc. (v 9),
Hurt the progress of the church (v 10),
Cause non-believers to commit iniquity (v 11),
The needy were not helped (v 12)

Ezra Taft Benson

"Pride is essentially competitive in nature. We pit our will against God's. The proud make every man their adversary by pitting their intellects, opinions, works, wealth, talents, or any other worldly measuring device against others. God will have a humble people. Either we can choose to be humble or we can be compelled to be humble." (CR, April 1989)

Because of this problem in the church, Alma resigns as Chief Judge so he can devote all his time teaching the church.

Alma 4:16-19

16 And he selected a wise man who was among the elders of the church, and gave him power according to the voice of the people, that he might have power to enact laws according to the laws which had been given, and to put them in force according to the wickedness and the crimes of the people.

17 Now this man's name was Nephiah, and he was appointed chief judge; and he sat in the judgment-seat to judge and to govern the people.

18 Now Alma did not grant unto him the office of being high priest over the church, but he retained the office of high priest unto himself; but he delivered the judgment-seat unto Nephiah.

19 And this he did that he himself might go forth among his people, or among the people of Nephi, that he might preach the word of God unto them, to stir them up in remembrance of their duty, and that he might pull down, by the word of God, all the pride and craftiness and all the contentions which were among his people, seeing no way that he might reclaim them save it were in bearing down in pure testimony against them.