

September 9–15: Helaman 13–16, “Glad Tidings of Great Joy”

Warnings of Judgments

Samuel the Lamanite preaches repentance to inhabitants of Zarahemla but they cast him out. They voice of the Lord came to him and told him to return. The people would not let him back in so he testifies to them from the walls of the city

Helaman 13:12-14

12 Yea, wo unto this great city of Zarahemla; for behold, it is because of those who are righteous that it is saved; yea, wo unto this great city, for I perceive, saith the Lord, that there are many, yea, even the more part of this great city, that will harden their hearts against me, saith the Lord.

13 But blessed are they who will repent, for them will I spare. But behold, if it were not for the righteous who are in this great city, behold, I would cause that fire should come down out of heaven and destroy it.

14 But behold, it is for the righteous' sake that it is spared. But behold, the time cometh, saith the Lord, that when ye shall cast out the righteous from among you, then shall ye be ripe for destruction; yea, wo be unto this great city, because of the wickedness and abominations which are in her.

Even though they are a small minority, why do you think the Lord is will to spare “Zarahemla... because of those who are righteous” in it?

(if it were not for the righteous... I would cause that fire should come down out of heaven and destroy it)

Recall what happened to the people of Ammonihah in Alma 14 & 16 when they cast out all those who believed Alma and Amulek

We to can bring the same blessing in our day, even if our numbers our small

Spencer W. Kimball

“There are many many upright and faithful who live all the commandments and whose lives and prayers keep the world from destruction.” (CR, April 1971)

He warns them that they will not be able to keep there riches

Helaman 13:21-23

21 Behold ye, the people of this great city, and hearken unto my words; yea, hearken unto the words which the Lord saith; for behold, he saith that ye are cursed because of your riches, and also are your riches cursed because ye have set your hearts upon them, and have not hearkened unto the words of him who gave them unto you.

22 Ye do not remember the Lord your God in the things with which he hath blessed you, but ye do always remember your riches, not to thank the Lord your God for them; yea, your hearts are not drawn out unto the Lord, but they do swell with great

pride, unto boasting, and unto great swelling, envyings, strifes, malice, persecutions, and murders, and all manner of iniquities.

23 For this cause hath the Lord God caused that a curse should come upon the land, and also upon your riches, and this because of your iniquities.

How do you think that someone can be “cursed because of your riches”?

(yea... have not hearkened unto the words of him who gave them unto you)

Dallin H. Oaks

"Materialism, which gives priority to material needs and objects, is obviously the opposite of spirituality..... Like other Book of Mormon prophets, Samuel the Lamanite warned the Nephites that they were cursed because of their riches, 'Because ye have set your hearts upon them, and have not hearkened unto the words of him who gave them unto you.'...

"If allowed to become an object of worship or priority, *money can make us selfish and prideful*, 'puffed up in the vain things of the world' (Alma 5:37). In contrast, if used for fulfilling our legal obligations and for paying our tithes and offerings, money can demonstrate integrity and develop unselfishness. The spiritually enlightened use of property can help prepare us for the higher law of a celestial glory." (CR, Oct. 1985)

What do you think Samuel means when he tells them that “also... your riches [are] cursed”?

How do you think the riches themselves can be cursed?

(your hearts... swell with great pride... and all manner of iniquities)

Hugh Nibley

“The Prophet Samuel the Lamanite sets forth the interesting rule that when 'the Economy' becomes the main and engrossing concern of a society... the economy will self-destruct.... Note well the sequence of folly: first we are well pleased with ourselves because of our wealth, then comes the game of status and prestige, leading to competitive maneuvers, hatred, and dirty tricks, and finally the ultimate solution. Where wealth guarantees respectability, principles melt away as *the criminal element rises to the top*: 'For this cause hath the Lord God caused that a curse should come upon the land, and also upon your riches' (Hel 13:17).” (The Prophetic Book of Mormon, pg. 349)

What happens to a society when money becomes so important that it doesn't matter how you obtain it?

(the criminal element rises to the top)

Next Samuel warns them that they will be lead by "foolish and blind guides"

Helaman 13:24-26

24 Yea, wo unto this people, because of this time which has arrived, that ye do cast out the prophets, and do mock them, and cast stones at them, and do slay them, and do all manner of iniquity unto them, even as they did of old time.

25 And now when ye talk, ye say: If our days had been in the days of our fathers of old, we would not have slain the prophets; we would not have stoned them, and cast them out.

26 Behold ye are worse than they; for as the Lord liveth, if a prophet come among you and declareth unto you the word of the Lord, which testifieth of your sins and iniquities, ye are angry with him, and cast him out and seek all manner of ways to destroy him; yea, you will say that he is a false prophet, and that he is a sinner, and of the devil, because he testifieth that your deeds are evil.

Why do some people who claim to believe former prophets refuse to believe in modern prophets?

(because he testifieth that your deeds are evil)

Helaman 13:27-29

27 But behold, if a man shall come among you and shall say: Do this, and there is no iniquity; do that and ye shall not suffer; yea, he will say: Walk after the pride of your own hearts; yea, walk after the pride of your eyes, and do whatsoever your heart desireth—and if a man shall come among you and say this, ye will receive him, and say that he is a prophet.

28 Yea, ye will lift him up, and ye will give unto him of your substance; ye will give unto him of your gold, and of your silver, and ye will clothe him with costly apparel; and because he speaketh flattering words unto you, and he saith that all is well, then ye will not find fault with him.

29 O ye wicked and ye perverse generation; ye hardened and ye stiffnecked people, how long will ye suppose that the Lord will suffer you? Yea, how long will ye suffer yourselves to be led by foolish and blind guides? Yea, how long will ye choose darkness rather than light?

Why do you think a civilization would "choose darkness rather than light"?

(ye wicked and ye perverse generation; ye hardened and ye stiffnecked people)

Joseph Smith

"The world always mistook false prophets for true ones, and those that were sent of God, they considered to be false prophets and hence they killed, stoned, punished and imprisoned the true prophets, and these had to hide themselves 'in deserts and dens, and caves of the earth,' and though the most honorable men of the earth, they banished them from their society as vagabonds, whilst they cherished, honored and supported knaves, vagabonds, hypocrites, impostors, and the basest of men." (TPJS, pg. 206)

He warned them not to wast the days of their probation and not to procrastinate repenting

Helaman 13:37-39

37 Behold, we are surrounded by demons, yea, we are encircled about by the angels of him who hath sought to destroy our souls. Behold, our iniquities are great. O Lord, canst thou not turn away thine anger from us? And this shall be your language in those days.

38 But behold, your days of probation are past; ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation until it is everlastingly too late, and your destruction is made sure; yea, for ye have sought all the days of your lives for that which ye could not obtain; and ye have sought for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head.

39 O ye people of the land, that ye would hear my words! And I pray that the anger of the Lord be turned away from you, and that ye would repent and be saved.

How do you think we can get to the point to where our “destruction is made sure”?

Marion G. Romney

"The free agency possessed by any one person is increased or diminished by the use to which he puts it. Every wrong decision one makes restricts the area in which he can thereafter exercise his agency. The further one goes in the making of wrong decisions in the exercise of free agency, the more difficult it is for him to recover the lost ground. One can, by persisting long enough, reach the point of no return. He then becomes an abject slave. By the exercise of his free agency, he has decreased the area in which he can act, almost to the vanishing point...

"These poor souls have placed themselves in the power of Lucifer and his followers.... The fact that they were originally endowed by their Creator with free agency does not save them from the most awful bondage, the bondage of sin." (CR, Oct. 1981)

Alma told his son, “wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10).

Now Samuel tells us, “ye have sought for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head”

Signs of Christ's Coming

Samuel makes it clear what his purpose is in preaching to the Nephites

Helaman 14:9-13

9 And behold, thus hath the Lord commanded me, by his angel, that I should come and tell this thing unto you; yea, he hath commanded that I should prophesy these

things unto you; yea, he hath said unto me: Cry unto this people, repent and prepare the way of the Lord.

10 And now, because I am a Lamanite, and have spoken unto you the words which the Lord hath commanded me, and because it was hard against you, ye are angry with me and do seek to destroy me, and have cast me out from among you.

11 And ye shall hear my words, for, for this intent have I come up upon the walls of this city, that ye might hear and know of the judgments of God which do await you because of your iniquities, and also that ye might know the conditions of repentance;

12 And also that ye might know of the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and of earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and that ye might know of the signs of his coming, to the intent that ye might believe on his name.

13 And if ye believe on his name ye will repent of all your sins, that thereby ye may have a remission of them through his merits.

What does Samuel say is his intent in teaching the Nephites from the walls of the city?

(that ye might know of the coming of Jesus Christ that ye might know of the signs of his coming, to the intent that ye might believe on his name)

How do you think that knowing the signs of the times can help us to believe in Christ?

Let's read some of the signs of Christ's birth

Helaman 14:2-7

2 And behold, he said unto them: Behold, I give unto you a sign; for five years more cometh, and behold, then cometh the Son of God to redeem all those who shall believe on his name.

3 And behold, this will I give unto you for a sign at the time of his coming; for behold, there shall be great lights in heaven, insomuch that in the night before he cometh there shall be no darkness, insomuch that it shall appear unto man as if it was day.

4 Therefore, there shall be one day and a night and a day, as if it were one day and there were no night; and this shall be unto you for a sign; for ye shall know of the rising of the sun and also of its setting; therefore they shall know of a surety that there shall be two days and a night; nevertheless the night shall not be darkened; and it shall be the night before he is born.

5 And behold, there shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld; and this also shall be a sign unto you.

6 And behold this is not all, there shall be many signs and wonders in heaven.

7 And it shall come to pass that ye shall all be amazed, and wonder, insomuch that ye shall fall to the earth.

What timeframe does Samuel give the Nephites of when Christ will be born?

(five years more cometh)

What indisputable signs would be given so that they would know the very day of the birth of Christ?

(the night before he cometh there shall be no darkness
here shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld)

Let's read the signs of Christ's death

Helaman 14:20-21,28-29

20 But behold, as I said unto you concerning another sign, a sign of his death, behold, in that day that he shall suffer death the sun shall be darkened and refuse to give his light unto you; and also the moon and the stars; and there shall be no light upon the face of this land, even from the time that he shall suffer death, for the space of three days, to the time that he shall rise again from the dead.

21 Yea, at the time that he shall yield up the ghost there shall be thunderings and lightnings for the space of many hours, and the earth shall shake and tremble; and the rocks which are upon the face of this earth, which are both above the earth and beneath, which ye know at this time are solid, or the more part of it is one solid mass, shall be broken up;

28 And the angel said unto me that many shall see greater things than these, to the intent that they might believe that these signs and these wonders should come to pass upon all the face of this land, to the intent that there should be no cause for unbelief among the children of men—

29 And this to the intent that whosoever will believe might be saved, and that whosoever will not believe, a righteous judgment might come upon them; and also if they are condemned they bring upon themselves their own condemnation.

What indisputable signs would be given so that they would know the very day of the death of Christ?

(there shall be no light... for the space of three days, to the time that he shall rise again from the dead)

What reason does Samuel give for being so specific about the signs of Christ's birth and death?

(to the intent that there should be no cause for unbelief among the children of men
And this to the intent that whosoever will believe might be saved)

Like then Christ raised Lazarus from the dead – there was no possible room for doubt. And if you don't repent you will be knowingly rebelling against God.

Repentance

Let's read what Samuel said about the righteousness of the Lamanites

Helaman 15:4,7-8

4 But behold my brethren, the Lamanites hath he hated because their deeds have been evil continually, and this because of the iniquity of the tradition of their fathers. But behold, salvation hath come unto them through the preaching of the Nephites; and for this intent hath the Lord prolonged their days.

7 And behold, ye do know of yourselves, for ye have witnessed it, that as many of them as are brought to the knowledge of the truth, and to know of the wicked and abominable traditions of their fathers, and are led to believe the holy scriptures, yea, the prophecies of the holy prophets, which are written, which leadeth them to faith on the Lord, and unto repentance, which faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart unto them—

8 Therefore, as many as have come to this, ye know of yourselves are firm and steadfast in the faith, and in the thing wherewith they have been made free.

In verse 8 he states, “as many as have come to THIS, ye know of yourselves are firm and steadfast in the faith”

What is “this” in this verse referring to?

(a change of heart)

What steps are outlined by Samuel that show how the Lamanites obtained this change of heart and became “firm and steadfast in the faith”?

David A. Bednar

"Line upon line and precept upon precept, gradually and almost imperceptibly, our motives, our thoughts, our words, and our deeds become aligned with the will of God. Conversion unto the Lord requires both persistence and patience.

"Samuel the Lamanite identified five basic elements in becoming converted unto the Lord: (1) believing in the teachings and prophecies of the holy prophets as they are recorded in the scriptures, (2) exercising faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, (3) repenting, (4) experiencing a mighty change of heart, and (5) becoming 'firm and steadfast in the faith.' This is the pattern that leads to conversion." (CR, Oct. 2012)

Lets read the impact of Samuel's teaching, specifically among the believers

Helaman 16:1-5

1 And now, it came to pass that there were many who heard the words of Samuel, the Lamanite, which he spake upon the walls of the city. And as many as believed on his

word went forth and sought for Nephi; and when they had come forth and found him they confessed unto him their sins and denied not, desiring that they might be baptized unto the Lord.

2 But as many as there were who did not believe in the words of Samuel were angry with him; and they cast stones at him upon the wall, and also many shot arrows at him as he stood upon the wall; but the Spirit of the Lord was with him, insomuch that they could not hit him with their stones neither with their arrows.

3 Now when they saw that they could not hit him, there were many more who did believe on his words, insomuch that they went away unto Nephi to be baptized.

4 For behold, Nephi was baptizing, and prophesying, and preaching, crying repentance unto the people, showing signs and wonders, working miracles among the people, that they might know that the Christ must shortly come—

5 Telling them of things which must shortly come, that they might know and remember at the time of their coming that they had been made known unto them beforehand, to the intent that they might believe; therefore as many as believed on the words of Samuel went forth unto him to be baptized, for they came repenting and confessing their sins.

What were the people of Zerehemla witnessing at this time for “the intent that they might believe”?

(when they saw that they could not hit him, there were many more who did believe
Nephi was... showing signs and wonders, working miracles among the people)

Let’s read how the signs of Christ’s birth were received by the wicked. This is 4 years after Samuel’s prophecies

Helaman 16:13-18

13 But it came to pass in the ninetieth year of the reign of the judges, there were great signs given unto the people, and wonders; and the words of the prophets began to be fulfilled.

14 And angels did appear unto men, wise men, and did declare unto them glad tidings of great joy; thus in this year the scriptures began to be fulfilled.

15 Nevertheless, the people began to harden their hearts, all save it were the most believing part of them, both of the Nephites and also of the Lamanites, and began to depend upon their own strength and upon their own wisdom, saying:

16 Some things they may have guessed right, among so many; but behold, we know that all these great and marvelous works cannot come to pass, of which has been spoken.

17 And they began to reason and to contend among themselves, saying:

18 That it is not reasonable that such a being as a Christ shall come; if so, and he be the Son of God, the Father of heaven and of earth, as it has been spoken, why will he not show himself unto us as well as unto them who shall be at Jerusalem?

When the signs and wonders began to be fulfilled, why do you think the wicked

“[depended] upon their own strength and... wisdom”?

Robert D. Hales

"For the most part, the Nephites 'harden[ed] their hearts' and became blind to the 'signs and wonders' of the times. These signs were given so 'that [the people] might know that the Christ must shortly come.' But instead of heeding them, the Nephites 'depend[ed] upon their own... wisdom, saying: Some things [the believers] may have guessed right,... [but] it is not reasonable that such a being as a Christ shall come.'

"In those days as in ours, some naysayers, called anti-Christ, convinced others that there was no need for a Savior and His Atonement." (CR, Oct. 2004)

They also dismiss the signs and wonders by stating that the prophets and teachers are trying to mislead the people

Helaman 16:20-22

20 But behold, we know that this is a wicked tradition, which has been handed down unto us by our fathers, to cause us that we should believe in some great and marvelous thing which should come to pass, but not among us, but in a land which is far distant, a land which we know not; therefore they can keep us in ignorance, for we cannot witness with our own eyes that they are true.

21 And they will, by the cunning and the mysterious arts of the evil one, work some great mystery which we cannot understand, which will keep us down to be servants to their words, and also servants unto them, for we depend upon them to teach us the word; and thus will they keep us in ignorance if we will yield ourselves unto them, all the days of our lives.

22 And many more things did the people imagine up in their hearts, which were foolish and vain; and they were much disturbed, for Satan did stir them up to do iniquity continually; yea, he did go about spreading rumors and contentions upon all the face of the land, that he might harden the hearts of the people against that which was good and against that which should come.

Why do you think wicked would claim that the intent of the prophets was to “keep [the people] in ignorance”?

(they were much disturbed, for Satan did stir them up to do iniquity continually)

Delbert L. Stapley

"Samuel, the Lamanite prophet, prophesied to the Nephites of the approaching birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord, in the land of Jerusalem. They rejected his witness and testimony. They attempted to explain away the teachings of Samuel and the unusual phenomena of nature so much in evidence on this continent before Christ's birth, which happenings were also prophesied of by their prophets. They accused their spiritual leaders of keeping the people down to be servants to their words, also servants unto them. *Thus ignorantly persuaded they*

were unwilling to yield themselves to the teachings and warnings of the prophets." (CR, Oct. 1961)