Lesson 16
Mosiah 4–6

In addition to the normal questions, I also provide an outline of chapter 4 in appendix 1.

Mosiah 4

Verse 1: What is the fear of the Lord? Are King Benjamin’s people afraid that the punishments he has described in verses 25–27 of chapter 3 will come upon them? How so if they are the diligent people Benjamin said they were in Mosiah 1:11?

Verse 2: How can those who have been diligent in keeping the commandments say these things of themselves, namely, that they are carnal and less than the dust of the earth? Today we would say such people have a poor self-image, but Mosiah doesn’t seem to be telling us that the people were wrong to think of themselves this way. How do you explain this?

What do they ask for? How does that explain the question above?

How is what they ask for related to being diligent in keeping the commandments?

Is there any significance to the description they give of Christ at the end of the verse?

Verse 3: Notice what we have in the story we’ve seen so far: a diligent people who are filled with the fear of God
and are humbled, and who then ask for mercy and forgiveness and receive those blessings. What might that say to us about our own salvation?

Might the joy described here have something to do with the “joy of the saints” mentioned by Enos? How does the experience of Benjamin’s people compare and contrast with Enos’s experience?

**Verse 5:** Benjamin is emboldened by his people’s response. But rather than congratulating them on their repentance, he rubs it in: The knowledge of God’s goodness has made you realize your worthless and fallen state. Why does he do this? Why not speak kind words to them? Why encourage the “negative attitude” and “bad self-image” that they seem to have? (Or does this whole sermon begin to make us wonder about the truthfulness of what we are told about the importance of a positive self-image?)

**Verses 6–7:** The things we need to come to know if we want salvation:

- God’s goodness
- his matchless power
- his wisdom
- his patience
- his long-suffering
- the Atonement, which he prepared in the beginning in order to bring salvation

The things we must do in response:
trust the Lord (i.e., have faith)
be diligent in keeping the commandments
continue in the faith to the end of mortality

What is the relation between these two lists? How does the first one prepare us for the latter? Why do we need to know the things on the first list?

**Verse 8:** Notice that there are no other requirements for salvation than the three listed. But what about repentance? Ordinances? Did Benjamin leave them off the list, or are they included somehow?

**Verses 9–10:** These verses repeat what was just said in verses 6–8, but in different terms: what we must believe and do in order to receive salvation.

We must believe:

- in God; that he exists
- that he is the Creator
- that he has all wisdom
- that he has all power
- that we don’t understand all that he can
- that we must repent and forsake our sins
- that we must humble ourselves before God

We must:

- ask for forgiveness
- do the things corresponding to what we believe
What is the significance of each of the things we must believe? Why must we believe each of those things in order to be saved? What must we do that corresponds to each of the things we must believe? For example, what must we do that corresponds to believing in God and that he exists? What must we do that corresponds to believing that he is the Creator with all wisdom and power?

**Verse 11:** Once again, Benjamin repeats what he has been saying in different words. Why is this threefold repetition necessary?

Notice that he equates “coming to a knowledge of God’s glory” with “knowing his goodness, tasting his love, and receiving a remission of sins.” How are those the same things? (The word *glory* means “praise” or “praiseworthiness.”)

Why does he say “retain in remembrance” rather than “remember”? What does the first add to our understanding?

If we’ve come to a knowledge of God’s glory, Benjamin says, he wants us to remember God’s goodness and our own nothingness, and also his goodness and long-suffering to us unworthy creations, and he wants us to humble ourselves “to the depths” and call on the Lord and remain steadfast in faith in what is to come. Why do we need to remember both the Father’s goodness and our own nothingness?

Why do we need to remember his goodness and long-suffering, especially in relation to our unworthiness?

Is Benjamin a “negative” person?
What does it mean to be humbled to the depths? (Haven’t we seen an example in this chapter?) Why is that necessary?

What is it that “is to come, which was spoken by the mouth of the angel”? (Remember the beginning verses of chapter 3.) In whom or what must our faith remain steadfast?

**Verse 12:** Notice that what follows, presumably through verse 16, is contingent on what has come before; it is contingent on remembering God’s goodness and our own nothingness, humbling ourselves, calling on God, and remaining faithful.

We often cite the following verses as if they were commandments, but the beginning of this verse makes it plain that they are blessings that follow from receiving a remission of our sins. On the other hand, aren’t commandments blessings?

**Verses 12–16:** If we do the things Benjamin has described, we will:

- always rejoice (even in the midst of difficulty?)
- be filled with the love of God (is this his love for us or our love for him?)
- always retain a remission of sins
- grow in a knowledge of the Creator’s glory (which is the same as the knowledge of what is just and true!)
- not have a mind to injure one another, but to live peaceably and render to each his due (what is that due?)
not allow our children to go hungry or naked or to transgress the commandments (what does this say about child rearing?)

or to fight and quarrel with each other and serve the devil

but we will teach them to “walk in the ways of truth and soberness” (what are those ways? what does it mean for our children to be sober?)

and to love one another

and to serve one another

succor those who need succor

administer our substance to those who need it (what does the word *substance* mean?)

not allow the beggar to beg in vain (given the number of beggars in the world and the limitations of our resources, how do we do this?)

This list is important, for in it Benjamin has given us a test we can use to judge whether we are doing what it takes to receive salvation. The logic of what he says looks like this:

If you are doing what it takes to receive salvation, then you will also be doing these things.

So if you aren’t also doing these things, then you aren’t doing what it takes to receive salvation.

(An analogous argument would be: If you are a millionaire, you can afford a fifty-cent ice cream
cone. So if you can’t afford a fifty-cent ice cream cone, you aren’t a millionaire.)

What’s interesting is that it doesn’t follow from what he says that if you are doing these things you are doing what it takes to receive salvation. That invalid argument would look like this:

If you are doing what it takes to receive salvation, then you will also be doing these things.

So if you are also doing these things, you are doing what it takes to receive salvation.

(An analogous argument would be: If you are a millionaire, you can afford a fifty-cent ice cream cone. So if you can afford a fifty-cent ice cream cone, you are a millionaire. Obviously that isn’t right, so neither is the hypothetical argument.)

Why does Mosiah give us a test for when we aren’t doing what it takes to receive salvation, but no test for when we are doing what it takes?

What does “master of sin” mean? When Benjamin equates being the master of sin with being the evil spirit spoken of by the fathers, an enemy to all righteousness, what does he teach us?

What does it mean to be an enemy to all righteousness? How is that possible?
**Verse 16:** To whom does the word *beggar* refer in this and following verses? Is it the same as “those that stand in need your succor”?

**Verse 17:** In what ways do we say this?

**Verse 18:** Why would saying this about a beggar mean that we have no interest in the kingdom of God?

**Verse 19:** Is the answer to the question about verse 18 that if we say that about a beggar, we say it about ourselves and we condemn ourselves in saying it?

**Verses 20–21:** We must impart of our substance because the Father imparts of his. What does *substance* mean in this case? Why use that word rather than *wealth* or something similar?

**Verses 17–23, 26:** Of all the things on the list, why does Benjamin give so much emphasis to this particular one?

**Verse 24:** At what point can we deny the beggar because we cannot give to him? How little can we have?

**Verse 25:** Can we say, “I give not because I have not” in our hearts but be wrong? Can we deceive ourselves about how much we have to give? What does it mean that if we don’t say this in our hearts we are condemned “because we covet that which [we] have not received”? What is it that we have not received but covet?

**Verse 26:** Notice the qualifier on our administrations to the needy: “according to their wants.” What does that mean in practical terms? As home and visiting teachers? As people approached by various charitable organizations? As people approached on the street by a beggar?
**Verse 27:** All these things must be done in order. All what things? To what does this admonition refer—to caring for the needy? To other things as well?

What does it mean to do these things “in wisdom and order”? How do we decide what way of dealing with the needy is in wisdom and order? When we are told that we must not run faster than we have the strength, is Benjamin giving us a way out after such a strong sermon about service? In what must we be diligent? What prize is it that we can win?

**Verse 28:** How is this admonition related to those which have come before? Particularly to the admonition about beggars?

**Verse 29–30:** The fact that no list could be made of all the ways one could sin shows why no law, except the law of the Spirit, could suffice for salvation.

How do we watch our thoughts and deeds? Must we be continually looking over our shoulders for fear we have done something wrong?

How would the Nephites “continue in the faith of what [they had] heard concerning the coming of [the] Lord”? What does that mean? How would it apply to us? What does the admonition to remember entail?

**Mosiah 5**

**Verse 2:** Earlier we saw that the people were so many that they couldn’t all hear King Benjamin. In fact, he had a transcription of his sermon sent around so all could hear his words (2:8). That makes it difficult to believe that they all answered his question at the same time. (Presumably, they
heard the question at different times.) So what might it mean to say that “they all cried with one voice”?

When the people say they have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually, are they saying anything about the natural man mentioned in 3:19? What does it mean not to have a disposition to do evil? Have you ever had that experience? Does this mean that the people never did evil again? Does it mean that they never desired to do evil again?

During Joseph Smith’s day, *disposition* meant “arrangement” as well as “natural state of mind.” The latter meaning is obviously relevant to the people’s description of themselves—they no longer tend to do evil naturally (without thinking about it)—but might the first meaning also be informative?

Notice too that the writer doesn’t describe the change that occurred as something they did, but as something that happened to them because they accepted the testimony of the Holy Spirit: the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent wrought a mighty change in their hearts. They had faith, but their faith didn’t change their hearts; the Holy Spirit did. Does that say anything about repentance? About overcoming our own evil dispositions?

**Verse 3:** They say they could prophesy of all things if it were expedient. What does it mean to prophesy of all things? Why is that important? What does it mean to prophesy, beyond foretelling the future?

**Verse 4:** To what does “this great knowledge” refer? Why is it important that faith has taught them?
Verse 5: At what times do we enter into a similar covenant, to do the will of God and to be obedient to his commandments?

In Mosiah 1:11 the writer pointed out that the people had been diligent in keeping the Lord’s commandments. Now we see that a mighty change has occurred and that they covenant to keep his commandments. What happened? What’s the difference between their previous obedience and this that they now covenant to? What might we learn from this change that has occurred, a change from one kind of obedience to another?

Verse 6: What does King Benjamin mean when he says this is a righteous covenant?

Verse 7: The covenant they have made makes them Christ’s children. Does this suggest anything about our reference to the Savior as our “Elder Brother”? What does it mean to be spiritually begotten of Christ? What does it mean to be born of him? Is there a difference between being begotten of him and born of him?

Verse 8: Why does Benjamin call Christ a “head”?

What does it mean to be free?

Lehi says we all have agency, so in what way are these people now free that they weren’t before?

King Benjamin’s grammar makes being free and receiving salvation parallel. In what sense or senses do they mean the same thing?

What does it mean to take the name of Christ? How do we do that? When do we do it? (What does it mean to take that
name in vain?) Since Benjamin is speaking to the members of the Church, how is this different from what they did when they were baptized?

Benjamin says his people who have entered into the covenant should take Christ’s name on themselves so that they will be obedient to the end of the lives. How does taking his name on ourselves make us obedient? What is Benjamin saying?

Verse 9: Are the children of Christ the only ones who will know the name by which they are called, as this seems to imply?

Verse 10: Why do we have to be called by some name or other? What other name or names might we be called by? What does it mean to be called by one of these other names?

Verse 11: We are accustomed to hearing that our names will be blotted from the Lord’s records if we transgress and do not repent, but what Benjamin says here is unusual. What does it mean to have Christ’s name blotted out of our hearts?

Oddly, the discussion of having our names blotted out occurs mostly in the Old Testament. (See Deuteronomy 9:14; 29:20; 2 Kings 14:27; and Psalm 109:13, as well as Alma 5:57; D&C 85:5, 11). In the New Testament, the only discussions are discussions of those whose names will not be blotted out (Revelation 3:5; 19:12, 16).

In the latter-day scriptures, the only discussion of blotting out names is this one and an earlier instance (1:12).

Do you have any idea why this is primarily an Old Testament theme? In contrast, having one’s name written in the
book of life can be found in Malachi 3:16; Luke 10:20; Revelation 2:17; 13:8; 17:8; 21:12; Alma 5:58; 3 Nephi 24:16; and D&C 76:68.

**Verse 12:** What does it mean to have the Savior’s name written in our hearts?

**Verse 13:** Why is the Lord compared to a master here? Why must we serve him? What does that say about the necessity of obedience? In other words, does this explain why obedience is a requirement of salvation?

**Verse 14:** We cannot even claim our own bodies (2:25), so we necessarily belong to someone, the being by whose name we are called. What does the image used in this verse say about our relation to our master?

**Verse 15:** What does it mean to be steadfast and immovable? Steadfast in what? Immovable with respect to what?

What does *abound* mean?

What does it mean to be sealed Christ’s? How is it that being steadfast and immovable as well as abounding in good works make it possible for us to be sealed Christ’s?

What does the word *salvation* mean in this context? What is eternal life?

What does it mean that we have them through the Creator’s wisdom, power, justice, and mercy?

Why does the writer mention that the Father is the Creator? What has that to do with the subject of this verse?
Mosiah 6

Verse 1: Why did Benjamin record the names of all those who entered the covenant?

Verse 3: What does the word *consecrated* mean? Why would a king be consecrated?

What does “stirred up” mean in this context? Why did the people need to be stirred up to remember the covenant?

Isn’t the experience they had, the changing of their hearts, a permanent experience? (How long did its results last?)

See appendix 1 for an outline of Mosiah 4.