

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Alma 23–27

War

We have a long way to go, but there are some things that are much too important to miss. What we want to get now, just to begin with, is this general situation that seems so confused—this confused situation of battles, etc., in these chapters following Alma 22. In Alma 22:28–34 it makes a very important statement. It's hard to believe that this was written in 1829 because it wasn't until the beginning of the twentieth century that Alfred MacKinder, a Scotch geographer, invented *geopolitics*, which is the basic theory of two main types of culture that occupy the world and are in constant conflict. All world wars have been based on that, and here it is set forth here. We get the picture that the Lamanites are in the Southwest and scattered off toward the East. They are pushed in this direction and that direction, and they are being contained by the Nephites who are in the Northeast in general. So you have two general land masses, the one surrounding the other. In the Southwest all along here are Lamanites. The main body are Nephites, but there are Lamanites over here. They want to keep their way open in case they can retreat there. These are the two cultures. The one is the culture of the steppes, the heartland, or the *bedū*.

In the Old World all around central Asia is all marginal, grass-raising country with nomadic tribes of great antiquity that have always been on the move. Along all the northern shore of Africa and all of Arabia are the desert tribes. They are the *bedū*, and they live as described here. They all live in tents, whether it's the yurts of Central Asia or the *bayt al-sha'ar* of the Arabs. They are on the move all the time, and they are in a state of perpetual war. They are always bringing pressure to bear on the peripheral civilizations, which are the settled civilizations. Of course, you can be the one or the other. They are not doomed to be the one or the other. The Arabs, all of a sudden, in the eighth century became the greatest city builders of them all, just for a very short time. They have preserved this marvelous culture in Spain with the *sūqs*, the bazaars, the universities, and the libraries. It's a marvelous sort of thing these people can do. The other culture, of course, is the sedentary; it's the city one. We still have it in the United States, for example.

The plains Indians, who happened to be to the north and east, and the Navajos, who came down from the north very late, were always pushing on the Pueblos, the people in settled cities. Beginning with the Anasazi, then the Hopi and the Navajo came in. Much older are the Taos and the Acoma. There were settlements of great antiquity under pressure from [other tribes]. This is exactly what we have in the Book of Mormon. Nobody pointed this out until anthropologists of the twentieth century did. Especially geographers pointed out that this is the basic pattern that we are going to have in our history. We are going to have [people like] the Lamanites who are essentially mobile. They move around, but they can have settlements—they always do. Of course, the Nephites can also move around. There are the sedentary and the mobile [people]; those are the two that divide the world and

always have. The battle is between them; they keep the pressure on all the time. Verse 28 describes it very well. They dwelt in tents, and they were idle. To us they don't work; they don't cultivate the soil or anything like that, whereas the others work very hard.

Then in Alma 23 the Lamanite king pushes the church; he backs it up. He rules a very large area, you notice. As we find out at the beginning of the next chapter, he rules the Amalekites, the Amulonites, the Lamanites, and the people of Anti-Lehi-Nephi who were his own people. The key to this whole thing is that those who were converted at this time were a relatively small group, but very influential. Alma 23:1: "The king of the Lamanites sent a proclamation among all his people that they should not lay their hands on Ammon [or his people]" or make any trouble, but let them do anything they wanted. The brethren were given a *carte blanche* here to go forth and preach in whatsoever place they wanted to. They should have free access to their houses, temples, and sanctuaries—everything wide open to the missionaries "that they might be convinced concerning the wicked traditions of their fathers." Well, some aren't going to take that very well; [all people are] proud of the traditions of their fathers. He wants to convince them. This is a "glasnost." He wants these people to believe that they are all one people; they have to bury their differences, etc. Notice he says in verse 3: "... that they might be convinced that they were all brethren, and that they ought not to murder, nor to plunder, nor to steal, nor to commit adultery . . ." They were all his subjects.

Aaron, Ammon, and the brethren got busy "consecrating priests and teachers throughout the land among the Lamanites" who began accepting the gospel. Verse 5: "And thousands were brought to the knowledge of the Lord, . . . and they were taught the records and prophecies." And the Lamanites proved the most faithful of them all. We are told in verse 6 that many who joined at that time were rock firm and never again did fall away. "For they became a righteous people; they did lay down the weapons of their rebellion [they started doing this before Ammon's people buried theirs, which is what righteousness means. What is righteousness?] that they did not fight against God any more, neither against any of their brethren." This, as I said, was before [Ammon's people], so this is an interesting thing the way things are being pushed here.

Here's a list of the good Lamanites, you notice. It's quite a complicated thing here. They include the people of Middoni, and those in the city of Nephi, and Lamanites in the land of Shilom and Shemlon, and those in the city of Lemuel, and in the city of Shimnilom, etc. It sounds like the Hopi villages; their names all sound alike, you know. They sound just like that. Verse 13: "And these are they that laid down the weapons of their rebellion, yea, all their weapons of war; and they were all Lamanites." So the tide has turned now; these have been very important events that have happened.

So then what happens? Then the question arises with verses 16: Do we have a state within a state here? It looks awfully good for the church, but most of the people were out of it. They didn't like it at all, as we shall soon see. "And now it came to pass that the king and those who were converted were desirous that they might have a name." Not only were they going to be a distinct people, they were going to have a name to set themselves off from the rest of the nation. Well, again was that a tactful thing to do? Was that a wise thing? Well, you have to have the name anyway. As we read in Doctrine and Covenants 115, the name of the Church was a very important thing. You have to have a name to distinguish yourself—*nomen est omen*. Without a name you can't be identified. We know that in this age of computers identification is everything. You have to have a name to distinguish you from all others. But would this be disruptive in the state? On the contrary

it was a removal of barriers. It wasn't a setting up of barriers by giving themselves a special name, Anti-Nephi-Lehi. It's an interesting name, incidentally; we will get to that. They were doing the very opposite.

This is what he says here in verse 18: "And they began to be a very industrious people; yea, and they were friendly with the Nephites; therefore, they did open a correspondence with them, and the curse of God did no more follow them." He tells us again right across the page here that what they did was to remove all the barriers; they opened trade to everybody. That's what we call "glasnost" today, I suppose. They were named Anti-Nephi-Lehies. You know that Nephi-Lehi means a combination of Nephi and Lehi, and *anti* means "combination, face-to-face, meeting." You have Adam-ondi-Ahman. That's one of the richest prepositions we have. This *anti* means so many things. We get it in the Book of Mormon a good deal—Antiomno and things like that. There's *anti* in the Book of Mormon. The Latin *ante* means "standing in front of a person and facing him." Of course, that's the Greek *anti* and the Arabic *'inda*. The Old English is **and-*. The word *answer*, for example, is *answarian*—swear back at a person. This means "face to face confrontation" whether it's in Old Norse, Old English, Semitic, Arabic, Greek, Latin, or in the Book of Mormon. It means "a face-to-face meeting, a joining together with somebody." We are going to find later on about an Anti-Christ, who is a person who pretends to be Christ, who matches Christ, who pretends to take the place of Christ. It's not somebody who opposes Christ, but somebody who pretends to be Christ. We get that a little later when we get to Korihor. But first they gave themselves this name of Anti-Nephi-Lehies. "And they were called by this name and were no more called Lamanites." So they were set apart, but they began to be an industrious people—getting to work at last. They did open a correspondence with the Nephites, "and the curse of God did no more follow them."

Question: With the gathering of the people under Lamoni and their receiving a new name, would that be similar to the year festival that you described when we talked about Benjamin?

Answer: Yes, remember it is going to tell very clearly in the next chapter that when they all returned, it was to the law of Moses which they observed strictly. Of course, that all centers around the rites and ordinances of the temple, the bringing of the people together, and the renewing of the covenants. They all enter into the covenant again, and they have to come up to Jerusalem to worship the king, the Lord of Hosts. You read that at the end of Zechariah.

Do we have a state within a state? Well, some people thought so. They didn't like it. In chapter 24 there's going to be real trouble. This chapter 24 is one of the most significant in the Book of Mormon. We never quote it, of course. We like to talk about Captain Moroni and the two thousand. We don't like to talk about these pacifist "wimps" here, but these are the best people in the Book of Mormon. They are doing what the Lord wants them to do. But they [the unconverted] didn't like it at all. They were stirred up, and when [the converts] formed this Anti-Nephi-Lehi group, that was just too much for them. They were stirred up by the Amalekites and the Amulonites to get anybody who wasn't in the combination, and they began to rebel against their king. It was open revolution now; they took up arms against him. So they were rebelling and having a revolution against the king and the whole thing. They are much more numerous than the other people, too. How are they going to handle that, especially since these people aren't inclined to fight

back? This is the backlash. Armed rebellion is what it leads to, as you would expect it to considering that with only a [small] number of the people the king went so far. They were just reveling in this religion, the new name, and everything else they had given themselves. It causes the inevitable backlash. But, on the other hand, they are faced with a policy of nonresistance. This is a strange thing. Remember that Ammon's people were a relatively small group. But that's what the Hopis practice; they practice nonresistance. *Hopi* means a peaceful people, and anybody can take advantage of them, from anthropologists to oil companies to uranium companies, etc. They are just pushovers for anybody, and you would think they would have been wiped out long ago. But as the Book of Mormon tells us later on, those that take up arms and oppose are the ones who are going to be destroyed. The Hopis are still there and going strong after everybody has been perfectly free to take advantage of them, and don't think people haven't tried to do it.

There actually are people who would refuse to fight. So how are you going to fight these people? This is an important thing to remember here. From verse 22 on there is no contest. This is the reason for it, and this is the most interesting thing. That's why I say this is not a popular chapter. Notice how often they repeat the word *murders* here. Verse 8: "And behold, I thank my great God that he has given us a portion of his Spirit to soften our hearts, that we have opened a correspondence with these brethren, the Nephites." Notice they are opening correspondence with everybody. They are not raising barriers; they are lowering them. Verse 9: "We have been convinced of our sins, and of the many *murders* which we have committed." In the next verse it talks about the *murders*, and in verse 11 "the many murders." They keep talking about the *murders* here. They refer to killing on the battlefield. Is that murder? Well, you bet it is. During the recent operation we have adopted the amazing doctrine, which certainly doesn't agree with Clausewitz, that you measure your success in war by body count. You can gain nothing at all [by that]. One of the basic principles of Clausewitz is that until the war is over nobody knows who is going to win because chance plays a greater part in war than anywhere else. As he says, nobody knows. It's your game of chess again. You can have all the pieces on the board, your opponent can have only two left, and he can win. This happens in time of war. Strange things happen this way. They feel guilty; they think what they have been doing is murdering.

Verse 11: "... for it was all we could do to repent sufficiently before God [they can't repent enough] since God hath taken away our stains, and our swords have become bright, then let us stain our swords no more with the blood of our brethren; ... if we should stain our swords again" we couldn't have a claim on the atonement if we went on doing this sort of killing. It won't do. These are mostly Lamanites talking now, you see. Verse 14: "And the great God has had mercy on us, and made these things known unto us that we might not perish; yea, and he has made these things known unto us beforehand, because he loveth our souls [they realized the enormity of what they had been doing] as well as he loveth our children; therefore, in his mercy he doth visit us by his angels [that's what it takes to turn them around] ... since it has been as much as we could do to get our stains taken away from us, and our swords are made bright, let us hide them away that they may be kept bright, as a testimony to our God."

"As a testimony to God." It's interesting—they tell me a slogan you often found in Korea and Vietnam was "Kill a gook for God." Now the gooks have come over here and shown us that they are not gooks at all. Most of them are a lot smarter than we are as students, and we've got a lot of them. But we thought that was virtuous. These chapters of the Book of Mormon are very necessary—actually they are. Verse 16: "And now, my brethren, if

our brethren seek to destroy us, behold, we will hide away our swords.” The rest of the chapter is on the theme of not offering resistance. From verse 22 on there is no contest. This is a change of Lamanite policy, and it was most effective among the pure Lamanites. The others didn’t go for it, we are told here [in verse 29]: “Now among those who joined the people of the Lord, there were none who were Amalekites [they were an important part of the kingdom] or Amulonites,” who were mostly the other ethnic group, the Mulekites. And none of the order of Nehor were persuaded—the whole church had been Nehor before, “but they were [only the] actual descendants of Laman and Lemuel,” the blood of Israel. This certainly implies that the others—the Ishmaelites, the Amulonites, and the Amalekites—were of another stock actually. But they are so closely related, just as they are among the Indians and as we are. After a people have once been enlightened (they had been enlightened; remember they came out of Zarahemla) and then have fallen away it’s worse than ever before.

There’s an interesting thing about this refusing to fight back. The same thing happens in the fourth book of Maccabees. There are these terrible, bloody stories that Josephus tells. He was an eyewitness to the sort of thing that went on. But in 4 Maccabees Jews are fighting Jews there. The Greeks and then the Romans torture. They start persecuting the Jews on a massive scale, and the Jews are nonresistant. They are willing to be martyred. It immediately dampens all the ardor because you can’t be heroic if the enemy doesn’t fight back. You just give up; you are not going to carry on at all. This is no contest; this is no fun at all. This is what happens here. “And thus without meeting any resistance, they did slay a thousand and five of them.” Well, no contest, no game. People started losing interest there. This is what happens in 4 Maccabees when they start with aged martyrs and then the seven sons of the widow. They offer no opposition. It begins to hurt the consciences of the leaders on the other side and make them sick. As a result they get mad at these people, “Won’t you resist? Dammit, why don’t you fight?” They get mad enough to slaughter them. It’s a paradox here because they didn’t want to slaughter them; they forced them to do it. “Why do you force us to do this dirty thing?” This happens at the beginning of the next chapter. “Those Lamanites were more angry because they had slain their brethren.” The Lamanites stopped fighting then because the others weren’t putting up a fight. In various cases war tribes have dropped their ferocity. That’s a characteristic of the Indians. They can change very quickly from being enemies to being friends, and the other way around. So the Lamanites stopped killing them then.

Verse 24: “There were many whose hearts had swollen in them for those of their brethren who had fallen under the sword, for they repented of the things which they had done.” As I say, it takes all the heroics and passion out of it. Clausewitz says there is no hatred in war at all because you don’t know any of the enemy to hate them. It has to be artificially induced. It’s used very skillfully in the Book of Mormon by Amalickiah when he sets up towers and has regular speakers going around. You have to whip up this hatred. You have to make an issue, as Clausewitz tells us, and build it up. It’s artificially produced. Why would they stop fighting so readily? For a very good reason. These were their own people they were fighting; they weren’t fighting a traditional enemy. Just a month or so before they had all been one nation and one people; moreover, the bonds had been lowered. They had been visiting each other and knew each other. There’s a wonderful passage in the [writings] of the fourth or fifth century ambassador to the court of Attila. It goes back to Asia and talks about the same sort of thing. These people knew each other on both sides of the line; they didn’t want to fight each other. They had been a single nation; they were not a traditional enemy. Since the “glasnost” I suppose they had known each other. It’s not surprising at all that they stopped the slaughter. If it had been a traditional enemy, if

it had been somebody else [they might have gone on]. But they were all under the same king in the same kingdom. These people were in a state of open rebellion; they were the rebels. Yet even with rebels what a bloody thing it can become, as we have seen in the case of our Civil War—the nastiest thing that ever happened. They just went on killing as if they were hypnotized, a horrible thing, and gaining nothing by it.

So they threw down their weapons. They wouldn't fight anymore, "for they were stung for the murders which they had committed." This was murder they were doing. I mean when you take life it's murder no matter what you call it. Then more of them were joining the church than those who were slain. "Now, among those who joined the people of the Lord, there were none who were Amalekites or Amulonites." They still remained outside and they still remained hostile, so there would be more war. None of the Nehor people [joined the church], and that was the main church among them. Only the actual descendants of Laman and Lemuel were converted.

In chapter 25 the Lamanites were angry because they had slain their brethren. That may be puzzling because it gets mixed up here. The Lamanites transferred the action to Ammonihah now. That was Ishmael's group. Here's another thing. You remember what the blessing on Ishmael was. Ammonihah was the city they were going to wipe out completely. This was a group of Lamanites [that would do it]—not the Lamanites that had pledged not to fight again because these were fighting. These were the other Lamanites, their brothers, who were so mad to see the way their brethren had been treated. They started taking it out on the Amalekites and the Amulonites, and they made an example of Ammonihah. When Abraham gave his blessing to Isaac and Ishmael, his two sons, the blessing on Ishmael was that his hand should be against all men and all men's hands should be against him. Of course, that's the *ghāza*, that's the raid. You're fighting everybody. There's a perpetual state of tribal war among them. They make agreements in tribes and then somebody breaks them. Somebody kills somebody and there must be vengeance. Honor requires that you seek vengeance. So you revenge him, and they have to revenge the one you killed. So this goes on and away you go back and forth. Later on the Book of Mormon lays immense importance on not avenging anything because once you start that there is no end—as you see in Ireland, in Lebanon, in the Philippines, etc. There are factions that have to get even with each other, and each one has a legitimate offence. They have both been wronged, etc.

So the Lamanites were angry, and they took it out. They "went over into the borders of the land of Zarahemla, and fell upon the people who were in the land of Ammonihah and destroyed them." The lands were divided up into lesser sections. This was Ammonihah, and they wiped them out. This led to general fighting all along the front here. What we find here is the Nephites versus the Lamanites, and the fighting goes on. In verse 4 Amulon takes a beating. [His people] were Mulekites. Amulon was the leader of the priests who were led out by Noah. Noah was the son of Zeniff, who was a direct descendant of Zarahemla, a Mulekite. This is another stock here. They were slain by the hands of the Nephites. It's a free for all now. Everybody is fighting everybody else, just like the wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth century—the point being that you would be on one side one day and another side the next. This is the way you would shift back and forth. Here the remainder of the people of Amulon fled into the wilderness—they were old hands at that. They got there by themselves. Then they usurped power over the Lamanites they found there and had an *auto-da-fé* and caused many of the Lamanites to perish because of their belief. See, they moved to the only safe place. They moved into the territory of the

recently converted, nonresistant Lamanites so they wouldn't have any trouble. The Amulonites just went in there, took over and became their usual brutal selves.

Verse 6: "For many of them, after having suffered much loss and so many afflictions, began to be stirred up in remembrance of the words which Aaron and his brethren had preached to them in their land; therefore they began to disbelieve the traditions of their fathers, and to believe in the Lord." This is talking about the Lamanites. On a broad front around the east side you find them also. These general movements take place. You know how that happens. After Amulon took a beating he moved into Lamanite country and oppressed the Lamanite nonresisters who had been converted by this general pacifistic trend. These general movements have their trends. There are times in this country when we feel very warlike, very proud, and all this sort of thing. Then there are other times when we are much more critical of ourselves, more inclined to be sober. So the pendulum swings back and forth. The Lamanites in general reacted against the arrogant Amulonites because of the way they had treated the non-resistant, gentle Lamanites. The other Lamanites got mad at the Amulonites and lit into them. So we find a perennial feud going on here, a terrible mess. Verse 8: "Now this martyrdom caused that many of their brethren should be stirred up to anger; and there began to be contention in the wilderness; and the Lamanites began to hunt the seed of Amulon and his brethren [who had done so much mischief to their more faithful brethren] and began to slay them. . . . And behold they are hunted at this day by the Lamanites." So it was going on at the time this was written.

They saw it was going to be a no-win situation. Verse 13: "When the Lamanites saw that they could not overpower the Nephites they returned again to their own land [the conversions were steadily increasing among them, and it says they did accept and follow the law of Moses]; and many of them came over to dwell in the land of Ishmael and the land of Nephi [this was a very mobile period], and did join themselves to the people of God, who were the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi. And they did also bury their weapons of war, according as their brethren had, and they began to be a righteous people. . . . Yea, and they did keep the law of Moses . . . [and] did look forward to the coming of Christ. The law of Moses was the type, the outward performances, but they had to perform them to keep them in mind, to keep them informed, relying upon the spirit of prophecy that the Messiah would come.

Now we come to this wonderful speech, Ammon's mission report. It's a very good one here. It's a most singular document. The Book of Mormon is so full of things like this one here. This is Ammon [writing] to his brethren. Remember, this was the same Ammon who was more than a match for the people at the waters of Sebus. He was a one-man platoon; he could wipe out anything you wanted. He was the most ferocious and effective fighter in the Book of Mormon. Yet see what kind of a mission he went on here. Verse 3: "Behold, I answer for you; for our brethren, the Lamanites, were in darkness, . . . but behold, how many of them are brought to behold the marvelous light of God! . . . Behold, the field was ripe." This is what happened, a miraculous turn. There's one key figure in all this change, all this going on. The whole movement comes back to this one man, Ammon, so it is very important that he gives a report on his behavior, his motivation, and how he was able to do it. It's very interesting how one person will start a movement, like Martin Luther, for example. He makes the first move, and everything starts rolling. That's what happened here. It was just the time to do it; they thrust in their sickles and did reap. Verse 5: ". . . but when the storm cometh they shall be gathered together in their place, that the storm cannot penetrate to them."

Verse 9: “For if we had not come up out of the land of Zarahemla, these our dearly beloved brethren, who have so dearly beloved us, would still have been racked with hatred against us, yea, and they would also have been strangers to God.” How can you break down the barrier of hatred? This is the big problem. How can we do it? Well, not by making a virtue of hatred and cultivating your traditional hatred, as they do in certain countries. “His brother Aaron rebuked him, saying: Ammon, I fear that thy joy doth carry thee away unto boasting.” Are you responsible for the whole thing? Did you turn the tide? Oh, no, no, “my joy is full.” Notice he says here that he knows he is nothing. “Yea, I know that I am nothing.” As a result of that he says his joy is full. As Mosiah tells us in Mosiah 4:11, do this and you will always be happy; you will always feel to rejoice, because that removes the great burden of ego so we can turn our attention away from this image of invidiousness, conspicuous consumption, and competitiveness. This frees you to deal with and enjoy reality because all that other stuff is phoney—to say, “What is my rank? What is my position? How do I look? etc. That has nothing to do with it; that’s ridiculous. When you free yourself from all that and realize that you are nothing, then you can afford the luxury of being happy, which is very nice.

Verse 13: “Behold, how many thousands of our brethren has he loosed from the pains of hell; and they are brought to sing redeeming love.” We are told that they went back to the law of Moses, and the song of redeeming love was a very important part in the cult of Moses. When the people all came together, they would sing the song of redeeming love. It was part of their ritual; I have an article coming out on that: “. . . and this because of the power of his word which is in us, therefore have we not great reason to rejoice? . . . Yea, they were encircled about with everlasting darkness and destruction.” True, it was everlasting darkness. We all are until we accept the gospel. What have you to look forward to here? Remember the most famous ode on the subject? Catullus’s Fifth Ode is on that subject. “Let’s make love and live, my Lesbia,” says Catullus.

“The criticism, the traditions, the strict moral laws of our strict elders don’t take seriously. Consider them worth one penny,” he says. “The sun goes down and the sun comes up again. But once our brief candle has gone out, nothing remains but a perpetual night of eternal blackness.”

That’s what you have. If you don’t accept the gospel and believe it, what do you have to await but a night of eternal blackness? As Shakespeare said, “We are the stuff that dreams are made of, and our little life is surrounded with a sleep.” It’s like sleep before we came—blackness, no memory, no nothing—sleep after we get here, and after we leave, no nothing. We are surrounded by darkness, complete blackness on all sides. So Catullus expresses it very beautifully. What’s his solution? He says, wild sex is the only thing, while you can get it. “Give me a thousand kisses; then give me a hundred more,” and we will really get at it. This is the only answer [according to this philosophy] because it is a desperate situation. “Once our brief flight has gone down, it’s just one night of perpetual sleep.” This is literally true what he says. People do live in that condition if they don’t have the gospel. He says, “they were encircled about with everlasting darkness,” and on both sides of us there’s the darkness.

Verse 16: “Therefore, let us glory, yea, we will glory in the Lord; yea, we will rejoice, for our joy is full [because you have done away with that]. . . . I cannot say the smallest part which I feel.” This is pure joy. This is what you call *charity*. Our word *cheer* is the same as *charity*, the Greek *charis*, Latin *gratia*, etc. It’s no mental reservations, no gnawing

discontent, no vaulting ambition. These are the seeds of tragedy, you see. If you have to have your success here in the world and this is the only place you can get it, then you have the making of a tragedy. In the first place because you are going to have to do some immoral things to get there, and in the second place because you are going to be disappointed. Every tragedy ends in death. Well, sooner or later it will. Remember the terrible fix that Oedipus finds himself in. Well, the chorus in *Oedipus at Colonus*, the second play, says, you think Oedipus has it bad. It's just the same punishment you're going to get. You're just going to be nothing after all. Oedipus, for his crime, is being punished no more than you are being punished, because we are all going to same place. But it turns out that Oedipus does go into the next world. He goes through the ordinances. He goes into the temple, etc. The last we hear of him is when the messenger reports how he sees him go into the distance. He says he wasn't allowed to go beyond the veil. If he had gone beyond the veil he would have seen many more things. But he said, "Oh, there are great things!" Sophocles was a priest himself and a very devout man, as well as the greatest playwright who ever lived. He has given that picture of the hope to come hereafter. Well, we have it here. He [Ammon] says, "Behold, I say unto you, I cannot say the smallest part which I feel," because he is liberated from all the things that make us afraid and make us do the things that always lead to tragedy.

Verse 20: "Oh, my soul, almost as it were, fleeth at the thought. Behold, he did not exercise his justice upon us [we didn't suffer the way we deserved to suffer], but in his great mercy hath brought us over that everlasting gulf of death." That's the big one, you see. This is the only thing men really fear. That's why they live in quiet desperation, because that's what they are looking toward at the end of their careers. Their careers are going to take a downturn before long. Present dangers and inconveniences can be dealt with very easily because they are merely temporary. We can get along with them very nicely. But that's not the big unpleasantness. Remember T. S. Eliot's immortal lines, "I have seen the immortal footman hold my coat and snicker, and in short, I was afraid." Here's the footman holding his coat and saying, "It's time to go now, Buster." He was afraid, and we are all scared to death. Don't think you can face it down because nobody has ever done it. There are the defiant characters, like Macbeth, but theirs are the cruelest ends of all.

Then he says in verse 21: "I say unto you, there is none that knoweth these things, save it be the penitent." Am I talking over your heads? he says. Do you think I'm crazy because I'm rejoicing in all this? No, only the penitent know these things. You'll never rejoice unless you are penitent, because, as Freud says, it's the guilt feelings that keep you from being happy after all. They're suppressed; you have to bring them out to get them out into the open. (It's not a very good cure actually.) But they are the things that give you the skin rashes, the ulcers, and things like that. You know the guilt is there, but you try to keep it down. You think you have forgotten, but you haven't. It's going to haunt you all the time. He said we get rid of all this. We haven't been punished as we deserve to be punished, but it's wonderful, he says. But you'll never know these things unless you repent, completely aware of how wrong they are. Here they believe a thing that makes them desperately sorrowful, that makes them absolutely miserable. The funny thing is if you only knew how wrong you are. You don't have to be miserable because you are not right. That's not what comes after at all. It's not darkness. You wouldn't have come out of nothing in the first place.

Verse 22: "Yea, he that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing—unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God;

yea, unto such it shall be given to reveal things which never have been revealed.” What is a mystery here? Now he starts telling about his mission here. He had a plan to go out and convert these people. “Now do ye remember, my brethren, that we said unto our brethren in the land of Zarahemla, we go up to the land of Nephi, to preach unto our brethren, the Lamanites, and they laughed us to scorn?” They laughed their heads off; it was the funniest thing they ever heard of. Convert those characters? This is what they said. “For they said unto us: Do ye suppose that ye can bring the Lamanites to the knowledge of the truth? Do ye suppose that ye can convince the Lamanites of the incorrectness of the traditions of their fathers [in which they firmly believed], as stiffnecked a people as they are; whose hearts delight in the shedding of blood; whose days have been spent in the grossest iniquity; whose ways have been the ways of a transgressor from the beginning? Now my brethren, ye remember that this was their language.” They’re worse than Communists. These people are unthinkably vile. They just laughed at the idea of going up to preach to them. You are not going to get anywhere, is what they said. There’s only one way to deal with those people; we have to get them before they get us. That’s the only thing to do.

Verse 25: “And moreover they did say: Let us take up arms against them, that we destroy them and their iniquity out of the land, lest they overrun us and destroy us.” This is the unanswerable argument for war. With a gun it’s kill or be killed. If you put yourself in that position, then you must do it. We must defend ourselves. We have about 2200 “nukes” now because they have only 1800 and we have to have more—knowing perfectly well that if we use as many as six it will all be over with everybody. Yet we have hundreds and we are accumulating thousands of them. They say we are getting eight new warheads every day. They have a mass production going, and none of them can be used, of course. The military absolutely hate them because they make a hash of any strategy or tactic. They can’t do anything against that sort of weapon. You can’t control it. There’s a marvelous chapter in Clausewitz on the uncertainty of war; you can’t control anything. I have seen this lots of times. As soon as the battle starts, the general can do nothing but walk back and forth in his tent. He tries to get somebody on the wire and gets nobody. All the connections are broken. Nobody knows what going on anywhere. As soon as the shooting starts everything dissolves. Our modern technology does not overcome that difficulty; it only makes it worse. You know how easily a computer can go out, and how easily it can be misinterpreted, and how easily you can hit the wrong key. A little while ago Pat hit the wrong key on the computer and we lost a whole week’s work of dictating. This can happen. And, of course, in the fluster, hurry, and excitement of war, it is going to happen. It happens all the time. Everybody makes wrong [decisions]. I had to make reports every day. I had to go out and interview prisoners of war, try to find out what was going on, and make a sensible report out of it. It was a garbled mess all the time. Once in a while it would work though, but oh boy! This is what he [Ammon] is talking about here, this absurdity. But this is the answer they gave: we must destroy them before they destroy us. That’s unanswerable, we say, because they are dangerous—they’re a threat.

Ah, but Ammon has the answer to that in verse 26: “But behold, my beloved brethren, we came into the wilderness not with the intent to destroy our brethren, but with the intent that perhaps we might save some few of their souls.” Notice this; it’s a gamble as far as he’s concerned. Of course, all war is a gamble, too. It’s a gamble, but he says it’s worth it, “that perhaps we might save some few of their souls.” He doesn’t have great hopes in going; it’s not a sure deal at all. It’s just possible that they might save a few of them. It’s worth all this trouble just to save a few of them. That’s quite an exchange when you start figuring out the chances, the expense, and all this sort of thing.

Verse 27: “Now when our hearts were depressed, and we were about to turn back, behold . . .” They weren’t getting anywhere at all; they met what they thought they would. Things looked very bleak when they got there. “And now behold, we have come, and been forth amongst them; and we have been patient in our sufferings . . .” They went back again because “the Lord comforted us, and said: Go amongst thy brethren, the Lamanites, and bear with patience thine afflictions, and I will give unto you success.” And this is what the mightiest warrior in the Book of Mormon had to put up with: “And we have been patient in our sufferings, and we have suffered every privation; yea, we have traveled from house to house [and let the people kick us around], relying upon the mercies of the world—not upon the mercies of the world alone but upon the mercies of God. President Benson’s speech was on pride. This man had no pride at all—the mighty Ammon going around begging, as it were, from door to door, relying on the mercies of the world and the people. “And we have been cast out, and mocked, and spit upon, and smote upon our cheeks.” I wouldn’t take a chance spitting on Ammon. But he allowed it. Why? He goes on: “And we have been stoned, and taken and bound with strong cords, and cast into prison.” Why did he allow all this to happen? Verse 30: “And we have suffered all manner of afflictions, and all this, that perhaps we might be the means of saving some soul.” That was a gamble right there, but it was worth it. Is it worth the chance? “And we supposed that our joy would be full if perhaps we could be the means of saving some.”

There’s Pascal’s famous proposition. Is it worth practicing self-control and Christian virtues just on the chance that there might be a hereafter, that you might live forever and have eternal life? It’s not proven at all [according to him]; it’s just a chance, just a gamble. Is it worth making the trouble? He says, of course, it’s worth making the trouble. If you win you win everything, and if you lose you don’t lose anything because nobody is expecting anything anyway. You can’t lose, so bet on it by all means. Go that way, because when you win you stand to win it all. If you go the other way, you know you will lose, and you have already lost [paraphrased]. So Pascal’s famous proposition is put forth here to the brethren that perhaps we might save some soul—there might be a chance, and it is worth everything. But it really did work, he says. Verse 32: “For behold, they had rather sacrifice their lives than even to take the life of their enemy [this is what he regards as his reward, the great triumph of this great warrior]; and they have buried their weapons of war deep in the earth, because of their love towards their brethren. And now, behold I say unto you, has there been so great love in all the land? Behold, I say unto you, Nay, there has not, even among the Nephites. For behold, they would take up arms against their brethren; they would not suffer themselves to be slain. But behold how many of these have laid down their lives; and we know that they have gone to their God, because of their love and of their hatred to sin.” Regarding that as the ultimate sin, they keep calling it murder, and they don’t want to do that.

Verse 36: “Now if this is boasting, even so will I boast.” I don’t make any excuses. They are a branch of the tree of Israel that has been lost from its body. This is how they thought of themselves; they knew that they were isolated, etc. There have been enclaves. People never forget their homes that they have come from originally. There are some enclaves in Europe, Asia, etc., the Jews being the isolated ones that never forget. During the time that I was growing up and the generation before me, all the Saints in the West here felt we were just marking time until we could return to Jackson County, which was the real place where we should be. We should go back to Missouri. Everybody thought we would be

doing that. “This people, who are a branch of the tree of Israel, and has been lost from its body in a strange land, . . . wanderers in a strange land.” These are enclaves, etc.

Now he gets into a universal theme in verse 37, which is very important. “Now my brethren, we see that God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in; yea, he numbereth his people, and his bowels of mercy are over all the earth.” You can’t divide the earth into the godly and the godless, can you?

In this next chapter the Amalekites were still strong and still dangerous. They began a movement against the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, who were with the government that had taken over more or less. “The Amalekites, because of their loss, were exceedingly angry. And when they saw that they could not seek revenge from the Nephites, they began to stir up the people in anger against their brethren, the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi; therefore they began again to destroy them.” Remember, these various people who were members of the nation had their districts, states, or provinces they lived in, which were fairly uniform. They were going to make trouble for the king. They did rebel, but they were reduced. They began to destroy the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, and the people still refused to take up arms. Well, that was a pushover for them now, but they were really mad about the Anti-Lehi-Nephi people. Verse 4: “When Ammon and his brethren saw this great work of destruction, they were moved with compassion.” They had to do something about it. Ammon said, well, let’s get the people together and clear out and go to the land of Zarahemla. This evacuation of villages is very common in the history of the Pueblos, the Southwest Indians, whose villages are very ancient and stable. Nevertheless, again and again they evacuate a village and move to another place because of hard feelings, or war, or dangers from something else. There’s constant movement between the villages and the tribes. There are plenty of them in the Book of Mormon. We call that the Rechabite principle. Jonadab ben Rechab [see Jeremiah 35] led the people out away from the wicked world they were in so they could be in the desert by themselves and worship the Lord as they pleased. That’s what we have in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and that’s what we have here.

Verse 5: “Let us go down to the land of Zarahemla to our brethren the Nephites, and flee out of the hands of our enemies, that we be not destroyed.” Since we won’t fight them we had better run away from them. “But the king said unto them: Behold, the Nephites will destroy us [we deserve what we are getting], because of the many murders and sins which we have committed against them [there you are again—war is murder]. We will be their slaves [boy, he has it bad] until we repair unto them the many murders and sins which we have committed against them.” Notice regardless of the fact that they were killing mutually and reciprocally on the battlefield, it was a murder against the enemy.

Verse 9: “But Ammon said unto him: It is against the law of our brethren . . . that there should be any slaves [at all] among them.” We can’t be their slaves. Our only alternative is to submit to them. Then we would be their slaves, but Ammon says it’s against the law of Moses that Israelites should be made slaves—they can’t be. We can’t do it, but we’ve got to get out. So the voice of the Lord came to Ammon and said, “Get this people out of this land, that they perish not.” This is another one of those migrations.

Verse 12: “. . . for Satan has great hold on the hearts of the Amalekites, who do stir up the Lamanites to anger against their brethren to slay them.” So they gathered the people together. It’s the usual procedure in verse 14. “And they gathered together all their people, yea, all the people of the Lord, and did gather together all their flocks and herds.” You may say this is extravagant. Remember, this was [translated] in 1828–29 before the

Church was founded, but this is exactly what the Mormons did. From New York they went to Ohio, from Ohio to Missouri and Jackson County, from Jackson County [to Nauvoo, from Nauvoo] to Salt Lake Valley. They were always gathering everything they had and getting out. They had to take everything with them and move, and that's what they did. Some of the wagon trains crossing the plains must have been enormously impressive, when you would see hundreds of wagons. Ten wagons look like something big in the movies, but when you get hundreds of them strung along it must be a terrific thing. That's what some of the big companies had, one company following another. So they went "into the wilderness which divided the land of Nephi from the land of Zarahemla, and came over near the borders of the land."

But where are they going to settle? All the good land was taken already. They were relieved fortunately because, as they were making the journey, Ammon was going to Zarahemla to ask for permission to do something. He met Alma and the missionaries returning from their labors. There was a great rejoicing. The joy of Ammon was full "even to the exhausting of his strength." He fell to earth he was so overcome. This Ammon was a passionate person. Of course, this is *proskynōsis*, this falling to the earth. This is another ancient custom that we don't have today. In a *salām* the knees bend over. When you fall on your knees and bend over, that's a common salute to a person in certain countries. This is what happened. He fell to the earth again, which is what you do when you are overwhelmed in the presence of God or a great man like Alma, "but behold their joy was not that to exceed their strength. . . . Alma conducted his brethren back to the land of Zarahemla, even to his own house."

The brethren stayed at his house, but meantime they were going to make negotiations to see if they couldn't get these people of Ammon who wouldn't fight, the Anti-Nephi-Lehi people, settled somewhere. They found a place for them; they formed a buffer state in the land Jerashon. Some of you may have been to Jerash, which is on the border between Jordan and Syria. I was there many years ago. It is a magnificently preserved city, a perfectly preserved Roman city with all its splendor. There's the long, long main street, the shop fronts, the pillars, and the fountain. There's a beautifully preserved amphitheater, and it was neglected completely. Nobody was out there; it was just in the desert. Now it has been made a *son et lumière* affair—one of these where they put on a show and the tourists go out in busses. Jerash it's called, which is the same as Jerashon, the border town. They put them in a border country called Jerashon, and it made a buffer state. They didn't have to fight, but they were a buffer. They supplied grain and other necessities to the Nephites, and the Nephites gave them protection there. It was a good arrangement for both of them. They fixed it up very nicely. Verse 22: "Behold, we will give up the land of Jerashon . . . for an inheritance. And behold, we will set our armies between the land Jerashon and the land Nephi, that we may protect our brethren in the land Jerashon."

You know the Jews have had settlements out here in the West, too. Have any of you ever heard of Clarion? Back in the beginning of the twentieth century they were going to found a new Jerusalem at a place called Clarion on the border between Utah and Nevada out there by Baker. Of course, it disappeared completely, but there were many attempts like that by the Jews and others to settle (Hume Stilling and some very famous cases of Quaker settlements, Massachusetts Bay, Pennsylvania). Jerash was that sort of thing. So they said we will protect them there while they give us supplies. "And this their great fear came because of their sore repentance which they had, on account of their many murders and their awful wickedness [it isn't all fair in war] . . . that they may inherit the land

Jershon; and we will guard them [and] they will give us a portion of their substance to assist us that we may maintain our armies.” Well, that was a fair operation then. So they settled down and took to that. These people that settled there were absolutely ideal—I guess something like the Amish that you find in Pennsylvania or the Doukhobors, perfectly honest and upright. “And they did look upon shedding the blood of their brethren with the greatest abhorrence [it didn’t depend on whose blood either] . . . and they never did look upon death with any degree of terror” for themselves.

So we get to the next chapter, and time is up. Well, at least we got that far. We need to get to this very important chapter 30. With 62 chapters to Alma, we are going to have to move right along. We’ll probably be able to do it if it gets into sort of a uniformity here. In chapter 28 the Lamanites keep up the pressure at a high price to themselves. There’s a general confrontation and lots of bloodshed. Then we get a picture of confused war, you see.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Matthew Arnold, “Dover Beach”

That was the situation of the world before World War I when he wrote that poem. But it’s still the situation “where ignorant armies clash by night.” And, believe me, they are ignorant.