

CHAPTER 38

Helaman 13–16

Introduction

The gospel of Jesus Christ offers all people the opportunity to change. Throughout much of the Book of Mormon, the Lamanites' "deeds [had] been evil";

however, "the preaching of the Nephites" (Helaman 15:4) led "the more part of them" to receive the gospel (Helaman 6:1) and experience a mighty change of heart. Here in the book of Helaman is an obvious reversal of roles—a people who had once been taught became the teachers. Many



Nephites, on the other hand, had become prideful and ignored their own prophets, so the Lord sent a Lamanite prophet to warn them to repent and prepare for the coming of the Lord. Look for the Nephites' collective and individual response to the Lord's Lamanite messenger. Samuel's words were important enough to the Savior that He endorsed them during His personal ministry in the Americas and testified they had all been fulfilled (see 3 Nephi 23:9–13).

Commentary

Helaman 13:3. "Whatsoever Things Should Come into His Heart"

- Samuel, who was a prophet, did not take it upon himself to decide what to preach to the Nephites. We read in Helaman 13:3 that he taught "whatsoever things should come into his heart." Concerning this revelatory process, President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, described how the voice of the Lord often comes:

"Revelation comes as words we *feel* more than *hear*. Nephi told his wayward brothers, who were visited by an angel, 'Ye were past *feeling*, that ye could not *feel* his words' [1 Nephi 17:45; italics added].

"The scriptures are full of such expressions as 'The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened' [D&C 110:1], or 'I will tell you in your mind and in your heart' [D&C 8:2],

or 'I did enlighten thy mind' [D&C 6:5], or 'Speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts' [D&C 100:5]. There are hundreds of verses which teach of revelation" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 77; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 60).

Helaman 13:11–16. Spared Because of a Few Righteous People

- There have been times when the wicked were spared from terrible destructions because there were righteous people living among them. The wicked people of Zarahemla had the righteous people to thank for their preservation from destruction, though, of course, they did not know it. In a few years Zarahemla lost this silent and unappreciated protection, and Samuel's words were fulfilled (see 3 Nephi 9:3). Even Sodom and Gomorrah would have been spared if only 10 righteous people had lived there (see Genesis 18:23–33).

How we live really does make a difference. The personal righteousness of a few can become a great blessing to others, especially to those in our own family and local community.

Helaman 13:19–22. Riches and Spirituality

- Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described the relationship between materialism and spirituality:

"Materialism, which gives priority to material needs and objects, is obviously the opposite of spirituality. The Savior taught that we should not lay up 'treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal' (Matthew 6:19). We should lay up treasures in heaven: 'For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also' (Matthew 6:21). . . .

"There is nothing inherently evil about money. The Good Samaritan used the same coinage to serve his fellowman that Judas used to betray the Master. It is 'the *love of money* [which] is the root of all evil' (1 Timothy 6:10; italics added). The critical difference is the degree of spirituality we exercise in viewing, evaluating, and managing the things of this world and our experiences in it.

“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” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1985, 78; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 62–63).

HELAMAN 13:21–22

To what did Samuel attribute the Nephites’ curse? What did they remember and what did they forget? Why is this important in your life?

Helaman 13:23–29. Following the Living Prophet

• Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught the importance of following living prophets and apostles: “Now, my dear brothers and sisters, please pay attention to those things that the leaders of the Church have taught. . . . Apply the teachings that will help you and your family. Let all of us, regardless of our family circumstances, bring into our homes the teachings of the prophets and the apostles to strengthen our relationships with each other, with our Father in Heaven, and with the Lord Jesus Christ. I promise you in the name of the Lord that if you will listen not just with your ears but also with your heart, the Holy Ghost will manifest the truth unto you of the messages delivered by [the President of the Church], his counselors, the Apostles, and other leaders of the Church. The Spirit will prompt you to know what you should do as individuals and as families in order to follow our counsel, that your



testimonies might be strengthened and that you might have peace and joy” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 86; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 67).


Helaman 13:38. Iniquity Is Contrary to the Nature of Happiness

• Samuel warned the Nephites that they had been seeking happiness in doing iniquity, which is contrary to the nature of happiness. Speaking of this problem and how true happiness comes, Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles pointed out that happiness only comes with righteousness:

“Have you noticed how Satan works to capture the mind and emotions with flashing images, blaring music, and the stimulation of every physical sense to excess? He diligently strives to fill life with action, entertainment, and stimulation so that one cannot ponder the consequences of his tempting invitations. Think of it. Some are tempted to violate the most basic commandments of God because of seductive actions portrayed as acceptable. They are made to seem attractive, even desirable. There seems to be no serious consequence, but rather apparent lasting joy and happiness. But recognize that those performances are controlled by scripts and actors. The outcome of decisions made is likewise manipulated to be whatever the producer wants.

“Life is not that way. Yes, moral agency allows you to choose what you will, but you cannot control the outcome of those choices. Unlike the false creations of man, our Father in Heaven determines the consequences of your choices. Obedience will yield happiness, while violation of His commandments will not” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 105; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 102).

HELAMAN 13:38

In what ways does Alma 41:10–11  relate to Helaman 13:38? Why is it impossible to find happiness in sin?

Helaman 14. Samuel’s Prophecy of the Savior’s Coming

• One of the most specific prophecies in scripture is the one by Samuel concerning the birth and death of Jesus Christ. The following charts outline Samuel’s teachings, including the birth and death of Christ with their recorded fulfillment and Samuel’s teachings to direct the people:

Prophecy of the Savior’s Birth		Fulfillment
Helaman 14:2	Birth in five years	3 Nephi 1:13
Helaman 14:3–4	No darkness the night before the birth	3 Nephi 1:15
Helaman 14:5	New star	3 Nephi 1:21
Helaman 14:6	Many signs and wonders in heaven	Helaman 16:13; 3 Nephi 2:1
Helaman 14:7	All people amazed and fall to the earth	3 Nephi 1:16–17

Samuel Taught Them to Prepare for the Savior (Helaman 14:8–13)	Teaching
Helaman 14:8	Believe in God
Helaman 14:9, 13	Repent and be forgiven through Christ
Helaman 14:30	You are free to act for yourself

Prophecy of the Savior’s Death		Fulfillment
Helaman 14:20, 27	Sun darkened for three days	3 Nephi 8:19–23
Helaman 14:21	Thunder, lightning, earthquakes	3 Nephi 8:6–7
Helaman 14:22	Earth broken up	3 Nephi 8:12, 17–18

Prophecy of the Savior’s Death		Fulfillment
Helaman 14:23	Great tempests; mountains laid low and valleys become mountains	3 Nephi 8:5–6
Helaman 14:24	Highways and cities destroyed	3 Nephi 8:8–11, 13–14
Helaman 14:25	Graves open and resurrected Saints minister to people	3 Nephi 23:9–13

Helaman 14:11. “That Ye Might Know the Conditions of Repentance”

• Elder Richard G. Scott taught about the conditions of repentance:

“In *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, Spencer W. Kimball gives a superb guide to forgiveness through repentance. It has helped many find their way back. He identifies five essential elements of repentance:

“*Sorrow for sin.* Study and ponder to determine how serious the Lord defines your transgression to be. That will bring healing sorrow and remorse. It will also bring a sincere desire for change and a willingness to submit to every requirement for forgiveness. . . .

“*Abandonment of sin.* This is an unyielding, permanent resolve to not repeat the transgression. By keeping this commitment, the bitter aftertaste of that sin need not be experienced again. . . .

“*Confession of sin.* You always need to confess your sins to the Lord. If they are serious transgressions, such as immorality, they need to be confessed to a bishop or stake president. Please understand that confession is not repentance. It is an essential step but is not of itself adequate. Partial confession by mentioning lesser mistakes will not help you resolve a more serious, undisclosed transgression. . . .

“*Restitution for sin.* You must restore as far as possible all that which is stolen, damaged, or defiled. Willing restitution is concrete evidence to the Lord that you are committed to do all you can to repent.

“*Obedience to all the commandments*. Full obedience brings the complete power of the gospel into your life with strength to focus on the abandonment of specific sins. It includes things you might not initially consider part of repentance, such as attending meetings, paying tithing, giving service, and forgiving others. . . .

“I would add a sixth step: *Recognition of the Savior*. Of all the necessary steps to repentance, I testify that the most critically important is for you to have a conviction that forgiveness comes because of the Redeemer. It is essential to know that only on His terms can you be forgiven” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 102; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 76).



Paul Gustave Dore

- In addition to the important elements taught above by President Kimball and Elder Scott, repentance must also include change. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained: “We must change anything we can change that may be part of the problem. . . . We thank our Father in Heaven we are *allowed* to change, we thank Jesus we *can* change, and ultimately we do so only with Their divine assistance. Certainly not everything we struggle with is a result of our actions. Often it is the result of the actions of others or just the mortal events of life. But anything *we* can change we *should* change, and we must forgive the rest. In this way our access to the Savior’s Atonement becomes as unimpeded as we, with our imperfections, can make it. He will take it from there” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2006, 70–71; or *Ensign*, May 2006, 70).

Helaman 14:11–12. Samuel’s Purpose in Teaching

- In Helaman 14:11–12 the prophet Samuel listed four truths he wanted the people to know from his teachings:

Know the judgments of God

Know the conditions of repentance

Know of the coming of Jesus Christ

Know of the signs of His coming

Helaman 14:15–19. The Atonement Overcomes Death

- Samuel the Lamanite described the difference between physical death, the first spiritual death, and the second spiritual death—as well as how the Savior’s Atonement helps us overcome these deaths.

Physical death. Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Presidency of the Seventy defined physical death and who will experience it: “Physical death is the separation of the spirit from the physical body. Because of the Fall of Adam, all mankind will suffer physical death” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2006, 74; or *Ensign*, May 2006, 73).

The first spiritual death. Spiritual death when someone is “cut off from the presence of the Lord” (Alma 42:9).

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) explained that both of these deaths are the result of the Fall of Adam and Eve: “Our first parents, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God. By eating the forbidden fruit, they became mortal. Consequently, they and all of their descendants became subject to both mortal and spiritual death (mortal death, the separation of body and spirit; and spiritual death, the separation of the spirit from the presence of God and death as pertaining to the things of the spirit)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 7; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 6).

For us, this spiritual death occurred when we left God’s presence and were born into mortality. Samuel the Lamanite called being cut off from His presence “the first death” (Helaman 14:16).

Samuel the Lamanite taught that all of Heavenly Father’s children who lived in mortality will overcome physical and spiritual death through the powers of the Atonement of Jesus Christ (see Helaman 14:17). Many other scriptures also attest to this fact (see 2 Nephi 2:9–10; 9:15, 22, 38; Alma 11:43–44; 12:12–15, 24; 42:23; 3 Nephi 26:4).

The second spiritual death. The second death is an ultimate or final spiritual death that comes not because

of leaving God's presence to be born into mortality, but comes because of unrepented personal sin.

The Savior has also provided help to overcome this second spiritual death. By suffering for our sins, He offers us the opportunity to repent. But to those who do not repent, there “cometh upon them again a spiritual death, yea, a second death, for they are cut off again as to things pertaining to righteousness” (Helaman 14:18). This means that a person with unresolved sin cannot remain in God's presence after he or she is brought back to Him for judgment.

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described this condition:

“If physical death should strike before moral wrongs have been made right, opportunity for repentance will have been forfeited. Thus, ‘the [real] sting of death is sin’ (1 Corinthians 15:56).

“Even the Savior cannot save us in our sins. He will redeem us from our sins, but only upon condition of our repentance. We are responsible for our own spiritual survival or death (see Romans 8:13–14; Helaman 14:18; D&C 29:41–45)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 102; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 73).

Helaman 15:3–4. God's Divine Love

- The Lord loves all people but cannot tolerate sin. Although Helaman 15:4 states that the Lord hated the Lamanites “because their deeds have been evil continually,” Samuel is an example of the many Lamanites who were taught the gospel message and gained God's favor once they were converted.

Elder Russell M. Nelson addressed the subject of God's love for those who sin: “Does this mean the Lord does not love the sinner? Of course not. Divine love is infinite and universal. The Savior loves both saints and sinners. The Apostle John affirmed, ‘We love him, because he first loved us’ [1 John 4:19]. And Nephi, upon seeing in vision the Lord's mortal ministry, declared: ‘. . . Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, because of his *loving kindness* and his long-suffering towards the children of men’ [1 Nephi 19:9; italics added]. We know the expansiveness of the Redeemer's love because He died that *all* who die might live again” (“Divine Love,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2003, 24).

Helaman 15:7–8. A Lasting Change of Heart

- President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) understood the power of the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon, to change our lives. He emphasized the importance of having the doctrines taught in our latter-day scripture deep in our hearts if we are to stay “firm and steadfast in the faith” (Helaman 15:8).



President Benson taught, “Social, ethical, cultural, or educational converts will not survive under the heat of the day unless their taproots go down to the fulness of the gospel which the Book of Mormon contains” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, 96; or *Ensign*, May 1975, 65).

Helaman 16:2–3, 6–8. Divine Protection

- The protection Samuel received while he delivered his message of repentance is not unusual. The scriptures include several examples of prophets who were threatened but whose lives were miraculously guarded so they could complete their missions. Consider the following examples and recall how they were able to present the Lord's words while under the threat of injury or death: Noah (see Moses 8:18), Abraham (see Abraham 1:5, 12, 15–19), Lehi (see 1 Nephi 1:19–20; 2:1–4), Nephi (see 1 Nephi 17:48–55), and Abinadi (see Mosiah 13:1–5). Sometimes the Lord's servants eventually lose their life, but not until, as Abinadi declared, they have “delivered the message which the Lord sent [them] to deliver” (Mosiah 13:3).

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reminded us:

“Prophets of all dispensations have willingly put their lives on the line and, with courage, have done the will and proclaimed the word of God. . . .

“. . . Let us follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ and His prophets, past and present. It may not be required of us to give our lives as martyrs, as did many of the prophets. What is required is our obedience to the Lord's commandments and our faithfulness to the

covenants we have made with Him” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 49; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 35).

Helaman 16:2–20. Reactions to the Prophet

- Helaman 16 records the ways the wicked reacted to the prophet Samuel and his message. President Ezra Taft Benson spoke of how the wicked react to prophets of our day:

“The prophet will not necessarily be popular with the world or the worldly.

“As a prophet reveals the truth it divides the people. The honest in heart heed his words, but the unrighteous either ignore the prophet or fight him. When the prophet points out the sins of the world, the worldly either want to close the mouth of the prophet or else act as if the prophet didn’t exist, rather than repent of their sins. Popularity is never a test of truth. Many a prophet has been killed or cast out. As we come closer to the Lord’s second coming, you can expect that as the people of the world become more wicked, the prophet will be less popular with them” (“Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet,” in *1980 Devotional Speeches of the Year* [1981], 29; see also *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [1988], 133).



The following list includes some reasons why the people in Helaman 16:2–21 refused to heed the words of the prophet:

1. Subsequent scattering of the Jews (see vv. 17–20)
2. Personal anger (see v. 2)

3. Prophets just guess right occasionally with their prophecies (see v. 6)
4. People trust more in their own strength and abilities (see v. 15)
5. Teachings are often not reasonable (see v. 18)
6. Teachings of the prophets are confused traditions and cannot be proved (see v. 20)
7. Prophets trick and deceive us rather than doing real miracles (see v. 21)

Helaman 16:15, 18, 20. Depending on One’s Own Strength and Wisdom

- Elder Dallin H. Oaks cautioned us against relying solely upon personal study and reason to determine spiritual truths:

“The Book of Mormon describes [an] attitude among a people who depended solely ‘upon their own strength and upon their own wisdom’ and upon what they could ‘witness with [their] own eyes.’ (Hel. 16:15, 20.) Upon the basis of reason, these persons rejected the prophecies, saying, ‘It is not reasonable that such a being as a Christ shall come.’ (Vs. 18.) Applying that same attitude, a prominent professor dismissed the Book of Mormon with the assertion, ‘You don’t get books from angels. It is just that simple.’

“Those who seek gospel knowledge only by study and reason are particularly susceptible to the self-sufficiency and self-importance that sometimes characterize academic pursuits. As the apostle Paul observed in his day, ‘Knowledge puffeth up.’ He cautioned the learned: ‘Take heed lest by any means this liberty [knowledge] of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. . . . And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?’ (1 Cor. 8:1, 9, 11.)” (*The Lord’s Way* [1991], 46–47).

HELAMAN 16:22

What is Satan’s goal for spreading contention?

Helaman 16:22. Satan Spreads Contention

• Why is it important to avoid contention with others? Elder Russell M. Nelson explained that the answer reaches back into premortal life:

“To understand why the Lord has commanded us not to ‘contend one with another,’ we must know the true source of contention. A Book of Mormon prophet revealed this important knowledge even before the birth of Christ. . . . [See Helaman 16:22.] . . .

“Contention existed before the earth was formed. When God’s plan for creation and mortal life on the earth was first announced, sons and daughters of God shouted for joy. The plan was dependent on man’s agency, his subsequent fall from the presence of God, and the merciful provision of a Savior to redeem mankind. Scriptures reveal that Lucifer sought vigorously to *amend* the plan by destroying the agency of man. . . .

“Satan’s selfish efforts to alter the plan of God resulted in great contention in heaven. . . .

“This war in heaven was not a war of bloodshed. It was a war of conflicting ideas—the beginning of contention.

“Scriptures repeatedly warn that the father of contention opposes the plan of our Heavenly Father. Satan’s method relies on the infectious canker of

contention. Satan’s motive: to gain personal acclaim even over God Himself” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 85–86; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 68–69).

Points to Ponder

- Consider if you had lived in the days of Samuel, whether you would have accepted these prophets and perhaps even stood against the masses in their defense. In what ways do you feel you are following the living prophet in your life?
- Helaman 15:7 describes what led the Lamanites to their mighty change. Have you known anyone who has had a life-changing experience after being led to the scriptures?
- Read Helaman 16:22. What have you found to be the most helpful tool to keep peace and harmony with your family and those you associate with?

Suggested Assignments

- Write a letter to a missionary. Include in your letter a description of a principle you learned from Samuel’s teachings. Explain how you think it applies in your life.
- Teach a lesson in family home evening on the difference between having a hard heart and a broken heart. Consider using scriptures from Helaman 16:13–23 and 3 Nephi 9:20.