

1 Alma 23*Missionary Work*

If we are to fulfill the responsibility given to us by the Lord on the Mount of Olives to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, then we will need to open the doors to these nations... We've hardly scratched the surface. We need far more missionaries, and we need more countries that will think of us as being their friends and will give us an opportunity to come into their nations and give to their people the finest thing in the world—the gospel of Christ—which can be their salvation and their great happiness.

We will make them good citizens, we will make them good souls, and we will make them happy and joyous.

Spencer W. Kimball, Conference Report, Oct. 1978, p. 66; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, pp. 45-6.

2 Alma 23:1-5

"that the word of God might have no obstruction"

The king of the Lamanites removed restrictions that had kept the gospel from being taught among his people, and the missionaries went forth preaching throughout the land. President Thomas S. Monson related a similar event as he described the circumstances surrounding the decision made by the government of the German Democratic Republic to allow missionaries to preach in the land after years of restricted Church activity:

"Our ultimate goal was to seek permission for the doorway of missionary work to open. Elder Russell M. Nelson, Elder Hans B. Ringger, and I, along with our local German Democratic Republic church leaders, headed by President Henry Burkhardt, President Frank Apel, and President Manfred Schutze, initially met with State Secretary for Religious Affairs Kurt Löffler as he hosted a lovely luncheon in our honor. He addressed our group by saying, 'We want to be helpful to you. We've observed you and your people for twenty years. We know you are what you profess to be: honest men and women.'

"Government leaders and their wives attended the dedication of a stake center at Dresden and a chapel at Zwickau. As the Saints sang 'God be with you till we meet again'—'Auf Wiedersehen, Auf Wiedersehen'—we remembered Him, the Prince of Peace, who died on the cross of Calvary. I contemplated our Lord and Savior, when He walked the path of pain, the trail of tears, even the road of righteousness. His penetrating declaration came to mind: 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid' (John 14:27).

"Then it was back to Berlin for the crucial meetings with the head of the nation, even Chairman Erich Honecker.

"...We were driven to the chambers of the chief representatives of the government.

"Beyond the exquisite entry to the building, we were greeted by Chairman Honecker. We presented to him the statuette *First Step*, depicting a mother helping her child take its first step toward its father. He was highly pleased with the gift. He then escorted us into his private council room. There, around a large round table, we were seated. Others at the table included Chairman Honecker and his deputies of government.

"Chairman Honecker began, 'We know members of your Church believe in work; you've proven that. We know you believe in the family; you've demonstrated that. We know you are good citizens in whatever country you claim as home; we have observed that. The floor is yours. Make your desires known.'

"I began, 'Chairman Honecker, at the dedication and open house for the temple in Freiberg, 89,890 of your countrymen stood in line, at times up to four hours, frequently in the rain, that they might see a house of God. In the city of Leipzig, at the dedication of the stake center, 12,000 people attended the open house. In the city of Dresden there were 29,000 visitors; in the city of Zwickau, 5,300. And every week of the year 1,500 to 1,800 people visit the temple grounds in the city of Freiberg. They want to know what we believe. We would like to tell them that we believe in honoring and obeying and sustaining the law of the land. We would like to explain our desire to achieve strong family units. These are but two of our beliefs. We cannot answer questions, and we cannot convey our feelings, because we have no missionary representatives here as we do in other countries. The young men and young women whom we would like to have come to your country as missionary representatives would love your nation and your people. More particularly, they would leave an influence with your people which would be ennobling. Then we would like to see young men and young women from your nation who are members of our Church serve as missionary representatives in many nations, such as in America, in Canada, and in a host of others. They will return better prepared to assume positions of responsibility in your land.'

"Chairman Honecker then spoke for perhaps thirty minutes, describing his objectives and viewpoints and detailing the progress made by his nation. At length, he smiled and addressed me and the group, saying, "We trust you. We have had experience with you. Your missionary request is approved.'

"My spirit literally soared out of the room. The meeting was concluded. As we left the beautiful government chambers, Elder Russell Nelson turned to me and said, 'Notice how the sunshine is penetrating this hall. It's almost as though our Heavenly Father is saying, 'I'm pleased.'"

"The black darkness of night had ended. The bright light of day had dawned. The gospel of Jesus Christ would now be carried to the millions of people in that nation. Their questions concerning the Church will be answered, and the Kingdom of God will go forth.

"As I reflect on these events, my thoughts turn to the Master's words, "In nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things' (D&C59:21). I confess the hand of God in the miraculous events pertaining to the Church in the German Democratic Republic"

Thomas S. Monson, Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 78-79; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 52-53.

Alma 23:6

3

They preached the gospel. They preached creation, fall, and atonement. They preached faith, repentance, and rebirth. They preached Christ. That is, their message was substantive and sacred, and it was presented by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus the listeners were converted to Christ, not to the missionaries or the other members of the Church, as pleasant and sincere and dedicated as those might be. They were converted to Christ, and thus their testimonies and their lives were built upon the only sure foundation (see Helaman 5:12).

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987-1992], 3: 165

4 **Alma 23:6**

"never did fall away"

"With the increase of missionary work throughout the world, there must be a comparable increase in the effort to make every convert feel at home in his or her ward or branch. Enough people will come into the Church this year to constitute more than 100 new average-size stakes. Unfortunately, with this acceleration in conversions, we are neglecting some of these new members. I am hopeful that a great effort will go forward throughout the Church, throughout the world, to retain every convert who comes into the Church. This is serious business. There is no point in doing missionary work unless we hold on to the fruits of that effort. The two must be inseparable."

Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 69-70; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 50.

Alma 23:5-13

Conversion of the Lamanites

5

"In the twenty-third and twenty-fourth chapters of Alma we have a dramatic account of the power of the gospel changing almost a whole nation from a bloodthirsty, indolent, warlike people into industrious, peace-loving people. Of these people the record says that thousands were brought to a knowledge of the Lord, and that as many as were brought to a knowledge of the truth never did fall away. . . . That is the great message I want to leave here. It is the softening of the hearts that this gospel does to the people who receive it. . . . Now this remarkable transformation wrought in the hearts of these thousands of people was done in a very short period of time under the influence and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It would do the same thing today for all the peoples of the earth if they would but receive it. . . ."

Marion G. Romney (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1948, p.75)

6 **Alma 23:14**
Amalekites

The founder of this group of Nephite apostates is not recorded in Mormon's abridgement of the original historical record. However, traditionally the original leader would have been someone named Amaleki. Satan had "great hold on the hearts of the Amalekites" (Alma 27:12). They were consumed with hatred toward those who sought to serve God and live righteously. The Amalekites were foremost in killing the faithful Anti-Nephi-Lehies (Alma 24:28) and "were of a more wicked and murderous disposition than the Lamanites" (Alma 43:6). The efforts of missionaries to reclaim these advocates of evil were nonproductive (Alma 23:14; 24:29).

"And thus we can plainly discern, that after a people have been once enlightened by the Spirit of God, and have had great knowledge of things pertaining to righteousness, and then have fallen away into sin and transgression, they become more hardened, and thus their state becomes worse than though they had never know these things" (Alma 24:30).

Note that the name Amalekites is also found throughout the Old Testament and refers to an Arab tribe that was in constant conflict with the Israelites.

Amulonites

These were the descendants and followers of Amulon and the other wicked priests of King Noah, who forsook their first wives and children and later kidnapped and took as wives daughters of the Lamanites (Mosiah 20:1-5). The offspring from these later unions became known as the Amulonites, being joined by others who apostatized from the true faith. The Amulonites were “harder” in their hearts than the Lamanites (Alma 21:3), continually stirring the Lamanites up to wage war against Nephites and the converted Lamanites (Alma 24:1). The Amulonites were after the “order of Nehors” (Alma 21:4), an apostate religious sect that followed the false and wicked teachings of Nehor (Alma 1). The tragic history of the Amulonites is that they ended up fulfilling the prophecy of the martyred prophet Abinadi, who had foretold that they would be hunted and slain (Mosiah 17:11-19): “The Lamanites began to hunt the seed of Amulon and his brethren and began to slay them.... Thus the words of Abinadi were brought to pass, which he said concerning the seed of the priests who caused that he should suffer death by fire” (Alma 25:8-9).

Hoyt W Brewster Jr., *Who's Who Book of Mormon Ready Reference*, p. 12, 23.

Alma 23:17

7 *Anti-Nephi-Lehies*

The name *Anti-Nephi-Lehies* could indicate the joining together of the descendants of Nephi and those who followed him with the other posterity of Lehi: “The name ‘Anti’ of ‘Anti-Nephi-Lehi’ may be a reflex of the Egyptian *nty* ‘he of, the one of.’ Thus, rather than having the sense ‘against,’ it has the meaning ‘the one of Nephi and Lehi’”

Dennis L. Largey, ed., *Book of Mormon Reference Companion* [2003], 67.

8 Alma 23:18

“Curse did no more follow them”

The curse was the withdrawal of the Spirit of the Lord.

Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 3:122