

Helaman 8

Helaman 8:1

1 The scriptures testify that the proud are easily offended and hold grudges. (See 1 Nephi 16:1-3.) They withhold forgiveness to keep another in their debt and to justify their injured feelings.

The proud do not receive counsel or correction easily. (See Prov. 15:10; Amos 5:10.) Defensiveness is used by them to justify and rationalize their frailties and failures. (See Matt. 3:9; John 6:30-59.)

Ezra Taft Benson, "Beware of Pride", *Ensign*, May 1989, p. 6

Helaman 8:5-6

2 When threatened, we become anti-enemy instead of pro-kingdom of God... We forget that if we are righteous the Lord will either not suffer our enemies to come upon us—and this is the special promise to the inhabitants of the land of the Americas (2 Ne. 1:7)—or he will fight our battles for us.

Spencer W. Kimball, *Ensign*, June 1975, p. 6

Helaman 8:14-24

3 Chief among the plain and precious things taken from the Old Testament was the testimony that the Messiah would be the Son of God. Alma declared this doctrine to be the seed that grows up into the tree of everlasting life. In so doing he cited the testimony of three Old Testament prophets—Zenos, Zenock, and Moses. He then quoted Zenos and Zenock to that effect. His quotation from Moses, however, though a Messianic prophecy, does not specifically state that the Messiah would be the "Son of God." (See Alma 33.) In the present instance, Nephi refers to the same text that Alma Quoted and also declares that it described the Messiah as God's Son.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of the doctrine of Christ's divine sonship. Alma, as noted, referred to it as the tree of everlasting life, meaning that all the doctrines of the kingdom are fruits plucked from this tree and are of necessity rooted in this doctrine. The Atonement, the Resurrection, and the personal nature of God serve as classic examples. Of his own life, Christ said: "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." (John 10:18.) That is to say: "Because my mother is a mortal woman I have inherited blood, or the ability to die, from her; and because God is my Father I have inherited immortality, or the ability to live, from him." Thus Christ, because he is the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, is the only man who ever walked the face of the earth who had the capacity to both live and die—to lay down his life and to take it again. He became the first fruits of the resurrection, his body and spirit joining in an inseparable union. All who became heirs of mortality as a result of the fall of Adam become heirs of immortality through the death and resurrection of Christ. Every spirit that has been clothed with a body will have claim upon that body in the worlds to come. Like our Father, in whose image and likeness

we are, we will be personal beings, and like him will have body, parts, and passions. Such are the fruits of divine sonship.

Millet & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol 3, pp. 3373-374.

Helaman 8:14-15

4 *Brazen Serpent*

According to the Bible, when the people of Israel were being bitten by serpents and some of the people were dying, the Lord commanded Moses to make a serpent “and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.” (Numbers 21:8-9.) That is the end of the account in the Bible. However, the account in the Book of Mormon indicates that when Moses lifted up the brazen serpent he did “bear record that the Son of God should come. And as he lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, even so shall he be lifted up who should come. And as many as should look upon that serpent should live, even so as many as should look upon the Son of God with faith, having a contrite spirit, might live, even unto that life which is eternal.” (Helaman 8:14-15.)

The Savior also indicated that the “brazen serpent lifted up by Moses” was a type (shadow, or example) of his own crucifixion when he said: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:14-15.)

Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 243-44.

5 Some scholars of the Book of Mormon have wondered if this story of the serpent as given in the book of Helaman did not account for the “serpent motif” in the art and architecture of some of the American Indian cultures. Also, it is of interest to note that one of the names given by some of the American Indians to the great white God who appeared out of the eastern sky was the name of *Quetzalcoatl*, which literally means the bird-serpent, or the serpent of precious plumage.

Ibid.

6 Divinely deliberate and serious symbolism is involved. Without this needed elaboration, the Old Testament episode of the fiery serpents does not give us a fulness of spiritual insight that can clearly be “for our profit and learning.” (1 Nephi 19:23.) The symbolic emphasis in this episode is upon both the necessity and the simpleness of the way of the Lord Jesus. Ironically, in Moses’ time many perished anyway. The promise for the future is as follows: “And as many as should look upon that serpent should live, even so as many as should look upon the Son of God with faith, having a contrite spirit, might live, even unto that life which is eternal.” (Helaman 8:15. See also 1 Nephi 17:41; Alma 37:46.)

Thus, now we have the verified and amplified analogy, thanks to the precious and plain things given to us in “these last records.”

The whole episode points towards the need to look upon Jesus Christ as our Lord, likewise a simple but unwaivable requirement. How plain and precious in any age!

Neal A. Maxwell, *Plain and Precious Things* [1983], 22.

Helaman 8:15

7 *Look and Live*

For us as individuals the course is crystal clear. By precept and example we should do all that lies within our power to take the message of the gospel, the Lord's solution to our problems, to the peoples of the earth and inspire them to look to him and live. For every individual in this world there is yet an option, and it is still open. But whatever others may do, let us not personally be diverted from our course. Let us "be not faithless, but believing" (John 20:27).

Let us so long as we live continue to "seek... the Lord to establish his righteousness" (D&C 1:16). Let us prove worthy to live with him eternally in the heavens. Let us not be deceived by the learning and sophistries and the wickedness of this world. Let us not forget that God lives, that we are his children, that his purpose is to bring us to immortality and eternal life. Let us always remember and keep in mind that all man has learned and accomplished, together with all that he will yet learn and accomplish in mortality, is as a drop in the ocean compared to the knowledge and works of God. Let us remember that in the light of God's knowledge, and he knows all things, still his instructions to us—against that total knowledge—is that, above all else, the one thing of most importance to us is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Let us be constantly aware that we are living in the last gospel dispensation; that Satan has marshaled all his forces for war; that he is making his final premillennium struggle for our individual souls and for the souls of all men. Let us realize that the conflict we are now in will be accelerated to such intensity "that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety" (D&C 45:68).

Let us understand that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the literal kingdom of God in the earth; that neither defectors from within nor enemies from without can stay its progress. It is here to stay and to triumph. In the words of Moroni, "The eternal purposes of the Lord shall roll on, until all his promises shall be fulfilled" (Mormon 8:22).

Marion G. Romney, *Look to God and Live*, pp. 12-13.

Helaman 8: 19-22

8 *Zenos, Zenock, Ezias*

The prophet Zenos is mentioned twelve times in the Book of Mormon, Zenock five times, and Ezias once. According to Helaman 8:19-20 it would seem that these men lived somewhere between the time of Abraham (2200 B.C.) and Jeremiah (626-586 B.C.) Their writings appeared on the brass plates of Laban—the equivalent of, though more extensive than, our present-day Old Testament (up to 600 B.C.). As with all other true prophets of all dispensations, these men bore witness of Christ.

Book of Mormon Student Manual 1996, p. 108

Helaman 8:21-239 *Mulek*

The Lord gave Ezekiel a parable concerning the king of Judah and his seed being taken into Babylon (Ezekiel 17:1-21). As an apparent addendum to this prophecy, the Lord said:

Thus saith the Lord God; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent:

In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell (Ezekiel 17:22-23).

Elder Orson Pratt, who himself had a special gift of prophecy (see D&C 34:10), interpreted these verses as a prophecy concerning the Mulekites:

When Zedekiah, king of Judah, was carried away captive into Babylon, the Lord took one of his sons, whose name was Mulok [sic.], with a company of those who would hearken unto His words, and brought them over the ocean, and planted them in America. This was done in fulfillment of the 22nd and 23rd verses of the seventeenth chapter of Ezekiel... By reading this chapter, it will be seen that the Jews were the “high cedar,” that Zedekiah the king was the “highest branch,” that the “tender one” cropped off from the top of his young twigs, was one of his sons, whom the Lord brought out and planted him and his company upon the choice land of America, which He had given unto a remnant of the tribe of Joseph for an inheritance, in fulfillment of the blessing of Jacob and Moses upon the head of that tribe.

The last phrase of the Ezekiel prophecy, “in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell,” (17:23) may be an allusion to their dwelling with the Nephites and Lamanites. The Nephites were branches of Joseph who were to “run over the wall... unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills [America]” (see Genesis 49:22-26).

Monte S Nyman, *The Record of Helaman*, p. 349

10 ...when Zedekiah was sensible of it, he took his wives and his children and his captains and friends, and with them fled out of the city, through the fortified ditch, and through the desert; and when certain of the deserters had informed the Babylonians of this, at break of day, they made haste to pursue after Zedekiah, and overtook him not far from Jericho, and encompassed him about. But for those friends and captains of Zedekiah who had fled out of the city with him, when they saw their enemies near them, they left him and dispersed themselves, some one way and some another, and every one resolved to save himself; so the enemy took Zedekiah alive, when he was deserted by all but a few, with his children and his wives, and brought him to the king.

Josephus (Jewish Historian) *Complete Works*, trans. William Whiston. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, [1960], 220

Helaman 8:23

11

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: “Christ-Messiah is God! Such is the plain and pure pronouncement of all the prophets of all the ages. In our desire to avoid the false and absurd conclusions contained in the creeds of Christendom, we are wont to shy away from this pure and unadorned verity; we go to great lengths to use language that shows there is both a Father and a Son, that they are separates Persons and are not somehow mystically intertwined as an essence or

spirit that is everywhere present. Such an approach is perhaps essential in reasoning with Gentiles of sectarianism; it helps to overthrow the fallacies formulated in their creeds. But having so done, if we are to envision our Lord's true status and glory, we must come back to the pronouncement of pronouncements, the doctrine of doctrines, the message of messages, which is that Christ is God. And if it were not so, he could not save us."

Millet & McConkie, Commentary, Vol 3, p.377.

Helaman 8:25

13 **Laying up... treasures in heaven]** It is a good doctrine that our works follow us in the worlds to come (see D&C 59:2). Valiant servants in the cause of God are promised that the "[lay] up in store" blessings for the world to come (D&C 4:2-4). Indeed, by such service, James said, the faithful servant could "hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:20). "Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven... for where you treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19-21; see also 3 Nephi 13:19-21; compare Luke 12:13-21).

14 [Shortly after the death of President David O. McKay], one of the Church brethren approached Elder [Harold B.] Lee and asked, "Is it correct what I have heard that they're going to make Joseph Fielding Smith the President of the Church?"

That wasn't a very good question to ask Elder Lee at that time. Elder Lee answered politely and confirmed that he thought that would be the case.

But the man persisted and said, "How can that be? I can't believe that. How can we sustain Joseph Fielding Smith? He's ninety-three years old. Why, he's so old I'm not sure he is really quite with it." The man continued developing this point—how could a man at that age, his body weak and worn down, still direct this Church?

President Lee listened for a while, but his sharp mind was spinning. He responded, "My good brother, do you know what it takes to be a prophet of the Lord?"

The man said, "Well, I guess I really don't know exactly."

"Well," said Elder Lee, "what do you think it would take?"

The fellow then said, "Well, I suppose he'd have to know all about genealogy, the missionary program of the Church, and the missionaries and what they're doing and how to supervise them. He would need to know about the Primary and the Relief Society and the building and construction programs." He named quite a few other major functions of the Church.

When he finished Elder Lee said, "That's all wrong." He could sometimes say that quite pointedly. The man was taken back a bit. Then Elder Lee answered his question by stating, "Shall I tell you what it takes to be a prophet? There's only one capacity; just one. And that is to be able to hear the voice of the Lord. That's all. He's got all the rest of us to do the work. He just has to do one function. Do you suppose that this great living Apostle, who has been sustained a prophet for six decades, longer than any other man on earth, might be able to do that?"

The brother was feeling a little low by then, but Elder Lee continued, “Do you suppose that Joseph Fielding Smith, who was a home teaching companion of President Wilford Woodruff, might know something about that?”

By this time the man, in some humility, was on the retreat.
Gene R. Cook, as told in *He changed My Life*, p.32-33.