

**Lesson Highlights**

- *Mosiah teaches principles of good government.*
- *Alma the Younger serves as chief judge and combats priestcraft.*
- *Amlici seeks to be king but is rejected by the voice of the people.*
- *The Church prospers but becomes prideful. Alma resigns the judgment seat to devote himself to the ministry.*

A study of this lesson will help us understand righteous principles of government and avoid priestcraft and pride.

**Next Week:**

Lesson 22:

*"Have Ye Received His Image in Your Countenances?"*,

Alma 5-7

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**Introduction**

**Monarchy, Republic, Democracy, Theocracy** What do these words mean?

- **Monarchy** is government under the leadership of one ruler, such as a king; sometimes characterized by absolute rule.
- **Republic:** rule by a group of elected representatives.
- **Democracy:** government by the people, with majority rule.
- **Theocracy:** government guided by God through revelation to a prophet.

Consider the type of government the Nephites had under Mosiah. For many years Mosiah served as a king and a prophet who received revelation from God to lead the people. Under his leadership, the government had characteristics of both a monarchy and a theocracy. After the reign of King Mosiah, Alma the Younger was appointed chief judge over the people of Nephi, thus beginning a time period known as *"the reign of the judges"* (Mosiah 29:44), with a new form of government that included elements of a republic, a democracy, and a theocracy.

This lesson explains how the system of judges was organized to provide righteous leadership and describes some of the challenges Alma faced as chief judge and as the presiding high priest over the people.

**Mosiah taught principles of good government.**

When all of King Mosiah's sons refused to succeed him as king, Mosiah sent a written proclamation among the people, recommending a system of government to replace the rule of kings after his death.

**Mosiah 29:13, 16.** Mosiah counseled his people that having kings is either good or bad depending on the character of the king.

**Mosiah 29:13, 18** The two men Mosiah described as different examples of kings were King Benjamin and King Noah.

**Mosiah 29:16-18, 21-23** Mosiah described the consequences of having a wicked leader. He cited abuse of power, promotion of iniquity, disregard of law, unjust and immoral practices, and possible perversions of justice as possible or probable consequences. So, Mosiah suggested that the people establish a system of judges to replace the rule of kings.

**Mosiah 29:11;** see also **D&C 98:10** Qualities Mosiah said that these judges should have included wisdom and respect for God's commandments. These qualities are important in leaders today because they promote respect of the people for the judge and assure righteous judgment for the people.

**Alma the Younger served as chief judge and combated priestcraft.**

The people had followed Mosiah's counsel and appointed judges throughout the land, with Alma the Younger as chief judge.

**Alma 1:1-2, 15** In the first year of the reign of the judges, a man named Nehor was brought before Alma to be judged.

**Alma 1:3-4** Nehor been teaching the people that the church was wrong, that priests should be popular and should be supported by the people instead of laboring for their own support, and he taught that all mankind would be given eternal life.

**Mosiah 29:11-14** The foundation of the laws that the people would be judged by were the commandments of God. People enjoy numerous blessings of peace, justice, and harmony when they live by laws that are based on righteous principles.

**Mosiah 29:24-26, 28-29** Mosiah proposed to limit the power that could be obtained by wicked individuals or groups. He proposed that they do all things by the voice of the people, appoint judges and make the judges accountable to the people, and have a system of appeals against judges who did not judge by the law.

**Mosiah 29:27** Mosiah proclaim that if the majority of the people chose wickedness, the judgments of God would visit them with great destruction.

Think about some ways you can help others understand and choose righteousness.

**Alma 1:5-6** The effect of his teaching was that he won a certain following who paid him to preach and joined the church he established. Nehor's teachings were appealing to so many people because they lower the standards that people have to meet and make salvation seem easy. Of course, these same teachings have been heard in our day from pulpits and TV screens.

**Alma 1:7-8** While Nehor was preaching to the people, he was met by Gideon, a member of the Church who served as a teacher and had served faithfully as a captain for King Limhi.

*So often individuals, communities, or entire nations allow abundance and prosperity to cloud spiritual vision and elevate pride as their primary motivator in life. It is a matter of ongoing urgency to follow prophetic counsel in avoiding pride and hard-heartedness, which inevitably lead to the collapse of moral values and the destruction of the spiritual aspect of life. There is no lesson from the Book of Mormon that is more pervasive than the admonition to avoid pride. (Teachings and Commentaries on the Book of Mormon, Ch. 21, Ed J. Pinegar and Richard J. Allen)*

**Alma 1:7** Gideon responded to Nehor's false teachings by admonishing him with the words of God. Knowing and testifying of the word of God helps us withstand false teachings as we refer to the true doctrines as contained in the scriptures.

**Alma 1:9** Nehor became angry with Gideon and slew him with a sword.

**Alma 1:10-13** When the people took Nehor before Alma, the two crimes Alma found him guilty of were priestcraft and murder.

**Alma 1:16; see also 2 Nephi 26:29** Priestcraft is teaching false doctrine for fame and fortune.

**Alma 1:12** Alma gave the people fair warning regarding priestcraft--that if it were enforced on the people, it would prove their destruction.

**Alma 1:15-16** Although Nehor was put to death for his crimes, priestcraft and other wickedness continued to spread throughout the land.

**Alma 1:19-22** Angry words progressed into actual fistfights between those who belonged to the Church and those who did not.

### *Amlici sought to be king but was rejected by the voice of the people.*

**Alma 2:1-2** In the fifth year of the reign of the judges, a cunning man named Amlici was joined by many followers who wanted to make him king over the land.

**Alma 2:4** Amlici wanted to be king so that he could destroy the church of God.

**Alma 2:7-10** When the majority of the people voted against him, Amlici gathered his followers, had himself crowned as king, and admonished his followers to subjugate their brethren.



### *The Church prospered but became prideful. Alma resigned the judgment seat to devote himself to the ministry.*

**Alma 4:1-2** Even though the Nephites had been victorious in battle over the Amlicites and the Lamanites, many Nephites had died, and those who remained had suffered great losses among their flocks and their grain.

**D&C 38:41** We should treat people who disagree with our beliefs with mildness and meekness as we warn them of the consequences of sin and transgression.

**Alma 1:23-24** This contention affected some members of the Church to the point of excommunication while some others withdrew from the Church and became inactive.

**Alma 1:25** We learn from those who remained in the Church of God that we can endure trials with patience and faith. We can remain "steadfast and immovable" in keeping the commandments of God if we pray faithfully and live by God's commandments.

**Alma 1:26-30** describes a time of peace and prosperity among the people of the Church.

**Alma 1:26** The priests regarded those whom they taught as equals and fellow members, not lesser beings. This attitude is important when we are teaching others because it demonstrates a Christlike example.

**Alma 1:27** Alma described the way the members of the Church treated those in need, willingly giving of their substance. Following their example can bring peace to our lives.

**Alma 2:16-19** The first battle between the Nephites and the Amlicites was won by the Nephites at a cost of 6,562 lives while the Amlicites lost 12,532 of their number.

**Alma 2:23-25** When Alma sent spies to follow the remainder of the Amlicites, the spies observed the Amlicites joining with a large host of Lamanites.

**Alma 2:27-28** Even though they were fewer in number, the Nephites were able to defeat the combined army of the Amlicites and Lamanites because their prayers were answered and the hand of the Lord strengthened them.

**Alma 3:4, 13** To distinguish themselves from the Nephites, the Amlicites marked their foreheads in red.

**Alma 3:14-19** These markings were a fulfillment of prophecy that the Lamanites and those who fought against the seed of Nephi would be marked in their foreheads.

It is important for us to "see that they brought upon themselves the curse" (Alma 3:19) because it illustrates that condemnation from God is through our choice, not his.

**Alma 4:3-5** Some results of these afflictions were that the people realized that they had failed to make righteous choices and had therefore, suffered the punishments of God. They returned to the Church and added thousands of members to the rolls.

## Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the doctrines discussed in this lesson.

- What is your role in civic matters?
- What can you do to rearrange your priorities to make sharing the gospel more important?

**Alma 4:5-6** As we see here, it took the members of the Church all of one year to return from great righteousness to pride and worldliness.

**Alma 4:8-12** Pride affected the way the people of the Church treated others, both in and out of the Church as church members treated others with scorn and persecution, setting a terrible example for non-members.

**Alma 4:10** This evil influence of proud members caused nonmembers to view the Church unfavorably and therefore, they declined to join with the Church.

The example of Church members is important to the missionary work of the Church because that example speaks louder than the teachings and precepts from the pulpit.

**Alma 4:15-18** In response to the increasing pride and iniquity of the people, Alma placed Nephiah in the judgment seat by the voice of the people and then limited his activity to teaching and preaching.

### *Conclusion*

Ponder how the challenges Alma faced are similar to problems we face today and how many of the solutions to these problems are similar. In the coming weeks, we will study Alma's responses to other challenges he faced as the high priest over the people. We will observe how Alma preached the word of God to deal with each situation he faced.

**Alma 4:19** He did this so that he could combat the evil that had crept into the Church. Preaching the word of God can "*stir [people] up in remembrance of their duty*" by reminding them of their sacred covenants.

Ponder the concept that preaching the word of God can "*pull down*" pride, craftiness, and contention.

**Alma 4:19** The phrase "*bearing down in pure testimony*" suggests that Alma would teach with the power of God, relying on simplicity and the witness of the Spirit. Consider how your life has been changed by hearing others bear pure testimony of the gospel. Problems of war and conflict, hunger and famine, injustice and inequality in the world today could be solved by preaching and living the gospel.

**MOSIAH'S ADVICE ABOUT THE KIND OF GOVERNMENT THAT  
"WILL MAKE FOR THE PEACE OF THE PEOPLE." (Mosiah 29:10)**

[**Mosiah 29:11**] Appointed "*wise men*" to positions of leadership. (See also **D&C 98:10**)

[**Mosiah 29:11-14**] Established laws that rested on a foundation of the commandments of God and promoted peace, security, and happiness.

[**Mosiah 29:16-24**] Since wicked leaders "*pervert the ways of all righteousness*," the power of all leaders was limited.

[**Mosiah 29:25-27**] Decisions were to be made according to "*the voice of the people*."

[**Mosiah 29:28,29,31**] Officials were to be made accountable for their decisions and actions. (See also **D&C 134:1**)

[**Mosiah 29:32**] Laws were to provide that "*every man may enjoy his rights and privileges*." (See also **D&C 98:5**)

[**Mosiah 29:30,34,38**] "*Every man* [was expected to] *bear his part*" and "*answer for his own sins*."

from "***Eternal Principles of Government: A Theological Approach***,"  
*Ensign*, June 1976, 11, Edwin Brown Firmage

The gospel of Jesus Christ contains principles of truth applicable to the government of our families, our churches, our cities, states, and to nations themselves. These principles of government are so basic to human nature that they are applicable to different times and cultures as well as to our own. ***These seem to me to be some fundamental eternal principles of government*** (emphasis added):

1. Government properly constituted is good, not something necessarily to be overcome.
2. Means exist by which God's knowledge of eternal principles may be known by man.
 

*"You must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.*

*"But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong."*  
(D&C 9:8-9.)
3. Coercive means of domination are not only prohibited, but in the nature of things can produce neither individual righteousness nor real community; such can only be accomplished by teaching correct principles with persuasion, long-suffering, and love.
4. The conscience of man must be left free from governmental restraint or coercion.
5. Legitimate government demands the consent of the governed. The "voice of the people" or majoritarianism makes government legitimate, assuming the protection of minority rights and the inviolability of matters of conscience.
6. The inherently necessary and yet potentially corruptive nature of power makes necessary both its grant and its limitation. One of the most profound passages of the Doctrine and Covenants observes:
 

*"We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion."* (D&C 121:39.)
7. The seventh principle is the human factor: unwise or dishonorable men can corrupt a fair system; conversely, wise and good men can make good government out of a flawed structure. This human factor demands that "*honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men ye should observe to uphold*." (D&C 98:10.)

Latter-day Saint theology offers a solution to an age-old paradox—the conflict between individualism and communality—by suggesting a harmony between them in which each is essential to the other. Man's individuality, stemming from his eternal and uncreated intelligence and protected by the principle of agency, is developed to its ultimate godlike potential as he serves his brothers and sisters without compulsory means in righteousness and love.