

LAMANITES AND AMLICITES CURSED FOR THEIR REBELLION

(Alma 1:98-130)

V98-103

In this type of ancient war there would be no polite usage of uniforms to distinguish the sides of the battle. While the clothing and manner of the Lamanites could be expected to be different from the Nephites, the Amlicites were Nephites not long before this incident. They would be expected to be similar physically and to have a similar mode of clothing and weaponry. In a war that virtually requires close combat, it is essential that combatants be able to know the difference between friend and foe. The Lamanites would be “marked” by their shorn heads, and the Amlicites had to find some way to identify themselves to their allies so they would not be included in what the Amlicites had hoped would be a slaughter of Nephites.

V104-108

Alma expands that the reason for the skin of blackness or the “dark” skin is to create a barrier between the Nephites and the Lamanites to prevent intermarriage. This prohibition against intermarriage with the Lamanites continues from Nephi’s time through to Alma’s time. The prohibition continues to protect the Nephites from the false traditions.

V109-116

These three verses continue the prophecy of Nephi that Mormon is applying to the marking of the Amlicites. In repeating these lines Mormon makes an interesting insertion. At the beginning of each of these lines Mormon adds the words “and again.” What he is doing is emphasizing that this is a citation rather than his own words. The speaker of the citation is the Lord, and Mormon is both highlighting the specifics of the declaration and separating his voice from the voice of the Lord. Structurally, he ends the citation by the concluding “and these were the promises of the Lord unto Nephi and to his seed.”

V117-121

Mormon concludes this unit by providing the moral of this particular story. The elements of Mormon’s lesson are that the Amlicites were unaware that they were fulfilling prophecy, and that they brought the condemnation on themselves.

V122-130

Mormon is not writing at that time and so can distance himself from the events. Mormon is detailing the events that are leading to the coming of Christ. At this point we are only 87 years from the birth of Christ, and Mormon still has a lot of explaining to do to get from the relatively righteous Nephites to those who are persecuting the believers just before Christ’s birth. These events are part of an explanation of the spiritual war, not the physical one. For that reason we get the spiritual aside of the cursing of the Lamanites and the Amlicites. It is those spiritual witnesses of these wars that are most important to Mormon.

The ultimate spiritual happiness or misery of man is based upon our own choices.

This is Mormon’s logical conclusion to the story of the Amlicites, who have become cursed, and did so voluntarily. Mormon’s story of the Amlicites emphasizes that they were originally Nephite, and therefore not subject to the curse of the Lamanites (not the implicit eternal misery of those who oppose God – as known by the way of life of the Nephites). The cursing of the Amlicites came because they made a choice, and they received the reward of that spirit that they “listeth to obey.”