

# AFTER THE MANNER OF THE LAMANITES

## EXPANDED EDITION

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*And the Amlicites were distinguished from the Nephites; for they had marked themselves with red in their foreheads, **after the manner of the Lamanites** ... for they [the Amlicites] also had a mark set upon them; yea, they set the mark upon themselves, yea, even a mark of red upon their foreheads. Thus the word of God is fulfilled, for these are the words which he said to Nephi ... Now the Amlicites knew not that they were fulfilling the words of God, when they began to mark themselves in their foreheads... (Alma 1:102,111,112,117)*

From the record of Alma preserved in the Book of Mormon<sup>1</sup> we gain important insights into *the manner of the Lamanites* with respect to *the mark of the curse* which had come upon them. These insights come from Alma's account of the fifth year of the reign of the Judges over the people of Nephi.<sup>2</sup> In that year a group of people, called the Amlicites, dissented from the Nephites and joined forces with the Lamanites, the avowed enemies of the Nephites.

Upon joining the Lamanites, the Amlicites took upon themselves a specific tradition of the Lamanites, that of placing a mark upon their foreheads.<sup>3</sup> Although they did not know it, by

marking themselves *after the manner of the Lamanites* the Amlicites were actually fulfilling the words of God.<sup>4</sup> Like the Lamanites, they had come out in open rebellion against God and His people. Therefore, according to the judgments of God it was *expedient*<sup>5</sup> that *the curse*, and the associated *mark of the curse* (which had come upon the Lamanites), should likewise come upon the Amlicites.<sup>6</sup>

Although the Amlicites did not practice all the traditions of the Lamanites (at least not at first), such as shaving their heads, they did adopt the one tradition that signified *the curse* that had come upon the Lamanites. They began to mark themselves *after the manner of the Lamanites*.

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, scripture references are from: *The Holy Scriptures, an Inspired Revision (IR) of the Authorized Edition* (Herald Publishing House, 1974 Edition, First Printing); *The Book of Mormon*, 1908 Authorized Edition (Herald Publishing House, 10<sup>th</sup> Printing, 1973); *The Doctrine and Covenants* (Herald Publishing House, 1970 Edition, Second Printing, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> Alma 1:53-130

<sup>3</sup> Alma 1:102

<sup>4</sup> Alma 1:117

<sup>5</sup> Expedient: characterized by suitability, practicality, and efficiency in achieving a particular end; fit, proper, or advantageous under the circumstances. (*Webster's Unabridged Third New International Dictionary*, © 1961)

<sup>6</sup> Alma 1:118

## According to The Mark Which Was Set Upon Their Fathers

Alma's description of *the mark of the curse* that had been set upon the Amlicites provides us with a clear understanding of *the mark* that had been set upon the Lamanites and how it was applied by God. Three important lessons from his record are outlined below.

1. Alma linked *the mark* which the Amlicites took upon themselves directly to the *mark of the curse* that had come upon the Lamanites.

*And the Amlicites were distinguished from the Nephites; for they had marked themselves with red in their foreheads, after the manner of the Lamanites ... And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers ...* (Alma 1:102,104)

Alma further explained that, according to God's word, a *mark* was set upon the Amlicites by their actually applying a mark to themselves.

*Now we will return again to the Amlicites, for they also had a mark set upon them; yea, they set the mark upon themselves, yea, even a mark of red upon their foreheads.* (Alma 1:111)

That is to say, the mark was not *set upon them* by God placing it upon them through some supernatural means. The Amlicites themselves, though they did not know it, were the instruments by which God set a mark upon them in fulfillment of His words.<sup>7</sup> Thus, by stating that the Amlicites marked themselves *after the manner of the Lamanites*, Alma shows us that, in fulfillment of God's words, the Lamanites set the mark of a dark skin upon themselves.

2. Alma strengthens the tie between *the manner of the Lamanites* marking themselves and

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<sup>7</sup> Alma 1:117

*the curse* that had come upon them by referencing Nephi's original account.<sup>8</sup> Alma writes:

***Thus the word of God is fulfilled, for these are the words which he said to Nephi: Behold, the Lamanites have I cursed; and I will set a mark upon them, that they and their seed may be separated from thee and thy seed, from this time henceforth and for ever, except they repent of their wickedness and turn to me, that I may have mercy upon them.*** (Alma 1:112,113)

Nephi's record, penned hundreds of years before, provides us with a firsthand account of the curse that was pronounced upon the Lamanites. As Nephi explains, according to the word of the Lord the Lamanites were cut off from God's presence because of their iniquity and hardness toward Him and His people.<sup>9</sup> Part of being cut off from God's presence involved being cut off from God's people as well. To accomplish this, God set a *sore cursing* on the Lamanites and caused a *skin of blackness* to come upon them.<sup>10</sup>

*And behold, the words of the Lord had been fulfilled unto my brethren [Laman and Lemuel], which he spake concerning them, that I [Nephi] should be their ruler and their teacher; Wherefore, I had been their ruler and their teacher, according to the commandment of the Lord, until the time they sought to take*

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<sup>8</sup> II Nephi 4:33,34

<sup>9</sup> I Nephi 1:53-58 with II Nephi 1:33,34

<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that the Lord followed up His pronouncement of a curse upon the Lamanites by telling Nephi that the Lamanites would be "*a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in remembrance of me*" (II Nephi 4:40). The Lord further warned Nephi that if his seed failed to remember Him they would eventually be destroyed by the Lamanites (II Nephi 4:41). Then, in the very next verse, Nephi tells of how he consecrated his younger brothers to "*be priests and teachers over the land of my people*" (II Nephi 4:42). This was Nephi's apparent response to God's warning. We would be wise to both understand the appropriateness of Nephi's response and heed his example.

away my life.

Wherefore, the word of the Lord was fulfilled which he spake unto me, saying: That inasmuch as they will not hearken unto thy words, they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord. And behold they were cut off from his presence. And He had caused **the cursing** to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity. For behold, they had hardened their hearts against Him, that they had become like unto a flint; Wherefore, as they were white, and exceeding fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people, **the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them.**

And thus saith the Lord God, I will cause that they shall be loathsome unto thy people, save they shall repent of their iniquities. And cursed shall be the seed of him that mixeth with their seed: for they shall be cursed even with the same cursing. And the Lord spake it, and it was done. And because of their cursing which was upon them, they did become an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety, and did seek in the wilderness for beasts of prey.  
(II Nephi 4:29-39)

Alma plainly shows us that the Lamanites fulfilled God's word by marking themselves (evidently with paints, dyes, or even possibly tattoos).<sup>11</sup> He does this by establishing a connec-

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<sup>11</sup> In an article titled, "Tattooing of the North American Indians," (*American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 11, No. 3, Jul. - Sep., 1909, pp. 362-400), the author, A. T. Sinclair, records the following: "When the Spaniards landed in the West Indian islands, they gazed with astonishment and horror on the "fantastic, diabolical images" of demons (zemis) tattooed on the naked bodies of the natives. And early Spanish historians speak of it as a common practice all over Spanish America. The first volume of the Jesuit Relations . . . intimates that tattooing was a well-known custom in the whole of New France. In the remaining parts of North America the earliest explorers everywhere reported tattooing." Might these observations suggest that *the manner of the Lamanites* expanded greatly, both in extent on an individual's body as well as geographically?

tion between the mark the Amlicites placed upon themselves – *after the manner of the Lamanites* – and the curse that had come upon the Lamanites.

3. Alma concludes by explaining the appropriateness of the Amlicites and the Lamanites setting a mark upon themselves according to the curse.

**Now I would that ye should see that they [the Amlicites] brought upon themselves the curse. And even so doth every man that is cursed, bring upon himself his own condemnation.**  
(Alma 1:119,120)

In the words of Alma, which he wrote years later to his son Corianton regarding *every man, they are their own judges*.<sup>12</sup>

The mark the Amlicites placed upon themselves *after the manner of the Lamanites* was an outward sign of the inward condition of their hearts. As Alma explained, just as both groups had caused *the curse* to come upon themselves by their rebellious actions, in the same *manner* they caused their bodies to be marked with paint or dye by the action of their own hands. They had acted in such a way as to mar their spirits within. They then manifested this marking of their spirits by setting a distinguishing mark upon their bodies, one which was consistent with the judgments of God upon their lives.

By placing the mark upon their bodies, both their bodies and spirits, i.e. their souls,<sup>13</sup> bore the imprint of their sin – the two (spirit and body) had come into agreement. Just as they had marred their own spirits through transgression, to the fulfilling of God's words they painted the skins of their bodies with a mark that set them apart from the faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

As opposed to having *garments* washed white in the blood of the Lamb of God, the Amlicites and Lamanites had *garments* marked with

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<sup>12</sup> Alma 19:70

<sup>13</sup> D&C 83:4a

the curse of rebellion.<sup>14</sup> Their garments had become spotted and filthy through the pride and the hardness of their hearts.<sup>15</sup>

In summary, Alma has taught us at least three important lessons:

- 1) The Amlicites, like everyone who joined the Lamanites in their transgression,<sup>16</sup> received a mark upon their skin by applying it to themselves (even if they did not know they fulfilled God's word by marking themselves).<sup>17</sup>
- 2) The phrase, *after the manner of the Lamanites*, means that both the Amlicites and Lamanites marked themselves according to the curse that had come upon them.<sup>18</sup>
- 3) Marking themselves was in fulfillment of the words of God – that every man who is cursed brings upon himself his own condemnation.<sup>19</sup>

### **They Must Search Mine Other Plates**

Why did Alma, and not Nephi, provide us with a description of how *the mark of the curse* was applied to the Lamanites and their fellow dissenters? In making his *small plates*<sup>20</sup> Nephi may have considered it *sufficient* to simply say why *a skin of blackness* came upon the Lamanites without saying how.<sup>21</sup> Consider his closing words to this portion of their history.

***And if my people desire to know the more particular part of the history of my people, they must search mine other plates. And it sufficeth me to say, that forty years had***

<sup>14</sup> cf. Alma 3:39-41 & 21:60 with I Nephi 3:112-134, III Nephi 12:32, Ether 6:10, Moroni 10:27-30, etc.

<sup>15</sup> I Nephi 3:122-134, II Nephi 4:29-39; Mormon 2:44-52

<sup>16</sup> Alma 1:107,108,114-116

<sup>17</sup> Alma 1:102,111,117,120

<sup>18</sup> Alma 1:102,111 with Alma 1:117-120

<sup>19</sup> Alma 1:112,117

<sup>20</sup> I Nephi 2:1-6, 91-102, Jacob 1:1 & Jarom 1:2 with I Nephi 5:218-231, II Nephi 4:45-51, etc.

<sup>21</sup> cf. II Nephi 4:50,51 with I Nephi 2:1-6, 3:252, II Nephi 4:5,6

*passed away, and we had already had wars and contentions with our brethren.* (II Nephi 4:50,51)

Nephi's *other* or *larger plates*<sup>22</sup> reportedly contain greater details, *the more particular part*, of the history of his people and, thus, perhaps more detail on this topic as well. On his smaller plates he was careful to record only the spiritual history of his people and *the ministry* the Lord provided unto them. What a great blessing it will be when all the records of the ancient inhabitants of this land are brought forth!<sup>23</sup>

### **Thus the Word of God is Fulfilled**

Does Alma's reference to the Amlicites having marked themselves with a red mark *after the manner of the Lamanites* indicate that the Lamanites had both a red mark in their foreheads and a mark of blackness on their skin? In considering this question, please note that both Alma and Nephi spoke of only one mark that had come upon the Lamanites, not two marks. While the Lamanites had a number of *incorrect traditions*, only one mark is identified as signifying the curse – that of a mark of *darkness* or *blackness* upon their skins.

Remember, Alma links the mark which the Amlicites took upon themselves directly to *the curse*, and he links the dark skin of the Lamanites to the same curse. According to Alma, both groups marked themselves consistent with *the curse* that had come upon them.

Further, it appears evident that the color of each mark was different. The Amlicites had *a mark of red* on their foreheads while the Lamanites had *a mark of a skin of blackness* or *darkness* to distinguish them from the Nephites.

Alma's lesson regarding marking them-

<sup>22</sup> I Nephi 2:91-102, I Nephi 5:218-231, Jacob 2:66-70, etc.

<sup>23</sup> cf. Ether 1:109-117 with I Nephi 3:184-216, I Nephi 4:16-19, II Nephi 2:19-24, Jacob 3:2 and IV Nephi 1:57-59, Mormon 1:2-6,43-45 Mormon 3:7,8, Mormon 4:17-19,98-103, etc.

selves in fulfillment of the words and judgments of God is very important and should not be overlooked or discarded. In fact, it is the only mechanism Alma outlines to account for the darkness of the Lamanites' skin. Why, then, the apparent difference in color between the marks? Why were the Lamanites distinguished by a *skin of blackness* while the Amlicites were distinguished with a *mark of red* on their foreheads – both signifying the same curse?

Some years ago, while I was prayerfully reading Alma's account of the Amlicites, the Lord impressed upon me that the Amlicites had disdained, even loathed, the Lamanites because of their filthy ways.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, they did not embrace all of the *incorrect traditions* of the Lamanites, at least not at first.

Because the Amlicites were so set against the Nephites, they were determined to defeat them. However, not having sufficient numbers of their own for this task, the Amlicites found it *expedient* to join forces with the Lamanites to increase their chances of winning against the Nephite armies. As I understand it, while the Lamanites apparently marked themselves with a dark color, the Amlicites used red to differentiate themselves from the other Lamanites they disdained as well as from the Nephites they had rebelled against. Notwithstanding this subtle distinction of color, the Amlicites still unwittingly fulfilled the words of the Lord by marking themselves.

On a somewhat related note, I find it interestingly consistent with the Book of Mormon record that those who killed Joseph Smith, Jr., and his older brother Hyrum on June 27, 1844, had painted themselves with *black paint* the day of the murder (D&C 113:1b). By faith I am assured that these murderers had adorned themselves with black paint consistent with the curse that had befallen the Lamanites of old. In their hearts they had become as the Lamanites in seeking to plunder and destroy the Lord's servants and His church. Therefore, they had marked themselves accordingly, even if they did

<sup>24</sup> cf. I Nephi 3:128-134 with Jacob 2:51-54

not know they were fulfilling the words of the Lord in doing so.

### *White As Snow*

Over the years I have heard the belief expressed that Nephi's reference to *a skin of blackness*<sup>25</sup> suggested that God changed the skin color of the Lamanites' supernaturally, e.g. by genetically altering the pigment in their skin.<sup>26</sup> As outlined in the previous sections, Alma's account of the Amlicites does not support this belief. Instead, through plainly stated phrases, including the following, Alma directs us to a less dramatic, more straightforward mechanism to account for the noted skin color change:

- *...they had marked themselves...after the manner of the Lamanites*
- *...they also had a mark set upon them; yea, they set the mark upon themselves...*
- *Now the Amlicites knew not that they were fulfilling the words of God, when they began to mark themselves in their foreheads...*
- *Now I would that ye should see that they brought upon themselves the curse. And even so doth every man...*

<sup>25</sup> II Nephi 4:35

<sup>26</sup> One statement that Alma makes may possibly be taken to indicate that an alteration of genetics affecting skin pigment had taken place in the Lamanites when the Lord pronounced a curse "*of a skin of blackness*" upon them. Alma writes, "*that whosoever did mingle his seed with that of the Lamanites, did bring the same curse upon his seed*" (Alma 1:107). Note, Alma did not say *upon themselves*, but *upon his seed* or offspring. This could point to a supernatural introduction by God of a dominant gene that produced a *black skin*, one which only God could have introduced into the Lamanites families. But how would the introduction of such a gene have fulfilled the words of God that they set the mark upon themselves? How would the Nephites still call the Lamanites true brothers if their genetics had been changed? Note also that it would have had to have been reversed supernaturally within the space of just a generation or two when a Lamanite converted and became a part of the Nephites (cf. III Nephi 1:49-53 with II Nephi 12:81-84, etc.).

Do other scriptures substantiate Alma's description of how the mark was applied to the Amlicites and Lamanites? References to black skin, or at least the appearance of blackness, are found in the Bible as well as in the Book of Mormon. Over the years attempts have been made to explain or account for the variation in skin color within the human race based on the different references from the Bible in particular. More specifically, attempts have been made to tie the genetic makeup of a person's skin color directly to one of a number of different curses mentioned in the Bible.

But are references to dark or black skin in the Bible the result of genetic (pigmentation) alterations or changes? Is there a link between variations in skin color and curses? Is there a precedent of God supernaturally changing the genetic makeup of people to alter their skin color when pronouncing a curse on them?<sup>27</sup> A review of quotes from the Bible will hopefully help answer these and related questions. Hopefully they will also add to our understanding of the dark appearance of the Lamanites in light of God's justice and mercy.<sup>28</sup>

The first references from the Bible considered here are to individuals or peoples who apparently did not have a *black* skin from genetic pigmentation, yet they had an appearance of a *black skin* or *blackness* because of their circumstances or conditions. Job, for example, cried out, "**My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat.**"<sup>29</sup>

According to Strong's Concordance, the word Job used for *black* refers to something being *dim* or *dark* as well as *black*. Though the basic genetic makeup of his skin was not changed, apparently his appearance had changed as a result of his mourning for an extended pe-

<sup>27</sup> An affirmative answer to this question would lead to yet other questions, however. For example, if God changed the Lamanites genetic makeup when causing a skin of darkness to come upon them, could they still be called the *brethren* of the Nephites (e.g. Alma 28:16, Moroni 1:4, etc.)?

<sup>28</sup> cf. Mormon 3:23 & Alma 1:112,113 with Psalm 89:14

<sup>29</sup> Job 30:30 with Job 2:8

riod of time among *the ashes*. In other words, the change that had come upon Job was not a curse but the result of his many trials and the great anguish of soul resulting from the destruction which had befallen him and his household.

We also read of blackness in the prophecies and lamentations of Jeremiah concerning the covenant people of the Lord.

*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.*<sup>30</sup> *For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; **I am black**; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?* (Jeremiah 8:20-22)

According to Strong's Concordance, the Hebrew word for *black* in this verse includes *sackcloth* or *sordid garments*, i.e. things that one puts on or wears, such as soiled clothes or even ashes. Jeremiah's countenance reflected his *hurt* and great mourning caused by the corruption and the resulting judgments that had come upon his people.

In this next verse from Jeremiah's writings, *visage* means *countenance* (appearance, expression, manner, etc.).

*Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire; Their **visage is blacker than a coal**; they are not known in the streets; their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick. They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger; for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field.* (Lamentations 4:7-9)

While the Nazarites had been once *more ruddy*<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> cf. D&C 45:1

<sup>31</sup> Ruddy: having or marked by a reddish color associated with the glow of good health ... (*Webster's Un-*

*in body than rubies*, they had become *blacker than coal*. This vivid description is clearly not one that indicates their inherent skin color was changed genetically. Rather, their change in appearance was related to their grief and lack of food owing to the sins of their people and the judgments God placed upon them.

In the following passage quoted from Jeremiah, a terrible famine associated with an apparent season of extreme heat was identified as causing the peoples' skins to be *black like an oven*.

***Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities. Servants have ruled over us; there is none that doth deliver us out of their hand. We gat our bread with the peril of our lives, because of the sword of the wilderness. Our skin was black like an oven, because of the terrible famine.*** (Lamentations 5:7-10)

Again, it is apparent that this reference to skin color did not involve a supernatural genetic change in skin pigmentation. Rather, the appearance of God's covenant people was a transient change caused by *the terrible famine* which had come upon their land as a result of the sins and iniquities of their fathers. These quotes do not support the conclusion that references to black skin color are, necessarily, references to the genetic makeup of a person's skin.

Please note that Jeremiah lived in the same time frame as Nephi and his brothers, Laman and Lemuel. While the people in Israel, from whom they had come, were suffering from a terrible famine, the Lamanites began to experience a spiritual famine, one of being cut off from the presence of the Lord and His people (as a result of spiritual death).<sup>32</sup>

The skin of both peoples reportedly became *black* in nearly the same time frame, both as a result of sin. It would seem apparent that the

noted change in skin color of those living at that time in Israel did not involve a basic change in their genetic makeup. Therefore, it would seem inconsistent to conclude that the covenant peoples in the Americas were changed genetically while those in the land of Israel were not.

To summarize to this point, neither Job's nor Jeremiah's descriptions of *black* or *blackness* account for the different skin colors based on genetics that are found within the human race. In each account considered, the noted blackness was associated with an appearance change caused by how they adorned themselves in response to the judgment of God or as a result of the trauma their bodies suffered in response to their trials. It was not the mark of a curse pronounced upon them by God.

What about accounts where a specific curse was pronounced upon a person or group of people? First, consider Cain. Based on tradition, many people have believed over the years that Cain was cursed with a black skin. This view is not supported by scripture, however. According to Moses' account in Genesis, God cursed Cain by saying:

*And now, thou shalt be cursed from the earth...when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.* (Genesis 5:21,22 IV; 4:11,12 KJV)

Like his father Adam, Cain was a tiller of the ground.<sup>33</sup> To not have the ground yield fruit to him was a devastating curse. In response, Cain complained that his punishment was greater than he could bear. He would be driven out of the presence of the Lord and become a *fugitive* and a *vagabond*, and he feared he might be slain for his iniquities.<sup>34</sup> In reply, the Lord set a *mark* upon him to notify others of the *vengeance* that would come upon them if they were to slay

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<sup>32</sup> II Nephi 4:31-37

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<sup>33</sup> cf. Genesis 5:5 IV (4:2 KJV) with Genesis 3:23-25 (3:17-19 KJV) & Genesis 4:1 IV

<sup>34</sup> Genesis 5:24 IV (4:13,14 KJV)

him.<sup>35</sup>

In reviewing the account of Cain's curse and the mark set upon him, first note that the *mark* set on Cain was not the curse itself nor was it the mark of the curse that had come upon him. Being cutoff from the presence of the Lord, having the ground be barren unto him, and becoming a fugitive and vagabond was the curse.

Also note that God brought the mark upon Cain to, in effect, protect him. It was a sign to others, warning them to take care how they dealt with this man. But God did not cause this mark to come upon Cain until Cain expressed his concerns about being slain by others. Evidently, Cain understood that if the ground would not yield fruit unto him, he would have to somehow maintain subsistence for himself and his family through stealing (as a *fugitive*) and begging (as a *vagabond*).

Finally, note that the scriptures do not provide us with specific information about the form or extent of the mark God placed on Cain, just that it was placed upon him. Whether or not it was placed upon his skin we are not told in the text. Where, then, do we hear that it was a skin of blackness? There are different oral and written traditions (not scripture) that have maintained this belief over the years. But the many different traditions that have extended to our day are not in agreement. Some have suggested that the mark was actually a letter, word, or phrase imprinted upon his body, while others indicate the mark was limited to his face, etc.<sup>36</sup>

Consider Cain's children. Through prophecy, Enoch was shown that they would be *black*.

*And Enoch also beheld the residue of the people which were the sons of Adam, and they were a mixture of all the seed of Adam, save it were the seed of Cain; for the seed of Cain*

<sup>35</sup> Genesis 5:25 IV (4:15 KJV)

<sup>36</sup> Many different books and articles have been written on this subject. Therefore, no one volume or selection of volumes is put forth here as authoritative. Rather, the reader is encouraged to access them via libraries, the internet, etc., to gain an appreciation of the vastness of resource materials on this topic.

*were black, and had not place among them.*  
(Genesis 7:29 IV)

However, we are not told the cause of the blackness or what form it took. The *seed of Cain* may have likewise marked themselves as did the Lamanites, even though they may not have known that in doing so they were fulfilling the words of the Lord. It may have been a spiritual blackness that separated them from the remainder of Adam's posterity, e.g. through religious practices and spiritual arts.

To summarize this consideration of Cain, the records found in the scriptures make it clear that the mark God placed on Cain – by what means we do not now – was not the curse or the mark of the curse itself. Further, the scriptures do not identify the exact nature of the mark. Therefore, Cain is not a valid example from which to conclude that black skin, caused by pigmentation, is the mark of a curse.

Next consider the prophecy of Enoch regarding the peoples of Shum and of Cainan (from the land of Enoch's forefathers).<sup>37</sup> According to the prophecy, Enoch foretold that the people of Cainan, being numerous, would attack the people of Shum and massacre them to obtain their land. Once victorious, the people of Cainan would then divide themselves between their homeland and the land of the people of Shum. As a result, the Lord had Enoch prophesy and say, *the Lord shall curse the land with much heat, and the barrenness thereof shall go forth forever*.<sup>38</sup> We are then told that *a blackness came upon all the children of Cainan, that they were despised among all people*.<sup>39</sup>

First note that the *blackness* came upon the people of Cainan following the curse God placed upon *the land*, which the people of Cainan obtained by conquest.<sup>40</sup> Next, the *blackness* that came upon them could refer to a blackening of their skin, which may have been

<sup>37</sup> Genesis 7:4-10 IV

<sup>38</sup> Genesis 7:9 IV

<sup>39</sup> Genesis 7:10 IV

<sup>40</sup> cf. D&C 38:4d,e with II Chronicles 7:14

the result of living in a hot and arid land, which most assuredly was accompanied by famines caused by these climatic conditions similar to what the Jeremiah and his people suffered.<sup>41</sup> It could also, perhaps, be a reference to their marking themselves similar to the Amlicites, though no such references are mentioned in the text.<sup>42</sup>

While the *blackness* that came upon the people of Cainan was not the curse itself, we are told that it was associated with their being *despised among all people*. Granted, God could have supernaturally changed the skin of the people of Cainan just as He supernaturally changed the weather of their lands. But what would cause *all* people to despise the people of Cainan?<sup>43</sup> Would it be their inherent skin color, or would it be the fact that they murdered an entire nation to gain additional land for themselves? It would appear reasonable to conclude that the *blackness* which came upon them was a mark of death (often signified by black, e.g. apparel). No skin color change would have been needed to remind *all* people that the people of Cainan murdered the people of Shum to expand their borders.

Returning to the words of the prophet Jeremiah, a contemporary of Nephi's, we read: "*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?*"<sup>44</sup> Given this verse, consider now a notable New Testament conversion. An Ethiopian was baptized by Philip through the amazing orchestration and facilitation of the Holy Spirit.<sup>45</sup> But did God change the Ethio-

pian's skin as a result of being joined to the church through baptism?<sup>46</sup> The Spirit of the Lord was clearly in charge of what took place that day – as evidenced by the instruction given to Philip by *the angel of the Lord* and by Philip being *caught away* following the baptism.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, such a change would have been possible, if the Lord so chose.

If the Lord had changed the Ethiopian's skin, something so miraculous as this would most assuredly have been included in the Book of Acts along with these other miracles. But the text is silent and does not make an issue of this new convert's skin color or of any change to it in terms of his salvation or his being made a part of the body of Christ.

If this New Testament account had included a reference to a change in skin color, then there may, perhaps, be justification for placing an emphasis on skin color differentiation in our day. Instead, by the silence of the text on the subject, the baptism of the Ethiopian, facilitated by the Holy Ghost, should serve to silence (put an end to) conjecture regarding the eternal worth of a person based on the intrinsic color of his or her skin. As will be discussed in greater detail later in this paper, nearly 600 years before the Ethiopian was baptized by Philip, Nephi affirmed that there is no differentiation or distinction in the Lord's eyes based on skin color.

*And he [the Lord] doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men; And he inviteth them all to come unto him, and partake of his goodness; And he denieth none that come unto him, **black and white, bond and free, male and female**; And he remembereth the heathen, and **all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.** (II Nephi 11:110-115)*

Finally, consider how God caused leprosy to come on Miriam, Moses' sister, for speaking against Moses upon his marrying an Ethiopian

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<sup>41</sup> See Lamentations 5:7-10.

<sup>42</sup> In mourning their own spiritual death, perhaps, whether they knew they were doing so or not(?).

<sup>43</sup> Consider Lamech and how he was *despised* and *came not among the sons of men* because he had murdered a man *for the oath's sake*, which oath was according to the covenant he had entered into with Satan to become Master Mahan, *the master of the great secret* (Genesis 5:38-43). No mention is made in the scriptures about his skin color or God placing of a mark upon his skin. *Darkness* is mentioned, however, but only in reference to his wicked and abominable *works of darkness*.

<sup>44</sup> Jeremiah 13:23

<sup>45</sup> Acts 8:26-40

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<sup>46</sup> Remember, the church receives new members into the body of believers through baptism; see D&C 17:7,18.

<sup>47</sup> Acts 8:26,39

woman. The leprosy caused Miriam's skin to turn *white as snow*.<sup>48</sup> Is there a lesson in the apparent irony of God's judgment in this situation? If a black skin was the mark of a curse, why did the Lord cause a *snowy white* skin to come upon Miriam, a diseased skin, not a black skin? God could also have justified His servant, Moses, by even bringing a *white* skin upon his Ethiopian wife.

Of more particular interest, why would Moses, who wrote the accounts found in Genesis just reviewed, choose to marry an Ethiopian woman if indeed he knew that *black* skin was the sign of a curse? Did not Moses write that *all* people despised the people of Cainan for the apparent *blackness* that had come upon them? Why then did he not despise this woman of *black* skin? Why did he bring her to his own bosom in marriage – unless the blackness spoken of in each instance referred to different conditions? Suffice it to be said that we must be careful how we judge so that we do not judge rashly or wrongly.

*For behold, the same that judgeth rashly, shall be judged rashly again; for according to his works shall his wages be; therefore, he that smiteth, shall be smitten again of the Lord.*  
(Mormon 4:24)

*Therefore, my son, see that ye are merciful unto your brethren; deal justly, judge righteously, and do good continually; and if ye do all these things, then shall ye receive your reward.* (Alma 19:78)<sup>49</sup>

### **Prove All Things, Hold Fast That Which is Good**

Why are there so many differing views and opinions on this subject, even among revered religious leaders who have lived throughout the ages? The answer to this question may simply reside in whether or not each person actually

<sup>48</sup> Numbers 12:1-16

<sup>49</sup> cf. Micah 6:8

asked God through faith in Jesus Christ's name concerning this matter of skin color.<sup>50</sup> Or, more subtly, it may be an outgrowth of different individuals being *seduced by evil spirits, or doctrines of devils, or the commandments of men*.<sup>51</sup>

Because it is easy to assume a number of things based on a given passage of scripture, a great need exists to follow Jesus' saying to *ask, knock, and seek*.<sup>52</sup> To understand just how important this particular *saying* of our Lord is, an example will be briefly reviewed. Like the present topic, this example pertains to the *other sheep, even the lost sheep of the house of Israel* whom our Lord came specifically *to seek and to save*.<sup>53</sup>

During His ministry in the Americas, Jesus informed His covenant people that their *brethren* in Jerusalem did not know about them.<sup>54</sup> The reason they did not know, He said, was because of their *stiff-neckedness and unbelief*.<sup>55</sup>

*And now because of stiff-neckedness and unbelief, they understood not my word; therefore I was commanded to say no more of the Father concerning this thing unto them.*  
(III Nephi 7:17)

Like Nephi's brothers, Laman and Lemuel, they had failed to *inquire* of the Lord because of their hard hearts and rebellious ways. As a result, the Spirit of the Lord ceased *striving* with them, at least on this point, and did not minister to their understandings the meanings of His words.

*And it came to pass that ...I [Nephi] spake unto my brethren [Laman and Lemuel], desiring to know of them the cause of their disputations. And they said, Behold, we can not understand the words which our father hath spo-*

<sup>50</sup> cf. John 8:31-36 & John 14:26 with Matthew 7:12,13, John 14:14, James 1:5-16 & 4:3, etc.

<sup>51</sup> cf. D&C 46:3b-4b

<sup>52</sup> cf. Matthew 7:34,35 with Matthew 7:12,13

<sup>53</sup> cf. Matthew 15:23 & Ezekiel 34:11-31 with Luke 19:9,10

<sup>54</sup> III Nephi 7:13-21

<sup>55</sup> III Nephi 7:17

ken concerning the natural branches of the olive tree, and also concerning the Gentiles. And I said unto them, **Have ye inquired of the Lord?** And they said unto me, We have not, for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us. Behold, I said unto them, How is it that ye do not keep the commandments of the Lord? How is it that ye will perish because of the hardness of your hearts? Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said, **If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely, these things shall be made known unto you?**<sup>56</sup> (I Nephi 4:7-13)

Jesus further stated of those in Jerusalem, they did not understand His words about His *other sheep* because they *supposed* who it was and, therefore, did not confer with Him on whether or not their understandings were correct.

*And they understood me not, for they supposed it had been the Gentiles; for they understood not that the Gentiles should be converted through their preaching.* (III Nephi 7:21)

The words, *for they supposed*, are very telling words. We, too, can fall into the trap of *supposing* things and, thus, fail to call upon the Lord. If we are to avoid falling into incorrect understandings or traditions, we must seek the wisdom the Lord offers us in this and the many lessons like it found in scripture. We must be very careful not to *suppose* we know in and of ourselves. Rather, as Mormon admonishes, we must take care to seek a correct understanding of all things through *searching* in the light of Jesus Christ.

*Wherefore I beseech of you, brethren, that ye should search diligently in the light of Christ, that ye may know good from evil; and if ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and con-*

<sup>56</sup> cf. James 1:5-8

*demn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ.* (Moroni 7:18)

In the words of the Apostle Paul, we are to:

*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.* (I Thessalonians 5:21)

**Black and White, Bond and Free, Male and Female...Jew and Gentile**

As noted earlier, Nephi, who described the mark of *the curse* that had come upon the Lamanites as *a skin of blackness*,<sup>57</sup> also penned these words:

*And he [the Lord] doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men; And he inviteth them all to come unto him, and partake of his goodness; And he denieth none that come unto him, **black and white, bond and free, male and female;** And he remembereth the heathen, and **all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.** (II Nephi 11:110-115)*

Please note in particular Nephi's emphasis on God welcoming *all* people who come unto Him, saying *all are alike unto God*, including **black and white**,<sup>58</sup> *bond and free, male and female, the heathen, and Jew and Gentile*.<sup>59</sup>

Is Nephi's reference to *black and white* a direct reference to a difference in skin coloration between the Lamanites and Nephites (possibly to humble the Nephites)?<sup>60</sup> Or is it perhaps a general, more global reference to the array of

<sup>57</sup> II Nephi 4:35

<sup>58</sup> cf. Acts 8:26-40 with Jeremiah 13:23

<sup>59</sup> Perhaps it could be argued that Nephi's list of contrasts was meant to encompass all people by taking into account gender, covenants, oppression, as well as cursings. According to this approach, one could perhaps argue that *black and white* refers to those who are cursed and those who are not cursed, respectively. But this argument does not account for the Amlicites marking themselves with the mark of the curse *after the manner of the Lamanites* as a result of coming under the same curse.

<sup>60</sup> cf. Jacob 2:16-65 with II Nephi 4:40,41

skin colors Nephi would have remembered from his life years before in the cosmopolitan city of Jerusalem? A more general reference would appear to be consistent with the parallel comparisons or contrast of *male and female*, *bond and free*, and *Jew and Gentile*.

It is evident that Nephi's reference to *black and white* in this context is primarily an assurance that our Lord's invitation is to everyone. This theme is consistent with Jesus' words, that whosoever will come unto Him may come and find rest to their souls.<sup>61</sup> But does this theme convey the whole meaning of Nephi's message? Should one conclude that a naturally black skin is a sign of sin?

When considering Nephi's words it is helpful to remember the other comparisons or contrasts he gives along with *black and white*:

- *bond and free*
- *male and female*
- *Jew and Gentile*

Nephi's list of contrasts is related more with things that people do not necessarily choose for themselves.<sup>62</sup> Just as people are born either male or female, Jew or Gentile, or bond or free, so are people born with different skin colors based on the combination of their parents' genetics. Therefore, Nephi's reference to *black and white* is more likely related directly to circumstances beyond an individual's control rather than a reflection of their state of sin.<sup>63</sup>

Consider further the array of intrinsic skin colors found in the peoples around the earth. Does such an array reflect sin to varying degrees? If so, where would be the cutoff line between the two extremes, *black and white*?<sup>64</sup> Are

<sup>61</sup> cf. John 3:16, Matthew 11:29,30, etc.

<sup>62</sup> Granted, modern scientists continue their pursuit of knowledge regarding the human genome and how to manipulate it according to their design, including attempts to alter the fundamental makeup of our physical bodies.

<sup>63</sup> cf. John 9:1-3

<sup>64</sup> Who, indeed, can claim a purely white skin except the sick or dead? As the Apostle Paul assures us, we will

those people who are born with a lighter, fairer skin complexion (even within a given family) inherently less sinful than those born with darker skins? Or are those who sunbathe to darken their skin complexion (which is a natural outcome of extended sun exposure) evidencing a tendency to sin? The records contained within the Book of Mormon do not point us in this direction of thought.

Since God cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance, where would He draw the line between *black and white* – if indeed one considers the pigment of our skin a measure of sin? **Nephi assures us that there is no line of demarcation**, saying: *And he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; And he remembereth the heathen, and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.*

Again, in stating that God does not distinguish between people based on whether or not they are *black or white* when they come unto Him, Nephi makes it clear that the inherent color of one's skin is not a distinguishing factor as to who is acceptable before God. How, then, would God's changing the intrinsic color of someone's skin be consistent with God not distinguishing between people who come to Him based on skin color? Again, Nephi's words assure us there is no such line of demarcation.

Just as it should not be considered a curse to be male and female, Jew and Gentile, or bond and free, one should not be viewed as being under a *curse* for having skin color of a darker or lighter hue.<sup>65</sup>

Yes, God pronounced that *a skin of blackness* should come upon the Lamanites and those who joined themselves unto them. Remember, the mark the Amlicites placed upon themselves was *after the manner of the Lamanites* was red. Further remember that the red mark the Amlicites took upon themselves was meant to *distin-*

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be judged for the deeds done in the flesh, including those deeds that have to do with our bodies, not for the intrinsic color of our skin.

<sup>65</sup> cf. II Corinthians 5:10 with I Corinthians 3:17

*guish* them from the Nephites just as the Lamanites were distinguished from the Nephites by their darkened skins.<sup>66</sup> More specifically, this red mark was set upon them by God – by them marking themselves – as a mark of *filthiness* (like the soiled garments Jeremiah described?), even a mark that would make them unattractive, i.e. *not enticing*, to the followers of Nephi – who were a clean people which delighted in fine apparel, etc.<sup>67</sup> Would not changing their appearance through marking themselves with dyes and/or paints make the Amlicites and Lamanites unattractive to the Nephites, especially to the Nephites who were *neat and comely*?<sup>68</sup>

As noted earlier, God made mankind *male and female* and pronounced His creation *good*; that is, the creation of two complementary genders was a blessing not a cursing.<sup>69</sup> Likewise God created mankind with a potential array of skin color, from *black* to *white* and many shades in between, just as He placed within the genetic makeup of the human race eyes of blue, brown, black, green, gray, and shades in between – and pronounced it good.

God also gave mankind a range in hair colors: black, brown, red, yellow and many shades in between. Consider, then, yet another tradition of the Lamanites. They shaved their heads and, thus, effectively hid this distinguishing trait, i.e. their hair color. Each individual's hair color was already set by their individual genetic makeup. But they cut it off, effectively marking (masking) themselves in a *manner* that was akin to their marking their own skin. Shaving off their hair or even attempting to dye it may have changed their appearance but it did not change the fundamental makeup of their genetic code. They were still *brethren* to the Nephites by blood and genetics, even if not by faith.

Shaving their heads and marking themselves were traits or features that they could control or impose upon themselves, which the record

<sup>66</sup> Alma 1:102-106

<sup>67</sup> cf. II Nephi 4:35 with Alma 1:44, etc.

<sup>68</sup> Alma 1:41

<sup>69</sup> Genesis 1

clearly shows they did.

Earlier it was noted how the prophet Jeremiah asked, “*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?*”<sup>70</sup> Years later Jesus would likewise remind His disciples, “*...thou canst not make one hair white or black.*”<sup>71</sup> The message to us, then, is that while we cannot change everything in our lives, **we must change the things that we can change through faith in our Lord.**<sup>72</sup> Further, we must not wrongfully attribute sin to those things we or others cannot change.<sup>73</sup>

Each of us must repent of our own sins and trust solely in the saving merits of Jesus Christ; only in this way can we be washed clean and made *white* through His cleansing blood.<sup>74</sup> This, then, is what we can and must do – as opposed to attempting to blame or excuse ourselves or others based on things we or they cannot change.

Through faith in Jesus Christ, we can humbly and sincerely submit ourselves to His will by putting off the *old man*, or *natural man*, and receiving with thanksgiving the *new man*.<sup>75</sup> This is the renewing and generating grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is free for everyone to receive, but only if they will repent and come unto Christ.<sup>76</sup>

It is not our lineage or our genetic makeup that qualifies us to be the children of Abraham.<sup>77</sup> We must enter into the covenant God made with Abraham by faith according to His marvelous plan of redemption and salvation for all mankind; otherwise we will not be numbered

<sup>70</sup> Jeremiah 13:23

<sup>71</sup> Matthew 5:38 IV

<sup>72</sup> cf. Acts 4:12 with Philippians 2:1-16

<sup>73</sup> cf. Isaiah 5:20

<sup>74</sup> cf. II Nephi 13:27-30 with Helaman 5:65-67 & Moroni 6:5

<sup>75</sup> cf. Alma 5:25 with Ether 6:10-13; see also Colossians 5-11

<sup>76</sup> cf. II Corinthians 5:15-21

<sup>77</sup> cf. II Nephi 12:78 with Romans 8:14-17, John 8:39-45, etc.

among the children of Abraham.<sup>78</sup> As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans:

*For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. (Romans 2:28,29)*

### **The Light of His Countenance Did Shine Upon Them**

Nephi witnessed the mark of the curse that had come upon his brothers because of their hardness and iniquity. Still he expressed great confidence and knowledge in this truth: the Lord *denieth none that come unto Him*. All are invited to come unto Jesus Christ and be cleansed of their sins through His shed blood. First He cleanses us inwardly; the outside will follow.<sup>79</sup> As it is written, God knows and judges the hearts of all.<sup>80</sup> Likewise, we are not to judge by the outward appearance, but according to the righteousness of God.<sup>81</sup>

The white appearance which is of greatest importance to each of us is *the light* of Jesus Christ's own *countenance*.<sup>82</sup>

*And it came to pass that Jesus beheld them, as they did pray unto him, and **his countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them, and behold they were as white as the countenance, and also the garments of Jesus; And behold the whiteness thereof did exceed all the whiteness, yea, even there could be nothing upon***

<sup>78</sup> cf. Romans 4:1-25 with Romans 11:1-36; see also Ephesians 2:11-22 with I John 2:1-3 & Alma 16:210-217 with II Nephi 12:78

<sup>79</sup> Matthew 23:22-30

<sup>80</sup> cf. I Samuel 16:6,7,12 & I Kings 8:39,40 with Jeremiah 11:20

<sup>81</sup> cf. John 7:24 with John 5:30b-31

<sup>82</sup> cf. II Corinthians 4:6,7 with Exodus 34:29,30, II Corinthians 3:1218 & Hebrews 10:16-25

*earth so white as the whiteness thereof. (III Nephi 9:25,26)*

May we come, then, unto this same Jesus Christ through faith and obedience to His word so He may likewise smile upon us and purify our countenances and our garments.<sup>83</sup>

*And when Jesus had spoken these words, he came again unto his disciples, and behold they did pray steadfastly, without ceasing, unto him; and he did smile upon them again; and **behold they were white, even as Jesus.** (III Nephi 9:31)*

Only in this way, by faith in Jesus Christ unto repentance of our sins, can our eternal *garments* be made truly *white* and *pure* before the Lord.

*O then ye unbelieving, turn ye unto the Lord; cry mightily unto the Father in the name of Jesus, that perhaps ye may be found spotless, pure, fair and white, having been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, at that great and last day. (Mormon 4:65)*

And we will be made *white* even as Jesus Christ is white and pure if we truly seek to be like Him when He returns in His glory.<sup>84</sup>

*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (I John 3:2)*

Otherwise, if we adopt the traditions of the Lamanites, *how can we*, in the words of Mormon, *expect that God will not stay His hand in judgment against us?* We cannot, for it is written that the curse will follow all those who fight against the Lord and His people.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>83</sup> cf. III Nephi 1:52,53 with III Nephi 4:49,50

<sup>84</sup> Mormon 7:49-53 & I John 3:1-3 with I Peter 1:22,23

<sup>85</sup> cf. II Nephi 7:20-32

*O my beloved son, how can a people like this, that are without civilization; (and only a few years have passed away, and they were a civil and a delightful people;) but O my son, how can a people like this, whose delight is in so much abomination, how can we expect that God will stay his hand in judgment against us? (Moroni 9:12)*

In summary, skin coloration coming from heredity is not something we can alter, nor is it something we should disdain or pride ourselves in. Rather, according to the testimony of Nephi, our assurance should rest in the word of the Lord, that He *denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female*. These words provide us with an everlasting assurance. They assure us that whosoever will repent and come unto Christ may come and be cleansed *every whit*, but only if we come to Him with a broken heart and a contrite spirit.<sup>86</sup> As it is written, *God is not a respecter of persons, but He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.*<sup>87</sup> So, likewise, we must not be a respecter of persons if we are to have and live by the faith of Jesus Christ.<sup>88</sup>

*My brethren, ye cannot have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, and yet have respect of persons. (James 2:1)*

### **They Were Dyed in Blood**

Not only did God set a mark on Laman and Lemuel for fighting against Nephi, but He also promised to set a mark upon all those who fought against Nephi's seed in future generations.

*And again: I will set a mark upon him that mingleth his seed with thy brethren, that they may be cursed also. And again: **I will set a***

<sup>86</sup> cf. Psalm 51:16,17 & III Nephi 4:2,49,50 with I Nephi 4:19

<sup>87</sup> Acts 10:34,35 & James 4:6 with Proverbs 3:34

<sup>88</sup> cf. Galatians 2:20,21

**mark upon him that fighteth against thee and thy seed.** (Alma 1:114,115)

Thus, the curse which was applied to the Amlicites *after the manner of the Lamanites* was also applied to the rebellious throughout their generations.<sup>89</sup> For example, in the record of Nephi (the son of Helaman) we read of a band of robbers who fought against the Nephites. When they came to battle against the Nephites, this band of robbers had been *dyled with blood*. Their appearance was so horrifying that upon seeing them the Nephites fell to the ground and prayed earnestly to the Lord for His deliverance from their enemies.

*Therefore Giddianhi gave commandment unto his armies, that in this year they should go up to battle against the Nephites. And it came to pass that they did come up to battle; and it was in the sixth month; and behold, great and terrible was the day that they did come up to battle; And they were girded about after the manner of robbers; and **they had a lamb-skin about their loins, and they were dyed in blood; and their heads were shorn; and they had head-plates upon them;***

*And great and terrible was the appearance of the armies of Giddianhi, because of their armor, and **because of their being dyed in blood.** And it came to pass that the armies of the Nephites, when they saw the appearance of the army of Giddianhi, had all fallen to the earth, and did lift their cries to the Lord their God, that he would spare them, and deliver them out of the hands of their enemies. (III Nephi 2:48-52)*

As noted earlier, many, if not all, Native American tribes have traditions of marking themselves with paint, dyes, tattoos, etc. Given the witness found in the Book of Mormon, these traditions appear to be evidence of a pervasive influence of the *incorrect traditions* of the Lamanites upon the cultures that have continued

<sup>89</sup> cf. Exodus 20:5,6 & Deuteronomy 5:9,10

on down to the present day in the Americas. Four generations after the time of Jesus Christ's ministry to the peoples of this land only Lamanites remained.<sup>90</sup> Consequently, the Lamanites' culture and their *incorrect traditions* would have dominated the region in the wake of the death or dissension of all the Nephites. Further, given the fact that many peoples on the different continents of the earth have similar traditions, their marking themselves may be evidence that somewhere in their history they too came under the same curse. Perhaps we shall learn more regarding their manner of marking themselves when the Lord gathers His word into one record.

*For I command all men, both in the east, and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them: For out of the books which shall be written, I will judge the world, every man according to his works, according to that which is written.*

*For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews, and they shall write it: And I shall also speak unto the Nephites, and they shall write it; And I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; And I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth, and they shall write it. And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews:*

*And the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews. And it shall come to pass that my people which are of the house of Israel, shall be gathered home unto the lands of their possessions; and my word also shall be gathered in one. (II Nephi 12:65-73)*

<sup>90</sup> cf. I Nephi 3:128-134, Mormon 4:1-12, etc. (with the exception of Moroni initially as well as the *three disciples who were to tarry* until the Lord's return; Moroni 1:1-4, IV Nephi 1:15,41, Mormon 1:14,17 & 4:12,84-86.)

### *And the Curse of God Did No More Follow Them*

While it appears rather evident that Alma linked the dark skins of the Lamanites to the manner in which they marked themselves, his account may not address all of the reasons for the darkness of their skins described elsewhere in the Book of Mormon.

Consider, for example, the manner in which the Lamanites lived. Early on, when the Lamanites and Nephites parted ways, according to the record of Enos the Lamanites became a *ferocious* and *bloodthirsty* people, who had become *full of idolatry and filthiness*.

*And I [Enos] bear record that the people of Nephi did seek diligently to restore the Lamanites unto the true faith in God. But our labors were vain; **their hatred was fixed, and they were led by their evil nature, that they became wild, and ferocious, and a bloodthirsty people; full of idolatry, and filthiness; Feeding upon beasts of prey, dwelling in tents, and wandering about in the wilderness, with a short skin girted about their loins, and their heads shaven; and their skill was in the bow, and the cimeter, and the ax. And many of them did eat nothing save it was raw meat; and they were continually seeking to destroy us.** (Enos 1:30-33)*

Their manner of dress (or lack thereof)<sup>91</sup> and rough outdoor lifestyle would have maximized their exposure to the elements, namely the sun and earth, and would have contributed to a darkening of their skins as well. Therefore, taking into account the weathered complexion of the Lamanites may explain not only their darkened appearance, but why those who were converted unto the Lord became *white* and *delightful* to the Nephite peoples.

According to eyewitness accounts, those who were converted unto the Lord became a clean and industrious people. Their manner of living

<sup>91</sup> Mosiah 6:38 & Alma 1:103

changed from dwelling in such a way as to be exposed fully to the elements to wearing clothes and, presumably, cleansing themselves.<sup>92</sup>

*Therefore the king consulted with Aaron and many of their priests, concerning the name that they should take upon them, that they might be distinguished. And it came to pass that they called their name Anti-Nephi-Lehis; and they were called by this name, and were no more called Lamanites. **And they began to be a very industrious people**; yea, and they were friendly with the Nephites; therefore they did open a correspondence with them, **and the curse of God did no more follow them.***  
(Alma 14:18-20)

The great change noted in this passage of scripture had come about among the converted Lamanites as a result of their response to the preaching of repentance by the sons of Mosiah and their companions in the Lord. The sons of Mosiah had undertaken this missionary effort among the Lamanites based on *the conditions of repentance*<sup>93</sup> that the Lord extends to everyone according to His plan of redemption.

*And it came to pass when they [the sons of Mosiah and their companions in the Lord] had arrived in the borders of the land of the Lamanites, that they separated themselves, and departed one from another, trusting in the Lord, that they should meet again at the close of their harvest: for they supposed that great was the work which they had undertaken.*

*And assuredly it was great, for they had undertaken to preach the word of God to a wild, and a hardened, and a ferocious people; a people who delighted in murdering the Nephites, and robbing, and plundering them; And their hearts were set upon riches, or upon gold, and silver, and precious stones; Yet they sought to obtain these things by murdering*

<sup>92</sup> cf. II Nephi 4:35 & III Nephi 1:52 with IV Nephi 1:1-12; see also Alma 14:46 & Helaman 5:91-108

<sup>93</sup> cf. Helaman 2:71-73 with Helaman 5:71-74

*and plundering, that they might not labor for them with their own hands:*

*Thus they were a very indolent people, many of whom did worship idols, and **the curse of God had fallen upon them because of the traditions of their fathers; notwithstanding, the promises of the Lord were extended unto them, on the conditions of repentance; Therefore this was the cause for which the sons of Mosiah had undertaken the work, that perhaps they might bring them unto repentance**; that perhaps they might bring them to know of **the plan of redemption**: Therefore they separated themselves one from another, and went forth among them, every man alone, according to the word and power of God, which was given unto him.* (Alma 12:21-27)

The four sons of Mosiah, along with their companions in the work, labored diligently among the Lamanites for fourteen very difficult but rewarding years.<sup>94</sup> By the end of their harvest of souls, many thousands of Lamanites were brought to the redeeming knowledge of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.<sup>95</sup>

The repentant Lamanites offered unto Jesus Christ broken hearts and contrite spirits; therefore, according to His plan of redemption, the Lord poured out His Holy Spirit upon them.<sup>96</sup> In response, they buried their weapons of rebellion, casting them away from themselves, and entered into a covenant to no longer fight against God or their brethren.<sup>97</sup> Thus, the curse no longer followed them.<sup>98</sup>

Like the people of King Benjamin, the converted Lamanites no longer had a *disposition to do evil, but to do good continually*.<sup>99</sup> In other words, they no longer would have had a *disposition* to mark themselves *after the manner of the Lamanites*.<sup>100</sup> Rather, they began to be a right-

<sup>94</sup> Alma 12:4-20

<sup>95</sup> Alma 14:78-128 with Alma 12:6; cf. I Nephi 4:19

<sup>96</sup> III Nephi 4:49,50 with D&C 39:2, etc.

<sup>97</sup> Alma 14:11,12,27, etc.

<sup>98</sup> Alma 14:20

<sup>99</sup> Mosiah 3:3

<sup>100</sup> cf. Alma 1:102,111,117

eous people who walked in the ways of the Lord.<sup>101</sup>

Later, in the thirteenth year after the sign of Jesus Christ's birth, another group of Lamanites were converted unto the Lord and joined the Nephites. Upon their conversion, we read that *their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites.*

*Therefore all the Lamanites, who had become converted unto the Lord, did unite with their brethren, the Nephites, and were compelled, for the safety of their lives, and their women and their children, to take up arms against those Gadianton robbers; Yea, and also to maintain their rites, and their privileges of their church, and of their worship, and their freedom, and their liberty.*

*And it came to pass that before this thirteenth year had passed away, the Nephites were threatened with utter destruction, because of this war, which had become exceeding sore. And it came to pass that those Lamanites who had united with the Nephites, were numbered among the Nephites: **and their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites; And their young men and their daughters became exceeding fair, and they were numbered among the Nephites, and were called Nephites. And thus ended the thirteenth year.*** (III Nephi 1:49-53)

Again, is this change in the color of their skin a reference to a supernatural genetic change of the pigment of their skins? Or did this change simply result in a change in their countenance from being filled with the Holy Spirit and from becoming a clean and industrious people like the Nephites who did not mark themselves *after the manner of the Lamanites*? The miracle Jesus points us to is the change that occurred in their hearts, a change that was not perceptible to their viewing.

*And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings; and ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. **And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me, at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not.*** (III Nephi 4:49,50)

It was not obvious to anyone's viewing. It was a change that occurred on the inside. As Jesus told the religious leaders of His day, first clean the inside of the cup and the outside will be cleansed as well.

*Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye make clean the outside of the cup, and of the platter; but within they are full of extortion and excess. Ye blind Pharisees! **Cleanse first the cup and platter within, that the outside of them may be clean also.** Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! **For ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but are within full of the bones of the dead, and of all uncleanness.** Even so, ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous, And say, *If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets; Wherefore, ye are witnesses unto yourselves of your own wickedness, and ye are the children of them who killed the prophets; And will fill up the measure then of your fathers; for ye, yourselves, kill the prophets like unto your fathers. Ye serpents, and generation of vipers! How**

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<sup>101</sup> cf. Alma 14:74

*can ye escape the damnation of hell? (Matthew 23:22-30)*

Jesus Christ cleansed the inside of the Lamanites first, and then the outside (including their skin) was made clean. Miraculously? Through changing the pigment of their skin? He does not mention doing so. But what Jesus does reference is the miraculous cleansing of the inward lives of the Lamanites through the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost. The desired outward change followed as fruit of the inward root of righteousness, i.e. the *engrafted word*, the *incorruptible seed* which the apostles admonish us to receive with *meekness*.<sup>102</sup>

In the near future, I believe, Nephi's prophecies concerning a remnant of the children of Lehi, called the Lamanites, will again be fulfilled. According to these prophecies, this remnant will come to the knowledge of their Redeemer and the *very points of His doctrine* that they may know how to come unto Him and be saved.<sup>103</sup> They will learn about their forefathers and that they are descendants of the house of Israel. The *scales of darkness*, which have kept them blind to the glorious light of Jesus, shall fall from their eyes. They will become a *white and delightful* people through His smiling upon them, changing their *countenances* from *black* to *white*. Their eternal *garments* will be made *white* in the blood of the Lamb, and they shall become firm forever according to the promise of the Lord.<sup>104</sup>

*And then shall the remnant of our seed know concerning us, how that we came out from Jerusalem, and that they are descendants of the Jews. And the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among them; wherefore, they shall be restored unto the knowledge of their fathers, and also to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was had among their fathers.*

<sup>102</sup> See James 1:21 & I Peter 1:22,23 with Galatians 5:22,23.

<sup>103</sup> I Nephi 4:19

<sup>104</sup> Helaman 5:91-108

*And then shall they rejoice; for they shall know that it is a blessing unto them from the hand of God; **And their scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes: and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white and a delightful people.** (II Nephi 12:81-84)*

### **Incorrect Traditions...Would Prove Their Destruction**

Alma explained that the mark of *the curse* had been set upon the Lamanites according to the wisdom of God. It was to set them apart, even to *distinguish* them from the Nephites. The reason given by Alma was that this was done so that the Nephites would not mix with the Lamanites and begin to believe in their *incorrect traditions*, which if they did, *would prove their [the Nephites'] destruction*.

*And their brethren sought to destroy them; therefore they were cursed; **and the Lord God set a mark upon them, yea, upon Laman and Lemuel, and also the sons of Ishmael, and the Ishmaelitish women; And this was done, that their seed might be distinguished from the seed of their brethren, that thereby the Lord God might preserve his people, that they might not mix and believe in incorrect traditions which would prove their destruction.** (Alma 1:105-106)*

This happened to the Amlicites. By adopting *the manner of the Lamanites*, the Amlicites were thereafter *called under this head*, meaning that of the Lamanites.

*Therefore whosoever suffered himself to be led away by the Lamanites, **was called under that head**, and there was a mark set upon him. (Alma 1:108)*

Once Amlicites and other Nephite dissenters had been a free people under the headship of Jesus Christ according to the covenant King

Benjamin's people had entered into.

*And now, because of the covenant which ye have made, ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters: For behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him, and have become his sons and his daughters. **And under this head ye are made free; and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free.** (Mosiah 3:8-10)*

But by adopting the *incorrect traditions* of the Lamanites they were no longer under His headship and liberty. Instead, they were assimilated into the culture and curse of the Lamanites.<sup>105</sup>

On the other hand, those who did not believe in the *incorrect traditions* of the Lamanites were called Nephites. They held to the word of the Lord and did not mark themselves according to *the curse* pronounced by the words of God and, thereby, retained their liberty in Jesus Christ.

*And it came to pass that **whosoever would not believe in the tradition of the Lamanites, but believe those records which were brought out of the land of Jerusalem, and also in the tradition of their fathers, which were correct, who believed in the commandments of God, and kept them, were called the Nephites, or the people of Nephi, from that time forth; And it is they who have kept the records which are true of their people, and also of the people of the Lamanites.** (Alma 1:109,110)*

*Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free...If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (John 8:31,32,36)*

According to Nephi, his people adhered to the instruction given in the Law of Moses, which

<sup>105</sup> cf. Helaman 2:14

included the Lord's command to His people not to mark themselves.<sup>106</sup>

*Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you; I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:28)*

Thereby, the Nephites were preserved by the Lord.

How about us? Will we take upon us a mark of a curse, or will we follow the pattern of righteousness preserved for us in scripture? Will we adopt the *incorrect traditions* and the ungodly *manner* of others, or will we keep ourselves pure, e.g. by not marking our bodies, through the hope of becoming like Jesus Christ when He returns? Will we come under the headship of someone other than Jesus Christ? Or will we preach repentance to those who have adopted the *incorrect traditions* of the fallen?

As you contemplate these and related questions, please remember the words of the Apostle Paul, that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost. They are not ours to do with as we please or mark. Rather, we are to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice unto Him.<sup>107</sup> Having been purchased with a precious price, by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, we have been called to take upon us His robes of righteousness.<sup>108</sup> For it is only through His sacrifice that our eternal souls can be made truly white and pure.<sup>109</sup>

Let us not conform, then, to the *incorrect traditions* of the Lamanites (e.g. by marking our bodies with paints, stains, tattoos, etc.), but like the sons of Mosiah, let us rather preach repentance to those who practice such *incorrect traditions* so that God may have mercy upon them.<sup>110</sup>

*Thus the word of God is fulfilled, for these are the words which he said to Nephi: Behold, the*

<sup>106</sup> II Nephi 11:45-47

<sup>107</sup> Romans 12:1-3

<sup>108</sup> I Corinthians 3:16,17 & 6:19,20 with Revelation 19:8

<sup>109</sup> I Nephi 3:117-119 with Revelation 7:14

<sup>110</sup> cf. Alma 12:20-27

*Lamanites have I cursed; and I will set a mark upon them, that they and their seed may be separated from thee and thy seed, from this time henceforth and for ever, **except they repent of their wickedness and turn to me, that I may have mercy upon them.*** (Alma 1:112,113)

*And now, my son, go thy way, declare the word with truth and soberness, that thou mayest bring souls unto repentance, **that the great plan of mercy may have claim upon them.*** (Alma 19:116)

This, too, is our calling, to teach obedience to God's commandments to those who do not know God and His ways.<sup>111</sup> We have been called to teach *the conditions of repentance* and His *plan of redemption*.<sup>112</sup> It is not our calling to absorb or soak up the culture around us like a sponge. Rather, it is given to us to have rivers of living waters flow out from us according to the gifts and blessings of the Holy Ghost, to preach the saving knowledge of faith on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>113</sup>

### **The Mark of the Beast vs. The Mark of the Lamb of God**

Certain marks are very important in that they have everlasting consequences, some for good and some for evil. The day will come in which everyone who has received a particular mark, called *the mark of the beast*, will suffer eternal death and separation from God.<sup>114</sup>

*And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, **If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his***

<sup>111</sup> cf. Matthew 28:17-19, etc.

<sup>112</sup> cf. D&C 16:3c-f with D&C 2:6, Alma 4:6, etc.

<sup>113</sup> John 7:38,39 with I Nephi 3:68 & Romans 5:5

<sup>114</sup> Revelation 13:1-18, 14:9-12, 19:20,

*indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.* (Revelation 14:9-11)

But those who do not receive this mark in their foreheads will be blest forever.

*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, **neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands: and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*** (Revelation 20:4)

Is everyone who receives a mark on their foreheads lost? No. Some people have actually been saved by receiving a mark in their foreheads. Consider this account from the prophet Ezekiel:

*And the glory of God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; And the Lord said unto him, **Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.***

*And to the others he said in mine hearing, **Go ye after him through the city, and smite; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity; Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary.** Then they began at the an-*

*cient men which were before the house. (Ezekiel 9:3-6)*

Should we, then, take a mark upon ourselves, and if so, which mark? Most assuredly, yes, we have been called to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>115</sup>

*And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; **and his name shall be in their foreheads.** (Revelation 22:1-4)*

This is the *mark* by which we are to be known before the world.<sup>116</sup>

*There is no other name given, whereby salvation cometh, therefore, **I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God, that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives.** And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this, shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ.*

*And now, **it shall come to pass that whosoever shall not take upon them the name of Christ, must be called by some other name;** therefore, he findeth himself on the left hand of God. And I would that ye should remember also, that this is the name that I said I should give unto you, that never should be blotted out, except it be through transgression;*

<sup>115</sup> cf. Moroni 4 & 5

<sup>116</sup> cf. Jeremiah 33:16 with Jeremiah 23:6

*Therefore, take heed that ye do not transgress, that the name be not blotted out of your hearts. I say unto you, I would that ye should remember to retain the name written always in your hearts, that ye are not found on the left hand of God, but that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called, and also, the name by which he shall call you: For, how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart? (Mosiah 3:11-17)*

Nephi was shown that after Jesus Christ visited His covenant peoples in the Americas, many of his people would have their garments made white through the blood of the Lamb by exercising faith on His name. Then, in the fourth generation after Christ's ministry in their midst, the majority of the people would become filthy and separate from the righteous by the subtlety of Satan, that old serpent who is the enemy of all righteousness.

*And I saw the heavens open, and the Lamb of God descending out of heaven; and he came down and shewed himself unto them. And I also saw and bear record that the Holy Ghost fell upon twelve others, and they were ordained of God, and chosen. And the angel spake unto me, saying, Behold the twelve disciples of the Lamb, who are chosen to minister unto thy seed. And he said unto me, Thou remembereth the twelve apostles of the Lamb? Behold they are they who shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel: Wherefore, the twelve ministers of thy seed shall be judged of them; for ye are of the house of Israel; and these twelve ministers whom thou beholdest, shall judge thy seed. And behold they are righteous for ever; for because of their faith in the Lamb of God, **their garments are made white in his blood.***

*And the angel said unto me, Look! And I looked and beheld three generations pass away in righteousness, and **their garments***

*were white, even like unto the Lamb of God. And the angel said unto me, **These are made white in the blood of the Lamb**, because of their faith in him. And I, Nephi, also saw many of the fourth generation, who passed away in righteousness. And it came to pass that I saw the multitudes of the earth gathered together.*

*And the angel said unto me, Behold thy seed, and also the seed of thy brethren. And it came to pass that I looked and beheld the people of my seed gathered together in multitudes against the seed of my brethren; and they were gathered together to battle. And the angel spake unto me, saying, Behold the fountain of filthy water which thy father saw; yea, even the river of which he spake; and the depths thereof are the depths of hell; And the mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they may perish, and are lost; And the large and spacious building which thy father saw is vain imaginations and the pride of the children of men. And a great and a terrible gulf divideth them; yea, even the word of the justice of the eternal God, and the Messiah who is the Lamb of God, of whom the Holy Ghost beareth record, from the beginning of the world until this time, and from this time henceforth and for ever.*

*And while the angel spake these words, I beheld and saw that the seed of my brethren did contend against my seed, according to the word of the angel; And because of the pride of my seed, and the temptations of the devil, I beheld that the seed of my brethren did overpower the people of my seed. And it came to pass that I beheld and saw the people of the seed of my brethren, that they had overcome my seed; and they went forth in multitudes upon the face of the land. And I saw them gathered together in multitudes;*

*And I saw wars and rumors of wars among them; and in wars, and rumors of wars, I saw many generations pass away. And the angel*

*said unto me, Behold, these shall dwindle in unbelief. And it came to pass that I beheld after they had dwindled in unbelief, they became a dark and loathsome, and a filthy people, full of idleness and all manner of abominations. (I Nephi 3:112-134)*

Where will we cast our lot in these last days? Will we adopt *incorrect traditions* or will we minister righteousness unto the Lamanites and others like them who have dwindled in unbelief these many years because of the *incorrect traditions* of their fathers? Will we not set our hopes on the *robes of righteousness* which Jesus Christ holds in store for all who wait on Him, not only for ourselves but also for those who know not God? Or will we have our garments marked by the stains of this world? Remember the words of Jude:

*And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. (Jude 22,23)*

### **How Will Any of You Feel?**

How will you *feel* in the last day? Have you taken upon you the name of Jesus Christ? Have your garments been washed white in His blood through faith on His name? Or is your life marked with the *incorrect traditions* of those who have rebelled against God? Have you taken upon you the mark of a curse, or have you been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb?

Perhaps you have not taken upon you all of the *incorrect traditions* of the world around you, but have you adopted some of their *manner* of marking yourselves nonetheless, perhaps in just a small way? If so, do not procrastinate the day of your repentance. Be careful not to allow subtle or overt marks of curses to creep into or be established in your lives. If you have, please consider the counsel Alma posed to his own people, some of whom may have been contemplating defecting over to the Lamanites as did

the Amlicites.

*I say unto you, Can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? I say unto you, Can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances? I say unto you, Can ye think of being saved when you have yielded yourselves to become subjects to the devil?*

*I say unto you, Ye will know at that day, that ye can not be saved: for there can no man be saved **except his garments are washed white: Yea, his garments must be purified until they are cleansed from all stain, through the blood of him** of whom it has been spoken by our fathers who should come to redeem his people from their sins.*

*And now I ask of you, my brethren, **How will any of you feel, if ye shall stand before the bar of God, having your garments stained with blood, and all manner of filthiness?** Behold, what will these things testify against you? Behold, will they not testify that ye are murderers, yea, and also that ye are guilty of all manner of wickedness?*

*Behold, my brethren, do ye suppose that such an one can have a place to sit down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, and also all the holy prophets, whose **garments** are cleansed, and are spotless, pure, and white? I say unto you, Nay, except ye make our Creator a liar from the beginning, or suppose that he is a liar from the beginning, ye can not suppose that such can have place in the kingdom of heaven, but they shall be cast out, for they are the children of the kingdom of the devil.*

*And now behold, I say unto you my brethren, If ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, Can ye feel so now? Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently humble? That your **garments** have been cleansed and made white, through*

*the blood of Christ, who will come to redeem his people from their sins?*

*Behold, are ye stripped of pride? I say unto you, If ye are not, ye are not prepared to meet God. Behold ye must prepare quickly, for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand, and such an one hath not eternal life. Behold, I say, Is there one among you who is not stripped of envy? I say unto you, that such an one is not prepared, and I would that he should prepare quickly, for the hour is close at hand, and he knoweth not when the time shall come; for such an one is not found guiltless. And again I say unto you, Is there one among you that doth make a mock of his brother, or that heapeth upon him persecutions? Wo unto such an one, for he is not prepared, and the time is at hand that he must repent, or he can not be saved;*

*Yea, even wo unto all ye workers of iniquity; repent, repent, for the Lord God hath spoken it. (Alma 3:36-56)*

### **Put On Thy Beautiful Garments**

Hear the call of God today. Hear the call to forsake all the markings of *incorrect traditions* and put on the beautiful *garments* of righteousness. Put on *garments* made white by the blood of the Lamb.<sup>117</sup>

*Thus saith thy Lord, The Lord and thy God pleadeth the cause of his people: Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again. But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; who have said to thy soul, Bow down that we may go over: And thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street to them that went over.*

***Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: For henceforth there shall no more come into thee, the uncircum-***

<sup>117</sup> Revelation 19:7-9

*cised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. (II Nephi 5:108-114)*

Like Nephi of old, cast from yourselves the weight of every sin that has so easily beset you.

*Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin. Rejoice, O my heart, and give place no more for the enemy of my soul. Do not anger again, because of mine enemies. Do not slacken my strength, because of mine afflictions.*

*Rejoice, O my heart, and cry unto the Lord, and say, O Lord, I will praise thee for ever; yea, my soul will rejoice in thee, my God, and the rock of my salvation.*

*O Lord, wilt thou redeem my soul? Wilt thou deliver me out of the hands of mine enemies? Wilt thou make me that I may shake at the appearance of sin? May the gates of hell be shut continually before me, because that my heart is broken and my spirit is contrite?*

*O Lord, wilt thou not shut the gates of thy righteousness before me, that I may walk in the path of the low valley, that I may be strict in the plain road? O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness? O Lord, wilt thou make a way for mine escape before mine enemies? Wilt thou make my path straight before me? Wilt thou not place a stumbling block in my way? But that thou wouldst clear my way before me, and hedge not up my way, but the ways of mine enemy.*

*O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee for ever. I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh; for I know that cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh. Yea, cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm.*

*Yea, I know that God will give liberally to him that asketh. Yea, my God will give me, if I ask not amiss: therefore I will lift up my voice unto thee; yea, I will cry unto thee, my God, the rock of my righteousness. Behold, my voice shall for ever ascend up unto thee, my*

*rock and mine everlasting God. Amen. (II Nephi 3:46-66)*

Come and be perfected in Jesus Christ. Touch not the evil gift. Rather, put on the beautiful *garments* of a pure heart, even the *garments* of Zion.<sup>118</sup>

*And again I would exhort you, that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing. And awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion, and strengthen thy stakes, and enlarge thy borders for ever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled.*

*Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in no wise deny the power of God. And again, if ye, by the grace of God, are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father, unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy without spot. (Moroni 10:27-30)*

With the Apostle Paul, press toward the **mark** for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.<sup>119</sup> As you do, please remember the words penned by Nephi: *He denieth none that come unto him, **black and white, bond and free, male and female**; And he remembereth the heathen, and **all are alike unto God**, both Jew and Gentile.*<sup>120</sup>

<sup>118</sup> D&C 94:5c

<sup>119</sup> Philippians 3:14

<sup>120</sup> II Nephi 11:110-115

*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (II Corinthians 4:6,7)*

### **May the Peace of God Rest Upon You**

It seems fitting to close with a blessing from Alma. In the following prayer, he expressed a special desire for his people, that the Lord would keep their *garments* spotless and clean before God so that it would be well with them in the last day. This, too, is my prayer according to the measure of faith Jesus Christ has given unto me.

*And now I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive, and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long suffering; being temperate in all things; being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times; Asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive, And see that ye have faith, hope, and charity, and then ye will always abound in good works;*

*And may the Lord bless you, and keep your garments spotless, that ye may at last be brought to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the holy prophets who have been ever since the world began, **having your garments spotless, even as their garments are spotless in the kingdom of heaven**, to go no more out.*

*And now my beloved brethren, I have spoken these words unto you, according to the Spirit which testifieth in me; and my soul doth exceedingly rejoice, because of the exceeding diligence and heed which ye have given unto my word. **And now, may the peace of God rest upon you, and upon your houses and***

*lands, and upon your flocks and herds, and all that you possess; your women and your children, according to your faith and good works, from this time forth and for ever. And thus I have spoken. Amen. (Alma 5:39-44)*

So likewise may your eternal *garments* be made clean and bright, even pure and white, through the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, both now and forevermore through faith on His precious name, that He may claim you His in the last day. Amen.