

# Mosiah 11–17 – S03E18

“A Light … That Can Never Be Darkened”

Abinadi the prophet bears witness of Christ at the cost of his life. Giving us, in the process, some of the most powerful scripture to be found anywhere.

I’m Mark Holt, and this is Gospel Talktrine.

Thank you again for joining me for Gospel Talktrine, your “Come follow Me” podcast. And as was the case last week, I’d like to invite any of those who are out there who are suffering because you’ve been affected by this pandemic, either physically or emotionally, or economically, send me your first name and town, and I’ll be happy to read your story on our next episode, and request that those listening pray on your behalf. We’d like to start involving the faith of those listening to benefit everyone.

And send those messages, along with any gospel questions you have, to [gt@gospletalktrine.com](mailto:gt@gospletalktrine.com).

## This week’s lesson material

Today’s lesson is Mosiah 11 through 17, “A Light … That Can Never Be Darkened.” It’s the story of the prophet Abinadi, who lived among the people of Zeniff, in the time of the wicked King Noah.

So before we begin, I’m going to tell you a story from the Old Testament. And later on it will become a little more clear as to why this is an important story.

## Old Testament story of David and Absalom

So some of you may remember the story of Absalom in the Old Testament. He was a son of David. And David was the King of Israel, and his son Absalom wanted the throne. He willing to even kill his father over it, so there was this bitter struggle between the followers of Absalom and those who were still loyal to David.

For a time, it seemed like Absalom would be victorious. The entire history of the Old Testament, the trajectory would have taken a different direction, and we never would have heard of Solomon, for example.

Fortunately for David, one of the advisors that he left behind was still loyal to him, and he advised Absalom, he gave Absalom some bad advice that cost him the victory. And in [2 Samuel 18](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/ot/2-sam/18?lang=eng), we have this story of David’s final victory of the forces of his son, Absalom.

Now one of the things that’s interesting is that David, until the very end, he cared so much about Absalom, he loved his son so much, that he wanted to preserve his life. So he gave the order to his generals, “Go out and win this victory, but don’t kill the leader.” Well, Joab was a wicked man, you might say, but also very fiercely loyal throughout his life to David. And so Joab was sick and tired of Absalom being a burr under his saddle. Absalom had caused them so much trouble. So when the battle allowed it, Joab actually did kill Absalom. And of course, the forces of David were victorious.

## Joab chooses messengers to send good tidings, and bad

But they had two pieces of news. One was that there was a victory, and two, that Absalom was dead. And the one part of the news was good, and the second part of the news was bad, for David.

And so, in the later part of [2 Samuel 18](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/ot/2-sam/18?lang=eng), we have this interplay, where Joab is going to send news. And David’s friend Ahimaaz, he wants to carry the news. But Joab won’t let him. He says to him, “Some other day you will carry tidings, but today you won’t, because the King’s son is dead.” And so he sends another messenger. And after a few more minutes, or however long, Ahimaaz finally prevails upon Joab to let him also carry news of the battle to David.

And Ahimaaz is such a fast runner, that he reaches David first.

Now the part I want to draw your attention to, is what happens when they’re both still a ways off. And David has a watchman up on a tower, or up on the roof, waiting for news of the battle. And what happens when they see this messenger, gives us a really good indication of what it means to bring “good tidings.”

So while they’re still a ways off, the watchman can tell that it’s Ahimaaz that’s running, and he says “Here comes one running, and he looks from here, by the way he’s running, he looks like the way Ahimaaz runs.” And David the king says, “Well, he’s a good man, and he cometh with good tidings.”

So that’s the part I want you to keep in your mind, as we go forward.

Now Ahimaaz comes in front of the king and says, “Your forces have been victorious.” And the king says, “What about my son? Did my son survive?” And Ahimaaz hides that part of the message, because he knows there is another messenger behind him. So then the other messenger comes, and he’s the one who breaks the bad news to the king.

So this is a story of two messengers, in 2 Samuel 18, and keep that in mind as we talk about the chapters for the lesson today.

## King Noah’s wickedness, and the prophet Abinadi’s testimony

So chapters 11 through 17 are really the story of, first of all, an introduction into how the righteousness of King Zeniff could be left behind for the wickedness of King Noah. And then secondly, a prophet that comes among the people of Noah, and his testimony and his ultimate fate. So obviously, as we mentioned, his name is Abinadi.

Now chapter 11 gives us a pretty lengthy list of the wickenesses of Noah. First of all, he levies a twenty percent tax on all his people on everything they would produce: the precious metals that they would mine, anything they would create, or build. Twenty percent of it has to go to the king. And what does the king do with this wealth?

The first thing he does, is he has to support a host of wives and concubines. And then he also adorns all of his buildings with gold and other precious things, and with rich ornaments. And so, the king uses this tax in order to support – as it says here – “thus did the people labour exceedingly to support iniquity.” [[Mosiah 11:6](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/11?lang=eng&id=6#p6)] Because he replaces all of his father’s priests with wicked priests. And they’ve got to have their wives and concubines. And he plants a lot of vineyards, and they’ve got to have lots of wine to drink.

And the Lamanites are still coming around, and the Lamanites have gotten a little smarter, so rather than attack the Nephites where the two armies can meet, the Lamanites start launching guerrilla attacks, and sneak attacks, and it’s basically a terrorist state at this point. The Lamanites will kill any innocent people that they find without protection.

And so Noah’s whole civilisation, they find themselves in great peril. Nevertheless they do eventually manage to meet the Lamanites in battle and win a victory, and it describes them as a bloodthirsty people, who ascribe their victory to their own strength, [[Mosiah 11:18-19](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/11?lang=eng&id=18-19#p18)] and this is the state of things when Abinadi finally shows up.

So we’ve got people who are no longer being taught to obey the commandments of God or worship God in any sort of sincere way. They’re being taught that what the king is doing is right. Now this is one of the important messages of this lesson, is that if the king wants the people to support him in iniquity, he can’t teach what’s true. So if he wants to enjoy a life of sin, he has to change the doctrine that is being taught as truth.

So as it says later in the Book of Mormon, one wicked king can actually bring to pass such great wickedness because of this very thing. He has to – not only engage in wickedness himself – but he has to teach it. He has to make everyone else approve of it. In order to do that, he had to levy this tax, so he could support all of his priests who would support him in his wickedness.

And so, he costs the people a lot of their labour, he costs them whatever wealth they had to give up to support him. Doubtless some of their daughters and sisters and wives had to go to the king. The king probably had his pick, and some of their land. The costs of the wickedness of Noah are great. But ultimately, he also costs them the protection of the Lord.

## Abinadi teaches that the people need to repent

So that’s chapter 11. At the very end, we learn about Abinadi coming among them, and teaching that this people will be scattered if they don’t repent right now. What he teaches is, there is an opportunity now for the people to change, and if they repent in sackcloth and ashes, then I the Lord will forgive them.

And when Noah the king hears about this, he says, “Who is Abinadi?” And then he utters these fateful words – you don’t ever want to find yourself near anyone who utters this – “Who is the Lord, who would destroy this people?” [[Mosiah 11:27](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/11?lang=eng&id=27#p27)] If you check the footnote there, you’ll see that those were the very same words that were uttered by Pharaoh. So Pharaoh says, “Who is Yahweh? Who is Jehovah,” which is presumably the same words that King Noah here is saying. “Who is Yahweh? Who is Jehovah, that he would judge this people?”

To utter those words means that he has divorced himself so firmly from the truth that it is very hard for him now to find his way back.

So that is the state of things in the land of Lehi-Nephi – that Zeniff led his people into – one generation later.

## Two years later: a different prophesy

Now Abinadi flees for his life, they reject his message. But two years later he comes back with a slightly different message. Which is: “Now it’s too late to repent.” [[Mosiah 12:1]](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/12?lang=eng&id=1#p1) If you pay attention you can notice the difference there. Not just that the people *might* be destroyed, it’s that the people *will* be destroyed.

So the second time he comes back and says the people will be subjected to bondage, I will send hail upon them, they’ll be devoured by wild beasts. Which is one of the things, incidentally, when Ammon and his followers come from Zarahemla – if you remember last week, we talked about how there was an expedition to find out what happened to the people of Zeniff. When they meet up with Limhi, the grandson of Zeniff, Limhi is quoting – though we don’t recognise it at the time, but he uses very scriptural language – and now we can see Limhi is quoting very freely, and very frequently, and very densely, from Abinadi.

## The symbolism of the East wind

So this idea of bondage, this idea of being driven and eaten by wild beasts, remember Limhi talked about them as being a flock that will be scattered. And one of the quotes that I forgot to mention is that the people will have the East wind sent upon them. And Limhi says “We have had the East wind sent upon us.”

And this is an interesting scriptural reference, because in the Old Testament, the East wind is a symbol of God’s sudden destruction. And if you think about the country of Israel today, on a map, west you’ll see the very end of the Mediterranean Sea, and to the east of it is this huge expanse of the Arabian Desert. So a wind that blows from west to east will moisture from the Mediterranean Sea over Israel, and bring rain clouds and bring fertility and life. But a wind that comes from the east – and you might think of that as a dust storm – will bring dryness and death.

Now there are few ways in the Old Testament that people are destroyed. Most of them, when we think about it, would be by an invading army. But life in Israel was a constant struggle, to keep your crops and your flocks alive with enough water, to go from season to season, and to increase. And water was basically wealth in that land.

And so one of the ways that God could destroy you, and leave you alive, was to send the East wind. Because a dust storm blowing out of present-day Jordan or Saudi Arabia into Israel, would cover your fields with dust and sand, and perhaps even plug up your wells. Your flocks would die within a few days, and perhaps even some of your family. And you might survive if you get yourself out of there, and find a source of water that you can drink. But all your wealth is gone, overnight.

That’s what the East wind means, and that’s what Abinadi is quoting. He’s making reference to this common scriptural idea, and later on Limhi will quote that same idea from Abinadi.

And I bring it up because presumably in South or Central America where they live now, during the events of this lesson, the East wind would not have had that same meaning. And so this phrase would only be used by people who were very familiar with the scriptures. And they wouldn’t care about an East wind unless they had been reading in the brass plates.

So that tells us a lot about Abinadi, and that also tells us a lot about Limhi. They’re both men who have studied the scriptures extensively. And Limhi, especially, sees himself in the position that Abinadi foretold. That someone who has to repent in sackcloth and ashes, and God will be slow to hear their cries, as Abinadi says at the end of chapter 11.

And this second time that Abinadi comes, he’s actually captured. It’s interesting, it kind of makes me laugh. At the start of chapter 12, it says Abinadi came among them in disguise. And then the very next sentence it says, “And here was his message. ‘Thus saith the Lord: the Lord said unto me, Abinadi, go forth and teach unto this people.’” So, kind of ruined his own disguise there, by using his name in his lesson.

But I’m pretty sure that’s just a word he used after they discovered who he was, but it’s funny the way it’s written.

## Abinadi is brought before the king

So anyway, Abinadi is brought before the king at this point. And in front of the king – I guess before we get into it, what I want to have us thinking about is, remember, that what is going to happen at the end of this lesson is one of these priests is going to be deeply, deeply converted. So there is a whole audience full of people, and one of them is going to change, as Abinadi talks. We don’t have any indication beforehand that it would happen. But, if we remember that is going to happen, we can start thinking about what would have given rise to that.

The reason I say that is, one of the priests asks a question that seems sincere. [[Mosiah 12:20-21](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/12?lang=eng&id=20-21#p20)] It requires them to listen when Abinadi gives his answer. And it also gives Abinadi an opportunity to bear powerful testimony. One of the most powerful testimonies ever borne of Jesus Christ. So as I read this, I like to think that Alma had already had his heart softened somehow. Perhaps he had heard Abinadi in the street, perhaps the two of them had met, perhaps he heard him two years before in the first time that he came through. Or perhaps he just heard about him, and he’d started to realise that what Abinadi was saying was actually true.

And the it says here in chapter 12 that the priests were amazed, because he confounded them in all of their words. So, maybe that was what did it, but if so, it was a very sudden conversion. Which can happen, obviously. But I like to think about what process did Alma have to go through – Alma the Elder – in order to actually have such a deep conversion, from a wicked priest – someone who would support the king in wickedness and actually teach wickedness to the people and hide the truth – to somebody who is willing to give up his life for a prophet. Because that is the change that Alma undergoes.

And so, it seems interesting that it would happen so quickly. Which is a very, very inspiring story.

## Abinadi is asked to explain the meaning of verses from Isaiah 52

Well maybe it’s one of the other priests, but maybe it’s Alma, who says to Abinadi, “Can you tell me the meaning of this scripture?” And then the scripture that is read is from [Isaiah 52](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/ot/isa/52?lang=eng&id=7-10#p7). Now in the next few chapters we’re going to get a very, very detailed inspired commentary about Isaiah 52 and 53, those chapters that are the most, you might say, the most messianic in all of the Old Testament.

The chapters, as Jesus Christ, as you might remember, on the road to Emmaus, he said to his disciples, who were sad that he had died, he said, “Look, don’t you think that the scriptures said this? Ought not Christ to have suffered to enter into his glory? Don’t you think the scriptures have talked about this?” And then what Christ does is, he gives them a run-down of those scriptures that talked about Jesus suffering.

And undoubtably, among those scriptures was this passage in Isaiah 52 and 53, which to Isaiah would have been one continuous passage. He didn’t divide it into the same chapters that we have.

So starting in chapter 52 [verse 7](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/ot/isa/52?lang=eng&id=7#p7), Abinadi has an opportunity now to explain what the prophets had said about Christ, before Lehi left Jerusalem, and had been in the scriptures. Some of the scriptures that he had are lost to us today. And so he talks about some of the ways that Christ has been prophesied in the scriptures, and says “have not all prophets spoken more or less concerning these things?” [[Mosiah 13:33](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/13?lang=eng&id=33#p33)]

Something that you or I might not say about the current Old Testament. But for him, in the brass plates, the Old Testament as he had it, it was true.

And Abinadi’s reaction to this question is a little bit of surprise. “Look, you pretend to be the priests, and you ask me to explain one of the most important scriptures, anywhere, to you. So let me ask you this question, priests of Noah, does salvation come by the law of Moses?” And they say, “Well, yes, it does.”

Now, you remember, we’ve talked about – in the past few lessons – we’ve talked about, the message of the prophets is, that there is no other name whereby man can be saved, than that of Jesus Christ. But here we have an example of some teachers who believe that there is another name. So, when Abinadi says, “Can you be saved by the law of Moses?” and they say “Yes,” really what they’re saying is, “We believe there is another name, by which man can be saved. That name is Moses.” Or, “The name is the law of Moses. We can be saved, if we just follow this law of Moses, and salvation comes because of that law.”

Now, Abinadi is about to teach them that this is actually not true.

Though the law of Moses is expedient for them to obey, it is not the source of their salvation. However, it is not only that that he teaches them. He teaches them, “Look, if you were to obey the law, you’d get pretty close to salvation, even though the law itself isn’t what would save you. But you’re not obeying the law! Obeying the law would be of great benefit to you and the people. But not only are you not teaching it, you’re not obeying it yourselves.”

Noah and the priests don’t like this one bit. And so Noah commands that Abinadi be immediately slain.

And this is when we get this amazing confrontation between Abinadi and Noah and his priests, because he says, “Do not lay your hands upon me, because the power of God is on me, and I have a message to give, and also God will protect me until I answer your question. And then it doesn’t matter what happens to me. But you can see that you don’t dare to lay a finger on me. And you better not, for you’ll be smitten, until I’m done talking.” [[Mosiah 13:1-5](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/13?lang=eng&id=1-5#p1)]

## Abinadi’s testimony: the four most powerful chapters of scripture?

And from the moment Abinadi says this, until when he’s done talking, is Mosiah chapters 13 through 16.

And I said this a couple of years ago, when we studied Isaiah in the Old Testament year. And if you want to go back and refer to that one, in the lesson when we talked about Isaiah 52, then I also made a commentary about this particular part of the Book of Mormon. And what I said at that time was, “If, somehow, you were separated from any electronic devices, and you had to leave your home, and you had to carry just the bare minimum with you. And so you had to choose four chapters of scripture – I tried to construct a scenario where you could only take four chapters of scripture with you – I would say that you would have a hard time convincing me that the four chapters that I should take with me should not be Mosiah chapters 13 through 16.

Because in these chapters is, in my opinion, is the most powerful testimony of Christ anywhere. And also, an explanation of just about everything we need to know to follow him in faith, and to be motivated to follow him, and to repent when we commit sin.

The spirit, the courage, the doctrine, the power, of these chapters, I don’t think is equalled anywhere. Except perhaps those few chapters that deal with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, but as we’ll see, Abinadi rivals, and is a figure, a type for even that.

So at the beginning of this powerful, protected testimony, Abinadi does some foreshadowing, and he says, “Look, I’ll talk until I’m done, and then it doesn’t matter what happens to me. But, I should warn you, how you treat me will be an indication of how God is going to treat you, in the future.”

And then he goes on to finish talking about the Ten Commandments. So he started talking about having no other Gods before Jehovah. The he finishes reading off, from his memory, the rest of Exodus chapter 20. He has it commuted to memory. And he says, “Have you done these things?” He’s using the Ten Commandments to stand in for the entire law of Moses.

Now, obviously, you remember we’ve talked about the paragraph of kings, where the kings are not to multiply to themselves wives, and are not to multiply to themselves gold, and they are to study the scriptures, and make a copy of them with their own hand, they have to write a copy with their own hand, and study the scriptures every day of their lives. Those are the commandments in the law of Moses, to just the king. It’s obvious that King Noah isn’t doing this either. But Abinadi doesn’t mention that.

What he does, is he mentions the most well-known part of the law of Moses, and he uses that as a symbol for the whole thing. He says, “You’re not even keeping this first beginning part. And obviously salvation doesn’t come through the law alone. But God had to give the Israelites the kind of law that a stiff-necked people could follow. So if they as a stiff-necked people needed that law, and you aren’t even following that, then how far away are you from the salvation of God?” This is the message of Abinadi.

And then at the end of chapter 13, he says, “Look, the whole point of the law of Moses was to show that God himself would one day come and live among his people. And not only that, but he would be stricken and afflicted.” As proof then, he skips a few verses from where they had asked him a question, and again, from memory, he quotes the entirety of Isaiah 53.

And this begins, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” And it talks about how, Jesus Christ, during his mortal ministry, will be rejected of man, and will be punished for our transgressions. That we like sheep have gone astray, every one to his own way, and God will lay upon him the penalties for our transgressions. [[Isaiah 53:6](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/ot/isa/53?lang=eng&id=6#p6)]

That is the point of Isaiah chapter 53. A powerful, powerful chapter of scripture. And that’s [chapter 14](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/14?lang=eng) in Mosiah. They’re almost the same words.

So then, after he’s done quoting that, in chapter 15, then we get this inspired commentary of both Isaiah 53 and then 52 – from Abinadi, from a prophet – telling the priests of Noah exactly what these chapters mean. And again, as he hinted at the end of chapter 13, here at the beginning of chapter 15 he says, “Look, I want you to understand that it is true. What these chapters are saying, what these verses are teaching, is that God himself will come down and live among men. And will redeem us from our sins, if we will repent. That is the entirety of the gospel, that is what every prophet teaches. And the creator of the world, the one that we have prayed to from the time of Adam, will subject himself to the flesh. So this God, this being that we’ve worshipped as the Father, will become the Son of God, and live among us in flesh.”

And that’s why he draws the parallel between the Father and the Son.

## How Christ is both the Father and the Son

Now in modern usage, this could actually cause some confusion. Because we believe that God the Father, and Jesus Christ are two separate beings. And here it’s saying that Jesus is the Father and the Son. Now both are true, but you have to understand, that’s because Jesus himself, in his role as creator, and in his role as redeemer and saviour, has earned the title of the Father. So God, the father of Jesus Christ, the Heavenly Father to whom we pray, in the name of Christ, is properly called the Father. But here we learn that Jesus Christ is also properly called the Father.

Now that fact shouldn’t cause you any distress, as Jesus has said, “My Father and I are one.” He and his Father are united in all things. So, if these verses give us a little bit of reason to think that talking about the Father might lead to some ambiguity, the teachings of Jesus Christ, and later on also the teachings of Joseph Smith, let us know that “Look, because they’re the same in spiritual aspects, in physical appearance, and also in the amount of love they have for us, that it’s more than appropriate for Jesus to have earned this same title by which we know the Father.

And there are other titles that they share. We would call both the Father and the Son “our Lord” and “our God.” So that’s just a few words about that description of Jesus as the Father and the Son.

## The good tidings of Isaiah 52:7: “He saith unto Zion: Thy God reigneth!”

But the message is, and this is the message of Isaiah 52:7, that when they said, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him… that publisheth peace,” – that’s the verse they asked Abinadi to interpret – that when they said that, what they were talking about is, these tidings that this messenger is bringing is, “He saith unto Zion: Thy God reigneth!” And the fact that “thy God reigneth” is, that God himself will come to the earth. [Mosiah 15:14]

So we’ve talked in the last couple of lessons about how this is the gospel. The good tidings are, that God will come to earth and dwell among us, and redeem us from our sins, and save us. So God loves us that much, that he’s willing to come down and clothe himself in flesh, and then be mistreated. But eventually overcome everything, and in so doing give us the means to overcome everything as well. That is the good news.

## *Me-basser*: the messenger that brings good news

But before we talk about good news, I want to back up and talk about the messenger that brings good news. So, really, that is the point of this verse. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that are publishing peace, that say unto Zion: Thy God reigneth!”

And they don’t know the meaning of this verse! Abinadi, in trying to explain it, is talking about what message they’re bringing.

Now in Hebrew, if you were to go to biblehub.com, and you were to look up Isaiah 52:7, you would see that, how beautiful… and then you were to click on Hebrew, you would see each Hebrew word, then you would see an English rendering of what that word means. And so you would see: *How - beautiful - on - the - mountains*, et cetera, *are- the - feet - of* – and then you would see *one word* in Hebrew, and in the English part you would see “him who bringeth god tidings.” That is: one word, *me-basser*, the good messenger, and then “him who bringeth good tidings.” Several words in English.

And so this is kind of what I want to talk about. This is why I read that passage, or I mentioned the passage in 2 Samuel 18. Because when David knew that his friend Ahimaaz was the one bringing news of the battle, he said to himself, “I know it is good news.” This was a signal to him, because – we’ll talk about why – but we know it was a signal to him, because he says, “Oh, he’s a good man, and therefore he’s bringing good tidings.”

Ok, so this gives rise to the idea, and this is an idea I’m going to develop now, for the rest of the lesson, which is: that the messenger – one of the messages of Abinadi, one of the teachings of Abinadi is – the messenger is the message. And I’m going to support this now with some ideas from Hebrew, from 2 Samuel 18, and then finally here from the Book of Mormon.

So first of all, “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him that is bringing good tidings.” Now, good tidings as we mentioned in the last couple of weeks, generally meant, in Hebrew it meant, the people that did not go to battle, they’re waiting at home, they’re waiting to find out the fate of their entire nation, their entire civilisation. It may be that they’ve sent their armies out, and the Philistines have destroyed them. And they’re going to find out that, as of tomorrow, they’re all going to be speaking a different language, or living in a different place, or maybe even dead.

And then when they find out their king was victorious, then this is the ultimate in good news. And the way that the feet of the messenger are described is so wonderful, because, as Ahimaaz is running towards David to give him the news of his victory, the watchman can pick out his identity by the way that he runs. From his feet he can tell who he is.

And, from who he is, David is able to guess at what his message might be.

Now we have a little clue about this, when Ahimaaz says, “I want to carry this news,” and Joab says “No. This isn’t the news for you to carry. You can carry the news some other day. Because it’s bad news. And therefore, I’m going to send this guy.” That gives us a little clue that in that culture, and in that time, the messenger could be, might be, chosen, based on the content of the message.

So, part of the way that I’m going to signal David that his forces were victorious is, I’m going to send a messenger that he knows is bringing good news. However, because his son is dead, I’m going to send someone who he doesn’t know, and therefore, he’s going to be left in doubt until the messenger arrives. Because nobody wants bad news in a hurry, but he wants good news right away. Presumably.

And so, then Ahimaaz, he can’t bear – we have to read between the lines here – but he can’t bear the idea that David will receive this news from someone else, so he begs Joab for the opportunity to also carry the news. And then he runs so fast he overtakes the other messenger. And so, David in the distance is able to say, “How beautiful upon the mountains, upon this hill, that this runner is running towards me on, are his feet. Because I know, from who it is – and from the way he runs I know who it is – and from who it is I know what kind of message he is bringing – how beautiful those feet are. How beautiful that is, because I know we’ve won, and now, no longer are we going to be subject to this wicked rule of Absalom, but I’m going to continue to rule the way that God is commanding me to rule. And God can bless me, and now we’re going to build the Temple, and do all these other things.”

So it’s wonderful news, and it all comes down to the feet of this messenger. And that is a way for us to understand, what Isaiah was talking about when he wrote this verse: “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who are publishing peace, bringing news about the victory of the king.”

Now, “Saying unto Zion: Thy God reigneth!” Zion is understood – in this time period – to be the people of the Lord who exist in peace, the “pure in heart” as we understand it today. But it is an *ideal*. It is the ideal of a people that is utterly protected by God. And the reason they are utterly protected by God, is because they’re utterly faithful to him.

So, the surface interpretation of this verse in Isaiah is, that there will come a day when the news will go out that God is now in charge. As we have it in the New Testament, the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ. And he shall reign forever and ever.

Well this is the Old Testament version of that prophesy, that there will come a day when messengers bring not just a message of an earthly battle won, but that God himself is now reigning personally on the earth. And what a wonderful day that will be. It will be the kind of news that will make the very feet of the messenger beautiful on the mountains.

## How the word *me-basser* in Hebrew becomes *gospel* in English

Now we’ve talked in the past about how good news has been transferred directly from Hebrew – I shouldn’t say directly – but it has been transferred *exactly*, and very deliberately, from one language to another, until it finally reached English. So into Greek, “good tidings” was rendered “eu” [good] and “angelion,” which actually means messenger. So this “me-basser,” this “one who bringeth good tidings,” became “eu-angelion,” which means “good messenger.” And in Old English it was rendered “Godspel”: good, and messenger or message. And in English, modern English, it was finally rendered “Gospel.” Which we translate as “good news,” but we’ve lost some of the context of that word, of the meaning of that word, and where it came from. [[me-bas-ser: Englishman’s Concordance](https://biblehub.com/hebrew/mevasser_1319.htm)] [[eu-anggelion: Strong’s Concordance](https://biblehub.com/greek/2098.htm)]

## The messenger who brings good tidings

And from ancient times, the idea of the messenger was intimately tied up with the message, to the point where there was one word for a messenger who brings good tidings, and there were other words for other types of messengers. You were either that type of a messenger, or you were not. And in this verse in Isaiah, that’s the kind of messenger that is coming.

Now all of that is context for Abinadi’s explanation of what this scripture means. He talks about how anyone who has ever carried the message of Jesus Christ has been one of these messengers. They’re publishing peace, and how beautiful upon the mountains were their feet. But the prophets especially, are the ones who are his seed, as mentioned in Isaiah chapter 53. The seed of Christ are those who believe in him, and have allowed him to give them new birth. And therefore, they become his seed, they become his progeny. [[Mosiah 15:11-13](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/15?lang=eng&id=11-15#p11)]

But especially among this number are included those prophets who have borne witness of him, from the time since the world began, who are doing so today, and will do so henceforth and forever. [Mosiah 15:13-17]

But, he says, there is one final meaning of this verse that trumps all the others. And that is, how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who is the *source* of peace. Who is the prince of peace. And as we read that description by Abinadi, I want you to think about, again, how David must have felt when he saw the messenger – his watchman recognised who that messenger was – and then David knew intuitively, this is a messenger bringing good news.

This is exactly the same feeling that Abinadi is trying to convey when he talks about, *not only prophets* bringing this message of Jesus, but Jesus Christ himself being the messenger of peace. How beautiful his feet will be, when we’re finally able to see that. [Mosiah 15:18]

And so therefore, that messenger, Jesus Christ, when he is the messenger, will become the message, that “Thy God reigneth.” And Jesus, incidentally, that is one of his titles. You may remember the scripture applying to the appearance of Jesus in the Kirtland Temple, and we read this in Malachi chapter 3, which is:

“I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant.” [Malachi 3:1]

So Jesus Christ is not just the covenant itself, but he is also the messenger of the covenant. Another indication to us that the messenger is the message.

So that gives us a couple of layers of what Abinadi is talking about in chapter 15. There are probably so many more. And every time I read this, I come up with something new.

## Resurrection and judgement: a message of accountability and a message of mercy

But going on to [chapter 16](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/16?lang=eng&id=13-15). This is a chapter where he talks about resurrection and judgement. And again, we have this theme of the Book of Mormon reiterated, which is resurrection, we will all be restored to our perfect frame, but then, immediately we’re brought before God for judgement. And not only are our bodies restored to us, but our deeds are restored to us.

And we have the resurrection of good, or a resurrection of evil. In other words, constantly, along with the message of salvation in the Book of Mormon, is taught the message of accountability. And luckily for us, that message of accountability is always accompanied by a message of mercy. Because if it weren’t for the mercy of Christ, our choices just wouldn’t matter. But because of Christ, we have the opportunity to choose good, and have it matter, even though our choices cannot be perfect, when we choose good. Christ’s mercy can make the difference.

So that’s the message of chapter 16, which is that men can be brought back, not only from death, but also from sin.

A couple of notable verses here:

“He is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened; yea, and also a life which is endless, that there can be no more death.” [[Mosiah 16:9](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/16?lang=eng&id=9#p9)]

Now if you had asked me before preparing this lesson, “Where does that verse come from?” I would have said, “It’s probably found in the New Testament.” And I looked, and even though the words *light* and *life* very frequently occur close to each other, this same idea is never expressed in exactly this way in the New Testament. It’s only here, in the testimony of Abinadi, that it is expressed exactly this way. Where Jesus Christ is described as the light and the life of the world, both of which are endless.

And once again, in much the same way as we did during King Benjamin’s address, we have this message where the message of mercy is intimately tied up to the message of suffering from sin. And there’s really no reason why that shouldn’t be so. It’s just that, in mainstream Christianity, most people think, “Well, this is either a preacher who believes in hellfire and damnation, or who believes in salvation by faith alone. But you can’t have both.”

And the truth is, the true gospel of Jesus Christ, as is being taught here, very, very succinctly and completely by Abinadi, is that it is mercy itself that allows us to realise the consequences for our actions, then escape them through repentance if we choose.

There is no fundamental inconsistency in a prophet teaching the consequences of sin, in order to get across the idea of mercy.

So I’m going to go back to chapter 15 and read a couple of verses, then I’m going to read a verse from 16.

So in chapter 15, [verse 18](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/15?lang=eng&id=18-20#p18):

18 And behold, I say unto you, this is not all. For O how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of *him* that bringeth good tidings, that is the founder of peace, yea, even the Lord, who has redeemed his people; yea, *him* who has granted salvation unto his people;

19 For were it not for the redemption which he hath made for his people, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, I say unto you, were it not for this, all mankind must have perished.

20 But behold, the bands of death shall be broken, and the Son reigneth, and hath power over the dead; therefore, he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead. [emphasis added]

And then, we’ll jump forward to the end of chapter 16. He finally comes back to the law of Moses, and the fact that *they* believed that salvation comes through the law of Moses. And he says, this is how he finishes his protected testimony. He says:

13 And now, ought ye not to tremble and repent of your sins, and remember that only in and through Christ ye can be saved?

14 Therefore, if ye teach the law of Moses, also teach that it is a shadow of those things which are to come—

15 Teach them that redemption cometh through Christ the Lord, who is the very Eternal Father. Amen. [[Mosiah 16:13-15]](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/16?lang=eng&id=13-15#p13)

Again, I wish I could say it more powerfully, as powerfully as Abinadi does, but I just don’t think there’s a more powerful testimony to be borne anywhere of Jesus Christ, than that borne by Abinadi the prophet. And perhaps it was because he knew that it was going to cost him his life. And it does.

So in [chapter 17](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/17?lang=eng) we learn that they burned him to death for that. So the first thing that happens is, King Noah commands that Abinadi be put to death. And then Alma says, “No, look, King, I want you to let him go free! He’s spoken truly to us about our iniquities.” And not only does Alma immediately lose his place, because of this, as a priest, but then he’s hunted very soon after for his life, and he has to hide.

And what he does, is he hides himself, and writes down the teachings of Abinadi. He recognises that they were some of the most profound things ever to be taught anywhere. These writings, now obviously, they survive to this day, because we now have them in the Book of Mormon.

But Alma, as we will learn soon, Alma departs from the people of King Noah, and takes his followers with him. But we have reason to believe that whatever record Alma created of the teachings of Abinadi, there was more than one copy. So he brought a copy with him, but also Limhi is quoting from it later.

And so Alma is teaching in secret, just as Abinadi did.

Now this is something that we will revisit, this process of somebody who is firmly wicked becoming a very powerful teacher, almost instantly converted by a prophet of the Lord, and then becoming a powerful teacher later on. So I just want to point that out, that this is the first indication we have of it. But we’re going to see several more examples, as the story of the Book of Mormon continues.

## Abinadi is sentenced: parallels to the New Testament

So Alma is out of the picture, and Abinadi is put in prison, and then they bring him back, and interestingly the time that he’s in prison is three days. And they bring him back, and they say to him, “Abinadi, we’ve found an offence, by which you’re worthy of death. And that offence is this: That you’ve said that God himself will come down and take the form of a man. And for this you shall be put to death. However, there is a way out for you. If you will take back the evil you have spoken of the King, and of his people, then we’ll let you go.”

So I want you to realise what’s going on here. They’ve accused him of blasphemy, which under the law of Moses could be met with death, if he had truly blasphemed. If what he was saying was not true, then it would be blasphemy, and under the law of Moses the penalty would have been death.

However, if that were the reason they wanted to kill him, then they would have said, “You need to take back this blasphemy, and then we can let you go.” But instead, what they say is, “Take back what you said about the King.” So it becomes obvious – and that’s [verse 8](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/17?lang=eng&id=8#p8), you can find that in chapter 17 – “If you were to take back what you said about the King, then you can go.” So really, that was the infraction.

Now, compare this to the trial of Jesus Christ. And that’s the point I want to make by bringing all this up. When Jesus is accused of blasphemy before the Jews, then they send him to Pilate. And what is he accused of there? He is accused of speaking about a king, of calling himself the king, of threatening the king’s power. And so, this is an exact parallel – something like 150 years before Jesus – an exact parallel of the unjust trial that would eventually condemn Jesus to death. For the same purported cause, and for the same actual underlying offence, Abinadi is found guilty of death, or worthy of death, in the same way that Jesus is. By an unjust trial, conducted by corrupt religious leaders, and then ratified by a ruler who is afraid of those leaders.

So that’s very interesting, and you’ll see in verse 11, King Noah wants to release Abinadi, much the same way that Pilate wanted to release Jesus. But, because these priests, they continue to pressure him, he’s willing to do it.

Now, incidentally, Noah, he surrounded himself, he chose these priests. He surrounded himself with people who would enable his wicked behaviour. And when the time comes, he wants to repent, that choice to surround himself with enablers, it came back to bite him, because he was unable to repent. They wouldn’t let him escape from his own pattern of wicked choices. He had to continue on that pattern, or he had to break off his relationship with every one of these enablers. And that proved too much for him to do.

And they say, “Oh, he’s reviled the King,” and they stir him up to anger, and he goes against his own conscience in this moment, and in so doing seals his own fate.

Now again, when they put Abinadi to death, they burn him to death, and he says, “This is the same thing that will happen to you. This is a type of the things to come.” Now you can see, in that pronouncement, and in the events which follow, in which Abinadi suffers death by fire, that he becomes the very message that he was trying to say. The fact that he says, “What happens to me is a type of what will come,” those are the words of someone who knows he is the message.

And that is also true of Jesus Christ. So that’s another way in which Abinadi is like the Saviour.

So why does it matter? Why did I take so much time to talk about the messenger being the message, and to uncover that lesson from the scriptures in this week’s chapters? Because now we get to choose, OK? We go back to the story of 2 Samuel 18, and we get to choose – which message do we want to be? The messages we choose, and the way we carry them, will eventually come to define us the same way they did Ahimaaz.

Our feet can render their very surroundings beautiful, if our message is strong enough. So like Ahimaaz, let us choose our messages carefully. Let us be known as someone who brings good tidings of good, who publisheth peace, and who saith unto Zion, “Thy God reigneth!” Who bears testimony – like Abinadi says all the prophets did, more or less – concerning Jesus Christ. To talk about how he came into the world to bear our sins and afflictions upon himself, and that salvation comes through him, and in no other way. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.