

Excerpts from Alma 43-63: Teaching Spiritual Patterns from a Treatise on War, McMullin, Thomas D., August 1994

In Alma 43-63, Mormon gives considerable detail regarding the Nephite/Lamanite wars. In a book written to bring people to Christ, some people struggle to see the spiritual relevance of such an extensive account of warfare. Determining spiritual relevance can be made more puzzling by the fact that most accounts of the Nephite wars are either mentioned in passing or, at best, described in only a few verses. One might well ponder, therefore, why Mormon—in the economy of gold plate inscription—devoted such a lengthy portion of the record to a period of warfare that does not ultimately shape the final outcome of the record. One possible view of this scripture block may relate to strong parallels between the Lamanite leaders Zerahemnah and Amalickiah, and Lucifer. Each was an apostate who rebelled and sought to “usurp great power over [the Nephites]...by bringing them into bondage” (Alma 43:8). [See the chart at right for parallels:]

As a leader in Nephite and Lamanite conflicts, Moroni can be seen as a type of Christ. (Christ is our leader in spiritual conflict.) Perhaps Mormon wanted us to see the keys Moroni used to secure a Nephite victory. These keys have spiritual counterparts the Lord has given to assist us in our spiritual warfare. These keys include those listed in the [chart at right]:

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING [Alma 43-53] AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

The time of greatest danger and susceptibility to the Lamanites was when the Nephites were divided by sin, internal dissent, and contention (see Alma 51:16, 53:9).

Despite the wickedness of some of the Nephites, the people of Nephi were preserved because of the “prayers of the righteous” (Alma 62:40). When there were no righteous people, the Nephite society dissolved (see Helaman 6:38-40).

The Nephites were victorious because of the faith, commitment, and testimony of the “two thousand stripling soldiers” (Alma 53:22). These soldiers performed “every word of command with exactness” (Alma 57:21), were “true at all times” Alma 53:20), and “put their trust in God continually” (Alma 57:27).

Despite perilous times, “there never was a happier time among the people of Nephi, since the days of Nephi, than in the days of Moroni” (Alma 50:23).

Lucifer	Lamanite Leaders
• Sought to overthrow the kingdom of God (see D&C 76:28).	• Nephite dissidents sought to overthrow the government (Alma 46:4–5).
• Rebelled and apostatized (see D&C 76:25–27; Moses 4:1–4).	• When not successful, rebelled and defected to the Lamanites (see Alma 43:6; 46:3–7).
• “Sought to destroy the agency of man” (Moses 4:3).	• Sought to destroy the liberty of the people (see Alma 46:10).
• Used flattery to win the hearts of men (see 2 Nephi 28:22).	• Used flattery as a key tactic to gather support (see Alma 46:4–5).
• Stirred men’s hearts to anger “against that which is good” (2 Nephi 28:20).	• Stirred the Lamanites up to anger against the Nephites (see Alma 43:8).
• Sought to grasp men in the bondage of the chains of hell (see 2 Nephi 28:22).	• Sought to bring the Nephites into bondage (see Alma 43:8, 29).
• “Maketh war with the saints of God, and encompasseth them round about,” after being cast out of heaven (D&C 76:29).	• Sought to destroy the church of God (see Alma 46:10).

Moroni’s Tactics	The Lord’s Counsel
• Armed his people with shields and weapons (see Alma 43:19).	• “Put on the whole armour of God” (Ephesians 6:11; see also D&C 27:15–18).
• Followed, with faith, the prophet’s counsel regarding the order of battle (see Alma 43:23).	• “Give heed unto all his words and commandments” (D&C 21:4; see also vv. 5–6).
• Raised a “standard” to his people, giving them purpose, focus, and vision. He had them accept the standard by covenant (see Alma 46:19–21).	• “Cleave unto the covenants which thou hast made” (D&C 25:13).
• Kept the people in constant remembrance of the covenants they had made (see Alma 46:19).	• “Behold, ye shall meet together oft” (3 Nephi 18:22).
• Identified and strengthened areas of weakness, especially in areas where the enemy had previously been successful (see Alma 49:2–15).	• President Harold B. Lee said: “The most important of all the commandments of God is that one that you’re having the most difficulty keeping today. . . . Today is the day for you to work on that until you’ve been able to conquer that weakness. Then you start on the next one that’s most difficult for you to keep” (in <i>Church News</i> , 5 May 1973, p. 3). “I make weak things become strong” unto you (Ether 12:27).
• Took great care to fortify the cities (see Alma 49:4, 8, 14; 50:1–6).	• “Every dwelling place of mount Zion . . . shall be a defence” (Isaiah 4:5).
• Taught the people to look to God for power and strength, so they could succeed in battle (see Alma 55:31).	• “See that ye look to God and live” (Alma 37:47).