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Lesson 64 - The Separation of the Colony

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LESSON 64.—THE SEPARATION OF THE COLONY.

PLACE.—Land of First Inheritance and Land of Nephi.

TEXTS.—II. Nephi 4:13; 5:1-9.

13. And it came to pass that not many days after his [Lehi's] death, Laman and Lemuel, and the sons of Ishmael, were angry with me because of the admonitions of the Lord ;

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1. Behold, it came to pass that I, Nephi, did cry much unto the Lord my God, because of the danger of my brethren.

2. But behold, their anger did increase against me ; insomuch that they did seek to take away my life.

3. Yea, they did murmur against me, saying: Our younger brother thinks to rule over us ; and we have had much trial because of him ; wherefore, now let us slay him, that we may not be afflicted more because of his words. For behold, we will not have him to be our ruler ; for it belongs unto us, who are the elder brethren, to rule over this people.

4. Now I do not write upon these plates, all the words which they murmured against me. But it sufficeth me to say, that they did seek to take away my life.

5. And it came to pass that the Lord did warn me, that I, Nephi, should depart from them, and flee into the wilderness, and all those who would go with me.

6. Wherefore, it came to pass that I, Nephi, did take my family, and also Zoram and his family, and Sam, mine elder brother and his family, and Jacob and Joseph, my younger brethren, and also my sisters, and all those who would go with me. And all those who would go with me, were those who believed in the warnings and the revelations of God ; wherefore they did hearken unto my words.

7. And we did take our tents and whatsoever things were possible for us, and did journey in the wilderness for the space of many days. And after we had journeyed for the space of many days, we did pitch our tents.

8. And my people would that we should call the name of the place Nephi ; wherefore we did call it Nephi

9. And all those who were with me, did take upon them to call themselves the people of Nephi,

1: Mosiah 10:12-16.

LESSON STATEMENT.

Scarcely was Lehi buried than trouble arose. Laman and Lemuel,

with their friends, would not be led by Nephi. They asserted that they were the elder brothers, and theirs was the right to rule. They would not recognize Nephi's authority, though they knew that God had appointed him to be their leader. So, by the command of Heaven, the two parties separated. Nephi, and those who would listen to him, moved away, and left those who clung to Laman in possession of their first home.

Those who went with Nephi were his own family, Zoram, Sam, Jacob and Joseph, and their families, and some others whose names the Book of Mormon does not give. Henceforth those who belonged to this branch of Lehi's house were known as Nephites, after Nephi, their leader; while those who remained with Laman were called Lamanites.

The Nephites were those who believed in the warnings and revelations of God; while the Lamanites rejected His word and did not keep His commandments.

After many days' journey the Nephites pitched their tents and began to build up a new home. To the land they now occupied they gave the name of Nephi, while the region they left in the possession of the Lamanites is frequently called "The Land of their First Possession."

NOTES.

LAND OF NEPHI.—Nephi simply tells us that he and his company traveled in the wilderness many days. Their journey was northward, as is shown by their later

history; but Nephi, in his very brief account of this migration, says nothing with regard to the direction in which they traveled. At the end of many days a land was found which was deemed suitable for settlement.

No doubt the choice of location was made by Divine inspiration. It was a highly-favored land, rich in mineral and vegetable productions, and yielded abundant crops to the labors of the husbandmen. It appears to have been near some great waters—the Pacific Ocean or an inland sea, for Jacob, Nephi's brother, in speaking of the potency of the faith of his people, says, "We truly can command in the name of Jesus, and the very trees obey us; or the mountains, or *the waves of the sea*" (Jacob 4:6). In this happy country the Nephites dwelt, prospered and increased until they again moved northward. Perhaps they migrated, not once, nor twice, but several times; for we hold it to be inconsistent with the story of the record and with good judgment to believe that in their first journey they traveled as far north as Ecuador, where they dwelt about four hundred years later. In the first place, there was no necessity for Nephi and his people taking such a lengthy, tedious and hazardous journey; in the second place, in their weak condition, it was nigh unto an impossibility; again in a few years the Lamanites had followed and overtaken them. It is altogether inconsistent to think that that people, with its racial characteristics, could in so short a time have accomplished so marvelous a triumph as to follow, hunt up and attack their late brethren, if the latter had placed all the distance from Chili to Ecuador between themselves and their pursuers. When we consider the difficulties of travel through the trackless wilderness, the obstacles interposed by nature, the lack of all roads or other guides to indicate where the Nephites had gone, it seems out of the question to imagine that in twenty years or so, the shiftless, unenterprising Lamanites had accomplished such a feat. To the contrary, we believe that Nephi and those with him traveled until they considered themselves safe, then settled down in a spot which they deemed desirable. By and by the Lamanites came upon them; the Nephites defended themselves as long as they could, and when they could do so no longer they again moved northward.

THE WILDERNESS.—By the expression "the wilderness" we understand the inspired writer to mean the uncultivated and uninhabited portions of the land. As the Nephites extended their possessions and occupied new lands the borders of the wilderness gradually grew less and less.

THE SISTERS OF NEPHI.—Our text is the only place in the Book of Mormon where Nephi's sisters are mentioned. We are told nothing of their names, ages or number, or anything with regard to their after lives.

WHAT WE MAY LEARN FROM THIS LESSON.

1. That shortly after Lehi's death Laman and his associates grew so angry with Nephi that they sought to kill

him. 2. The cause of their anger, at that time, was that he urged them to keep the commandments of God. 3. They also argued that if they slew him he would not be their ruler and leader. 4. They claimed the right to rule, because they were Lehi's eldest sons. 5. By command of the Lord, Nephi and those who believed in the revelations of God fled into the wilderness. 6. Those who accompanied Nephi were his brothers Sam, Jacob and Joseph, his sisters, Zoram and his family, and others whose names are not given. 7. After many days they pitched their tents and gave to their new home the name of Nephi. 8. They likewise called themselves Nephites or the people of Nephi. 9. In this lesson is shown the protecting care of God over those who keep His commandments.

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON.

1. What took place shortly after Lehi's death? 2. Who were the leaders in this movement? 3. Why were they angry with Nephi? 4. On what grounds did they base their claims to rule the colony? 5. What purpose had they in taking Nephi's life? 6. What did the Lord warn Nephi to do? 7. Why did He give Nephi this warning? 8. What were the names of those who went with Nephi? 9. What was the character of those who went with him? 10. Who was Zoram? 11. What do you know about Nephi's sisters? 12. How long did the company journey? 13. What did they take with them? 14. What name did they give to their new home? 15. What did they call themselves? 16. Who were the Lamanites? 17. Tell what you know about the land of Nephi. 18. What may we learn from this lesson of God's protecting care over His servants?