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Lesson IX. Samuel, the Lamanite Prophet

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LESSON DEPARTMENT.

An Appreciation of the Book of Mormon

Senior Course of Study.

LESSON IX.

Samuel, the Lamanite Prophet.

(For Tuesday, January 4, or Sunday, January 9.)

Before presenting the ministry of Samuel perhaps we ought to cast about to check up our historical moorings. So far we have covered, indirectly at least, the Book of Mormon narrative through the Book of Mosiah. We have followed the children of Lehi from Jerusalem to America, we have seen the division into Nephites and Lamanites, and we have considered the establishment of Zarahemla, the return to Lehi-Nephi, the growth of the Colony of Alma, and finally the gathering together once more of all the worthy Nephites in Zarahemla and surrounding centers. That history has covered a period of 509 years, leaving 91 years before the advent upon this continent of the Savior. Those 91 years are crowded full of significant events. Among the outstanding ones are:

The institution of a government of judges, Alma, the younger, being the first chief judge.

The mission of the sons of Mosiah among the Lamanites.

The conversion of many Lamanites who take upon themselves the name of the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi.

The ravages of the Gadianton robbers.

The appearance of such anti-Christians as Korihor.

The departure of the ships of Hagoth.

The prophetic mission of Samuel, the Lamanite.

These ninety-one years may be fairly adequately summarized by saying that they saw a ripening of the Nephites in iniquity, a gradual conversion of a great part of the Lamanites to the work of the Lord, a constant warfare between the Nephites and Lamanites, schisms both civil and religious among the Nephites, and a marked tendency to disregard the word and work of the Lord and the messengers whom He sent in the hope of redeeming His people. Latter-day Saints should be encouraged to turn through the books of Alma and Helaman as a warning against the ills from which we are suffering today. Our pride, our religious indifference, our worldliness, our vicious habits, particularly among the younger generation, are the very things that, 1925 years ago, called forth a Samuel—they are the very things that called forth the dire calamities attendant upon the ministry of Him whom Samuel proclaimed.

And so, as we turn to the Prophet Samuel, let us ponder the question, "What would be the burden of Samuel's message if he were to be sent to us today?"

The Voice of an Indian prophet! It was once the good fortune of the writer to listen to the thrilling testimony of a modern Indian. He had returned to his home in one of the stakes of Idaho from a mission among his own people of the northwest. As he recounted the results of his labors he was filled with a spirit of conversion that fairly electrified his audience. He stood out in such marked contrast to the ordinary type of Indian whom most of us have encountered. "Dusky Son of the Prairie" though he called himself, he had an eloquence and a fervor seldom surpassed by any son of God. No one could ever forget his testimony that he knew that he and his people were Book of Mormon people—were the Lord's people. What a testimony to the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon!

And so it is not an impossible occurrence that a Lamanite should declare the word of the Lord to His people. Such a one declared it nearly two thousand years ago—Samuel, the Lamanite prophet. The historical setting for his appearance was most remarkable. Five hundred years earlier his forefathers had been the great anxiety of their father Lehi. It was to them that Nephi had to declare the word of the Lord—it was with them that Nephi and his successors struggled that they might preserve in one faith the descendants of Lehi. Now the conditions are reversed. The Nephites, in spite of their heritage, their teachings, and all of their blessings have lost their faith and their ideals—the Lamanites, despite their curse and the lack of those very things that should have exalted the Nephites,

have risen to that exaltation that they enjoy communion with the Spirit of the Lord—they live His Gospel.

To have Samuel, the voice out of a fallen civilization, sound the note of warning to his brethren the Nephites—to have him proclaim the advent of the Master Himself, is a glorious proof that God is no respecter of persons. It is a splendid confirmation of that assurance given us in the fifth verse of the seventy-sixth section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"For thus saith the Lord, I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end."

When Samuel, like Abinadi, appeared among the Nephites and called upon them to repent of their wickedness, they were deaf in sin, and yielding easily to the promptings of the devil, they cast one more prophet out of their midst. Discouraged, no doubt, and perhaps sensitive because of the line drawn between Nephites and Lamanites, Samuel would have returned to his own land. But—and this is surely an evidence of the divine favor in which he was held—he was recalled by the voice of the Lord:

"And behold, an angel of the Lord hath declared it unto me, and he did bring glad tidings to my soul." Helaman 13:7.

Having returned, he delivered a most remarkable message to the people of Zarahemla. His wonderful prophecies we shall consider fully in a later lesson—we are concerned here with His call to repentance. It rings with a warning as vital today as it was two thousand years ago.

"Behold ye, the people of this great city, and hearken unto my words; yea, hearken unto the words which the Lord saith; for behold, he saith that ye are cursed because of your riches, and also are your riches cursed because ye have set your hearts upon them, and have not hearkened unto the words of him who gave them unto you.

"Ye do not remember the Lord your God in the things which he hath blessed you, but ye do always remember your riches, not to thank the Lord your God for them; yea, your hearts are not drawn out unto the Lord, but they do swell with great pride, unto boasting, and unto great swelling, envyings, strifes, malice, persecutions, and murders, and all manner of iniquities.

"For this cause, hath the Lord God caused that a curse should come upon the land, and also upon your riches; and this because of your iniquities;

"Yea, wo unto this people, because of this time which has arrived, that ye do cast out the prophets and do mock them, and cast stones at them, and do slay them, and do all manner of iniquity unto them, even as they did of old time.

"And now when ye talk, ye say, if our days had been in the days of our fathers of old, ye would not have slain the prophets; ye would not have stoned them, and cast them out.

"Behold ye are worse than they; for as the Lord liveth, if a prophet come among you, and declareth unto you the word of the Lord, which testifieth of your sins, and iniquities, ye are angry with him, and cast him out, and seek all manner of ways to destroy him; yea, you will say that he is a false prophet, and that he is a sinner, and of the devil, because he testifieth that your deeds are evil.

"But behold, if a man shall come among you and shall say do this, and there is no iniquity; do that and ye shall not suffer; yea, he will say, walk after the pride of your own hearts; yea, walk after the pride of your eyes, and do whatsoever your heart desireth; and if a man shall come among you and say this, ye will receive him, and say that he is a prophet.

"Yea, ye will lift him up, and ye will give unto him of your substance; ye will give unto him of your gold, and of your silver, and ye will clothe him with costly apparel; and because he speaketh flattering words unto you, and he saith that all is well, then ye will not find fault with him.

"O ye wicked and ye perverse gen-

eration; ye hardened and ye stiff-necked people, how long will ye suppose that the Lord will suffer you? Yea, how long will ye suffer yourselves to be led by foolish and blind guides? Yea, how long will ye choose darkness rather than light?" Helaman 13:21-29.

Naturally enough, such a rebuke only enraged the Nephites who set about to take the life of one who would so arraign them in their wicked ways. Not that some of them were not touched. Those who believed, "went forth and sought for Nephi; and when they had come forth and found him they confessed unto him their sins and denied not, desiring that they might be baptized unto the Lord."

But those who would not believe cast stones and shot arrows, that they might kill him. Picture Samuel, an Indian, standing on the wall about Zarahemla, declaring the word of the Lord to His "would-be" people, only to have them, lost to their own better selves, attempting mob-like to take his life! Picture him so shielded in the armor of God's Holy Spirit, that he could not be touched!

And when they refused to listen further, and when they would have seized him and put him to death, armed in the might of that same Spirit, "behold he did cast himself down from the wall, and did flee out of their lands—

"And behold, he was never heard of more among the Nephites."

Someone very fittingly has remarked "The Lord was with Samuel, but the devil was with the Nephites."

Helaman 16:23 declares,

"And notwithstanding the signs and the wonders which were wrought among the people of the Lord, and the many miracles which they did, Satan did get great hold upon the hearts of the people, upon all the face of the land."

Satan has now some two thousand fewer years to operate in than in the days of Samuel. No doubt he is waging a vigorous campaign against the souls of men—there is evidence that he is now “getting great hold” upon some of the children of men. May we not, therefore, ponder well the modern significance of the “call” of Samuel.

OUTLINE LESSON NINE.

Historical summary to date.

A bird's eye view of the narrative ahead.

Religious conditions during the reign of the judges.

The mission of Samuel.

The divine favor in which he was held.

His message.

His reception.

His “call” to us.

QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS.

1. Have some one familiar with the Book of Mormon summarize the books Alma and Helaman.

2. Assign special readings and reports on such subjects as:

A. The sons of Mosiah and their mission among the Lamanites.

B. The people of Anti Nephi-Lehi.

C. Korihor.

D. The two thousand sons of Helaman.

E. Teancum.

F. The Gadianton Robbers.

G. The ships of Hagoth.

3. Compare the labors of Samuel, the Lamanite, with those of the Prophet Jonah.

4. What changes in civilization among the Lamanites made possible the appearance of such a character as Samuel?

5. To what extent is the message of Samuel applicable to the world today?

LESSON X.

The Savior Upon the American Continent.

(For Tuesday, January 11, or Sunday, January 16.)

It is fitting that this concluding chapter on the purely appreciative aspect of the Book of Mormon should be devoted to that greatest of all subjects, Jesus Christ. To know Him is life eternal—to study about Him is one of the rarest privileges given to man. His appearance and ministry among the Nephites are so full of significance that a single chapter can at best serve but as an introduction to a life time contemplation. Then too, His ministry is so interwoven with prophecies that really to appreciate His American mission we ought to link together all available material in one big comprehensive presentation. In view of the fact, however, that the remaining lessons of this year's work are to be given over to

Book of Mormon prophecies, let us leave the Messianic predictions to the succeeding chapter and in this lesson contemplate some of the outstanding features of Jesus' ministry here on this continent.

First of all there was the advent itself—that first wonderful appearance. The one cherished hope of the Nephites from the first promise of Nephi—a hope enriched by the expectancy of more than six hundred years—was that the Master would come. And when that hope was realized—when the Savior appeared—it is little wonder that the Nephites were moved beyond description.

Thrilling as is the story, “And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keep-