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Characters and Teachings of the Book of Mormon: Preview of Lessons for 1954-55

Author(s): Leland H. Monson

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Abstract: The doctrines and messages which Alma and his brethren gave to the people are fundamental concepts of the gospel as we know it today. These principles should be thoroughly studied. A knowledge of them will help us to understand the men who accepted and taught them.

The lessons for this year cover the period just preceding the coming of Christ to the people on this continent. In our study of them, we shall see many fascinating and dramatic scenes depicting the faith of the characters who guided the destiny of the Nephite civilization during this crucial period.

Theology—Characters and Teachings of The Book of Mormon

Preview of Lessons for 1954-55

Elder Leland H. Monson

AS previously pointed out, the course of lessons “Characters and Teachings of The Book of Mormon” has been prepared for the purpose of encouraging the Relief Society members to read and study the book. The textbook of instruction is The Book of Mormon, our new witness for the divinity of Jesus Christ.

The Book of Mormon contains many characters who looked forward with intense faith to the coming of the Son of Man in the meridian of time. Among these characters stands Alma, one of the great missionaries in the history of the Nephite civilization. Talking to the people of Gideon, Alma defined what we mean by the divinity of Christ, saying:

. . . he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God (Alma 7:10).

Jesus, according to Alma, was to have a mortal mother, from whom he inherited the capacity to die; and an immortal father, from whom he inherited the power to overcome death. Jesus became the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh.

This concept of the divinity of Christ is all important to Mormonism, for it gives to mankind an authoritative message. The Ten

Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount become, not man’s gift to civilization, but God’s gift. Only such an authoritative message possesses the urgency and power to activate the lives of men and women.

No woman can prayerfully study the work of Alma and of his brethren, Amulek, Ammon, Aaron, Omni, and Hinner, without having her faith in Jesus Christ kindled and strengthened. Alma defines clearly and definitely how faith is developed and nourished. A careful study of Alma, chapter 32, by each class leader before beginning this year’s course will serve to help each one to teach faith-promoting lessons. This should be the aim of each class leader.

The doctrines and messages which Alma and his brethren gave to the people are fundamental concepts of the gospel as we know it today. These principles should be thoroughly studied. A knowledge of them will help us to understand the men who accepted and taught them.

The lessons for this year cover the period just preceding the coming of Christ to the people on this continent. In our study of them, we shall see many fascinating and dramatic scenes depicting the faith of the characters who guided the destiny of the Nephite civilization during this crucial period.

Class leaders should strive to make these characters and incidents live long in the memories of their class members. Narratives of specific battles should receive emphasis only as they serve to reveal the characters of the men who engaged in them.

In the first lesson, the class leader should make certain that she connects the lessons of this year with the last lesson given the previous spring, in order that the narrative continuity of The Book of Mormon will be clear.

The reading text for the year is from Alma 9 through Alma 63. To receive credit in the reading project of The Book of Mormon, a sister must read these chapters during the year in which these lessons are studied.

The titles and objectives for our lessons this year are as follows:

Lesson 25. *Alma and Amulek* (Alma, chapters 9-16)

Objective: To show how Alma and Amulek, in preaching repentance to the inhabitants of Ammonihah, were sustained by the Lord.

Lesson 26. *Missionary Activity of Ammon* (Alma, chapters 17-20; 21:18-23)

Objective: To show the change which takes place in the souls of men when the light of the gospel enters.

Lesson 27. *Missions of Other Sons of Mosiah* (Alma, chapter 21:1-8; chapters 22-28)

Objective: To show the results of exercising faith in one's self, faith in a people, and faith in one's God.

Lesson 28. *Further Teachings of Alma and Amulek* (Alma, chapters 29-35)

Objective: To show the great influence of prayer and repentance in changing the lives of people.

Lesson 29. *Instructions of Alma to His Sons* (Alma, chapters 36-42)

Objective: To show how Alma's admonitions to his sons emphasize that only through keeping the commandments of God can we achieve happiness in this life and joy in the world to come.

Lesson 30. *Moroni and the Nephite Armies Serve Their Country and Their Church* (Alma, chapters 43-49)

Objective: To show that the Lord will not suffer his people to be destroyed, if they remain righteous and uphold the truth.

Lesson 31. *Helaman, Son of Alma, And His Two Thousand Sons* (Alma, chapters 50-58)

Objective: To show the power of mothers in teaching their children to obey the commandments and not to doubt, but to put their faith in the Lord for their preservation.

Lesson 32. *Peace Comes to the Nephites Through Righteousness* (Alma, chapters 59-63)

Objective: To show the necessity of maintaining righteousness within a country in order to withstand the enemies without.