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The Gospel to the Lamanites XVI–XVII

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Abstract: This series traces the origin, Book of Mormon prophecies regarding, subsequent conditions of, and ultimate destiny of the Lamanites. The sixteenth through seventeenth parts conclude the series.

The Gospel to the Lamanites

BY REY L. PRATT, PRESIDENT OF THE MEXICAN MISSION.

XVI—Who is to Carry the Restored Gospel to the Lamanites?

Now, taking it for granted that we, those who have joined the Church from among the Gentile nations, are those whom the prophets foretold would receive the fulness of the gospel in the latter days, is it too much to suppose that we are also those seen and mentioned by the Prophet Nephi when he said:

“And now I would prophesy somewhat more concerning the Jews and the Gentiles. For after the book of which I have spoken shall come forth, and be written unto the Gentiles, and sealed up again unto the Lord, *there shall be many which shall believe the words which are written; and they shall carry them forth unto the remnant of our seed?*”

And if we are those who should believe the word which was to be written, and who should carry it forth unto the seed of those who wrote it, I ask, why are there so many of us who are averse to doing the Father's work among the Lamanites? Why so many young men among us who, when the subject is mentioned to them of taking a mission to Mexico, for instance, where millions of the remnant of the seed of Nephi dwell, say: “O let me go anywhere except to *Mexico*; I wish to go to a country that is civilized, and come in contact with people where I can gain education and polish?” And why will so many parents who say to their sons and to the sons of other parents, who are called to fill missions to the Lamanites, “I would prefer to have my son go anywhere rather than to Mexico,” or, “If I were you, I would ask to have my mission changed, because you will never come in contact with anyone but savages where you are going.”

Do these conditions exist, perchance, because we do not believe in the words of the Book that has been written? Or is it that we do not have full faith in the prophecies contained in the Book, referring to the redemption of this branch of the covenant people of the Lord? Or is it that we believe in these things only in an abstract way, and lull ourselves to sleep with the thought that the Lord will do his work in his own way, and that in no way can we be among those who are supposed to take part in this work, supposing that the Lord has reserved, to bring forth at some future time, some other special men whom he will call upon to do this work?

Whatever the cause, the feelings described exist in the minds of far too many of the members of the Church, and in my mind they are thoughts and feelings that should have no place in the hearts of Latter-day Saints.

I have heard men say, who profess a good standing in the Church, that they doubt if the gospel will ever be able to bring about the redemption of this people. And I have had others say to me: "Do you not wish that your work was among a civilized people who could appreciate the gospel message you carry to them? How is it that you can content yourself to spend the best years of your life among that dark and benighted people, who are too low and degraded to ever be raised above the condition in which they now live?"

Young men have come into this mission who say that before they came relatives and friends brought to bear every influence possible to get them to strive to have their missions changed to some field of labor where civilized people live, and others have come down here with such a preoccupied idea and prejudice against this people that it takes months for them to become wholly converted to the work that they themselves came out to do: a work of redemption among the Lamanites.

I have heard men say that they would like to see about nine-tenths more of the Lamanites killed off, and that then the Lord might be able to do something with the rest of them.

Why should such feelings exist in the hearts of Latter-day Saints? It seems to me that we, of all people, with the great knowledge we possess in regard to this people, should be the most tolerant towards them in their fallen condition, and be, not only willing, but anxious to work for their uplift and redemption. They are what they are because of their own wickedness and that of their forefathers, and because of the curse that the Lord has permitted to come upon them in consequence of those sins, but the same God who has permitted them to become what they are still claims them as his covenant people, and he has said that he would remember them in mercy and restore them from their fallen condition. And, furthermore, he has said that he would use us, those of the Gentiles who have come to a knowledge of his true gospel, and who believe in the words of the Book which is a history of this very people, as instruments in his hands to carry the gospel to them and to bring about the restoration of which he has spoken. Who are we, if we believe as we profess, to say that we will not, or that we do not wish to take part in this work; or to counsel the Lord when this work should begin or be done? Those who do so are only sitting in their own light.

It is not my desire to try to show that the work of the Lord and the preaching of the gospel among the Lamanites is any

greater than the work of the Lord and the preaching of the gospel among any other people, but it is my desire to show that it is *all* the Lord's work, and that this part of it is as important as any other part. And the Lord will, indeed, do his work in his own way, and if we do not avail ourselves of the great privilege of being instruments in his hands in helping to bring about his righteous purposes, he will find others who will, and we shall find that we have let pass by the grandest privileges of our lives.

I firmly believe in the words of the Savior when he said: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in *all the world* for a witness unto *all nations*; then shall the end come."

The gospel is, as Paul says, "The power of God unto salvation, unto *every one that believeth*; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." And the work of carrying it unto all nations and unto every creature, rests with us, we who have come to a knowledge of it; and I maintain that a mission to the Japanese is as honorable and as necessary as one to the European nations, and a mission to Mexico, Central America, South America, or the islands of the sea, where a remnant of the seed of Lehi dwell, is as honorable, and as much to be desired, as a mission to the Eastern, Central, or Western States, of the United States.

Are not the people of all these lands, and as for that, of all the lands of the earth, the children of our Father in heaven? And have they not all an equal chance to the saving powers of his holy gospel, in as far as they yield obedience to it? And is not the promise of the Lord extended unto them which says: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved?" and the thought occurs, as occurred to Paul of old: "How then shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!'"

I ask the question: How are the Lamanites to call upon the true Christ in whom they have not believed? And how are they to learn to believe in him, if he is not taught unto them? How is the gospel to bring about the restoration and redemption of the covenant people of the Lord, who sit in darkness, if it is not carried and taught unto them by those who have a knowledge of it? Beautiful, indeed, in the eyes of those who are redeemed, will be the feet of those who bring unto them the gospel of peace and redemption, and the glad tidings of good things.

It seems that of old the apostles chosen by the Savior had a similar idea to that possessed by many of our people in the Church today. They believed, then, that the gospel of the Savior was

only to the Jews,, as many of our people believe that the gospel today is only to the so-called enlightened nations of the world.

Peter, the chief apostle, had to receive a vision from the Lord, in which he was commanded not to call common or unclean that which the Lord had cleansed, to prepare him to go unto Cornelius, a Gentile, and teach and administer unto him the ordinances of the gospel; and so great was the impression made upon Peter by this vision, and the rehearsal of a vision that this same man Cornelius had received, that he exclaimed: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in *every nation* he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." The same is true in our day, and of whatever nation, he that will fear the Lord and work righteousness is accepted with him.

Not simply because the Lamanites are a covenant people of the Lord can it be expected that the Lord is going to redeem them without any effort on their part. No; he intends that they shall be redeemed through obedience to the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation unto all men, and for that reason he has willed that it should be carried and taught unto them by us, who have been so favored as to receive it in all of its restored purity. And rather than a duty it is a great privilege we have in being able to participate in this great and glorious work of redemption.

XVII—Conclusion

As has been said in this article, the work of the Lord among the Lamanites has been going on ever since the Church was organized. In the year 1879, a mission of the Church was opened up in the republic of Mexico, which is a nation composed almost wholly of Lamanites or a mixture of Lamanitish blood; and at the present time the gospel is being preached with great success among the inhabitants of that land. Many hundreds of the natives have accepted the truth, and are living in strict accordance with the principles of the gospel, and the gospel is doing for them just what it is doing for any other people who accept and live it. The work is at present being carried on by only a few missionaries, far too few for the work that is before us. When we stop to think that only a few of the fifteen millions of Lamanites living within the republic of Mexico have heard the gospel, and that we have before us all of the republics of Central and South America, with their millions of people, all Lamanitish blood, as fields that have never been touched, we can of a truth say: "The harvest is indeed great but the laborers are few." What we want and what the work needs is more help to carry on the great work of redemption among this branch of the covenant people of the Lord.

Can anyone wish to see a more literal fulfilment of all that

the Lord has promised should come upon this people, as a result of their wickedness? And can anyone, with a love of the gospel, and a love of their fellow men in their hearts, wish other than to see a speedy fulfilment of the great promises of redemption made unto them?

Reduced, as they have been, to one-tenth of their former numbers, and trodden down till they are "a hiss and a by-word, and are counted as nought by the Gentiles," they are in precisely the condition that Nephi saw that they should be in, when the gospel should find them. And the power to raise them from their present condition, the gospel of Jesus Christ, is in our hands, to be not only willing but anxious, to carry the gospel of peace and love and of redemption and salvation to those who are sick and in spiritual darkness.

Remember the words of the Savior wherein he said: "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick," and also, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Think it no hardship, if you are called by the Master, to go to the ends of the earth to save if it were but one soul, but rather esteem it a great privilege and blessing, for great shall be your reward and your joy with that one soul in your Father's Kingdom.

MEXICO, D. F., MEXICO

[THE END]



ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER DEE, SCOTLAND.