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Chapter LV

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their humiliation; and as they have drunk to the dregs from the cup of bitterness of the wrath of God, so is the glorious day now dawning, when the light of the eternal Gospel shall illumine the hearts of their descendants; fill them with the love of God; renew their ancient steadfastness and faith, and make them the fitting instruments in his hands of accomplishing all his holy purposes with regard to them, in which also shall be fulfilled all the gracious, glorious promises made by Jehovah to this transplanted branch of the olive tree of Israel.

CHAPTER LV.

THE HISTORIANS OF THE NEPHITES—THE PLATES OF NEPHI
—LIST OF THEIR CUSTODIANS—THEIR LENGTHENED
YEARS.

SHORTLY after the arrival of Lehi and his little colony on the promised land, Nephi received a commandment from the Lord to make certain "plates of ore" upon which to engrave a record of the doings of his people. Some time later, or between thirty and forty years after the departure of Lehi from Jerusalem, Nephi was further instructed regarding the records. The Lord then said unto him, Make other plates; and thou shalt engraven many things upon them which are good in my sight, for the profit of thy people. Nephi, to be obedient to the commandment of the Lord, went and made these other plates, and upon them were

engraven the records from which the first portions of the Book of Mormon are translated; or those parts known to us as the First and Second Books of Nephi, and the Books of Jacob, Enos, Jarom, and Omni.

The two sets of plates manufactured by Nephi were both used as records of his people and called by his name; but their contents were not identical. Upon the first set was engraven the political history of the Nephites, upon the second their religious growth and development. The one described the acts of their kings, and the wars, contentions and destructions which came upon the nation; the other contained the story of the dealings of the Lord with that people, the ministry of his servants, their teachings and prophecies. Of the contents of the first we know but little, simply that which we gather from incidental remarks made in the second; but the second is given to us in its completeness in the translation contained in the Book of Mormon.

It would have been very interesting to students of history to have received the detailed account of the reigns of the kings who governed the people of Nephi, that is, to those who would accept these records as of God; but it was far more important that those most sacred truths contained in the revelations of heaven to that people should be made manifest to this generation. The one would be a satisfaction to our intellectual natures, but the other is necessary to our eternal salvation; for the Book of Mormon contains the fulness of the gospel, and also many things plain and most precious that have been taken out of the Jewish scriptures, through the craft or ignorance of apostate Jews and Christians. For this most important reason those

portions of the Nephite records that are now contained in the Book of Mormon were first revealed; we should never have been willing to have accepted the others without them, for it is upon the basis of religion, not of history, that the Latter-day Saints accept the Book of Mormon. We also have the promise that other plates will be translated and given unto us in the Lord's due time, and doubtless among them will be those first plates upon which Nephi recorded, with such detail, the travels and labors in the wilderness of his father and associates.

The plates of Nephi containing the sacred annals of his people were not entirely filled with engraving until about two hundred years before Christ. They were made by Nephi between the years 570 and 560 before the advent of the Redeemer; but the record on them goes back to the time when Lehi left Jerusalem, or 600 B. C., so they in reality contain the history of God's dealings with that branch of the house of Israel for about four hundred years.

When Nephi died he transferred these sacred records to the care of his brother Jacob. From that time to the time that Moroni finally hid them in the hill Cumorah, they were in the hands of four families, who had charge of them, as near as can be told from the abridgement that we have in the Book of Mormon, as follows: Jacob and his descendants held them from B. C. 546 to about B. C. 200, when they were transferred to King Benjamin, who, with his son Mosiah, the younger, held them until B. C. 91, at which time they were given into the care of Alma, the chief judge; and he and his posterity retained them until 320 years after the advent of the Messiah. After these, Mormon and

Moroni were the custodians until the close of the record, in the year 420 after Christ.

In the table that follows, B. C. signifies before Christ, and A. C. after Christ, counting from the true date of his birth as given in the Book of Mormon, and not from the accepted Christian Anno Domini (year of our Lord), which is now almost universally admitted to be from two to four years wrong. In those places where no date is given, the desired information is not afforded in the Book of Mormon, and therefore can only be guessed at. We therefore prefer to leave such places blank. It will also be remembered that Mormon, just before the great last battle, which resulted in the extinction of the Nephite nation, hid up in the hill Cumorah all the records which had been entrusted to him by the hand of the Lord, save it were the few plates which he gave to his son Moroni.

The following are the names of the Nephite historians, with the times during which they held the records:

Nephi, from —— to 546 B. C.

Jacob, from 546 to ——.

Enos, from —— to 422.

Jaron, from 422 to 362.

Onni, from 362 to 318.

Amaron, from 318 to 280.

Chemish, from 280 to ——.

Abinadon, from —— to ——.

Amaleki, from —— to 200 (about).

King Benjamin, from 200 to 125.

King Mosiah, from 125 to 91.

Alma (the younger), from 91 to 73.

Helaman (the elder), from 73 to 57.

Shiblou, from 57 to 53.

Helaman (the younger), from 53 to 39.

Nephi, from 39 to 1.

Nephi (the disciple), from 1 to 34 A. C.

Nephi, from 34 to 110.

Amos, from 110 to 194.

Amos (the younger), from 194 to 306.

Anmmaron, from 306 to 320.

Mormon, from 320 to 385.

Moroni, from 385 to 420.

In the above table, one thing will most certainly strike the attention of the observant reader. It is the lengthened period that some of the historians held the records. Jacob and his son Enos held them one hundred and twenty-four years. Jarom held them sixty. In this fact we find a very pleasing confirmation of the statement of Nephi that during the time he and his brethren were wandering in the wilderness, living on raw meat and suffering all kinds of hardships, fatigue and privations, the Lord so greatly blessed the women in the company that they were strong, yea, even like unto the men, having an abundance of milk to suckle the babes born unto them. Jacob was born at this time, and doubtless inherited an exceedingly strong constitution, which he transmitted to his posterity.

The second epoch at which the longevity of the custodians of the plates is remarkable is during that reign of universal righteousness which followed the ministry of the crucified Savior. By living unto the Lord in all things their lives were marvelously prolonged; especially were those of the children born during the continuance of this happy and holy period and before the effects of the after apostasy had

begun to work on them. Thus Nephi, the son of Nephi the disciple, had charge of the records seventy-six years, his son Amos eighty-four years, and Amos, the son of the last named, the wonderful period of one hundred and twelve years; or father, son and grandson, three generations, a total of two hundred and seventy-two years. What a powerful sermon this one fact preaches in favor of entire submission of body and soul to the perfect and perfecting law of God.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE WOMEN OF THE BOOK OF MORMON—THEIR CONDITION
AND POSITION.—ABISH—ISABEL.—MARRIAGE—AMULEK.

IT IS somewhat noticeable how little prominence is given to womankind in the historical narrative of the Book of Mormon, and unfortunately when mention is made of her it too frequently grows out of man's sins and her misfortunes. Of all the descendants of Lehi and Sariah, but two women are mentioned by name; one, Abish, a converted waiting woman to a queen of the Lamanites; the other, Isabel, a harlot of the land of Siron, whose meretricious charms seduced Corianton, the son of Alma, from the work of the ministry among the Zoramites.

Although we have but few individual characters standing out in relief from the historical background, yet from many incidental references as the story of the