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Chapter LXXIV

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CHAPTER LXXIV.

MIRACLES AMONG THE NEPHITES—THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST
—JOHN AND THE THREE NEPHITES—TRANSLATIONS.

THE SUBJECT of spiritual gifts leads us to the kindred one of miracles. The Book of Mormon teaches in very strong language that God is a God of miracles. Were it not so he would cease to be an unchangeable Being. He would be a partial God, blessing one people more than another.

Such is the teaching of the Book of Mormon on this point; and we find in the history of the Nephite people many remarkable manifestations of the marvellous power of God, either shown through the instrumentality of his acknowledged servants, or by the direct interposition of divine power.

Some of the miracles recorded in the annals of the Nephites bear a strong resemblance to others narrated in the Bible. There is nothing extraordinary in this: it is altogether reasonable to believe that in the healing of the sick, for instance, there would be incidents in common in many cases. Nor are the miracles of the Book of Mormon any more difficult of belief than those of the Bible. In fact, we are of the opinion that had the people of this dispensation been taught as persistently to believe the Book of Mormon as they have the Bible, the miracles of the first-named book would require less faith or explanation than some found in the latter.

The miracles of the Book of Mormon consist largely in the healing of the sick, the deliverance of God's servants, and the punishment of the wicked.

Some of them are given in great detail, others are referred to in the most meagre language. Among those of which we have spoken at length in earlier portions of this work are the judgments that came upon the impious anti-Christ^{*} Sherem and Korihor;† the deliverance of Alma and Amulek from the prison in Ammonihah;‡ the restoration of the lawyer Zeezrom to health;§ the deliverance of Nephi and Lehi; and the baptism with fire and the Holy Ghost of the Lamanites in the prison in the city of Lehi-Nephi;|| the famine caused and terminated by Nephi's prayer;¶ and the wonders that attended the ministrations of Ammon and his brethren during their mission among the Lamanites.** Of these we shall make no further mention. Nor shall we again review the miraculous signs and wonders that attended the earthly birth†† and death‡‡ of the Messiah. Neither do we think it necessary to take more than a passing glance at the miracles performed by Christ during his visits to the Nephites and the other wonders that glorified those days. But we will now refer, at slightly greater length, to a few miraculous circumstances that do not come so prominently into view in the historical narrative.

In the Book of Alma reference is made to an occurrence which reminds us strongly of Daniel at the court of king Belshazzar. What is said is very brief and leaves the reader in entire darkness as to when and where the event took place. But from the context we

* See Chapter vi.

† Chapter xxvi.

‡ Chapter xxiv.

§ Chapter xxv.

|| Chapter xxxvii.

¶ See Chapter xxxviii.

** Chapter xix.

†† Chapter xl.

‡‡ Chapter xli.

are led to the conclusion that it took place in the land of Nephi, and certainly not later than the days of the first Mosiah. The Prophet Amulek, in the opening of his address to his fellow citizens of Ammonihah, to prove his standing in their midst, refers to his ancestry. Among his forefathers was one Aminadi, a Nephite, who interpreted certain writing, written by the finger of God upon the walls of a temple. Nothing more is told us of this exceedingly interesting and important event, and we are left to conjecture as to what circumstances led to this divine interposition, and whether the words so miraculously written were of instruction, comfort or reproof (*Alma x. 2*).

The raising of Timothy to life by his brother Nephi after he had been stoned to death, is another miraculous circumstance which is only casually mentioned. Both these brothers were afterwards chosen by Jesus among the Twelve whom he selected as his disciples. The raising of the dead in the name of Christ manifested how great must have been the power with heaven possessed by this Nephi, as it was doubtless by others of his family—notably his father—before the time of the ministration of the Savior to this people.

The miracles that attended the ministry of the Savior on this land were, many of them, of the same character as the wondrous works he performed among the Jews; only frequently more marvelous and more glorious, on account of the greater faith of the Nephites. He healed the sick, cast out devils, raised the dead in Bountiful as he did in Judea and Galilee. But there were other manifestations that were somewhat different; that, so far as the record goes,

were entirely dissimilar. In the land of Jerusalem Jesus miraculously fed five thousand by increasing the store of loaves and fishes that had been provided; in Bountiful he administered the emblems of his body and blood when neither the disciples nor the multitude had brought either bread or wine. Angels ministered to men during his labors among the Jews; they did so more abundantly during his visits to the Nephites. Again, though we are told in the Bible of the holy Redeemer blessing little children, we nowhere read therein of the glorious manifestations, the outpouring of the Spirit, the ministry of the angels, the baptism of fire that took place when the risen Redeemer condescended to bless the little ones of the Nephites.

Great were the wonders that attended the labors of the Three Nephite disciples who were to tarry on earth unto the end. Death had no power over them; they passed through the most terrible ordeals unhurt. Swords would not slay them; fire would not burn them; savage beasts would not harm them; prisons could not hold them; chains could not bind them; the grave could not entomb them; the earth would not conceal them. No matter how much they were abused or maltreated they triumphed over all their persecutors.

The age in which the Three ministered was a peculiar one. Under ordinary circumstances the superhuman powers shewn by them would have brought the wicked to repentance. But the happy age of peace and innocence that had followed the Savior's ministry was fast passing away; the people were hardening their hearts; they were relapsing into iniquity with their eyes open; they were sinning knowingly and under-

standingly. Angels from heaven would not have converted them; they had given themselves up to Satan, and every manifestation of the power of God in behalf of his servants only made them more angry, and more determined upon the destruction of those who sounded in their ears the unwelcome message of divine wrath. The hurricane might demolish the dungeon; the earthquake overthrow the walls of the prison; the earth refuse to close when the disciples were cast into it; these protests of nature simply caused their hardened hearts to conjure up fresh methods of torture and devise new means to destroy those whom they so intensely, and yet so unwarrantably, hated. But they ever failed; the three Nephites still live.

Of what change passed upon John, the Apostle, or how it was brought about that he should not taste of death, we are not told; but so far as the three Nephites are concerned we are informed they were caught up into heaven, and there experienced a change that is not explained; and that they there saw and heard unspeakable things. Mormon, writing about them, says:

And now behold, as I spake concerning those whom the Lord had chosen, yea, even three who were caught up into the heavens, that I knew not whether they were cleansed from mortality to immortality.

But behold, since I wrote, I have inquired of the Lord, and he hath made it manifest unto me, that there must needs be a change wrought upon their bodies, or else it needs be that they must taste of death;

Therefore that they might not taste of death, there was a change wrought upon their bodies, that they might not suffer pain nor sorrow, save it were for the sins of the world.

Now this change was not equal to that which should take place at the last day; but there was a change wrought upon them, insomuch that Satan could have no power over them, that he could not tempt them, and they were sanctified in the flesh, that they were holy, and that the powers of the earth could not hold them;

And in this state they were to remain until the judgment day of Christ; and at that day they were to receive a greater change, and to be received into the kingdom of the Father to go no more out, but to dwell with God eternally in the heavens.

In the Bible we read of two men who lived before the Savior's advent—Moses and Elijah—who did not taste of death; we also read in the Book of Mormon of two—Alma and Nephi—who were translated.

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE PROPHECIES REGARDING THE SAVIOR—THEIR COMPLETENESS AND DETAIL.—NAMES AND TITLES GIVEN TO CHRIST.

ONE OF the most noteworthy things connected with the ancient Nephite church was the great plainness and detail with which the incidents of the birth, life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ were understood and prophesied of by the servants of God who