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Lessons from the Life of Nephi XI: Nephi Builds a Temple

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Abstract: A narrative of Nephi's life and lessons that may be learned from the life of Nephi. At times it is better to suffer wrongs than to demand one's rights, and the purposes of God will not be thwarted.

some circumstances men may be taken advantage of. They may be imposed upon. But in the end, and taking life from beginning to end, it will be found that the greatest benefits will flow to those who strictly observe these sayings of the Lord.

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF NEPHI.

XI.—Nephi Builds a Temple.

TEXT.—Therefore, verily I say unto you, that your anointings, and your washings, and your baptisms for the dead, and your solemn assemblies, and your memorials for your sacrifices, by the sons of Levi, and for your oracles in your most holy places, wherein you receive conversations, and your statutes and judgments, for the beginning of the revelations and foundation of Zion, and for the glory, honor, and endowment of all her municipalities, are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name.—*Sec. 124: 39, Doc. and Cov.*

SOON after Nephi and his people established themselves in their new homes, they commenced to build a temple. This was a very great undertaking for so small a people. But it was absolutely necessary that they should do so to enable them to keep the commands of God, for, as we have before told you, the Nephites kept the law of Moses with all its ordinances, sacrifices and burnt offerings, although they were believers in the coming of the Messiah and observers of the law of the gospel. They could not offer the sacrifices required by the Mosaic law, or attend to some of the higher ordinances of the gospel without they built a temple; and for this reason we find that in whatever land they settled, this people always made the building of a temple one of their first works.

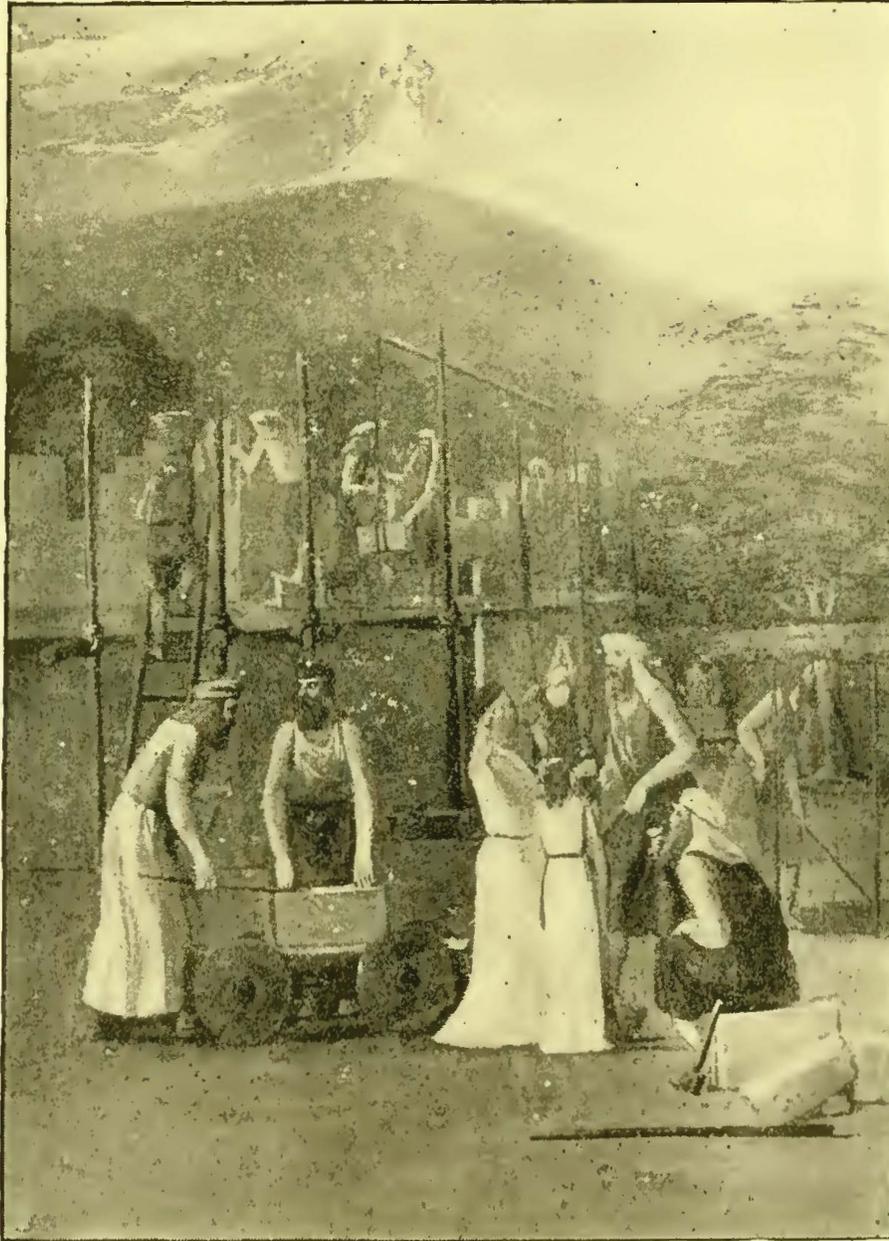
Nephi informs us that he built a temple and constructed it after the manner of the temple of Solomon, but it was not built of so many precious things, for they were not to be found in the land. From this we understand that he built it after the pattern of Solomon's temple, which, of course, it would be very probable he would do, as his temple and Solomon's temple were used for the same

purposes, and even if he built it as large as was Solomon's temple, it would not have been an impossible work for Nephi's people; for the temple of Solomon was quite a small building compared with the church edifices of other lands. Its peculiarity consisted in the vast amount of gold and other precious things that were consumed in its construction and adornment. It was quite possible for Nephi to build a temple of the same pattern and size as Solomon's temple in the space of a few years with the labor he had at his command. But it was not adorned with the same lavishness for the very good reason, as Nephi informs us, that the precious things so abundant at the temple in Jerusalem were not to be found in the land where the Nephites dwelt, or, if they existed there, they had not been discovered at that time by the people of Nephi. However, the Nephites did their best to make it look beautiful with the material they had at their command, and the workmanship, we are told, was very fine. If any one has any doubts as to the possibility of Nephi's having built such a temple, we must remember that the people were full of zeal toward the Lord, their God, and that Nephi taught them to be industrious and to labor with their hands. There were no drones in their midst, and by their united efforts, directed by the revelations of God and the wisdom of their inspired leader, they accomplished much more than a far larger people under less favorable circumstances could possibly have done.

It may be well for us at this point to give a short sketch of the temples that are afterwards mentioned in the Book of Mormon. From it we learn that in every land which the Nephites occupied, they built a temple to the name of the Lord their God; and there must at one time have existed a chain of these temples from Chili to the Isthmus of Darien and then many others widely scattered over Central and North America. The next temple that we read of after the one built by Nephi is the one that was built in the land of Lehi-Nephi before the exodus of the Nephites

under the elder Mosiah into the land of Zarahemla. When the colony that was led by Zeniff returned from Zarahemla and occupied that region, we find that they made use of this temple; and Zeniff's son, king

gold; and he caused a breastwork to be built before them on which they might rest their bodies and their arms, while they taught the people. We must not forget that Noah was a very wicked man, and the priests that he as-



THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE.

Noah, greatly adorned it, though he appears to have used it for very base purposes. We are told that he caused his artificers to work all manner of fine wood within the walls of the temple; also copper and brass, while the seats of the priests he ornamented with pure

sociated with were of a like character, and they appear to have defiled this temple by their false teachings and unholy lives.

It is a somewhat remarkable fact that a few years later when Ammon and his brethren, the sons of King Mosiah, went among the Lam-

anites, who had again occupied this land, that these Nephite missionaries had, by royal proclamation, free access to the synagogues of the people and also to their temples. Ammon, in speaking on this point, says, "we have also entered into their temples and synagogues and taught them." From this it is evident that at that time there were several temples in the lands occupied by the Lamanites, but we cannot tell whether they had been originally built by the Nephites before their exodus or whether they were erected by some sect of Nephite apostates, who had gone over to the lands of the Lamanites and united with that people and had carried some remnants of the worship of the true God with them. Some of these, possibly, had taken upon themselves, as did the priests of Egypt, as recorded by Abraham, to officiate in the ordinances of the holy priesthood, though they had no right so to do. Such a course has been quite common in all ages. Men have departed from the true faith, they have lost the power from God to officiate in its ordinances; but they have fashioned a creed of their own, formed partly of the truths of the old faith and partly of the errors which they mixed with them.

When Mosiah led the people out of the land of Lehi-Nephi and established them in Zarahemla, he built a temple there and for some time it appears to have been the only temple in that land; for a few years, there seems to have been only one city occupied by the Nephites.

When King Benjamin perceived that his end was approaching, he told his son Mosiah to gather all the people to this temple, and he would explain to them his desires and give them his commands. The people did so, but they were so numerous that they could not assemble inside the walls of the sacred building, so they pitched their tents, each man with his family, round about the temple walls. King Benjamin caused a tower to be erected near the temple, and from the top of this tower he spoke to the people who surrounded him in their tents. But soon the people began to

spread out; other cities were founded, other temples were built, and, in the early days of the judges, we read that Alma and Amulek went forth preaching the gospel to the people in their temples and their sanctuaries. Some few years later, we have an account of a vast number of the Nephite people migrating to the northern continent, and Helaman tells us so numerous did they become and so widespread was their colonization of the land that not one hundredth part of their proceedings are recorded in the Book of Mormon, nor of their building of temples, synagogues and sanctuaries.

There are two other temples that are specially referred to. One is spoken of by Amulek, the companion of Alma. He informs us that he was a descendant of Aminadi, who interpreted the writing which was on the wall of the temple, and which was written by the finger of God. Whether this occurred in the temple which was built in the land of Lehi-Nephi or not, we can not tell, but certainly it was in one of those that were erected before the Nephites came to Zarahemla, as Amulek mentions the name of his father and grandfather before he mentions this Aminadi, and consequently we are justified in supposing that this worthy man lived at some period before the removal of the people to Zarahemla.

The other temple to which reference is made is the one that was built in the land of Bountiful, or near the Isthmus of Darian. It was in the neighborhood of this temple that Jesus Christ appeared and ministered, after His resurrection, to a great multitude.

We may now consider for a few moments to what uses these sacred edifices were put. We think it will require no argument to prove that they were used, as were all other temples of the people of Israel before the advent of our Savior, as the place where they offered their sacrifices and burnt offerings. If any testimony is required on this point, we can refer to the statement with regard to the people who gathered around the walls of the temple at the call of King Benjamin. We

are told that the number of people who assembled was so great that they did not number them, and that this people took of the firstlings of their flocks that they might offer sacrifice and burnt offerings, according to the law of Moses. The second use to which these temples were put was for the public assemblies of the people of the Church. We have just cited the case where King Benjamin called all the people together at the temple at Zarahemla. We have referred to Alma and Amulek preaching to the people in their temples in the land of Zarahemla, and to Ammon and his brethren doing the same thing to the people in the land of Lehi-Nephi and regions adjacent. We also learn that King Limhi, the son of Noah, sent a proclamation among all his people to gather themselves together at the temple at Lehi-Nephi to hear the instructions he had to give them, when he was making arrangements for their journey to Zarahemla. And in still earlier days Jacob, the brother of Nephi, assembled the people to hear his words, at the temple built by his brother. These quotations all show that the temples were used for this purpose, as undoubtedly they were also used for the solemn assemblies of the Priesthood.

We also believe that the temples among the people of ancient America were used for the performance of the same ordinances—baptisms, endowments, sealings and so forth—as are those of the Latter-day Saints at the present day. This is conclusively shown by the fact that the Nephites had the gospel preached to them in its fullness; and there are some ordinances connected with the gospel that can be administered only in a temple erected to the name of the most high God. That the Priesthood of the ancient Nephites possessed the same power as was given by Jesus to His Apostles, and as has also been given to the Saints of God in this dispensation, is shown by the words of the Lord Himself to Nephi, the son of Helaman. He says:

Behold, thou art Nephi, and I am God. Behold, I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels, that, ye shall have power over this people, and shall smite the

earth with famine, and with pestilence, and destruction, according to the wickedness of this people.

Behold, I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth, shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven; and thus shall ye have power among this people.

And thus, if ye shall say unto this temple, it shall be rent in twain, it shall be done.

And if ye shall say unto this mountain, be thou cast down and become smooth, it shall be done.

And behold, if ye shall say, that God shall smite this people, it shall come to pass. [Book of Helaman, chapter 10, verses 6—10.]

What greater power than is here expressed was ever given to any servant of God, either of ancient or modern times?

The zeal of Nephi's people in building a temple to the name of the Most High God is an example that all God's covenant children can wisely follow. Their faith, union and perseverance in this noble work are worthy of the highest praise, and prove how much can be accomplished by a united people, no matter how few their numbers. It is an example of courage, patience and devotion that we all do well when we imitate.

George Reynolds.

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

The Jewish Question.

THE attention of the nations is drawn, through the persecutions of Russia, to the Jewish nation to an extent not before known for centuries. That nation now occupies a prominent place in the thoughts of statesmen and of professors of religion. Everyone who keeps informed concerning the progress of events cannot help being impressed by the peculiar position which the Jews occupy. The sympathies of right-minded people have been greatly aroused in their behalf; for if only half that comes to the public through the newspapers be true, their sufferings are dreadfully severe. Of course, those who engage in these severe measures against them justify themselves for their conduct, and endeavor to point out the features of the Jewish character and their method of dealing as furnishing