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The Alma Family (A Book of Mormon Sketch)

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Abstract: This series presents a life sketch of the Alma family, many of whom became prophets. The life of Alma the Younger is compared to the Apostle Paul—both were called upon to repent and became great missionaries for the Lord. The prophecies of Alma are among the most numerous, important, and interesting in the Book of Mormon, and his inspired advice to his sons contains many doctrinal matters. Helaman the son of Helaman, grandson of Alma, carried on the work of righteousness in spite of the Gadianton robbers. His son Nephi was a great prophet who paved the way for the visit of Christ in America. Nephi's brother Lehi and Lehi's son Nephi were also great leaders. The fourth part continues the discussion of Alma the Younger.

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles; these are the beginnings of sorrows."—MARK xiii, 8.

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THE ALMA FAMILY.

(A Book of Mormon Sketch).

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The account given of the teachings of Alma and Amulek, their disputations with Zeezrom and other lawyers and rulers, is given at length in the Book of Mormon, and, in consequence thereof, we have handed down to us some of the plainest, yet profoundest teachings on the atonement, the resurrection, the powers of the priesthood, etc., that are had amongst mankind. We cannot follow them here through all the varied incidents that led to the final catastrophe. Faithfully the prophets warned Ammonihah of its approaching desolation; scornfully and incredulously the hardened people hurled back these words of warning with defiance. The few that believed, of which the crafty, hair-splitting Zeezrom was the most notable example, were cast out of the city, whilst Alma and Amulek were bound with strong cords, and, under false accusations of having reviled the laws, they were cast into prison.

Having consigned Alma and his

companion to a prison cell, the infuriated people hunted up the wives and the little ones of the believers whom they had cast out, with such as had accepted the truth who still remained in the city, and, gathering them in a body, they burned them in one great martyr's fire. Into the torturing flames they also cast the records that contained the holy Scriptures, as though in their blind fury they imagined that they could thereby destroy the truths that were so odious to them. In the refinement of their devilish cruelty they brought Alma and Amulek to the place of martyrdom, that they might be witnesses of the agonies of the suffering innocents, and listen to the crackling and the roaring of the flames. With jeers, with mouthings and derisive gestures, they called upon the prophets to rescue their dying converts. Amulek's noble heart was pained beyond endurance; he besought Alma to exercise the power of God that was in

them, and to save the victims from the consuming flames. But Alma replied, "The Spirit constraineth me that I must not stretch forth mine hand, for behold the Lord receiveth them up unto himself in glory; and he doth suffer that the people may do this thing, according to the hardness of their hearts, that the judgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just; and the blood of the innocent shall stand as a witness against them, yea, and cry mightily against them at the last day." Then Amulek said, "Perhaps they will burn us all." To which Alma responded, "Be it according to the will of the Lord. But, behold, our work is not finished; therefore they burn us not."

When the fire had burned low, and the precious fuel of human bodies and sacred records was consumed, the chief judge of the city came to the two prophets as they stood bound, and mocked them. He smote them on the cheek, and mockingly asked them if they would preach again that his people should be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone, seeing that they had no power to save those who had been burned, neither had God exercised His power in their behalf. But neither answered him a word. Then he smote them again and remanded them to prison.

After they had been confined three days, they were visited by many judges and lawyers, priests and teachers, after the order of Nehor, who came to exult in the misery of their prisoners. They cross-questioned and badgered them, but neither would reply. They came again the next day, and went through the same performance. They mocked at, they smote, they spat upon the two disciples. They tantalized them with outrageous and blasphemous questions, such as the nature of their peculiar faith inspired. How shall we look when we are damned? sneeringly asked these unbelievers in damnation. Patiently and silently all this was borne; day after day was it repeated; harder and harder grew the hearts of the Ammonihahites towards their prisoners; fiercer and stronger grew their hatred. They

stripped Alma and Amulek of their clothes, and, when naked, bound them with strong ropes. They withheld food and drink from them, and in various ways they tortured their bodies, and sought to aggravate, tantalize and harrow up their minds. On the 12th day of the 10th month of the 10th year of the judges (B.C. 82), the chief judge and his followers again went to the prison. According to his usual custom he smote the brethren, saying as he did so, "If ye have the power of God, deliver yourself from these bonds, and then we will believe that the Lord will destroy this people according to your words." This impious challenge the crowd one by one repeated as they passed by the prophets, and smote them in imitation of their leader. Thus each individual assumed the responsibility of the defiance cast at the Almighty, and virtually said, "Our blood be upon our own heads." The hour of God's power had now come—the challenge had been accepted. The prophets, in the majesty of their calling, rose to their feet; they were endowed with the strength of Jehovah; like burnt thread the cords that bound them were snapped asunder, and they stood free and unshackled before the terror-stricken crowd. To rush from the prison was the first impulse of the God-defying followers of Nehor; but in their fear all else was forgotten, some fell to the earth, others, impelled by the crowd behind, stumbled and fell over their prostrate bodies, until they became one confused, inextricable mass, blocking each other's way, struggling, yelling, cursing, pleading, fighting; frantically, but vainly, endeavoring to reach the outer gate. At this moment of supreme horror an earthquake rent the prison walls; they trembled, then tottered, then fell on the struggling mass of humanity below, burying in one vast unconsecrated grave rulers and judges, lawyers and officers, priests and teachers. Not one was left of all the impious mob, who a few moments before defied Heaven and challenged Jehovah's might. Alma and Amulek stood in the midst of the ruins unhurt. Straightway they left the scene of desolation and went into the

city. Here the terror-stricken people fled from them as a herd of goats flies from before two young lions.

Alma and Amulek, being so commanded, left the doomed city and passed over to the land of Sidom. Here they found the Saints, who had been cast out of Ammonihah. To them they told the sad, though glorious story, of their martyred kin, and with many words of wisdom and consolation they encouraged them to lives of devotion to Christ. Here also they found Zeezrom, the lawyer, racked in spirit with the recollection of his former infamies, and tortured in body by the heats of a burning fever. At his request the two servants of the Most High visited him. They found that he had repented in much tribulation for the past, and that faith had developed in his heart. Alma then exercised the power of his calling. Appealing to Heaven, he cried, "O Lord our God have mercy on this man, and heal him according to his faith, which is in Christ." Zeezrom thereupon leaped upon his feet, his fever had left; he was made whole by the grace of God, whilst the people wondered and were astonished at this manifestation of God's goodness. Zeezrom was then baptized by Alma, and became a zealous, faithful advocate of divine law.

The more complete organization of the Church in Sidom was the next work accomplished by Alma, which, having been satisfactorily attended to, and the proper officers of the priesthood having been ordained and appointed, Alma, accompanied by his faithful friend Amulek, returned to his home in Zarahemla.

Next year Ammonihah was destroyed. Less than four months had elapsed since the two inspired followers of the Lamb had left it to its fate, when the Lamanites fell upon it like a whirlwind in its suddenness, and as an avalanche in its utter desolation. The sword, the spear, the dart and the arrow, consigned its sons and daughters, young and old, to the torments of eternal fire. For one day the fierce flames consumed the walls and towers of Ammonihah, and illumined, the lurid sky shone on the

distant mountain tops, and lit the neighboring valleys. The great city was no more; the word of the Lord had been fully accomplished; not one of its children remained. A desolation and a desert remained, where dogs, vultures and wild beasts struggled for the carcasses of the slain. For many years it was uninhabited, and, under the name of the Desolation of Nehor, it became a perpetual testimony, a sign and a token to the whole Nephite nation that the words of the Lord never fail, and that vengeance is His, and He will repay (B.C. 81).

Having resigned the office of chief judge, Alma no longer led the armies of Nephi. A righteous man named Zoram was their commander. Without delay he gathered his forces, and prepared to meet the invading Lamanites. Knowing that Alma was the mouthpiece of God, he and his two sons went to the high priest, and inquired how the campaign should be conducted. That word was given, its instructions were carried out, victory perched upon the Nephite banners, and the Lamanites, utterly routed, retreated to their own lands, and there was continued peace throughout the continent for three years.

During this period of peace, Alma and his fellow priesthood preached God's holy word in the power and demonstration of the Spirit, and with much success. Great prosperity came to the Church throughout all the lands of the Nephites. At this happy time "there was no inequality among them, the Lord did pour out his Spirit on all the face of the land," as Alma supposed, to prepare the hearts of his people for the coming of Christ. Like many others of the ancient prophets, he ante-dated that glorious appearing. He little knew of the wars and contentions, the feuds and disruptions, the apostacies and dissensions, the spiritual tribulation and material commotion that would precede that blessed day. But with this object full in view, he labored and rejoiced, preached, blessed and prophesied, never tiring in his energies, and feeling sorrowful only because of the hard-heartedness and spiritual blindness of some of the people. In

one most glorious event he had unspeakable joy. His youthful companions, the sons of King Mosiah, returned from a fourteen year's mission amongst the Lamanites, during which time, after many sore trials and great tribulation, they, by the grace of the Father, had brought many thousands of that benighted race to a knowledge of the principles of the everlasting Gospel. The story of their afflictions, their sufferings, their patience, their joys and their triumphs, does not properly belong to the life of Alma, but the two histories run in parallel lines to the paradise of God.

Alma was traveling south on one of his missionary journeys from the land of Zarahemla to the land of Manti, when he met Ammon and his brethren coming from the land of

Nephi. On hearing the story of the mission, he at once returned home with them to Zarahemla. Here the condition of affairs amongst the Lamanites was rehearsed to the chief judge, who laid the whole subject before the people, so that whatever was done in relation to the Christian Lamanites, might be done by common consent. The Nephites decided to give the land of Jershon (which lay south of the land Bountiful) to these people for an inheritance. With this cheering news Ammon, accompanied by Alma, returned into the southern wilderness, to the place where his people were awaiting the decision of the Nephites. Here they were ministered to and comforted by Alma and others, after which they resumed their march to the land designated for their future abode.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

ABOUT THE COMING OF CHRIST.

At a business meeting, held in Nauvoo, Illinois, U.S.A., the Prophet Joseph Smith made some remarks regarding the coming of Christ, of which the following report was published, in the *Times and Seasons*, at the time. It lately appeared in the *Woman's Exponent*, of Salt Lake City, from which it is now taken :

"Were I going to prophesy, I would say the end will not come in 1844, 5, or 6, or 40 years,—there are those of the rising generation who shall not taste death till Christ comes.

"I was once praying earnestly upon this subject, and a voice said unto me, 'My son, if thou livest until thou art eighty-five years of age, thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man.' I was left to draw my own conclusions concerning this, and I took the liberty to conclude that if I did live to that time He would make His appearance; but I do not say whether He will make His appearance, or I shall go where He is. I prophesy in the name of the Lord God; and let it be written, the Son of Man will not come in the clouds of heaven, till I am eighty-five years old—then read the

14th chapter of Revelations, 6th and 7th verses: 'And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come;' and Hosea, 6th chapter—after two days, etc., 2520 years, which brings it to 1890. The coming of the Son of Man never can be, till the judgments spoken of for this hour are poured out, which judgments are commenced. Paul says, 'Ye are the children of the light, and not of the darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief in the night; it is not the design of the Almighty to come upon the earth and crush it and grind it to powder, but he will reveal it to his servants the Prophets.'

"Judah must return. Jerusalem must be rebuilt, and the Temple, and water come out from under the Temple, and the waters of the Dead Sea be healed. It will take some time to build the walls of the city and the Temple, etc., and all this must be done before the Son of Man will make