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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 tenth part concludes the discussion of Nephi, the son of Helaman.

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).

BY ELDER GEO. REYNOLDS.

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Peace, peace throughout the vast continent from north to south, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, followed this reformation. A Nephite could visit and do business in every part of the wide land, and so could a Lamanite. This goodly peace brought stability, stability brought wealth, wealth engendered pride, pride gave birth to numerous sins, to be followed by contentions, dissensions, and then wars. These evils begat sorrow, sorrow softened their hearts to repentance, repentance was followed by the blessing of God, which again brought peace, prosperity and, by-and-bye, riches. And at this era of Nephite national life, this is the one eternal round which their inspired historians are compelled to chronicle. Within four short years of the happy time of universal peace we have just referred to, the riches of the world had induced stubbornness and rebellion towards God, combined with the insane desire to rob, plunder and murder

their fellow-men. If there ever were a people swift to do evil, it was the Nephites of this generation. In the year B. C. 26, Cezoram, the chief judge, was murdered by an unknown hand, as he sat on the judgment seat, and his son, who succeeded him, suffered in like manner within the year. The Gadianton robbers grew in strength, numerically and morally, and were actually fostered amongst the Nephites, whilst the more righteous Lamanites utterly destroyed all that they found within their borders. The one people dwindled in unbelief, the other grew in grace and in the power of God's divine Spirit.

Nephi tarried on the northern continent until the year B.C. 23, when his teachings and his prophecies having been rejected by its inhabitants, he returned in sorrow to Zarahemla; but he found no comfort there. The Gadianton robbers filled the judgment seats, and perverted the law to their own avarice and lust. The life,

the property, the liberty, the virtue of righteous men and women were counted but things of naught, their playthings or their spoil.

Nephi's house in Zarahemla was situated on one of the principal thoroughfares—it led to the chief market-place. In his garden, near the highway, he built a tower, whither it was his wont to repair for prayer. On one occasion, shortly after his return from the north, he became so deeply concerned because of the iniquities of the people, that in earnest supplication to the Lord he raised his voice so high that he was heard by the passers by in the street below. A listening crowd soon gathered, and when the prophet had ended his devotions and become aware of their presence, he commenced to teach them. His words were not sugar-coated, to adapt them to the predilections of his congregation. To the contrary, he boldly rebuked their sins, their murders, their whoredoms, their secret iniquities, at the same time, in the love of the Gospel, intreating, beseeching and pleading with them to amend their lives and do better. He also warned them of the terrible, impending judgments that would inevitably fall upon them if they repented not. His words caused a division among his hearers, some clamoring for his arrest and imprisonment as one who bore false testimony and reviled the law, whilst others maintained that he spoke the truth and was a prophet. To prove to their sin-darkened minds that the prophetic gift was with him, he told them to send to the hall of judgment, and that there they would find the chief judge murdered, lying in his blood; yet more, that the murderer was the victim's brother. Five of the crowd hastened to prove his words. They hurried to the judgment hall, and there they found the chief magistrate in the condition that Nephi had declared. Other citizens, who knew nothing of Nephi's words, having entered the hall, and finding the five men there with the dead body, they concluded that they were the assassins, and consigned them to prison. And some of the most hardened afterwards charged Nephi with

being an accomplice before the act, and that he had arranged the whole affair to obtain influence with the people, so that they would believe and accept his doctrine. On this charge he was bound and imprisoned. By the wisdom that Heaven gave him so abundantly, he was enabled to baffle this attempt on his life, and through his instrumentality the murdered judge's brother having been brought to confess his crime, Nephi was delivered from his traducers and set at liberty. Some of the citizens now acknowledged that he was a prophet, others declared that he was a god, whilst many remained hardened in their sins. So violent became the contention, that the people gathered in excited crowds upon the streets, wrangling and disputing about the events of the past two days, and in their excitement they entirely forgot Nephi, and left him standing alone in the street. With a sorrowful heart he wended his way homeward; but before he reached there, the voice of the Lord came to him with many words of comfort and commendation. As with others of His servants, the Lord made a covenant with him, that whatsoever he bound on earth should be bound in heaven, and whatsoever he loosed on earth should be loosed in heaven; that he should have power over the elements to bless and to curse; to smite the earth with famine and pestilence and destruction, and that none should have power to hurt him. The Almighty then directed him to return and again raise his cry of repentance in the cities of the Nephites. He obeyed, and lifted up his voice in solemn warning; he went from multitude to multitude, from city to city, from land to land, but without effect. Sometimes when he thus warned his fellow-men, they sought to imprison and otherwise maltreat him, but the Spirit of God would bear him out of their midst to labor in some other place. In this manner three years passed away; contentions and wars, murder and violence, filled the land. At last Nephi, no longer able to bear the sight of the people being wasted by the sword, falling beneath each other's ruthless hand, besought the Lord that a famine

might desolate the land and, peradventure, bring the people to an understanding of their awful condition, and cause them to humble themselves and repent. The Holy One heard and answered his petition, the heavens became as brass over the land, the rains ceased, the earth dried up, the crops failed, and the people perished for want of food. Two years passed (B.C. 19 and 18) and the third came, and still the freshening rain was withheld (B.C. 17). During this year the people, humbled by their sufferings, turned towards the Lord. They endeavored to root out iniquity from their midst, they destroyed the Gadianton robber bands, and established the government on a more righteous foundation. Nephi, observing the change in their conduct and feelings, interceded with the Lord in their behalf. His prayers were answered, the welcome rain descended on the parched-up soil, and a bounteous harvest once more crowned the labors of the husbandman (B.C. 16.) The repentant people now regarded Nephi in his true light, they revered him as a great prophet, and for a few short years they listened to his teachings. Whilst they did so they prospered. But the leaven of unrighteousness had too thoroughly permeated the national life for their faithfulness to God to be of any long duration. Two, three, or perhaps half a dozen years they would maintain their integrity, and then corruption would seethe, the vile would snatch the reins of government, the good would be oppressed, and contention and war, with all their horrors, would again reign supreme. Thus it was after the three years of famine. For two years there was peace, in the third there began to be much strife (B.C. 13), in the next the Gadianton bands reappeared, and

carried havoc amongst their more peaceable fellow-countrymen. Going on, year by year they grew in iniquity and ripened for destruction. For many years Nephi strove to stem the tide of vice; at times partial success rewarded his unceasing efforts, and he had joy in the baptism of some honest souls. But the great bulk of the people had rejected the Gospel, they had no love for its holy principles, and were unfit for its blessings.

Shortly before the birth of Christ, Nephi transferred the plates of brass and other records to his son Nephi, gave him charge concerning them, and departed from the land of Zarahemla. Whither he went, or what became of him, is hidden from the knowledge of mankind. That he did not return to the dwelling-places of humanity is testified to by his son some ten years afterwards (A.D. 9).

Of Nephi's private life and circumstances we can learn but little from the Book of Mormon. It is evident that his public labors as a preacher of righteousness occupied almost his entire time. Two of his sons, Nephi and Timothy, are mentioned by name; these were both chosen by the crucified Redeemer to be members of the Quorum of the Twelve Disciples who ministered amongst the Nephites. His character is the one that stands pre-eminent in his age; he was of a verity a friend of God, who so acknowledged him, blessed him with as high and glorious privileges as are ever conferred on man, made peculiar and special covenants with him, and gave him revelations daily. His whole history gives evidence of his faith, patience, courage, integrity, humility and zeal. In his long life he saw much sorrow, but God took him to Himself at last.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

We are building up our characters and our lives, not only by our actions, but by the directions in which we are looking, by the models we set before us, by the ideals we cherish, by the company we keep, by the books we read, by all the conditions in which we put ourselves. By looking up to what is higher and better, we shall rise to higher and better states of being, and our characters and conduct will always bear an intimate relation to those things upon which our mental vision dwells with pleasure and satisfaction.