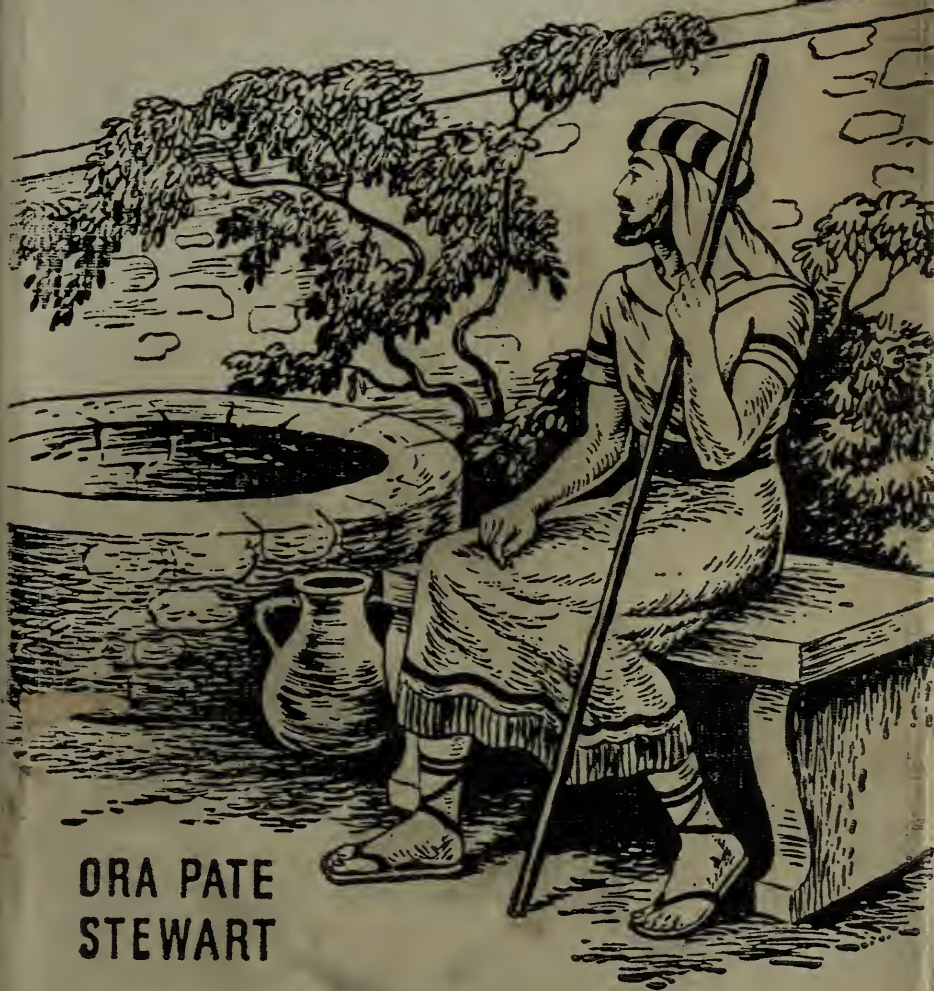


BRANCHES

Over the Wall



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Branches Over the Wall

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“Joseph is a fruitful bough,
even a fruitful bough by a
well; whose branches run
over the wall.”

(Genesis 49:22.)



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BRANCHES OVER THE WALL

Six hundred B.C. was a **Jerusalem** memorable year in Jerusalem; **600 B. C.** it was the year that twenty-one year-old Zedekiah took his place as king of the Jews. What he probably did not suspect was that he was to be their last king. "And in that same year there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city of Jerusalem must be destroyed." One prosperous citizen, feeling great concern for his native city, was influenced by these prophecies to the extent that he went out and prayed to God with all his heart in behalf of his people. This man was Lehi; and as he prayed, he saw a pillar of fire come down and rest upon a rock before him. And the things that he saw and heard made him quake and tremble. He was so nearly overcome with the weight of the manifestation that he went home to his own house and lay down upon his bed. In the quiet of his room the vision continued; and he saw the heavens open; and a glorious messenger descended with a

book which he bade Lehi to read. The text began: "Wo, wo unto Jerusalem, for I have seen thine abominations!" And it went on to say that the great city would be destroyed, that many of the inhabitants should perish by the sword, and that many should be carried away captive to Babylon.

Lehi was greatly impressed. He immediately went about the city, recounting the things that he had seen and trying to persuade the people to repent. This made him a little peculiar in the eyes of the Jews and they mocked him. Lehi was not so sensitive to their mocking; but when their taunts took on a life and death aspect it was the Lord Himself who informed him of the plot:

"Blessed art thou Lehi, because
Lehi of the things which thou hast
Leaves done; and because thou hast
Jerusalem been faithful and declared unto
 this people the things which I
 commanded thee, behold, they seek thy life."
 This information came through in a dream, and instructed Lehi to take his family and leave the city immediately. So "he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold and his silver, and his precious things, and took nothing with him save it were his family,

and provisions and tents, and departed into the wilderness." The provisions included "seeds of every kind, of grain and of fruit;" for Lehi would never again set foot in his native land, and there must be sustenance for his children in a new country.

Three days out of Jerusalem they camped in a valley down by the Red Sea. The family at that time consisted of Lehi and his wife Sariah and their four sons, Laman, Lemuel, Sam and Nephi. The family accepted Lehi's strange flight in varying degrees of approval. Laman and Lemuel, the two oldest sons, like the people of Jerusalem, thought their father had taken a turn toward the peculiar. Nephi, the youngest and the most unquestioningly obedient, went out by himself and prayed for an understanding. He came back from his walk fully assured that his father was in the right, and that Jerusalem would surely be destroyed. Sam was persuaded to the same mind by the testimony of his younger brother Nephi. Sariah, used to luxury and convenience, accepted her life in a tent with womanly acquiescence—until it appeared that her four sons had been sent out on an impossible errand for a brass Bible and had perished in the treacherous wilderness. Then she bristled

rebelliously and called her husband a visionary man.

“Behold thou hast led us forth from the land of our inheritance, and my sons are no more, and we perish in the wilderness!”

“I know that I am a visionary man,” Lehi confessed; “for if I had not seen the things of God in a vision I should not have known the goodness of God, but had tarried at Jerusalem, and had perished with my brethren. But behold, I have obtained a land of promise, in the which things I do rejoice; yea, and I know that the Lord will deliver my sons out of the hands of Laban, and bring them again unto us in the wilderness.”

The four young men had been sent back to Jerusalem with instructions to bring back a certain volume of scripture, engraved in scholarly Egyptian upon plates of brass, to be found in the personal treasury of a rich and arrogant officer named Laban. Laban was a distant kinsman of Lehi, both being descendants of Joseph who was sold into Egypt. The book contained not only the five books of Moses and the history of the Jews down to that very year, six hundred B.C., but many of the prophecies of Enoch and others of the antedeluvian patriarchs.

Besides, it told all of the genealogy and much of the family record connecting Lehi with his illustrious ancestor Joseph. But sturdy and wholesome as it was as a family relic, its greatest value was that it was probably the most complete and the most durably compiled testament of God's dealings with mankind in existence. It is entirely possible that the Book had been providentially prepared, in the timelessness of enduring brass, and in the timeliness of Lehi's departure, to serve as the guiding scripture for a thousand years of civilization in the New World.

The boys went back to Jerusalem to get it. But as in so many instances when the Lord gives an order, He does not give the details of how to accomplish it. The young men were left to their own resources.

They were very resourceful. First they drew lots to see which one should approach the selfish Laban and ask for the record. The lot fell to Laman. Reluctantly he went, and was subsequently thrown out of the rich man's house. He outran the servant who was sent to slay him, but returned to his brothers out of sorts and discouraged.

For the second try the boys went to their own abandoned home and gathered up all

they could carry of their father's gold and silver and personal treasures, and tried to buy the brass Book. But Laban would not sell. However, he noticed that their property was great, and after the boys had gone he sent his servants to kill them and bring back their riches. Again, the young men were forced to run for their lives, and to leave their property in their flight. Of course, it fell into the hands of Laban.

The two older brothers were by now completely exasperated, and they took their fury out on Nephi, who had insisted righteously: "I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save He shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which He commandeth them." His brothers beat him with a rod, until an angel appeared and stood by the cave where they were hiding.

"Why do ye smite your younger brother with a rod?" the angel asked. "Know ye not that the Lord hath chosen him to be a ruler over you, and this because of your iniquities? Behold, ye shall go up to Jerusalem again, and the Lord will deliver Laban into your hands."

The older brothers were doubtful. As soon

as the angel had gone they resumed their skepticism.

“How is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands? Behold, he is a mighty man, and he can command fifty, yea, even he can slay fifty; then why not us?”

Nephi quickly reminded them that the Lord had been able to destroy Pharaoh and his six hundred Egyptian chariots in the Red Sea.

“He is mightier than all the earth—then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands.”

It was night now, and Nephi had his brothers hide outside the wall of the darkened city. It was dangerous to be found in the streets at night. The sinful life for which Jerusalem was so soon to be destroyed was at its highest at night. It was not safe for a man to be out, unarmed, and with no guard.

But Nephi was armed with a commandment from God, and his bodyguard was the Spirit of the Lord. He crept carefully into the city, he and the Spirit, and journeyed toward the mansion of Laban.

Now Laban had apparently been out with the “elders” that night, and the refreshment

had been wine. It is doubtful that there was enough Priesthood in Jerusalem at that time to form an Elders' Quorum; but nevertheless, Laban had been out with the so-called "elders and brethren," and he had not quite made it home before his wine had taken effect. He had fallen in a drunken stupor by the way. This circumstance adds to the evidence that the leaders of Jerusalem were in need of mending their ways. But it also adds to the old pattern that God permits men to bring down upon themselves their own destructions; because when Nephi came upon the drunken figure of Laban, whose gold-hilted sword gleamed upward in the moonlight, the Spirit whispered to the young man that here was Laban, delivered into his hands. Nephi drew the handsome sword from its sheath at the drunken man's waist. The hilt was of pure gold; and the blade of the most precious steel, and the workmanship of the greatest excellence.

"Never at any time have I shed the blood of man," Nephi said; and he shrank from the deed.

"Behold, the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands," the Spirit said again. Nephi knew that Laban had tried to kill him and

his brothers, and that he had also stolen their property. The Spirit urged again: "Slay him, for the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands. Behold, the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief."

Nephi remembered now the time when he had prayed in the wilderness for his testimony. The Lord had given him the encouragement: "Inasmuch as thy seed shall keep my commandments, they shall prosper in the land of promise." And how could they keep the commandments if this stubborn man would not let them have the Book? They had to have the Book, for their children and their children's children. A nation must not be made to dwindle and perish in unbelief. One man was certainly expendable for this. Nephi raised the sword of Laban and smote off his drunken head. Then he dressed himself in the dead man's apparel, armor, sword, sheath and all, and approached the mansion boldly. As he came upon Zoram, Laban's servant and guard of the treasury, the Spirit lent Nephi the gift of tongues, so that he was able to speak to the servant in the voice of Laban. He ordered

Zoram to go with him into the treasury and fetch him the Brass Plates. Nephi then carried the record and ordered the servant to follow him. The record was valuable, and dangers lurked in the streets. They would carry the book to the elder brethren who were waiting outside the walls. Zoram dutifully followed, supposing that his "master" spoke of the elders and brethren of the Jews. It was the last time he would set foot in Jerusalem also. When they reached the hiding place outside the walls the gift of tongues disappeared; and Zoram was persuaded to cast his lot with Nephi and become a pioneer to the promised land. And he stood with him like a brother from that time on.

The errand of obtaining the Brass Plates had taken so long that Sariah had despaired of ever seeing her boys again. But as Lehi had comforted her with his prophecy, their sons returned. The mother's confidence was complete.

"Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath commanded my husband to flee into the wilderness; yea, and I also know of a surety that the Lord hath protected my sons, and delivered them out of the hands of Laban, and given them power whereby they could

accomplish the thing which the Lord hath commanded them.”

Lehi was thrilled with the information on the Brass Plates. He was moved to prophesy that the scripture they contained should go forth to all the nations, kindreds, tongues and people who should be his descendants; and that the plates should never perish, nor be dimmed or tarnished by time.

Once more the four sons were to return to the doomed city; this time to bring out the family of a distant kinsman, Ishmael, who had five daughters and two sons. Ishmael was a descendant of Ephraim, while Lehi was descended from Manasseh. Ephraim and Manasseh were brothers, sons of Joseph. And with the marriage of Lehi's sons with Ishmael's daughters, the whole blood of Joseph was to be represented in their posterity. Zoram, the erstwhile servant of Laban, married the oldest daughter of Ishmael. And from this early period, the leanings of Zoram and Sam were toward Nephi; and those of the two sons of Ishmael toward Laman and Lemuel. This division was to prove true of their posterity for a thousand years.

In the wilderness, camped by the Red Sea, Lehi had another vision. In it he saw the

destinies of his sons far into the future. He fore-saw the destiny of the city they had left behind; and he saw that after six hundred years the Messiah would come. As he explained the vision to his family Nephi felt the urge to ask the Lord for a similar manifestation. He was rewarded with the vision, the interpretation of the mysterious parts, and a few personal informations about his own posterity. He saw that Jesus was scheduled to make a visit to his descendants in the promised land; and he saw that his people would enjoy a fine civilization for a thousand years. But his vision had an unhappy ending. He saw that his own posterity would eventually be destroyed by his brothers' children.

Heavy in spirit because of the ultimate sinfulness and destruction of his children, Nephi returned to the tent of his father. There he found his older brothers quarreling over some of the points of their father's visitation. Had they bothered, Nephi wanted to know, to ask the Lord for an interpretation? And what had they to dispute about? Weren't their children going to survive the new world experience? It was Nephi who had cause to mourn for his unborn children. However, he patiently explained the vision

to his doubting brothers, and pacified them somewhat as to their place in the great forthcoming drama.

Dreams and visions had their place in establishing the faith and describing the future of the tented colony, but

God now had more immediate activities for them. The wilderness camp was no promised land.

**Journey
in the
Wilderness**

One night the voice of the Lord came through to Lehi. On the morrow they were to take up their journey.

There was no need for Lehi to lie awake the rest of the night and ponder his course. When he opened the door of the tent the next morning, there in the dooryard lay a round brass ball of curious workmanship. It was made of very fine brass. It had two spindles inside, one of which pointed in the direction where they should go. It pointed to the south-southeast, down the Arabian Peninsula. The colony loaded their provisions and followed the needle.

After eight years of traveling, hunting, resting, bearing children, perhaps even planting of precious seed and waiting for harvests from time to time, keeping close to the fertile borders by the Red Sea where game and grazing

were to be found, the group arrived at the seashore, the great ocean. Ishmael had died on the arduous journey, and they had buried him at the point where they turned eastward.

The land by the great waters was a land of wild honey and fruitful abundance. Perhaps they thought it was the promised land. It was the most promising that they had seen. But the Lord allowed them to rest for only one year. Then He commanded Nephi to build a ship. The branches of Joseph, the fruitful boughs, had come to the great well. Now they must run over the wall. It was a great hurdle and it would take the sturdiest ship. After the Lord had shown him the blueprint Nephi was confident that he could build the craft. He smelted ore and made tools. His brothers were not so confident.

“Our brother is a fool,” they said, “for he thinketh that he can build a ship; yea, and he also thinketh that he can cross these great waters!”

Nephi was very much discouraged with them. They mistook his discouragement for inability.

“We knew that ye could not construct a ship, for we know that ye were lacking in judgment; wherefore, thou canst not accom-

plish so great a work. Thou are like unto our father, lead away by the foolish imaginations of his heart. . . . We know that the people who were in the land of Jerusalem were a righteous people . . . and our father hath judged them, and hath lead us away because we would hearken unto his words; yea, and our brother is like unto him." They thought to throw them both into the sea.

What, Nephi wanted to know, would have happened to the children of Israel if they had not followed Moses? You know that Moses was commanded of the Lord. You know about the manna in the wilderness. "And now," he concluded, "if the Lord has such great power, and has wrought so many miracles among the children of men, how is it that He cannot instruct me, that I should build a ship?"

The older brothers continued in their abusiveness until the Lord had to shake them up.

"We know of a surety that the Lord is with thee," they confessed at last, "for we know that it is the power of the Lord that has shaken us."

The brothers were so shaken that they fell down and were about to worship Nephi; but Nephi righted them:

"I am thy brother, yea, even thy younger brother; wherefore, worship the Lord thy God, and honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God shall give thee."

The ship was completed in about a year; and Laman and Lemuel had to admit that it was wonderful. By now the colony had increased by several children. Lehi and Sariah had had two more sons in the wilderness, Jacob and Joseph. And the marriages of their older sons had been fruitful.

**Journey
by Sea** Then one night the Voice came to Lehi. It was time to load the ship and launch out to sea. The next day they loaded, with "much fruits and meat from the wilderness, and honey in abundance, and provisions according to that which the Lord had commanded us, we did go down into the ship, with all our loading and our seeds, and whatsoever thing we had brought with us, everyone according to his age; wherefore we did all go down into the ship, with our wives and children."

A gentle wind arose and the boat moved toward the promised land.

They were not without trouble afloat because

a year on the sea was too long a time for the older brothers to be quiet and humble. They became riotous and rebellious, and they bound Nephi with strong cords. There was a terrible storm and the craft was beaten back. But the brothers were persuaded at last, and Nephi was restored to the helm where he was able to read its instruments and right the ship.

The new land was South America. They disembarked on **Two Races** the west coast of what is now

Chile, or about the center of the west coast of the continent. For a time they continued to live together as a colony, for nineteen years in fact. But after Lehi died, old jealousies among the brothers, which had flared up rather frequently all along, now burned into full blaze. By this time—nineteen years in America, and only thirty years out of Jerusalem—there were two distinct *races*. The *Nephites* were a white and industrious people. The *Lamanites* were “cursed with a burnt and loathsome skin,” and were lazy and plunderous; they had abandoned their clothes and had taken to eating raw wolves and jaguars—to be strict with the record, wild beasts of prey.

At this time Nephi, righteous to a point which annoyed his two oldest brothers unendingly, took the Brass Plates and as many as

would follow him and removed several days journey away. His followers were Zoram, Sam, Jacob and Joseph—and his sisters, here mentioned for the first time—and their families.

The Lamanites, who were left to their barbarianism in the south, were composed of Laman and Lemuel and the two sons of Ishmael and their families.

The Nephites built up a splendid culture in their new home to the north. (Temples and other edifices of such a culture have been found in Bolivia and Peru. The Pre-Incan civilization is ascribed to this people.) Nephi taught his people in the arts and industries. Gold, silver, iron and copper were found in abundance. And God prospered the colony. However, Nephi says he was forced to take the sword of Laban and use it for a pattern to make weapons for the defense of his people against the Lamanites on occasions of invasion. And this situation became steadily worse. The Lamanites, even in their filthy and barbarious state, were able to outdo the Nephites in producing posterity. With every new war, even though ten redskins bit the dust to one Nephite, still the supply of redskins seemed inexhaustible.

Nephi, at the insistence of his people, became their king; and that office was held in succession by his descendants. But in the leadership of religious affairs he was succeeded by his younger brother Jacob, who was succeeded by his own posterity. Two separate accounts, or books, were kept, covering the first four hundred years, one by the prophets and one by the kings. The record that has come down to us is the record of the prophets. The fuller account of the kings for this period has not yet been made available to us.

Jacob was a valiant prophet and leader. The first Nephite Anti-Christ arose during his time, a learned man named Sherem. Sherem sought out Jacob and tried to convert him to his priestcraft. Jacob withstood him with the words of God; whereupon Sherem demanded a sign. He got his sign; the Lord struck him, that he died, and his converts were convinced of his fraud.

After nearly four hundred years out of Jerusalem, the offices of state and church were merged in the great king, Mosiah the First, a descendant of Nephi. By way of a dream he was warned that the Lamanites to

Mosiah's Migration

the south were too near and too numerous for Nephite safety, and he was advised to abandon the comfortable but endangered civilization Nephi had founded, the land of Nephi, and moved his people a greater distance away. So the Nephites migrated northward, "many days' journey."

They were greatly surprised to come upon a semi-civilized, somewhat degenerated people in a land they called Zarahemla.

These newly discovered folk greatly outnumbered the war-depleted Nephites, but were found to be harmless and co-operative. Their language, while having a Hebrew root, was in a sad state of dilapidation due to nearly four hundred years of misuse. They had brought no Brass Bible to guide their theological thought, and reading and writing were unknown to them. King Mosiah set about to teach them reading, writing, history and theology. After they had developed enough understanding that they could communicate more easily it was learned that Zarahemla, king of this strange people, had kept a record in his head, which he recited to Mosiah. The information had been handed down from father to son for nearly four

hundred years. It was most interesting information. Zarahemla was a direct descendant of Mulek, the youngest son of Zedekiah, the last king of the Jews. During the siege of Jerusalem by Babylonian invaders in five-eighty-nine and five-eighty-eight B.C., Zedekiah had been dethroned, his sons, all except the infant Mulek, were put to death before his eyes, then his eyes were put out. By some miraculous strategem the young child Mulek was brought to the isthmus country. Zarahemla was his descendant. The colonists had settled first just north of the isthmus, but had moved their capital to the south shortly after their arrival and had lived there ever since.

This information was more than a new bit of strange news. It was a conclusive proof that Lehi had been inspired in that dream long ago wherein he was warned to leave Jerusalem. Eleven years after he had gone the city was actually destroyed. Here was a descendant of a survivor who had perpetuated the story. It checked well with the facts as Mosiah knew them. God was over all, and things were progressing as He had said they would.

Isaiah the prophet had prophesied—and it

was written in the Brass Bible — “and the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward and bear fruit upward for out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall do this.” The Nephites did not fulfill this prophecy because they were not of the house of Judah. They were of the house of Joseph. But Zedekiah was of the house of Judah; and out of his house his youngest son Mulek had escaped. He had taken root in Zarahemla. And here was the fruit. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts had done this.

(It has been observed by thoughtful persons that the nose on the buffalo nickel has a decidedly Jewish bent. Turn it over — we’re speaking of the Indian, not the buffalo. Lord Kingsborough thought that the Indians had Jewish noses. On this anatomical extremity he advanced the theory that perhaps the Indians had come from Jerusalem. His thinking was years ahead of his time. Mulek was a Jew. The Mulekites joined the Nephites. At a later period the Lamanites joined the Nephites and Mulekites, which merging was good for more than two hundred years before they broke away again. It is possible that

during this peaceful inter-racial interim the Jewish minority were able to stamp one feature into the emerging permanent race—they won by a nose!)

Shortly after the merging of the Nephites with the people of Zarahemla, a restless man by the name of Zeniff, a Nephite with a longing for the old home in the south country, organized a company of friends and returned to the homeland in the Andes. Zeniff admits that he was over-zealous and he did not recognize the Lamanite cunning until their trap was sprung. Lamanites surrounded them, gradually increasing their rate of tribute until the Zeniff colony realized they were in actual bondage to their red-skinned cousins. To make things worse, Zeniff died after forty years' leadership, and his selfish and sensuous son Noah plunged his people into great depths of sin. The climax of Noah's atrocities was the burning of the prophet Abinadi, the first Nephite martyr to the testimony of the coming Christ. This act brought about the crucial resolution in the careers of two other young men, Gideon the soldier-teacher, and Alma, the organizer of the great church and the instigator of baptism among the pre-Christian

Zeniff

Americans. (There may have been baptisms performed earlier. But Alma is the first to record the ordinance as a church-wide practice among the Nephites.) Alma, with a few hundred righteous followers, escaped from the wrath of the wicked puppet king Noah and established a church in the wilderness. Gideon, sword in hand, swore he would slay Noah and put a stop to his wicked leadership. Precisely at the time of this crisis the Lamanites chose to swoop down upon the unsuspecting people of Noah; whereupon Noah with a few of his friends and his cowardly self-styled "priests" fled in terror, leaving their wives and children helpless before the treacherous Lamanites. Gideon and Limhi, Noah's son, rose to the situation and secured a treaty from the Lamanite invaders. But the price was almost utter slavery. Noah's friends, ashamed of their cowardly desertion and incensed at Noah's selfish domination, took it upon themselves to burn him at the stake as he had burned the innocent prophet Abinadi, thus depriving Gideon and his illustrious sword of the avowed blood-letting.

Limhi, Noah's son, had a disposition and character more like that of his grandfather Zeniff than that of his father. He had stayed

with the people and had exercised his wisdom in securing a peace with the Lamanites. His people now elected Limhi to be their king.

Limhi the king and Gideon the general of the army, both realizing the ultimate futility of a prolonged servitude to their wolf-eating cousins, tried desperately to find a way of escape. They were surrounded now and guarded on every side. In their desperation they remembered their grandfather's people, the main body of the Nephites at Zarahemla, and wondered if it would be possible to contact them and ask for help. Perhaps the Nephite army could be persuaded to come and rescue them. On the strength of this hope they smuggled forty-three men out of the gates of the surrounded city and instructed them to go find the traditional city of Zarahemla—it was somewhere to the north, many days' journey—and ask for help.

The forty-three men went north all right, for many, many days. They missed the land of Zarahemla at the isthmus country and traveled many days and many miles further. In the north continent they came upon heaps of bones, piles of carcasses, bleached and crumbling on the wasted plains — an entire nation of sturdy-statured men, women, and

children, who had come to a mysterious, unmistakable doom. City after city they passed finding here a sword and there a breastplate of very fine and curious craftsmanship—and always the inevitable heaps of bones. They went as far north as the Great Lakes; then they turned eastward. They stopped at a sizeable hill in the hilly country of western New York where uncountable millions had fallen by the sword. This was the worst of all. They rummaged in the ruin heaps and found a few valuable trinkets most curious of which was a small tablet made of twenty-four sheets, or plates, of pure gold. They were engraved all over with fine, beautiful writing; but not a man in the company could decipher the strange language. They took the small gold book and traveled further east—as far as the sea-shore. There had been a magnificent city there at one time. Perhaps it had once been the capital of the good king Omer. But it had been destroyed.

Dismally the forty-three men turned back. It was a sad and disappointing tale they would carry back to their people in captivity far, far away in the south: Zarahemla was indeed a big place. Their grandfathers had indeed had many children; many of them were giants; but

they were all dead. They had had a most marvelous civilization; they had built towering cities; but these had all tumbled to decay. It was all a great mystery. Even their beautiful writing could not be read. There would be no help at all from Zarahemla.

But shortly after the return of those forty-three men there was help from Zarahemla. Sixteen messengers from that thriving country stole cautiously into the surrounded city and offered their services as guides to lead the captive faction north to the national capital. After the tired messengers were fed and made comfortable Limhi brought out the small gold book that his forty-three scouts had salvaged from the wasted far north. Could these new messengers make anything out of the curious writing? No, they could not. It was undoubtedly a mystery. But there was a man who could interpret the writings of the gold book. He lived in Zarahemla. He was the king in fact. His name was Mosiah, and he was a grandson of Mosiah the First. He had in his possession a very peculiar instrument—Aaron, the brother of Moses, had once possessed such a one, in all probability the same one—through which a righteous man could look and divine wonderful things pertaining to the works and

will of God. The instrument was called the Urim and Thummim, and it was composed of two crystal stones set in a silver bow. Only the most righteous men could look through it as it was made of the same material as the celestial world, or the "sea of glass" that prophets wrote about. Imposters had made crude imitations. Most anywhere among the devil's priestcraft could be found crystal gazers; but their instruments were exaggerated and possessed none of the properties of the original interpreters of the Lord's priesthood. Mosiah was a very righteous man, and the Lord would give him the interpretation through the interpreters. Was this Mosiah a prophet? Yes, Mosiah was a prophet, and more: he was a *seer*. He could see into divine things.

They took the small gold book with them when they stole silently out of the captive city a few nights later. They had made the Lamanite guards drunken with strong wine, and the whole city escaped into the wilderness during the night. The next day the Lamanites tried to follow them; but they had taken a circuitous route, and a storm had obligingly washed away their tracks. The Lamanites floundered and lost trace of them. They came upon the hide-out of Noah's renegade "priests,"

and subsequently upon the wilderness city where Alma lived quietly with the church he had organized; but they returned without Limhi and Gideon and the people of the city of Nephi.

In Zarahemla King Mosiah was glad to see the curious gold book. Under the crystal interpreters it became a readable and fascinating story. But it was very sad. It was a brief history of a people who left the Tower of Babel two hundred years after the flood and who came to North America in eight barges. They were large in stature; and they were the most highly civilized nation ever to have lived. But they became rich and proud and selfish. Then there were wars. Prophets rose among them and cried repentance. Repentance or destruction, they had cried. The people argued that they were too great to be destroyed. Nobody is that great, cried the prophets. The Lord would make them smelling heaps if they would not repent. As heaps of earth should they become. As mounds. Their drumlin hills would be their builders.) Their drumlin hills would be their epitaph.

The Jaredites

Mosiah was sickened and saddened when

he came to the end. Millions of them had died in the last great war in the hilly country of the eastern sector of the north continent. One man only — besides the historian — had survived. One stubborn usurping king — the historian was the rightful heir—out of sixteen hundred years of the world's most magnificent civilization—had walked out alive. And here was a curious thing: one lonely battle-scarred man had wandered southward many, many years before—Mosiah had heard the story from the native Mulekites of Zarahemla. His name was Coriantumr, and he had stumbled into the newly-made camp of the first Mulekites. They had taken care of the stranger for nine months. Before he died he was able to communicate to them that he was the last survivor of a great nation to the far north. His people had come to their destruction in a terrible civil war. He had carved his story and as much of the history of his people as he could remember on the several faces of a large stone. (Later this great stone had been found and Mosiah's grandfather had translated its story. It tallied remarkably with the message of the twenty-four gold plates.)

The incidents of Zeniff's leaving Zarahemla three generations before, the restless activities

of his people in the land of the Lamanites, the captivity that they brought upon themselves, all these would have little bearing on the over-all story of the Book of Mormon if it had not been that the Lord used the exigency of their plight to a great over-all advantage: In the desperation that they had brought upon themselves they went out for help, and *incidentally* brought back the twenty-four gold plates. It was ordained that they should find them. Their contribution then ceases to be an impetuous, ill-advised journey into captivity; they were the discoverers of all that we know of sixteen hundred years of the world's greatest civilization, now extinct and remnantless except for a few mounds and other evidences scattered over the northern continent. The twenty-four gold plates put flesh and blood upon these dry bones. They add to the over-all testimony that America is the land choice above all other lands, and that whoever lives here must serve the living God. Otherwise they will be removed. (We should not hope to come upon the bones of the Jaredites in our time. We should hope that the resurrection might have reclaimed most of them before now.)

Alma

But perhaps the biggest blessing to rise out of the Zeniff experience was Alma. After witnessing the scandalous martyrdom of the prophet Abinadi whom he had tried unsuccessfully to defend, Alma had escaped a like sentence by taking a group of several hundred friends and fleeing into a remote wilderness. After more than twenty years in that outpost he was successful in leading his group north to Zarahemla, where he was welcomed for his talents of leadership and the fine quality of his character. In Zarahemla he was appointed and ordained to become the president, or chief high priest of the church, which was called the Church of Christ even though it was nearly a century before the Savior would be born. For this position Alma proved to be an inspired choice; and the leadership of the church, from that day until the end of the Nephite race five hundred years later, was ordained from his posterity. In fact, the greatest leaders of both church and nation were elected from his descendants.

The experiences of the Zeniff colony and the finding of the mysterious record of the northern people (known as Jaredites) had

a great effect upon the Nephites at Zarahemla. They wanted to live their religion better. They did not want to invite the captivity of Zeniff or the destruction of the Jaredites. They wanted peace and security and the blessings of the Lord.

Alma's son, however, and his friends the four sons of King Mosiah, chose to go about in youthful arrogance like Saul of Tarsus of a later day, kicking against the pricks and persecuting the saints. Their fathers' prayers for them were unrewarded until one day when an angel met the young men in the road and reprimanded them. The effect was spectacular and permanent. Alma the Younger became the greatest teacher in the Book, excepting only Jesus Christ; and the four sons of Mosiah went on a mission to the Lamanites.

There had never been a successful Lamanite mission before.

The experiences of these young men make wonderful stories to tell; but one story will suffice for

**Mission
to the
Lamanites**

this brief resume. The names of the king's sons were Ammon, Aaron, Omner, and Himni. Ammon was the leader of the group, and his experiences were very interesting. I am taking

the story teller's liberty of retelling them in my own words.

On the edge of the Lamanite country the missionaries separated and went their several ways. And Ammon found himself in the Lamanite province of Ishmael. There he sought out the chief personage of the province, a subordinate king named Lamoni, and offered his services as a servant. Lamoni was in need of servants at the time so he accepted him, rather than put him to death or deport him as was the dealing with foreigners.

It is from this part of the story that we get our best glimpse of Lamanite government and politics. It seems that after the Zeniff colony had escaped the Lamanite shackles and returned to the Nephite city of Zarahemla, the Lamanites moved into their abandoned city, the ancient city of Nephi, and established it as the Lamanite national capital. Here the king of the Lamanites, always called King Laman, established his throne. The king had a number of sons, sons-in-law, and persons who had purchased his favor, whom he appointed to lesser thrones throughout his kingdom. These subordinate kings could rule their provinces according to their own desires, exerting powers

up to life and death over their particular subjects. So long as they were willing to contribute men for the national army, and so long as they remembered to come to the capital once a year with ample gifts for King Laman's birthday, they could rule just about as they pleased in their separate states. Thus it was that Lamoni was king of the province of Ishmael; and Antiomno was king of the province of Middoni; and King Laman above them was king over all the land of the Lamanites.

Lamoni's province was infested with robbers who hid in the canyons above the chief watering place for his flocks and herds. When the servants brought the animals to water, the robbers would swoop down from their hide-outs, beat away the servants with their huge clubs, and drive the sheep and cattle up the draw for a colossal barbeque. After such a fracas the servants would saunter sorrowfully back to king Lamoni with the sad news. Lamoni had a chopping block rigged up for such occasions, to teach his servants not to be so neglectful. The entire group were lined up and their heads were chopped off. Then Lamoni would raise the people's taxes and buy up another herd of cattle and another flock of sheep; he would conscript from among his subjects an-

other batch of herdsmen; and the routine would repeat itself.

The chopping block was wearing down; the people had little left that would make good taxes; it became harder and harder to find a herd of cattle or a flock of sheep; Lamoni was getting very low on servants; he was having a hard time. So when Ammon appeared and offered to be a servant, Lamoni gave him the job of chief herder.

On the third day when he took the animals to the watering place Ammon was met by the robbers. They waved their huge clubs and made hideous noises designed to scatter both servants and animals. But Ammon called to his scampering herders and instructed them to post themselves around about so that the cattle could not escape. Then with a sling-shot and a few smooth stones he withstood the robbers. He slew the leader of the mob and six of his hateful companions. Then as the others crowded in close to bludgeon him with their cruel clubs, Ammon calmly sliced off their upraised arms with his trusty sword. The herders who were with Ammon each came into the affray to the extent of picking up a gory souvenir apiece, and marched back to their king with the severed arms—which they

presented to Lamoni as evidence of Ammon's extraordinary talents in robber-dealing.

Lamoni was not so much pleased as he was overcome. The word that the book likes to use for such a state is *astonished*. Lamoni was not a bad man. He had not meant to murder his servants. He had only meant to discipline them — with the only punishment that he or they could understand. But was this, after all, a sin? Had the Great Spirit grown tired of the smell of blood? Had He sharpened His sword of justice, the two-edged one, and come down from his happy hunting ground to settle a few scores for Himself?

Lamoni sent out to the stables for Ammon. Ammon was finishing the chores and getting Lamoni's chariot ready for the birthday feast trip to the capital. But when he came in the king could not bring himself to speak what was on his mind. After some time Ammon reminded him that he had sent for him. Still Lamoni did not speak. Finally Ammon, who had divined the king's troubled thoughts, asked him if he thought him to be God.

"God I do not know," answered Lamoni truthfully; "but thou art most assuredly the Great Spirit."

Ammon explained to Lamoni that God

and the Great Spirit were in reality one and the same; and hastened to add that he, Ammon, was most assuredly not that Great Being. But God had sent him with a wonderful story, and Ammon would be delighted to tell it to the king.

Lamoni was ready to listen.

Ammon began at the beginning. He told of the great council in heaven, which took place before the world was ready for its mortal inhabitants. He told of God and Christ and the spirits of unborn mankind, working together to figure out the best plan to follow for the happiness and prosperity of man and for the glory of God when the time came for our life in the earth. Jesus had led with the suggestion that the same plan be adopted that had been used in other worlds; but Lucifer interrupted and offered his own plan, and offered to assume all the credit and glory for it; but his plan was rejected because it was one of force. Christ's plan was one of free will and choice, giving every individual the right to choose in every situation as it came along how he would react to it. God accepted Christ's plan. It would be better for men to have their free agency.

So Adam and Eve were placed in the earth. In order to get the full benefit of their privi-

lege of free agency their memories of their lives in heaven were sealed over. From the first they were allowed a choice. They chose to become completely mortal so that they could grow in knowledge and understanding, and so that they could raise a family. That was Adam's chief assignment — to bring life into this world from the spirit world—to begin the mortal processes that would make a place in the world for all his spirit brothers and sisters in heaven. Of course, embodied in such a choice was the consequence of death, because once a man became mortal he must eventually die. Adam knew this because God had told him. He could have stayed in the Garden of Eden perhaps forever; but the purposes for which the world had been created would have been postponed just that long. So Adam chose mortality, and knowledge, and parenthood, and death.

But God did not intend that men should die and remain forever dead. So He ordained Christ to bring the gospel into the world and offer it to the people. As many as would accept and live it would be redeemed and exalted. As many as would not would have to be content with just merely being resurrected. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be

made alive." Adam plunged all humanity into the grave. Christ raised them all — every one. But some would rise to live in mansions with the nobility of heaven, others would be servants, and others would not even see the lights of the glorious city. They would be cast out in outer darkness. Whatever glory a man rose to, it was his just reward for what he had earned during his life. If a man were to aspire to associating with God and Christ in the life hereafter, he must keep all the commandments while he was here.

What must a man do in this life if he desired to dwell with God in the next? Lamoni wanted to know.

Ammon told him. He must have faith first; and then he must repent.

Ammon went on; but Lamoni pondered upon the repentance. He could see it all now. The chopping block, worn down and sodden with blood. Endless lines of silent servants—not servants, men they were. Men just like himself. He didn't know how many. He hadn't counted them. But for some subtle trick of fate he had been a servant, and they had been kings. Perhaps they would sit in mansions. He hoped so. He mortally hoped so. Perhaps the greatest trial of their lives

amounted to their obedience to him. They had obeyed. They had bowed under his sword. And what was his own trial? Perhaps merely the government of men. O why had he been so hard a master? Why had he not found some other way? It was all he had ever known—all he had ever been taught; and yet he could not lay the blame to his ancestry and tradition; a man was his own agent. Ancestry and tradition would have their own sins to answer for. Lamoni could not lean on them. Not now that he knew. He was responsible for his own actions and decisions. Why had he not seen it before?

In an overcoming remorse Lamoni slid like a lifeless lump to the floor. Servants tenderly lifted him and carried him to his bed. His sons and daughters mourned, and his faithful wife watched over him. There was no sign of life, but she would not give up. On the third day her friends tried to persuade her to admit that he was dead and allow them to bury him. But she held off stoutly.

“They tell me that he stinketh,” she was heard to say; “but to me he stinketh not.”

At last she called Ammon in and asked his advice. Ammon assured her that Lamoni was not dead, but that his body was asleep

while his spirit was being shown wonderful things.

On the fourth day Lamoni arose. He was not dead. He was more alive than he had ever imagined he could be.

"The blessed Lord has forgiven me," he told his wife and friends. Then he told of all the things the Spirit had made manifest to him. And he told them with such knowledge and power that his entire household were converted to the gospel of Christ.

Lamoni looked upon Ammon now, not as a servant, and not as the Great Spirit, but as a wonderful friend and brother in Christ. A wonderful brother indeed, for "how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who bringeth good tidings and publisheth peace!" Lamoni would like to publish the peace that had come into his own soul. He had been ignorant and barbarious. Now he knew the Lord, which knowledge brought its own refinement. He had been sick with sin. Now he was well.

What could he do for his friends? Would Ammon like half of his kingdom? Would he liked to marry his daughter?

Ammon did not want a half kingdom or a whole kingdom. He could have been king

of the Nephite if he had chosen. But he would rather be a missionary. Nor did he accept the marriage. A missionary has a full time job. But there was one thing Lamoni could do for him. Ammon had learned that two of his brothers were in prison in the neighboring province of Middoni. Would Lamoni use his influence with the ruler of that land to release Ammon's brothers?

More than that, Lamoni would go with him. He knew the king of Middoni. "His name is Antiomno. He is a good friend unto me. I will flatter him."

It now occurred to Lamoni that Ammon had received no letter or no messenger.

"How do you know that your brothers are in prison in the land of Middoni?" he asked of Ammon.

"The Spirit hath made it known unto me," Ammon answered.

Yes, Lamoni thought; the Spirit could do all of that. They drove on toward the land of Middoni in the handsome chariot that was Lamoni's personal coach.

But before they had come to the land where Antiomno ruled they were approached in the road by a more splendid chariot. It was the

royal coach of King Laman himself, come down from the city of Nephi.

It was plain to see that the old king was fairly beside himself with anger. He had been annoyed that his son Lamoni had not bestirred himself to come to his birthday feast. Surely he could not have forgotten the day. It was the same day every year. Old and ailing and beset with all the cares of being king, Laman could still take time out to drive over to the land of Ishmael to see for himself what it was that had kept his son Lamoni from coming up to the feast.

Lamoni thought back. The three days of the feast were those same three days when he had lain in his bed chamber. He explained to his father that he could not have come. Yes, he had intended to all along. Ammon had prepared the chariot for the journey. But something had come up. Something wonderful.

King Laman noticed the Nephite. A Nephite was a murderer and a thief and a liar. All Nephites were murderers and thieves and liars. Everybody knew that. What was Lamoni doing in the company of a Nephite?

Lamoni tried to plead for his friend. It was no use. If Lamoni defended him he was

no better than a Nephite. Laman would take away his kingdom.

That would be all right. Lamoni did not need a kingdom. He rather thought he would like to be a missionary anyway, like his friend Ammon. He would even like to divide his great new joy with his father.

The old king was thoroughly enraged. He drew his sword and would have killed his son. Ammon had not interfered until now. But he was not going to stand by and see his fine new Christian friend, his newest convert, die before he was even baptized! Ammon raised his sword and intercepted the blade intended for Lamoni. The old king's sword clattered to the road. His arm crumpled to his side. The impact sent him to his knees in the dust. He looked up at Ammon standing over him with his whole sword still well in hand and muttered something that sounded like:

"Brother, you've got a powerful right!"

Ammon held his pose and expression, even though the king looked so helpless and afraid.

"Would you like half my kingdom?" the older man muttered. "Would you like to marry my daughter?"

"I want no kingdoms," Ammon said firmly; "I do not want to marry your daughter. You

can restore Lamoni's kingdom to him; and you can promise never to interfere in his affairs again. And—if you can spare it—I would like a signed statement from you giving me and my brothers the privilege of teaching your people — of merely offering them the gospel; that is all I ask.”

“You are a generous man,” said King Laman. “I will agree to anything you say.”

As Ammon wrote out the permit for the king to sign, the old man inquired why he did not change his course and come to the capital instead.

“I shall greatly desire to see you,” the king confessed.

But Ammon answered that no, he would be going now to the land of Middoni to get his brothers out of jail.

“Then as soon as you are through with your business in Middoni, then will you come? You have shown great power over my body. I am anxious to see what you can do for my soul.” He signed the document jerkily. He had only lately learned to write. The one commendable thing that the wicked “priests” of Noah had done was teach the Lamanites to read and write.

Ammon did not make an answer. He must

be off to the land of Middoni. He put his sword back in its sheath and offered the old man an arm. King Laman rose unsteadily upon his feet. Ammon picked up the hapless sword from the dust and put it in his shaking hand. Then he saluted the king of the Lamanites and mounted to his place in the chariot beside his friend Lamoni.

The old king brushed the dust from his knees and gave the order that would turn his chariot about. He would go home and think.

Ammon did not arrive a minute too soon at Middoni. It was a good thing that he had the king's document so there would be no more delay. His brothers were naked and bruised, and starved into the very shadows of death. They could not have held out much longer. Ammon wept when he saw them. But hunger and cold and shame are part of the trials of missionaries. They were fed and clothed and set free to go on about their great work.

Ammon did not get around to visit the capital and accept the old king's invitation personally to bring him the gospel; his duties as president of the mission and his labors in the provinces of Ishmael and Middoni kept him busy. But he sent his brother Aaron, and the visit was a great success. Aaron was no less

a missionary than his brother. King Laman's conversion was as spectacular and as complete as that of his son Lamoni.

Had King Laman lived longer the great missionary venture might have been easier. But shortly after his conversion he died. His worthy son, heretofore unmentioned, but a staunch and admirable brother of Lamoni and also a convert to the church, succeeded his father as Lamanite king. He broke the tradition of taking the name of Laman and chose the name Anti-Nephi-Lehi instead. But certain unscrupulous men, descendants of those renegade priests of Noah who had slain the prophet Abidani, opposed the missionary movement; and these caused a rebellion to overthrow the kingdom. This was, or seemed at the time, an unfortunate stroke, as it placed the new converts in a dangerous position with the usurping dynasty. There was a war. But it was a war on one side only. The converted Christians buried their swords in the ground and walked out to meet their armed enemies, singing hymns and saying prayers of thankfulness for the gospel. Without the slightest resistance one thousand and five Christian Lamanites died. "And there was not a wicked man slain among them." They had buried

their swords as a testimony that they had repented of generations of bloodshed. When their enemies saw that they would lie down and die rather than shed more blood there was a great spirit of repentance which swept over many of the swordsmen; more than a thousand of them laid down their swords and joined their converted brethren. The remainder of the Lamanite army ceased to kill Lamanites and turned their fury against the Nephite nation far away to the north. In this spurt of rage they completely destroyed the great Nephite outpost city of Ammonihah and part of the city of Noah before they were repulsed.

Ammon and his brothers had converted thousands of Lamanites during their thirteen years' mission. They led these northward to the land of Zarahemla; and the Nephites gave them the province of Jershon on the east coast, just east of the province of Zarahemla, for their new home. The government set up a militia of Nephite soldiers to further protect them from any possible Lamanite attack.

During this thirteen years much had happened to the Nephites in the land of Zarahemla. During the first year the government had changed from a kingdom to a judgeship, a form of theo-democracy which elected a

chief judge and sustained a high priest, which officers were responsible for maintaining peace and harmony in both nation and church. Mosiah the Second had set up a new and judicious set of laws designed to fit the needs of the new form of government, and the people had voted to accept and respect them.

In the year ninety-one B.C., **Alma the Second** Alma the First, after having ordained his son Alma the Second to succeed him as chief high priest of the church, passed away. And in that same year the last and the greatest Nephite king, Mosiah the Second, died also. Mosiah's four sons were on a mission; so Alma the Second was elected by the people to be the first Nephite chief judge. The combined offices of high priest and chief judge comprising the highest judiciary body, Alma was within himself the Supreme Court of his nation.

Each of the provinces elected its local chief judge and sustained its local high priest to serve the cities of the provinces; and the cities had lesser judges and lesser priests. Thus we find local judges and priests in the provinces of Gideon, Manti, Ammonihah, Jershon, et cetera. The court of each of the provinces

was made up of the two officers as in the Supreme Court. Local cases, so long as they did not involve too great a crime, were tried in the provinces. But if the issue involved anything so serious as murder, the case was brought to the Supreme Court at Zarahemla.

The salary of a judge, whether national, provincial, or city, was set at one senine of gold for a day. A senine of gold would buy one measure of barley. It was the smallest gold coin. The wage of the high priest he would receive in heaven. There was no salary on earth. The gospel was free, and the labor of the high priest was a labor of love and worthiness, and ordination.

For eight years Alma the Second received his well earned senine a day for his services as chief judge. But he never in his life accepted so much as one senine for his labor in the church.

But his troubles began as early as his first year, when a man by the name of Nehor was brought to him for trial. Nehor was a trouble maker, and had been for some time, because he preached the devil's doctrine of do as you please without fear — all mankind shall be saved at the last day. All his parishioners

Nehor

needed to do was pay Nehor a handsome senine every time he passed the platter and the Lord would take care of them. With so easy a gospel the people flocked to him. And with the people thus taking care of Nehor he became very rich and arrogant.

Alma had watched the operations of Nehor with growing anxiety. He had looked up the statutes in the Mosiahic law and found that there was nothing he could do to stop him. The law Mosiah had made stated plainly that any citizen was entitled to believe what he believed. There was a punishment for lying. But Nehor swore that he believed. Alma knew that the man lied; but there was no way to prove it in court. From the standpoint of the church, which contributed the ecclesiastical half of the Supreme Court, he was just as untouchable, since the law of free agency was as old as God Himself. The law of free agency provides that every soul is entitled to act upon his own choice, upon every matter that confronts him; and if people choose to preach false doctrine, or to adopt it and practice it instead of the true gospel, they are entitled to their choice; and unless they can be rescued from their disillusionment there are kingdoms prepared to receive them. The sad part of it

is that those kingdoms are not so magnificent as the celestial kingdom where God and Christ and the righteous will be at home. But many souls in all generations have selected the lesser orbs, in spite of the fact that all the prophets from earliest times have tried to bring the celestial glory into the focus of the people.

So Alma had watched Nehor with a grieving heart, watched him lead away the weak and wavering into the easy paths of sin and apostasy, and watched him grow fat and rich with the senines they paid for his foolish instructions.

But at last Nehor had overstepped his privileges in the law. He had killed a man. We have met that man before, and we have admired him for his courage and judgment. He was Gideon who in his younger days had figured importantly in the deliverance of the people of Limhi from Lamanite servitude up in the old city of Nephi to the south. Since coming back to Zarahemla he had been active as a teacher and home missionary. He was loved and respected. A great city and a valley to the south of Zarahemla were named in his honor. And when Nehor met him in the road and drew up his chariot to rebuke him for being so old-fashioned as to believe and teach

the gospel, Gideon "withstood him with the words of God." The words of God were a little bit offensive to the rich and comfortable Nehor; so he "drew his sword and smote upon Gideon until he died."

At the trial Nehor pleaded for himself with boldness and arrogance. But Alma was calm and firm in dispensing judgment in this his first case on the bench.

"This is the first time that priestcraft has been introduced among this people," he said, "And you are not only guilty of priestcraft, but you have endeavored to enforce it by the sword; and were priestcraft to be enforced among this people it would prove their entire destruction."

The other count, the matter of the murder, was dealt with with equal directness:

"And you have shed the blood of a righteous man—a man who has done much good among this people; and were we to spare you, his blood would come upon us for vengeance. Mosiah, our last king, made the law. It was voted upon and accepted by the people. We must abide by the law. You are condemned to die."

The court was adjourned. Nehor was carried up to the top of the hill Manti. There, "be-

tween the heavens and the earth"—perhaps suspended by a rope — he confessed that his teachings were contrary to the word of God. We are not told that this last-minute confession reserved for him any special seat in paradise. We are merely told that after his confession, "there he suffered an ignominious death."

It is unfortunate that his priestcraft did not die with him. Apostates and trouble-makers from that time forward were generally labeled with his name—"after the order of the Nehors."

As the people grew in prosperity they swelled in pride. Pride brought its own sins and its own negligences. People sought

Alma's Mission

for easier ways than faith and works. Enterprising teachers offered them easier gospels for money. And after eight years of struggling with these elements, Alma retired from his office of chief judge so that he could spend his entire time and energy with the church. The most effective measure to take against priestcraft is enlightenment; so Alma proceeded from city to city and from synagogue to synagogue teaching the plain and simple principles of the gospel. If, as the Nehors taught, we are all working for the same place, by circuitous routes, and if we all arrive at that place—then

that place is *not* the celestial kingdom—because there is only one route to that place, and it is not the route of paid priests and easy works. The Nehor routes may all lead to the same place all right, but it will be a lesser kingdom. There are two lesser kingdoms than the celestial; there is the terrestrial, where will go “the good and amiable people of the earth” who were deceived and blinded by the craftiness of certain teachers and the pride of their own hearts; and there is the Telestial, where will go the souls “who loveth and maketh (such) lies.” God of course is the judge; but Alma wanted to make sure that when he came up for judgment that he would be found to have done his best. So he trudged from city to city preaching, teaching, warning the people of the pitfalls of hell, and encouraging them with the wonderful hope—if they would have faith and repent — of the celestial kingdom, the place where Christ will dwell. He taught in Zarahemla, in Gideon, in Melek; he **Ammonihah** taught in Ammonihah, perhaps the most wicked city in the entire Nephite nation. Here the gospel of the Nehors had taken a deep root and had gone to seed. The city’s main industry seems to have been a college for lawyers. But the lawyers it

produced were taught to twist and mutilate the law, especially scriptural law, into unrecognizable limbo. They were taught to agitate arguments so that cases could be pressed against citizens accused of disturbing the peace — a system of “make” work for ambitious lawyers. The city attracted a motley flock of lesser judges, schooling them into more profitable careers than their meagre but legitimate senine a day could offer them. It was a racket. And when Alma made his appearance in Ammonihah the lawyers there were ready for argument. Alma had made one substantial convert in a wealthy citizen named Amulek; and the two teamed together like Paul and Barnabas and gave forth with the words of God. In one street meeting there was a terrible debate. The lawyers tried to corner Alma and Amulek. They tried to get them to contradict and deny their words. They offered them money, great sums of money, to deny their testimonies. Alma and Amulek withstood them on every count. The result was that Zeezrom, one of the chiefest lawyers, was brought to repentance. He later became a valiant missionary for the church. But another result was that Alma and Amulek were cast into prison, and of the people who were found in sympathy with the

doctrines they taught, the men were stoned out of the city and their wives and children were burned in a terrible fire. Alma and Amulek were made to witness the burning as part of their punishment for preaching in that wanton city. Alma prophesied that for these great sins the city of Ammonihah would be destroyed. This, of course, according to the mighty lawyers of that great city, was not possible. What fate could raise a hand big enough to crush so important a city!

Alma and Amulek were threatened with execution on some trumped-up charge—blasphemy against the city and provincial officials—which shows how far the lawyers of Ammonihah had sunk in error. They had greatly overstepped their legal powers, the burning of those innocent women and children presenting another example. If the lawyers had observed the laws of the land not one of those atrocities could have happened. But this was an outpost city, and the lawyers had taken the law into their own hands. The judges smote Alma and Amulek on their cheeks; they deprived them of their clothing, and gave them no food nor water for many days. But finally the day and the hour came when there was an adjustment to be made. The judges and lawyers had

assembled within the prison to inflict one last round of indignities upon the unfortunate prisoners. It was the twelfth day of the tenth month in the year eighty-one B.C. The chief judge of the province and all the lesser dignitaries lined up and took turns striking the prisoners. The chief judge challenged them with these words:

“If you have the power of God deliver yourselves from these bands, and then we will believe that the Lord will destroy this people according to your words.”

Every petty lawyer all down the line repeated the same challenge, word for word. When the last one had spat his indignities the missionaries rose to their feet in the power of God. Alma cried out:

“How long shall we suffer these great afflictions, O Lord? O Lord, give us strength according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto deliverance!”

Their bands fell loose about their feet. The judges, lawyers, and teachers were terrified. In their scramble to escape they fell to the ground. At this time a great quaking shook the earth. The prison walls fell apart. The entire structure collapsed upon the bewildered taunters. Every one was killed in the crash. Only Alma

and Amulek stood unhurt. So great had been the noise of the quake and the tumbling prison that hundreds of townspeople rushed to the scene of the disaster. When Alma and Amulek alone walked out of the crumbled ruins the people fled in terror, "even as a goat fleeth with her young from two lions."

Alma and Amulek were now through with the city of Ammonihah. And God was nearly through with it. The episode had happened on the twelfth day of the tenth month, eighty-one B.C. On the fifth day of the second month of the next year a battle cry was sounded from the direction of the great outpost city of Ammonihah. It was a terrible alarm, and the citizens of the Nephite interior tried to rally together an army and hurry to the assistance of that distressed city. But they were too late. They found the city of Ammonihah in ashes; and the stench of burning flesh was so noisome that they made a detour in the national highway and avoided the smelly ruins for many years. They called it "the Desolation of the Nehors."

(We already know who destroyed the city of Ammonihah. When the Lamanite rebel army had grown sick after slaying the thousand-and-five of their own people—those Lamanites

who were converted through the efforts of Ammon and his brothers, those Christian Lamanites who had buried their swords and taken up the faith—the army, under the leadership of renegade priests, apostates left over from the days of the wicked King Noah, charged northward to spend their fury on the Nephites. The outpost city of Ammonihah fell first in their path. And they destroyed it completely before the Nephite army had time to act on the alarm. The Nephites were able to turn the Lamanite army back before it could inflict much more damage. But enough had already been done to fulfill a certain prophecy made only a few short months before. The great city of Ammonihah was now a smelling heap. God and the Lamanites had humbled it.)

Alma saw to it that the demise was properly recorded: “Every living soul of the Ammonihahites was destroyed, and also their great city, which they said God could not destroy, because of its greatness. In one day it was left desolate; and the carcasses were mangled by dogs and wild beasts of the wilderness.”

The efforts of Alma and Amulek began to be rewarding. They did not want destruction to come to the cities; they wanted repent-

ance and reconstruction. The testimony of Ammonihah, and the smell, went a long way toward bringing about the desired results. Many worthy men joined them in their cause. Zeezrom became a great missionary. They minced no words about which sins they were trying to uproot. They preached "against lying, deceiving, envying, strife, malice, reviling, stealing, robbing, plundering, murdering, committing adultery, and all manner of lasciviousness, crying that these things ought not so to be." For a brighter outlook they offered the wonderful atonement of the Son of God, which atonement should very shortly take place. Many people were interested in this hope and asked the priests and missionaries where Christ would come when He made His appearance. They were told that after His resurrection He would come to visit them. This was very satisfying and brought great peace and joy to the Nephite people.

Ammon's Return It was while Alma was on one of his missions to Manti, one of the farthest south of the Nephite provinces, that he met with his old friend Ammon. It was a joyous meeting after thirteen years. Ammon had left his thousands of Lamanite converts in the strip

of wilderness south of Manti, and he and his brothers had gone on ahead to see what provision the Nephites were willing to make for this Christian re-inforcement from the far south. The Nephites were willing, as has been stated, to give them the province of Jershon, on the east coast by the sea, in a spot most protected from any possible Lamanite harassment. The Lamanite harassment was not long in coming. The rebel army had followed their flight, and no sooner were they established in the protected land of Jershon than the great Lamanite army, still officered by apostate former Nephites, closed in for trouble; and the bloodiest battle of Nephite history up to that year, seventy-seven B.C. was waged. Tens of thousands of Lamanites fell, and the slaughter among the Nephites was tremendous. Piles of dead bodies littered the land and the mourning was awful. Some of these dead, says Alma, died to enter into a state of endless woe, and some others died to be raised to dwell at the right hand of God, in a state of never-ending happiness. His conjecture is as good as his history:

“And thus we see how great the iniquity of man is because of sin and transgression, and the power of the devil . . . O that I were

an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth."

The Lamanite army was successfully driven back; but there was another blotch of sorrow for Alma that appeared very shortly in the person of Korihor. Korihor was a follower of

Korihor the gospel of Nehor. He went about the country preaching the same troublesome untruths:

"Why do ye yoke yourselves with such foolish things? Why do ye look for a Christ? No man can know of anything which is to come." (Perhaps the devil does not possess any forward-looking prophetic capabilities; but he has no right to limit the vision of the prophets.) Prophecies, to Korihor, were foolish traditions of the fathers. And to believe—"it is the effect of a frenzied mind—derangement." And sins—there were no sins; if a man prospered above his brother it was because of his genius; if he conquered it was because of his strength; and death was the end of all. His

favorite sermon was: Do as you please; no God will ever call you to account for your sins because there is, he said, no God.

He made the tactical error of going into the land of Jershon and trying to ply his unholy trade among Ammon's newly converted Lamanites. They had paid out enough to the devil before they had joined the church, and they were taking no chance with Korihor and his priestcraft. They bound him securely and carried him out beyond the city limits and left him. He traveled from place to place; and minor courts hailed him in and tried him for trouble-making. In the city of Gideon during his trial he went on to blasphemy, referring to God as "some unknown being—a being who never has been seen or known, who never was nor ever will be." For this bold blasphemy he was bound over to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court was composed of Nephihah, successor to Alma as the Chief Judge of the nation, and Alma, the president or high priest of the church. Here Korihor raved on as before, making the additional mistake of accusing the high priest of glutting himself upon the labors of the people. Alma was indignant at the accusation.

"I have never received so much as even

one senine for my labor; neither has any of my brethren!" The gospel is free. It has always been free. No true priest will ever make a charge for his services. "I have labored with mine own hands for my support, notwithstanding my many travels round about the land to declare the word of God unto my people." The reward of a priest is the joy he feels in his heart for having imparted the gospel to others. Could there be any deceit in a joy that was so perfect?

Korihor said there could be deceit.

Did Korihor believe there was a God?

No, Korihor did not.

Alma bore him his testimony. "Ah, yes, and Korihor, you too know there is a God—but you are possessed of a lying spirit."

"Show me a sign!" cried the possessed man. That was a sign in itself; it is a wicked and adulterous generation that seeketh after a sign. Any time that a person demands a sign it can be depended upon that that person falls into the class of the wicked and adulterous.

"You have had signs enough," Alma remonstrated. "Will you tempt your God?" Alma the high priest counted up the evidences of a God. There were the testimonies of those present; there were the prophets of former

times; there were the scriptures; there was the earth and everything upon the face of it; its motion; all the planets which move in their ordained courses—all these witness that there is a God, a Supreme Creator.

“I will deny, except you show me a sign,” said the stubborn Korihor.

Alma was grieved. “Well, it is better that your soul should be lost than that you should be the means of bringing destruction to many souls by your lying and flattering words. So, if you deny again, God will smite you, that ye shall become dumb—never more to open your mouth to deceive this people.”

Korihor wavered ever so slightly. “I do not deny the existence of a God,” the devil prodded him, “but I do not believe that there is a God; and I say also that you do not know that there is a God”; the devil tugged out another denial, “and except you show me a sign, *I will not believe.*”

“You will have your sign,” Alma said sadly. “You will be struck dumb. In the name of God, you shall be struck dumb. You shall no more have utterance.” Alma the prophet had pronounced the sign. In the authority of the priesthood, which is the power of God, or that portion of the power delegated to righteous

men, he had pronounced it. The devil in Korihor wilted before that power. Korihor was dumb.

Nephihah the chief judge passed a note to the stricken man:

“Are you convinced of the power of God?”

Korihor put forth his own hand and wrote an answer:

“I know that I am dumb, for I cannot speak; and I know that nothing save it were the power of God could bring this upon me; yes, and I also knew that there was a God. But the devil deceived me; for he appeared unto me in the form of an angel, and he said: ‘Go and reclaim this people, for they have all gone astray after an unknown God.’ And he said: ‘There is no God’; yes, and he taught me what I should say. And I have taught his words; I taught them because they were pleasing to the carnal mind; I taught them with so much success that I verily believed that they were true; I have withstood the truth, even until I have brought this great curse upon me.”

That had been written in answer to the chief judge. Now Korihor wrote to Alma the high priest and begged him to restore his speech.

But the sign was not to be so temporary. It was a sign that would go with the sign-seeker throughout the rest of his miserable life.

“If this curse should be taken from you, you would again lead away the hearts of this people; so it shall be as the Lord will.”

The Lord willed to leave the curse where it rested; and the case was dismissed.

Reduced now to the status of a speechless beggar, Korihor wandered the streets, going from house to house, pleading in his voiceless way for food. In a matter of weeks he was found in the proud and pitiless city of the apostate Zoramites south of the land of Jer-shon, and southeast of the city of Zarahemla. The Zoramites had no place for a cast-off, handicapped, former Anti-Christ; so they ran him down in the street and trod him to death.

Nephihah the chief judge published the story of Korihor and posted it throughout the whole Nephite nation. Erstwhile disciples read the notices and changed their ways lest a similar fate overtake them.

When Alma learned of the shameful death of Korihor he made a notation in his journal: “And thus we see the end of him who perverteth the ways of the Lord; and thus we see that

the devil will not support his children at the last day, but doth speedily drag them down to hell.”

**Mission
to the
Zoramites**

The incident of Korihor's peti-
ous death in the city of the Zor-
amites focused the attention of
the church leaders upon that sin-
ful city. Alma took his two
younger sons, Shiblon and Corianton, his long-
time friends the sons of Mosiah, Ammon,
Aaron and Omner, his two most zealous con-
verts whom he had rescued from the doomed
city of Ammonihah, Amulek and Zeezrom,
and the eight of them went on a mission to
the Zoramites.

Here they were grieved to find a complete departure from the faith. Synagogues had been built at great cost. In the center of each stood a high platform, the top of which would admit only one person. On the day that they had selected as their Sabbath the worshippers would assemble in the synagogue and one at a time would mount the platform, or "holy stand," which they called Rameumptom, and would repeat word for word each the same prayer.

“Holy, holy God; we believe that thou art God, and we believe that thou art holy, and

that thou wast a spirit, and that thou art a spirit, and that thou wilt be a spirit forever. Holy God, we believe that thou hast separated us from our brethren; and we do not believe in the tradition of our brethren, which was handed down to them by the childishness of their fathers; but we believe that thou hast elected us to be thy holy children; and also thou hast made it known unto us that there shall be no Christ. But thou art the same yesterday, today, and forever; and thou hast elected us that we shall be saved, whilst all around us are elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell; for the which holiness, O God, we thank thee; and we also thank thee that thou hast elected us, that we may not be led away after the foolish traditions of our brethren, which doth bind them down to a belief of Christ, which doth lead their hearts to wander far from thee, our God. And again we thank thee, O God, that we are a chosen and a holy people. Amen.”

After witnessing one of their worship services Alma and his friend were grieved beyond measure. This would indeed be a difficult field of labor. Alma laid his problem squarely before the Lord:

“O, how long, O Lord, wilt thou suffer

that thy servants shall dwell here below in the flesh, to behold such gross wickedness among the children of men? Behold, O God, they cry unto thee, and yet their hearts are swallowed up in their pride. Behold, O God, they cry unto thee with their mouths, while they are puffed up, even to greatness, with the vain things of the world. Behold, O my God, their costly apparel, and their ringlets, and their bracelets, and their ornaments of gold, and all their precious things which they are ornamented with; and behold, their hearts are set upon them, and yet they cry unto thee and say—'We thank thee, O God, for we are a chosen people unto thee, while others shall perish.' Yea, and they say that thou hast made it known unto them that there shall be no Christ. O Lord God, how long wilt thou suffer that such wickedness and iniquity shall be among this people? O Lord, wilt thou give me strength, that I may bear with mine infirmities. For I am infirm, and such wickedness among this people doth pain my soul. O Lord, my heart is exceedingly sorrowful; wilt thou comfort my soul in Christ. O Lord, wilt thou grant unto me that I may have strength, that I may suffer with patience these afflictions which shall come upon me, because of the iniquity

of this people. O Lord, wilt thou comfort my soul, and give unto me success, and also my fellow laborers who are with me—yea, Ammon, and Aaron, and Omner, and also Amulek and Zeezrom, and also my two sons—yea, even all these wilt thou comfort, O Lord. Yea, wilt thou comfort their souls in Christ. Wilt thou grant unto them that they may have strength, that they may beat their afflictions which shall come upon them because of the iniquities of this people. O Lord, wilt thou grant unto us that we may have success in bringing them again unto thee in Christ. Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious, and many of them are our brethren; therefore, give unto us, O Lord, the power and wisdom that we may bring these, our brethren, again unto thee.”

After this faithful prayer Alma laid his hands upon the heads of his companions and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. And throughout the mission the Lord provided them with every needful thing.

But missionary progress was small. The people were too rich and too proud. There was no place in their synagogues nor any opportunity in their services for missionaries to teach the gospel. It was only among the

poor and outcast that they were able to make any headway, in street meetings and on the hillsides.

In one such hillside meeting Alma delivered the most beautiful sermon on faith anywhere recorded in the scriptures (Alma 32:21-43). In this lesson-parable, with the greatest simplicity possible, he was able to plant the seed of faith in the hearts of many souls. And it was in this same meeting that Amulek made the statement that has made him famous: "This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God."

Some of the other missionaries did not meet with so much success. Shiblon was brutally stoned and imprisoned; but he bore these indignities with patience. And Corianton became discouraged and was enticed away from his field of labor into the land of Siron by the harlot Isabel.

No sooner had the missionaries left the Zoramites than the leaders of that apostate city made a careful survey of the population to see how many of their number had been affected by the words of Alma and his companions. Anyone who had been impressed was expelled from the Zoramite society. All such were cast out. But when these fugitives sought shelter in Ammon's Jershon, the Zoramite so-

ciety was grossly infuriated. They sent threatening communications to the Ammonites demanding that they too expell the homeless converts. But the Ammonites ignored the threats and moved over to make room for these poor unfortunate outcasts.

Now the Zoramite province of Antionum bordered onto a strip of wilderness to the south, which wilderness bordered onto the northeastern outposts of the Lamanites. So it was an easy matter for the angered Zoramites to set up communications with the Lamanites and foment a small war against the province of Jershon. But the Zoramites had not reckoned with the national government, and had not taken into consideration the fact that one seceding state cannot make war upon a loyal one without some interference from the national capital. The movements of the Zoramites were closely watched from Zarahemla; and a new and brilliant commanding general was appointed to meet the trouble—

where it was expected, on the southern border of the land of Jershon. The preparation time was short, but Moroni, the Nephite general, twenty-five years old, brave and cunning,

Zoramite Trouble

General Moroni

was ready on the dividing line when the Zoramite-Lamanite troops appeared. When the attack looked over the defense there was a sudden change of plans. Never before had the Lamanites come up against such magnificent armor. Moroni's soldiers were clothed in a very thick uniform, over-laid with breast-plates, arm shields, and head guards, and supported with the best of weapons. The Zoramite-Lamanite hosts had made no such preparations. The Zoramites, though clothed, were unprotected; the Lamanites, as always, had come to the fight naked; and their weapons were antiquated. Zerahemnah, the Lamanite commander, called off the attack and retreated with his armies into the wilderness. He had it in his mind to wander around in no-man's land until Moroni had lost track of him—then he would make a surprise seige upon the southern Nephite province of Manti up by the headwaters of the River Sidon.

But Moroni was ready even for this. He sent spies to follow Zerahemnah. And where his own intelligence left off, he was willing to accept a little prophetic assistance. So he sent to Alma and asked him to petition the Lord to see what more he should do. And through

Alma the Lord gave away Zerahemnah's secret maneuver.

So when Zerahemnah arrived in Manti with his wandering troops, Moroni was there already and waiting with patches of soldiers secreted behind every hill and more entrenched in the valley in a great U-shaped trap.

Uncounted bodies were thrown into the waters of the Sidon river and were carried north into the Pacific ocean to be salted down in their watery graves until the resurrection. Some were Nephites; but by far the greater number were Lamanites; Zerahemnah himself was scalped; but he lived to make a covenant with Moroni that the Lamanites would never again come up to battle against the Nephites. If that treaty could have been kept perhaps the history from then on would have been somewhat different. And perhaps it could have been kept if it had not been for a certain Nephite named Amalickiah. At any rate the treaty was kept for nearly two years.

After the Zoramite mission Alma called each of his three sons to his home in Zarahemla to give them his blessing and instruction. Helaman, the oldest, was commended for his faithfulness and was instructed in

**Alma
Blesses
His Sons**

the keeping of the records and uses of the sacred relics of the priesthood, because he was to succeed his father in the leadership of the church. Concerning the Jaredite record inscribed on the twenty-four gold plates that the men of Limhi had found in the north contingent Alma gave Helaman special warning. The message of the book was to be widely circulated; but the symbols of priestcraft, those combinations and oaths and covenants, the secret combinations that had first been the craft of Cain and later the downfall of the Jaredite nation—all these were to be carefully kept from the Nephites lest they should be tempted to try them out and thus bring about their own destruction prematurely. (Ironically enough, carefully as the prophets guarded these evil informations, still at a period just a few years later the devil himself was able to reveal enough of his secrets to Gadianton and Kishkumen to form an organized crime machine, the workings of which were blamed for the final destruction of the white race in America.)

Many priceless proverbs are recorded in Alma's heart-to-heart talk with his oldest son:

“O remember, my son Helaman, how strict are the commandments of God. . . . Trust not these secret plans (of the Jaredites) unto this

people, but teach them an everlasting hatred against sin and iniquity. . . . Teach them to withstand every temptation of the devil, with their faith on the Lord Jesus Christ. Teach them to never be weary of good works, but to be meek and lowly in heart; for such shall find rest in their souls. O remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God. Cry unto God for all thy support; yea, let all thy doing be unto the Lord. . . . Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and He will direct thee for good . . . Do not let us be slothful because of the easiness of the way."

Shiblon, the second son, likewise received a wonderful blessing from his father;

"There is no other means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ . . . See that ye are not lifted up unto pride; see that ye do not boast in your own wisdom, nor of your much strength. Use boldness, but not overbearance; and see that ye bridle your passions, that ye may be filled with love; see that ye refrain from idleness. Do not pray as the Zoramites do, for ye have seen that they pray to be heard of men, and to be praised for their wisdom. Do not say 'O God, I thank thee that we are better than our brethren'; but rather

say, 'O Lord, forgive my unworthiness, and remember my brethren in mercy.' Now go, my son, and teach the word unto this people. Be sober. My son, farewell."

To his youngest son, Corianton, Alma had more to say. Corianton had made a serious mistake; and Alma meant to get to the bottom of his son's trouble and help him out of it;

"I would to God that ye had not been guilty of so great a crime . . . Yea, she (Isabel) did steal away the hearts of many; but that was no excuse for thee, my son. Thou shouldst have tended to the ministry wherewith thou wast entrusted . . . Suffer not the devil to lead away your heart again after those wicked harlots. O my son, how great iniquity ye brought upon the Zoramites; for when they saw your conduct they would not believe my words . . . Seek not after riches nor the vain things of this world; for behold, you cannot carry them with you."

Corianton's understanding was not quite clear on at least two important doctrines of the gospel. He did not understand the actuality of the resurrection of the dead; and he did not know how the principle of repentance operates. So his father patiently explained these two subjects with careful detail. The time being seventy-three years before Christ it was

necessary for Alma to explain that there would be no resurrection until after Christ Himself had resurrected. But this principle was just as true and just as important and just as communicable seventy-three years before Christ was to be born as it would be thirty-three years after. Time makes no difference to a truth so big as the resurrection.

“Is not a soul at this time as precious unto God as a soul will be at the time of His coming? Is it not as easy at this time for the Lord to send His angel to declare these glad tidings unto us as unto our children? Is it not as necessary?”

Alma explained that after death we are all assigned to paradise, both the wicked and the righteous, in separate sections and conditions, where we will remain until our individual resurrections are ready to be accomplished. We shall not all arise together. The righteous will be considered first. But every single soul will arise. It is a law and none can escape. There will be some who have sinned so greatly that they will be ashamed to go get their bodies and show them. But they will have to arise anyway, and stand in their corruption before God and be judged.

Alma spoke of the resurrection as a restor-

ation, of as a restoring of the body to the spirit.

“Do not suppose, because it has been spoken concerning restoration, that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. *Wickedness never was happiness.*”

The doctrine of repentance was beautifully explained by Alma to this son who needed so badly to know about repentance.

“There is a law given, and a punishment affixed . . .” The wages of sin is death, and justice would have it so. And *justice* would get its dues, hard as they are, if it were not that God has offered us *mercy*. The only way we can get mercy is through His Son Jesus Christ. And we apply for mercy through repentance of our sins. And if we repent and obtain mercy, we can then bypass justice and go on—not as fast, perhaps, as if we had not sinned; but we are placed back upon the highway toward our original goal. Those who do not take advantage of the mercy offered through Jesus Christ must necessarily suffer the rewards of justice.

“The plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God Himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God

might be a perfect, just God, *and a merciful God also* . . . There is a law given, and a punishment affixed, and a repentance granted; which repentance mercy claimeth; otherwise, justice claimeth the creature and executeth the law, and the law inflicteth the punishment . . . for justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus none but the truly penitent are saved . . .

“Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point because of your sins, by denying the justice of God; but do let the justice of God, and His mercy, and His long-suffering have full sway in your heart; and let it bring you down to the dust in humility.”

Alma closed his remarks to his youngest son with the reminder that the young man was still called to preach the word of God.

“And now, my son, go thy way, declare the word with truth and soberness, that thou mayest bring souls unto repentance, that the great plan of mercy may have claim upon them. And may God grant unto you even according to my words.”

Alma's patience and understanding and wisdom in teaching his sons was productive of great good. Helaman and Shiblon each in turn served as president of the church. And Corian-

ton would have had the same great calling had he not chosen to go with the ships of Hagoth with a supply convoy destined for emigrants to the far north. (It is not recorded that he ever returned, or that he ever arrived at his intended destination. It may be that he was on one of the ships which was never reported—until hundreds of years later when we learn that those stray ships of Hagoth peopled the Pacific Islands).

Alma's sons set out upon new missions; and Alma himself could not rest so he went out one last time. Then one day he called Helaman to him and gave him his final instructions for the church. He confided to his oldest son a revelation he had had concerning the ultimate destruction of the Nephite race. Then he gave his other sons one last blessing. He blessed the land with a two-way blessing; cursed should be this land to any and all who do wickedly; and the same ground would be blessed for the righteous. Then he blessed the church, and all who should stand fast in the faith. Then he left Zarahemla by the road which led to the city of Melek. He was never heard from again. His sons and the people came to the conclusion that the Lord had taken him for His own purposes, as he had

taken Moses and Elijah. Thus passed the greatest teacher of the Nephite nation since Nephi.

The Lamanite treaty, or covenant, pledging that they would **Amalickiah** never come again to war against the Nephites had stood for nearly two years; and perhaps it could have stood much longer had not Amalickiah, a large and strong man among the Nephites, aspired to overthrow the democratic government of nearly twenty years' standing and plunge his civilization backward into a kingdom. Of course, he hoped by deft maneuvering to obtain this kingdom for himself. He succeeded in flattering a large number of lesser judges, the governors of cities and provinces, to support him in the "election," promising them posts of importance in his "kingdom." Fortunately, Helaman and his church workers had been diligent in trying to promote unity and righteousness; so by a narrow margin, Amalickiah did not win. However, he was successful in drawing away a large number of dissenters, and these apostatized from the church and seceded from the union.

Moroni, loyal commander of the Nephite troops, recognizing what a grave danger Amalickiah and his apostates presented, was inspired to rip a section from his coat and make a flag,

which became the national banner or Title of Liberty. Then he knelt down and prayed mightily that God would preserve that liberty. And with his pennant waving from the top of a pole he proceeded to recruit his people. The banner read:

"In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives and our children."

Amalickiah, seeing that Moroni intended to preserve the peace, gathered his dissenters and proceeded to flee toward the borders of the Lamanites. Moroni and his troops tried to head him off. He succeeded in capturing Amalickiah's hosts, and in persuading most of them to re-unite with the democratic government; guards eluded Moroni and escaped into Lamanite territory.

Moroni knew then that his time was short and his task was great. He must fortify the Nephite boundaries as they had never been fortified before. Amalickiah would be back just as soon as he could persuade the Lamanites to break their treaty. And Moroni, knowing Amalickiah, and knowing the Lamanites, knew that it would not be long.

Amalickiah worked fast. He worked on the

Lamanite king first, flattering him and filling him with propaganda designed to feather his war bonnet. The king finally ruffled to the occasion and consented to war. But the Lamanite army felt different about it. Perhaps most of them had stood on the banks of the Sidon not two years before and had seen their commander scalped and their comrades floating in their blood northward toward the western sea, and had made the solemn covenant with Moroni never to fight again. Lehonti, the new Lamanite general, had strong feelings about the matter. It is unfortunate that his strongest feeling was fear. He took his troops and marched to the national armory on top of the hill Antipas in the land of Onidah, and secured his men in the fort. Amalickiah with his own bodyguard and a few of the king's men followed Lehonti. His intention was strictly bloodless. He camped at the foot of the hill and sent messages up to Lehonti. He merely wanted to talk with him. Lehonti was skeptical. On the fourth try Amalickiah himself went up the hill, and Lehonti listened. Amalickiah would rest his few sleeping troops at the foot of the hill. Lehonti was to come down during the night with the Lamanite army and surround Amalickiah's unsuspecting men. In the morning,

Amalickiah, his face saved by sheer arithmetic, would surrender to Lehonti's hundred-to-one quickly and painlessly. Amalickiah asked only one stipulation for this bloodless surrender—that he be made second in command of the Lamanite armies.

If Lehonti had only had the inspiration to seize upon this renegade and put him into prison the history of two nations might have been different. But Lehonti and the Lamanites of this period were creatures of fear instead of inspiration. He surrounded Amalickiah, and made him second in command. And on the way back to the city of Nephi, the Lamanite capital, Lehonti, the first in command, suffered a slow and painful death — bloodless of course — Amalickiah's mess sergeant merely poisoned him by degrees.

Amalickiah, now first in command of the Lamanite army, marched on toward the capital at the head of his unnumbered brown brothers. As he neared the governing city, King Laman himself came out to meet him and congratulate him upon his successful and bloodless merging of the troops. Amalickiah sent a few chosen men on ahead to bow before the king in the road. The king, copying a Nephite courtesy, raised his arm in his best Indian "How" as a

signal for the kneeling messengers to arise. The lead one arose with a dagger in his hand. There was no need for even a "stick-'em-up," or "reach." The king's arm was already above his head. And the dagger sank into his heart. The servants of King Laman fled in terror; and Amalickiah's servants called back to their master: "Behold, the servants of the king have stabbed him to the heart, and he has fallen and they have fled! Come and see!"

Amalickiah brought up his troops to the spot where King Laman lay in his blood.

"Whosoever loved the king, let him go forth, and pursue his servants that they may be slain." A large number broke ranks and pursued the innocent servants. The servants however were able to get away. (They got far away, and joined the Nephites in the land of Zarahemla, settling in the province of Jershon with Ammon's Lamanite converts. Nine years later one of them was able to prove himself a great hero to the Nephite cause.)

So far Amalickiah's carefully laid plans had worked with precision. Now all he had to do was go to the queen and tell her how sorry he was that she was a widow. Was there anything that he could do in his humble way to

comfort her? There was; and he did; and he married her.

As king of the Lamanite nation Amalickiah's first official act was to declare war on the Nephites. It developed into one of the longest wars, and the most detailed one in the book.

All of Amalickiah's treacherous plans had been accomplished within a very few months. But when he sent his armies northward to attack the Nephites there were great surprises in store for him. Moroni had worked hard and fast. The smelting outpost city of Ammonihah which had been burned to the ground nine years before was now a bristling fort, surrounded by a high embankment and further protected by a moat. Baffled, the Lamanites retreated and made a fresh charge against the city of Noah, heretofore the weakest outpost city, but here they found even more resistance. Angered, the captains swore they would break through or die trying. They all died trying; and more than a thousand of their men died with them. But not a single Nephite was killed in the skirmish. The Lamanites went home and told Amalickiah that his war was not profitable.

This was Amalickiah's first great set-back. He cursed God and swore that he would drink the blood of Moroni.

The Nephite general did not slacken his defense preparations. He knew that as soon as Amalickiah could raise up new captains he would renew the war. So Moroni fortified every city. He swept out the southeast wilderness where the Zoramites had been and where the Lamanites now had a few scattered settlements. It was Nephite territory. He built strong new cities; Moroni by the east sea; above it and also on the seashore, Nephiah, named after the chief judge; north of it the city of Lehi, named for his second general; and many other coastal and border cities. Then he built a great wall from east to west, a fortified national boundary between the Land of the Nephites to the north and the land of the Lamanites to the south. (Miles of ruins of such a wall have now been discovered, running east and west through sections of the Andes.)

During these preparations Moroni had his set-backs also, consisting of dissensions and uprisings. These were successfully quelled; but the breaches made a sufficient gap in the Nephite security for Amalickiah to renew his attack. And trouble was again upon the Nephites.

The war was detailed and bloody. But there are a few points that are valuable to us, and a few characters who were brave and noble in

their defense of right. No one can read the last twenty chapters of Alma without thrilling at the worth of freedom, and without joining in a prayer for liberty and righteousness. The chapters are filled with alternatives. If the Nephites had kept a righteous unity Amalickiah and the Lamanites could not have wedged in. And on the other hand, if the president of the church had resisted the inspiration to lead two thousand young Lamanites, sons of Ammon's converts, to the defense of their adopted faith and race, perhaps much more blood and many more cities would have been lost. If the mothers of these two thousand stripling warriors had ceased to pray for their youthful sons, perhaps many of them might never have returned. Every one received a wound; but because of the prayers of their mothers at home they all returned. If Teancum, third in command and brave beyond the call of duty, had not dared to steal into Amalickiah's tent and stab the sleeping tyrant perhaps the turning point of the war might have been postponed. If there were any medals to be given for valor Teancum would have received the highest the nation could offer. If this same Teancum had not designed to slay Amalickiah's brother and successor in a similar fashion six years later,

perhaps the war might have been prolonged. This last valiancy cost Teancum his own life; but it marked the end of the war.

Peace and prosperity began to settle once again over the Nephites. But the war had been long and strenuous. The leaders of church, army, and government had spent their vitality. Nephiah the chief judge had died in the early part of the war; Helaman, the president of the church, died within three years after hostilities ceased; Moroni the general within four; Shiblun, Helaman's brother and successor in the church died within six years; and Pahoran, successor to Nephiah the Chief Judge died within seven.

During this interval there was an expansion movement to the far north. Five thousand, four hundred emigrants left in one group to settle the desolate country left barren by the Jaredites. The land was fertile enough, but the timber had been destroyed. It was necessary to take seedling trees and great stores of provisions to these colonies in the north. So Hagoth, an ingenious inventor and adventurer, built a number of ships and launched them, loaded with colonists and supplies, from the west coast at a port

Emigrations to the North Continent

just south of what was then the isthmus, into the Pacific ocean. Some of the ships were able to disembark their cargoes at their intended destination in the north—possibly on the coast of California. But others were unreported. Corianton, Alma's youngest son, went north on one of these ships. When Shiblon would have given him the leadership of the church he had not returned. His return was never reported. (It could be that he arrived in the north and lived the rest of his life as an inconspicuous pioneer; or it could be that he sailed on one of the unreported ships to the Pacific Islands to finish his mission of teaching the forefathers of the Hawaiian people. If so there might be a trace of the blood of Alma preserved in those islands to this day.)

Helaman's son Helaman was made the next leader of the church. Moroni's son Moronihah was appointed the new commander of the army. And Pahoran's son Pahoran was elected to be the new chief judge. But a new menace now arose to scourge the Nephites. It was the organization of the **Gadianton Robbers**. This secret order formed the greatest crime syndicate that had ever operated in the western hemisphere since the days of the Jared-

ites whose bones were now being plowed into the fields of the northern colonists. Helaman had guarded those Jaredite secrets carefully. But the devil had revealed them to his followers the Gadiantons, and blood and terror were the results. Pahoran the Second was murdered. Helaman the Second was elected to take his place. The Gadiantons attempted to kill him also; but their plan was discovered and they did not succeed.

Helaman did well as leader of his church and nation; and he did well as the father of two wonderful sons, Nephi and Lehi. He taught his people and his sons. But the Gadiantons increased in spite of all efforts. Before his death Helaman conferred the offices of the church upon Nephi, and the people elected that same young man to be their chief judge. He governed them in righteousness for nine years. But the Gadiantons continued to grow more powerful. The Lamanites heard that there was internal trouble among the Nephites and they were quick to take advantage. They swept in and laid seige to all the Nephite cities as far north as the southern borders of Bountiful, which was one of the most northern of the established Nephite cities. The capital was temporarily changed from Zarahemla to Boun-

tiful; and General Moronihah did his best to recapture the besieged cities to the south. But after a valiant struggle he was forced to abandon all hopes and use all his strength to hold the few northern cities that were left to the Nephites. Nephi could see that he was making small headway with the government and that his efforts were needed full time in the church. So when the subversive parties of his government tried to elect a lesser man for governor, Nephi gave up the judgment seat without argument and redoubled his efforts in the church. He took his brother Lehi and went on a mission.

Second Mission to the Lamanites

Beginning at Bountiful the missionaries worked south. They made small impression upon the Nephites; but when they came to the besieged city of Zarahemla which was Lamanite-occupied they preached with such power that they baptized eight thousand persons of the occupation forces. With this great success behind them, and this encouragement, the two missionaries went south to the ancient city of Nephi, that great city which Nephi the First had built, which Mosiah the First had vacated, which Zeniff had re-occupied, and which had served as the Lamanite

capital for the past hundred years. There they were promptly put into prison. Further, they were sentenced to be executed.

On the day that they were supposed to be put to death a great crowd, three hundred people, assembled to witness the proceedings. However, the proceedings from there on were not exactly what these witnesses had expected. The two missionaries were encircled about by fire. The fire was obviously burning, yet the missionaries did not burn. This was amazing. The Lamanites stood as if struck dumb. The missionaries were amazed too; but they could see the opportunity to do a little missionary work:

“Fear not, for behold, it is God that has shown unto you this marvelous thing, in the which is shown unto you that ye cannot lay your hands on us to slay us.” An earthquake punctuated the utterance, and three hundred people trembled with the impact. Then a terrible black cloud settled upon the spectators. From somewhere above the cloud they heard a still, mild voice:

“Repent ye, repent ye, and seek no more to destroy my servants whom I have sent unto you to declare good tidings.”

Another earthquake rattled through the prison. Then the voice came again:

“Repent ye, repent ye, for the kingdom of God is at hand; and seek no more to destroy my servants.”

A third earthquake shook the walls. Not a person dared to move. The voice came a third time; but the words were too great to be repeated by man. The earth shook a fourth time.

One in the congregation was a Nephite by birth, and he had once known the faith of his fathers. But he had apostatized from the church and dissented from his native country and cast his lot with the Lamanites. This man noticed that Nephi and Lehi appeared to be conversing with someone above them, and that their faces shone like the faces of angels. The man cried to the crowd to look.

“What do all these things mean?” they asked. “And who is it with whom these men do converse?”

“They do converse with the angels of God,” the man informed them.

“What shall we do, that this cloud of darkness may be removed from overshadowing us?” the people asked.

“You must repent,” answered the Nephite, “and cry unto the voice, even until ye shall

have faith in Christ; and when ye shall do this, the cloud of darkness shall be removed from overshadowing you.”

The people cried unto the voice. They cried until the cloud was removed. When the cloud had dispersed they saw that they were each surrounded by a fire. But when they noticed that there was no harm in it for them their fear subsided and they were filled with unspeakable joy.

“Peace, peace be unto you, because of your faith in my Well Beloved, who was from the foundation of the world.”

Looking up toward the Voice the people saw angels coming down out of heaven. And they were instructed to go forth, to marvel not, nor to doubt, but to go among the people and testify to what they had seen and heard.

Instead of two missionaries now there were three hundred and two who preached the word to the Lamanites. And the Lamanites were converted. They called home their troops which had occupied the Nephite cities for several years. What years of war could not do these missionaries, fired with the Holy Ghost, were able to accomplish in a matter of days. And for the first time in five hundred seventy

years the Lamanites felt the urge to send missionaries to their wayward, Gadianton-infested brothers, the Nephites.

We would think that this great fusion of the faith would solve all the problems and that a great peace would now be possible between two nations who had hated and feared and warred for more than half a millennium. But not so. The devil and all his imps who had pricked at the Nephites through their dark skinned kinsmen for all these generations now abandoned their Lamanite hosts and concentrated upon the Gadiantons among the Nephites. Judges were murdered; laws were changed; the good laws that Mosiah had been inspired to make were twisted and mutilated until there was left no semblance of justice. Offices were filled by Gadianton murderers; and the government was overthrown.

Mission at Home Nephi and his brother Lehi, after their work with the Lamanites, had gone on a mission to the colonists in the far north.

But when they returned to their home country of Zarahemla they found that their people had utterly deserted the faith to follow the Gadiantons. Heartsick, Nephi prayed from the tower in his garden at home in Zarahemla;

and his anguish attracted a large crowd who congregated in the road which ran in front of his home toward the chief market place. The people seemed to have forgotten that this same Nephi only seven years before had been their chief judge, and that he was still president of the church. His prayer interrupted, Nephi turned to reproach the gaping crowd. The things that he told them were sharp and to the point. He prophesied that their chief judge would be found murdered—and runners who were sent from the crowd confirmed it. He was accused of planning the murder, from which accusation he was freed only after he had instructed his taunters where they would find the killer and by what means they could get his confession. The murdered and the murderer were brothers; and both were members of those unholy Gad-iantons.

The Lord commended Nephi for his boldness and steadfastness in the face of so much opposition, and promised him great personal power, that whatever he pronounced against his people the Lord would stand by him and perform it. He was instructed to tell the people:

“Except ye repent ye shall be smitten, even unto destruction.”

Nephi declared it. And when
Civil War the people tried to bind him
and cast him into prison he was
lifted out of their grasp by the power that the
Lord has promised him. And in this way he
appeared, declared, and was rejected in every
congregation of the Nephites. So destruction
began. It began first with war, of the internal
kind. After two years of this it looked as if
destruction were sure. So Nephi pleaded with
the Lord:

“O Lord, do not suffer that
Famine this people shall be destroyed
by the sword; but O Lord, rather
let there be a famine in the land, to stir them
up in remembrance of the Lord their God,
and perhaps they will repent and turn unto
thee.”

And so it was done. There was no rain.
Things dried up. The ground ceased to pro-
duce. Seasons came and went, but there were
no harvests. The people put on sackcloth and
besought their judges to find Nephi and give
him their message:

“Behold, we know that thou art a man of
God, and therefore cry unto the Lord our God
that He turn away from us this famine, lest

all the words which thou hast spoken concerning our destruction be fulfilled.”

Nephi received the message.

“O Lord,” he prayed, “behold this people repenteth; and they have swept away the band of Gadianton from amongst them insomuch that they have become extinct; and they have concealed their secret plans in the earth . . . O Lord, wilt thou hearken unto me, and cause that it may be according to my words, and send forth rain upon the face of the earth, that she may bring forth her fruit, and her grain in the season of grain . . . And now O Lord, wilt thou turn away thine anger, and try again, if they will serve thee?”

So it rained; and in the season of fruit there was fruit; and in the season of grain there was grain.

And before many seasons there were Gadiantons again. The time was very near when the Savior was to be born. And the devil had to get in his last violent thrusts of destruction. The Nephite nation sank to a new low.

Most notable of the Lamanite missionaries was Samuel, who **Samuel the Lamanite** was more than a missionary—he was a prophet, and the only one of his race mentioned by name in the book.

He tried to cry repentance to Zarahemla, but was cast out of that city. So he returned and shouted his message from the wall:

The sword of justice hangs over the Nephite people. In four hundred years it will fall—the sword of famine, pestilence, and war. Were it not for the few righteous, whom God respects, fire would come down now and devour this great city of Zarahemla. Woe to the city of Gideon; woe to all the Nephite cities. Nothing can save them now but repentance and faith in Christ. The word of God will be taken away from you. There will be those among your enemies who will be allowed to live to witness—and to make sure your destruction. But you will be utterly destroyed in the fourth generation. You will hide up your treasures, because you love your riches and want to hold onto them; but when you go to retrieve them they will be gone; and no man will find them. They will become slippery. You did not remember that God gave them to you, and you forgot to thank Him for them. You did not hide up even a tithing to God. You hid them up unto yourselves. But they will not be there when you go to find them. Even your swords—on the day when you need them to go to battle—they will not be there. And you will have cause to mourn.

You say that had you lived in times of old you would not have slain the prophets and stoned them. But you are worse than they. The prophets who are in your midst you call devils, possessed of evil spirits, and you seek every means to destroy them. Yet you will pay your priests and your ministers who flatter you in your sins. You give them your gold and silver, and clothe them in costly apparel because they preach to you an

easier gospel. But there is no salvation in their gospel. When you realize, in your poverty, that you have deceived yourselves, you will cry to God to deliver you. But the days of your probation will then be past; you will have procrastinated the day of your repentance until it is everlastingly too late; and the devil will already have claimed you his. And because that was your choice, God will not interfere. You have sought for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of righteousness.

The Lamanite prophet prayed that the Nephites would repent, and that the Lord would turn away His anger; but he knew that his prayer was wishful; he had envisioned another fate. From this point on he spoke with the boldness of a prophet:

The time is very near. Count the years—there will be five. Then will come the Son of God to redeem all those who will believe. There will be signs. His coming is no secret. The signs by which you may know of His birth are these: There shall be great lights in heaven, insomuch that the night before His birth there shall be no darkness—it will be as light as day. For the period of a day, a night, and a day it shall be as one day. You will know of the rising of the sun and also of its setting, and you can count the hours. Watch for this sign, for the night of no darkness will be the night before He is born. There shall arise a new star, such a one as you have never seen. And this is not all—there shall be many signs and wonders in heaven. You will wonder and be amazed, and will fall to the earth. And as many as will believe shall have everlasting life.

The Lord has commanded me, by His angel, that I should come and tell you this. He said: 'Cry unto this people REPENT, and prepare the way of the Lord!' But because I am a Lamanite, and because I have told you your sins, you are angry with me, and seek to destroy me. You have cast me out of your city. But I have climbed upon your wall, and you shall hear my message. I have come so that you will be warned of the judgments of God which await your iniquities; and also that you might know the conditions of repentance; and to give you the signs of His coming—in the hope that some of you may be convinced and will repent.

The signs of the Savior's death, though that death was necessary to the plan of life, were not beset with new stars and great lights and wonders in heaven. Those hours surrounding His great sacrifice would be full of death, turmoil and darkness for the western world:

In the day that He shall suffer death, the sun shall be darkened and refuse to give light; the moon also and the stars. There shall be no light, from the time of His death until His resurrection. For many hours surrounding His death there shall be thunderings, lightnings, and earthquakes; and the rocks which you know at this time are solid, or for the most part a solid mass—these shall be broken up. Forever after they shall be found seamed and cracked and in broken fragments, above the ground and below. There shall be tempests; many mountains shall be laid low, like a valley; and many valleys shall become mountains, whose height is great. Many highways shall be broken up; many cities shall become desolate. And many graves shall be

opened, and shall yield up many of their dead; and many saints shall appear unto many.

With so many signs, said Samuel, there would be no cause for unbelief among the children of men. And if belief, there should be repentance. And if repentance, then redemption. But the choice was up to mankind, as God had certainly done His part. The Lord had loved the Nephites and had been very patient with them. He had, according to Samuel, hated the Lamanites. Now lately, through the preaching of the Nephites, the Lamanites had been converted. They were doing very well by their newly embraced faith, and that faith was redeeming them. Samuel wanted only to bring back to the Nephites that wonderful gospel which they had brought his people. But his finishing note was not optimistic:

If they will not repent they shall be utterly destroyed; and as surely as the Lord liveth shall these things be.

While Samuel the Lamanite was preaching on the wall of Zarahemla, Nephi the Nephite was "baptizing, and prophesying, and preaching, crying repentance unto the people, showing signs and wonders, working miracles among the people, that they might know that Christ must shortly come." People who were persuaded by Samuel's words sought out Nephi

and confessed their sins and were baptized. But the more part of them were not persuaded, and these — those same who, had they lived in times of old, professed that they would not have slain the prophets and stoned them—took up stones and arrows and tried to destroy Samuel. But their stones and their arrows glanced off into harmless space. So the people cried out to their captains:

“Take this fellow and bind him, for behold he hath a devil; and because of the power of the devil which is in him we cannot hit him with our stones and our arrows. Therefore take him and bind him. Away with him!”

But the captains—the “law”—the Gadianton hirelings — were thwarted in their attempted arrest. The Lamanite missionary had finished his Nephite mission. He had delivered his message, and was just leaving. He cast himself down from the wall and fled to his own country. The Nephites never heard of him again.

But they had occasion to remember him for four hundred years. After that there was no occasion because there was no more Nephites. The prophecies of Samuel were by then all fulfilled.

By the year that marked six hundred years since Lehi had left Jerusalem, Nephi the son

of Helaman had transferred his offices and responsibilities to his oldest son Nephi and had departed out of Zarahemla. "And whither he went, no man knoweth." It was the conjecture of his sons and his people that he had been translated, or carried away by the Lord in a manner similar to that in which his great-grandfather Alma the Second had been taken; or as Moses or Elijah. They watched for his return for ten years, and then concluded that the Lord had taken him for His own purposes.

But the year marked greater miracles and wonder than the passing of Nephi. The prophecies of Samuel began to be realized. Some said the time was already past when the signs of the Savior's birth should be shown. Others waited hopefully and watched. Lachoneus, the chief judge, was himself a righteous man. But he had little control over some of the apostate factions of his government; and a powerful and dangerous group actually set a date, by which time, if the signs of the Savior's birth were not shown, all believers would be put to death. This decree added greatly to the anxiety of the believers. Not only were the signs desirable from the standpoint of a long-awaited peace—but they

Signs of Christ's Birth

had now taken on a personal aspect of life and death. As the execution date drew near, believers prayed anxiously. Nephi, foremost among the believers, prayed most earnestly. All day long he prayed; and then came the assurance:

“Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is near at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world . . .”

At the going down of the sun there was no darkness. All night long there was no darkness. A great new star appeared. The people were so astonished that they fell on their faces to the ground. They remembered the prophecies; and they remembered their iniquities. It was astonishing how right the prophets had been. Those who had planned the execution of the believers experienced the added astonishment of frustration. More people realized their error and joined the faith.

**Christ's
Lifetime** But the thirty - three years of Christ's earthly life in Palestine were not beset with great peace and unity for the Nephite-Lamanite nation in America. As early as those first signs certain factions thought that the Law of Moses could now be put away. If Christ were

on earth, they reasoned, then they should be through with Moses. But the authorities of the church knew better. The sacrifice of the blood of the Lamb was not yet accomplished. Ever since Adam there had been blood sacrifice, practiced by those who looked forward to the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who would give His blood toward the atonement for sin and the resurrection of all flesh. But that great act was not accomplished with His birth. It would be accomplished with His death and resurrection. So the typifying sacrifice of lambs' blood must continue for thirty-three years more. The leaders of the church labored diligently to make this truth understood. Not one jot nor tittle of the law should pass away until it was all fulfilled.

But these defections among the believers were not so damaging as the new rise of the Gadiantons among the apostates. Even the younger generation of the now devout Lamanites were deeply affected; and many were led away to join that unholy order in the hills. The Gadiantons lived by theft, plunder and murder, and they had become so strong that the whole moral fiber of the nation was endangered.

By the time that Jesus was nine years old

the people changed their time reckoning from "six-hundred-and-nine years after Lehi left Jerusalem" to "nine years from the time when the sign was given," or the year nine A. D. By the year thirteen they were at war; "for the Gadianton robbers had become so numerous, and did slay so many of the people, and did lay waste so many cities, and did spread so much death and carnage throughout the land, that it became expedient that all the people, both the Nephites and the Lamanites, should take up arms against them." By this time the curse of the Lamanites had been removed; their dark and loathsome skin had been bleached with repentant living, and "their young men and young daughters became exceedingly fair, and they were numbered among the Nephites."

But because of so many dissensions and contentions both in the church and in the government, the Gadiantons were able to gain great advantage. They were emboldened to the high pitch that occasioned this letter from the robber leaders:

Up in the hills
Sixteen A.D.

"Lachoneus, most noble and Chief Governor of the land:

Behold, I write this epistle unto you, and do give unto you exceeding great praise because of your firmness, and also the firmness of your people, in maintaining that which ye suppose to be your right and liberty; yea, ye do stand well, as if ye were supported by the hand of a god, in the defense of your liberty, and your property, and your country, or that which ye do call so. And it seemeth a pity unto me, most noble Lachoneus, that ye should be so foolish and vain as to suppose that ye can stand against so many brave men who are at my command, who do now at this time stand in their arms, and do await with great anxiety for the word: 'Go down upon the Nephites and destroy them.' And I, knowing of their unconquerable spirit, having proved them in the field of battle, and knowing of their everlasting hatred towards you because of the many wrongs which ye have done unto them, therefore if they should come down against you they would visit you with utter destruction. Therefore I have written this epistle, sealing it with mine own hand, feeling for your welfare, because of your firmness in that which ye believe to be right, and your noble spirit in the field of battle. Therefore I write unto you, desiring that ye should yield up into this my people, your cities, your lands, and your possessions, rather than that they should visit you with the sword and that destruction should come upon you. Or in other words, yield yourselves up unto us, and unite with us and become acquainted with our secret works, and become our brethren that ye may be like unto us—not our slaves, but our brethren and partners of all our substance. And behold, I swear unto you, if ye will do this, with an oath, ye shall not be destroyed; but if ye will not do this, I swear unto

you with an oath, that on the morrow month I will command that my armies shall come down against you, and they shall not stay their hand and shall spare not, but shall slay you, and shall let fall the sword upon you even until ye shall become extinct.

And behold, I am Giddianhi; and I am the governor of this the secret society of Gadianton; which society and the works thereof I know to be good; and they are of ancient date and they have been handed down unto us.

And I write this epistle unto you, Lachoneus, and I hope that ye will deliver up your lands and your possessions, without the shedding of blood, that this my people may recover their rights and government, who have dissented away from you because of your wickedness in retaining from them their rights of government, and except ye do this, I will avenge their wrongs.

I am,

(Sincerely yours)

Giddianhi."

Lachoneus, the most noble and chief governor of the land, did not exactly wither away at the pompous words of the robber leader. Instead, he commanded his people to look to the Lord for protection against the day of Gadianton attack. The letter had said that this attack would take place on the morrow month. In actuality it did not come for three and a half years. And by that time the Nephites were ready and prepared for any comers.

“As the Lord liveth,” Lachoneus had told his people, “except ye repent of all your iniquities and cry unto the Lord, ye will in nowise be delivered out of the hands of those Gadianton robbers.” He had said much more; and the people began to see that he was right. Early in the sixteenth year he issued a proclamation that all the people should bring their possessions and provisions, leaving nothing behind that would sustain the Gadiantons, and come to the provinces of Zarahemla and Bountiful. Toward the end of the seventeenth year the people had wholeheartedly complied. “And they had taken their horses, and their chariots, and their cattle, and their flocks, and their herds, and their grain, and all their substance” — enough to last seven years. (They actually lived in the fort enclosure from the latter part of the seventeenth year until sometime during the twenty-sixth.) “And they did march forth by the thousands and tens of thousands, until they had all gone forth to the place which had been appointed”—which was Zarahemla and Bountiful.

Lachoneus appointed captains and generals to supervise the fortifying of the area and the preparing of weapons and armor for the expected attack. He appointed for the command-

ing general a devout prophet whom he could rely upon to lead an inspired defense. The prophet was Gidgiddoni (who is not to be confused with the similarly named robber chief Giddianhi).

After the people had completed their fort and perfected their weapons they were anxious to try them out against the Gidiantons.

"Pray unto the Lord," they told their general, "and let us go up upon the mountains and into the wilderness, that we may fall upon the robbers and destroy them in their own lands."

But the general in Gidgiddoni knew that canyon passages were dangerous, especially in enemy-held territory; and the prophet in him knew that God's people do not start wars; they fight only to defend themselves and their privileges.

"The Lord forbid," he answered; "for if we should go up against them the Lord would deliver us into their hands; therefore we will prepare ourselves in the center of our lands, and we will gather all our armies together, and we will not go against them, but we will wait till they come against us; therefore as the Lord liveth, if we do this He will deliver them into our hands."

By the eighteenth year the robbers were

astonished to find that city after city of the Nephite country had been abandoned. But their rummaging brought no reward. There was no pillage to plunder. There were no grains in the fields; and they could not live on stubble. Wild game did not venture into the abandoned cities; and the robbers were starved into retreat to the wilderness. By the year nineteen A. D. the wilderness game had been depleted; and in the sixth month of that year the Gadiantons were so hungry and so desperate that they prodded themselves to launch the long-threatened attack.

Their battle approach was gruesome. "Great and terrible was the day that they did come up to battle. They were girded about after the manner of robbers; and they had lamb-skins about their loins, and they were dyed in blood; and their heads were shorn, and they had headplates upon them; and great and terrible was the appearance of the armies of Giddianhi because of their armor, and because of their being dyed in blood."

When the people from the fort saw this hideous advance they fell on their faces and began to call upon God. This occasioned a great shout of joy from the blood-stained robbers, for they supposed that the Nephites had

fallen with fear. "But in this thing they were disappointed, for the Nephites did not fear them; but they did fear their God and did supplicate Him for protection." In the first onrush of battle the Nephites were prepared; "in the strength of the Lord they did receive them."

It was the greatest battle to date in Nephite history. The Gadiantons were forced to retreat; and the Nephites pursued them as far as the borders of the wilderness. The orders of the prophet-general were that no prisoner should be taken, and that every Gadianton who was unable to make it to the wilderness should be slain. Giddianhi was unable to make it. His brother Gadiantons fled without him. The Nephites returned to their fort.

Two years later the Gadiantons returned with a new commander, Zemnarihah, this time not to attack but to lay seige to the outlying fields; for they supposed that the Nephites would have to plant and reap to sustain themselves. But in this again they were wrong, because the welfare plan of the fort-enclosed Nephites was a seven-year-plan, and so far only a fraction of their supplies had been allotted. So the Gadiantons merely made themselves easy targets for close range harassment from

the fort. Zemnarihah then attempted to by-pass the fort and escape through the isthmus into the far north. He did not have the prophetic insight to know that the north continent was still unredeemed from the Jaredite curse of desolation; nor to know that the prophet-general would have the foresight to cut him off at the narrow, Nephite-held pass. Gidgiddoni divided the Nephite army and marched one group northward by night. Thus Zemnarihah found his Gadiantons locked between two armies. Battle was rather pointless under these circumstances, and thousands of Gadiantons, whose desperate course had been run, offered themselves prisoners. Others, rebellious still, were put to death. Zemnarihah was hanged on the top of a tall tree until he was dead. And after he was dead the tree was felled to the earth. And the cry went up from the victorious Nephites: "May the Lord preserve His people in righteousness and in holiness of heart, that they may cause to be felled to the earth all who seek to slay them because of the power and secret combinations, even as this man hath been felled to the earth." They completed their triumph with another shout: "May the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, protect this people in

righteousness, so long as they shall call on the name of their God for protection.”

The prisoners were converted. By the twenty-first year there was not a soul who did not “believe.” In the twenty-sixth year the people abandoned the fort and returned to their homes in both continents.

Great prosperity followed. Laws were established in equity and justice. Cities were repaired and new ones built. Great highways were cast up in the twenty-eighth year. (They were to be cast down again in the first month of the year thirty-four. But the people were proud of them in twenty-eight.) By twenty-nine the prosperity had become too great for the humility; “and some were lifted up unto pride and boastings because of their exceeding great riches; yea, even unto great persecutions; for there were many merchants in the land, and also many lawyers, and many officers. And the people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning; yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches.” With this inequality came persecution and discontent. Minor judges and even priests, the lower courts of the land, began to deal out injus-

tices. In this year Lachoneus the Second had succeeded his father as chief judge. When some of the injustices of the lower courts were brought to his attention—prophets had been privately murdered by provincial courts—he brought the guilty lawyers and priests to trial. But Satan had re-planted his combination seeds, those same which had flourished in the blood-stained hands of Cain, of the Jaredites, and of the Gadiantons. And these had ripened like thistle down among the lower officials and their kindred. Before Lachoneus the Second was able to carry out the just sentence imposed upon the guilty men, he was murdered in his judgment seat. He was murdered by a new crop of Gadiantons in the year thirty. And his murderers swore they would raise up a king. The people, however, dissolved into tribal units, each group appointing a leader or chief. The national government was destroyed and each tribe subsisted as best it could. In four years the nation had sunk from a high peak of prosperity to a complete national disintegration. The newest Gadiantons escaped to the far north under the leadership of a wicked man named Jacob; and the remainder of the people had crumbled into unorganized tribal units.

Nephi the son of Nephi strove hard to make the necessary religious repairs before those dreadful and destructive signs should appear which would announce the suffering and death of the Savior. His brother Timothy worked with him. They possessed great powers, and many miracles were performed. But the people were angered and enraged by their works. Timothy was rudely stoned to death, whereupon his brother Nephi raised him from the dead. Those who witnessed this miracle were more angry than ever. The years thirty-one and thirty-two were without noticeable reward to the two prophets. Some few were converted, and these were baptized. Nephi ordained them to help him in his ministry; and their combined efforts began to show results. This was none too soon, for the eventful thirty-third year came to a close. Believers waited in awe for those second signs that Samuel the Lamanite had foretold thirty-eight years before. Some doubting-believers wavered over the question—was the time already past? Four days beyond the end of that year they knew the answer.

“And it came to pass in the thirty-and-fourth year, in the first month, on the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm, such a one as had never had been known in all the land.” Terrible tempests, thunder, earthquakes, lightnings, terrified the people. Zarahemla took fire. The east coast city of Moroni sank into the Atlantic ocean with all its populace. The city of Moronihah was covered by a mountain. The destruction in the old familiar south country was terrible; but it was surpassed by the horrors that swept the desolate north. The great new city of Jacobugath in the far north where the Gadianton king Jacob had taken his followers was burned to the ground, with all its Gadiantons. Highways were broken up and roads were spoiled. People were carried away in whirlwinds and never seen again. The face of the earth was deformed. Rocks were rent and broken into fragments. All this took place within three hours. Then a thick, black, vaporous darkness settled upon everything. No torch nor kindling could be made to light. The darkness was total and damp. It was as if the outer darkness of hell had moved into the promised land. The dark-

Death of Christ

ness was pierced by the moaning cries of survivors:

“O that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and then would our brethren have been spared, and they would not have been burned in that great city Zarahemla.” and in another place: “O that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and had not killed and stoned the prophets, and cast them out; then would our mothers and our fair daughters, and our children have been spared, and not have been buried up in that great city Moronihah.”

The darkness remained “for the space of three days,” punctuated only for the howling and weeping of the few who were left alive.

(It is generally conceded that the three hours of physical upheaval, thunderings, lightnings, earthquakes, and tempests, were the same three hours that Christ hung on the cross, or the hours from three to six in the afternoon, Jerusalem time; and that the “three days” of vaporous darkness were the same period that the body of Jesus lay in the tomb, or from six o’clock Friday evening until dawn Sunday morning, Jerusalem time. Although that interval was not seventy-two hours, or literally three whole days, it has been frequent-

ly referred to in the scriptures as three days. As parts of three days were involved it would be proper to say that Christ arose "on the third day.")

The mournings and howlings were interrupted by a Voice — and everyone heard it together:

"Wo, wo, wo unto this people: Wo unto the inhabitants of the whole earth except they shall repent; for the devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice, because of the slain of the fair sons and daughters of my people; and it is because of their iniquity and abominations that they are fallen! Behold, that great city Zarahemla have I burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof . . . That great city Moroni have I caused to be sunk in the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof to be drowned . . . That great city Moronihah have I covered with earth, and the inhabitants thereof, to hide their iniquities and their abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come any more unto me against them . . . The city of Gilgal have I caused to be sunk, and the inhabitants thereof to be buried up in the depths of the earth." The Voice continued, naming city after city. "All these have I caused to be sunk, and made

hills and valleys in the places thereof . . . That great city Jacobugath, which was inhabited by the people of King Jacob, have I caused to be burned with fire because of their sins and their wickedness, which was above all the wickedness of the whole earth, because of their secret murders and combinations; for it was they that did destroy the peace of my people and the government of the land; therefore I did cause them to be burned . . . O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you? Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive . . . Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning.

“I came unto my own, and my own received me not. And the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled. And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of

Moses fulfilled . . . And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and burnt offering shall be done away . . . And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not.

“Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin. Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. For such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me ye ends of the earth, and be saved.”

Following the miraculous Voice there was a silence for many hours. The mourning ceased while the people pondered over what they had heard. Then the Voice came again, addressed to all who were spared of the House of Israel, saying how oft He had gathered them as a hen gathered her chickens; how oft He would have gathered them if they had heeded; and how

oft will He still gather them if they will repent and turn unto Him in full purpose of heart. "But if not, O House of Israel, the places of your dwellings shall become desolate until the time of the fulfilling of the covenant to your fathers."

At last the darkness passed and it was morning. The survivors already knew the extent of the damage. The Voice had recounted it to them. With the darkest hours past they began to feel better, and began to see how blessed and fortunate they were to have been left alive. Only the most righteous had been spared.

The narrator here interrupts the narrative to remind us all: "And now, whoso readeth, let him understand; he that hath the scriptures, let him search them, and see and behold if all these deaths and destructions by fire, and by smoke, and by tempests, and by whirlwinds, and by the opening of the earth to receive them, and all these things are not unto the fulfilling of the prophecies of many of the holy prophets . . . Many have testified of these things at the coming of Christ, and were slain because they testified . . . Zenos did testify, and also Zenock spake concerning these things . . . our father Jacob also . . ." (The

prophecies of Zenos and Zenock are not contained in any of our printed Bibles of today; but they were graven into the Brass Plates which were the Old Testament of the Nephites.)

(And this narrator interrupts to say that even without Zenos and Zenock we have not been left without prophecies. And of more timely importance to us are the prophecies concerning the Second Coming, when the wicked will burn as stubble. There is a comforting warning incorporated into these prophecies that "he that is tithed shall not be burned at His coming." So we need not be so unprepared as were the Nephites. If anyone wishes to spare himself from a burning death he may investigate the blessings of the tithing system. It is a prophecy that can be depended upon, just as surely as the prophecies of Samuel and Zenos and Zenock.)

"In the ending of the thirty-and fourth year . . . soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven," which can be understood to mean soon after He had completed His resurrected visit to His Homeland in Palestine, "He did truly manifest Himself unto them" the Nephites. He had told the Jews, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also

I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." But the Jews had supposed that He referred to the Gentiles. The Jews did not know of the Nephites. Their escape from Jerusalem in six hundred B.C. had gone completely unnoticed. The only other Israelites the Jews knew of were the Ten Tribes, lost since seven hundred twenty-one B.C. The Jews supposed that they were the sole survivors of the House of Israel—and most of them still suppose that the blood of Jacob is all theirs. It is very difficult to persuade a Jew that the covenant corpuscles also sustain the American Indians, the original Hawaiians, in a more diluted strain the Mexicans, and a peculiar race known as the Mormons—and that the vast nation of the lost Ten Tribes will not be lost much longer but will return to claim their blood-right. Christ had never promised to preach to the Gentiles. This was the assignment for His disciples. But He did not argue this blood-count with the self-contained Jews. He merely told them: "Other sheep I have . . ." and left them to figure it out.

We are told, in warning of the destructions coming in the last days, to see that we stand in holy places. The Nephites may have had a

similar warning, for after the destructions were visited upon their civilization we find the righteous gathered together at the temple in Bountiful. There is no evidence that Bountiful was destroyed; and likely the temple and grounds were left intact. Perhaps the righteous had come out of the babelous cities before the calamities were loosed. This would seem true of Nephi and Timothy, whose ancestral home was Zarahemla, which was the first city to burn — and all the inhabitants thereof. Perhaps these two stood in a holier place. (These things are interesting because we shall soon again feel the divine fire; yet the holy places do not seem overly crowded.)

The crowd at the temple at Bountiful numbered two thousand five hundred. Perhaps they had assembled for a general conference. They “were marveling and wondering one with another, and were showing one another the great and marvelous change which had taken place. They were also conversing about this Jesus Christ, of whom the sign had been given concerning His death,” when the meeting was quieted by a still but penetrating Voice. At first the words were indistinct. Listening intently they heard it a second time, but were still unable to understand the words. The third

time, they raised their eyes toward the sound, looking steadfastly toward heaven, and the words came through distinctly:

“Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name —hear ye Him.”

**Christ's
Visit to the
Nephites**

Still looking into heaven the people saw a Man descending, clothed in a white robe. They dared not speak; they thought they were seeing an angel. But they were not left long in doubt.

“Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. I am the Light and the Life of the world, and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning.”

The whole multitude fell to the earth. Now they remembered. Nephi the First had had a vision and had seen this very circumstance. He had written it into their scriptures that Christ would show Himself to them after His ascension. The people were afraid to look upon the prophecy fulfilled.

“Arise and come forth unto me,” Jesus said,

“that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.”

Two thousand five hundred persons examined the death wounds. They saw, they felt, and they knew.

“Hosanna!” they shouted. “Blessed be the name of the Most High!” And they fell in worship at His feet.

The Lord called Nephi from the group. This was divine acknowledgement of the priestly authority of that good man, and acceptance of the authority of his fathers, Alma the First, Alma the Second, Helaman the First, Helaman the Second, Nephi the Second, and now Nephi the Third. Nephi arose and went forward, knelt down and kissed the feet of the Master. The Lord told him to arise.

“I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people when I am again ascended into heaven,” the Lord said; and then He called up eleven others, including Nephi’s brother Timothy whom Nephi had raised from the dead, and his son Jonas. To each of these twelve He gave the same commission.

“On this wise shall ye baptize; and there shall be no disputations among you. Verily I say unto you, that whoso repenteth of his sins through your words, and desireth to be baptized in my name, on this wise shall ye baptize them—Behold, ye shall go down and stand in the water, and in my name shall ye baptize them.

“And now behold, these are the words which ye shall say, calling them by name, saying: ‘Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.’ And then shall ye immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water . . . And according as I have commanded you thus shall ye baptize. And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been . . . He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another . . . Whoso believeth in me and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not

baptized, shall be damned . . . This is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father . . . and again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things . . . This is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them.

“Therefore, go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth.”

Jesus then turned to the multitude and admonished them to give heed to the teachings of the Twelve whom He had commissioned. Then He proceeded to give His western flock the Beautitudes and the same teaching known as the Sermon on the Mount. Much of it is made more clear than in the Matthew version. An interesting deviation in perspective occurs when He came to the part “Consider the lilies . . . take no thought for your life,

what ye shall eat, what ye shall drink, what ye shall put on . . ." the Lord will take care of you—He had turned from the multitude and was speaking to the Twelve. The necessity for these manual pursuits was not apparently lifted for the multitude. Neither does the passage argue for a paid ministry. It merely sets the minds and spirits of the Twelve free to labor in their ordained calling, with the assurance that God will take care of all their physical needs.

To the multitude again: "Judge not, that ye be not judged—" And He continued much the same as He had taught the Jews.

"Behold, ye have heard the things which I taught before I ascended to my Father; therefore, whoso remembereth these sayings of mine and doeth them, him will I raise up at the last day."

Some of the people were wondering what Jesus would do about the Law of Moses.

"The law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses. Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel; therefore, the law in me is fulfilled, for I have come to fulfill the law; therefore it hath an end." The prophecies, however, which concerned the future would still all come to pass.

Jesus turned again to the Twelve:

“Ye are my disciples; and ye are a light unto this people, who are a remnant of the house of Joseph. This is the land of your inheritance, and the Father hath given it unto you. And not at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell it unto your brethren at Jerusalem. Neither at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell unto them concerning the other tribes of the House of Israel, whom the Father hath led away out of the land. This much did the Father command me that I should tell unto them: That other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd . . . It is because of their iniquity that they know not of you . . . Ye are they of whom I said: ‘Other sheep I have . . .’” And they understood me not, for they supposed it had been the Gentiles; for they understood not that the Gentiles should be converted through their preaching . . . they understood me not that the Gentiles should not at any time hear my voice—and I should not manifest myself unto them save it were by the Holy Ghost. But behold, ye have both heard my voice, and seen me; and ye

are my sheep, and ye are numbered among those whom the Father hath given me. And . . . I have other sheep, which are not of this land, neither of the land of Jerusalem, neither in any parts of the land round about whither I have been to minister . . . I have received a commandment of the Father that I shall go unto them, and that they shall hear my voice, and shall be numbered among my sheep . . . therefore I go to show myself unto them.”

The Twelve were commanded to record these things, because the Jews had not asked about them, and probably would not ask, and therefore these sayings might never become known through the Bible. But some day they would come before the notice of the Gentiles, in a day when the Gentiles should be especially favored. Then as many as would believe and join faith with the Israelites would be given an inheritance with the chosen people. But if they chose not to believe, and not to take upon themselves the responsibilities of the covenant children, then they would be trodden down, because it would be a day when unity and oneness would be expected—a day when disaffection had run its course, a day when:

“Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing, for they shall

see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion.

“Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God.”

This prophecy from Isaiah is more than a pleasant anthem. God wants His people to sing it together. He wants a harmonious song. He will give everyone a chance to sing, first the Israelites, then the Gentiles, and last again the Israelites. But He will not force them all to sing together. So far He has merely offered them the book and tried to teach them the song. During the rehearsals the rendition has not been harmonious. Now has come the hour for the great performance. He has been patient before, but now He must have harmony. The curtain is going up. We have to sing together. “With the voice together shall they sing.” There is a threat in it—for all those who still find it pleasant to sing their own tunes, and all those who cannot see their way clear to bring their focus eye to eye—all these must be trodden down. The Lord will make bare His holy arm and thrust them out. Then He will be

content with a smaller chorus. With the voice together shall they sing.

The prophecy is as urgent as life and death. It was hard for the Nephites to understand. Jesus noticed their perplexity:

“I perceive that ye are weak, that ye cannot understand all my words which I am commanded of the Father to speak unto you at this time. Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again. But now I go unto the Father, and also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for He knoweth whither He hath taken them.”

The Ten Tribes had been lost since seven hundred twenty-one B. C. It was good that they should be included in the Shepherd's round-up. But the Nephites were not ready to let their Shepherd go. Jesus saw their tears, and he was filled with compassion for them:

“Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them thither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them thither

and I will heal them . . . for I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you.”

He healed them all. Then He called for all the little children to be brought. After praying to His Father He took the little children one by one and blessed them, and prayed to the Father in their behalf. Through tears of joy He addressed the parents:

“Behold your little ones.”

The parents looked, “and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them.”

Jesus then sent His disciples for bread and wine. While they were gone, He seated the multitude. When the disciples returned, Jesus took the bread, broke it and blessed it and commanded the Twelve to eat. They ate and were filled. Then Jesus had them pass it to the assembly.

“Behold there shall one be ordained among you,” Jesus said, “and to him will I give power that he shall break bread and bless it and give it unto the people of my church, unto all those who shall believe and be baptized in my name. And this shall ye always observe to do, even

as I have done, even as I have broken bread and blessed it and given it unto you. And this shall ye do in remembrance of my body, which I have shown unto you. And it shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you."

The wine was then blessed and passed, first to the disciples and then to the multitude.

"Blessed are ye for this thing which ye have done," Jesus told the Twelve; "for this is fulfilling my commandments, and this doth witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you. And this shall ye always do to those who repent and are baptized in my name; and ye shall do it in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you, that ye may witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you. And I give unto you a commandment that ye do these things. And if ye shall always do these things blessed are ye, for ye are built upon my rock. But whoso among you shall do more or less than these are not built upon my rock, but are built upon a sandy foundation; and when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow and

beat upon them, they shall fall, and the gates of hell are ready open to receive them. Therefore blessed are ye if ye shall keep my commandments, which the Father hath commanded me that I should give unto you. Verily, verily I say unto you, ye must watch and pray always, lest ye be tempted by the devil, and ye be led away captive by him. And as I have prayed among you even so shall ye pray in my church, among my people who do repent and are baptized in my name. Behold, I am the Light; I have set an example for you."

To the multitude:

"Behold . . . ye must watch and pray always lest ye enter into temptation; for Satan desireth to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. Therefore ye must always pray unto the Father in my name; and whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be given unto you. Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed. And behold, ye shall meet together oft; and ye shall not forbid any man from coming unto you when ye shall meet together, but suffer them that they may come unto you and forbid them not; but ye shall pray for them, and shall not cast them

out; and if it so be that they come unto you oft ye shall pray for them unto the Father, in my name. Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the Light which ye shall hold up — that which ye have seen me do.”

This was one last admonition to His disciples:

“I give unto you another commandment, and then I must go unto my Father that I may fulfill other commandments which He hath given me. And this is the commandment . . . that ye shall not suffer any one knowingly to partake of my flesh and blood unworthily, when ye shall minister it; for whoso eateth and drinketh my flesh and blood unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to his soul; therefore, if ye know that a man is unworthy to eat and drink of my flesh and blood ye shall forbid him.” Nevertheless, such were not to be forbidden to attend the worship service. They should be prayed for; “for ye know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them . . .

“And now I go unto the Father, because it is expedient that I should go unto the Father for your sakes.”

Then Jesus laid his hands upon His disciples, one by one, and gave them the power to confer the Holy Ghost. A cloud settled down over the multitude then so that they could not see the Savior. But the disciples saw, and recorded that Jesus ascended into heaven.

The people went to their homes. But they could not rest after what they had seen and heard; and the expectation of more on the morrow was more than they could contain. All night long they labored to get messages to any kindred and friends who had not been privileged to be in attendance during the Savior's visit.

Certainly their night's efforts were rewarded, because on the morrow a great and unnumbered multitude had assembled on the Temple grounds at Bountiful. Long before the Savior arrived they were there. There were so many that the Twelve disciples divided them into twelve assemblies, so that they could all receive the instructions that had been given on the previous day. Each of the Twelve taught and ministered to the separate groups. The disciples then prayed for the Holy Ghost. Baptism is usually a prerequisite to the receiving of the Holy Ghost; so Nephi went first into the water and was baptized. Then he baptized the others

of the Twelve. The multitude followed and watched.

“And when they were all (twelve) baptized and had come up out of the water, the Holy Ghost did fall upon them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost and with fire. And behold, they were encircled about as if it were by fire; and it came down from heaven, and the multitude did witness it, and did bear record; and angels did come down out of heaven and minister unto them.”

Jesus chose this moment to make His second appearance. He began His second day by calling upon the multitude to kneel and pray, and also His disciples. Then He went a little way off and prayed to the Father. Three times He returned to them while they prayed on.

“So great faith have I never seen among all the Jews,” Jesus said; “wherefore, I could not show unto them so great miracles, because of their unbelief . . . There are none of them that have seen so great things as ye have seen; neither have they heard so great things as ye have heard.”

Jesus broke the sacramental bread and blessed it and gave it to the Twelve, who partook of it and passed it to the assembly. Then He blessed the wine and gave it. “Now,

there had been no bread, neither wine, brought by the disciples, neither by the multitude; but He truly gave unto them bread to eat, and also wine to drink."

"He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled."

Now that there was ample Spirit to assist their understandings, the multitude were ready to hear the Savior's interpretation of the prophecies of Moses and Isaiah and others of the prophets who had been hard to understand. Jesus made it plain that it was He who had commanded those prophets what they should say. The Lord has many special blessings for the House of Israel, or for all those who descend through the blood of Jacob, even though they have been shaken and scattered to the far corners of the earth. The remnants will be gathered together at two assembling points—the Jews to their homeland Jerusalem, and the remainder to the New Jerusalem, on this hemisphere. The Gentiles will nourish the American remnant of Israel—the Indians, the Mexicans—and will bring them a knowledge of God. This is to be a sign. The gospel will be

preached to them and they shall believe. Then will come the time to sing together. As many of the Gentiles as are willing to join faith and forces with Israel will be blessed and numbered with them. As many as will not believe will be trodden down—by the remnants of Israel.

“Search the prophets,” He concluded, “for many there be that testify to these things.”

Jesus then turned to the subject of records which the Nephites had kept and recited the important prophecies made by their own prophets. “Behold, other scriptures I would that ye should write, that ye have not.” Turning to Nephi, the first of the Twelve, He said:

“Bring forth the record which ye have kept.”

Nephi brought the records and laid them before Him. Jesus looked them over.

“I commanded my servant Samuel, the Lamanite, that he should testify unto this people, that at the day that the Father should glorify His name in me that there were many saints who should arise from the dead, and should appear unto many, and should minister unto them. Was it not so?”

It was so. “Yes, Lord, Samuel did prophesy according to thy words, and they were all fulfilled.”

“How be it that ye have not written this thing, that many saints did arise and appear unto many and did minister unto them?”

Nephi remembered then that he had not recorded this fulfillment. He wrote it into the record.

After He had expounded all these scriptures, Jesus commanded His disciples to study them all and teach them.

The Brass Plates, or the Old Testament of the Nephites, made a most complete book—as far as it went—to six hundred B.C. But the prophet Malachi had lived at a later date, and his prophecies were of course not recorded in that great Book. Nevertheless, Jesus wanted the Nephites to have them; so He quoted, and had them make a transcript of the third and fourth chapters of Malachi. It was just as important to the Nephites as it was for the Jews, and Gentiles, and for us, to know that:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”

(Elijah the prophet was sent on April 3, 1836, to the temple at Kirtland, Ohio. And he

brought with him the keys, or the power and authority it takes to do and make valid the preparatory work that must be done before "the great and dreadful day of the Lord." The turning of the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers is the work of our great genealogical societies, the connecting of fathers to children in the genealogical order that is a necessary part of the order of heaven. The principal functions of this work are to establish the lineage of the covenant blood, and to weld each link firmly and eternally into its proper place. This work is now being done in the temples by the priesthood. And it was Elijah's special commission to restore it before the great and dreadful day. That day would be more dreadful if he had not come with this preparation.)

There were naturally other scriptures which were not had by the Nephites, but which were important for their enlightenment. The great book of John had not yet been written. Nephi, and the Brother of Jared, and others, had seen the same vision, but the Lord was reserving the book for John to write. But Jesus wanted the Nephites to know the story of mankind throughout his whole cycle—pre-existent, mortal, death or separation, resurrection, exalta-

tion and eternal life; and the generations of the earth from its earliest forming through its mortal course, its melting and burning with a purifying fire, and its emergencies as the Sea of Glass or Urim and Thummim which will be the celestial kingdom for the righteous who have lived upon it in its mortality. So He supplied all the scriptures it took to tell the story. (These He caused to be written into the Plates of Nephi. But Mormon in his abridgement was forbidden to transcribe them. The Lord told him that this small excerpt, not even a hundredth part, was enough for us at this time. "I will try the faith of my people." But Mormon informs us that if we develop more faith we can have more of this information.

The Lord was with the Nephites for three days, during which time He taught them, gave them ordinances, healed their sick, raised at least one man from the dead, blessed their little children, and loosed the tongues of the little ones and permitted them to prophesy marvelous things, too great to be written into their records. "The Lord truly did teach the people, for the space of three days; and after that He did show Himself unto them oft, and did break bread, and bless it, and give it unto

them." It was probably on one of these after-occasions that He came upon His disciples praying and fasting.

"What will ye that I shall give unto you?" He asked.

"Lord, we will that thou wouldst tell us the name whereby we shall call this church; for there are disputations among the people concerning this matter."

Jesus was a little annoyed:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, why is it that the people should murmur and dispute because of this thing? Have they not read the scriptures, which say ye must take upon you the name of Christ, which is my name? For by this name shall ye be called at the last day; and whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved at the last day . . . How be it my church save it be called in my name? For if a church be called in Moses' name then it be Moses' church; or if it be called in the name of a man then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel . . . And if it so be that the church is built upon my gospel then will the Father show forth his own works in it. But

if it be not built upon my gospel, and is built upon the work of men, or upon the works of the devil, verily I say unto you they have joy in their works for a season, and by and by the end cometh, and they are hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return."

Jesus made it plain to His disciples that He had given them His gospel. They were charged with it. He admonished them pointedly to keep it and teach it.

"Behold, all things are written by the Father; therefore out of the books which shall be written shall the world be judged. And know ye that ye shall be judges of this people . . . Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am."

Jesus was pleased with His disciples, and with the Nephites of that period. "Yes, and even the Father rejoiceth, and also all the holy angels, because of you and this generation; for none of them are lost . . . I mean them who are alive of this generation . . . But behold, it sorroweth me because of the fourth generation from this generation, for they are led away captive by him even as was the son of perdition; for they will sell me for silver and for gold, and for that which moth doth corrupt and which thieves can break through and steal.

And in that day will I visit them, even in turning their works upon their own heads.

“Enter ye in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate, and broad the way which leads to death, and many there be that travel therein, until the night cometh, wherein no man can work.”

It was now time for Jesus to go. He wanted to give His disciples one last blessing.

“What is it that ye desire of me, after that I am gone to the Father?”

Nine were ready with their answer: “We desire that after we have lived unto the age of a man, that our ministry, wherein Thou hast called us, may have an end, that we may speedily come unto Thee in Thy kingdom.”

“Blessed are ye because ye desired this thing of me; therefore, after that ye are seventy-and-two years old ye shall come unto me in my kingdom; and with me ye shall find rest.”

There were three who had not spoken their wish. Jesus turned to them:

“What will ye that I should do unto you, when I am gone unto the Father?”

The three hesitated, afraid to ask.

“Behold, I know your thoughts,” Jesus said, “and ye have desired the thing which John, my beloved, who was with me in my ministry, before that I was lifted up by the Jews, desired of me. Therefore, more blessed are ye, for ye shall never taste of death; but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven. And ye shall never endure the pains of death; but when I shall come in my glory ye shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality; and then shall ye be blessed in the kingdom of my Father.” He went on to bless them with immunity from pain and any physical injury. (This was a good blessing to have, because at a later period they were cast into prisons, thrown into pits, cast into hot furnaces, thrown into dens of wild beasts, none of which treatments registered any discomfort for them, nor prevented them from preaching the word of God.)

The nine who had asked to die quickly at the age of seventy-two Jesus touched with His

finger. The three who had elected to remain to teach the gospel until the Second Coming were caught up into the air, where they saw and heard unspeakable things. "It did seem unto them like a transfiguration." But they returned to carry on the mortal mission of their choice. (Mormon, who lived from 311 to 385 or 386 A. D. says: "I have seen them and they have ministered unto me. And behold, they will be among the Gentiles, and the Gentiles shall know them not. They will also be among the Jews, and the Jews shall know them not. And it shall come to pass, when the Lord seeth fit in His wisdom that they shall minister unto all the scattered tribes of Israel, and unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, and shall bring out of them unto Jesus many souls, that their desire may be fulfilled, and also because of the convincing power of God which is in them.")

The three Nephites are not the only ones who have enjoyed this prolongment of life. Enoch and his congregation have not yet tasted death. Moses and Elijah were left alive for some unfinished portions of their missions. Alma the Second, and Nephi the son of Helaman were thought to be translated without death. And John the Beloved was left alive.

The calling of these three Nephites fits in well with the Lord's policy in former instances.

With His church named for all time and His disciples' last wishes granted, Jesus left His western flock. He was able to accomplish more in three days with the Nephites than He had been able to do with the Jews in three years. The organization that He left in America functioned in unity for nearly two centuries. This was more than a hundred years after the last Apostle of the Jews had been boiled in oil. Among the reasons for His great success in the western mission are, the people had already been sifted by the great purge that witnessed His death; only the more righteous were left alive; and His descent from heaven in His resurrected state, His being introduced by the Father Himself, made for His mission a more convincing entry than His lowly birth in a manger. However, the scriptures had amply foretold both peoples in what state He should come; and both could have been better prepared. His Second Coming has also been amply foretold; and by the signs of the times it is near. We have a preparedness job ourselves to do, if we are to meet Him with trimmed wicks and oil in our lamps.

The first three hundred years following the advent of Christ are skimmed over hurriedly in a single chapter known as the **Years of Peace** Book of Fourth Nephi. We are told that for the first two-hundred years the people "had all things common among them," that there were no rich and no poor, no class distinctions, but that all were partakers of the heavenly gift. Whether or not Nephi, the president of the Twelve, was one of the Three Disciples who elected to remain and continue his mission we are not told. But his son Nephi succeeded him as keeper of the records presumably in the year thirty-four, and kept them until his death in one-hundred-ten, when he gave them to his son Amos. Amos kept them eighty-four years, or until one hundred ninety-four, when his son Amos took them. At about this time a small faction of people drew away from the church and took on the name of Lamanites; and in the year two hundred one the people abandoned the united order and proceeded to pursue more selfish ends. Some were lifted up in pride to the wearing of costly apparel, fine pearls, and the more splendid things of

the world. Class distinction crept in. Churches were set up to get gain, and people began to deny the Christ. By two hundred ten “there were many churches which professed to know the Christ, and yet they did deny the more parts of His gospel.” They admitted all sorts of unworthiness into their churches, and administered sacraments and ordinances to these indiscriminately. One of the churches set itself to persecute the true believers, and most especially the three elderly disciples whom Jesus had left. These three were imprisoned, but the prisons were rent in twain; they were cast into furnaces of fire, but came forth receiving no harm; they were placed in dens of wild beasts—they played with them as a child with a lamb; but the violent attempts to destroy them continued. In the year two hundred thirty-one there was a great and final division into the old order of Lamanites and Nephites. The division was much the same as it had originally been; the Nephites were composed of the descendants of Nephi, his brothers Jacob and Joseph, and their friend Zoram; the Lamanites were descendants of Laman, Lemuel, and the two

**Riches and
Pride**

**Nephites
and
Lamanites**

sons of Ishmael. (Sam is not mentioned in this second division; but in his patriarchal blessing given by his aged father Sam was promised that his seed should cast their lot with Nephi.) In this last division the old bitternesses were revived; the Lamanites taught their children to hate the Nephites; if the Nephites upheld the gospel, then the Lamanites tried to throw it down. By the year two hundred forty-four the Lamanites had become greatly more numerous than the Nephites. By two-hundred-sixty

Decline the Gadianton order of evil was revived. By the same year the pride and vanity of the Nephites had endangered their security. And from this time on the three disciples began to sorrow for the sins of the world. By the year three hundred the Nephites were no better than the Lamanites. Gadianton robbers were everywhere—"and there were none that were righteous save it were the Disciples of Jesus." Great stores of gold and silver were laid away in hiding from the robbers, never to be found again. Amos the Second died in three hundred five, after giving the records to his brother Ammaron. (Both Amos and Ammaron had lived to a great age, as their father Amos had died in one hundred ninety-four. It is pre-

sumable that the peace and tranquillity of the early years after Christ produced greater longevity in the lives of the believers.) In the year three hundred twenty one Ammaron hid all the sacred records in the hill Shim, in the province of Antum in the north. This deposit represented one treasure which should not be lost to the Gadiantons. The work and history of nine hundred twenty-one years must not be destroyed. At this time Mormon was only ten years old. But Ammaron was at very least one hundred twenty-seven, and he knew that he must find trusted hands to continue the work. So about the time that he hid the records he came to Mormon.

“I perceive that thou art a **Mormon** sober child, and art quick to observe; therefore, when ye are about twenty and four years old I would that ye should remember the things that ye have observed concerning this people; and when ye are of that age go to the land of Antum, unto a hill which shall be called Shim; and there have I deposited unto the Lord all the sacred engravings concerning this people. And behold, ye shall take the plates of Nephi unto yourself, and the remainder shall ye leave in the place where they are; and ye shall engrave on the plates of

Nephi all the things that ye have observed concerning this people.”

Young Mormon remembered to observe. The next year his father took him south to the distant city of Zarahemla — which had been rebuilt about twenty-six years after the big fire—and on the journey Mormon observed that the whole face of the land had become covered with buildings, and that the people were as numerous almost as the sands of the sea. The occasion for the trip was probably—and this is conjecture, based upon earlier and similar circumstances — that Mormon Senior was the general of the army, and that knowing war was imminent with the Lamanites, he had taken his young son and migrated to the old Nephite capital where hostilities were expected

to begin. Perhaps it was still the
War capital, although it seems that a
 great many important people had
 moved farther north. At any rate, the battle
 began on the borders of Zarahemla by the old
 familiar waters of the Sidon. (If the Sidon
 River could be definitely established a great
 block of Book of Mormon geography could be
 mapped. The old Sidon, before the face of
 the land was changed on that fateful day
 early in thirty-four A.D., began its course in a

hilly wilderness south and west of Zarahemla, and flowed northward, emptying its waters into the western sea at a point just south of what was then the isthmus. But hills determine the courses of rivers, and when the valleys became hills at the time of the Crucifixion, the Sidon may have had to change its course. The isthmus itself may have been greatly altered, as a whole strip of east coast cities, south and east of Zarahemla, were sunk into the sea and were never brought up for repairs. "There were many cities which had been sunk, and the waters came up in the stead thereof; therefore these cities could not be renewed." So two great landmarks, the River Sidon and the Narrow Neck of Land have become obscured.) But the war, the beginning of the last great struggle of the Lamanite-Nephite peoples, began on the banks of the Sidon in the year three hundred twenty-two A.D. There was a terrible skirmish and the Lamanites were temporarily repulsed. It is possible that Mormon Senior was killed in one of the battles of that year; or perhaps he died during the four years' quiet that followed. At any rate, four years later, his young son Mormon, only fifteen years old, was officially elected to serve the Nephite nation as commander-in-chief of the armies.

(Since Moronihah, similarly very young, was elected to succeed his father General Moroni after an earlier Lamanite-Nephite conflict, it seems reasonable to suppose that young Mormon's father had preceded him in that military capacity; or that the military attention was focused upon the boy because his father had held the office before him.)

At the age of fifteen also the boy experienced a wonderful vision; but when he attempted to preach to his people, he was forbidden by the Lord. The people were wilfully wicked, and therefore unworthy of visions. The three disciples were taken from them. The land was cursed. People buried their treasures to keep them from the Gadiantons. But the curse of the land made them "slippery," or impossible to be retrieved again. Samuel the Lamanite had prophesied this very condition five years before the birth of Christ. Witchcraft, magic, and the power of the devil were felt everywhere.

The battles of the next few years are given in some detail. Mormon defended his people the best he could. He was continually outnumbered, but he managed well against great odds. He was pushed and pursued northward however, until he came into the country of

the hill Shim where Ammaron had deposited the records. Remembering the early charge, Mormon took up the plates of Nephi so that he could record his observations.

The Nephites had been pushed to this northerly position because of their fear and their neglect to ask for divine help. In the year three hundred forty-six Mormon revived the slogan of the Title of Liberty, and persuaded his troops to stand boldly and fight for their wives, their children and their homes, instead of running before their tormentors. With thirty thousand Nephites against fifty thousand Lamanites he was able to retake their own ground; and by three hundred fifty he was able to effect a treaty with the Lamanites. The city of Desolation just north of the isthmus was named the southern boundary of the Nephites; and the cities of Bountiful and Zarahemla and all the land south was ceded to the Lamanites. This gave the Nephites the north continent and the Lamanites the south. Mormon then proceeded to fortify the boundary, or the narrow neck of land, so that the Lamanites could not get through. He had ten years of peace in which to fortify. During this ten years the Lord gave him permission

to preach to his people, to offer them an alternative for the destruction He had promised:

“Cry unto this people—‘Repent ye, and come unto me, and be ye baptized, and build up again my church, and ye shall be spared.’”

Mormon cried the message. But it was in vain. So in three hundred sixty-one the Lamanites came to the city of Desolation against the Nephites. Mercifully, the Lord allowed the Nephites one last victory. But after the battle the victors boasted in their strength, and swore to avenge the blood of their numbers who were slain. They raised blasphemous oaths and swore that they would go against the Lamanites and utterly destroy them. Mormon knew that this is not the way God’s wars are fought. He utterly refused to lead them any more.

“I had led them many times to battle, and had loved them, according to the love of God which was in me, with all my heart; and my soul had been poured out unto God all the day long for them; nevertheless, it was without faith, because of the hardness of their hearts. And thrice have I delivered them out of the hands of their enemies, and they had sworn by all that had been forbidden them by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that they would

go up unto their enemies to battle, and avenge themselves of the blood of their brethren, behold the voice of the Lord came unto me saying: 'Vengeance is mine, and I will repay; and because this people repented not after I had delivered them, behold, they shall be cut off from the face of the earth'."

So Mormon retired to watch the vengeance of the Lord do its work. He retired at the age of fifty, and remained in retirement for about fourteen years.

Small advantages were gained and lost by both sides until the year three hundred seventy-five, after which time the Nephites gained no more advantage. Seeing that they were about to be destroyed Mormon went to the hill Shim and took up all the records which Ammaron had placed there. (He would have to work fast, to race with the destiny of his race, to compile and abridge the bulk of the Nephite records, which abridgement was the crowning labor of his life. It was a tremendous task, totally unrewarded in his own time. His book was not published until 1830. It was truly a labor of love and faith, and of grave concern for us who are privileged to read it.)

It was about this time also that Mormon decided to "repent of his oath" and reassume

the Nephite military leadership. His people had confidence in him. Mormon had no confidence. "Behold, I was without hope, for I knew the judgments of the Lord which should come upon them; for they repented not of their iniquities, but did struggle for their lives without calling upon that Being who created them. . . . And they did not come unto Jesus with broken hearts and contrite spirits, but they did curse God, and wish to die. Nevertheless they would struggle with the sword for their lives."

It was a losing cause. Mormon says he would rather not harrow up our souls with the details. But some harrowing details are given in a letter to his son Moroni. The Lamanites took many prisoners from the tower of Sherizah, men, women, and children. They slew the man and fed their flesh to the wives and children. And, says Mormon, if you think this is barbarious, see what the Nephites are doing in Morianton. "For behold, many of the daughters of the Lamanites have they taken prisoners; and after depriving them of that which was most dear and precious above all things, which is chastity and virtue—they did murder them in a most cruel manner, torturing their bodies even unto death; and after they have done this, they devour their flesh like wild beasts—

and they do it for a token of bravery! O my beloved son, how can a people like this, that are without civilization—and only a few years have passed away, and they were a civil and delightful people—But O my son—how can we expect that God will stay His hand in judgment against us? Behold, my heart cries; Wo unto this people. Come out in judgment, O God, and hide their sins, and wickedness, and abominations from before Thy face.”

The judgment was not long in coming. Mormon wrote to the Lamanite king and asked permission to assemble his people in the hilly country of Cumorah, where he hoped he could sustain them. It was a beautiful country of grass and hills and fountains. The Lamanite leader granted him this request. By the end of the year three hundred eighty-four the Nephites had all been gathered and had pitched their tents for a last stand. Knowing the end was near, and that the records must be saved, Mormon buried them all in the hill Cumorah, excepting his abridgement which he gave to his son Moroni, who would fill in the last details.

“Wherefore, write somewhat a few things, if thou art spared and I shall perish. . . .”

Men, women, and children
Destruction watched the Lamanites approach.

“And with that awful fear of death which fills the breasts of all the wicked, did they await to receive them. Every soul was filled with terror because of the greatness of their numbers.”

Swords, bows and arrows, axes, and all manner of weapon's descended unmercifully. Mormon's ten thousand men were all slain, and he himself was wounded and left on the battle field. Moroni's ten thousand were all hewn down, but Moroni was spared. Twenty-one other generals, each with ten thousand troops all fell, 230,000 men. Perhaps many times this number, counting the wives and children who all fell with them!

“And when they had gone through and hewn down all my people save it were twenty-and-four of us, among whom was my son Moroni, we having survived the dead of our people, did behold on the morrow, when the Lamanites had returned unto their camps, from the top of the hill Cumorah . . . (the 230,000 dead) . . . And their flesh and bones, and blood lay upon the face of the earth, being left by the hands of those who slew them to molder upon the land, and to crumble and to return to their mother earth.”

From the top of that historic hill Mormon looked out over his finished nation and dedicated their bones:

“O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you! Behold, if ye had not done this, ye would not have fallen, and I mourn your loss.

“O ye fair sons and daughters, ye fathers and mothers, ye husbands and wives, ye fair ones, how is it that ye could have fallen!! But behold, ye are gone, and my sorrows cannot bring your return.

“And the day soon cometh that your mortal must put on immortality, and these bodies which are now moldering in corruption must soon become incorruptible bodies; and then ye must stand before the judgment seat of Christ, to be judged according to your works; and if it so be that ye are righteous, then are ye blessed with your fathers who have gone before you.

“O that ye had repented before this great destruction had come upon you. But behold, ye are gone, and the Father, yea, the Eternal Father of heaven, knoweth your state; and He doeth with you according to His justice and mercy.”

The Nephites were gone, and Mormon knew that he could do no more for them. But he knew that many Lamanites would be spared, and for these he had a message. He knew that they would not receive it for many generations — it was fourteen hundred forty-five years before his book was to be published—but he wanted them to have it. So to the modern American Indians he wrote, in effect: Know that you are of the House of Israel. (You are descendants of Joseph who was sold unto Egypt.) You must repent or you cannot be saved. You must lay down your weapons — most wars are not of God. You must learn the history of your fathers. Repent and believe in Jesus Christ, that He is the Son of God—that it was He who gave us the victory over death; He has redeemed the world; He has made it possible for the righteous to return and dwell with God. So repent and be baptized, and lay hold upon the gospel of Christ. The gospel is contained, not only in your own history (The Book of Mormon), but in the record that shall come to you from the Jews, The Bible, which the Gentiles will bring to you. If you believe one you will believe the other. Both books tell the same gospel. You

are a remnant of Jacob; you are numbered among the people of the first covenant—

“And if it so be that ye believe in Christ, and are baptized, first with water, then with fire and the Holy Ghost, following the example of our Savior, according to that which He hath commanded us, it shall be well with you in the day of judgment.”

Those are the last recorded words of the great general and prophet Mormon. They are as good for us as for the Indians.

Moroni says that there had been Nephite dissenters who had escaped into the south country, and a few more who had joined forces with the Lamanites prior to the last battle; but that after the great destruction at Cumorah all these were hunted down—“until they were all destroyed. And my father also was killed by them, and I even remain alone to write the sad tale of the destruction of my people—And whether they will slay me, I know not. Therefore I will write and hide up the records in the earth; and whither I go it mattereth not.” He says the Lamanites were fighting among themselves, and war was everywhere.

**Moroni,
Lone
Survivor**

Moroni is accounted for, wandering, hiding,

writing, for another solitary thirty-five years. The fly leaves in the book of his father had left little space for his observations. But perhaps he was able later to find ore and make additional pages; or perhaps as he searched among the buried records in the vault in the hill he came upon some unused plates; because the after-thoughts, the special gems that Moroni left us are among the most valuable in the book. He made a translation, an abridgement, from the original Adamic-language testament of the Jaredites—the twenty-four gold plates. This is our chief source of history and explanation of that people who left the Tower of Babel to return to North America and experience for sixteen hundred years the greatest civilization chronicled in the scriptures. They lost their lease to the promised land because they revived and practiced the murderous artifices of Cain, an order which had its Nephite parallel in the Gadianton organization. The Jaredite story is fascinatingly told in Moroni's clipt chapters, the Book of Ether.

Other valuable thoughtfulness left us by Moroni are, the prayer, or authoritative words of Jesus when He gave His disciples the commission to confer the Holy Ghost; the word for word pattern for ordinations to offices in the

priesthood; the blessings on the sacramental bread and wine; the requisite conditions and the proper mode of baptism; one of his father's sermons on charity; and two letters he had received from his father, one shortly after Moroni's call to the ministry, and the other the sorrowful account of conditions during one of the last battles. The first letter is especially valuable because it establishes with unmistakable directness the fact that "it is solemn mockery before God that ye should baptize little children." Parents should be taught that they must repent and be baptized, and humble themselves *as* their little children, and they will be saved *with* their little children. "But little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world; for how many little children have died without baptism! He that supposeth that little children need baptism is in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity; for he hath neither faith, hope, nor charity." Mormon says in his letter that he had heard that there had been disputations about this subject in Moroni's branch of the church. Immediately he inquired of the Lord. The answer was direct and emphatic:

"Behold, I came into the world not to call the righteous but the sinners to repentance;

the whole need no physician, but they that are sick; wherefore, little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken away from them in me, that it hath no power over them." This is part of His gift of *mercy*.

This clarification is extremely important. Although there is no mention in the Bible of little children ever being baptized, still conscientious Christians have been baptizing them for years in what they believe to be good faith. But here Jesus Himself corrects this widespread error by giving Mormon the instruction: "He that supposeth that little children need baptism is in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, for he hath neither faith, hope, nor charity." So in other words, the "good faith" of those who believe in infant baptism is not good faith, nor hope, nor charity. "It is mockery before God, denying the mercies of Christ, and putting trust in dead works."

That little children are saved in the kingdom of God is very comforting to many of us who have little ones who have died in infancy. The mercy and love of Christ is certainly large enough to receive them, who have never known sin.

Moroni's farewell is sad, but full of faith. He knew that the book abridged by his father would come before us. He knew *when* it would come. "It shall come in a day when there shall be churches built up that shall say: 'Come unto me, and for your money you shall be forgiven of your sins!' I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing . . . Why are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ? Why do ye not think that greater is the value of an endless happiness than that misery which never dies—because of the praise of the world? Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not?" Moroni felt this phase of his calling very keenly. "I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord will say unto you: 'Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust?' God shall show unto you that that which I have written is true."

The year was four hundred twenty-one A.D. Moroni took up the stylus to engrave his last words into the golden page:

“And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen.”

Sometime between 421 and 1823 Moroni emerged from his rest in the paradise of God, a resurrected, re-embodied man. The record he had carefully deposited in the hill Cumorah in 421 was uncovered and given to Joseph Smith on September 22, 1827. It was published and offered to the world in 1830, just as Moroni had seen fourteen hundred years earlier that it would be. It stands today as the Stick of Joseph, together with the Stick of Judah, or the Bible, as Ezekiel foretold—“and they shall become one in thine hand.” They have become one in the hands of many.

The biggest message of the Book of Mormon is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and still the Master of the world; and that the Bible is His word and law. One book substantiates

the other. There will yet be other books to substantiate both.

The Book of Mormon is a fruitful bough; and the fruit is in season now.

“And when ye shall receive these things,” Moroni pleads from his last chapter, “I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, He will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things. And whatsoever thing is good is just and true; wherefore, nothing that is good denieth the Christ, but acknowledgeth that He is.”



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