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Chapter IX

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Abstract: Popular at Jerusalem to Reject Prophets—Laman and Lemuel did not Believe Predictions Concerning that City—Confidence of Jews in Jerusalem—Glory of the City—The Magnificent Temple—Capture of the City—The Conspirators Chastened—Lehi and Nephi saved

their brother Nephi had said to them upon the subject. It was with great reluctance that they left their native city, Jerusalem. They were never satisfied with their father for leading them away from there. While indulging in their frequent fits of murmuring they accused him of being visionary and of being misled by his foolish imaginations.



CHAPTER IX.

POPULAR AT JERUSALEM TO REJECT PROPHETS—LAMAN AND LEMUEL DID NOT BELIEVE PREDICTIONS CONCERNING THAT CITY—CONFIDENCE OF JEWS IN JERUSALEM—GLORY OF THE CITY—THE MAGNIFICENT TEMPLE—CAPTURE OF THE CITY—THE CONSPIRATORS CHASTENED—LEHI AND NEPHI SAVED.

LAMAN and Lemuel were evidently full of the ideas which were popular in Jerusalem at the time they lived there. It was the popular thing at that time to reject the predictions and warnings of Jeremiah and the other prophets concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, the killing of many of its inhabitants, and the carrying away captive of many unto Babylon. We are warranted in believing that these young men had but little faith in these predictions. They had a good inheritance at Jerusalem. Their father, Lehi, was a man of wealth there, having an abundance of gold and silver and other precious things. They could see no sense in the movement which he had made, in leaving his comfortable and pleasant surroundings and taking his journey into the wilderness. At no time during their wanderings do they appear to have had any faith in what their father said should be the fate of Jerusalem.

The confidence of the Jews in the city of Jerusalem and its high destiny was something very extraordinary. Their great men and prophets had rejoiced in the walls and bulwarks of its glorious temple. They had uttered many promises and predictions concerning the city and its great destiny. These

utterances the Jews believed. The prophets who had spoken and written them had passed away, but their memories were cherished as sacred. New prophets arose, who prophesied evil concerning the city, the temple and the people. They foretold the disasters which should befall them and the dreadful fate that awaited them, unless the nation and its rulers should speedily repent. These prophets the Jews rejected. They did not believe Jeremiah; they did not believe Ezekiel; they did not believe Lehi, nor any of the many prophets, who, Nephi informs us, were raised up and sent by the Lord to them at that time. But Josephus says, they did give credit to false prophets, who deluded them with the statement that the king of Babylon would make no more war against them; but that the Egyptians, who were the allies of the Jews, would make war against him and conquer him. The king of Babylon had killed their king, Jehoiakim; he had taken away many captives; his son Jehoiachin, whom he had made king had also been sent captive to Babylon, together with many thousands of the leading people; the temple had been despoiled; and Zedekiah himself, an uncle of the last king, and a brother of King Jehoiakim, had been placed upon the throne by the king of Babylon and only held the kingly dignity by his permission; but yet, so confident were they of their future prosperity, and, as Josephus informs us, so deluded by false prophets as to the assistance Egypt would render them, that they were heedless of all the predictions and warnings of the true prophets of God and sought to take their lives. According to Josephus:

“False prophets deceived Zedekiah in saying that the king of Babylon would not make any more war against him or his people; nor remove them out of their own country into Babylon; and that those then in captivity would return, with all those vessels of which the king of Babylon had despoiled the temple.”

It is very evident that Laman and Lemuel shared in these mistaken views. They had but little or no faith in their father's words. The false prophets made statements and uttered pretended prophecies which were more agreeable to their ears and more in consonance with their ideas and anticipations.

Jerusalem had been chosen of God. It was His city. Tradition had pointed out one of the hills upon which it stood as the spot to which Abraham brought his son Isaac, upon that memorable occasion when, in obedience to divine command, he prepared to sacrifice him to the Lord. From the days of David it had been the political and religious capital of the Israelitish nation; that king had removed the ark of the covenant there. He had prepared gold and silver, brass and iron, dressed stones and cedar timber in abundance before his death for his son Solomon, with which to build the temple. Here was that glorious building which was adorned and beautified by the great King Solomon as no building had ever been—the house of God, which He had designed to fill with His glory. This structure, for its extent, elaborateness and grandeur, was not only the pride of all Israel, but the wonder of all people who saw it. In the temple was the great altar of sacrifice, the holy of holies, toward which the eyes of all the nation were turned as the point where the Lord revealed Himself to His servants. When Lehi and his family left Jerusalem the temple had been despoiled of much of its riches; but those celebrated works of molten brass, executed by Hiram, the Tyrian, with which Solomon had adorned it, the sea of ten cubits in diameter supported by twelve oxen, the bases, and the pillars Jachin and Boaz, each of them eighteen cubits in height and twelve in circumference, which stood in the porch still remained there. It was not until the capture of the city by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, about eleven years after the departure of Lehi, that these were broken up, and the materials, with other rich plunder from the temple and from the city, carried to Babylon. Though in the days of Lehi, Jerusalem was not so magnificent as in the days of Solomon, yet it was still the splendid city of the great king. It had passed through many vicissitudes since that day. Ten of the tribes had seceded under Jeroboam and set up a rival capital at Samaria, yet to the Jew it was the holiest spot on earth; around it clustered the most glorious memories and the most brilliant hopes. The withdrawal of the allegiance and the tribute of the larger portion of the Israelitish race had not caused the kingly city to lose much of its splendor or of its influence among the nations.

The sons of Lehi were familiar with the history of their birthplace. They knew that if it had declined through the misrule of one monarch, it had been resuscitated through the zeal of another. It was more than likely that Laman and Lemuel had unshaken confidence in the skill and valor of their nation in war; they knew how impregnably strong were the fortifications, the towers and the walls of the sacred city; they were aware that it was only by the consent of the two last kings that the armies of the king of Babylon had effected their entrance within its walls; but they were probably satisfied in their own minds that, should the people of Jerusalem defend their city, no army or means of attack which the king of Babylon could bring against it would be successful in effecting its capture, much less its destruction. They would not believe that the city which the Lord had chosen, and which had a historic existence of five centuries before the hanging gardens for which Babylon was famous were built, was to be destroyed by the king of that city. But the Lord had pronounced its doom. He had witnessed its wickedness and abominations. His prophets had warned its people what their fate would be, and there was only one way of escape—the contrite repentance of its king, nobles and people, and thorough submission to the will of the Lord. Eleven years after Lehi and his family left Jerusalem the city was captured by Nebuchadnezzar; but so formidable was its resistance that it could only be reduced by starving its inhabitants. Lehi was shown its destruction in a vision, and in telling his sons and all their families about it, he said that had they remained in Jerusalem he and they would also have perished.

The Lord did not suffer Lehi and Nephi to be injured by these wicked children and brothers. He was with them, and the voice of the Lord spoke many things unto the conspirators and chastened them exceedingly. This caused their anger to subside, and they repented of their sins, and once more they were blessed with food and were saved from perishing.