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Lesson 66 - Nephi's Reign and Death

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LESSON 66.—NEPHI'S REIGN AND DEATH.

PLACE—Land of Nephi.

TEXT.—II Nephi 5:18-20; Jacob 1:9-12.

18. And it came to pass that they would that I should be their ¹king. But I, Nephi, was desirous that they should have no king; nevertheless, I did for them according to that which was in my power.

19. And behold, the words of the Lord had been fulfilled unto my brethren, which he spake concerning them, that I should be their ²ruler and their teacher; wherefore, I had been their ruler and their teacher, according to the commandments of the Lord, until the time they sought to take³ away my life.

20. Wherefore, the word of the Lord was fulfilled which he spake unto me, saying: That inasmuch as they will not hearken unto thy words, they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord.⁴ And behold, they were cut off from his presence. * * * *

9. Now Nephi began to be old, and he saw that he must soon die; wherefore, he anointed a man to be a king and a ruler over his people now, according to the reigns of the kings.

10. The people having loved Nephi exceedingly, he having been a great protector for them, having wielded the sword of Laban in their defense, and having labored in all his days for their welfare;

11. Wherefore, the people were desirous to retain in remembrance his name. And whoso should reign in his stead, were called by the people, second Nephi, third Nephi,⁵ &c., according to the reigns of the kings; and thus they were called by the people, let them be of whatever name they would.

12. And it came to pass that Nephi died.

1. II Nephi 6: 2. I Nephi 2: 22; 3: 29. 3. II Nephi 5: 2, 4. I Nephi 2: 21; Alma 9: 13, 14. 5. Jacob 1: 15; Jarom 1: 7, 14; Omni 1: 12, 19, 23, 24; Mosiah 1: 10; 6: 4-7; 29: 46.

LESSON STATEMENT.

Soon after the arrival of the Nephites in their new home, they desired that Nephi should be their king, which he,

in reality, was in all but the name. For he was their leader and guide, their high priest and prophet, and in time of war their general and commander. But Nephi was desirous that they should have no king. He, doubtless, preferred that they should recognize God as their King, but to comply with their wishes he consented, and as their king, did for them all the good that was in his power.

Under his wise and beneficent rule the Nephites increased and prospered greatly. So much did they love him because of his goodness, that when he died they called his immediate successors second Nephi, third Nephi, and so on, no matter what their individual names were. How long this practice continued we are not told, but we find that the last three kings (Mosiah I., Benjamin, Mosiah II.) were called by their own particular names.

The separation of the followers of Laman and Nephi brought about a further fulfillment of the word of the Lord. He had promised that Nephi should be a ruler and teacher to his brethren, which he was until they strove to kill him after the death of Lehi. Then the Lord commanded him to leave the rebellious portion of the community to themselves and take the obedient to a new land. In this new land he became

their king, while the others, by this division, were bereft of the priesthood; they had none who could approach God, and consequently, as had been foretold, they were cut off from His presence. The result of this was that they rapidly sank into barbarism; while the Nephites, enlightened of the Lord and led by His servants, increased in numbers and wealth, and developed many admirable traits of genuine civilization. Shortly before his death Nephi anointed another man to succeed him on the throne.

NOTES.

THE DEGRADATION OF THE LAMANITES.—Enos, the nephew of Nephi, writing in the succeeding generation, states: "And I bear record that the people of Nephi did seek diligently to restore the Lamanites unto the true faith in God. But our labors were vain; their hatred was fixed, and they were led by their evil nature that they became wild and ferocious, and a bloodthirsty people; full of idolatry and filthiness: feeding upon beasts of prey, dwelling in tents, and wandering about in the wilderness with a short skin girdle about their loins and their heads shaven: and their skill was in the bow, and in the cimeter, and the ax. And many of them did eat nothing save it was raw meat; and they were continually seeking to destroy us.—*Enos 1:20.*

JACOB.—The brother of Nephi. He was the elder of the two boys born to Lehi and Sariah in the Arabian wilderness. He was a mighty man of God, and, apparently, next to Nephi, the greatest and most devoted of all the sons of Lehi. When the little colony divided after the death of Lehi, Jacob, who was yet young, followed Nephi, and was ordained by him a priest to the people. Undoubtedly he received the higher priesthood, or he could not have acted in the rites of the lesser priesthood, he being of the tribe of Manassah, and not of Levi. He magnified his calling with much zeal and prudence, and Nephi records, at considerable length, extracts from his teachings. When Nephi died, Jacob appears to have taken charge of the spiritual concerns of the people, and to have presided over the church; he also became custodian of the sacred treasures.

SWORD OF LABAN.—The sword worn by Laban at the time he was slain by Nephi; the latter afterwards used it as a pattern for the swords which he made for his people to use when attacked by the Lamanites.

DATE OF NEPHI'S DEATH.—The date of Nephi's death is not stated in the Book of Mormon; but was evidently later than B. C. 545.

WHAT WE MAY LEARN FROM THIS LESSON.

1. That the obedient who accompanied Nephi to the new land desired that he should be their king.
2. That he, with some reluctance, consented.
3. That as a true servant of God he did all the good in his power for his people.
4. He was their leader, father, prophet and priest, and when the Lamanites attacked them, he defended them in battle.
5. That the Lamanites, being bereft of the priesthood, rapidly sank into barbarism and idolatry.
6. That they were thus cut off from the presence of the Lord, and His word was fulfilled respecting them if they would not keep His commandments.
7. That when Nephi grew old he anointed another man to succeed him as king.
8. That when Nephi died the people so loved him that to keep his goodness in remembrance they called his successors by his name.
9. That the promises of the Lord were fulfilled to Nephi that he should be a leader and teacher of his brethren.

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON.

1. Whom did the Nephites desire for their king?
2. What were his feelings on the matter?
3. When he consented what course did he take?
4. What was his character as king?
5. What were the feelings of the people towards him?
6. What prophecies were fulfilled regarding the Lamanites?
7. What causes led to their fulfillment?
8. What prophecies were fulfilled concerning Nephi?
9. How were they fulfilled?
10. Describe the condition of the Lamanites in the next generation.
11. Tell what you know concerning the sword of Laban.
12. Who succeeded Nephi on the throne?