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Lesson IV. Book of Mormon Gems

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LESSON DEPARTMENT.

An Appreciation of the Book of Mormon

Senior Course of Study.

LESSON IV.

Book of Mormon Gems.

(For Tuesday, November 7, or Sunday, October 31.)

One of the most beautiful passages in the Book of Mormon—a passage rich in its promise and full of historical verification—is the declaration of Nephi that the Lord preserves as in the hollow of His hand those whom He chooses for sacred missions.

“And when the Jews heard these things, they were angry with him; yea, even as with the prophets of old whom they had cast out, and stoned, and slain; and they also sought his life, that they might take it away. But behold, I, Nephi, will shew unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance.” I Nephi 1:20.

You will recall that when Lehi had seen in vision the calamities that were to befall the people of Jerusalem unless they repented, he went forth to warn them and to urge them to change their manner of living. You will recall also, that, upon hearing him, they only mocked him and sought to take his life.

This passage sounds a wonderful truth. Not only was Lehi delivered and preserved to lead his little band to the promised land—every prophet has been sustained and safeguarded until his mission has been

fulfilled. It is true that many of the finest characters that were ever intrusted with the deliverance of God's will to His people have been martyrs to their causes but it is equally true that these same characters have been marvelously preserved until their destined duty was performed.

Witness these cases:

Lehi: The account as given in I Nephi chapter 2. *Hornetta*

Nephi: The account as given in I Nephi chapter 7. *Grace*

Nephi: The account as given in I Nephi chapter 16. *Bernice*

Nephi: The account as given in I Nephi chapter 18. *Ada*

Nephi: The account as given in II Nephi chapter 5. *Ellen*

Abinadi: The account as given in Mosiah chapter 13. *Ethel Thompson*

Aaron: The account as given in Alma chapter 21. *Ethel Larson*

Samuel, the Lamanite: The account as given in Helaman chapter 16. *Edna*

Nor does the truth of this declaration apply only to Book of Mormon characters. Being a truth revealed by the Lord it applies to all ages and to all men. Witness the preserving care extended to: Noah, Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel.

And of course it was wonderfully manifested in the life of the

Master Himself as it was later in the case of our own Prophet, Joseph Smith. In fact, this Book of Mormon truth is being proclaimed anew in the experience of many of the servants of the Lord as they go out into the world today to proclaim His word. The following testimony, given by an elder who did missionary service in Great Britain, is a striking evidence of the force and truthfulness of this Book of Mormon promise.

"Opposition to our work started sometime during the last of 1910 and the beginning of 1911, by occasional newspaper attacks in different places throughout England, and now and then an open attack upon the elders on the street during our open air meetings. The agitation grew and increased and inside of a month or two the whole country was inflamed. Practically every newspaper and magazine of any importance was publishing articles pro and con the question (mainly con, and with a hatred that was deep-seated and venomous). Finally, but this was later, the question reached such proportions that it became an open matter in Parliament, questions being directed on our propaganda and activity in the country, our opponents demanding a parliamentary investigation. Churchill, however, then home secretary, put a quietus on the row by openly stating that there was nothing to the agitation.

"It was the evident desire of our opponents after the campaign of villification had fully started, to drive us out of several of the towns where we had been preaching, in the endeavor finally to drive us entirely from the country. The agitation became intense and grew to alarming proportions in Birkenhead across the Mersey from Liverpool.

At the time I was presiding over the Liverpool conference, and Birkenhead was a prosperous branch in the conference. I suppose we had seventy or eighty odd Saints enrolled.

"The matter came to a head here one Sunday night during the last of March, when word came to me from the elders in charge, that their meeting had been interrupted by a dozen or more agitators who had entered the hall and by interruptions and unseemly conduct refused to allow the evening services to proceed. Threats had come to them during the week also that they were to be driven out of town. Meetings were held by the 'Antis' on the streets and market-places during the week, where several rather prominent men of the town addressed them, among them town counselor, T. M. Thompson, and a preacher by the name of Thomas. I accordingly came down from Preston my headquarters, to take charge of the meeting the following Sunday. I decided to keep the outsiders out of our meeting, so as to prevent any interruption, had the elders deliver tickets of admission to the Saints and our friends, and notified the police department that we wanted help. Sunday night came, and with two or three police at the door, we let in only the Saints. The crowd grew in number until after we had started, there must have been some several hundreds of people present. Just as we were about to start, a brass band came down the street, leading another crowd. When they got opposite our building, the leaders, among them Town Counselor Thompson, tried to enter, but was told he was not allowed in. This started the crowd hooting and jeering, and they tried to push the door,

but saw they could do nothing with the police in front. Accordingly, Thompson wanted to know if we intended leaving Birkenhead. I told him certainly not. He then handed me a written ultimatum, which read as follows: 'I, Thomas M. Thompson, on behalf of the citizens of Birkenhead demand that you leave this district within seven days and not return as your business in the town is not conducive to the best interests of the peace.' I told him we had no intention of leaving. He asked if we were ready to take the consequences, and I told him yes. More bickering took place, and the crowd tried again to rush the door. We carried on our meeting with the crowd yelling around the building, and the band playing. Thompson held a meeting just outside the door, and it was difficult to hear ourselves talk inside. The crowd got stirred up and a window was smashed. When the meeting closed we sent the Saints home, the local elders, Brothers Williams and Madison and myself going upstairs and remaining till the crowd should disperse, on the advice of the police. The crowd hung around until near midnight, waiting for us to come out, and then dispersed, when we went to our lodge.

"During the following week, I had several consultations with President Clawson in regard to the affair. I knew, as he did, that the whole country was watching the Birkenhead affair, and if we were driven out, the same attacks would be tried elsewhere. Brother Clawson was skeptical about staying, but acting on our desire to stay and fight it out, agreed. The Saturday before we held a prayer meeting at Edge Lane and the elders and Saints throughout the conference

were advised to fast and pray. I saw the chief of police and requested help from him for the Sunday service. He promised to help us. Sunday afternoon before going to Birkenhead, Brother Clawson called me into his private office and told me he desired to give me a blessing, and it was a beautiful one, and certainly inspiring. He promised me I should go and come in peace, and that the power of the Almighty would be made manifest in our behalf.

"We had the Saints come as early as possible to our meeting. This was the end of our time given in the ultimatum of the previous Sunday. The crowd began to congregate in front of our building. A squad of fifty or sixty policemen stationed themselves around the building. When we were about ready to start our services, we heard a brass band coming down the street, and in a short time the row started. A crowd of what I should estimate to be two or three thousand people, but which one newspaper estimated at five thousand, was soon massed up and down the streets around our building. Thompson and his brass band were in the lead. When it was found that we were still in town and even holding our meeting, and that no admission was allowed, pandemonium and mobocracy broke out. The mob assaulted the police in the endeavor to break in the door but were held back. In the encounter several policemen were more or less seriously injured by flying missiles, one beaten and kicked so badly that it was necessary to take him to the hospital.

"The crowd, seeing that it couldn't get in, then began to throw stones, half-bricks, etc., through the

windows until several windows were completely demolished. Fearing some of the Saints might be injured by flying glass or missiles, I immediately dismissed the meeting, and told the Saints to depart singly or in twos, which they did.

"This night, when the Saints had departed, I intended to remain in the hall with the elders until the crowd had dispersed, as was done the Sunday before. In fact the police so advised me stating that our lives were in danger in case we came out. However, I had no sooner got back in the meeting room with the elders, than I was prompted to tell the brethren with me that we would leave. The thought of what was our apparent danger didn't enter my mind at the time, and did not enter the minds of the elders with me. We took our hats, opened the door pushed aside a huge English "bobby" standing in front of the door, passed across the few feet intervening between the door and the mob. I pushed our way into the crowd. The crowd was still fighting with the police and throwing anything at hand at them and the building. If ever I felt the spirit of murder in the air this was the occasion, the whole movement, of course, being directed against us four. Yet into the crowd we went and walked for practically a block through them. On all sides I remember hearing cursings against the 'Mormon' elders and what would happen to them when caught. We passed man after man and woman after woman, with stones and sticks of various sizes, waiting for us. Yet not an eye saw us leave the building and not an eye saw us pass through the

crowds. We passed through them as if the street were clear, took our train to Liverpool, and arrived safely.

"The crowd stayed around the building until near midnight waiting for us.

"The police inspector next day asked me when we left the building. I told him and told him we had pushed one of his men away in order to pass the door. I remember his reply: 'Well, I'll be d——d. I supposed you fellows had stayed there all night, since my men told me you hadn't come out.'

"That ended our trouble in Birkenhead. Several of the leaders of the crowd were arrested and dealt with by the law."

OUTLINE.

Declaration of the truth that the Lord preserves His Prophets.

Illustrations from the Book of Mormon.

Illustrations from the Bible.

The case of Joseph Smith.

The testimony of one of our Missionaries.

QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS.

1. How do you harmonize the passage quoted at the beginning of this lesson with the fact that so many of the Prophets of the Lord have been martyrs?

2. Assign individual members the cases listed and others of your choice for special reports.

3. Enumerate the occasions upon which the life of the Prophet Joseph was preserved from his enemies.

4. In what way are these cases evidence that Satan is still carrying on his campaign against the Lord?

5. Quote I Nephi 1:2), beginning "But behold."