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Chapter XII

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Abstract: The Waters of Mormon—Alma, Helam and Others Baptised Therein—The Church Organized—The King Warned—He Sends Troops—Alma and his People Flee to the Land of Helam—They Build a City

CHAPTER XII.

THE WATERS OF MORMON—ALMA, HELAM AND OTHERS BAPTIZED THEREIN—THE CHURCH ORGANIZED—THE KING WARNED—HE SENDS TROOPS—ALMA AND HIS PEOPLE FLEE TO THE LAND OF HELAM—THEY BUILD A CITY.

THE FIRST to go down into the waters of Mormon for baptism were Alma and a fellow believer named Helam. When they entered the water Alma lifted his voice in prayer, and besought the Lord for his Holy Spirit. This blessing having been bestowed, he proceeded with the sacred ordinance. Addressing his companion, he said, Helam, I baptize thee, having authority from the Almighty God, as a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve him until you are dead as to the mortal body; and may the Spirit of the Lord be poured out upon you; and may he grant unto you eternal life, through the redemption of Christ, whom he has prepared from the foundation of the world. Having said these words, both Alma and Helam were buried in the water, from which they came forth rejoicing, being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Others, even to the number of two hundred and four souls, followed Helam into the waters of baptism, but in all these cases Alma did not again bury himself beneath the wave, but only the repentant believers. From this time we may date the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ in that land, and henceforth its members assembled for worship and testimony once a week.

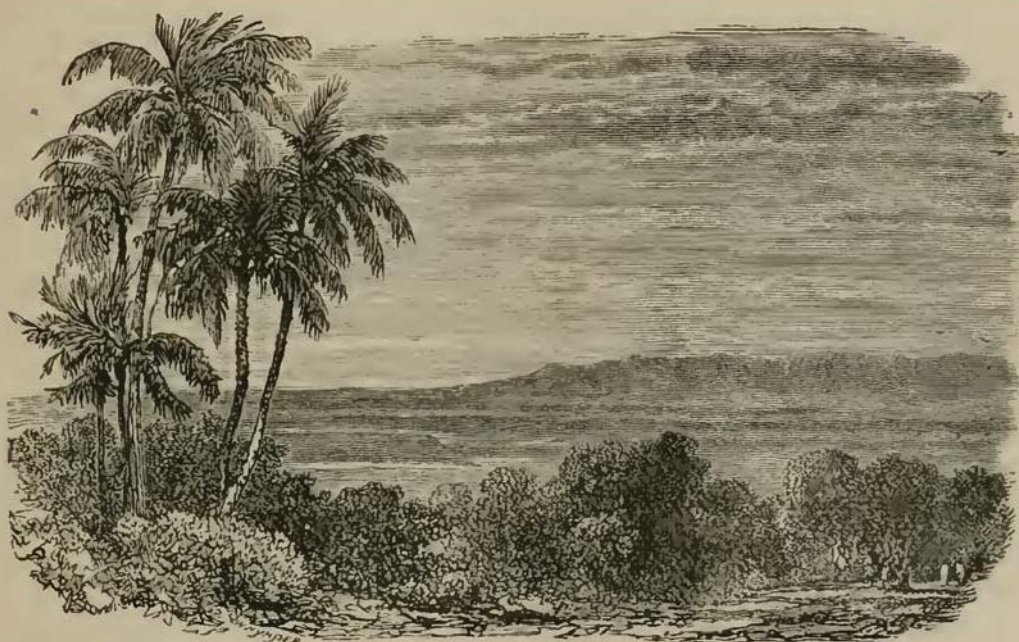
Notwithstanding the care and secrecy with which the members of the church acted, Noah soon discovered

that there was some hidden movement amongst his subjects, and by the help of his spies he discovered what was taking place at Mormon. Making the tyrant's usual excuse, that the Christians were in rebellion against him, he sent his armies to capture and destroy them. But a greater than he stretched forth his arm to preserve his people. The Lord warned Alma of the king's intentions, and by divine direction he assembled his people, some 450 souls, gathered their flocks and herds, loaded up their grain, provisions and other supplies, and departed into the wilderness.

Being strengthened by the Lord, notwithstanding that they were impeded by their flocks and families, the pilgrims traveled with sufficient rapidity to escape the pursuing forces of king Noah, who were reluctantly compelled to return to the land of Nephi without having accomplished the object of the expedition. At the end of eight days Alma's company ceased their flight, and settled in a very beautiful and pleasant land where there was an abundant supply of pure water. We have no direct information with regard to the course taken by this colony, but it is evident from the details of their later history, that the new settlement lay somewhere between the lands of Nephi and Zarahemla, though possibly somewhat aside from the most direct route. We think it far from improbable that it was situated at the head waters of some one of the numerous tributaries to the Amazon that take their rise on the eastern slopes of the Andes.

The colonists, whose industry is especially referred to by the inspired historian, immediately set to work to till the soil and build a city. The city, with the surrounding territory, they named the city and land

of Helam. Now that they were established as a separate people, independent of both Lamanite and Nephite princes, they desired a form of government, and requested Alma to be their king. This honor he declined. He rehearsed to them the history of their fathers; he pictured to them the infamies of king Noah's reign; he shewed them how a wicked ruler could lead his subjects into all manner of evil, and how such things led to bondage; and, on the other



THE LAND OF HELAM.

hand, how much better it was to have the Lord as their king and ruler, and to be guided by his servants under his inspiration. This counsel the people wisely accepted. Alma, though not bearing the title of king, acted as their leader, as their high priest and prophet, and as the mouthpiece of Heaven whenever God's holy word was graciously given them. In this happy state the people of Helam continued for some years,

the Lord greatly prospering them and crowning their labors with abundant increase. Nevertheless, the Lord saw fit to chasten this devoted people, and to try their patience and their faith, of which trial and its results we shall have more to say as we proceed with our story.

We must now leave Alma and his people for a time and return to king Noah.

CHAPTER XIII.

KING NOAH'S SUBJECTS REBEL—GIDEON—THE LAMANITES INVADE LEHI-NEPHI—THE NEPHITES RETREAT—A PART SURRENDER—THE NEW TERMS OF PEACE—NOAH IS BURNED TO DEATH—LIMHI MADE KING—NOAH'S PRIESTS ESCAPE—THEY SEIZE SOME LAMANITE MAIDENS—ANOTHER WAR—THE NEPHITES VICTORIOUS—THE KING OF THE LAMANITES WOUNDED—MUTUAL EXPLANATIONS.

SOON AFTER the return of Noah's army from their unsuccessful attempt to capture Alma and his people, a great division grew up amongst that monarch's subjects. They were heartily tired of his tyranny and his debaucheries. One of those most dissatisfied was an officer of the king's army named Gideon. We have no reason to believe that he was at that time a wicked man though he did rebel against the king, but rather that he was a good, pure and wise man, for in after life he proved that he possessed all these virtues. In the disturbances that now arose between Noah and his people Gideon sought to slay the king. But Noah fled to