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Chapter LIII

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Abstract: The Commencement of the Apostasy—It Grows in Intensity—The Persecution of the Disciples—Lamanites Again—Re-appearance of the Gadianton Bands—War—Ammaron Hides the Records

CHAPTER LIII.

THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE APOSTASY—IT GROWS IN INTENSITY—THE PERSECUTION OF THE DISCIPLES—LAMANITES AGAIN—REAPPEARANCE OF THE GADI-ANTON BANDS—WAR—AMMARON HIDES THE RECORDS.

BY THE year A. C. 201, all the second generation had passed away, save a few; the people had greatly multiplied and spread over the face of the land, north and south, and had become exceedingly rich; they wore costly apparel, which they adorned with ornaments of gold and silver, pearls and precious stones. From this date they no more had their property in common, but, like the rest of the world, every man sought gain, wealth, power and influence for himself and his. All the old evils arising from selfishness were revived. Soon they began to build churches after their own fashion, and hire preachers who pauded to their lusts; some even began to deny the Savior.

From A. C. 210 to A. C. 230, the people waxed greatly in iniquity and impurity of life. Different dissenting sects multiplied, infidels abounded. The three remaining disciples were sorely persecuted, notwithstanding that they performed many mighty miracles. They were shut up in prison, but the prisons were rent in twain by the power of God; they were cast into fiery furnaces, but the flames harmed them not; they were thrown into dens of wild beasts, but they played with the savage inmates as a child does with a lamb, and received no harm; they were not sub-

ject to many of the laws that govern our mortal bodies, they had passed through a glorious change, by which they were freed from earthly pain, suffering and death. Not only did the wicked persecute these three immortal ones; others also of God's people suffered from their unhallowed anger and bitter hatred; but the faithful neither reviled at the reviler nor smote the smiter; they bore these things with patience and fortitude, remembering the pains of their Redeemer.

In the year A. C. 231 there was a great division among the people. The old party lines were again definitely marked. Again the old animosity assumed shape, and Nephite and Lamanite once more became implacable foes. Those who rejected and renounced the gospel assumed the latter name, and with their eyes open, and a full knowledge of their inexcusable infamy, they taught their children the same base falsehoods that in ages past had caused the unceasing hatred that reigned in the hearts of the children of Laman and Lemuel toward the seed of their younger brothers.

By A. C. 244 the more wicked portion of the people had become exceedingly strong, as well as far more numerous than the righteous. They deluded themselves by building all sorts of churches, with creeds to suit the increasing depravity of the masses.

When 260 years had passed away, the Gadianton bands, with all their secret signs and abominations, through the cunning of Satan, again appeared and increased until, in A. C. 300, they had spread over all the land. By this time, also, the Nephites, having gradually forsaken their first love, had so far sunk in the abyss of iniquity that they had grown as wicked, as proud, as corrupt and as vile as the Lamanites. All

were submerged in one overwhelming flood of infamy, and there were none that were righteous, save it were the disciples of Jesus.

Still, active hostilities did not break out for some time; but when war commenced, it scarcely ceased until that great battle near Cumorah, which brought extinction to the Nephite race. This war, or series of wars, was one of peculiar horrors. All the old savagery, ten times intensified, was rekindled, transforming the combatants into fiends. Each race seems to have striven to out-rival the other in its bloody and infernal inhumanity. Mormon, the Nephite prophet-general, in an epistle to his son Moroni, sorrowingly relates the fate of the Nephite prisoners—men, women and children—taken at Sherrizah. He adds: And the husbands and fathers of those women and children they [the Lamanites] have slain; and they feed the women upon the flesh of their husbands, and the children upon the flesh of their fathers; and no water save a little do they give them. And notwithstanding the abomination of the Lamanites, it doth not exceed that of our people in Moriantum. 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; and after they had done this thing, 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 unto wild beasts, because of the hardness of their hearts; and they do it for a token of bravery. Such was the horrible condition into which open, wilful, determined rejection of the gospel had brought both races.

Amos entrusted the records to his son Ammaron in the year 306 A. C.

Owing to the increasing depravity and vileness of the Nephites, he was constrained by the Holy Ghost to hide up all the sacred things which had been handed down from generation to generation (A. C. 320). The place where he hid them is said to have been in the land Antum, in a hill which was called Shim. After he had hid them up, he informed Mormon, then a child ten years old, of what he had done, and placed the buried treasures in his charge. He instructed Mormon to go, when he was about twenty-four years old, to the hill where they were hid, and take the plates of Nephi and record thereon what he had observed concerning the people. The remainder of the records, etc., he was to leave where they were.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE LAST LONG SERIES OF WARS—MORMON—THE FINAL
CONFLICT AT CUMORAH—THE LAST OF THE NEPHITES.

IT WAS in the year 322 A. C. that actual war broke out between the Nephites and Lamanites, for the first time since the Redeemer's appearing. A number of battles were fought, in which the armies of the former were victorious. Four years later the savage contest was renewed. In the interim iniquity had greatly increased. As foretold by the prophets, men's property became slippery, things movable were subject to unac-