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Chapter VI

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Abstract: The Condition of the Lamanites—Sherem, the First Anti-Christ—His Recantation and Dreadful End

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONDITION OF THE LAMANITES—SIHEREM, THE FIRST ANTI-CHRIST—HIS RECONTATION AND DREADFUL END.

WHILST the early Nephites were polygamists, and, unfortunately for them, unrighteous ones, the Lamanites were monogamists, which form of marriage they appear to have ever after retained.

One phase of Lamanite character, originating, doubtless, in their Israelitish ancestry, is worthy of our praise. It was the great strength of their domestic affections, their love for their wives and their kindness to their families. As we shall have to refer so often to their vices, we must, in justice to them, here insert the description of their virtues given by Jacob, the son of Lehi. He says, "Behold, their husbands love their wives, and their wives love their husbands; and their husbands and wives love their children; and their unbelief and their hatred towards you, is because of the iniquity of their fathers." Nor is there anything in this incompatible with the ferocity of their character or their bloodthirstiness in war. In the earlier ages of the Lamanite nationality, rigid chastity was observed by the men as well as by the women. Indeed, it may be said that while they manifested most of the prominent vices of semi-barbarous people, they also possessed the virtues that such races, uncorrupted by a more luxurious mode of life, generally shew. Nor would it be consistent, nor historically true, to give one general description and apply it to the whole

Lamanite race, for as their numbers increased the state of society amongst them grew more complex, and we read of different grades of civilization in their midst.

It must not be forgotten that the Lamanites occupied a much wider extent of country than did the Nephites. In this vast area were found people who dwelt in cities and cultivated the arts to the extent generally found amongst races of the same grade and characteristics. Whilst others, degraded in life and habits, roamed in the wilderness, building no houses, forming no permanent abiding places, but wandering from place to place, and depending for food and clothing upon the animals they caught in the chase, the fishes that abounded in the waters, and whatever they could steal from the hated Nephites, or indeed of their somewhat more highly civilized fellow-countrymen.

It was in the days of Jacob that the first Nephite Anti-Christ of whom we have any account appeared. His name was Sherem. He openly and unblushingly taught that there would be no Christ and that there was no necessity for an atonement. He was a type of many who came after, and a well fitted tool for his evil work. Bland in manners, fluent of speech, much given to flattery, and withal, well versed in the learning of the Nephites, he, by his sophistries, led many astray. His success fired his zeal and filled him with conceit. He actually sought to convert to his views Jacob, the prophet and presiding priest of the church, a man rich in wisdom, and the recipient of many divine revelations; one indeed who had seen angels and heard the voice of the Lord from time to time.

In the interview that occurred between these two widely differing men, Sherem charged that Jacob had changed the law of Moses, which was the right way, into the worship of a being whom Jacob said should come many hundred years hence. He added, Now behold, I, Sherem, declare unto you, that this is blasphemy; for no man knoweth of these things; for he cannot tell of things to come. Thus he denied prophecy, and styled good evil, and exalted error in the place of truth.

Jacob, being filled with the Spirit of God, confounded his arguments, brought forward the testimony of the scriptures, and proved that the very law of Moses on which he lay so great a stress, was from beginning to end but the type and foreshadowing of the more perfect law of the Christ who should come.

Beaten in his arguments, Sherem fell back upon that almost universal refuge of the false teacher. He defiantly called for a sign. A sign was given him. The power of God came upon him and he fell stricken to the ground. For many days he was nourished, but ineffectually. He himself perceived that death was approaching, and with this perception gathered in his soul all the fears and horrors of an apostate's doom. But before his death he called the people to him and confessed his iniquity. He denied the things he had taught, he "confessed the Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost, and the ministering of angels." He avowed that he had been deceived by the power of the devil, and bitterly bewailed his condition, as the fear that he had committed the unpardonable sin, in denying the Savior, weighed his soul down to hell. Having

made these small amends for his past iniquities, he could say no more, and gave up the ghost.

When the people who had gathered to hear his last words witnessed the terrors of his death, they were softened in their hearts, the power of God rested upon them, and they fell to the earth. The corrupt weeds he had sown in their hearts had withered, the truth had been vindicated, the cause of the Savior extolled, and peace and the love of God was restored again among the people. Thus was this apostasy eradicated, and God glorified; the Nephites of that generation from that time searching the scriptures and cleaving unto the truth.

When Jacob grew old he gave the sacred records to the keeping of his son Enos.

CHAPTER VII.

ENOS, THE SON OF JACOB—THE NEPHITES AND LAMANITES OF HIS DAY—HIS TESTIMONY AND PROPHECIES.

IN THE days of Enos the struggle still continued between the Nephites and Lamanites. The latter seem to have made it the business of their lives to harass and annoy their more peaceful brethren. Their hatred was fixed. They swore in their wrath that if it were possible they would destroy the Nephites, and also their records, that they might no longer be compelled to listen to their warnings, or be tormented by their appeals for peace and friendship.