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Personal Appearance of the Nephites

Author(s): George Reynolds

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Abstract: Describes the personal appearance of the Nephites as being “white and delightful people,” perhaps “well proportioned, ruddy of countenance, auburn hair and light eyed.”

Our engraving illustrates the scene, when the prophet appeared before the king.

The prophet broached the subject by relating a parable:

He said, there were two men in a city. One was rich, and owned many flocks and herds. The other was poor, and possessed only one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished, and which had grown up with his children, and was almost as one of his family. The rich man wanted to entertain a traveler who came along one day, but instead of killing one of his own animals to make a feast, he took that only lamb of the poor man, and killed it.

When King David had heard that, he became very angry, to think a man should be guilty of such an act of injustice, and declared that the man who had done it should surely die.

Then said the prophet Nathan unto the powerful king, "*Thou art the man.* Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife."

King David accepted the rebuke. He knew that the man of God told the truth. He acknowledged his guilt by saying, "I have sinned against the Lord." The king did what he could to atone for the crime he had committed, and doubtless respected the prophet all the more for coming to him and charging him with it.

He afterwards showed his respect for the prophet, by sending for him to come and anoint his son Solomon to succeed him as king.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF THE NEPHITES.

BY G. R.

EVER and anon throughout the Book of Mormon, we are reminded by the inspired historians, of the beauty of the Nephite race, especially in the days when the glory of righteousness beamed in their eyes, and shone in their countenances; then they were fair, very fair to look upon—a white and delightful people.

And well might it be so, for were they not descended from that kindred couple, Abraham and his half-sister, whose great beauty has been proverbial in every generation, since they graced the earth with their comeliness? So lovely was Sarah, the fairest of womankind of her generation, that when she was sixty-seven years of age, the royal Pharaoh, disregarding the charms of the darker daughters of Egypt, desired her for his wife; and his admiration was doubtless in good taste, for the Bible tells us that she was then "very fair." And still more remarkable, when yet another twenty-two years had passed away, and she had seen nearly ninety summers come and go on this earth, another monarch, Abimelech, sought to take her to himself. Nor was her husband's manly beauty less striking; obedience to God, the observance of the laws of life, and the cultivation of the generous virtues so enabled his

existence, that strength and manhood tarried with him in its force, long after that age when the sons of modern generations are feebly tottering to their graves.

Of the commanding beauty of Abraham's descendants, we have many recorded instances; but none that exceed that of his great grandson, Joseph, whose surpassing manliness placed him in the greatest jeopardy, but whose uncompromising virtue and unaffected innocency brought him off conqueror over temptation, and raised him to the highest pinnacle of earthly splendor and heavenly favor. It was from this well-favored Joseph that the Nephites sprang.

God has set the mark of His displeasure on the Lamanites, whom He has cursed, because of the iniquities of their fathers, with a darkened skin, uncouthly features, and strait, black, coarse hair. In the beginning, it was not so with either Judah or Manasseh.

In confirmation of the testimony of the Book of Mormon, that the inhabitants of this continent were once a white and beautiful people, it may be stated that when very ancient burial places in North and South America have been opened, the remains of two races—one dark and the other fair—have been exhumed. The question may arise: How could this be told, when the skin had long rotted off the bones, and left only the skeleton behind, which fell in powder as soon as it was exposed to the action of the air? In this way: The dry, gravelly soil in which some of these bodies were buried, had so little affected the mummy, that portions of the hair still remained in good preservation, and in numerous instances, it was such as is only found on the heads of light races. We will cite a few examples given by different enquirers in this field of research.

One writer, speaking of the ancient mummies found in Peru, says: "The hair in general is of a lightish brown, and of a fineness of texture which equals that of the Anglo-Saxon race." Again: "The ancient Peruvians appear, from numerous examples of hair found in their tombs, to have been an auburn-haired race." Another gentleman, a Mr. Haywood, has described the discovery, early in the present century, of three mummies, in a cave near the Cumberland River, in Tennessee; "and the color of their skin was said to be fine and white, and their hair auburn, and of a fine texture." The same investigator mentions several other cases where mummies were found in the limestone and saltpetre caves of Kentucky and Tennessee, with light yellowish hair. One scientist, to account for this peculiarity, suggests that it is possible that the light color was due to the action of lime and saltpetre; but this suggestion will not affect those buried in other formations of rock, nor will it account for the fineness of the texture of the hair. Reasoning from other data, other writers have concluded that the great cities whose ruins still stand in Yucatan and Central America, were the work of two races, a light and a dark-skinned race respectively.

The reference to the Anglo-Saxon race above made, is not without its value. To us it seems highly probable that the righteous Nephites, in very many particulars of form and features, resembled this people and its kindred races. Our reasons are: first, that there was a striking similarity in the appearance of the ancient Israelites and the olden Anglo-Saxons. This likeness has been remarked and commented upon by various authors. Again, it is well known to the Latter-day Saints, that there was a large percentage of the blood of Ephraim in the stock from whence the Anglos and Saxons sprung. So much admitted, it is easy to understand how the two half tribes, descended from the comely Joseph—

the one from Ephraim, and the other from Manasseh—would bear a strong family likeness.

Were we introduced to a typical Nephite, we should expect to find him well proportioned, ruddy of countenance, auburn haired and light eyed. This is, of course, simply conjecture, and is entitled to consideration only as such.

From reliefs found sculptured on the walls of the ruined cities of Central America, it seems probable that the ancient Lamanites esteemed flat, receding foreheads, the highest type of beauty. Most of the figures on which the greatest artistic skill is displayed, appear to represent persons on whom some artificial means had been used, in infancy, to flatten the front part of the head, as their debased descendants, the Flatheads, do in our day. It is a noteworthy fact, that other races of Israelitish descent, or who have come in close contact with the Hebrews, show this same tendency.

Skulls, thus flattened, have been taken out of tombs in the neighborhood of ancient Media, where the Israelites were once in captivity; also from sepulchres in Circassia, Scandinavia, Great Britain, etc., and one was even exhumed from outside the walls of Jerusalem. It is true the Book of Mormon does not refer to this custom, but it often speaks of the Lamanites shaving their heads, which in all probability may have afterwards grown into the still more hideous practice of flattening the skull, under the idea that it made them courageous. Indeed, it is quite possible that it did make them recklessly bloodthirsty, by injuring their intellectual powers, and thus tending to develop their more savage instincts.

TEMPLES.

BY DANIEL TYLER.

(Continued.)

IN my last I showed you how particular the Lord was about having everything recorded and witnessed. This strictness is not confined to those two items, but the Lord has always been very particular to have things done "according to the pattern" He has given. In a revelation given on the 19th of January, 1841, He says:

"For there is not a place found on earth that he may come and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fullness of the priesthood."

Perhaps some of my young readers may enquire if Joseph Smith previous to the giving of this revelation was not an Apostle, which is the highest grade of priesthood in the Church, as well as Prophet, Seer and Revelator, and if there were not a quorum of Twelve Apostles, a Patriarch and a quorum of Seventies as well as Elders, Priests, Teachers and Deacons.

Yes, my young friends, all these authorities were in the Church; yea, more, they had received endowments in the Kirtland Temple, where cloven tongues as of fire sat upon many, and they spoke with the power of God, and saw many marvelous things, brief mention of which has heretofore been made. While Joseph Smith was an Apostle he was also the chief of the Apostles, and presided over the Apostles and over the whole Church, as is stated in the Doctrine and Covenants, sec. cvii., par. 91-92. The question then arises, What is meant by the fullness of the priesthood?

It does not mean any special office above that of Apostles, but that there were powers belonging to the different grades of priesthood which had not been conferred. They had nontemple, no baptismal font, no administration for the

dead, no endowments, no place to "reveal ordinances which had been hid from before the world was." As a faint illustration, I will speak of the patriarchal priesthood, and say that every faithful Elder in Israel who has received a patriarchal blessing by a legally authorized father in Israel, is, himself, by virtue of his blessing, a patriarch to his children, and without such blessing is not a recognized patriarch. This doctrine may be new to some of you, but whether or not, it is true.

But all faithful patriarchs have not the fullness of that priesthood. By virtue of a patriarchal blessing the patriarch thus created receives power to renew unto his posterity the rights conferred upon him; but he cannot confer patriarchal blessings outside of his own lineage or rather beyond his immediate descendants; while those especially ordained to bless the people may bless all kindreds of the earth, and the Patriarch to the Church is recognized as the Patriarch of all Patriarchs.

In like manner men may be ordained to other grades of priesthood without obtaining a fullness thereof. The Lord informed the prophet that the temples were the places to receive "the fullness of the priesthood." He said: "for a baptismal font there is not upon the earth, that my Saints may be baptized for those who are dead; for this ordinance belongeth to my house," (a temple) "and cannot be acceptable to me, only in the days of your poverty, wherein ye are not able to build a house unto me."

These additional powers include all of the keys that belong to the holy priesthood on the earth, or were ever revealed to man in any dispensation, and which admit men and women within the veil. They enable them to pass by the angels and the gods, until they get into the presence of the Father and the Son. They make of them kings and priests, queens and priestesses to God, to rule and reign as such over their posterity and those who may be given to them by adoption, in the great jubilee of rest which is near at hand. It gives them the right to the tree of life, and the "seal of the living God in their foreheads," spoken of by John the revelator. No marvel, then, that the Lord requires sacred places for such great and glorious things—"the fullness of the holy priesthood" to be restored.

The Lord continued, and said: "but I command you all, ye my Saints, to build a house unto me; and I grant unto you sufficient time to build a house unto me, and during this time your baptisms shall be acceptable unto me. But behold at the end of this appointment, your baptisms for your dead" (in the river) "shall not be acceptable unto me; and if you do not these things at the end of the appointment, ye shall be rejected as a Church, with your dead, saith the Lord your God. * * * For therein are the keys of the holy priesthood, ordained that you may receive honor and glory."

I have not space to quote further at this time; in fact, what has been said ought to convince any and all of us that the Lord wants no half-way obedience to His laws, but is willing to condescend to mention the smallest items and then expects us to be humble enough to perform the smallest as well as the great obligations we are under to Him.

The doctrine that God would reject the dead on account of the neglect of the living may seem strange to some, but as they cannot be made perfect without us, the correctness of the doctrine is established, and it is doubly confirmed by the fact that we without them cannot be made perfect. Both the living and the dead must rise or fall together. This would seem to be the curse with which the earth would be smitten if the hearts of the fathers were not turned to the children, and