



Type: Magazine Article

God's Great Men: Jacob and Benjamin

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Source: *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. 50, No. 49 (3 Dec. 1888),
pp. 773–775

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Abstract: Short biographical sketches of Jacob and King Benjamin. Jacob saw the Redeemer in his youth and recorded the prophecy of Zenos. Benjamin was an able warrior and wise and industrious leader.

not been diminished, and those who have suffered the most for their religion are the ones who have the greatest confidence in the final glorious issue of the work; and the historian of the future will yet tell the same story of the present, which has been told of the past—viz., that the persecution of the Saints has cemented their faith, and made them stronger than ever.

The promise has been made to the followers of the Lord Jesus in this our day, that after they have been tested and tried, if they will be faithful, they shall overcome. And to those who fight against Zion the Lord has said: "Wo unto all those that discomfort my people, and drive, and murder, and testify against them, saith the Lord of hosts: a generation of vipers shall not escape the damnation of hell. Behold mine eyes see and know all their works, and I have in reserve a swift judgment in the season thereof, for them all" (Doc. & Cov., sec. 121, par. 23, 24).

And again He says to those who inhabit the continent of America: "That whoso should possess this land of promise, from that time henceforth

and forever, should serve him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off when the fullness of His wrath should come upon them, for behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God, or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fulness of iniquity among the children of the land, that they are swept off" (Ether ii, 8—10).

Our heavenly Father has made these announcements to those who persecute His Saints, and to those who possess the land of America. The heavens and the earth may pass away, but the word of the Lord shall not fail. God has decreed that His work shall triumph. He is with His people, and their ultimate victory is as certain as the existence of the earth on which we dwell.

"When dark clouds of trouble hang o'er us,
And threaten our peace to destroy,
There is hope smiling brightly before us,
And we know that deliv'rance is nigh;
We doubt not the Lord, nor His goodness—
We've proved Him in days that are past;
The wicked, who fight against Zion,
Will surely be smitten at last."

GOD'S GREAT MEN.

JACOB AND BENJAMIN.

My dear young brethren and sisters,—If you notice carefully the second book of Nephi, you will find that a large portion of it consists of the teachings of his younger brother Jacob. Jacob was born in the days of trouble and hardship as the family journeyed through the wilderness of Arabia; and he was a sharer in the afflictions brought about, not only by the perils of the journey, but by the obstinate and rebellious disposition of Lehi's elder sons. A great portion of Lehi's dying testimony was addressed to Jacob and Joseph (see Nephi, book 2, chap. 3, 4); and we find them ever after faithfully laboring in the interests of their brethren. In their youth they were ordained by Nephi to offices in the priesthood; and Jacob, while very young, obtained the glorious privilege of beholding the Redeemer.

He had reached the age of about fifty years when Nephi died, leaving the small plates in Jacob's care, with instructions to engrave upon them the most precious things, such as prophecies, remarkable dreams, visions, etc. In chapters 2-4 of his book we have a specimen of his teachings; and discover that the people had a tendency to run after evil; to indulge in vice, and to justify themselves for so doing because others had done wickedly. Jacob rebuked them; exhorted them to be pure; told them they were becoming worse than the Lamanites, and that unless they repented, they should be destroyed.

If you notice the leading papers of this age, and the prayers offered in churches, you will see there is much flattery of princes and worship of royalty; but men of God, such as

Elijah, Nathan, Isaiah, and many others in ancient times, rebuked evil, and princes trembled before them. From these things we learn the lesson that if we do the will of God, we never need fear the vengeance of man. True, earthly princes may kill the body, but the Savior teaches us to "fear Him who is able to cast both soul and body into hell." If we truly love God, all fear will be overcome; for "perfect love casteth out fear."

Jacob next gives us a prophecy of Zenos; one of the ancients whose prophecies are not recorded in the Bible. This man of God seems to have had perfect information respecting the founding of Israelitish colonies in various parts of the world; and he uses the figure of the tame and the wild olive trees to illustrate it. He agrees with Isaiah and the other prophets concerning the restoration of the Gospel, and of the kingdom to the chosen seed of Abraham. The power of God which was with Jacob, and his reluctance to use it to any man's injury are spoken of in the seventh chapter of his book. We are not informed how long Jacob lived after Nephi's death; but we have 124 years to divide between him and his son Enos; from which we may justly infer that both lived to be aged men.

A period of nearly 300 years passed away, during which the history of the Nephites is very meager; we are told, however, they had many wars with their sworn foes the Lamanites; and Jacob's prophecy that the latter should possess their inheritance was fulfilled. The Nephites traveled northward; found a colony of Jews in the land of Zarahemla; mixed with them, and here, in their chief city on the river Sidon,—or what is now called the Magdalena, in the United States of Colombia, South America—Mormon introduces us to King Benjamin, about 125 B.C., and 475 years after Lehi left Jerusalem.

King Benjamin was an able warrior, and led his people against their enemies until the latter were overcome, and peace was established in the land. He sought diligently to promote industry among his people. He set an example that all kings, who desire to live in the affections of their people,

would do well to follow. He labored to support himself; endeavored to serve his people, and to ease the burdens of taxation among them; but, best of all, he sought by humility to learn the will of God; and, having done so, he wound up his career by calling the people together and earnestly teaching them about the coming of Christ, and the necessity of serving God with all their hearts. So earnest were his words; so eloquent his speech; so powerful his appeals, and so noble his example, that no one could resist; and the assembled thousands immediately entered into a covenant with God, and the Church of Christ was established in the land of Zarahemla, 125 years before the Savior appeared on the Western Hemisphere.

In Benjamin, as well as in Nephi, we see the power for good that a wise leader has over his people. If a nation should always have men of God to rule over it, doubtless it would be a blessing to have kings, or other persons, in authority whose power should be very great; but while we can point to Moses and others among the Israelites; to Nephi, Benjamin, and Mosiah among the Nephites; Alfred the Great in England, and to many others by way of illustration, on the other hand, we have the wicked examples of Jeroboam and Ahab among the Israelites; Noah among the Nephites, and many rulers of modern times,—men who have encouraged the shedding of blood, and all manner of wickedness among the people.

It appears that before the days of King Benjamin, the Nephites had wandered far from the doctrines taught by Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, and others and, because of their dissensions, they had greatly suffered; hence he taught them as though they were little children who were taking first lessons. Can you not picture the aged man standing on the tower of the temple high above the assembled thousands who had come with their tents and encamped around it? So great was their confidence in their beloved leader, that every one wished to hear him, and they pressed together for that purpose. How eloquently he portrayed to them the consequence of

the fall of man, and the matchless love of God made manifest by the atonement! With what fervor he pleaded with his people to believe, and to make manifest their belief by repentance! He showed them that it is necessary not only to obtain a remission of sins; but that purity of life, and obedience to God's commandments are required in order to retain that remission. I have met persons who seemed to think that if they once had their sins remitted, it was sufficient; but such persons should study the Scriptures, and learn that the promise of salvation is made to those only who endure to the end. How beautifully, too, did this aged servant of God show that members of Christ's

Church must watch over their children and strive to keep them from evil, and because we are all beggars in the sight of God, we should never turn the needy and hungry from our doors! The principles which relate to individual judgment and forgiveness were, perhaps, never more clearly expounded than by this aged veteran on that occasion.

That you, my young friends, may be led to study what is written in that holy book concerning the subjects of this sketch, and thereby be brought to feel more interest in the welfare of your own souls, is the earnest desire of yours truly,

UNCLE JAMES.

FACTS AND EVENTS.

A new form of electrical railway is being erected at St. Paul, Minnesota. The cars do not touch the ground, but are suspended from girders which form the track and at the same time the mains conveying the current. Speeds of from eight to ten miles per hour are expected.

THE NATIONAL DRINK BILL.—Here is a way of getting people, if possible, to realize the enormous amount of money spent yearly on drink in the British Isles. It is based on last year's drink bill, which was £124,952,680, and is published in a slip form by J. Cook :—"Weight in sovereigns, 978 tons. Time to count it, without ever stopping, at the rate of one sovereign per second—3 years, 11 months, 21 days. The height of a pillar, if the sovereigns were placed face to face—116 miles, or a gold rope reaching from Carlisle to Liverpool. The length of a chain, if the sovereigns were placed edge to edge—1,725 miles. Out of the amount spent, 35 sovereigns could be placed on each letter in the Bible, and leave a balance of £126,880."

A RUINED CITY IN TEXAS.—The surveys at present being made for the Kansas City, El Paso, and Mexican Railroad, at a point north latitude 33 degrees and west longitude 106 degrees, have passed along the lava flow which, by the local population, is called the Malpais. It consists of a sea of molten black glass, agitated at the moment of cooling in ragged waves of fantastic shapes. These lava waves or ridges are from ten to twelve feet high, with combing crests. The lava flow is about forty miles long from north-east to south-west, and from one to ten miles wide. For miles on all sides the country is the most desolate that can be imagined. It has been literally burnt up. It consists of fine white ashes to any depth which, so far, has been dug down. To the north of the lava flow, and lying in a country equally desolate and arid, the surveyors have come upon the ruins of Gran Guivera, known already to the early Spanish explorers, but which have been visited by white men less often even than the mysterious ruins of Palenque, in Central America. Only a few people at Socorro and White Oaks have been at Gran Guivera, because it is at present forty miles from water. The surveyors found the ruins to be those of gigantic stone buildings made in the most substantial manner and of grand proportions. One of them was four acres in extent. All indications around the ruins point to the existence here at one time of a dense population. No legend of any kind exists as to how this great city was destroyed, or when it was abandoned. One of the engineers attached to the surveying expedition advances the theory that Gran Guivera was in existence and abundantly supplied with water at the time the terrible volcanic eruption took place which led to its destruction.—*Iron.*