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Alma 13, Alma Teaches about the Eternal Nature of Priesthood and Kingship

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Source: *Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord?: The Psalms in Israel's Temple Worship in the Old Testament and in the Book of Mormon*

Published: Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2011

Page(s): 583–585

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In Alma's confrontation with Zeezrom, the prophet's purpose was to teach the lawyer that the political coup he was preparing had not been approved at the Council in Heaven and therefore could not be valid. So at this point in his speech, Alma moves his discussion from the premortal life to this world, and the responsibilities of the members of the Council after they come to the physical earth:

6 And thus being called by this holy calling, and ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of God, to teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest – (Alma 13:6).

Earlier he had said they were to teach the “people”; now he says they are to teach the “children of men.” He appears to have been making a very careful distinction about when and where the teaching was performed—both in time and in space. Now he is saying that the members of the Council are given the same assignment in this world as they had before—that is to teach. Alma concluded his statement by summing up the eternal nature and authority of the priesthood:

7 This high priesthood being after the order of his Son, which order was from the foundation of the world; or in other words, being without beginning of days or end of years, being prepared from eternity to all eternity, according to his foreknowledge of all things—

8 Now they were ordained after this manner—being called with a holy calling, and ordained with a holy ordinance, and taking upon them the high priesthood of the holy order, which calling, and ordinance, and high priesthood, is without beginning or end—

9 Thus they become high priests forever, after the order of the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, who is without beginning of days or end of years, who is full of grace, equity, and truth. And thus it is. Amen (Alma 13:7-9).

Psalms of Israel's Temple Worship

The “Amen” concludes Alma’s comments about the eternal nature of priesthood and priesthood callings.

He continued his sermon by shifting all of his focus from the premortal world to this one, but he did not change the subject. He introduced the earthly priesthood by discussing the sanctifying powers of the Savior’s Atonement.

10 Now, as I said concerning the holy order, or this high priesthood, there were many who were ordained and became high priests of God; and it was on account of their exceeding faith and repentance, and their righteousness before God, they choosing to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish;

11 Therefore they were called after this holy order, and were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb.

12 Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceedingly great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God.

13 And now, my brethren, I would that ye should humble yourselves before God, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, that ye may also enter into that rest (Alma 13:10-13).

He then equated the authorities of priesthood with the responsibilities of kingship. To do that, he discussed the achievements of Melchizedek, who had been both priest and king to his people.

14 Yea, humble yourselves even as the people in the days of Melchizedek, who was also a high priest after this same order which I have spoken, who also took upon him the high priesthood forever.

15 And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes; yea, even our father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all he possessed.

16 Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his order, or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord (Alma 13:14-16).

In the Book of Mormon.

This statement is a flashback to verse two, which reads: “And those priests were ordained after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption.” Alma used those words to describe the ordinances that were performed at the Council in Heaven. Now he is using those same words to explain the meaning of the earthly ordinances. Yet in neither case did he actually identify which ordinances he was talking about. That leaves one to suspect that he thought it would have been inappropriate to describe them further. Alma continued:

17 Now this Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem; and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination; yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness;

18 But Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore he was called the prince of peace, for he was the king of Salem; and he did reign under his father (Alma 13:17-18).