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## Chapter XXXVII

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**Abstract:** The Sons of Helaman—Nephi's Righteous Rule—The Lamanites Again Invade Zarahemla—They Drive the Nephites into the Northern Continent—The Ministrations of Nephi and Lehi—The Manifestations of God's Power in the City of Nephi—Aminadab—The Conversion of the Lamanites—Universal Peace

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## CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE SONS OF HELAMAN,—NEPHI'S RIGHTEOUS RULE,—  
THE LAMANITES AGAIN INVADE ZARAHEMLA—THEY  
DRIVE THE NEPHITES INTO THE NORTHERN CONTINENT  
—THE MINISTRATIONS OF NEPHI AND LEHI—THE MANI-  
FESTATIONS OF GOD'S POWER IN THE CITY OF NEPHI—  
AMINADAB—THE CONVERSION OF THE LAMANITES—  
UNIVERSAL PEACE.

IN NEPHI we have one of the greatest prophets that ever trod the earth, or to whom the God of our salvation revealed his glorious will. He lived during the greater portion of the first century before Christ, and disappeared from the knowledge of mankind but a short time before the advent of the Messiah as a babe in Bethlehem. He is first referred to in the Book of Mormon (B. C. 44) as the elder of Helaman's two sons, Lehi being the younger. These two brothers appear to have been inseparable during their lives. They are nearly always mentioned as associated in the great and oft-times perilous labors of the ministry undertaken for the salvation of either Nephites or Lamanites. We have no information with regard to the time of Nephi's birth, but when his father died, in the year B. C. 39, he succeeded him as chief judge, the duties of which office he filled with wisdom and justice for about nine years, when, owing to the wickedness of the people, he resigned that office, and Cezoram was chosen by the people in his stead (B. C. 30).

The years that Nephi judged his people are some of the darkest in Nephite history. Owing to their great pride and iniquity, the Lord left them to them-

selves, and they became weak like unto the Lamanties, man for man. When war was declared, the latter, being much the more numerous, carried everything before them. In vain the Nephites struggled for their homes and their liberties. They were forced back by the hordes of the Lamanites from city to city, from land to land. Manti, Gideon, Cumeni, Moroni, and even Zarahemla fell. Nor did the war end when the bloodthirsty Lamanites held high carnival in the midst of its towers and palaces. Onward swept the invading host; backward fled the defenders of the commonwealth, and backward they continued until every town and city, every tower and fort, from Melek to Moroni, from Manti to Bountiful, were filled with the savage, half-disciplined, dark-skinned warriors of Laman. Not a place could be found in the whole southern continent where the soldiers of the Nephites successfully held their ground. Zarahemla, with its hallowed associations, its glorious temples, where the daily sacrifice was unceasingly offered, its proud palaces, its luxurious homes, its courts of justice, where the chief judge sat in the magnificence of almost kingly authority to administer the law—this their queen city, the seat of their government, the centre of their civilization, the home of their highest priesthood, was in the hands of their merciless, vandal-like foes. Nor had the danger stopped; with hurried hands the Nephites built a line of defence across the Isthmus of Panama from sea to sea, for the unnumbered hosts of their conquerors were still pushing forward. This line of fortifications was effectual; it stopped the roll of the barbaric tide northward, and the Lamanite commanders rested with the possession of a continent.

In this war the Nephite dissenters took active part against their white brethren, and to this fact, in part, may be attributed the sudden success that shone on the Lamanite arms. But little by little in succeeding years the half repentant Nephites regained their lost ground, until (B. C. 31) the most northerly half of their possessions had again fallen into their hands; but because of their only partial repentance, their leaders had not strength to lead them further, and Zarahemla still remained in the hands of the warriors of Laman.

When Nephi retired from the judgment seat it was with the intention of devoting his entire time to the preaching of the gospel. He associated his brother Lehi with him, and commencing at the most northerly settlement on the southern continent, Bountiful, he journeyed and preached throughout all the land southward in the possession of the Nephites. From thence the two brothers passed onwards to Zarahemla, where they found many Nephite dissenters, to whom they proclaimed the word of God in great power. Numbers of these confessed their sins, were baptized unto repentance, and immediately returned to their brethren to repair, if possible, the wrongs they had done, and make such restitution as lay in their power.

Numbers of the Lamanites also received the truth gladly, insomuch that eight thousand of that race were baptized in Zarahemla and the regions round about.

From Zarahemla the prophets proceeded to the Lamanite capital in the land of Nephi, where yet mightier power attended them. The voice of God from heaven sustained their testimony; angels ministered to the people who assembled to see them; neither prisons, nor chains, nor bonds could restrain or hold

them, and they accomplished an ever blessed and marvelous work amongst the benighted children of Laman (B. C. 30). God's power was manifested at these times in mercy to the darkened condition of the minds of the Lamanites, when only extraordinary manifestations of his divine goodness could reach their hearts. They had no records to which they could appeal, and all their traditions were opposed to the Holy Being whose message of eternal joy the Nephite prophets bore. Thus in their weakness they were strengthened by signs and wonders which a people better educated in the things of God could with but ill grace claim.

The story of the ministration of Nephi and Lehi in the land of Nephi is of the deepest interest. When they reached its chief city they were thrust into that same prison into which Ammon and his companions were cast by the guards of King Limhi. Here they were kept with little or no food for a number of days. At the end of this time the officers of the Lamanites went to the prison with the intention of slaying the two brothers. But to their intense surprise the Lamanites found them encircled about as if by fire. At this strange spectacle fear fell upon the officers. They dared not touch the two prisoners lest they should be burned. Yet when they saw that Nephi and Lehi were not consumed their hearts took courage, though they still stood as if struck dumb with amazement.

At this point the two brethren stood forward and began to explain that what was seen was manifested that they might learn that no one could harm them, and that they were the servants of the Most High, and his almighty arm shielded them. Nor was this all: a sudden earthquake shook the ground, the prison walls

tottered to their foundations, a pall of thick darkness covered all whom curiosity or other motives had gathered to the prison. The unburning flame, the tottering walls, the quivering earth, the impenetrable cloud of blackness, all conspired to fill the hearts of the Lamanites with solemn fear and awful dread. They realized the almighty power of God; they were filled with the sense of their own abject insignificance. A voice, the voice of One whom they knew not, sounded in their affrighted ears. Once and again, yea, a third time, and each time that the voice came it was followed by the trembling of the earth and the shaking of the prison walls. All nature quivered at the presence of the Majesty on High, whilst the heavy, palpable, impenetrable, darkness still enshrouded them.

From above the voice descended; it was outside the cloud; its tones came not to their quaking hearts with the roar of the pealing thunder; nor was it like the tumultuous flow of angry waters; but a still voice of perfect mildness, almost a whisper, that pierced to their inmost souls. That voice was the voice of the mighty God of Jacob, and he called upon all those who heard him to repent, and to do his servants no hurt. With the third repetition of this command were added marvelous words of salvation that cannot be uttered by men. And because of the thick pall of darkness that enveloped them, and the fearful dread that filled their hearts, none dared to move. Fear, astonishment, apprehension of what was to come, had riveted each to the spot on which he stood.

Among the crowd was a Nephite dissenter, an apostate from the true church, named Aminadab. This man, happening to turn his face in the direction in

which the two disciples stood, beheld that their faces shone with a glorious light, and that they were conversing with some one who appeared to be above them, for their eyes were turned heavenward. Aminadab drew the attention of those who surrounded him to this glorious appearance, and the spell that bound them was sufficiently removed to enable them to turn towards the prisoners and to become witnesses of the fact also. What do all these things mean? they anxiously inquired. They do converse with the angels of God, answered Aminadab. What shall we do that this cloud of darkness may be removed? was their next question. You must repent and cry unto the Voice, even until ye shall have faith in Christ, he replied. They did cry unto God with all the energy that their terrifying surroundings inspired, and so continued to supplicate until the cloud was dispersed. Then, to their great surprise, they discovered that they also were entombed in a pillar of living fire. Yet this fire did not hurt them, it did not singe their garments, it did not consume the prison walls, but their terror was swept away, and they were filled with a joy that was unspeakable, for the Holy Spirit of God filled their souls, and they broke forth in marvelous words of praise and rejoicing. Again a pleasant, searching whisper reached their gladdened ears. It said unto them, Peace, peace be unto you because of your faith in my Well-beloved, who was from the foundation of the world. Now there were about 300 souls who heard and saw these things, and they cast up their eyes unto heaven, which was opened to their vision, and holy angels came down and ministered unto them.

The tidings of this glorious appearing were quickly

spread near and far in the lands where the Lamanites dwelt. So powerful was the testimony, and so great were the evidences, that the major portion of the people believed, repented and obeyed the gospel. Then, like all true Saints, they manifested the sincerity of their repentance by works of restitution; they laid down their weapons of war, they cast aside their false traditions, their hatred gave place to love, and they restored to the Nephites Zarahemla and the other lands they had taken from them (B. C. 30).

So great was the reformation in their character that they soon exceeded the Nephites in their faith and good works. Extraordinary as it may appear, instead of Nephite missionaries visiting the Lamanites, Lamanite missionaries were soon ministering the precious truths of the gospel among the Nephites. Then a universal peace, such as had never before been known since the division of the two races, extended over the whole land. Indeed, from this time the history of the two nations, to a great extent, becomes one. Together they worshiped the Lord, together they rose and sank, together they battled with the assassin hosts of Gadianton, together they triumphed over those desperadoes, and together they sought refuge in one vast body when there was no safety but in massing the people in one land; together the more unrighteous portions of both races were destroyed at the crucifixion of the Savior, and together the more righteous ones witnessed his appearing, listened to his words, received his law, and became members of his holy church. Henceforth, for generations, they were no more of Nephi, no more of Laman, no more of Jacob, no more of Ishmael—all were of Christ.