



Type: Magazine Article

The Book of Mormon—Samuel the Lamanite Assignment

Editor(s): Mary Connelly Kimball

Source: *Relief Society Magazine*, Vol. 17, No. 12 (December 1930),
pp. 687–690

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

Abstract: No abstract available.

Guide Lessons for February

LESSON I

Theology and Testimony

(First Week in February)

BOOK OF MORMON—SAMUEL THE LAMANITE ASSIGNMENT

This lesson includes the material in the Book of Helaman, from the beginning of chapter 13 to the end of the seventh chapter of the Book of Third Nephi. The time is between B. C. 6 and A. D. 34—a period when the pendulum swings from good to evil among both Nephites and Lamanites with a swiftness that takes one's breath.

If the books are available, the student will find an interesting treatment of the characters involved in the lessons in Reynolds's *Dictionary of the Book of Mormon*, especially under the names of Samuel, Nephi the son of Nephi, and Laconeous; and in Evans's *Message and Characters of the Book of Mormon*, chapter twenty-seven.

The Story

The narrative opens with the preaching of Samuel on the wall surrounding the town of Zarahemla.

Samuel is a Lamanite. Having been directed of God to preach to the Nephites there, he scales the wall because the people will not let him in at the gates, and preaches to them from its top in spite of their opposition.

His message, which is extremely distasteful to the inhabitants of the town, is one of warning and repentance. He assures them that they are headed for complete destruction, and that it will overtake them unless they mend their ways. Also he

tells them of Christ and His work of redemption in Palestine. When Jesus is born across the waters, there will be three days of continuous light here, without any intervening darkness; and, at the time of His death, there will be a period of thirty-six hours of continuous darkness, with convulsions of the elements in the earth and in the sky.

A few of his hearers are converted and go to Nephi, who is still ministering, to be baptized. But others try to hurt him with stones and arrows. After finishing his preaching, Samuel disappears from the pages of the *Book of Mormon*.

That happened about six years before the advent of the Savior. The very next year some of the signs which the Lamanite prophet predicted made their appearance, but were disposed of by unbelievers, at least to their own satisfaction, with the "explanation" that they were "guesses." But, when the period of continuous light appeared, there was no such explanation forthcoming, and many were converted through it. On the whole, however, the Nephites were a hardened lot. It was the Lamanites that carried the torch. Once converted, they stayed so.

During this period the Gadianton band became a terrible menace to those who wished to preserve the rights and government of the people. To this gang of outlaws went

all those who thought they had a grudge against the government. At one time, it seems, this secret organization became so numerous and dangerous, not to say powerful, that all the Nephites and Lamanites were compelled to assemble in one place for self-protection. Under the leadership of Laconeous and Gidgiddoni the order was finally uprooted.

Towards the end of the period we are considering the political government of the Nephites became a thing of the past, and the people broke up into tribes, the binding cord in each tribe being kinship. The historian says, however, that there was a general agreement not to interfere with one another and that this rule was strictly observed, although the Nephites and most of the Lamanites made no pretense of holding to any religious beliefs.

Notes

1. *Freedom of the Will*: Perhaps nowhere in religious history is the doctrine of free agency made clearer than it is in this lesson. The statement of the doctrine comes from the Lamanite prophet, Samuel.

"Ye are free," says the prophet to the Nephites; "ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for, behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free." He draws the conclusion, therefore, that whoever is condemned, brings the condemnation upon himself. "Remember, my brethren, that whoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself; and whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself." "God," he continues, "hath given unto you that ye might know good from evil, and He hath given unto you that ye might choose life or death; and ye can do good and be restored unto

that which is good, or have that which is good restored unto you; or ye can do evil, and have that which is evil restored unto you."

2. *Lines Wiped Out*: Here, for the first time since Lehi's family came to the New World, we find all the Americans of the same color, creed, and nation, although not for long.

In the preceding lesson we learned that the Lamanites were converted to the teachings of Nephi and his brother. But these hitherto benighted people still retained their copper color. In this lesson, however, we are told that, not only did the Nephites and the Lamanites become one people politically, but that the Lamanites became white like the Nephites. In both lessons the former became the teachers of the latter in religion. Particularly were the Lamanites steadfast in the Church, once they saw the light.

Samuel points out this fact in his sermon on the wall of Zarahemla. "The more part of them," he says, "are in the path of their duty, and they do walk circumspectly before God, and they do observe to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments according to the law of Moses. . . . Therefore as many of them as have come to this, ye know of yourselves are firm and steadfast in the faith, and in the thing wherewith they have been made free. And ye know also that they have buried their weapons of war, and they fear to take them up lest by any means they should sin. They will suffer themselves that they be trodden down and slain by their enemies, and will not lift their swords against them, and this because of their faith in Christ."

3. *A New Nephite War Policy*: In this period we observe a deviation on the part of the Nephites in

their policy respecting killing their enemies.

It will be recalled that heretofore, whenever there was a war between the Nephites and the Lamanites, the Nephites would never take an enemy's life if they could help it. This seems to have been their invariable policy in war with the Lamanites. In this period, however, Gidgiddoni does not follow that policy in his encounters with the Gadianton robbers. What is the reason?

The historian does not give the reason, but we can easily gather it from the spirit of the *Book of Mormon* and the general practice of the people. It is this: The Lamanites had not been trained in the distinctions so well recognized by the Nephites—the distinctions, namely, between right and wrong from the higher point of view. In more than one place we have had occasion to point this fact out in these lessons. Not so, however, with the Gadianton robbers. They were Nephites. They had been accustomed to the moral and religious distinctions of Nephite life and culture. They knew, therefore, the difference between what they were doing and what they ought to have done. In other words, they were more accountable for their actions than the Lamanites because their knowledge was greater.

And so Gidgiddoni is not satisfied to defeat the robber band merely. He shuts the door to their escape when they are overcome in battle. He surrounds them, and orders his men to slay them right and left. All who are not taken prisoners have, on this policy, been put to death—as they richly deserve to be. Moreover, the leader of this outlaw band, which must have numbered tens of thousands, is hanged to a tree, after which the

tree is cut down with no little ceremony and shouting. It is almost a religious festival, this hanging. The explanation lies, not in the greater desire of the Nephite commander for blood, but in the greater culpability of the enemy on the assumption that they knew what they were doing.

This was the end, during that period, of the Gadianton robbers among the ancient Americans.

4. *Political Anarchy*: At one time during this short period of twenty-seven years crime became so prevalent as to tax all the resources of what government there was to put a stop to it. That was toward the end of the period, after the Nephite nation had broken up into tribes.

The division of the people was not into Nephites and Lamanites any more, nor into believers and non-believers in Christ, but rather into those who were for law and order, on the one hand, and those who were for organizing a government of tyranny and oppression, on the other hand. And so a fierce struggle ensued for mastery.

The usual methods employed by the criminal element were adopted—secret killings and the customary ways of hiding their guilt and avoiding punishment. For instance: Prophets arose to warn the lawless of their evil ways, and these prophets were put to death secretly. The murders, however, were perpetrated by the judges, contrary to the law. And when complaints were lodged against the judicial murderers, their friends and kinsmen, who were very numerous, united with “almost all the lawyers and the high priests” and entered into “a covenant to combine against all righteousness.” The result was, as the book tells us, that they “delivered those who were guilty from the grasp of justice

and set at defiance the law and the rights of their country."

Questions and Problems

1. How do you account for the superior faithfulness of the Lamanites?

2. How does evil get such a hold as it seems to have had at this time? Discuss the predominance of the criminal element in Chicago and the

bribery of judges in New York City, in this connection.

3. Why is it usually more difficult to organize the better element than the criminal? What motive actuates the latter always? How strong is that motive in man?

4. What are some of the problems that confront our American communities today? How may these be best solved, in your opinion?

Work and Business

LESSON II

Work and Business

Teachers' Topic for February

(This topic is to be given at the special teachers' meeting the first week in February)

THE RELIEF SOCIETY AS A SOCIAL OPPORTUNITY

"Society is the great educator. More than universities, more than schools, more than books, society educates."—*John Dewey*.

"And do I love to associate with my friends? I do, and I love to reflect and talk on eternal principles."—*Brigham Young*.

We receive social development in the Relief Society by—

I. Personal Contact with Women.

- (a) Who have like aims and aspirations.
- (b) Who have kindred interests.
- (c) Who have knowledge of the gospel and a love for its principles.
- (d) Who are seeking self-development.
- (e) Who have high standards of motherhood and child care.
- (f) Who are home loving and wish to preserve the standards of the home.

II. Participation in the Social Life of the Relief Society at—

- (a) Meetings.
- (b) Socials.
- (c) Bazaars.
- (d) Plays.
- (e) Exhibits.
- (f) Study Groups.
- (g) Trips.

A desire to contribute something to the group, to have a share in its success, brings social development of a high order.

III. Visiting Teaching.

- (a) Meeting women in their own homes.
 1. Fosters cordial and pleasing attitude.
 2. Gives opportunity for exchange of ideas.
 3. Develops tact and judgment.
- (b) Contact with officers as their representatives develops a feeling of sisterhood.
- (c) Comradeship with teaching companion engenders kindred feeling with all workers.