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## Keynote of a Prophet's Life

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**Abstract:** This article relates how Alma and the sons of Mosiah were miraculously converted to Jesus and his gospel. Alma's missionary experiences may be compared to the ministry of Jesus Christ who also accepted a lower station in life to serve his fellowmen and was subject to mockery and humiliation.

## KEYNOTE OF A PROPHET'S LIFE

By Elder Bertram T. Willis

**M**ORE than two thousand years ago in the western world now known as America, the great city of Zarahemla stood as the capital city of a great nation—the Nephite nation. Leader of the people at that time, about 100 B.C., was King Mosiah. Living also in Zarahemla was a young prophet, known in the Book of Mormon as Alma the Younger. His father, Alma the First, was the High Priest of the national religion, and because of the high social position of his family in Zarahemla, Alma the Younger was an intimate friend of King Mosiah's four sons. Both Mosiah and the elder Alma were mature, righteous men who had laboured constantly to build up the church and the religious tone of the Nephite nation. But their sons, spoiled by wealth and high social standing, did not follow the examples of their fathers. They brought much anxiety to their parents because of the wickedness of their lives and the attempts they made to discredit the Church.

### From The Pulpit

As Superintendent of the Mission Sunday School General Board, Elder Bertram T. Willis, writer of the accompanying article, has visited many Sunday School congregations throughout the mission. Among the many fascinating stories that he has told to these groups, is one from the Book of Mormon. At the request of the *Millennial Star* he has condensed the story for its readers. For the past year, Elder Willis has conducted the Millennial Chorus which is singing its way into the hearts of Britons.

As time went on, however, the lives of all five young men were changed as by a miracle. One day Alma was struck with paralysis and could neither speak nor move. Suddenly fearful, his four royal friends joined the others in fasting and prayer, and after two days and nights the paralysis left. Alma related how, during his illness, an angel had come from the presence of God and rebuked him for his past life

and had given him instruction for the future.

For nine years thereafter Alma and Mosiah's sons, Ammon, Aaron, Omner, and Himni, laboured zealously to explain the scriptures to all their countrymen. The Nephite people had the religious records that the original families had brought with them from Jerusalem. Alma's teachings and the teachings of the Church were based upon the Mosaic Law found in these records. Alma also prophesied of the coming Redeemer, a theme which later became the favourite subject for his sermons.

In the year 92 B.C., aged King Mosiah began to provide for the continuation of government at his death. Counselling with his four sons, he decided for the future good of the nation to appoint judges to govern the people, and to present his reasons in a proclamation for the change in government. Alma was chosen the following year to be the first chief judge, Mosiah's sons accepting their friend as leader in the new

government. In that same year the elder Alma, now aged 82, passed away, having conferred shortly before his death the office of High Priest of the Nephite church upon his son Alma. Soon after, King Mosiah died and Alma the Younger was left with the double responsibility of being the chief judge of the land, the first in history, and also the High Priest of the Church.

For the next few years the Nephite nation prospered under the new system of government. But along with wealth came pride and iniquity. Alma, with the reins of the government in his hands, saw with alarm the rising iniquity and inequality among his people. In the year 83 B.C., realizing that something had to be done quickly, he adopted a plan, bold, desperate, and startling to the people of Zarahemla, even within its humblest homes. What did he do?

First, he resigned his office of chief judge, the highest in the nation, and conferred it upon a wise man named Nephihah. Then he went among the people to teach them truth and the way of life, "seeing no way that he might reclaim them save it were in bearing down in pure testimony against them." The four sons of Mosiah, still true to Alma and the teachings of their fathers, promised to help. Almost immediately they departed and commenced their labours. These five Nephite aristocrats became ordinary travelling preachers, the butt of the market place ridicule.

**T**his must have been sensational for the Nephite people. Such a thing had never been done before by leaders of a nation. Perhaps many readers of the Book of Mormon have wondered if the above incident could be true to life. Nevertheless, Alma preached in Zarahemla, Gideon, Ammonihah, the land of Melek, and the land of Sidom. The story of his experiences during the two years is contained in thirty-two pages in the Book of Mormon. In each city he preached repentance and prophesied the coming of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem, the land from whence their forefathers came. Everywhere was his mission successful except in Ammonihah. But even there he found two men, Amulek and Zeezrom, who helped him much in other places. Meanwhile Aaron, Ammon, Omner, and Himni were having great success among the Lamanites.

Often I have wondered, in memory of the beautiful story of Alma. What was the keynote of his life? Has there ever been a similar character and incident in history? Only in the life of Christ do I see a parallel and, of course, even one of greater contrast.

Alma and his brethren accepted a lower station in life to do a greater work. Jesus descended from His glorious place in heaven, and chose to grow to mortal manhood in Nazareth, the lowliest of Jewish towns. He chose to be scorned by his fellow townsmen and by the countries learned. He finally allowed Himself to suffer death in the most humiliating and most painful way that men could conjure. Yet Jesus Christ was "The Mighty God, The Prince of Peace." Humility was the keynote of his life.

Let each one of us profit by the example of Alma who knew that it is only through humility that a man can influence his fellowmen for righteousness and gain the favour of his God.