

4. Defining an “Acceptable Sacrifice” (Genesis 5; Moses 6)

From Adam to Enoch and beyond, righteous descendants of our first parents ministered in the high priesthood after the holy order of God (Moses 6:7, 22–23, 67–68): “I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children; and I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people. 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. . . . 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—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” (Alma 13:1–2, 6–7).

As “preachers of righteousness,” Adam’s righteous descendants “spake and prophesied, and called upon all men, everywhere, to repent; and faith was taught unto the children of men” (Moses 6:23). Moreover, “This same priesthood, which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also” (Moses 6:7). It involves offering to God “an acceptable sacrifice” (Moses 6:3). That sacrifice foreshadowed the ultimate sacrifice God’s Only-begotten Son would make in order “that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption” (Alma 13:2). The priesthood after the holy order of God, in other words, formed the *vehicle* for offering an “acceptable sacrifice” to God (cf. Isaiah 19:21; 56:6–7; Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5; Doctrine & Covenants 84:19, 31). As the prophet Joseph Smith observed, “It is vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless, they, in like manner, offer unto him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him” (Lectures on Faith 6:8).

Adam, for example, agreed to forgo Paradise for a time in order to beget a posterity on the earth that would receive the same chance he had received to attain Paradise. Enoch put his life on the line by preaching to seven sinful nations to bring out of them a people of God (Moses 6:26–7:21). Melchizedek labored to turn a reprobate people back to their God (Alma 13:17–18). Abraham offered up his life, his wife, and his only-begotten son by Sarah, believing God could raise him up again from the dead (Genesis 12:11–20; Hebrews 11:17–19; Abraham 1:15). Moses was willing to have his name blotted out of the Book of Life in order for the Lord not to destroy Israel when it worshiped the Golden Calf (Exodus 32:30–32). Elijah escaped the slaughter of the prophets of the Lord and challenged the prophets of Baal to a life-or-death contest (1 Kings 18:17–19:18). John and Jesus’ three Nephite disciples desired to bring souls to Jesus for as long as the world should stand (cf. John 21:20–23; 3 Nephi 28:4–9). And so forth.

A classic Book of Mormon example of an acceptable sacrifice is Nephi the son of Helaman, who preached repentance at a time when his people the Nephites had corrupted themselves and conspiratorial forces had taken over their government. After he had declared God’s Word “with unweariness,” and had “not sought his own life,” God blessed him “forever” with the spirit

and power of Elijah: “I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels, that ye shall have power over this people, and shall smite the earth with famine, and with pestilence, and destruction, according to the wickedness of this people. Behold, I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and thus shall ye have power among this people” (Helaman 10:4–7). As with Enoch, his enemies thereafter could not withstand him, and God’s Holy Spirit conveyed him from place to place as he fearlessly preached God’s word to his people (Helaman 10:15–17).

(Much of this material is taken from *Endtime Prophecy: A Judeo-Mormon Analysis*, 215–218.)