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A Land of Promise

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Abstract: The Book of Mormon taught that America is a land of promise and the hope of the world. All other lands stretch out their hands for the material, political, and spiritual wealth that America offers.

Guide Lessons.

LESSON I.

Theology and Testimony.

FIRST WEEK IN MAY.

BOOK OF MORMON LESSON.

A LAND OF PROMISE.

“And the Lord would not suffer that they should stop beyond the sea in the wilderness, but he would that they should come forth even unto the land of promise, which was choice above all other lands, which the Lord God had preserved for a righteous people” (Ether 2:7).

“And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands” (1 Nephi 2:20).

From the very beginning, no doubt, God designed that this land should be a land of promise to those who dwell thereon. It could only fail when peoples came under condemnation, as did the Lamanites.

From the midst of turmoil and unrighteousness, such as characterized the building and the builders of the Tower of Babel, Jared and his brother came forth. From a heaven-condemned city, Lehi and his company found safety beyond the sea; for this land not only saved them from impending woes, left behind, but it yielded of its riches, and of a truth became a land of promise unto them.

Students of the Book of Mormon have marveled that in so short a time, with so small a beginning, peoples should have grown to be so mighty and so prosperous. The native richness of this land, once Earth's Eden, no doubt, had much to do with that result.

Again we learn from the Book of Mormon that in due course of time, multitudes of the Gentiles should come to this land, unto whom it should be a land of promise.

America has from the first symbolized gold; the tons of gold used to embellish the ceiling of one of the churches of Rome is eloquent testimony of the fact that the Spaniards found gold here. After the coming of the men who sought for treasure, came those

who sought religious and political freedom. Both found in time the thing they were in quest of; so that, from the beginning America has given those things that do support both the body and the spirit.

Before the discovery of America by Columbus very little was known of the new world. To be sure, the ancients possessed some maps that go to show that they knew of the existence of America, but the middle ages appear to have lost this knowledge. Let us turn for a few moments to some of the passages in the Book of Mormon that relate to the Gentiles and this land.

"And it came to pass that I beheld many multitudes of the Gentiles upon the land of promise; and I beheld the wrath of God, that it was upon the seed of my brethren: and they were scattered before the Gentiles and were smitten" (I Nephi 13:14).

"Behold, this land, saith God, shall be a land of thine inheritance, and the Gentiles shall be blessed upon the land" (II Nephi 10:10).

In considering this land as it affects the Gentiles, we have a flood-tide of material at close range. "And all people shall flow unto it," saith the Hebrew prophet of holy writ.

Witness the fulfilment of these words; for to think of New York, Chicago, and others of our large cities is to think of the Jews, the Italians, the Austrians, the Armenians, and other peoples of southern Europe and Asia. To think of Massachusetts, perhaps, makes us think of the British; surely New York and Pennsylvania, of the Dutch; Wisconsin and Minnesota, of the German and the Scandinavian; North Dakota, of the Russian and Icelandic people; Louisiana, of the French, and California, of the Spanish, Japanese and Chinese. Truly, the noted Jewish playwright and novelist, Israel Zangwill, speaks with knowledge when he calls America the "Melting Pot" of all nations. And this thing, apparent in the nation, is duplicated in every state—Utah being a marvelous example.

It would be difficult to conceive of a more perfect tribute to this land of ours than that found in Mary Antin's *Promised Land*. In the preface to this truly wonderful book, its gifted author tells us that she would hardly have written the book did she not know that she is the mouthpiece of an entire group, the Russian Jew. In the light of God's word is not the title of her book *The Promised Land* truly significant?

Not less remarkable perhaps are the tributes of Dr. Ed. A. Steiner, whose book, *The Trail of the Immigrant*, makes him an undoubted authority on the immigrant question. Very fittingly might he call his lecture of this season, "The Promised Land."

Dr. Steiner was born in the Carpathian mountains. Budapest, the capital of the Hungarian kingdom, was the nearest

large city to the little village of his birth. One day he watched a soldier who had lost one leg alight from the buss that brought all new comers to the town. This man was born in the same little town, but had gone to America years before. He had lost his leg in the Civil war, and had come back home to spend the remainder of his life, supported as he was by a pension from "Uncle Sam." "None of his relatives were alive, so he came to our home," said Dr. Steiner. At the head of his bed was a small portrait of Abraham Lincoln, about whom he liked to talk, and as often as the village people chanced his way, he told them of the great American father, with the kindly face who desired freedom for all men.

As if to mock Maximilian, who was the tool of Napoleon III of France, and Francis Joseph, his brother, late Emperor of Austria, who was the tool of the German Kaiser, to the end of threatening free government in America, in the very heart of the city of Budapest stands a life-sized statue of George Washington, a symbol of life, freedom and hope to the people who daily pass and gaze up at it—"A hand and face that truly beckons to a promised land," said Dr. Steiner. Then he added, that in the various cities of Europe are six such statues of the father of this country, each one telling of this better land, where life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are among the blessings the government seeks to extend to those who dwell under the folds of the Stars and Stripes.

At the present time, all eyes are turned to America. "America is the hope of the world," said Francis Nielson, long time member of the British Parliament, in a recent address.

As in the beginning the old world stretches out her hands to the new for material and spiritual help; for just as earnestly and as helplessly as the warring nations have turned to America for food, just so earnestly and helplessly will they turn to her for a knowledge of that better, freer life vouchsafed by a republican form of government.

Then, when the guns shall cease to roar, and the statesmen shall sit at the council board of peace, America, they say, shall be most potent for the future destiny of men. In many ways, some seen and others yet unseen, America will be an ensign to the nations for larger and better things. Surely the word of God fails not—this is the promised land.

The Spaniard coming to America was in quest of gold; the Puritan landing on Plymouth Rock and the Huguenot in South Carolina, sought first religious liberty, and afterwards political freedom. The Latter-day Saint convert, turning towards this goodly land, receives in a majority of instances all these gifts in one. If it is a land of promise to him who can partake of one or

two great gifts, how much more is it a land of promise to him who, embracing the gospel of Jesus Christ, knows that there and there alone is the permanent way to salvation—material, political and spiritual.

May the day hasten when the big world that looks to us now for food, and for the making of a world safe for democracy, shall also realize that in this land, choice above all other lands, God's Church is established, led by those having the holy priesthood, which power shall again redeem the earth and make it an Eden as at first.

QUESTIONS.

1. To what three groups of people has the Lord called the Western world, the land of promise?
2. How does the history of the Jaredites prove that it was a land of promise to the Nephites?
3. How was it a land of promise first to the Spaniards, secondly to the Puritans?
4. How has it been a land of promise to all peoples of the earth since the signing of the Declaration of Independence?
5. How is it a land of promise to the Russian Jew, of whom Mary Antin is spokesman?
6. How, a promised land to Dr. Edward Steiner and the group of village boys who saw the portrait of Abraham Lincoln and heard the story of his life?
7. How is it a land of promise to the warring nations of Europe today?
8. Show from anything that you may know, or may have read, that the old world depends upon the new for suggestions for larger liberty and national stability after the war?
9. To what people has America filled the largest and fullest hopes of the soul? Why?
10. Show that the gospel of Jesus Christ can provide all those other things for which America has been sought, and in addition the possibilities of eternal life to all who will follow its divine precepts.