



Type: Magazine Article

Lesson XII. Book of Mormon Prophecies - America— The Promised Land

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Source: *The Young Woman's Journal*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (January 1921), pp. 38–40

Published by: Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association

Abstract: No abstract available.

LESSON DEPARTMENT

An Appreciation of the Book of Mormon.

Senior Course of Study

LESSON XII.

BOOK OF MORMON PROPHECIES.

(For Tuesday, February 1, or Sunday, February 13.)

AMERICA—THE PROMISED LAND.

One of the most fascinating and stimulating books of the last quarter of a century is Mary Antin's "The Promised Land." It is the story of a little Yiddish girl who in the society of Europe could count for little if anything at all, but who in America because of our system of free schools and our democracy of opportunity has risen out of obscurity into a position of fame and distinction. To Mary Antin America is the Land of Promise. And so it is to the world. Freedom and equal opportunity make it a haven for all lovers of liberty.

Such an America is the America of prophecy—the land foreseen by the prophets of the Book of Mormon. To them it was pointed out long before its discovery in modern times as the land dedicated to be the home of the Lord's chosen people. The Book of Mormon is replete with passages declaring America to be a chosen land but perhaps we can best turn to representative declarations under four major headings, each significant in the progress and development of this country.

In the first place the discovery of America by Columbus and its settlement was clearly foreseen more than two thousand years before the event occurred.

"And I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land." I Nephi 13:12.

Not only did Nephi thus foresee the discovery of America, but he was shown three other developments which were to follow the discovery. He saw clearly that after the coming of Columbus other Gentiles would seek liberty in America. The reference is clearly one to our pilgrim fathers who sought a land where they might worship freely as they chose:

"And it came to pass that I beheld the Spirit of God, that it wrought upon other Gentiles; and they went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters." I Nephi 13:13.

Moreover, Nephi saw that these same Gentiles would drive back the remnants of his own people, the Lamanites, and possess their land. Of course we remember how the Indians were ousted and dispossessed of their territory as Europeans reached further and further into 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

that doth possess it shall serve God, or the Gentiles, and were smitten." I Nephi 13:14.

And finally, Nephi was privileged to foresee the American Revolution as a result of which this land of promise might be governed and controlled by those who chose to make it home. The same spirit which led Nephi into the truth of verses 17, 18, and 19 of chapter 13, led Washington to trust in a Providence which brought success to his revolutionary compatriots.

A second important prediction relative to America has to do with her form of government. It is surprising that though the men and women who settled America were men and women who had known no government except that wherein kings ruled and subjects obeyed, they established the principle from the outset that no king should reign here. It is interesting to note, too, that at the close of the revolutionary war when General Washington was the idol of his people, there was no suggestion of a sentiment in his heart to rule and reign. In his refusal to consider the possibility of becoming a king, he likely was unaware of the fact that he was fulfilling literally a Book of Mormon prophecy.

"But behold this land saith God shall be a land of thine inheritance, and the Gentiles shall be blessed upon the land.

"And this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles and there shall be no kings upon the land who shall raise up unto the Gentiles." II Nephi 10:10, 11.

From Washington's day to our day the idea of monarchy has been foreign to America.

The third prophecy is really a corollary of the second: America is to be a land of liberty:

"And this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles."

The same spirit which prompted that utterance prompted the founding of our government. In fact the two great keynotes to American liberty, The Mayflower Compact and the Preamble to the Constitution breathe a spirit as prophetic as the book which predicted that things should be as they are. At this time when interest in the Pilgrim Tercentenary is keen we may well ponder these two great documents as the embodiment of that spirit vouchsafed in the Book of Mormon and which has made America what she is.

THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT.

"In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are under-written—solemnly and mutually in the presence of God, and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civill body politick—to enacte, constitute, and frame such just and equall laws—from time to time as shall be thought most meete and convenient for the generall good of the colonie unto which we promise all due submission and obedience."

PREAMBLE.

CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES.

"We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

The fourth prophecy relative to America proclaims it to be a "choice land." There are so many passages bearing upon this point that it is hard to select those most significant.

"And now we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise, and whatsoever nation shall possess it, shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fulness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity;

"For behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he

shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fulness of iniquity among the children of the land, that they are swept off."—Ether 2:9, 10.

"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." I Nephi 2:20.

"But, said he, notwithstanding our afflictions we have obtained a land of promise, a land which is choice above all other lands; a land which the Lord God hath covenanted with me should be a land for the inheritance of my seed. Yea, the Lord hath covenanted this land unto me, and to my children forever; and also all those who should be led out of other countries by the hand of the Lord." II Nephi 1:5.

"Wherefore, I will consecrate this land unto thy seed, and they who shall be numbered among thy seed, forever, for the land of their inheritance: for it is a choice land, saith God unto me, above all other lands, wherefore I will have all men that dwell thereon, that they shall worship me, saith God." II Nephi 10:19.

And then finally there is that wonderful promise contained in Ether 13: 8-9-10.

"Wherefore the remnant of the house of Joseph shall be built upon this land; and it shall be a land of their inheritance; and they shall build up a holy city unto the Lord, like unto the Jerusalem of old; and they shall no more be confounded, until the end come, when the earth shall pass away.

"And there shall be a new heaven and a new earth; and they shall be like unto the old, save the old have passed away, and all things have become new.

"And then cometh the New Jerusalem, and blessed are they who dwell therein, for it is they whose garments are white through the blood of the lamb; and they are they who are numbered among the remnant of the seed of Joseph, who were of the house of Israel."

Surely these are glorious promises—and surely America has been a gloriously blessed land. When we consider that in three hundred years she has developed from that primitive settlement of Plymouth into one of

the richest and finest countries in the world, it is easy to believe that the hand of the Lord has been over her. Her resources, her varied scenery, her industrial achievements, her liberty loving people to a number well beyond 100,000,000, her advancing civilization,—all these things make us realize that America surely is "The Promised Land"—"A Choice Land above all other Lands."

Of course, such blessings are predicated upon the righteousness of the people who inhabit America. Should they fall into wickedness they will suffer the wrath of God in spite of their choice habitation. We need only refer to such passages as those of the twenty-first chapter of III Nephi to indicate what is possible. The challenge is heralded to every Latter-day Saint to preserve America as a favored land of the Lord—a land of righteousness.

OUTLINE LESSON XII.

Mary Antin's "The Promised Land."

Four Major Prophecies:

1. The Discovery and Settlement of America.
2. Her Form of Government.
3. America—a Land of Liberty.
4. America—a Choice Land.

These Promises Predicated Upon Righteousness.

QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS.

1. Discuss the providence of God in preserving America for these latter days.
2. Show how Columbus' work was the result of inspiration.
3. Give evidences showing the religious devotion of the men who won the American Revolution.
4. Discuss the statement "Our Constitution is an inspired document."
5. Define American liberty.
6. Why is such a liberty fundamental to the carrying out of the religious ideals fostered in this country?
7. Give evidences that America is a "Choice land above all other lands."
8. What leads you to believe that America will always be a favored land?