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Jacob's Isle

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Abstract: This article discusses the writings in the Bible and Book of Mormon that use the term “isles” and discusses what land is referred to by the prophets.

JACOB'S ISLE.

VIEWS HELD IN CHAPTER XI OF MANUAL MODIFIED CONCERNING THIS SUBJECT.

BY M. W. MANSFIELD, TEASDALE, UTAH.

Jacob, son of Lehi, in speaking to the people of Nephi, in the land of Nephi, said: "We have been led to a better land, for the Lord has made the sea our path, and we are upon an isle of the sea. But great are the promises of the Lord unto they who are upon the isles of the sea" (II Nephi 10: 20, 21).

The promises of the Lord to, and description of lands occupied by, those of the people of Israel who are and have been upon the isles of the sea, so far as we know, the promises and ancient description of the lands, are found in the Bible and other sacred books; and, as Jacob had the writings of the prophets on the brass plates, he doubtless referred to them for the promises to Israel, upon the isles of the sea. Let us see from those writings in what sense the term "isles" was used, and to what land reference was made by the prophets.

First, Moses said in Genesis 10: 5: "By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands, every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations." Referring to the seed of Japheth dividing their country among themselves, and that on the main land of Asia, he uses the term "isles" in speaking of their land, and any land may be termed an isle in the same sense.

In Zeph. 2: 11, the prophet says: "The Lord will be terrible unto them, for he will famish all the gods of the earth, and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen." This passage shows that the term "isles" is used in reference to all the lands of the heathen in all parts of the earth, without reference as to the situation as to water surroundings.

Lands distant from Palestine, where the sea separated them from that land, are referred to by the prophets as isles of the sea. "Wherefore, glorify ye the Lord in the fires [valleys], even the name of the Lord God of Israel in the isles of the sea" (Isaiah 24: 15).

The promises made to Israel that are scattered abroad on the isles of the sea are mentioned by Isaiah in part, and I refer now to his words, quoted in the Book of Mormon (I Nephi 21: 1): "Hearken, O ye house of Israel, all ye that are broken off and are driven out, because of the wickedness of the pastors of my people; yea, all ye that are broken off that are scattered abroad, who are of my people, O house of Israel. Listen, O isles, unto me, and hearken ye people from far; the Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name." (See also Isaiah 49: 1).

"The words of Zenos, which he spake concerning the three days of darkness, which should be a sign given of his (Christ's) death, unto those who should inhabit the isles of the sea; more especially given unto those who were of the house of Israel: * * * And the rocks of the earth must rend; and because of the groanings of the earth, many of the kings of the isles of the sea shall be wrought upon by the Spirit of God to exclaim, The God of nature suffers" (I Nephi 19: 10, 12).

Did the three days of darkness come upon the face of this land? If so, is not this one of the isles of the sea referred to, which would be inhabited by some of the house of Israel? We find that this land was inhabited by Israel at the time of the crucifixion, and the three days of darkness came upon this land, also great destruction. Hence, Zenos refers to this land of America in his "isles of the sea," where the "sign" should be given.

I think it is admitted on all sides that there is no recorded changes of this land from the days of Jared to the time of the great separation at Christ's death. If anything of the kind had occurred to the knowledge of historians of that day, they would, in all probability, have left the same on record. The Jaredite historians refer to this land as the promised land, from which we infer unity and not separation.

In the days of Heth, a king of the Jaredites, poisonous ser-

pents drove the flocks of that people through the narrow neck of land into the land known as Zarahemla; later, from this north country. Clearly showing that the land of North and South America was at that time joined by the narrow neck of land. The flocks of the Jaredites could not pass a strait connecting the sea and the ocean, if one existed at that time. The people of Mulek landed first in the north land, and subsequently moved southward into the land of Zarahemla, and no mention is made of any water which they crossed in that journey. The prophet Nephi includes North America in the term, "this land," in speaking of the mighty nation of the Gentiles which should be raised up on the American continent, because it is on the north land where the nation is; and he was in South America (I Nephi 22:7). The expedition from the land of Nephi sent by King Limhi to find Zarahemla, passed far into North America, and returned, but they evidently found no water to cross in their track, as no mention is made of any.

This company of men traveled from the land of their fathers' first inheritance—the land of Nephi, and returned there, and therefore no strait of water separated the land of Nephi from Zarahemla, or some mention would have been made of the same. Not only in the travels of this company, but in all of the movements of the peoples of the Nephite and Lamanite nations, from Nephi to Zarahemla, and *vice versa*, no mention is made of any water to be crossed, and I think it is impossible that these lands could have been thus separated. Jacob was in the land of Nephi when he made the statement above quoted, and hence could not have referred to any portion, but to the whole land, of North and South America, as an isle of the sea. He knew of Zenos' prophecy, and of Nephi's vision in which he saw the three days of darkness being on the land, and hence it is only a proper conclusion that this "promised land" was on an "isle of the sea." I do not think that anyone will contend that Jacob had traveled over the land sufficiently to know, from that source, the shape and extent of the country, but that he based his remark upon those things I have referred to, or made the same under the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

Mormon says: "The land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla were nearly surrounded by water, there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward"(Alma 22:32).

This remark was made describing conditions as they were before the great storm and upheavals, at the time of the Savior's death. This is the same condition that exists today, as the lands of Nephi and Zarahemla comprised the land south, or South America. This is one of the great evidences, that the land north and south were joined by the narrow neck or isthmus, as is the case today, which the Book of Mormon affords.

It will not do to say that at the time of Zenos' prophecies, and when Nephi received his vision, that this country of North and South America was broken into small or large islands, and subsequently connected by the disturbances at the time of the Savior's crucifixion, because there is no evidence on which to base the statement; but, on the contrary, much to support the opposite contention of unity. "Isles of the sea," in prophetic language, simply means, "countries of the sea." Modern geographical terms do not fully explain terms used by prophets and historians thousands of years ago, even after the translation into English of those terms, but they must be understood in the sense in which they were used at that time.

The continents of Europe, Asia and Africa constitute the main land on the earth, and all other lands, in the light of prophecy, are "isles," or countries of the sea.

The small islands near the land of North and South America no doubt constituted part of the isles referred to by Zenos, and no doubt some of the isles of the Pacific were included also.

REMARKS ON THE FOREGOING ARTICLE.

BY ELDER B. H. ROBERTS.

The ascertainment of truth, not the maintenance of personal opinions, I take it, is the attitude of every true student and teacher. This principle I have endeavored to make my guide in all research; and have sought to avoid the pride of opinion which would tempt one at times, to be slow to accept the truth when discovered, because contrary to views already entertained. There-