



Type: Magazine Article

The Lands of the Nephites

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Source: *Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 15, No. 22 (15 November 1880), pp. 261

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Abstract: A series of essays on Book of Mormon geography. To the earlier Nephites “the whole of North America was known as the land of Mulek, and South America as the land of Lehi.” From the period of Mosiah until Christ South America was “divided into two grand divisions”: Zarahemla and the land of Nephi.

workers with Luther when he first came into Speier had to endure considerable persecution in the beginning, still his teachings rapidly grew in favor, until the majority of the inhabitants held him in great reverence.

At the present time a great many Catholic priests live in this place. At one time I counted some twenty-five in the church. There is also a school here, which some fifty boys and young men attend to learn to "preach for hire and divine for money."

We walked through the city and viewed the buildings, the most of which are very low and ancient-looking. We also went out in the suburbs for some little time. We saw the remains of the old wall which formerly served as a defense to the city, and also the moat, where water anciently helped to prevent the entrance of the enemy. The city, generally is clean, and the inhabitants are mostly engaged in farming or gardening.

(To be Continued.)

THE LANDS OF THE NEPHITES.

BY G. R.

TO the ancient Nephites the whole of North America was known as the land of Mulek, and South America as the land of Lehi; or, to use the exact language of the Book of Mormon, "the land south was called Lehi, and the land north was called Mulek." (445*)

The reason why these names were so given, was because the Lord brought "Mulek into the land north, and Lehi into the land south," when he led them from Judea to this greater land of promise.

From the days of Mosiah to the era of Christ's advent, South America was divided into two grand divisions. These were the land of Zarahemla and the land of Nephi. During this period, except in times of war, the Lamanites occupied the land of Nephi, and the Nephites inhabited the land of Zarahemla.

That these two lands occupied the whole of the southern continent is shown by the statement of the sacred writer: "Thus 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." (303). The width of this narrow neck of land that connected the two continents is in one place said to have been "the distance of a day and a half's journey for a Nephite." (303). In another place it is called "a day's journey." (437). Perhaps the places spoken of are not identical, but one may have been slightly to the north of the other along the line of the isthmus.

Both the lands of Nephi and Zarahemla were subdivided, for governmental purposes, into smaller lands, states or districts. Among the Nephites, these lands, in the days of the republic, were ruled by a local chief judge, subject to the chief judge of the whole nation; and among the Lamanites by kings, who were tributary to the head king, whose seat of government was at the city of Nephi.

The land of Nephi covered a much larger area of country than did the land of Zarahemla. The two countries were separated by the wilderness which extended entirely across the continent from the shores of the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.

*--The figures refer to pages in the Book of Mormon, new edition.

The northern edge of this wilderness ran in a line almost due east and west, and passed near the head of the river Sidon. The Sidon is generally understood to be the river called the Magdalena in these days.

All north of this belt of wilderness was considered the land of Zarahemla; all south of it was included in the land of Nephi. We are nowhere told its exact breadth, and can only judge thereof from casual references in the historical narrative of the Book of Mormon.

The river Sidon flowed through the centre of the Nephite civilization of the days of the republic. After the convulsions that attended the crucifixion of the Holy Messiah, the physical and political geography of the continent was greatly changed, and the new conditions are very vaguely defined by the inspired historians.

On the western bank of the river Sidon was built the city of Zarahemla. From the time of its first occupancy by the Nephites, to the date of its destruction by fire (497) at the crucifixion, it was the capital or chief city of the nation, the centre of their commercial activities, and the seat of government. It was the largest and oldest city within their borders, having been founded by the people of Zarahemla before the exodus of the Nephites, under the first Mosiah, from the land of Nephi.

When the Nephites, by reason of increasing numbers, the exigencies of war, or for other causes founded new cities, the cities so built were generally called after the name of the leader of the colony or some illustrious citizen, and the land immediately surrounding, contiguous or tributary to the new city was called by the same name. As an example, we will take the city and land of Ammonihah, regarding which it is written: "Now it was the custom of the people of Nephi, to call their lands and their cities, and their villages, yea, even all their small villages, after the name of him who first possessed them; and thus it was with the land of Ammonihah" (256).

Some of these lands appear to have been relatively small, more resembling a county, or possibly a township, than any other division at present prevailing in this country. Such we suppose to have been the lands of Helam and Moreantou. Others, such as the lands of Bountiful and Desolation, embraced wide, extended tracts of country.

(To be Continued.)

Correspondence.

SPIRIT OF PERSECUTION—ELDERS THREATENED WITH WHIPPING AND HANGING.

MUDDY BRANCH, JOHNSON Co., Ky.,

November 6, 1880.

Dear Brother Lambert,

I think a line would be of some interest to you from this part of the Lord's vineyard. Since writing last to you, Brother Butterfield and I took a trip to Lawrence County, where we staid a short time and baptized one member.

When returning, we visited the Saints in Johnson County, and from there we started out to a new field of labor, traveling west as far as Owsley County, going through Morgan and Breathitt Counties. While in the latter County we held ten meetings, which were well attended, and many seemed anxious to hear us talk upon the principles of the gospel.