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Discovery of Ruined Cities in California

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Abstract: Richards writes concerning an article from the San Francisco Herald that describes ruined cities of California. “The wonderful and magnificent ruins . . . continue to puzzle and astonish the learning and wisdom of the great men of the nineteenth century, while every fresh discovery is an increasing evidence in favor of the Book of Mormon.”

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HE THAT HATH AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAITH
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DISCOVERY OF RUINED CITIES IN CALIFORNIA.

(From the San Francisco Herald.)

The great basin in the middle of our territory, bounded on the north by the Wahsatch mountains and the settlements of the Mormons in Utah, on the east by the Rocky Mountains skirting the right bank of the Rio Grande, on the south by the Gila, and on the west by the Sierra Nevada, is a region still almost unknown. Trappers and mountaineers have passed all round the inner side of its rim, but none have ever crossed it, with the exception of Mr. Beale, who traversed on his recent trip its northern slope, and Captain Joe Walker, the famous mountaineer, who passed nearly through its centre in the winter of 1850. But little, therefore, is known regarding it; but that little is exceedingly interesting, and fills the mind with eagerness to know more. From Captain Walker we have gathered many particulars regarding his celebrated trip, and the character of this mysterious land, which have never before been brought to light. There is no lack of streams within it; the Rio Colorado Chiquito, or Little Red River, runs entirely across it, about 100 miles to the north of the Gila, and almost parallel to it, and empties into the Colorado. About 120 miles still further north the San Juan follows exactly the same course as the Little Red River, and empties in Grand River, the most important branch of the Colorado. Grand River itself pursues a course a little south of west across the northern part of the basin, while the Avonkaree, a large river

discovered by Mr. Beale, Green River, and the Rio Virgen, are all large streams, which drain the northern mountain rim, and run in a southerly direction into the Colorado.

The great basin between the Colorado and the Rio Grande is an immense tableland, broken towards the Gila and the Rio Grande by detached sierras. Almost all the streams run through deep canons. The country is barren and desolate, and entirely uninhabited. But though now so bleak and forbidding, strewn all around may be seen the evidence that it was once peopled by a civilized and thickly-settled population. They have long since disappeared, but their handiwork still remains to attest their former greatness. Captain Walker assures us that the country from the Colorado to the Rio Grande, between the Gila and San Juan, is full of ruined habitations and cities, most of which are on the tableland. Although he had frequently met with crumbling masses of masonry, and numberless specimens of antique pottery, such as have been noticed in the immigrant trail south of the Gila, it was not until his last trip across that he ever saw a structure standing. On that occasion he had penetrated about midway from the Colorado into the wilderness, and had encamped near the Little Red River, with the Sierra Blanca looming up to the south, when he noticed at a little distance an object that induced him to examine further. As he approached, he

found it to be a kind of citadel, around which lay the ruins of a city more than a mile in length. It was located on a gentle declivity that sloped towards Red River, and the lines of the streets could be distinctly traced, running regularly at right angles with each other. The houses had all been built of stone, but all had been reduced to ruins by the action of some great heat, which had evidently passed over the whole country. It was not an ordinary conflagration, but must have been some fierce furnace-like blast of fire, similar to that issuing from a volcano, as the stones were all burnt—some of them almost cindered, others glazed as if melted. This appearance was visible in every ruin he met with. A storm of fire seemed to have swept over the whole face of the country, and the inhabitants must have fallen before it. In the centre of this city we refer to rose abruptly a rock 20 or 30 feet high, upon the top of which stood a portion of the walls of what had once been an immense building. The outline of the building was still distinct, although only the northern angle, with walls 15 or 18 feet long, and 10 feet high, were standing. These walls were constructed of stone, well quarried and well built. All the south end of the building seemed to have been burnt to cinders, and to have sunk to a mere pile of rubbish. Even the rock on which it was built appeared to have been partially fused by the heat. Captain Walker spent some time in examining this interesting spot. He traced many of the streets and the outlines of the houses, but could find no other wall standing. As often as he had seen ruins of this character, he had never until this occasion discovered any of the implements of the ancient people. Here he found a number of handmills, similar to those still used by the Pueblos and the Mexicans for grinding their corn. They were made of light porous rock, and consisted of two pieces about two feet long, and ten inches wide, the one hollowed out, and the other made convex like a roller to fit the concavity. They were the only articles that had resisted the heat. No metals of any kind were found. Strewn all round might be seen numerous fragments of crockery, sometimes beautifully carved, at others painted. This, however, was not peculiar to this spot, as he had seen antique pottery in every part of the country, from San Juan to the Gila.

Captain Walker continued his journey, and noticed several more ruins a little off his route next day, but he could not stop to examine them. On this side of the Colorado he has never seen any remains, except of the present races. The Indians have no traditions relative to the ancient people once thickly settled in this region. They look with wonder upon these remains, but know nothing of their origin. Captain Walker, who, we may remark, is a most intelligent and close observer, far superior to the generality of the old trappers, and with a wonderfully retentive memory, is of opinion that this basin, now so barren, was once a charming country, sustaining millions of people, and that its present desolation has been wrought by the action of volcanic fires. The mill discovered proves that the ancient race once farmed; the country, as it now appears, never could be tilled, hence it is inferred it must have been different in early days. They must have had sheep, too, for the representation of that useful animal was found carved upon a piece of pottery.

Lieutenant Beale states that on his first trip across the continent he discovered in the midst of the wilderness north of the Gila what appeared to be a strong fort, the walls of great thickness, built of stone. He traversed it, and found it contained 42 rooms. In the vicinity numerous balls of hard clay, from the size of a bullet to that of a grape shot, were met with. What was singular about them was the fact that frequently ten or twenty were stuck together like a number of bullets run out of half a dozen connecting moulds, or like a whole baking of rolls. It is difficult to say what these were intended for. They were so hard, however, that the smaller ones could be discharged from a gun. And now it remains for the antiquary to explore this most interesting region in the very heart of our country, and to say who were the people that inhabited it. They may have been the ancestors of the Aztecs whom Cortes found in Mexico, for they were known to have come from the north. Tradition relates that they sailed out from their northern homes directed by their prophets not to cease their march till they came across an eagle sitting upon a cactus with a serpent in its claws. This they found where the city of Mexico now stands, and there they established their dominion. This legend is

still preserved in the device upon the Mexican dollar. Some remnants of the Aztecs still remained within a few years past at the ruined city of Grand Quivera, or Pecos, in the wilderness of New Mexico. Here, in deep caverns, they kept alive, with reverential care, the sacred fire, which was always to burn until the return of Montezuma. It only went out about ten years ago, when the last Indian of the tribe expired. It may be that the

Pimos, south of the Gila, are an offshoot of the great Aztec nation, left behind in their march to the south. The Pimos, it is known, are far superior to the Indians of Mexico. They raise fine cotton, and from it manufacture all their clothing.

Would that some Stevens or Layard would arise to explore the wonders that lie concealed within this great basin, and bring to light the history of the strange people that once inhabited it!

[The wonderful and magnificent ruins which are ever and anon brought to light by travellers in the great interior of the American continent, continue to puzzle and astonish the learning and wisdom of the great men of the nineteenth century, while every fresh discovery is an increasing evidence in favour of the Book of Mormon. The description given above, particularly concerning the cause of the destruction of the cities and inhabitants, and the desolations of the country, coincides most remarkably with the account, in the Book of Mormon, of the great and fearful destructions, by fire, flood, whirlwind, earthquake, which came upon the people and the land at the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Cities were burnt by fire from heaven, and the whole face of the country was changed. How wonderfully this agrees with the description given by Captain Walker—"It was not an ordinary conflagration, but must have been some fierce furnace-like blast of fire, similar to that issuing from a volcano, as the stones were all burnt—some of them almost cindered, others glazed, as if melted. This appearance was visible in every ruin he met with. A storm of fire seemed to have swept over the whole face of the country, and the inhabitants must have fallen before it." Surely those who reject this last message of mercy, connected with the Book of Mormon, in which is made known the dealings of God with a great people, for centuries upon the American continent, will fall under great condemnation, for everything conspires to establish the fact that the work is of God. Let the reader peruse the following paragraphs from the Book of Mormon, for his own satisfaction—

"And it came to pass in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, in the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm, such an one as never had been known in all the land; and there was also a great and terrible tempest; and there was terrible thunder, insomuch, that it did shake the whole earth as if it was about to divide asunder; and there were exceeding sharp lightnings, such as never had been known in all the land. And the city of Zarahemla did take fire; and the city of Moroni did sink into the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof, were drowned; and the earth was carried up upon the city of Moronihah, that in the place of the city thereof, there became a great mountain; and there was a great and terrible destruction in the land southward. But behold, there was a more great and terrible destruction in the land northward: for behold, the whole face of the land was changed, because of the tempest, and the whirlwinds, and the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the exceeding great quaking of the whole earth; and the highways were broken up, and the level roads were spoiled, and many smooth places became rough, and many great and notable cities were sunk, and many were burned, and many were shook till the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth, and the inhabitants thereof were slain, and the places were left desolate; and there were some cities which remained; but the damage thereof was exceeding great, and there were many in them who were slain; and there were some who were carried away in the whirlwind; and whither they went, no man knoweth, save they know that they were carried away; and thus the face of the whole earth became deformed, because of the tempests, and the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the quaking of the earth. And behold, the rocks were rent in twain; they were broken up upon the face of the whole earth, insomuch, that they were found in broken fragments, and in seams, and in cracks, upon all the face of the land."

"And it came to pass that there was a voice heard among all the inhabitants of the earth, upon all the face of this land, crying, Wo, wo, wo unto this people; wo unto the inhabitants of the whole earth, except they shall repent, for the devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice, because of the slain of the fair sons and daughters of my people; and it is because of their iniquity and abominations that they are fallen. Behold, that great city Zarahemla have I burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof. And behold, that great city Moroni have I caused to be sunk in the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof to be drowned. And behold, that great city Moronihah have I covered with earth, and the inhabitants thereof, to hide their iniquities and their abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come any more unto me against them. And behold, the city of Gilgal have I caused to be sunk, and the inhabitants thereof to be buried up in the depths of the earth; yea, and the city of Onihah, and the inhabitants thereof, and the city of Mocum, and the inhabitants thereof, and the city of Jerusalem, and the inhabitants thereof, and waters have I caused to come up in the stead thereof, to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come up any more unto me against them. And behold, the city of Gadiandi, and the city of Gadiomnah, and the city of Jacob, and the city of Gim-gimno, all these have I caused to be sunk, and made hills and valleys in the places thereof, and the inhabitants thereof have I buried up in the depths of the earth, to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints should not come up any more unto me against them.

"And behold, that great city Jacobugath, which was inhabited by the people of the king of Jacob, have I caused to be burned with fire, because of their sins and their wickedness, which was above all the wickedness of the whole earth, because of their secret murders and combinations: for it was they that did destroy the peace of my people and the government of the land; therefore I did cause them to be burned, to destroy them from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints should not come up unto me any more against them. And behold, the city of Laman, and the city of Josh, and the city of Gad, and the city of Kishkumen, have I caused to be burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof, because of their wickedness in casting out the prophets, and stoning those whom I did send to declare unto them concerning their wickedness and their abominations; and because they did cast them all out, that there were none righteous among them, I did send down fire and destroy them, that their wickedness and abominations might be hid from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints whom I sent among them, might not cry unto me from the ground against them; and many great destructions have I caused to come upon this land, and upon this people, because of their wickedness and their abominations."—Book of Nephi iv. 2, 6, 7.—Ed.]

HISTORY OF JOSEPH SMITH.

(Continued from page 807.)

The following letter was received at Liberty, Clay county, Missouri, on the 28th of July.

City of Jefferson, July 18th, 1836.

Messrs. W. W. Phelps and others.

Gentlemen — The treatment your people have received, and are now receiving, is of an extraordinary character, such as is seldom experienced in any country by any people. As an individual I sympathize with you; and as the Executive of the State, deeply deplore such a state of things. Your appeal

to the Executive is a natural one; but a proper understanding of our institutions will show you, that yours is a case not for the special cognizance of the Executive. It is a case, or, I may say, they are cases of individual wrong. These, as I have before told you, are subjects for *judicial* interference; and, there are cases, sometimes, of individual outrage which may be so popular as to render the action of courts of justice nugatory, in endeavouring to afford a remedy. I would refer you to the charge of Judge Lawless, made to the Grand Jury of