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The Three Days of Darkness

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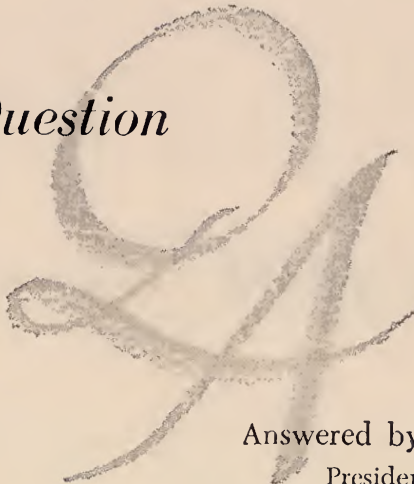
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Abstract: Luke 23:44 states that at Christ's crucifixion there was a period of darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. The Book of Mormon, however, states that it was a three-day darkness on the American continent. Both accounts are correct. The God of miracles who caused a three-hour darkness on one continent also caused a three-day darkness on the other. The greater period of darkness came because of the extreme wickedness of those in America.

Your Question



Answered by Joseph Fielding Smith
President of the Council of the Twelve

THE THREE DAYS OF DARKNESS

Question: *"In Luke 23:44, it states that at the crucifixion of Jesus there was a period of darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour, but in the Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi, 8:22-23, it states that a three-day period of darkness came upon the land at the death of Jesus. Which of the two accounts is considered accurate, or are they both accurate? If so, how could this be?"*

Answer: It is a well-established fact that the earth is a sphere, or a globular body, and that it revolves from west to east making one revolution in twenty-four hours according to man's reckoning. This being true, we have day and night as the earth revolves. If you will look at a globe representing the earth, you will discover that the Western Hemisphere is on the opposite side of the earth from Palestine where the Savior was crucified. The Lord revealed to Nephi nearly six hundred years before the birth of our Redeemer, that at the time of his death there would be three days of darkness on the Western Hemisphere,¹ and a few years before the crucifixion, the Prophet Samuel, also predicted the three days of darkness and that there should be thunderings and lightnings and great earthquakes so that the whole

face of the earth should be changed and broken up for it was in a solid condition at that time.²

Surely no one who believes in the scriptures and is acquainted with the great and varied miracles performed by Jesus when on the earth, can consistently feel that he could give eyesight to the blind, cleanse lepers, command the storms to cease, and raise the dead, and would be unable to control the light and the darkness on any part of the earth. It would be just as easy for him to cause darkness on one hemisphere for three days as it would on the other for three hours. This greater period of darkness and terrible punishment came upon the people in the Western Hemisphere because of their extreme wickedness and because they had, in the course of a very few years, turned away from the truth to follow Satan, and it is written of them that they did not sin ignorantly, for they knew the will of God concerning them, since it had been taught them; therefore they did wilfully rebel against God.³

Not only was there a period of darkness at the death of Christ, but the prediction that there should be a day and a night and a day of no darkness on the American Continent, also occurred, at the time of the birth of our Savior.

¹1 Nephi 19:10.

²Helaman 14:20-21.

³3 Nephi 6:18.