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The Horse in Ancient America

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Abstract: Through historical, scientific, and scholarly evidence, this article shows that there were indeed horses in ancient America, well before Spaniards. Nephi stated in the Book of Mormon that horses were found upon their arrival in the promised land.

goat and the wild goat, and all manner of wild animals which were for the use of man; they also found ores of all kinds, particularly of gold, silver and copper. The animals they tamed for their use, and Nephi and his people raised large flocks and herds of animals of various kinds.”*

“The people of Lehi were so few in number that they were a quiet and solemn race, with few amusements, but with an oppressing sense of the vastness of the land which they occupied, and of their own insignificance. Nor was there entire peace amongst them, for Laman and Lemuel, with others, were still fractions and turbulent.

“In the course of time Lehi felt that his earthly life was near its close, for he was aged and in failing health. So he called to him his sons and daughters and the other members of his colony, and blessed them in the same manner as his forefather Jacob blessed his family before he died. Lehi also prophesied many things that should happen to his posterity after him, for he was possessed of much of the Spirit of the Lord. After he had done this he died and was buried.”†

QUESTIONS

1. Who was Zenos and why should we remember him?
2. What is the fate of those who fight against Zion and how is their fate foretold in the Book of Mormon? 1 Nephi, chapter 22.
3. Relate the important points of 2 Nephi, chapter 1.
4. Who was Jacob and what was Lehi's message to him?
5. What important prophecy was given to Joseph by Lehi? How has it been fulfilled?
6. What important events are told in 2 Nephi, chapter 5. What happened to the rebellious sons and why?
7. What are the main points of Jacob's teachings to the descendants of Lehi?
8. Is the mention of the horse in the Book of Mormon an evidence of its truth or its falsity, and why? Read the article on “The Horse in Ancient America” which follows.

THE HORSE IN ANCIENT AMERICA

THE STATEMENT OF NEPHI that horses were found on this [the American] continent by Lehi's colony when they came here has been used as an argument against the divine origin of the Book of Mormon; for, objectors have asserted that the horse was not known upon this continent until it was brought here by the Spaniards. In this way they have tried to prove the record to be false; but recent researches by scientific men have demonstrated beyond the possibility of doubt that America is the original

*Deseret Sunday School Union Leaflets, February, 1896.

†*Ibid.*

home of the horse, and that at certain periods it was occupied with horses of many and various forms. Remains of the true horse, as we have it among us at the present time, have been found all over the land.

Professor O. C. Marsh, whose patient and intelligent investigations have thrown a flood of light upon this subject, states that the true horse at one time roamed over the whole of North and South America. Nor do we believe that they had become extinct at the time of the coming of Columbus. It is asserted that the Spaniards found none of these animals in Mexico or Peru, but Sir Francis Drake saw bands of wild horses as he coasted along the shores of California and Oregon about 1579. Robert Dudley, Earl of Northumberland, published in 1630 at Florence, Italy, a book called *Arcano del Mare*. In it he states that Drake found that the savages of the country were very courteous and kind, and the land pretty fruitful, and the air temperate. He saw rabbits in great numbers, but with tails as long as [those of] rats, [saw] *many wild horses, with the more wonder because the Spaniards never saw horses in America.*

It is customary to account for the immense herds of American horses on the assumption that the Spaniards introduced them. But if Drake and his companions saw these horses as described by Dudley, they could not have been descendants of Spanish horses; for no Spaniards had penetrated that country or been within hundreds of miles of it at the time of its discovery by Drake in 1579.

Viceroy Mendoza, who succeeded Cortez by appointment of the Emperor Charles in the civil administration of the Spanish possessions, sent out Vasquez de Coronado to find the Seven Cities of Cibola, of the wealth of which the Spaniards had heard very wonderful stories. As early as 1540 he penetrated the country as far as the territory now known as New Mexico and probably into Arizona. He and his troops had horses; but even if they had lost or turned loose any, it is most improbable that in thirty-nine years they would have multiplied into large herds observed by Drake on the sea board, which, as we know, was at least five hundred miles away. Coronado had but few horses, would have had fewer brood mares and would have been apt to mention any loss of a large number of auxiliaries so essential to his expedition.—Deseret Sunday School Union Leaflets, February, 1896.

CHURCH-WIDE NEWS

MRS. RACHEL BENZEBI, manager of one of the large agricultural projects in Palestine, left Salt Lake City on Friday, March 30th, after studying agricultural problems in Utah, which, she said, are in many cases identical with those of Palestine, and