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Chapter XV

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Abstract: Animals and Vegetables Valuable to Lehi and Company—The Potato—Abundance of Fruits—Jerusalem Destroyed—Lehi's Thankfulness for this Choice Land—A Land of Liberty to all who Should be Brought Here if they Would Serve God—Land to be Kept from Knowledge of Other Nations—Remarkably Fulfilled—Promises of the Lord to Lehi Concerning his Descendants and the Land—Present Condition of his Seed Predicted—Prophecies Concerning the Prophet Joseph Smith—Lehi a Great Prophet—Restrains his Children While Living—Rancorous Hatred After his Death Against Nephi—Enraged by his Admonitions—Propose to Kill Him

CHAPTER XV.

ANIMALS AND VEGETABLES VALUABLE TO LEHI AND COMPANY—THE POTATO—ABUNDANCE OF FRUITS—JERUSALEM DESTROYED—LEHI'S THANKFULNESS FOR THIS CHOICE LAND—A LAND OF LIBERTY TO ALL WHO SHOULD BE BROUGHT HERE IF THEY WOULD SERVE GOD—LAND TO BE KEPT FROM KNOWLEDGE OF OTHER NATIONS—REMARKABLY FULFILLED—PROMISES OF THE LORD TO LEHI CONCERNING HIS DESCENDANTS AND THE LAND—PRESENT CONDITION OF HIS SEED PREDICTED—PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH—LEHI A GREAT PROPHET—RESTRAINS HIS CHILDREN WHILE LIVING—RANCOROUS HATRED AFTER HIS DEATH AGAINST NEPHI—ENRAGED BY HIS ADMONITIONS—PROPOSE TO KILL HIM.

THE animals of the country Lehi, and his company doubtless found of very great value to them in their labors and movements. Besides these, it is probable they obtained many valuable vegetable productions which were peculiar to the country. The potato is indigenous to that region; it seems to be its natural home, and was found growing there in abundance by the first Europeans that visited the country. It is not unlikely that Lehi and his people also had it for use. Wild fruits are now very abundant in places contiguous to the spot where we are told they landed. One writer, in describing a contiguous province, says:

“The wild Indians bring from the woods many delicious fruits, pine-apples, plantains, bananas, nisperos, mamays, guavas, etc., as well as sweet potatoes, *camotes*, cabbage palm, *palmitos*, and yucas.”

If Lehi and his company found wild fruits so abundant, they had no difficulty in living in plentiful ease until the seed grains they brought with them matured. Everything contributed to make them feel that it was a choice land above all other lands;

for with all the other advantages it possessed, the soil was exceedingly fertile and the climate was delicious in temperature and healthy. Shortly after their arrival, Lehi informed his people that he had learned through a vision from the Lord that Jerusalem had been destroyed, and he said had they remained there, they also would have perished. He drew the attention of his children to the goodness of the Lord in warning them to flee out of Jerusalem and in preserving them until they had reached this choice land, which the Lord had covenanted should be for the inheritance of his seed forever, and also for all those who should be led out of other countries by the hand of the Lord. To those brought out of other countries this should be a land of liberty, so long as they should serve God according to the commandments which He has given; but if iniquity should abound the land should be cursed for their sakes. He told them that this land would be kept from the knowledge of other nations; for the reason that, if they discovered it, they would overrun it and there would be no place for an inheritance.

This explains why the world remained so long in ignorance of this continent. It was hidden from the world, and was almost a world by itself for centuries, its people having no communication with any other nation upon the earth. Generation succeeded generation, numerous and large cities were built, the whole land was covered with people, the arts of a high civilization were cultivated, revolutions, wars and great changes were effected and all the busy scenes of human life were enacted upon this continent, and yet the inhabitants of other lands were as ignorant of its existence as if it had belonged to another planet. This ignorance continued until the Lord moved upon Christopher Columbus to penetrate the great ocean which stretched between it and Europe. Men called it "the new world," and it was a new world to them; and though the evidences that highly-cultivated races had occupied the land for ages are abundant upon every hand, those who do not believe the Book of Mormon are still as ignorant of who they were, or where they came from and of all their history, excepting those facts which have been brought to light by the examination of the ruins of their cities, as they were when the continent was brought to the knowledge of the world.

Lehi gives the true explanation of the reason why this continent should be concealed from the knowledge of other nations. We see how it is to-day. This continent is so desirable that there is a steady stream of people flowing to it from all countries. They are filling up the land, and the Lamanites, who have occupied it under the promise of the Lord to their father Lehi, have been crowded back from both oceans until they have but small spots to live upon in the center of the land, and even these are coveted by the people of other nations who have come here. This would have been the result long, long ago had the world known of the existence of this continent; but the Lord concealed it, and guided those only to it whom He desired to occupy it, so that all His promises concerning it might be fulfilled. Lehi told his children, that if those whom the Lord should bring out of the land of Jerusalem should keep His commandments, they should not only prosper here, but they should be kept from all other nations and have the land to themselves; there should be none to molest them, nor to take the land away from them; but they should dwell safely for ever. It was the failure of the ancestors of the Indians, or Lamanites, to do this, that brought upon them and their children evils under which they at present suffer. Lehi, before his death, told them, by the spirit of prophecy, what their fate would be if they fell into unbelief and rejected the Lord. He said the Lord would bring other nations unto them, and He would give them power; they would take away from his descendants their lands, and they would be scattered and smitten. We have only to look around us to see how completely and exactly his predictions have been fulfilled. And as these predictions have come to pass, so will others also come to pass respecting the nations of the Gentiles that will occupy this land: they would not be permitted to utterly destroy the descendants of Nephi or the other children of Lehi; and if they, themselves, did not repent, and keep the commandments of the Lord, destruction would also fall upon them.

Among other plain and definite predictions which Lehi made unto his children was one respecting the birth and mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He quoted from a prophecy of Joseph, the son of Jacob, who was sold into Egypt, to the

effect that "a seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins." His name was foretold. He was to be called after the Patriarch Joseph and after his own father. The predictions of Lehi which he gave to his children before his death are very precious, because of their covering so many points and being so plain. He was a great prophet; the Lord had revealed to him a wonderful amount of knowledge concerning the future; and he was especially favored in having such a land as this given, by covenant of the Lord, as an inheritance to himself and his posterity. He did all in his power to teach his children and his people the ways of the Lord and to make them in some degree worthy of the favor which had been shown unto them; but with Laman and Lemuel and those who associated with them his tender entreaties, his solemn warnings, his severe rebukes, and his inspired and pointed predictions were all of no avail. They had gone from bad to worse until their hearts had become like flint, and no good impression could be made upon them. They were full of malice and the spirit of murder. While he lived, his presence had some restraining effect upon them. He was still the father and head of the people, whose authority and counsel, though often disregarded by his rebellious offspring, could not be altogether set aside. But he was scarcely buried before the rancorous hatred of Laman and Lemuel and their adherents broke out against Nephi. It was his admonitions concerning their iniquities that enraged them. His rebukes, they said, afflicted them; they viewed them as an attempt upon his part to dictate and rule over them. He was their younger brother, and they declared they would not have him as a ruler; for this right belonged to them, they said, as the seniors. They proposed to kill him. This brought affairs to a crisis.