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Father Lehi's Children

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Abstract: Describes President George Albert Smith's visit to Mexico City. Several prophecies concerning the Lamanites are quoted to show the importance of the Lamanites in the last days.



CONGREGATION ASSEMBLED TO HONOR PRESIDENT GEORGE ALBERT SMITH ON HIS FIRST VISIT TO MEXICO AS PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH

IN the book of Genesis are found both a blessing and a prophecy, which should be of particular interest to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at this time. It reads:

And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. (Gen. 22:15-18.)

When Father Lehi, about 600 B.C., left Jerusalem, as commanded by the Lord, the seed of Abraham was fulfilling prophecy—the children of Abraham through Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh were marching forward to a destiny little dreamed of by themselves—and one of the strangest in world history. Literally, they were going to a land where the descendants of Father Abraham would become “as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore.”

The descendants of Father Abraham in America alone today number many millions. Through Ephraim and Manasseh, sons of Joseph, who was a son of Jacob and whose grandfather was Abraham, descendants as numerous as the stars and of the sands on the seashore now live in the choice land of Joseph, America.

Father Lehi, who led to America the people about whom the Book of Mormon is largely concerned,

FATHER LEHI'S

By John D. Giles

FIRST ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT, Y. M. M. I. A.
AND BUSINESS MANAGER OF THE "ERA"

was of the tribe of Manasseh. Ishmael, whose daughters became the wives of the sons of Lehi, was of the tribe of Ephraim. Therefore, their descendants were all of the house of Israel, through Joseph, who was to become “a fruitful bough” whose branches would “run over the wall.”

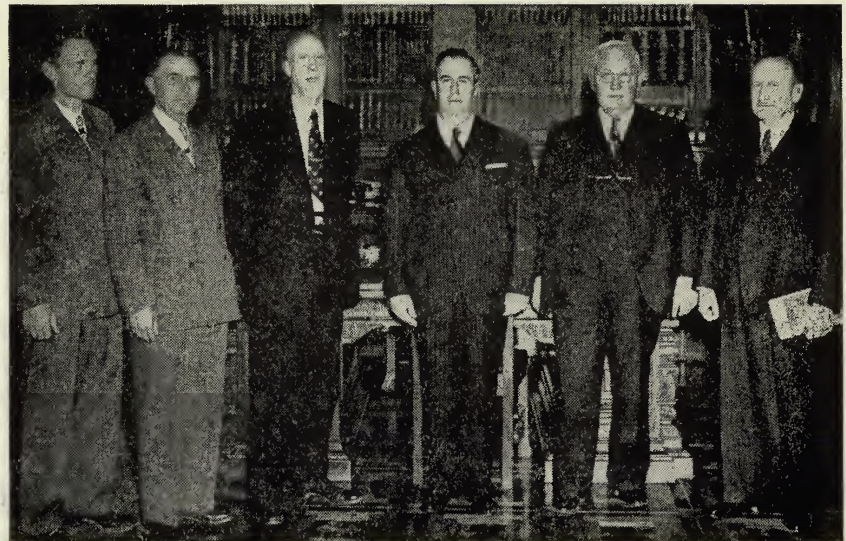
Thus as we speak of Father Lehi's children, we speak also of Father Abraham's children.

Father Lehi's children, who still live on this continent, which was to be their “land of promise” are now

called, generally, Indians. Among Latter-day Saints they are known as Lamanites, having descended from Laman, son of Lehi.

THE term Indian, as applied to this people is most unfortunate. Instead of being Indians, they were, we believe, the earliest Americans. Long before the white men came, America—both North and South—was their land.

President Smith (left center) visits President Manuel Avila Camacho of Mexico (right center).



When the first white men came, they found Indian bands, tribes, and nations occupying the land, with most of it divided among the different groups, in much the same way that land is divided among the states today; each nation or tribe had its own lands, fishing grounds, and hunting grounds.

The coming of the white man changed all that. Gradually, the white men took over more and more of the land, and finally the Indians were gathered together on reservations.

This change of conditions at one time appeared to threaten the very existence of the North American



President Smith with missionaries serving in Mexico

Zion shall flourish upon the hills and rejoice upon the mountains, and shall be assembled together unto the place which I have appointed. (D. & C. 49:24, 25.)

In the Doctrine and Covenants Commentary appears this statement:

There are two distinct predictions in these paragraphs. One says that "Jacob shall flourish in the wilderness, and the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose," before the great day of the Lord shall come; the second tells us that "Zion shall flourish upon the hills and rejoice upon the mountains." The first of these predictions refers to the Indians; the second, to the Latter-day Saints. Have they been fulfilled?

The American Indians are, indeed, flourishing today. . . . In Indian territory they have attained a high degree of both civilization and prosperity. Indians now occupy government offices and seats in legislative assemblies, in schools and pulpits, and in every walk of life. They are flourishing. This is all the more remarkable because at one time the general belief was that they were a vanishing race. When the United States became an independent nation, the number of Indians in North America was estimated at three millions, and in the year 1876 at only one million three hundred thousand. In 1907 the decrease had been checked, and an increase to one million four hundred and seventy-four thou-

sand was reported. Only a prophet inspired by God could have foreseen such a decided turn in the tide of Indian affairs. (Commentary to section 49, verses 24, 25.)

Elder James E. Talmage effectively establishes the identity of Father Lehi's children in this manner:

David, who sang his psalms over a thousand years before the "meridian of time," predicted: "Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven." And so also declared Isaiah. Ezekiel saw in vision the coming together of the stick of Judah, and the stick of Joseph, signifying the Bible and the Book of Mormon. The passage last referred to reads, in the words of Ezekiel: "The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand."

When we call to mind the ancient custom in the making of books—that of writing on long strips of parchment and rolling the same on rods or sticks, the use of the word "stick" as equivalent to "book" in the passage becomes apparent. At the time of this utterance, the Israelites had divided into two nations known as the kingdom of Judah and that of Israel, or Ephraim. Plainly the separate records of Judah and Joseph are here referred to. Now, as we have seen, the Nephite nation comprised the descendants of Lehi who belonged to the tribe of Manasseh, of Ishmael who was an Ephraimite, and of Zoram whose tribal relation is not definitely stated. The Nephites were then of the tribes of Joseph; and their record or "stick" is as truly represented by the Book of Mormon as is the "stick" of Judah by the Bible. (James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, chapter XV:275, 276; 1924 edition.)

The Book of Mormon identifies the Lamanites as of Israel and also prophesies concerning them:

And now, I would prophesy somewhat more concerning the Jews and the Gentiles. For after the book of which I have spoken shall come forth, and be written unto the Gentiles, and sealed up again unto the Lord,

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CHILDREN

Indian. Freely it was predicted that the Indians were a vanishing race and that eventually they would become extinct.

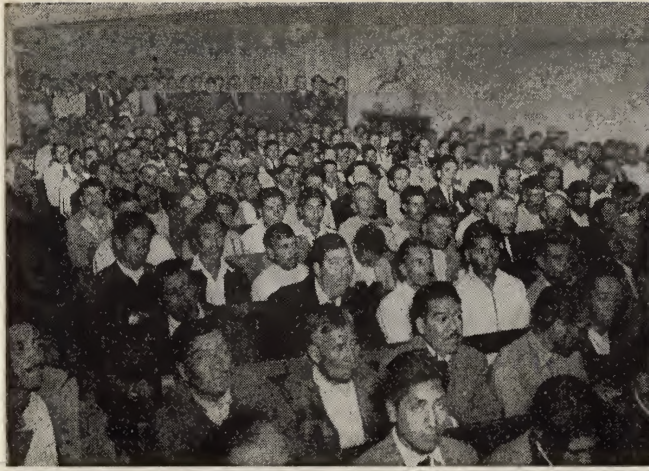
Those who made such predictions were not aware that in the providence of the Lord, the children of Father Lehi were destined to play important roles in the last days in both the Americas.

In a revelation given to Joseph Smith in March 1831, is this reference to the future of the American Indian:

But before the great day of the Lord shall come, Jacob shall flourish in the wilderness, and the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose.

President Smith met former President Herbert Hoover in Mexico City.





Meeting of priesthood members with President Smith



President Smith addressing group with the aid of an interpreter

(Continued from previous page)

there shall be many which shall believe the words which are written; and they shall carry them forth unto the remnant of our seed.

And then shall the remnant of our seed know concerning us, how that we came out from Jerusalem, and that they are descendants of the Jews.

And the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among them; wherefore, they shall be restored unto the knowledge of their fathers, and also to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was had among their fathers.

And then shall they rejoice; for they shall know that it is a blessing unto them from the hand of God; and their scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes; and many generations shall not pass away

among them, save they shall be a white and delightsome people.

And it shall come to pass that the Jews which are scattered also shall begin to believe in Christ; and they shall begin to gather in upon the face of the land; and as many as shall believe in Christ shall also become a delightsome people.

And it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall commence his work among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, to bring about the restoration of his people upon the earth. (Book of Mormon, II Nephi 30:3-8.)

President Brigham Young declared their lineage through Israel in these words:

The Lamanites or Indians are just as

much the children of our Father and God as we are. . . .

They are of the House of Israel; they once had the Gospel delivered to them, they had the oracles of truth; Jesus came and administered to them after his resurrection, and they received and delighted in the Gospel. . . . (Discourses of Brigham Young, page 122.)

Most easily identified of Father Abraham's children today are the Lamanites. Because of their distinctive racial characteristics, they are readily recognized. While other representatives of the tribe of Israel are present in the western hemisphere in large numbers, the Indians or Lamanites are the most easily identified.

PRESIDENT GEORGE ALBERT SMITH is the friend of the Lamanites. During his entire lifetime he has shown marked interest in their welfare. Whenever the opportunity has presented itself, he has gone out of his way to help them and to bless them.

In recent years he has visited on their reservations the Shoshone, Bannock, Blackfoot, Blood, Ute, Goshute, Hopi, Zuni, Navajo, Arapahoe, and other tribes in North America. A few years ago he spent many months among Father Lehi's children on the islands in the South Seas. Here he made friends for himself and for the Church in large numbers. President Smith maintains many of his contacts with these people by correspondence, occasional remembrances, and revisits wherever possible.

Frequently Lamanite brethren and sisters visit him at his office. No man, whatever his station in life, is greeted with more respect and friendliness or is shown more cour-



The churches of Mexico City were visited by President Smith



President Smith with President and Mrs. Pierce and Elder Joseph W. Anderson

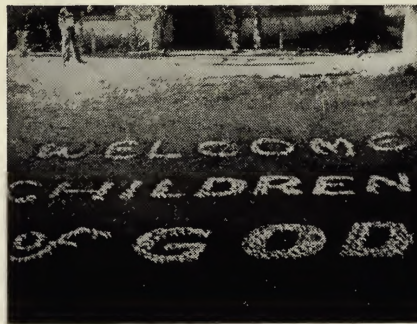


Part of the congregation inside the chapel

tesy than are these descendants of Father Lehi.

One of the most important missions of President Smith's ministry as President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints took him recently into the very heart of the land of the Lamanites. He journeyed to Mexico, a land which today is the home of more than thirty million of Father Lehi's children, for a series of important and dramatic meetings with the members of the Church in the vicinity of Mexico City.

Among the Lamanites of many countries are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In Mexico large groups of them have joined the Church. As the years go by, there is good reason for the hope



Written in flowers for President Smith's visit.

and belief that thousands more will accept the gospel of Jesus Christ, which came to their ancestors directly from the Master himself.

Among the thirty million Lamanites in our neighboring nation to the south in whose veins the blood of Israel flows, are some of the very

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Presidents Smith and Pierce and Elder Joseph Anderson visit the ancient ruins under the present Mexico City.



President Smith visited the people and saw their many activities. Top to bottom:

The burros with their loads of straw

Threshing by oxen as in Biblical times

Washing done at the well and dried on the ground in the sun

Plowing with oxen

Father Lehi's Children

(Continued from page 559)

best citizens of that land. They are intelligent, many of them are well educated, and most of them reflect in some degree their noble heritage.

To this land of the Lamanites, the land which has furnished so many external evidences of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, went recently President George Albert Smith on a truly Lamanite mission.

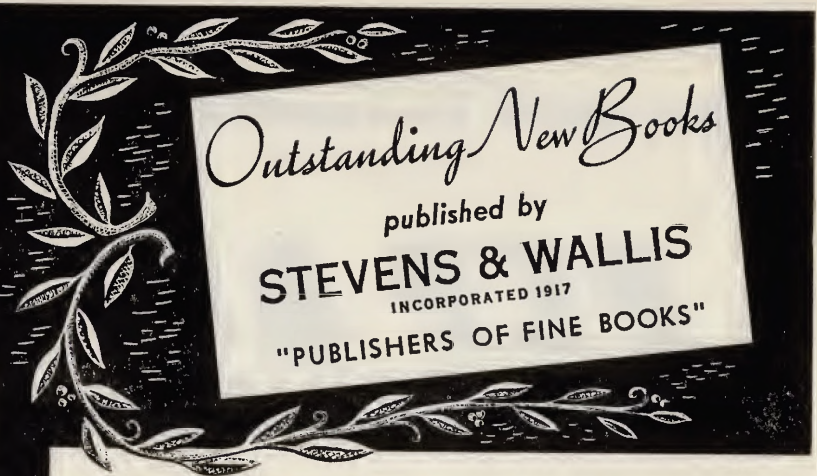
Since the first mission to the Lamanites called by direct revelation in 1830, probably no more important mission to the Indians has been undertaken by any member of the Church. Because of the nature of the mission it could be performed best by the President of the Church. It was the first time in the history of the Church that a President had visited the Saints in the Mexican Mission, and it proved to be a time of rejoicing among the people, many of them Lamanites and many others of the house of Israel through other genealogical lines.

The purpose of the visit of President Smith was to welcome back into Church activity some hundreds of members who had been out of harmony for the past ten years. When that important step was taken by this group of Father Lehi's children, it must have caused great joy in the spirit world among those who had labored and given their lives for the salvation of the people who sprang from the little group who left Jerusalem by command of God and established a great civilization in a new land.

Father Lehi, next to the Master himself, could well be envisioned as leading the rejoicing among his descendants, the Book of Mormon prophets, down to Moroni, last of the Nephites, who mourned the fate of his own people and that of the Lamanites, because of their disobedience.

The return of this large group to the fold occurred in Mexico City. For several years Elder Arwell L. Pierce, now president of the Mexican Mission, and himself a native of Mexico, had labored with great zeal to bring about this result. Knowing the Mexican people, through life-long contacts, and understanding and respecting them and knowing their origin and destiny, he was es-

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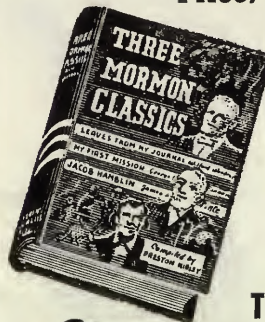
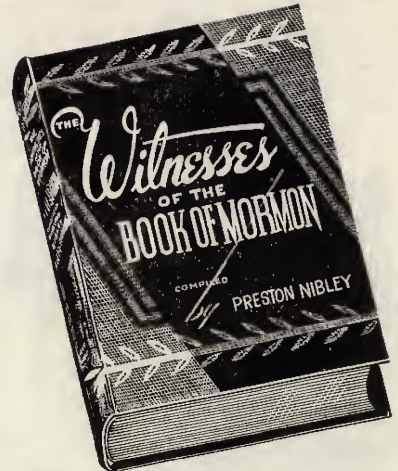


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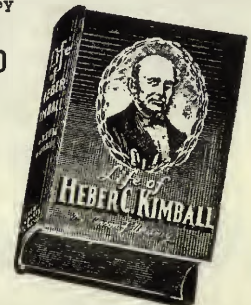
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Father Lehi's Children

(Concluded from page 601)

pecially qualified to counsel and guide these Lamanite brethren in this most important action.

Bringing with them an outstanding choir to furnish special musical numbers for the various conference sessions and accompanied by their leaders, the returning Saints participated in the exercises in humility and sincerity.

The dramatic highlight of the impressive occasion came when one of the leaders of the reconciled group, declared: "There is only one President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and he is here today: There is only one president of the Mexican Mission, and he is here today."

Reports indicate that no group of Saints anywhere has received the President of the Church more cordially, more respectfully, or more reverently than these descendants of Father Lehi received President George Albert Smith. And certainly no Church official who ever visited Mexico ever greeted them with more friendliness, more deference, or with more interest in their welfare.

To Father Lehi's children we are indebted for the preservation of the early records taken from Jerusalem, for the earliest written history of this continent, and for the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ as contained in the Book of Mormon. For these contributions to our knowledge and the contributions yet to come, the whole world eternally will be under obligation to these descendants of Joseph, who are destined to play stellar roles in the drama of life in the Western Hemisphere.

Father Lehi's children are numerous. Their destiny is made clear by prophecy both ancient and modern. They are God's children. At the proper time, those who prepare themselves will play important roles in the nations in which they live. Much as they have contributed to the world in the past, their contributions of the future will undoubtedly be much greater. Much as representatives of their race have been honored in the past, greater honors lie in the future.*

A people of prophecy and of destiny are Father Lehi's children.

*"This Is the Place" Monument, to be dedicated July 24, 1947, as a part of Utah's Centennial Celebration includes an heroic size bronze statue of Washakie, chief of the Shoshone Indians. Other recognitions of Lamanites are under consideration.

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