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Chapter LXXVIII

Author(s): George Reynolds

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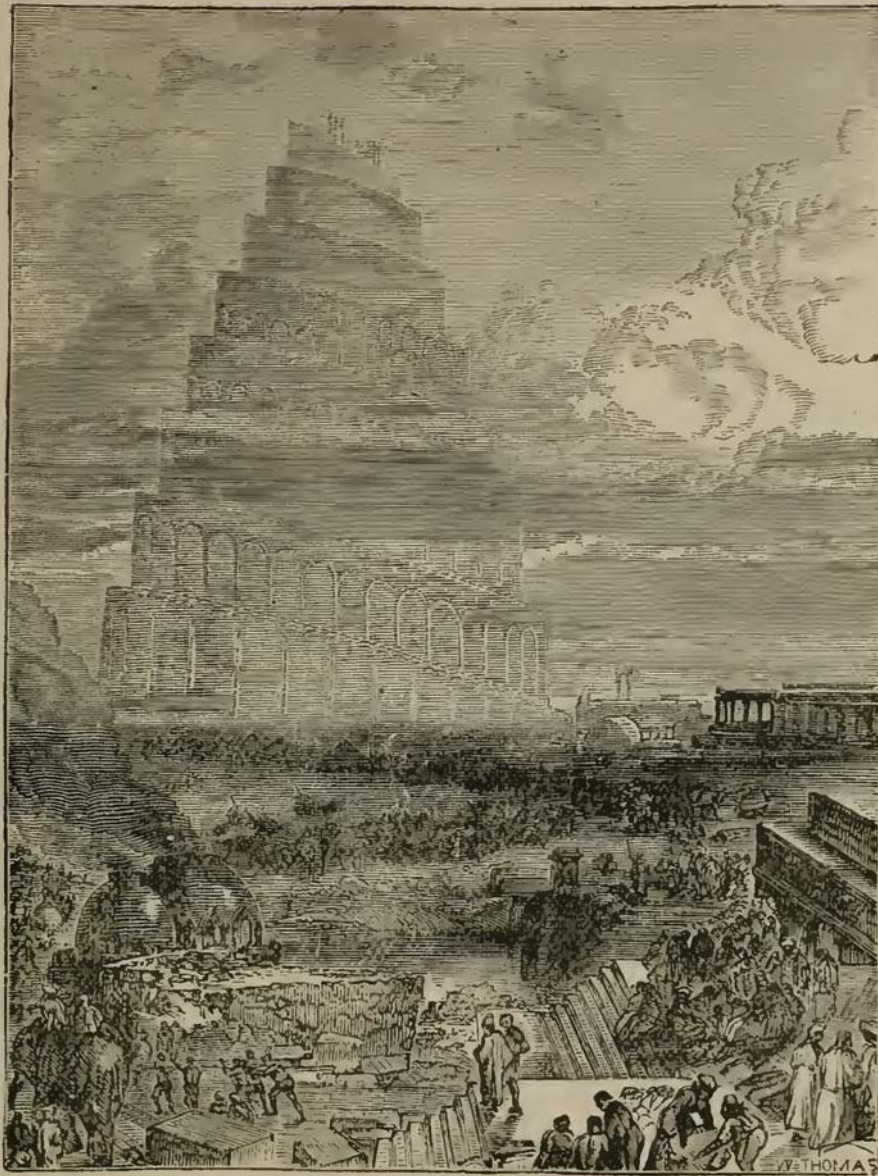


CHAPTER LXXVIII.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE JAREDITE RECORDS—CORIANTUMR
—ETHER—THE DISPERSION AT BABEL.—THE JOURNEY
OF THE JAREDITES—ATLANTIS.

LET US return to the year 123 B. C. At that time the Nephites in the land of Nephi were suffering sore afflictions at the hands of the Lamanites. In this extremity Limhi, their king, sent a company of forty-three men, with instructions to discover, if possible, their brethren in the land of Zarahemla, that peradventure they would bring them succor and deliverance. The expedition was unsuccessful, so far as its immediate object was concerned. The company missed the land of Zarahemla, pushed northward into Central America, and how far beyond we cannot tell. At last they discovered the remains of an ancient people who had apparently been destroyed in battle. Among other things they found twenty-four plates of gold, covered with engravings. This treasure, with some other relics of the vanished race, they took back to king Limhi.

When, shortly after, this section of the Nephite people escaped from their Lamanite taskmasters and returned to Zarahemla, the twenty-four golden plates



THE TOWER OF BABEL.

were presented to king Mosiah, the younger, and he being a seer, translated them by the aid of the Urim and Thummim, or, as described in the Book of Mormon, the interpreters, or "two stones which were fastened into the two rims of a bow."

These plates were found to contain the history of the world from the creation to the time of the building

of the Tower of Babel, and of the race whose remains had been found by the people of Limhi scattered on the land northward.

This was, however, not the first intimation that the Nephites had of the existence of this extinct people; for in the days of the elder Mosiah a large engraved stone was brought to him that had been discovered by the people of Zarahemla. It gave a very brief account of this same race, but more particularly referred to its last ruler, named Coriantumr; which Coriantumr had himself been known to the Zarahemlites; for he had, previous to his death, resided in their midst for nine months. This race is known to the readers of the Book of Mormon as the Jaredites.

The history that we have of this remarkable people, as given in the Book of Mormon, is Moroni's abridgment of the record contained on the twenty-four plates of gold. It entirely passes over the earlier portions of the history, and commences with the dispersion of the human family, when God confounded their language at the Tower of Babel. Interspersed with the narrative are many interpolations of Moroni's, in the shape of reflections, prophecies and explanatory remarks. As these additions or notes by the compiler are inserted in the body of the work, and not as foot notes, the reader of this abridgment has to use care in its perusal, or his ideas are apt to become confused; and he is troubled to account for statements which become perfectly plain when it is understood they were written nearly four hundred years after the advent of the Holy Savior.

The history of the Jaredites is called the Book of Ether, because the twenty-four plates from which it is

taken were hidden by a Jaredite prophet named Ether, in the place where they were afterwards discovered by the people of king Limhi.

The ancestors of the Jaredites were engaged in the attempt to build the Tower of Babel. It is probable they were of the family of Shem, as they were worshipers of the true God, and he conferred upon them his priesthood. How far they had wandered from the tower, if at all, when the Lord commenced the revelation of his will to them, is not apparent from the sacred text. They were commanded by him to go "*down* into the valley which is northward," and as the expressions up and down, when they occur in the Book of Mormon in connection with geographical locality, are always used with great exactitude, we may venture two surmises: that Jared and his friends had already wandered into some not far distant hilly region, or that the valley into which they were commanded to descend sloped towards the north, the flow of its waters, if any, being in that direction. In the days of the Nephites, the expression down is always used for north when referring to the places in and about the valley of the river Sidon, which empties into the Caribbean Sea.

The valley into which the Lord led the Jaredites was called Nimrod, after that mighty hunter of the early post-diluvian age. Here the people of Jared tarried for a time, while they prepared for the long journey which was before them. Their flocks and herds they had with them; they now went to work and snared fowls; they carried with them hives of honey bees (known to them by the name of Desert); and prepared a vessel in which they transported the fish of the waters. Everything that could possibly be of use

to them they appear to have collected. They were going to a land that had been swept clean by the waters of the Deluge; it had been bereft of all its animal life; the seeds of grains and fruits no longer germinated in its soil; and the colony had to replenish the continent with the animal and vegetable life, necessary for their comfort and sustenance, as though it was a new earth.

When in the valley of Nimrod the Lord came down and talked with the brother of Jared. But the brother of Jared saw him not, for the Lord remained concealed in a cloud. And God directed that the company should go forth into the wilderness, into that quarter where man had never yet been. As they journeyed the Heavenly Presence went before them in the cloud and instructed them and gave directions which way they should travel. In the course of their journey they had many waters—seas, rivers, and lakes, to cross, on which occasions they built barges, as directed by the Lord. It must have been an arduous labor, requiring much time and great patience to transport their flocks and herds, with all the rest of their cumbersome freight across these many waters.

We shall not attempt to trace the wanderings of the company on their way to the promised land. The account given in the of Book of Ether is entirely too meagre for that purpose.

Some suppose they went as far north as the Caspian Sea, which they crossed; then turning eastward slowly journeyed along the great central Asian plateau; thence to the Pacific seaboard, most probably on the coast of China. These suppositions may be correct; the writer does not know enough to either

affirm or deny them; but one thing is certain, the journey must have been a very long and tedious one, encumbered as the company was, with the flocks, etc., which they took with them to stock the land to which God was leading them. The region through which they passed was one in which no man dwelt, they could purchase no supplies, and if they did not live entirely on wild fruit, fish and small game, it is probable that they tarried now and again, at favorable points, long enough to plant and reap a crop. As they advanced to a great distance from the centre of population in western Asia it is possible that they traveled beyond the limits to which the larger animals had, by that time, scattered; and if so, they were entirely without the aid of the food obtained by the chase; on the other hand, it is probable that the fish in the lakes and rivers formed a valuable source of food supply; yet it must also be remembered they carried fish in a vessel with them. According to the generally accepted chronology, which may be right or may be wrong, the building of Babel commenced a little over a hundred years after the Deluge.

Through their prayers and faith the founders of the Jaredite nation obtained many precious promises of the Lord. Among these was the assurance that their language should not be confounded, and that the Lord himself would go before them and lead them into a land choice above every other land. And again, that the nation that they should find there should be none greater upon all the face of the earth. The history of their descendants proves how fully this last promise was realized. The cotemporary nations on the eastern continent—Egypt, Chaldea and Babylonia—were insig-

nificant when compared with the vast extent of territory held and filled by the Jaredites; they were the sole rulers of the whole western hemisphere, and possibly the originals, whence arose the stories of the greatness and grandeur of the fabled Atlantis; for we have no account in the sacred records that God shut them out from the knowledge of the rest of mankind when he planted them in America, as he afterwards did the Nephites; and late research has shown that the geographical knowledge of the ancients was much greater in the earlier ages than at the time of the Savior and a few hundred years previous to his advent.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

MORIANCUMER—BUILDING THE BARGES—THE FINGER OF THE LORD—THE APPEARING OF THE SAVIOR—THE VOYAGE.

LED BY the Lord personally, instructed by his own month, protected by his presence, the colony, of which Jared's brother appears to have been the prophet and leader, at last reached the borders of the great sea which divides the continents. To the place where they tarried they gave the name of Moriancumer. Here they remained for a period of four years, at the end of which time the Lord again visited the brother of Jared in a clond and chastened him and his brethren, because of their neglect to call upon his name. Repentance followed this reproof, and on their repentance their sins were forgiven them.