

Geography

2007-04-12 09:37:21

Wound #10

[If you have not read [Mandate](#) and [Joe's Call](#), please do so before continuing.]

Claims by Joe Smith that Book of Mormon events took place all over North and South America have been a wound to the Book of Mormon believing community for years. Like David Whitmer said, they do not believe Joe could say anything wrong, therefore, if he said Lehi landed in Chile, they will forever try to fit Book of Mormon history, geography, and archaeology into that area.

Here are some statements approved by Joe on Book of Mormon geography:

Mr. Stephens' great developements of antiquities are made bare to the eyes of all the people by reading the history of the Nephites in the Book of Mormon. **They lived about the narrow neck of land, which now embraces Central America**, with all the cities that can be found. Read the destruction of cities at the crucifixion of Christ, pages 459-60. Who could have dreamed that twelve years would have developed such incontrovertible testimony to the Book of Mormon? surely the Lord worketh and none can hinder. (*Time and Seasons*, September 15, 1842, vol. 3, p. 915)

Since our 'Extract' was published from Mr. Stephens' 'Incidents of Travel,' c., we have found another important fact relating to the truth of the Book of Mormon. Central America, or **Guatemala**, is situated north of the Isthmus of Darien and once embraced several hundred miles of territory from north to south.—**The city of Zarahemla, burnt at the crucifixion of the Savior, and rebuilt afterwards, stood upon this land** as will be seen from the following words in the book of Alma:—'And now it was only the distance of a day and a half's journey for a Nephite, on the line Bountiful, and the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea; and thus the land of Nephi, and the land of Zarahemla was nearly surrounded by water: there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward.' [See Book of Mormon 3d edition, p. 280-81.] **It is certainly a good thing for the excellency and veracity, of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, that the ruins of Zarahemla have been found where the Nephites left them:** and that a large stone with engravings upon it, as Mosiah said; and a 'large round stone, with the sides sculptured in hieroglyphics,' as Mr. Stephens has published, is also among the left remembrances of the, (to him,) lost and unknown. **We are not agoing to declare positively that the ruins of Quirigua are those of Zarahemla**, but when the land and the stones, and the books tell the story so plain, we are of opinion, that it would require more proof than the Jews could bring to prove the disciples stole the body of Jesus from the tomb, to prove that the ruins of the city in question, are not one of those referred to in the Book of Mormon. (*Ibid*, p. 927)

From an extract from "Stephen's Incidents of Travel in Central America," it will be seen that the proof of the Nephites and Lamanites dwelling on this continent, according to the account in the Book of Mormon, is developing itself in a more satisfactory way than the most sanguine believer in that revelation could have anticipated. It certainly affords us a gratification that the world of mankind does not enjoy, to give publicity to such important developments of the remains and ruins of those mighty people. When we read in the Book of Mormon that Jared and his brother came on to this continent from the confusion and scattering at the Tower, and lived here more than a thousand years, and **covered the whole continent from sea to**

JS FELLOWSHIP

Geography

sea, with towns and cities; and that **Lehi** went down by the Red Sea to the great Southern Ocean, and crossed over to this land, and **landed a little south of the Isthmus of Darien**, and improved the country according to the word of the Lord, as a branch of the house of Israel, and then read such a goodly traditionary account as the one below, we can not but think the Lord has a hand in bringing to pass his strange act, and proving the Book of Mormon true in the eyes of all the people. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, selected and arranged by Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976], 267.)

As can be seen, the people were greatly influenced by Stephen's *Incidents of Travel in Central America* book. They cited it liberally. Any proof would have helped relieve the burden placed upon them by their critics, but this would not be one of them.

The fact that Joe may have believed in a hemispheric model for Book of Mormon geography is strong support that he did not *write* the Nephite text, but rather translated it. When a man becomes a prophet, God does not instantly answer all questions and concerns about all aspects of the gospel (especially peripheral aspects such as geography). (Michael R. Ash, *Where Did Book of Mormon Events Take Place*, 2004)

The Book of Mormon has a different view of geography altogether, one centered in Western New York near where Joe recovered the record, equal in size to Bible geography. False and outlandish Book of Mormon claims by Joe's followers have led to embarrassing non-confirmations both by DNA and archaeology, which has been a serious wound to The Book and the work it was called to do.

Perhaps it was God's way of protecting The Book. If proof had come forth while The Book of Mormon was solely associated with Joe's churches, then Joe's churches would have been validated. But as we have seen, God's Church is much bigger than those, and He wants the body of Christ to receive the validation.

The true and simple geography is laid out at www.bookofmormongeography.org.