

Foundation for Research
on
Ancient
America



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NEWSLETTER NO. 42

April 8, 1983

Dear Members and Friends,

The Foundation for Research on Ancient America is quietly working behind the scenes, even though there is not a great deal to be said as to accomplishments at this time.

As many of you know, Fred Weddle made a trip to Mexico a short time ago for the purpose of photographing some ruins. A number of pictures were taken, which are still being processed, so we are not in a position to report much to date--only the promise that at a later date when more details are available, they will be shared with you.

Stele Bryant went with Fred Weddle for company, making the trip at his own expense. They visited with Neil Steede, who sent a message of hope and faith, in spite of his severe trials for the last two or more years. His recuperation from his 90-foot fall has been slow and costly, with much yet to be desired. His recovery astonished the doctors and was undoubtedly possible only because God did not intend for him to die. One leg is permanently damaged, being a constant reminder of his dependence upon God. In addition to his injury and fight for existence, Neil was called upon to part with his wife, who died last fall from a cerebral hemorrhage following very brief hospitalization, leaving a son less than three years old. Neil is employed by the Mexican government as an anthropologist. He is highly respected for his superior abilities and moral character. He has been actively engaged in research and writing. In time, we hope that some of his writings may be in form that we can bring them to our readers.

We thank those who have requested address changes. We suspect others should have done so. If you moved and did not tell us, we both are losers. We do the work and pay the cost of mailing the newsletters which you do not receive.

Please let us hear from you, either when we can serve you or when you may have something of interest to report.

--T.D.S. * * * * *

Marian Blumenschein has sent us her summary of an item she found in Science News, June 14, 1980, p. 373.

A radar image from 28,000 feet above the rain forest of Guatemala's central lowlands revealed a complex network of drainage canals. According to Richard E. W. Adams of Cambridge University, these canals were dug by the Mayans between 250 B.C. and A.D.900. An overland trip confirmed the existence of an elaborate network of canals one-half meter deep by one-to-three meters wide, which would have increased agriculture productivity. The discovery appears to answer the question of how the Mayan population (2 to 3 million persons at one time) fed themselves in an area marginally suited to agriculture. This radar image was made during initial tests over an 80,000-square-kilometer region of Guatemala and Belize in 1977 and 1978.

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THE EVERLASTING COVENANT

By

Thelona D. Stevens

Through the everlasting covenant there comes to the world another witness of the divinity of the Book of Mormon.

It is appropriate at the Easter season that special recognition be given to the everlasting covenant since every promise, every covenant God ever made with mankind was based upon the supreme offering of his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. The proclamation that Jesus Christ is the only name given under heaven whereby salvation can come to the children of men takes precedence over all other teachings in each of the Three Standard Books.

God, beginning with Adam, gave mankind the option of accepting eternal life through Jesus Christ (Gen. 4:4-8; 6:53-71). This is God's one and only everlasting covenant of salvation. Samuel of old gratefully wrote, God "hath made me an everlasting covenant, . . . this is my salvation" (II Sam. 23:5).

This everlasting covenant before Christ was referred to as the "old testament," the "old covenant," or the "first covenant" (Heb. 8:7; 9:1,18); after Christ as the "new testament" (Matt. 26:24; Mark 14:23), the "new covenant" (Heb. 8:8; 9:15), the "second covenant," a "better covenant," or a "better testament" (Heb. 7:20).

The Doctrine and Covenants identifies the everlasting covenant in these words:

I have sent mine only Begotten Son into the world, for the redemption of the world, . . . wherefore I say unto you that I have sent mine everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning and that which I have promised I have so fulfilled, and the nations of the earth shall bow to it.

--D&C 49:1e, 2d

All old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing, and this is a new and everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning. --D&C 20:1

God's everlasting plan of salvation was laid from the beginning, before the world was. Christ, the scriptures declare, is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Gen. 7:54; Rev. 13:8).

In the beginning, God required the offering of the firstlings of the flock, which was to be "a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father" (Gen. 4:5-7). God proclaimed to Adam, "As thou hast fallen, thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will" (Gen. 4:9). After Christ's fulfillment of his earth mission through his teachings, death, and resurrection from the dead, blood sacrifices were no more acceptable. The offerings from then on must be "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (III Nephi 4:49). When Christ had broken the bands of death by his resurrection, God's everlasting covenant had been fulfilled. Jesus said when he visited the Nephites, "One jot or one tittle hath not passed from the law but in me it hath all been fulfilled" (III Nephi 5:65). Everything required of him by the Father had been completed. The everlasting covenant was then in force. Hebrews 9:16,17 explains

Where a covenant is, there must also of necessity be the death of the victim. For a covenant is of force after the victim is dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the victim liveth.

Eternal life was thus made certain for all who pledged allegiance to God in the name of his Son--those before Christ under the first or old covenant, looking forward to His coming; those after Christ under the second or "better [fulfilled] covenant."

The ninth chapter of Hebrews gives a lucid explanation of these covenants, that if under the old covenant the offering of animal offerings

sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new covenant. -- Heb. 9:13-15 (Read the entire chapter.)

God's Covenants

When Adam accepted God's offer of salvation and was baptized, an everlasting covenant was made between God and Adam. From that time on, even to the present, whenever anyone makes his baptismal covenant with God, it is forever. When one pledges himself in baptism to serve God, he "sheweth unto the children of men," and "witnesseth unto the Father" that he will be "obedient unto him in keeping his commandments" (III Nephi 13:9). Thus, we make an everlasting covenant with God. In other words, we make our promise to God by which we are bound to the end of our days. With the acceptance of each individual's baptismal covenant, God, in turn, promises eternal life by invoking the everlasting covenant of salvation (made possible by Christ's supreme sacrifice).

Of course, God has made many covenants with man which are not baptismal covenants, all of which are everlasting, because God could never break his word:

God's covenant with

Enoch concerning Noah's posterity	Gen. 7:58
Enoch concerning Zion	Gen. 9:21-23
Noah regarding the bow in the cloud	Gen. 9:15-20, 24, 25
Abraham as to his blessing and his seed	Gen. 12:1,2,6; 13:13,14; 17:2,9,10
Sarah regarding Isaac	Gen. 17:25
The seed of faithful Israel to be known among the Gentiles	Isa. 61:8,9

The term "everlasting covenant" is not repeated with the recording of each and every covenant, though God's unvarying word, as stated, makes each an everlasting covenant. In the case of Noah, the promise was for "perpetual generations" (Gen. 9:18). Some promises are specifically named as everlasting covenants, as "the everlasting covenant of the holy priesthood" (Deut. 10:2); the "everlasting covenant of peace" (Ezek. 37:26); and of course God's everlasting covenant to Enoch, that when men "should keep all my commandments, Zion should again come on the earth" (Gen. 9:21-23).

Almost invariably when one is asked what the everlasting covenant is, the answer comes promptly, quoting these words to Enoch. The everlasting covenant made with Enoch is highly important, but even that important covenant could not be fulfilled were it not for the fulfillment of the most important covenant of all, the everlasting covenant through Christ, who declared that because he had been lifted up upon the cross, he would draw all men unto him (III Nephi 12:26,28; John 12:32).

The Everlasting Covenant

Of all the covenants God has made, only one can be called the everlasting covenant without further identification. All other covenants must be specified as to which one is

meant, as the everlasting covenant God made with Enoch, the everlasting covenant God made with Noah, or Abraham, or Sarah, or any other individual or group of individuals. The everlasting covenant of eternal salvation through Jesus Christ stands alone and above all, THE everlasting covenant.

The Doctrine and Covenants and the Everlasting Covenant

The Doctrine and Covenants strongly supports the Bible in the matter of the everlasting covenant. The Lord, speaking through the young prophet Joseph Smith, affirmed that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only means by which salvation can come to the children of men, such as sections 16:4f,g; 17:6, and many others.

John 1:1 plainly equates Jesus Christ and the gospel, the word of God. So does the Doctrine and Covenants in such passages as

I have sent mine everlasting covenant into the world, to be a light to the world.--45:2d

Blessed are you for receiving mine everlasting covenant, even the fullness of my gospel.
--66:1b

When men are called unto mine everlasting gospel, and covenant with me with an everlasting covenant, they are accounted as the salt of the earth.
--98:5k

And for this cause, that men might be made partakers of the glories which are to be revealed, the Lord sent forth the fullness of his gospel, his everlasting covenant.
--108:11

The Doctrine and Covenants sets forth the holy salutation in 85:40,41 "in the name of Jesus Christ, in token or remembrance of the everlasting covenant," and states that "one unworthy of this salutation . . . shall not have place among you" (in the school of the prophets).

The Book of Mormon and the Everlasting Covenant

Turning to the Book of Mormon, we discover that not one of the Book of Mormon authors used the same language that was used in the Bible and the Doctrine and Covenants to express the everlasting covenant of salvation, though in unmistakable language the fullness of the gospel is presented.

The irrefutable testimony of Christ as presented in the Book of Mormon by those ancient Americans provides the world with another powerful witness that Jesus is indeed the Christ.

God's plan of eternal salvation is dealt with extensively in the Book of Mormon, but instead of saying "the everlasting covenant," the Book of Mormon authors wrote reverently of the covenants of the Lord, as

"The covenant ye have made is a righteous covenant" (Mosiah 3:7)

"Ye have entered into the covenant" (Mosiah 4:2)

"The children of the covenant" (III Nephi 9:64)

Newsletter No. 42, p. 5.

In Nephi 9:64,65 there is reference to the time when the Father "fulfilleth . . . the covenant which he made with Abraham." This is the same covenant which the Bible calls an everlasting covenant which God made with Abraham (Gen. 12:2 13:13,14) and which is referred to in Doctrine and Covenants 107:18. The Book of Mormon (III Nephi 13:54,56,61) refers to what the Bible calls the everlasting covenant God made with the Israelites concerning the Gentiles (Isa. 61:8,9).

The word everlasting is used frequently in the Book of Mormon, as

"the Son of the everlasting God" (I Nephi 3:188)

"a work which shall be called everlasting" (I Nephi 215)

"the everlasting welfare of your souls" (II Nephi 1:128)

"mighty God, The Everlasting Father" (II Nephi 9:99)

Nephi, at the end of his work, wrote, "I bid you an everlasting farewell" (II Nephi 15:17).

There is the beautiful account of King Benjamin teaching his people, after which they entered into a covenant by which they were called the "children of Christ," thus becoming the "sons and daughters of God" (Mos. 3:7-9). King Benjamin declared to them, "There is no other name given, whereby salvation cometh." The account holds forth the same promise that the Bible offers for eternal salvation (Gen. 6:67-71; Mosiah 3:11-21).

There is no mistaking the meaning and the testimony of Christ as it is presented in the Book of Mormon, which has been the means of converting thousands to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

How Was the Book of Mormon Translated?

The long-time discussion continues as to the method used by Joseph Smith when he translated the Book of Mormon plates, whether it was visual or conceptual. Some affirm that Joseph Smith was given in the Urim and Thummim the exact words to write. Others just as firmly maintain that Joseph Smith was given understanding by means of the Urim and Thummim, which understanding he expressed in his own words.

Recent studies in chiasmus and wordprints have strongly supported the visual method of translation. By means of chiasmus it has been shown that each Book of Mormon author used a distinctly individual manner of expressing himself, and also that Joseph Smith's own type of expression differed widely from every one of the Book of Mormon authors. Dr. Richard A. DeLong has contributed appreciably to better understanding of this subject. We refer you to FRAA Newsletters No. 37 and No. 40.

Both words everlasting and covenant are used throughout the Book of Mormon, as stated, but never do they appear together, even though their meaning is the same as in the Bible and the Doctrine and Covenants.

Obviously, this is remarkable, in that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon, and he also corrected the King James Version of the Bible, giving the world the Inspired Version, in addition to which he gave the world many revelations of the Lord as are recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants. He freely made use of the term "everlasting covenant" in both the Inspired Version and the Doctrine and Covenants, but never once did he err by making use of that term in the Book of Mormon. It is

evident that he was writing the words which God gave him to write in order that we in these last days might have another powerful testimony that the Book of Mormon is the work of God and not of man.

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Scientists digging along the barren central coast of Peru have discovered human skeletons 7,700 years old. These, they believe, to be the oldest remains of an entire village in the Americas. Isolated burials have yielded older human skeletons in the Western Hemisphere, but not until the discovery of this village, called Paloma, have excavations been made of an entire village more than 5000 years old. Paloma is located 30 miles south of Lima. It was discovered some eight years ago, but the antiquity of it was not established until 1981 by Dr. Robert Benfer of the University of Missouri at Columbia. Dr. Benfer's team has excavated more than 220 skeletons from 56 houses, including "aborted or miscarried fetuses and whole families."

Because of the area's extremely dry climate, artifacts, foods and human remains at Paloma are remarkably well preserved. Charcoal fragments found at the site were analyzed by the carbon-14 dating method to determine the age of the settlement. A gourd was found next to the skeleton of an infant; inside the gourd were tiny shells and cactus spines, indicating that it was probably a baby rattle. In a depression of the floor of one house were the "remains of a fish dinner, and next to it, in another depression, were fish hooks and 50 feet of cord fishing line."

The buried bodies were so well preserved that the "skin, hair and intestinal contents were intact." Hence, the scientists could discover what food the villagers ate, giving them an insight into the agriculture of the villagers. By this means, it was learned that some of the earliest cultivated crops were maize or corn, peanuts, squash and peppers. It was determined that the villagers of Paloma ate fewer plants and more fish and land animals.

Dr. Benfer believes that the people overcultivated the land, turning it into a desert, which thus accounts for its destruction rather than changes in climate. He reasons that the Peruvian government might reclaim the land, even though a system of moisture preservation and conservation would be required.

--Kansas City Times, April 28, 1981.

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