

# ZARAHEMLA RECORD



Issue 45  
November 1989

## *The Meaning Behind* Moroni's Title of Liberty

by David Lamb

One of the greatest insights essential to understanding the scriptures can be found in 2 Nephi 8:9: "And all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him" (Jesus Christ). Simply stated, God has placed a pattern in all things, and all things bear witness of Jesus Christ that we might not be deceived. Time after time, God reveals this pattern through the means of types and shadows. This use of symbolism reminds us that Jesus is the only one to whom we are to look for eternal salvation and deliverance from death and hell. The concept that "all things bear witness of Christ" is profound and must be implemented into our scripture study if we are to gain true understanding. As we study the scriptures, we should continually ask ourselves, "How does this verse or story bear witness of Jesus Christ?"

A classic example of Jesus being revealed through the use of foreshadowing is found in Exodus 17:8-16. In this account, the Israelites prevail in battle over their enemy, the Amalekites, by constant observance of the rod which Moses holds up for all to see during the course of the battle. As the Israelites look to the rod, they maintain an advantage over the Amalekites. When they lose sight of the rod, the Amalekites

gain the advantage. Only by constantly looking to the rod which Moses holds up do the Israelites prevail and become victorious over their adversary.

The key to understanding the symbolism in this account is found in verse 15 as Moses builds an altar to commemorate the event and calls the altar JEHOVAH-NISSI, which translated means THE LORD IS MY BANNER. The Hebrew word *nissi* may equally be translated as "standard," "ensign," or "pole," as well as "banner." The insight to be gained from this event is that only by constantly looking to Jesus Christ can power and victory be achieved over the adversary. Christ is our standard, our ensign, and our banner which must be held up constantly in our daily lives if we are to overcome the temptations of Satan. If we are to prevail and inherit life eternal, we must focus all our attention upon Jesus Christ and no other, for he is the only one who can deliver us from the adversary.

The Book of Mormon account of chief captain Moroni and his title of liberty is in many respects similar to the account of Jehovah-Nissi. Both the rod which Moses holds up, and the banner which Moroni displays, represent Jesus Christ in type-and-shadow form. Alma 21:123 states that Moroni was a man of "perfect understanding." With this in mind,

it is safe to assume that Moroni was well versed in the word of God and the usage of types and shadows. In fact, it is highly possible that Moroni's idea for the title of liberty was the result of his familiarity with the Jehovah-Nissi account.

To understand the symbolism associated with the title of liberty, it is necessary to realize that physical warfare, as depicted in the scriptures, is symbolic of spiritual warfare. Satan and his followers constantly seek to attack (make war against) that which belongs to God, contending for the very souls of men. This scenario is played out in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon through wars and contentions between God's covenant people and their enemies. The title-of-liberty account is of particular interest in this respect as it gives a symbolic step-by-step procedure on preparation for spiritual warfare through the upholding of Jesus Christ. These steps are listed below:

1. In Alma 21:40 we find that Moroni is angry with Amalickiah and his dissenting followers who are plotting to overthrow the free government of the Nephites and establish a monarchy with Amalickiah as king. Moroni realizes that, if unchecked, these dissenters will accomplish their evil designs and bring the people under their control.

... that they (the remnant of the house of Israel) may know the covenants of the Lord ...



Likewise, we should despise evil and realize that Satan and his followers are enemies of the kingdom of God. Satan's greatest desire is to overthrow God's kingdom and set himself up as king. If unchecked, Satan will gain victory over the souls of all who will not resist his evil plan.

2. Alma 21:41 tells us that Moroni begins his campaign against the adversary by humbling himself before God through the rending of his coat. He then takes the torn

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piece and inscribes it with the following: "In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children." Next he attaches the rent piece to a pole. Humbling ourselves before our Creator should also be our first step as we prepare to resist the attack of Satan. We must realize that if we go forth in our own strength, we will fail. After humbling himself before God, Moroni writes an inscription upon his torn cloth to remind himself and his people exactly what is at stake in the war against the adversary. This is a perfect example for us today. We need to know exactly what is at stake. What will be the result if the adversary prevails in our lives? It is interesting to note that the things which were written on Moroni's banner are the same identical things which are under greatest attack today by Satan. Satan and his followers are attacking our God and religion today as never before. Our freedom and peace are consistently being threatened by the powers of darkness, not to mention the con-

stant attack which is being directed towards our families.

3. Alma 21:42 continues the account with Moroni putting on his armor and picking up the banner (which represents Christ). It is interesting to note that he puts on his armor *before* he picks up the banner. Symbolically speaking, he prepares himself by putting on the armor of God before he upholds Jesus Christ (the banner) to his people. This is important for us to remember. If we are to uphold Christ to the world, we must first be dressed in the whole armor of God as referred to in Isaiah 59:17 and Ephesians 6:13-17.

4. Alma 21:43 tells us that Moroni then bows before the Lord and enters into mighty prayer, committing himself and his people into the hands of God. In so doing, he seeks guidance from the Lord in preparation for battle. Likewise, once we have dressed ourselves in the armor of God, we must constantly seek the Lord's direction and instruction through prayer if we are to be effective warriors against Satan.

5. Alma 21:46 describes how Moroni then dedicates the land to God and proclaims the land as a choice land and the land of liberty. Moroni realizes that the land of Zarahemla is a choice land and the land of his inheritance. He realizes that God has established the land of his inheritance. He realizes that God has established the land as a land of freedom and he speaks out against those dissenters who were seeking to destroy that freedom. He proclaims that the land rightfully belongs to the covenant people of God and that Amalickiah and his followers have no rightful claim to the land. We, like Moroni, should realize that we live in a choice land of freedom. We must keep in mind that the kingdom of God (Zion) will one day be established in this land. We must realize that Satan desires to control

our nation in an effort to prevent this from happening. If we are to maintain our freedom and our inheritance, then we must strike out against Satan and his constant attempts to destroy our nation. We must dedicate the land to God and his covenant people. We must declare that the prince of darkness has no claim nor right to destroy that which belongs to the Lord and his people.

6. Alma 21:48-49 gives the account of Moroni going forth among the people, hoisting the banner and challenging all to join him in a covenant to fight for freedom and resist the adversary. This is the highlight of the story. Symbolically, Moroni establishes Jesus Christ (Jehovah-Nissi) as a banner or standard in his life. He acknowledges that Christ is Lord of their religion, freedom, peace, and families. He upholds Jesus Christ

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and goes forth among the people calling them to look to their Lord and enter into a covenant to keep his commandments. The people respond to the banner and they rally to defeat the enemy and maintain freedom throughout the land.

This is a type for our day. We must uphold Jesus Christ in our lives and recognize that he is Lord of all the earth. We must then uphold Christ to all who will respond. We must make Jesus the focal point of our lives and look to him as Lord and Savior, our Jehovah-Nissi, the one of whom all things bear witness.



Book of Mormon Geography:

## The Four Quadrants

The Book of Mormon contains many references to the geography of the land, and as a result, many people have attempted to organize these geographical references by creating maps to show places such as Zarahemla, the river Sidon, hill Cumorah, and so forth. Anyone who has seriously undertaken such a task knows the difficulty and frustrations of putting the pieces together. In order to make any sense of the geography we must understand some very basic principles about direction. I would like to share with you some of the insights about directions which I believe I have received from the Lord. Hopefully, they will aid you in your study of Book of Mormon geography.

One of the major areas of confusion in Book of Mormon geography has been the naming of the seas. In the traditional map in figure 1 we see that the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea have both been identified in the past as the “east sea,” whereas the Pacific Ocean has been referred to as the “west sea.” I have always been puzzled, as have many others I’m sure, as to why the east sea is on the north side of the land and the west sea is on the south side. Nephi tells us that they had the *liahona* (translated “compass,” Alma 17:71) prepared by the Lord and

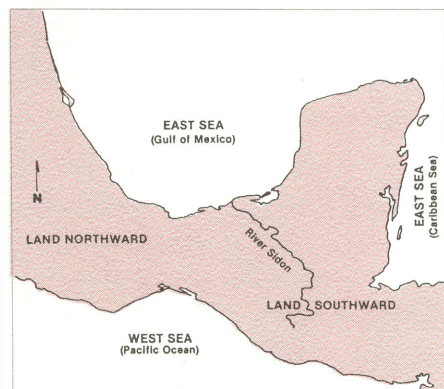


Fig. 1. Traditional geography map.

mentions one of the sixteen cardinal points (south-southeast, 1 Nephi 5:16). In almost four hundred verses dealing with geography, the writers in the Book of Mormon are

consistent in directional relationships. From archaeology we have also learned that Maya directional glyphs have been found in the correct orientation (“Rio Azul,” *National Geographic*, April 1986). The problem lies in our interpretation and understanding of the geography the Nephites were describing. It is useless for us to study Book of Mormon geography if the directions given are meaningless to us, or worse, if they seem to be inconsistent or contradictory.

We easily recognize and understand the directions of north, south, east, and west in the Book of Mormon, but there are other directions mentioned which are not as obvious to us. In addition to the four primary directions, the Nephites used “ward” directions: northward, southward, eastward. Looking back at the map of the area we see that the “land northward” is actually to the northwest and the “land southward” is to the southeast. These terms ending with “ward” are used in a general sense instead of referring to a specific cardinal point.

When describing the land on a

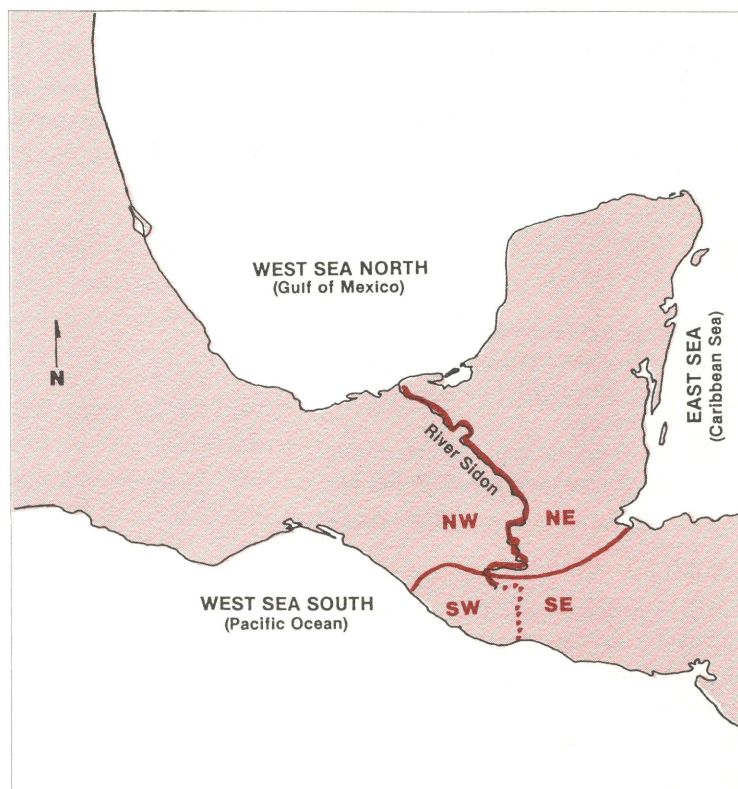


Fig. 2. Proposed map showing the four quadrants.

large scale, the Nephites generally used two major reference points which, when put into place, form four quadrants. As a result of the Lord opening my eyes to these reference points, the geography has become much easier to understand.

The land described in the Book of Mormon was sectioned off into four quadrants by using the two dividing lines (the reference points): one north/south and the other east/west. The north/south line was the river Sidon, thus dividing the east from the west.

Alma departed from thence and took his journey over into the land of Melek on the west of the river Sidon,

On the west by the borders of the wilderness. Alma 6:4

And it came to pass that Zoram and his sons crossed over the river Sidon with their armies And marched away beyond the borders of Manti into the south wilderness,

Which was on the east side of the river Sidon. Alma 11:11

The land was also divided by an



east/west line, separating the north from the south. This line was the boundary between the Nephite possessions and the Lamanite possessions. (See Alma 13:68-69.)

And the land of Nephi did run in a straight course from the east sea to the west. Alma 22:8

Now the land south was called Lehi, And the land north was called Mulek, which was after the son of Zedekiah;

For the Lord did bring Mulek into the land north, and Lehi into the land south. Helaman 2:129

With these two dividing lines (the north separated from the south and the east from the west) we can see that the land was divided into four quadrants: northwest, northeast, southwest, and southeast. (See fig. 2.)

Now that we understand this quadrant system which the Nephites used, our original dilemma (the east sea being to the north and the west sea to the south) can be easily resolved. The east sea is just what it says - the east sea. Therefore, the east sea is the Caribbean Sea. This is widely accepted. However, our dilemma was caused by labeling the

Gulf of Mexico as an extension of that east sea. Looking at the quadrant map (fig. 2) we see that the Gulf of Mexico is on the west side of the dividing line; therefore, it should be the west sea. The Pacific Ocean is also on the west side and it, too, should be the west sea. Since the Pacific Ocean lies in the southwest quadrant, it is called the west sea south. In Alma 24:61 we read that the Lamanites were fighting the Nephites by a sea. That sea was called the "west sea south." Because there was a west sea south, it can be concluded that there was a west sea north. Therefore, the Pacific Ocean is the west sea south and the Gulf of Mexico, lying in the northwest quadrant, would be the west sea north.

Since we don't hear about a sea in the southeast quadrant, there is no need to say "east sea north" for it is assumed that whenever the east sea is mentioned, reference is being made to the one on the northeast side. However, when we study the west sea, we must be alert as to where the action is taking place, and from that we can determine which west sea is being referenced.

In summary we have learned the following:

1. North, south, east, and west are accurate and consistent in the Book of Mormon.
2. The river Sidon divided the east from the west.
3. The border between the Nephites and the Lamanites divided the north from the south.
4. The two dividing lines create four quadrants.
5. The east sea is the Caribbean Sea.
6. The west sea south is the Pacific Ocean.
7. The west sea north is the Gulf of Mexico.

The new understanding that the Book of Mormon lands were divided into four quadrants helps us understand the geography. North and south take on new meanings, as do east and west. The Nephites obviously knew the directions, therefore it is up to us to examine the geography as they understood it.

The geography of the Book of Mormon is opening up rapidly and is becoming more and more exciting. I hope and pray that as you study the geography, any frustrations you have encountered can be overcome and your learning and understanding will increase. ZRF

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