

# ZARAHEMLA RECORD



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## 158 Years: A Type For Our Day

by Ray and Mary Lee Treat

**F**rom the beginning of the reign of King Mosiah II in 124 B.C. to the coming of Christ in A.D. 34 is a period of 158 years. This 158 years is only 15.5% of the total Nephite history of a thousand years yet 65 percent of the pages (473) covering the Nephite history in the Book of Mormon are devoted to this period. That's four times more pages per year than for any other year in the rest of the Nephite history.

If you're aware of the purpose principle you must ask yourself, "Why is there four times more information per year during this short period of 158 years than in the remainder of the Nephite history?"

There is reason to believe that the 158 years are a type and a shadow for the second coming of Christ. It is possible the Lord is giving us a pattern to apply to our present day. If so, the increased detail would then be extremely beneficial to help us in discerning types and shadows for our day.

With that possibility in mind, let us look closer at this section of the Book of Mormon which includes the books of Mosiah, Alma, Helaman and Third and Fourth Nephi.

A very broad type can quickly be discerned in these books. We shall call it an End-Time Type:

**Book of Mosiah** = The Gathering

**Book of Alma** = The Gospel Goes To All The World; Tribulation Begins

**Book of Helaman** = The Tribulation Increases

**Book of Third Nephi** = The Tribulation Ends; The Glory Coming of Christ

**Book of Fourth Nephi** = The Millennium

### **Book of Mosiah = The Gathering**

At the end of the Book of Omni we learn that Mosiah is warned by the Lord to take those Nephites who would believe and flee from the land of Nephi. The Lord leads this small group of people down to the land of Zarahemla where they meet a group of people who had come out from Jerusalem shortly after Lehi. The Nephites, in essence, lose the land of Nephi, their land of inheritance, because, as a nation, they are not faithful in keeping their covenant with the Lord.

However, the Lord is faithful in keeping his covenant with those who would believe and he gives them a new land of inheritance, the land of Zarahemla.

Zeniff, a Nephite who gathered to Zarahemla under Mosiah I, evidently does not understand this principle and wants to return to his

hometown. He takes a group of people back to the land of Nephi and makes a treaty with the Lamanites. Zeniff is not a "bad" man but his lack of understanding of the Lord's purposes put two generations in jeopardy. He gives the leadership of this colony to his wicked son, Noah, even though the record indicates he has other sons. Noah is the archetype for wickedness in the Book of Mormon and the people suffer greatly at his hands as well as at the hands of the Lamanites. This suffering could have been avoided had the people had the greater vision of the Lord's purposes in gathering them to Zarahemla.

Once again the Lord in his mercy sends the prophet Abinadi to bring the people to remembrance of their covenant with him. Alma, a priest of Noah, believes Abinadi and gathers those who also believe. They separate themselves from Noah and his people. Even though, as a people, this Nephite colony lacks the vision of what God is trying to do with them, God uses those who would receive the words of the prophet Abinadi to once again establish his covenant in the Nephite nation. Not only does God provide spiritual salvation to Alma and his group, ultimately he provides their

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

physical salvation and they are led back to Zarahemla.

Meanwhile, the words of Abinadi are fulfilled and Noah is killed by his own priests. Limhi, Noah's son, becomes the leader and the people are literally made slaves of the Lamanites.

The people back in Zarahemla want to know what has happened to their relatives who had gone to the land of Nephi many years before, so they send a group of men to search for them. Ammon, the leader of the group, finds Limhi and his people in great bondage to the Lamanites.

While both Alma's and Limhi's people are ultimately gathered to Zarahemla, there is a considerable difference in the degree of physical suffering endured by the people in the two groups. Alma and his people respond to the word of God when they first hear it; Limhi and the others do not respond until they are in great physical bondage. Then they turn to God and are restored spiritually and physically. At the end of the Book of Mosiah, all the Nephites are finally gathered to their land of promise, Zarahemla.

There are many truths to ponder for our day in this sequence of events concerning the gathering.

### Book of Alma = The Gospel Goes To All The World

In the Book of Alma, Alma II is the head of the church and also the chief judge. He realizes that wickedness is growing among the people so he gives up the civil leadership of the people and journeys throughout the land preaching and teaching. He reminds them of their covenant with the Lord. Alma II extends the covenant invitation or the gospel throughout all the Nephite land.

Simultaneously, the four sons of King Mosiah II – Ammon, Aaron, Omner and Himni – are preaching the gospel to the Lamanites. The record tells us they spend fourteen years preaching throughout all the land of Nephi, converting thousands. Those Lamanites who are

converted have to leave their homeland and gather to Zarahemla for safety. They make a covenant to bury their weapons of war and kill no more, even if it means giving up their own lives. These people are called the people of Ammon or Anti-Nephi-Lehis and are given the land of Jershon for their inheritance.

In chapter 16, Alma II and others go to the Zoramites who have separated from the Nephites and gathered in a land called Antionum. They have perverted the ways of the Lord and Alma is seeking to restore and regather them. Those Zoramites who believe the words of Alma and his brethren are cast out of their own land but are given an inheritance in the land of Jershon also.

A pattern seems to emerge from this part of the story: those who believe the word of God are separated from their homeland and loved ones but are given a new home and a new family, the family of God. This particular principle of gathering is found in all scripture.

At the end of chapter 16 in the Book of Alma, the gospel has been preached to all the Nephites and to all the Lamanites. Those who would believe and make a covenant with the Lord have been gathered. The record tells us that those who would not are principally those who had once been believers but had willfully turned away from the Lord.

The preaching of the gospel to all the Nephites and Lamanites has been accomplished. The lines have been sharply drawn. In chapters 20 through 30 of this book, those who have not made a covenant with the Lord seek to destroy those who have. The time of tribulation has begun. This is the setting for the well-known story of chief captain Moroni who travels about the land with his banner or title of liberty, calling the people to remember their covenant and to look to Christ.

### Book of Helaman = The Tribulation Increases

Almost without exception, each

year of the reign of judges is noted by Mormon, the abridger of this book. The Nephites, as a nation, begin to lose sight of their covenant again. There are short periods of great spiritual and physical prosperity, even in the midst of tribulation. In this book the Nephites lose control of their capital city, Zarahemla, for the first time and the Gaddianton\* robbers are established.

In the midst of great tribulation, however, we find great spiritual power to combat the forces of evil. Nephi and Lehi, sons of Helaman II, are mighty men of God. In Zarahemla, in the land of Nephi and in the land northward, they call the people to repentance. Nephi receives an endowment from the Lord and causes a famine in the land. This causes the people to repent for a time.

Into the midst of the Nephite spiritual ups and downs comes Samuel, a righteous Lamanite, to deliver his prophetic message to those who will receive it. He prophesies the destruction of the Nephites in the fourth generation after the coming of Christ; he prophesies three days of light at the birth of Christ and three days of darkness at the death of Christ.

The Book of Helaman could very well be a guide to the tribulation time shortly to come. In this book we observe how quickly the people forget their covenant with the Lord when opposition arises. We observe that the most wicked are former believers. There is also a great message in how the converted Lamanites deal with the Gaddianton robbers who are a type for Satan and his followers:

“. . . and they did preach the word of God among the more wicked part of them, insomuch that this band of robbers was utterly destroyed from among the Lamanites” (2:164).

The robbers had “seduced the more part of the righteous (Nephites) until they had come down to believe in their works . . . and to join with them in their secret murders and combinations” (2:165).

The Lamanites use the word of God to destroy wickedness and the Nephites try to co-exist until they are nearly destroyed themselves.

In this period of great tribulation, endowment is mandatory to combat the forces of evil. An interesting key to why Nephi is given the endowment may be found in the words of Christ to him. Mormon notes that Nephi has fearlessly and “with unweariness declared the word . . . unto this people” (3:115). He also notes that “thou . . . hast not sought thine own life, but have sought my will and to keep my commandments” (3:116).

So we observe that those who love God more than their own lives are those he can trust with endowment power.

### Book of Third Nephi = The Tribulation Ends; The Glory Coming of Christ

In the first three chapters of this book is a mini-type of significance. The Gaddiantons are about to destroy the Nephites and overrun the land. Lachoneous, the chief judge of the Nephites, devises a plan to save them. He brings all the people into the center of the land with provisions for seven years. This essentially starves the robbers out because heretofore they have been surviving by plundering the crops of the Nephites. Mormon tells us that because the Nephites are totally united and dependent upon God, they are victorious in defeating the Gaddiantons in battle. Is this not a type for how to defeat the forces of evil? Lachoneous utilizes the principles of gathering and unity. Unity is possible because the people know that they have to rely upon the mercy of God for deliverance.

The tribulation increases in intensity in this book, climaxing with the three days of darkness and upheaval prophesied by Samuel the Lamanite. Those who survive this judgment are those who have not stoned or killed the prophets.

The climax of these days of

*cont'd on pg. 4*

## Chiasmus Brings New Understanding of Geography

Alma 13:68-14:1 gives the basic framework for Book of Mormon geography. It was inserted by Mormon around A.D. 380 and describes all the major lands and their relationships to each other. After studying this passage for some time, over a dozen interwoven and overlapping chiastic structures and other forms of Hebrew poetry become apparent. One chiasm, contained in verses 68 and 69, relates to the specific dividing line between the Lamanites in the south and the Nephites in the north:

And it came to pass that the king sent a proclamation throughout **all the land**,

Amongst all his people who were in **all his land**, who were in **all the regions round about**

- A **Which** was bordering even to the *sea on the east and on the west*
- B And **which** was divided from the *land of Zarahemla*
- C By a narrow strip of *wilderness*
- D **Which** ran from the *sea east even to the sea west* and round about on the borders of the seashore
- C' And the borders of the *wilderness*
- B' **Which** was on the north by the *land of Zarahemla* through the borders of Manti by the head of the river Sidon
- A' **Running** from the *east towards the west*;

And thus were the Lamanites and the Nephites divided.

Verse 68 begins by telling us three times (a Hebraism) that the land of the Lamanites or the land of Nephi is the subject (“all the land,” “all his land,” and “all the regions round about”). A seven-line chiasm follows giving a description of the land and its relationship to the land of Zarahemla (the Nephites). The passage closes by reiterating that the preceding explanation describes

how the Lamanites and the Nephites were divided.

Without the chiasm, it is difficult and confusing to sort out the relationship between phrases. In the chiasm, four lines begin with “which;” a fifth starts with “running.” The chiastic structure clarifies that the antecedent of all five points is “land,” referring back to the main subject.

Once the proper antecedent is understood, it then becomes clear that the “narrow strip of wilderness” is subordinate information. The word “wilderness” appears in two places (C/C’) which are linked chiastically and are most likely synonymous. Traditionally the narrow strip of wilderness has been interpreted as the dividing line running from the east sea to the west sea and by the seashore. However, the chiastic structure tells us for the first time that this description actually refers back to the land of Nephi. Our new understanding is that it was the land, rather than the narrow strip of wilderness, which “ran from the sea east even to the sea west and round about on the borders of the seashore and the borders of the wilderness.” In other words, the “borders of the narrow strip of wilderness” is only *part* of the dividing line between the Lamanites and Nephites. (Also see “The Four Quadrants” by Sean Duff in *Zarahemla Record* #45.)

Chiasmus as a tool for understanding the Book of Mormon continues to grow in significance. Its use in the classic reference on geography is no exception. Our expectations are heightened that Hebrew poetry in general and chiastic structure in particular is going to aid in the breakthrough leading to an accurate and complete Book of Mormon geography. ZRF

tribulation is the appearance of Christ to the people in Bountiful. It is interesting to note that he does not appear to everyone on the first day. Those who see him first are those who have come to the temple, probably to keep the feast day. After the marvelous ministry of healing their sick and blessing the children, he instructs them to go and tell the others to gather the next day. No doubt there is a pattern here to ponder. None of us wants to be left out. Those who receive the fullness of his ministry are those actively keeping their covenant with him and looking toward the fulfillment of his promises.

### Book of Fourth Nephi = The Millennium

As part of Christ's ministry to the people, he commands that the sealed vision of the brother of Jared should be read to the people. After his departure, the people live in continual peace for nearly two hundred years. The first generation that had

experienced the visit of Christ remains faithful. The next generation also makes their personal covenant with the Lord and are able to remain true to it. Of the third generation, however, not all make a personal covenant with Christ.

At this point, the "golden age" comes to a close. The people divide into "ites" again and eventually are destroyed as a nation. Here our "End-Time Type" comes to a close.

What can we learn from this breakdown of the golden age? It is apparent that each of our children cannot be saved by our testimony alone. At some point in each person's life, he or she must make a personal covenant to serve the Lord. This is our responsibility as believers: to bring to Christ those who have not yet made their covenant.

### Conclusion

Why did Mormon give us such detail for these particular 158 years? Why is the golden age passed over so quickly? Is it not obvious that

these 158 years are the times of greatest value to us? May we profit from a closer look at this period of time, seeking to apply the many principles found therein. [ZRF]

\*The word Gaddianton is spelled with two d's on the original manuscript.

### Survey of the Covenants and Principles of the Book of Mormon by Ray and Mary Lee Treat

Would you like to have an eight-hour Book of Mormon seminar in your area? An overview is presented of the storyline, geography, covenants and principles in each book. Application of the covenants and principles for today is the focus of the seminar. Contact the Foundation office at 816-461-9406 to set a date.

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