

Book of Mormon 4
The Things Which I Saw ...
(1 Nephi 12-14)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Nephi's Vision is extremely important and has **historical facts that verify its truthfulness**)

I. Most people recognize America is a choice and blessed nation, **but don't know why.**

A. **Nephi's vision tells us why.** It is an overview of why God had preserved America, would bring certain groups to possess it, and why He had already swept some off.

II. Nephi saw the reason why the New Promised Land was important. *From its soil would come the power to overcome the false religions blinding the people* (1 Ne. 13:5).

A. Most of us feel uncomfortable hearing other churches referred to as "abominable." **It was their religious doctrines which were "abominable."** They portrayed a loving God as unjust and cruel, casting into hell innocent children and even the majority of all other people, even though they had no opportunity to receive the truth.

B. Through writings left by Nephi and other prophets, God the Father would reveal that He was a being of great love, not just to some, but **to all men.**

C. The term "mother of harlots" (1 Ne. 13:34) may also bother us. It is explained, "No one organization is intended. She is a harlot because she and her children have left their true husband --- Christ --- to live with the world. Because they do this for money and power, they have sold themselves." S. Michael Wilcox, "The Revelation" in the *New Testament and the Latter-day Saints* (Orem, UT: Randall Book Company, 1987) 365.

III. Nephi sees the future of this land, and the reality that a Promised Land, like Eternal Life, can only be inherited by the righteous (See Alma 37:45).

A. Sadly, Nephi sees his own descendants will eventually be swept off, due to sin.

B. He sees his brother's descendants will remain for a longer period but will be mostly destroyed when Europeans come, also due to sin.

C. He sees Europeans and other Gentiles inherit the land, but with **warnings they too will be swept off when "ripened in iniquity."**

D. While not given in Nephi's vision, The Book of Mormon later tells of an earlier group, the Jaredites, who previously inherited the land, and were the first to be wiped off.

1. The Book of Mormon witness, given in 1830, of *two* civilizations, has since been verified by the discovery of **the ruins of two great civilizations.**¹ Archaeologists are at a loss to explain what happened to these great civilizations. But the Book of Mormon tells us who they were, what happened to them, and why.

IV. Evidences support Nephi's Vision of a great War of Extermination in America.

A. Nephi saw the eventual wars occurring among his and his brothers' descendants.

"I beheld multitudes gathered together to battle, one against the other; and I beheld wars, and rumors of wars, and great slaughters ... among my people" (1 Ne 12:2).

1. Accounts are replete of early settlers finding evidences of a great past war in Western New York. Governor DeWitt Clinton told the New York Historical Society in 1808: **"There are vast ancient fortifications... scattered everywhere. All of which surpass the skill and engineering ability of our Indians. Their antiquity is unquestioned..."**

2. Samuel Kirkland, an early Protestant priest who worked with the Indians wrote, “From many concurring accounts which I have been able to get from **elderly Indian historians from several tribes**, there are well defined traditions that **long before the white man came here there was a great war in these parts**. ... the dead were so many that they could not be counted.... **All the historians agree that it was many ages ago. An age means about 100 snows, or years.**”

3. O’Turner’s *Pioneer History of Western New York* speaks of fortifications on the brow of every hill. Writing of the many numerous and abandoned ancient ruins [and everywhere abandoned weapons of war], he concludes, “**That here was a war of extermination we may well conclude** from masses of human skeletons we find indiscriminately thrown together.” [Emphasis added to all three quotations above].

V. Nephi saw the coming of Christ to the Americas and why it was important.

“I saw the heavens open, and the Lamb of God descending out of heaven:” (1 Ne. 12:6). “I also saw and bear record that the Holy Ghost fell on twelve others” (1 Ne 12:7).

A. The coming of Christ to this land provides a second witness to the reality of His resurrection and of His teachings.

VI. The Coming of Jesus the Christ to the Americas can be verified.

A. Multitudes of evidences exist, physical and oral, that Jesus visited the Americas.

1. **The ancient, primary name for God among many Northeastern Native Americans was Yod-he-vah. [Jehovah]. It was written in Hebrew characters, read from right to left.**

2. Many ancient objects and structures representing the cross have been found. ⁱⁱ In fact, Baldwin in his *Ancient America* said **that the cross was the most common symbol found throughout the lands.**

3. Legends about Christ also abound in Native records.

a. Stanford scholar L. Taylor Hansen spent forty (40) years collecting legends of Native Americans from Canada to Peru, including items from collections of other scholars. Persistent among the legends were those of a Great Man with wounds in his hands, who visited various groups, healed them, taught them, and warned them to remain righteous or they would be swept off. Most legends include His choosing *twelve special followers* as leaders.ⁱⁱⁱ

4. Representations of this personage are found on both continents, and are frequently symbolized by a feathered serpent. (A “Feathered Serpent” would symbolize Christ’s taking upon Himself men’s sins, **thus conquering evil**—(represented by the serpent)-- and then ascending into Heaven – (represented by the feathers).

VII. Nephi saw **a period of peace would predominate after Christ’s visitations, due to His teachings, and would last for 400 years** (1 Ne. 12:12-15).

A. Archaeologists doing excavations in Ohio noted a sudden cessation of wounds from fighting in the burials of ancient inhabitants, **from about the time of Christ to around 400 A.D.** (recorded in George R. Milner, *The Moundbuilders: Ancient Peoples of Eastern North America*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2004, pp. 9, 85.)

VIII. Nephi saw the ultimate destruction of one group --- the Nephites (1 Ne. 12:19-20).

A. Archaeological finds show a great civilization in Upper Middle America between approximately 400 B.C. and 400 A.D. called by scientists “Hopewell.” [Because the first major mounds were found on the property of a man named Hopewell.]

B. Archaeologists now say the Hopewell established great cities of wooden houses with defensive works beginning with very deep trenches rising up to high earthen hills capped with barricades of timbers covered with cement. (**This is exactly how the Book of Mormon describes the cities of the Nephites**).

C. The archaeological finds also show *that beginning about 400 A.D., this great civilization declined quickly*, and the building of these types of mounds suddenly ceased, without explanation.

IX. Nephi saw that the Gentiles coming to these lands would bring great destruction upon the Natives (1 Ne. 13:14).

A. Charles C. Mann, author of *1491*, (New York: Random House, 2006) summarizes the latest scholarship on **what these lands were like just prior to Columbus**. “[The Western Hemisphere] was, in the current view, a thriving, stunningly diverse place, a tumult of languages, trade, and culture, a region where *tens of millions of people [lived] ... Much of this world vanished after Columbus, swept away by disease and subjugation*. So thorough was the erasure that within a few generations neither conqueror nor conquered knew that this world had existed.” (pp 29-30). [emphasis added]. Mann points out that **by the time the main bodies of European settlers came to the U.S., two hundred years after Columbus’ arrival, North America had returned to a great wilderness leaving only hidden evidences of its once vast population**. Mostly it had been ravaged by European diseases for which there was no immunity.

X. Nephi saw that groups like the Pilgrims and Puritans would break free from the religious powers which persecuted them in the Old World and come for religious freedom to the New (1 Ne. 13: 16) Eventually a new nation here would break away from all foreign powers and establish wonderful new forms of freedom (1 Nephi 13:17-19).

A. A major pillar in the U.S. Constitution is that which allows religious freedom. **This was an absolutely necessary step to prepare for the coming forth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Restoration of the Lord’s pure gospel --- the main reasons America was preserved and has fulfilled its role as a Promised Land**.

XI. Nephi also saw that the (Book of Mormon) would be revealed to the new inheritors of America, who would bless others with its great light (1 Ne 13:34-40). Those so blessed would include Lehi’s descendants. It would help bring them back to God. In fact, the **Book of Mormon would begin the promised gathering of Israel from all nations**.

A. In Nauvoo, Joseph Smith was visited by an old chief and his sub-chiefs. They said that “they had been distressed and oppressed. They had been driven from their lands many times. They had wasted away in wars until only a few of them were left. The white men had hated them and shed their blood. They had talked with the Great Spirit to save them and let them live. **The Great Spirit had told them he had raised up a great prophet, chief, and friend who would do them good and tell them what to do, and that Joseph (pointing to the Prophet) was the man. They had come a great way.... They would await the great prophet’s words**.

“Joseph was very much affected by the oration and shed tears. He arose and told them that the words spoken were true; the Great Spirit had told them the truth. He said that he was their friend and brother, and he wished to do them good. The Great Spirit was their friend, but they had left Him and would not hear His words nor keep them. Consequently, He [the Great Spirit] had then left them.... Then Joseph said that the Great Spirit had given him a book and told him they would be blessed again. The Book stated what they would have to do....**it will not be long before the Great Spirit will bless you...**” (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Vol. V. 479-481.) (Emphasis added]

XII. Nephi saw that those who subsequently come to America must keep God’s laws or **they too will be swept off as had been witnessed by all previous inheritors of this land** (1 Ne. 14:5).

A. This is the warning which hangs over the heads of we who live upon this land today. The reality of this warning is made inescapable by the past histories. For its ancient ruins show past civilizations were indeed swept off, just as The Book of Mormon warned.

B. **This warning should be taken seriously, as there are those who have the desire and even the growing means of doing just that. Only God can protect us, and only if we are righteous!**

ⁱ **Due to rampant evidences**, many respected scholars, including William Penn and some from Harvard, **came to believe that American natives had a relationship to the Israelites and cited many evidences**. But they had no idea that there were more than one civilization who had lived here. This understanding came first from the Book of Mormon. Archaeologists only later came to realize this. To Latter-day Saints who believe the Book of Mormon occurred in North America, the two groups are now identified by scientists as the Adena [the earlier] and the Hopewell [the latter]. Those who believe the Book of Mormon occurred in Mesoamerica, believe the two groups are the Olmecs and the Toltecs. It is the opinion of this author that groups in both continents were Book of Mormon people, whose descendants had eventually spread throughout the lands.

Note: The prophets tell us that not only both Western Continents will eventually be Promised Lands, but the entire Celestialized Earth.

ⁱⁱ There are many examples of artifacts with “cross” imagery. When Cortez arrived in the New World, he saw crosses erected by the Indians. One commentator dismissed these as “World Trees,” common the world over (See Howard W. Goodkind, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, pp 54-65). But he did not understand that to many, particularly those with Christian backgrounds, **the cross and tree of life are the same**.

ⁱⁱⁱ L. Taylor Hansen’s *He Walked the Americas* is devoted entirely to this subject.