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"A Land of Many Waters"

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Abstract: Claims that certain geographical references in the Book of Mormon describe the land and lakes in central and northern New York.

"A LAND OF MANY WATERS"

BY DR. J. O. ELLSWORTH

A familiar sight to the Prophet Joseph Smith was the accompanying photograph of the setting sun in "A Land of Many Waters."

As I sat, I pondered: What a glorious sight! If only those hills, those waters, those woods could speak! Did the rippling waves so sparkle one hundred years ago, when along yonder hill the prophet of the living God made many trips to and from Colesville, Harmony, Fayette, and Hill Cumorah, carrying the record of a lost civilization? Those same hills 1,500 years ago were the hunting grounds and last camp of Mormon and his Nephite army. There, too, the vanquished Jaredites made their last stand.

The picture shows Lake Cayuga, one of the many glacial lakes of central and northern New York, which I think are spoken of in the Book of Mormon as "A land of many waters." The north end of Cayuga is six miles east of the Peter Whitmer farm where the Church was organized, and is only thirty miles southeast of the Hill Cumorah.

Mormon and Moroni, in the closing chapters of the Book of Mormon and in the latter's personal instructions to Joseph Smith, in my estimation, unquestionably identifies this portion of New York state.

"And it came to pass that we did march forth to the land of Cumorah, and we did pitch our tents round about the Hill Cumorah; and it was in *a land of many waters, rivers and fountains.*" (Mor: 6:4.)

The early history of the Nephites tells that King Limhi sent forth three of his men to find their friends at Zarahemla. "They were lost in the wilderness for the space of many days, yet they were diligent, and found not the land of Zarahemla, but returned to this land, having traveled in *a land among many waters*; having discovered a land which was covered with bones of men, and of beasts, etc., and was also covered with ruins of buildings of every kind; having discovered a land which had been peopled with a people who were as numerous as the hosts of Israel." (Mosiah 8:8.)

A knowledge of the fertility and natural resources of the land to the north is evidenced in the advice of the leader of the opposing forces of the armies of Moroni, the great Nephite general:

"Morianton put it into their hearts that they should flee to the land which was northward, which was *covered with large bodies of water*, and take possession of the land which was northward." (Alma 50:29:)

Again I think there is reference to the same country when we

read that many left "Zarahemla and went forth unto the land northward, to inherit the land. And they did travel to an exceeding great distance, insomuch that they came to large bodies of water, and many rivers." (Helaman 3:3-4.)

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