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A Modern Example of a Night without Darkness

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Corroborations

A Modern Example of a Night without Darkness

A remarkable event recorded in the Book of Mormon was the night of Christ's birth, at which time light remained even after sundown (see Helaman 14:3-4; 3 Nephi 1:8, 15). To some this seems impossible, totally unexplainable in scientific terms despite the fact that the Bible describes similar phenomena for the Israelite exodus from Egypt (see, for example, Exodus 14:19-20; Nehemiah 9:19; Psalm 78:14) and for the millennial era (see Zechariah 14:6-7; Revelation 21:10-11; 22:5). Even the believer, while satisfied that the Lord can perform miracles beyond our comprehension, is fascinated by the night without darkness that heralded the Savior's birth. So it is with great interest that we learn of a similar event that occurred in our own century.

On 30 June 1908 a gigantic explosion took place over a remote part of the Siberian forest in the Tunguska region. Scientists have speculated that it was caused by a gigantic meteorite, a comet, or even a black hole striking the earth. Whatever the cause, the effect was startling. For months afterward, there were spectacular sunrises and sunsets throughout the world, caused by the vast amount of dust thrown up into the atmosphere.

Most surprising of all was the fact that, throughout most of Europe and in parts of Asia and North America, the nights passed without darkness for about two months. The night sky glowed with red and yellow hues, even when overcast. In the British isles the northeastern sky was

tinted red. People in Scotland reported that, in rooms facing north, objects cast shadows at night. In London it was possible to read the small print in the *London Times* at midnight. Photos of Stockholm were taken at 1:00 A.M. by natural light, and a midnight photo of the Russian town of Navrochat looks like a bright summer afternoon. Photos of the glowing night sky were also taken in Orlov province, Russia, on the nights of June 30 and July 1. One Russian reported that the brightness woke him at 1:15 A.M. and that he then read for half an hour by natural light.

At the time, no one knew what had caused the strange glow. It was not until 1930 that a British meteorologist tied it to the Tunguska explosion, which, being in a remote area, had received little attention. But in 1908 some European observers were already comparing the bright night to the appearance of the sky following the explosions of the volcanic island of Krakatoa in 1883, when dust ejected into the atmosphere refracted the sun's rays, producing fiery sunsets and a night afterglow seen from New Zealand to Iceland. In some parts of the globe, the unusual night glow continued for three years.

This parallel with the Book of Mormon account of the night of Christ's birth is impressive, even if the Lord used other means than an atmospheric explosion to produce the phenomenon observed by the Nephites. —*Contributed by John A. Tvedtnes*

Biblical Editing (continued from page 3)

put the apostles in a bad light. Thus Matthew concluded his version with the apostles' recognition of Jesus' divinity rather than with their lack of understanding. This type of editorial change occurs throughout Matthew's gospel. He consistently changed verses where Mark had left the apostles misunderstanding or doubting to show that the apostles really did have faith (compare Mark 8:17-21 with Matthew 16:8-12; and Mark 9:30-32 with Matthew 17:22-23). This editorial pattern is an important clue to understanding the purpose of

Matthew's gospel. It may even be evidence that he wrote his book at a time when the apostles' authority was being questioned.

This approach to reading scripture—looking for contradictions and passages that do not fit together smoothly—may be unfamiliar even to longtime readers of the Bible, many of whom naturally prefer to focus on its inspirational teachings. Yet a close textual analysis is important if we wish to know the relationship between the text and the events it relates and the men who wrote and edited it. Moreover, understanding their purposes in editing may be as important as understanding the

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