

What About

The Book

of

Mormon



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The Book of Mormon

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In any work making the peculiar claims that the Book of Mormon does, the above questions will at once occur to the average mind, and it will be the purpose of this little treatise to give briefly and in as intelligible a manner as so limited space will permit, an answer to each of them.

In the first place, we wish to call attention to the very obvious fact that the scriptures, as accepted by all Christians, do not present the works of God as being done in an ordinary or commonplace manner. The reverse is always true. So when we encounter the strange or extraordinary in our analysis of this matter, it should be borne in mind that such should be expected and should also be regarded as being in favor of the Book of Mormon's claim to a divine origin, at least, when all other circum-

stances are present. In support of this we call attention to the "strange" manner in which Moses was called to be a leader of Israel: the burning bush. The drying up of the Red Sea for Israel to pass through was a "strange" thing. The unusual means by which God brought his own Son into the world was the "strangest" event in all history. Yet what Christian will be found willing to deny the fact? Added to this, we find the works of God being called "strange" in the following text from Isa. 28:21, 22: "For the Lord shall rise up as in Mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his *strange work*; and bring to pass his act, his *strange act*. Now therefore *be ye not mockers*, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord God of Hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth."

By this we will discern that God not only intends to work in a "strange" way, but that also His displeasure will rest upon those who may mock concerning it. Let us bear these thoughts in mind as we proceed with our answers, and let us also check them against the scriptures to which we shall appeal for support. Therein will we find safety against possible deception.

(1) What is the Book of Mormon?

Like the Bible it is a "book of books" by

various authors—fifteen in all. It purports to be the sacred story of the ancient inhabitants of America, whom it claims were of the house of Israel and so heirs to the promise made to Abraham. It also tells of a people who came to America from the Tower of Babel when, as the Bible tells, God scattered the people from thence to all parts of the world (Gen. 11:8-9). It therefore covers a period of from nearly two thousand years before Christ to about four hundred years after Christ. That America was so inhabited in ancient times by enlightened peoples is now amply proven by archaeology. Just an extract in support of this:

“The lowering of the waters of a lake in Arizona exposed the ruins of a city thousands of years old, in which was an ‘apartment house’ larger than any on Park Avenue in New York. In the Nevada desert is a buried city, six miles long, more ancient than the tomb of Tutankhamen. One of the most glorious of civilizations once flourished on our continent. Fifteen centuries ago the Maya Indians in Mexico and other parts of Central America reached a stage of culture which we might now envy...Tradition has held variously that the cradle of the human race was in Egypt, in Asia, in Europe. But all these discoveries

make us realize that America is a very old place, too" *Women's Home Companion*, February 1933.

(2) Where did it come from?

According to the claims, at the time that the kingdom of Judah was being carried away captive to Babylon, 600 years before Christ, a family of the tribe of Manasseh, the son of Joseph who was sold in Egypt, was commanded of God to build a ship (I Nephi 5:70) that God might begin the building up of the "house of Joseph" upon the "land of Joseph" which is indicated as being a very choice land in Deut. 33:13-17; Gen. 49:22-26. Another text of scripture refers to this particular land as being: "A land shadowing with wings" Isa. 18:1-2. America and America alone fills out in detail all lands in scripture designated as "Joseph's land." Hence, we find the descendants of Joseph through Manasseh migrating to that land, according to the Book of Mormon story.

This family consisted of Lehi and his wife, Sarah, and four sons: Laman, Lemuel, Sam and Nephi (later, two other sons, Jacob and Joseph, were born to them). The four sons married the four daughters of Ishmael, another descendant of Manasseh, thus combining two families and the servant of Laban, still another

descendant of Manasseh, and from whom they obtained the records of their forefathers clear back to the creation, which fact makes the Book of Mormon a complete record, and the writers of it possessed with an understanding of the history of mankind from the beginning. This family was custodian of the records, and continued the records from the time they left Jerusalem to the time that the records were hidden in a hill in New York state, where they were found in 1823. In all of the above, the story of the book agrees with what was subsequently given to the world by scientific explorers without any intention of giving support to the book. In many instances these findings were by men who were direct enemies to the claims of the book, and also often without a knowledge of the book or an interest in its claims.

According to Montesinos there were three distinct periods in the history of Peru. First was a period which began with the origin of civilization and lasted until the first or second century of the Christian era... It was originated, he says, by a people led by four brothers who settled in the Valley of Cuzco and developed civilization in a very human way. The youngest of these brothers assumed supreme authority, and became the first of a long line of sovereigns.

The Book of Mormon tells us that because of the rebellion of the elder sons, that Nephi, the youngest of the four sons of Lehi, became the ruler, both during their

travels and after they arrived in the land of promise, which is the new land of Joseph (America).

(3) What does it teach?

In this we think the book had best speak for itself, so we quote:

“Preach unto them repentance, and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ; teach them to humble themselves, and to be meek and lowly in heart; teach them to withstand every temptation of the devil, with their faith on the Lord Jesus Christ; Teach them to never be weary of good works, but to be meek and lowly in heart: for such shall find rest to their souls. O remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God; yea, and cry unto God for all thy support...” Alma 17:66-68.

Again: “...Remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, which shall come; yea, remember that he cometh to redeem the world” Helaman 2:71.

By this we see its teaching is that belief on the Lord Jesus Christ, and acceptance

of, and obedience to the gospel of Christ, is the only means of salvation. In all of its teaching it is in perfect accord with the Bible, especially the New Testament. In fine, it is an added witness from another branch of the House of Israel to the divinity of the Son of God, the Savior of the world. That it should be "ONE" with the Bible in this is manifest by the prophetic reference to both of these records as found in Ezek. 37:15-20.

"The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. And the sticks whereon

thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes.”

Here we learn that the two branches of the House of Israel, Judah and Joseph, were to have separate records, “sticks” with writing on them, one for each branch. The Bible is eminently the “stick” of Judah, and the Book of Mormon is very evidently the “stick” of Joseph. No other record has arisen making such a claim. Ezekiel’s prophecy has now been fulfilled, and the two sticks are now “ONE,” and in every way, since they teach the same thing, and both serve as Christ’s witnesses.

(4) How did we get it?

Well, in a very “strange” way, if measured by 20th century ideas of God and His method of doing things now, yet strictly in harmony with what we find in the Bible as being the way God works. The 29th chapter of Isaiah and the 14th verse tells us that God, Himself, is going to do a “marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.”

Verses 11 and 12 tell of a “book” that was to come forth, the words of which were to be delivered to a learned man, and he was to say he couldn’t read it because

it "is sealed." The book itself was to be delivered to an unlearned man and he was to say, "I am not learned." May not this "book" that was to come forth have been the "stick" or record of Joseph? Well, if it wasn't, where is the "stick"? The one referred to here in Isaiah was to come forth just prior to Jerusalem being restored after the long night of the dispersion of the Jews (Judah), because they crucified their Lord. This restoration began about 1852-53, so is now a thing of the past.

However, shortly before that, in 1820 to be exact, there was, living in the hill country of central New York state, a family of farmer folk by the name of Smith. Just plain Smith. Humble farmers and humble fishermen usually seem to be God's favorite material from which to select His ambassadors. So, in the spring of 1820, a young son of the family, only fifteen years of age, while reading his Bible chanced to read (or did God direct his mind?) the 5th verse of the 1st chapter of James, which gives the peculiar invitation when in doubt concerning what to do in order to please God, "to ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." The boy, believing this promise of scripture to be bona fide, and not merely inserted to "fill space," tells us that he, "lacking wisdom," went to the woods to pray and ask God for direction. Since the promise was explicit, that God would "give liberally" and "not upbraid," he was not expecting anything but an ex-

PLICIT answer. Nor was he disappointed. God himself and His Son Jesus Christ appeared to him in a shaft of light such as the Apostle Paul describes as appearing to him. The boy inquired as to which church he should join, but was told to "join none of them, for they were all wrong, and the personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight."

Three years later, he was given to understand that the time for the complete restoration of the old Jerusalem gospel, and the setting up of the Church of Christ as it was in New Testament times, was at hand; and that if faithful, he should have a part in that work. While in earnest prayer in his room before retiring, he was visited by an angel from God who informed him that the time to begin his work had come, and that there was deposited, in a hill not far from his father's home, metal plates containing the records of the ancient inhabitants of America, and with them, Urim and Thummin, an instrument spoken of in Ex. 28:30, Lev. 8:8, Num. 27:21, and Ezra 2:63, where its use is indicated as being that which made the high priest a seer. The angel spoken of above is very evidently the one mentioned in Rev. 14:6, where he was to bring back the "everlasting gospel," and in Zech. 2:1-7, where he was to announce the restoration of Jerusalem, because both of these things were accomplished by the work of this young man Joseph Smith, announced as being the

message he was to give to the world. He obtained the plates as directed, and with the Urim and Thummin was able to translate them into the English language. The result is the book known as the Book of Mormon. A strange story? Yes!

But remember, God says that He will do a "strange work." So this is a point in favor of the young Smith boy. And later, he and a "learned" man, a professor of languages in the city of New York, fulfilled more of Isaiah's prophecy. The "learned man" said he couldn't read a "sealed book," and the young man said he "wasn't learned" (Isaiah 29:11-12).

(5) Do we need it?

This question should be superseded by the more appropriate one: Is it true? If true, there could be no question as to its need; especially, since it tells of Christ setting up his church in the same manner, and with the same gospel teaching as is found in the New Testament, upon the American continent, after his resurrection; and the further fact that in John 12:47-50 Jesus tells us that it is "his words" that are to judge us at the last day. That He would thus establish His work in Joseph's land is evidenced by His statement in John 10:16, that He had "other sheep" not of the fold in Jerusalem, but who should hear His voice (III Nephi 7:20). This must have

referred to another branch of the house of Israel because He said He was "not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" Matt. 15:24.

But hear the book itself: "And the angel spake unto me, saying, These last records which thou hast seen among the Gentiles shall establish the truth of the first, (The Bible, BCF) which are of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them; And shall make known to all kindreds, tongues and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him or they cannot be saved" I Nephi 3:192-193. The "need" then becomes apparent because certainly the coming forth of the "stick" of Joseph would provide still another witness that Jesus is the Christ. It would also provide it in fulfilling this need testified to by thousands who have put it to this test.

(6) Is it a history, and if so, of whom?

Much has already been said in this article that answers this question, but we will add a few more items. First, the book of Ether (which is found near the close of the book, because the people mentioned therein were unknown until the people of Nephi,

and their prophet Moroni, who compiled the record, came into possession of their history) is the record of the Jaredites, who came from the Tower of Babel at the time that God confounded the language of the people and scattered them into all the world, as already mentioned in this treatise. It tells of their progress as a nation, their wars, and finally their almost complete dissolution. The bulk of the book is a history of the family, already mentioned, who came from Jerusalem 600 years before Christ. It tells of their national development, their wars, and their division into two distinct peoples, the Nephites, who were righteous and had a long line of prophets, and the Lamanites, who, because of their disobedience and rejection of God's laws and commandments, were cursed with a dark skin and became tribes of wandering warriors, and were almost continually warring against the Nephites. The origin of the names of these people will readily be discerned from the names of the four sons of Lehi, who came from Jerusalem. Their history covers a period from 600 years before Christ until about 400 years after Christ, when the last survivor of the Nephites, Moroni, tells of his wanderings and fleeing for his life, which evidently closed after he had deposited the sacred records in the hill in New York.

This left only the wandering tribes of Lamanites, and they were later called Indians by Christopher Columbus and by the Spaniards, when the modern history of

America had its beginning. The book also tells of Christ appearing to the Nephites, and establishing his church in exactly the same way as he did at Jerusalem. It also gives the history of another colony, who left Jerusalem eleven years after Nephi and his company left there. They were called the people of Zarahemla, but since they ultimately merged with the Nephites and were of the same blood, we will avoid further mention of them, because we are trying to be as brief as possible in this analysis. We must support the above purported history, however, by what has been divulged by archaeology. First, with reference to there being two distinct civilizations planted directly the one upon the other, the Jaredite followed by the Nephite, we will call attention to a statement by J. D. Baldwin in his *Ancient America*, page 156, as follows:

“The evidence of reconstruction in some of the cities before they were destroyed has been pointed out by explorers...architectural characteristics so different from each other that it is as impossible to attribute them all to the same people as to believe they were all built at the same epoch.”

An extract from another writer:

“Here and there closed passages, walls rebuilt with materials other than those employed in the

older construction, seem to indicate that the palace was occupied at two different periods" *Ancient Cities of the New World*, by Desire Charnay, page 333.

Added to the above, we can say from our personal experience for a number of years as a missionary among the Indians, that their traditions are in perfect accord with the story of the book. ALL outstanding incidents mentioned in the Bible are found among them, i.e., the story of the Creation; the story of the Flood; the story of Moses; the story of Christ; etc. In short it does for the American Indian exactly what we must expect the "stick" of Joseph would do for him. And WE KNOW by experience with the Indian that once he is made to understand what it is we are bringing him, and reads it, he invariably accepts it as his lost record. (A tradition which nearly all tribes carry.) He recognizes its story as being in keeping with the story of his forefathers, and he feels at home with it, whereas, even with Indians who have become Christianized, the Bible still tells a strange and unfamiliar story to them, except in so far as its story is ONE with theirs. Just a closing thought in the answer of this question, that verifies the date of the coming of the company of Lehi to America. In the *Popular Mechanics* magazine for June, 1934, there appears a very fine article entitled, "The Last of the Explorers," where we read this interesting ac-

count of these ancient Americans: "Expeditions sent from Washington recently uncovered stones with inscription unfolding stories of a people whose very existence was unknown before America was discovered...Now, however, their history is being uncovered and the world is learning the tale of the Maya people of Central America, who were cultured and religious, with a learning of the arts and sciences far surpassing the peoples of Europe." Then, following much of the same kind of statements, we read this: "The mystery of the origin of this highly civilized race, who build pyramids and temples comparable to the greatest in Egypt, is one of the most baffling science has ever tried to solve. Some time between 1,000 B.C. and 200 B.C. their dates show that they reached Central America." Well, the mean date between 1,000 B.C. and 200 B.C. is 600 B.C., and that fits exactly the story of the Book of Mormon.

(7) Is it a Bible?

No, it is the "stick" or record of the house of Joseph, the same as the Bible is the "stick" or record of Judah. Each tells its own story of the branch of the House of Israel it represents. Each has its own place, and fills its own mission. Each witnesses to the truthfulness of the other, and are ONE in teaching. There is no

indication in either that it is designed to supplant the other.

(8) Will it supplant the Bible?

No, no more than the history of the British Empire could supplant the history of Japan. Both of these great nations have traditions that indicate a common origin in the family of Ephraim, yet both have been separated through the centuries, and so have made history of their own.

(9) Is the Christian System complete without it?

No, emphatically no! How could it be, if all we have said in this article is true? If Christ, the great Master of men, established his work on both continents in ages gone by, why is not the work done in one place of equal importance with the work done in the other? The Old Testament makes many promises to the House of Joseph. His seed and inheritance was to prevail with blessings above those of his progenitors (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) (Gen. 49:26). Joseph was to have a "land," a "house," a "stick" (or record), yet the Old Testament is silent as to the fulfillment of these promises. *It would take a record of Joseph to do that.* Then, as we have shown Christ was to go to the

“lost sheep of the house of Israel,” and that He told the church at Jerusalem that there were other sheep not of *that* fold who must “hear my voice,” and then the Stick of Joseph comes along and tells us that Jesus, in his preaching to the Nephites, tells them that *they* are among those “other sheep” whom He referred to when teaching in the land of Jerusalem (III Nephi 7:20).

Robert G. Ingersol, the great American skeptic, in criticizing the Bible, and particularly the apparent exclusive work of Christ, restricted to the few in Palestine (as he reasoned), is reported to have said: “Away with your one-horsed Christ.” He couldn’t say that to believers in the Book of Mormon, who know it to be the “Stick of Joseph.” Added to that, critics of the book today are becoming non-plussed at the remarkable fulfillment of the prophecies contained in the book, as it relates to the history and destiny of the American nations. Today’s developments along this line are truly amazing.

One closing thought concerning the moral teachings of the book may not be out of place, because prejudice has prevented many honest, intelligent people from examining the book for themselves, feeling that a book that has attracted so much opposition must of necessity teach something bad. This has been augmented by the practices of some who have claimed a belief in the book, yet have practiced polygamy. In other words: Does the Book

of Mormon teach polygamy? Here we will again let it speak for itself:

“For behold, thus saith the Lord, This people begin to wax in iniquity; they understand not the scriptures; for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son. Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives, and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord. Wherefore, thus saith the Lord, I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem, by the power of mine arm, that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph. Wherefore, I, the Lord God, will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old. Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none: For I, the Lord God, delighteth in the chastity of women” Jacob 2:32-36.

This is the teaching of the book all the way through—clean and Godlike in all of its parts. No one can read and obey its

teachings and not be a Christian in the highest sense of the word. There is absolutely only one way to continue to regard it as a fraud and an imposter, and that is to leave it strictly alone, because the honest heart and unbiased mind cannot come into complete contact with it and not believe it. We invite this test.

“And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; And if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, and he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost; and by the power of the Holy Ghost, ye may know the truth of all things” Moroni 10:4-5.

