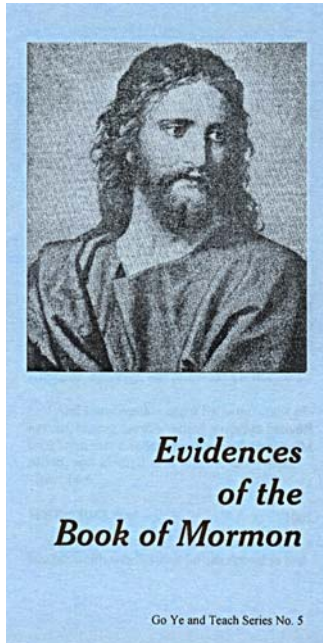


Evidences of the Book of Mormon



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EVIDENCES OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

The conditions that existed in the Dark Ages and in medieval times bear striking evidence of the prophetic power of the apostles and prophets of old. The Church that Jesus had organized had indeed suffered “violence” and the “violent has taken it by force” (Matt. 11:12); men had “fallen away” (II Thess. 2:2,3); they had “heaped to themselves teachers” who would not “endure sound doctrine” but had turned “to fables” (II Tim 4:3, 4). In this condition where the laws were “transgressed,” the ordinance “changed” (Isa. 24:5), there could be “no answer of God” (Mic. 3:6, 7). Good men, seeing such conditions, attempted reformations; the Almighty, however, had promised a restoration:

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” ¶Rev. 14:6.

THE RESTORATION

On the evening of September 21, 1823 Joseph Smith testifies that he had retired to bed and was earnestly engaged in prayer when an angel appeared to him in glorious light. He further testifies:

“He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me... that God had a work for me to do, and that my name should be had for good and evil, among all nations... “Church History, Vol. 1, pp. 12, 13.

“He said there was a book deposited written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang.” ¶Church History, Vol. 1, pp 12,13.

At the same time a vision opened to him and he saw the hiding place of the plates being described by the angel. Four years later he was permitted to obtain them. By divine help he interpreted the ancient characters and the Book of Mormon (named after one of the last prophets whose name was Mormon) was published in English in 1830.

THE BOOK OF MORMON

The Book of Mormon is, as the angel said, a record of the ancient inhabitants of America who were brought from Bible lands and directed to this land by divine direction. In greater detail it discusses the family of Lehi, which was composed of his four sons with their families. Lehi was warned by prophets of the impending attack by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (which warning was also confirmed to Lehi by a marvelous vision). Fleeing from Jerusalem about 600 B.C. these families built a boat and crossed to America.. They brought with them a record of all of the Scriptures possessed by the Jews, up to and including some of the prophecies of Jeremiah. Thus they had an excellent record of Hebrew history as well as the laws of the Lord and the prophecies of the holy prophets.

So great was their appreciation of the Almighty’s present goodness to them that they kept a record of the laws and blessings which they received as well as a record of their own progress. After developing, in the course of the centuries, a civilization marked by skills in architecture, metallurgy, medicine, transportation, machinery, spinning and weaving, apostasy set in as it had so many times before in the history of the Hebrews, their ancestors. Mormon, one of the last of their prophets, was commanded to abridge their record and hide it away until the Almighty could raise up another mighty nation upon this continent. When this was accomplished, an angel was sent to reveal its hiding place to Joseph Smith, the young man who was selected because of his faith to do this work for mankind.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Little was known in North America of the civilization of the Toltecs, Aztecs, and Mayas when the Book of Mormon was published in 1830. Joseph Smith, limited in education and restricted in background, could not have known of the extensive ruins that the spade of the archaeologist now reveals. Without linguistic attainment he would have no access to the documents in Spanish sent by the zealous friars to Spain—documents in which they had described the traditions, legends, and beliefs of the Indians as they existed at the time of the conquest—documents that lay for the most part untouched in musty archives in Spain until after the publication of the Book of Mormon. It was after the publication of Stephens’ book, Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapa, and Yucatan, in 1841, and Prescott’s popular work, The Conquest of Mexico, in 1843 that interest and understanding began to grow concerning ancient America. The Book of Mormon, published ten years before, had anticipated the revelation of the traveler and explorer; its testimony preceded the work of the translator and research worker!

Today, evidence in the form of travel and education films and magazine articles is so abundant that it is not necessary to include statements verifying the ancient peoples’ architectural abilities. Extensive ruins of excellent quality date back to the Christian and pre-Christian eras. The Book of Mormon had also declared that their knowledge also extended to

such fields as metallurgy, spinning and weaving, machinery, medicine and astronomy. These claims, too, have been verified. Of their proficiency in working in metals, Mr. Baldwin writes in his book *Ancient America*, pp 248, 249:

“They had great skill in the art of working metals, especially gold and silver. Besides these precious metals they had copper, tin, lead, and quicksilver...Their goldsmiths and silversmiths had attained a very great proficiency.”

In our modern stores, bed sheets with 220 threads per inch are regarded as sheets of top quality. The excellency they had obtained in spinning and weaving is verified by the fact that cloth has been found in Peruvian tombs containing as many as 300 threads per inch.

Further statements made by the Book of Mormon brought skepticism a generation ago; statements that the ancients knew of machinery, and cement and roads. These statements, however, have had their vindication: wheeled toys have been found in Aztec ruins; other wheels have been found in Peruvian artifacts. Cement has been found in various buildings and in roads which the Book of Mormon indicates were built to expedite transportation. These roads and the uses of cement are described in these words:

“The roads...are as good as the best procured by modern engineering. They are composed of stone slab set in a concrete bed and today, with some repairs, would be perfectly serviceable.” ¥*Adelaide Express Telegraph*, August 7, 1926

“In certain places the cement roads...extending for miles, remain today almost as perfect as at that remote period.” ¥*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, September 7, 1930.

MEDICINE AND ASTRONOMY

The additional statements of the Book of Mormon that the former inhabitants of America were skilled in medicine has had its vindication by the discovery of several skulls. The operation now known as trepanning (brain surgery) had been performed on the persons then living. The growth of the bone after this operation indicates that the operation must have been successful and the amount of growth indicates extended life for a long period of time.

The Book of Mormon indicates that two major systems of keeping time had been practiced in their generations. This interest in keeping time apparently continued even after the collapse of their more enlightened system. Ruins of observatories are still standing in which these people apparently continued these practices. Mr. Herbert Spinden, Ph.D., writes in *Scientific American*, January 20, 1928:

“When most of our ancestors were untutored barbarians, the Mayan priest astronomers had developed their science to a mathematical precision...they could tell the exact number of days between the recurrence of any phenomena.”

We have previously mentioned that the family of Lehi brought with them the Jewish Scriptures when they left Jerusalem, and that they kept an accurate record of their own which they handed down from generation to generation. Mr. H. Bancroft in *Native Races*, Vol. 5, p. 251, confirms that such a record had previously existed among them, a record which also contained prophecies of future events:

“At this assembly, there were brought forward all the Toltec records reaching back to the earliest period of their existence, and from these documents, after a long conference and most careful study, the Nahua annals from the time of the deluge, or even from the creation; together with all their religious rites, governmental systems, laws, and social customs, their knowledge respecting agriculture, and all the arts and sciences.”

“To the divine book was added a chapter of prophecies respecting future events and the signs by which it should be known when the time of their fulfillment was drawing near.”

Mr. Bancroft also recorded that:

“Votan...is said to have been a descendant of Noah and to have assisted at the building of the Tower of Babel. After the confusion of tongues he led a portion of the dispersed people to America.” ¥*Bancroft, Native Races*, Vol. 5, pp. 27,28.

Such traditions, along with the pictographs which evidently depict the temptation of Eve, give strong assurance that a previous understanding continued. Peruvian prayers which further illustrate this knowledge of biblical Scriptures are described by Mr. Lewis Spence, in *Myths of Mexico and Peru*, p. 305:

“By means of his word (nisca) the creator, a spirit, powerful and opulent, made all things. We are provided with the formula of his words by the Peruvian prayer still extant: ‘Let earth and heaven be,’ ‘Let a man be; let a woman be,’ ‘Let there be day,’ ‘Let there be night,’ ‘Let the light shine.’”

Such evidence does not escape the attention of Lord Kingsborough, who noted many of these things in his books *Antiquities of Mexico*, and declared (Vol. 6, pp 409):

“...coincidences... are sufficiently strong to warrant the conclusion that the Indians at a period long antecedent to the arrival of the Spaniards in America were acquainted with a portion at least of the Old Testament.”

Consistent indeed, is the Book of Mormon in revealing beforehand such interesting information!

BIBLICAL PROPHECY

Added to this evidence of a confirmatory nature (which comes from archaeology and historical sources) is that which to many people is even more sure—the testimony of biblical prophecy.

The prophet Ezekiel had seen a marvelous event transpire before the re-gathering of the house of Israel in the latter days (Ezek. 37:21,22). Of this preceding event he wrote:

“Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, for Judah, and for the children of Israel his companion: 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.” ¶Ezek. 37:16,17.

In ancient days a “stick” often meant a “book,” for books were written on scrolls and carried in that manner. It is evident that this reference means “books” for these were to be written upon—these were to become written records. There are two sticks under discussion: one for Judah and his descendants, and one for Joseph and his descendants. The Bible is the record of the Israelites as it is principally continued through the tribe of Judah after the dispersal of the other tribes by the Assyrians. The Bible, then, is the stick to which reference is first made.

The second stick (or record) is for Joseph and his descendants, and is an entirely separate record from the Bible. Lehi and his family were direct descendants of Joseph of Egypt and, as we have pointed out, also kept their divine record. When this record of the dispersed people of the tribe of Joseph, and the record of the Bible were brought together this Scripture had its fulfillment!

Further testimony of the Book of Mormon is also substantiated by biblical prophecy: the statement, for example, that Lehi and his family of four sons were warned to flee from Jerusalem prior to the attack by Nebuchadnezzar.

Jeremiah directed:

“Flee, get you far off, dwell deep, O ye inhabitants of Hazor, saith the Lord; for Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, hath taken counsel against you, and hath conceived a purpose against you. Arise, get you up unto the wealthy nation, that dwelleth without care, saith the Lord, which have neither gates nor bars, which swell along.” ¶Jer. 49:30,31.

These people were commanded to “flee” secretly [deep]; they were directed to a “wealthy nation,” apparently so far from marauding kings that they “dwelleth without care.” This could not have been a nation in the then known world for none of them were “alone;” all of them had “gates and bars.” The Lord had promised that descendants of Joseph of Egypt, in “the last days” (Gen. 49:1), would have such a “land” (Deut. 33:13-16). This land would be blessed above Palestine, the land given to their “progenitors;” a land wherein they would be blessed with “blessings of heaven above,” a land that lay “unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills” (Gen. 49:22-26). Surely, no land answers all the requirements of these prophetic promises as does America; surely, no event similarly meets all the requirements as does the secret flight of Lehi and his family, descendants of Joseph of Egypt!

The tradition of the Indians verifies the Book of Mormon story of the four brothers who led their people to America. Both Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Brinton note this persistent story of the founding of their nations:

“He (Montsinor) gives the Peruvian nation a beginning which is, at least, not incredible. It was originated, he says, by a people led by four brothers who settled in the valley of Cusco, and developed civilization there in a very human way. The youngest of these brothers assumed supreme authority, and became the first of a long line of sovereigns.” ¶Baldwin, *Ancient America*, p. 264.

Dr. Brinton writes in a similar vein in his book, *Myths of the New World*, p. 101:

“Hardly a nation on the continent but seems to have had some vague tradition of an origin from four brothers, to have at some time been led by four brothers or princes.”

THE TIME ELEMENT

As grand as is the confirmation of these prophecies are by the legends and traditions of the Indians, more grand is the confirmation of other prophecy by events in nations at the time before decreed.

Isaiah spoke of a “sealed book” which was to come forth to the attention “of all” by means of a “vision” (Isa. 29:11). This record was to come “out of the ground” (Isa. 29:4). The time of fulfillment was decreed:

“Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest? And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.” ¶Isa. 29:17,18.

In the early part of the nineteenth century Lebanon was a pastoral country. Since the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in 1830 tremendous changes have taken place in Lebanon. The conservative *Encyclopedia Britannica* (11th Edition), under the heading “Lebanon,” declares:

“The mixed population, as a whole, displays the usual characteristics of mountaineers... but its ancient truculence has given way before strong government action since the nineteenth century and the great increase of agricultural pursuits, to which the purely pastoral are now secondary.

“The culture of the mulberry and silk, of tobacco, of the olive and vine, of many kinds of fruits and cereals, has expanded enormously, and Lebanon is now probably the most productive region in Asiatic Turkey in proportion to its area.”

Meditation on the declaration of the Lord through Ezekiel is profitable:

“And when this cometh to pass ... then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.” ¶Ezek. 33:33.

Jesus said “. . . that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matt 18:16)

What a marvelous record the Book of Mormon is! It supplies us the key to the riddle of American origins; it explains the motivating power that assisted the ancients to develop the skills and sciences of civilization; it explains the reason for their collapse; it unfolds the reason for the present fascinating legends and beliefs; it throws a clear light upon the early history now lost in centuries of darkness and barbarism. Moreover it assures us that the prophecies of the Scriptures are dependable; that the Almighty can, and is, moving in power in the midst of the nations. Finally, and with urgency, it directs us to “ask God, the eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true;” assuring us that if we do so “with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:4,5). What a marvelous promise! May we prayerfully seek from God his confirmation of the divinity of the Book of Mormon, and of the Church and truth he has restored.

For additional information and literature, contact:

Remnant Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
700 West Lexington Avenue
Independence, MO 64050
Tele (816) 461-7215
FAX (816) 461-7278
www.theremnantchurch.com