

BOOK OF MORMON EVIDENCES

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SCRIPTURE

Truth is a knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come; and whatsoever is more or less than this, is the spirit of that wicked one, who was a liar from the beginning. The Spirit of truth is of God. I am the Spirit of truth. And John bore record of me, saying, He received a fullness of truth; yea, even of all truth, and no man receiveth a fullness unless he keepeth his commandments. He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth, and knoweth all things.

We have read from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, Section 90, Paragraph 4.

"Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good."

In previous sermons we have discussed Bible prophecies foretelling the Book of **Mormon**, and some of the reasons why we think it worthy of belief. Today we proceed to a consideration of the historical, archaeological, ethnological and other scientific facts which corroborate the Book of Mormon story--and they are many.

Let us first establish a few historical facts about the Book of Mormon itself as background for our discussion. Joseph Smith claimed that during an angel visitation he saw in vision the hiding place of the plates which contained the record of the Book of Mormon. This was in September of 1823. He was permitted to go to the hill where they lay buried and see them, but was not allowed to take them from their hiding place until September of 1827, four years later. The copyright for the Book of Mormon was secured by filing the title page in June of 1829, which fulfilled the copyright law of that day. Manuscript was delivered to the printer in August of 1829, and the first edition printed and released to the world in March of 1830.

In 1830, almost nothing was known about American archaeology, and most scientists of the day did not believe that there was much worth knowing. Several of the ancient Spaniards had written books about America, but most were lost in musty libraries and unknown even in Spanish speaking countries; no English translations were available for many years after the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830. Before 1830 there were a few books published in America about North American Indians, but none about the ancient civilizations of Mexico and Central and South America. Such books as Clavigere's "History of Mexico," (1787) Alexander von Humboldt's two volume "Researches Concerning the Institutions and Monuments of the Ancient Inhabitants of America," (1814) and del Rio's "Description of the Ruins of an Ancient City Near Palenque," (1822) had been published in English, but in Europe, where they were quite inaccessible to a poor, uneducated country boy like Joseph Smith, living in upper New York state. Gatherwood and Stevens, known as the "Fathers of American Archaeology" embarked on their first explorations in 1839--nine years after the publication of the Book of Mormon, and published their first book two years later, in 1841, when the Book of Mormon was eleven years old. In 1829 and 1830 there was not a single book on American Archaeology printed in English and readily available on this side of the Atlantic, and nobody was interested in the subject.

The Book of Mormon is here. No one can deny that. It has been in print for over 123 years. How did it get here? Anyone who purports to write a history of an ancient civilization must of necessity make countless statements of fact. Whoever wrote the

Book of Mormon possessed an uncanny knowledge of facts that no one else seemed to be aware of at the time. One of the modern students of the Book of Mormon has made the assertion that there are over four hundred statements of scientific and historical fact contained in the Book of Mormon that were generally unknown in 1830! Obviously we cannot enumerate all of these here, but we shall try to give you a few examples.

The Book of Mormon says that the second or Nephite colony, which left Jerusalem in 609 B.C., brought with them to America brass plates containing the oldest books of the Bible, that is, the Pentateuch, the books of the law, and the prophets up to the time they left Jerusalem. Donnelly's book, "Atlantis," page 198, says "There is scarcely a prominent fact in the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis that cannot be duplicated from the legends of American nations, and scarcely a custom known to the Jews that does not find its counterpart among the people of the New World."

The Book of Mormon says that the Nephite colony from Jerusalem from which the principal civilizations of Book of Mormon times stemmed, were Jews, who followed the Mosaic law. Lord Kingsborough's "Mexican Antiquities," Volume 8, page 25, gives that author's conclusion that the Toltecs of America were of Jewish descent. Theodore A. Willard in his book, "The Lost Empires of the Itzas and Mayas", page 422, remarks that the ancient Itzen-Mayas had many customs and habits similar to those of the Jews. "Both venerated one God, of whom they made no image. Both worshipped towards the east; and both burned incense in four directions. The confession of sins and atonement were common to both peoples. Both believed in devils. The Maya like the Jew was punctilious about washing and making ablutions." Altars for sacrifice are common among ancient American temples. Certain animals were regarded as clean or unclean. Willard also notes that many of the faces carved on walls and stones are of a Jewish cast. J. F. Lee in his book, "The Great Migration", pages 224 and 225, gives an amazing number of similarities between Hebrew and ancient American words.

The Book of Mormon says that the Nephite colony, of Jewish descent, built a temple which was like unto Solomon's, of exceeding fine workmanship, though not built of such precious materials as Solomon's -- and that they also built other temples and synagogues. Mayan temples were usually built with an outer court, an inner court, and a sanctuary corresponding to the inner "holy of holies" of Solomon's temple, where only the priest was allowed to go once a year. Bancroft's "Native Races", Volume 4, page 332, shows a drawing of the floor plan for the Temple of the Cross at Palenque, which has an outer and inner court, and a holy of holies.

Nephi, one of the first writers to contribute to the Book of Mormon, says, "I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians." This seems to indicate that he wrote Hebrew words with Egyptian symbols in order to conserve space. Mormon, the abridger and principal compiler of the book, states that he wrote in the characters which were known among them as "reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech." He also stated that "none other people knoweth our language." Mormon wrote this statement in 400 A.D. When the Book of Mormon was first published, the idea of a Jew from ancient Jerusalem knowing Egyptian was thought to be preposterous. Now it is common knowledge that in 600 B. C. Egyptian was the language of culture, of wealth, of diplomacy, of nobility throughout much of the world, as French or perhaps English is today. A. Moret, a French author, in his "History of the Orient", Volume 2, Page 787, says, "Behold, are not the Ethiopians, Syrians, and all foreigners alike instructed in the language of the Egyptians?" It is now an accepted historical fact that in the early Christian era, with Egypt under Roman rule, the language of Egypt became a dead language, and remained unknown to anyone on earth until the discovery of the Rosetta Stone near the mouth of the Nile at about the end of the eighteenth century, furnished the first key to unlock the mystery.

During his work of translation, Joseph Smith copied a page of the characters from the Book of Mormon plates, and sent them to Professor Charles Anthon of Columbia College, New York, for appraisal. Anthon perhaps did not know as much as he pretended to know about Egyptian, for he laughed them out of court. The original paper of that "Anthon Transcript" is still in our church vaults. It contains 236 characters, or 135 if duplications are eliminated. Ninety-seven of these have been shown to resemble very closely or exactly the symbols given in the Egyptian demotic dictionaries. Notice that not all of them do, for that would have been a fatal mistake, considering that the Book of Mormon says that the Egyptian symbols "have been altered by us, according to our manner of speech." Therefore, only 97 characters are the same; 38 are different. Egyptian influence is marked not only in the written characters; but is more easily discerned in the architecture and art of ancient America. The Egyptian T or Tau is very frequently met with as a decorative motif.

Before the fact was generally known to science, the Book of Mormon told the story of a high civilization being destroyed and succeeded by a lower. Now no one denies that that is exactly what happened in America. Buildings that show a low form of culture and a pagan religion are built upon the ruins of a higher culture, or in some cases, the higher form has been covered with masonry, and the lower type of architecture superimposed.

The Book of Mormon says that its people made and used chariots. The earliest archaeologists said flatly that the ancient Americans did not know anything about the wheel, and therefore could not have had chariots. I have read that statement in a book published as late as 1950, but that same book only 15 pages later mentions Desire Charnay's picturization in 1887 of a pottery toy with movable wheels, dating back to prehistoric times. Several of these wheeled pottery toys are now to be seen in the museum in Mexico City as proof that the ancient Americans knew and used wheels.

The Book of Mormon says that the Jaredites, who came to America in 2200 B.C., found the horse on this continent. When that was first noted in the Book of Mormon in 1830 a great howl of laughter went up, for everyone knew that the horse was brought to America by the Spaniards. Now it is undisputed among scientists that fossil remains of at least nine different species of horses have been found in America, dating back to Eocene and Pleistocene epochs. The Book of Mormon says that its people domesticated elephants and similar animals. Since the publication of the Book of Mormon fossilized remains of four or five species of elephants, as well as mastodons, camels, ground sloths, and glyptodons, have been discovered in America, oftentimes in association with spear or arrow points which prove the simultaneous existence of men.

One of the mysteries which never ceased to puzzle the early Spanish fathers, was the seeming familiarity of the native Americans with Christian doctrines and ordinances. They practiced baptism; they had something very closely resembling the Lord's Supper; they venerated the cross; they had a higher and lower priesthood; they worshipped a bearded white God whose features were depicted in carvings as semitic in cast. This God, who was known under a variety of names such as Quetzalcoatl, KukulKan, and Wiracocha, was always described in the same terms. He was white in contrast to the darker Indians; he was bearded, while the Indians were beardless; he had not been born among them, but suddenly appeared out of the east; he required no blood sacrifices of either animals or men; he had been slain on a cross but rose to life again; he was the giver and originator of much of their religion and culture; he left without dying, "promising to return again." These traditions agree most remarkably with the Book of Mormon story of Christ's visit to America, and make a fascinating and inexhaustible study for those who have time and inclination to follow it.

There are many other evidences we could recite for you if time permitted. There are differences in length and structure of the names of the Jaredites and the Nephites,

as might be expected of people sixteen centuries apart and of different races. There are no B aal names in the Book of Mormon, which agrees with the historical fact that Hosea prohibited them about 743 B.C., 143 years before the Nephites came to America. There is a strong Hebraic flavor to the language of the Book of Mormon. Hebrew does not use contractions; and there are none in the Book of Mormon. Hebrew does not use q's x's or w's, and there are none in any uncorrupted Book of Mormon proper name. Hebrew has a custom of stringing out numerals -- "two hundred AND thirty AND eight years", -- which is followed in the Book of Mormon. In Hebrew it is customary to say "the house of my father," instead of my father's house, and the Book of Mormon consistently follows this construction in such phrases as "plates of brass", "sword of Laban," "rod of iron," etc..

The chronology of the Book of Mormon is accurate. The date for the departure from Jerusalem is set at 609 B.C., but if modern theory that the birth of Christ occurred in 4 B.C. is right, then the proper date for this departure would be 613 B.C. One of the few decipherable things about Maya inscriptions is the Maya system of dates, which puts the beginning of Maya history at 613 B.C.

How did the writer of the Book of Mormon -- whoever he was -- have information enough in 1829 to get all these statements of fact right? There are too many to be explained as good guesswork. As we have shown, in 1830 there was no way for even a well educated man to have known them factually. If you have an explanation for them other than the one advanced by Joseph Smith, you would make a revolutionary contribution to science by proving your theory to be true.

Difficult as it is for people to accept, the most plausible explanation of the factual content of the Book of Mormon is that it was written by men who actually experienced the things of which they wrote, and that their writings were translated into the Book of Mormon by Joseph Smith as he said, by the power and gift of God. No other theory will stand the test of reason or of history.