



THE MASSIVE MORMON SCRIPTURE MESS

By Ed Decker

Trying to sort out the massive complexities of the Mormon scriptures is somewhat akin to the frustration one might feel trying to rewind a pickup load of tangled fishing line. Every time you feel like you have made some headway, another mess pops up.

It would be easy to cut the line and clear up little sections at a time, but that's the basic problem! The Mormons have never really had to confront their scriptures as a full set of integrated documents that can be measured by simple "scriptural test" procedures. The average Mormon only sees church scripture in the logical context of classroom references within the rigid teaching structure of the LDS instruction manuals.

The Mormon is taught to unequivocally accept the LDS scriptures as the pure word of God, without error or inconsistency. The Bible, the only real standard by which any doctrine can be tested, is then discredited, cutting the LDS scriptures loose from any biblical accountability. The only acceptable measurement for LDS scripture is the LDS scripture itself and that has already been given the fullest approval of an "infallible present-day prophet." There is no margin for the application of generally accepted scholarship.

In the LDS "Articles of Faith," the eighth article states, "We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God."(1)

Mormonism teaches that there are several problems with the Bible. First, many of its books are missing, so it is only an incomplete compilation at best. Second, we are told that many plain and precious things were taken away from the Bible by that "great and abominable church," as recorded in I Nephi 13:25- 28 in the Book of Mormon. The very document requiring biblical testing discredits its only credible witness!

The final severance from biblical accountability is the continued LDS teaching that what was left of the scriptures has been so often and badly translated that our present Bible is of almost no "stand alone" value. Apostle Orson Pratt summed up the LDS position when he stated, ". . .and who, in his right mind, could for one moment, suppose the Bible in its present form to be a perfect guide? Who knows that even one verse of the whole Bible has escaped pollution, so as to convey the same sense now that it did in the original?"(2)

Joseph Smith taught, "I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors."(3)

What we end up with is a set of spiritual laws that force the LDS people to judge their scripture by their own measure of faith and not by any outside influence. Even if there is an obvious contradiction with the LDS scripture and what is being taught by the present prophet, the Mormon cannot judge or

test the prophet by the scripture. According to LDS General Authority and President of the Council of The Twelve, Ezra Taft Benson, the LDS doctrine is that the living prophet is above scripture. There is absolutely no way out.

The finality of the Mormon theology is not based upon evaluation by scriptural evidence, but based entirely upon a "burning in the bosom." Again, LDS Scripture demands this final proof of itself and tells you this is what you must seek. In a word of admonition to Oliver Cowdery during the translation of the Book of Mormon, the Mormon god, through Joseph Smith, declared, "But behold, I say unto you that you must study it out in your own mind; then you must ask me if it is right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore you shall feel that it is right. But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong...."(4)

When the Mormon missionaries come into a home, they will talk about the prophet, Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon and will instruct the investigator to read the Book of Mormon and to pray about it. They will encourage the reader to seek that divine burning in the bosom which will prove that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God and the Book of Mormon is really scripture.

Moroni 10:4 will be quoted, "And when you have received 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 ask 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." Not withstanding the fact that the sentence structure has the response triggered as an answer that "these things are NOT true", the missionary use of the quote is to put the burden of proof on the investigator's sincere heart and real intent.

The investigator will feel good about it. It all becomes a subjective evaluation. The scripture and prophet are not to be tested. The doctrines are not to be tested. They are to be prayed about and this divine burning in the bosom will be the proof that they are delivering divine truth to you from God.

I can vividly remember lying on my bed for the better part of a whole night crying out to God for a burning in my bosom so that I would know the church was true. Hour after hour I lay there, with my breast lifted upward, as though it were on an altar of sacrifice, pleading for the evidence of this eternal truth. I knew that my heart was sincere, and yet the guilt of my not experiencing the manifestation was almost more than I could bear.

Finally, many hours into my vigil, that burning came. I felt an actual, physical burning sensation in my breast. I would later testify that it was as though I had a rise of 7 or 8 degrees. My chest was at a high fever temperature. I rejoiced in the certainty of my faith. Yet, I never checked one teaching of the missionaries against the Holy Bible to see if it matched up.

It is kind of interesting that when, as a born again believer, my wife, Carol, prayed the prayer of Moroni 10:4 as she read the Book of Mormon, seeking to know of its truth, she would fall asleep and experience that stupor Oliver Cowdery was told would be the evidence of untruth. Perhaps she was praying to the wrong God. When I prayed it, not being born-again, I prayed as instructed by the missionaries. I received one answer and she a totally different one. Yet, we were both sincere. What was the difference?

It is also interesting to note that the LDS Church recently published its own edition of the King James Bible. An article, "Church Publishes First LDS Edition Of The Bible," by Lavina F. Anderson, appeared in the October 1979 edition of the Ensign magazine and described the enormous project and the intense commitment of the project workers to cross-reference this edition to the other standard works of the church.

Aside from the very obvious question of why the prophet did not add back all the plain and precious

parts and correct the translation errors plaguing the Bible all these years, one comment regarding the project almost flew off the page like a fiery arrow imbedding itself into the center of my burned-out bosom.

In the last paragraph of the article, the writer concluded, "Brother Rasmussen added, 'Sometimes Brother Patch and I would be discussing a matter of linguistics, and, as we concluded, one of us would remark, "That feels good." I suppose to some people this might seem like a slipshod way to be scholars, but we could tell when we were moving in the proper direction and we could certainly identify the stupor that came over us when we weren't.' He paused, then added quietly, 'In some ways, scholarship was the least important part of our work.'"(5)

One area of this study clarified a long debated topic among the various subgroupings within the various branches of Josephite or Restorationist churches. It dealt with the authenticity of a manuscript called the Inspired Version of the Bible, written by Joseph Smith prior to his death. The copyrighted property of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints [RLDS], was never given full credentials by the Utah branch--until its release of the L.D.S. edition of the King James Bible.

It is quite significant that this new edition firmly places the inspired Version in the position of a Standard Work. The title page classifies the edition as "Authorized King James Version With Explanatory Notes And Cross References to the Standard Works Of the Church Of Jesus Christ Of Latter-day Saints." In the "Explanation Concerning Footnotes," on page vi, it identifies JST as the code for the Joseph Smith Translation, which is referenced throughout the LDS Edition, in clarification of some of the errors in the King James Edition.

During the Question and Answer time following a recent showing of the film, THE GOD MAKERS, in Colorado Springs, Colorado, I was making the point that all this extra-biblical scripture was out of order with God's Word. Among the several references I gave was the scripture in Revelations 22:18-19. It clearly stated, I said, that anyone who would add to the Bible or subtract from it in any way was in deep trouble with God.

A Mormon woman in the group challenged me on this statement and emphatically declared that this was only in reference to the Book of Revelation in its single content and had no bearing upon any other book of scripture, including any latter-day scripture. I asked her if these curses would be in effect if anyone had dared to alter just the Book of Revelation in any way. She replied that this was obviously so.

I then showed her that in the Joseph Smith Translation: he had added to, or subtracted from the Book of Revelation over 85 times.(6) "Even in the smallest context of the warning, Joseph Smith stands condemned as a false prophet," I declared. She stared in shock. Later, an LDS leader came up to me after the meeting and quietly whispered, "It doesn't matter; he was just adjusting the incorrect parts. I know that he is a true prophet!"

Setting aside all the Mormon claims of divine illumination for the moment, let's seriously "consider" the Book of Mormon on its own merit. The major question isn't how to begin such an evaluation, but where. In one of several forms of an undated LDS tract, entitled, "The Challenge The Book of Mormon Makes To The World," the last paragraph caught my eye.

It states, "The first thing to do in examining any ancient text is to consider it in the light of the origin and background that is claimed for it. If it fits into that background, there is no need to look any farther since historical forgery is virtually impossible." While that is not necessarily true, we can use it as a fair statement of the LDS position with regard to the Book of Mormon.

PAGE ONE

Starting with the very first page of the Book of Mormon, in the First Book of Nephi, we read the account of Lehi, the key prophet of the second migration. It is through this man that the actual Book of Mormon story comes forth. In I Nephi 1:4, we are told, "For it came to pass in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, King of Judah, (my father, Lehi, having dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days); and in that same year there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed."

Throughout the rest of Chapters One and Two, we see that Lehi is a mighty prophet of the Lord, and after much danger leaves the city of Jerusalem at the Lord's bidding.

Taking the clue that we are dealing with the reign of Zedekiah, we are able to go to II Kings 24:17, 18 and see that Zedekiah reigned for 11 years, starting about 600 BC. and ending his reign with the 4th and last siege of Jerusalem. This siege was conducted by Nebuchadnezzar and ended with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity.

At that time Daniel and Ezekiel had already been taken captive to Babylon-- Daniel in the first siege and Ezekiel in the third siege. The only prophet left in Jerusalem during Zedekiah's reign was Jeremiah and he makes that perfectly clear:

Jeremiah 2:8 "and the prophets prophesied by Baal" 5:31 "and the prophets prophesy falsely"

6:13 "and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely"

8:10 "every one dealeth falsely."

14:13-16 "the prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not....They prophesy unto you a false vision and divination."

23:16 "Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you"

23:21 "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken unto them yet they prophesied"
27:14-17 "Therefore hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, ye shall serve not the King of Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you...hearken not to the words of your prophets that prophesy unto you...hearken not unto them; serve the King of Babylon and live."
29:8,9 "Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you deceive you...for they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the Lord."

All these scriptures warn the people NOT to listen to ANY of the other prophets because they were ALL false and spoke lies. It is quite clear that Jeremiah was the only true prophet of God left in Jerusalem during the reign of Zedekiah.

Since God didn't deliver Ezekiel, Daniel, and Jeremiah from bondage, but wanted all the people to serve the King of Babylon, why would he favor a biblically unnamed prophet with a message in total contradiction to the one given to Jeremiah for the whole nation of Israel? He gave absolutely no biblical indication that some had to serve in Babylon, but some would be spared. In fact, He gave some pretty severe warnings to those who would attempt to escape captivity. In Jeremiah 28, we read about the false prophet, Hananiah, who taught rebellion against the Lord.

If the judgment of the Lord against Hananiah was death, why would God call and send forth another prophet, Lehi, with the same rebellious message to the very same people and call him a true prophet? Impossible! If the Book of Mormon were true scripture, Lehi would have to be in direct DISOBEDIENCE to God in leaving Jerusalem to escape capture and bondage in Babylon.

So, coming back to page one of the Book of Mormon, it immediately fails the basic test. It does not

fit into its time frame correctly as true scripture. One need not go a page further to know that we are dealing with a false prophet.

OUT OF THE DUST

Let's look at it from another angle. LeGrand Richards, in his famous missionary book, *A Marvelous Work and Wonder*, describes the biblical prophecies fulfilled by the Book of Mormon. He uses Isaiah 29:4 as a proof text of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon: "And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust."

Richards comments, "Now, obviously, the only way a dead people could speak "out of the ground" or "out of the dust" would be by the written word and this was done through the Book of Mormon. Truly, it has a familiar spirit, for it contains the words of the prophets of the God of Israel."(7)

Unfortunately for Book of Mormon scholarship, the Hebrew word for "familiar spirit" in this passage of Isaiah is the word, "OB," which is translated in the King James as Familiar Spirit. In the Hebrew, the word means necromancer, or a spirit of witchcraft. There are 15 Old Testament references to familiar spirits and all of them deal with witchcraft. The word for whisper here also means "chirp or peep", in the same context.

The apostle, LeGrand Richards, and the tens of thousands of Mormons who use his words as evidence that the Book of Mormon has this same "familiar spirit," tie their scripture solidly to witchcraft. They are heartily welcome to the label. Again, without raving shouts, the Book of Mormon fails its own challenge.

STICKS AND SCROLLS

Of the several other key biblical prophecies of the Book of Mormon, one other stands out as the most common of all LDS "proof" scriptures. It is in Ezekiel 37:15-17. The Scripture reads as follows: "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."

The LDS Church teaches that the sticks mentioned above are really scrolls (rolled on the sticks). They teach that the stick of Judah is the Bible and the stick of Joseph is the Book of Mormon. The joining together of the two sticks is a prophecy that the two books would become one witness as they would be joined together by the LDS Church. This is made clearly evident in the LDS scripture: ". . .and with Moroni, whom I have sent unto to you to reveal the Book of Mormon, containing the fullness of my everlasting gospel, to whom I have committed the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim...." (D&C 27:5)

In actuality, the Hebrew word used here for stick is "ES," or "ETS," meaning wood, tree or stick. The Hebrew words for scroll, roll, book, or writing, include Sepher, Dabar, Sephar, and Siphrah. Now, the Old Testament talks about sticks, rolls, books, writings, scrolls and so on. Yet, in no case has God ever used the word for stick to mean anything but a piece of wood. He never interchanged these words.

What was happening in this scripture? If you read the very next few verses, the people ask Ezekiel what he meant and he explained that the sticks represented the two kingdoms of Israel which shall be joined together just as the sticks were in his hands (verses 18-22).

Further, it was Ezekiel who wrote on both sticks. He obviously did not write both the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Again, the point is that the evidence of such an interpretation of this prophecy just does not exist. Ezekiel clearly defined the exact conditions and scope of the prophecy and we have concrete historical evidence of its fulfillment.

There is no external evidence from the Bible of a future set of scriptures such as the Mormons claim. The LDS effort to fit the Book of Mormon into biblical context has no point of reference.

THE PEOPLE WHO WEREN'T THERE

Let's look at the Book of Mormon in the historic sense. God is not obtuse. If this great society existed in the Americas, the evidences would have to be there. Sandra Tanner, a leading expert on the Mormon question, commented: "The Book of Mormon claims to be an actual historical record translated from real plates that Joseph Smith unearthed in a hill in New York. Now, if this is a genuine history, one would assume you could study this, just as you would study any historical book."

"When I study the Bible, I can approach it as a total atheist or as a believer in Christ", she continued, "but either way I can study the book historically. It does not require a 'testimony.' You can determine where Jerusalem is; you can determine that there was a Hebrew language. When we turn to the book of Mormon we have nothing. There is no Nephite language; there are no Nephite cities; there is not a map in any book of Mormon; you cannot locate any sites. There is no evidence for the book and yet it's supposed to be an historical record."

When asked about this during the filming of THE GOD MAKERS film, LDS Mission President, Harold Goodman, commented, "Many people do not understand the Book of Mormon. This is a history of the people that inhabited the American Continent--North, South and Central America, from about 600 B.C. to about 420 A.D., and we have much evidence, of course, of people having lived there."

We all know that a large, complex society did exist there during those years of Book of Mormon history. The question is still, "Does the Book of Mormon fit the time frame?" We do not think it does. Yet, with fervent zeal and that same burning testimony, the Mormons will claim it does. President Goodman is aware that Mormon missionaries throughout the world are converting people to the Mormon church by explaining to them that archaeology has proven the Book of Mormon to be true. Slide presentations, special firesides, and film strips are used along with volumes of specialty books on the subject, available wherever LDS books are sold.

Where are all these "evidences" so readily available as proof? How can they be and not be at the same time? Either they exist as presented by the Mormons or they don't. We can't play games with historic facts.

In the LDS visitors centers throughout the Church, a painting by the artist, John Scott, is displayed. Copies are available in great abundance wherever LDS materials are sold. The painting is called, "The Resurrected Christ in America." What is so important about this painting? It represents Christ standing before the multitudes in front of several of the temples in Meso- America, graphically tying in to the millions who have viewed this painting of Jesus, the Book of Mormon and the temples of these early civilizations. What is wrong? Neither temple existed until about 1000 A.D., almost 10 centuries AFTER the supposed appearance of Christ in the Americas!

The two temples are actually very well known: they are El Castillo and El Caracol. They are also used in one of the well- known LDS proof works, "The Trial of the Stick of Joseph," by Jack West. In both representations, their use can only be out of blind ignorance or blatant deception.

The fact that the painting is an artist's rendition is not important. It is important that it is published widely by the church as an expression of implied fact. The same painting is used, in part, as the cover of an LDS pamphlet, "Christ in America," written by Apostle Mark E. Petersen and published in 1983. Jack West's representation may also be waved away as the work of an individual, yet it is used widely to convert people out of the Christian body through the use of open deception.

Could the church and people like Jack West be just blind to the facts? We think not. Our friend, Jack Sande, wrote to John L. Sorenson, Chairman of the Department of Anthropology, at Brigham Young University and asked him about this problem, after receiving a copy of the West book from a Mormon Bishop.

In a letter to Jack, dated October 5, 1981, John Sorenson replied, "I understand that people who have not had educational experiences concerning archaeology could be enthusiastic about books like these of West or Farnsworth when they see these as supporting the Book of Mormon in which they strongly believe. I presume the Bishop who gave you the West volume would fall into that class--overcome by zeal. Nevertheless, the fact remains that those books are worse than useless, because they are not reasonably close to the truth. I wish the zealous had other options open to them in the way of truthful books, but at the moment, that is a problem."

John Sorenson sounded like a pretty upfront scholar. We went to a work of his, dated 1980, and found that he had made a couple of very significant observations. First, regarding the Bible, Sorenson said, "Learning about context seems unimportant to some readers of the book [Book of Mormon]; others consider it impossible. To me the Bible is a model in this regard. Biblical scholarship has illuminated certain inobvious meanings of that scriptural text showing the complex interplay between human and divine influences and establishing the Bible as a record all the more profound, because it is anchored in a complex reality of time, space and behavior. I have wanted that same illumination for Lehi's people and their book."

And what of that book? He made no evasive apologies, but hit directly home with his point: "After nearly 150 years since the Nephite record was first published by Joseph Smith, we Mormons have been unable confidently to pin down the location of a single city, identify even one route they traversed, or sketch an accurate picture of any segment of the life they lived in their American promised land. In many respects, the Book of Mormon remains a sealed book to us because we have been incapable of placing it in its specific setting."(8)

John Sorenson is not the only Mormon scholar who is a realist in this matter. Dr. Ross T. Christensen, BYU professor and head of the Society for Early Historic Archeology, stands by his side. Over twenty years earlier, in an article for the University Archeological Society, Dr. Christensen wrote, "In the first place, the statement that the Book of Mormon has already been proved by archaeology is misleading. The truth of the matter is that we are only beginning to see even the outlines of the archeological time-periods which could compare with those of the Book of Mormon. How, then, can the matter have been settled once and for all?"

Christensen continued, "That such an idea could exist indicates the ignorance of many of our people with regard to what is going on in the historical and anthropological sciences. With the exception of Latter-day Saint archaeologists, members of the archaeological profession do not, and never have espoused the Book of Mormon in any sense of which I am aware."

He added, "As for the notion that the Book of Mormon has already been proved by archaeology, I must say with Shakespeare, 'Lay not that flattering unction to your soul.'"(Hamlet III:4) (9)

Another honest Mormon scholar, Dee F. Green, asserts, "The first myth we need to eliminate is that Book of Mormon archaeology exists." He has termed the Church's current approach to Mormon archaeology as a back door one, and he is right. (10)

In the January/February 1981 Sunstone Magazine, Martin Raish, a doctoral candidate and teacher of Art History at BYU, wrote one of the best scholarly reports I have ever read on this subject of amateur attempts to prove the Book of Mormon through historic evidence.

He goes through the works of such men as Jack West, Dewey Farnsworth, Paul Cheeseman and Wayne Hamby, showing the exact manner in which the reader of their works is manipulated with sweeping assumptions, questionable artifacts, misdated archaeology and mismatched scriptures and pictures, all designed to assure the reader that the Book of Mormon is fact. Raish cautions the LDS community that these pseudo-scholarly tactics thwart the best efforts of the LDS professionals. He concludes that "I do not think that we will ever prove the Book of Mormon to be true through archaeological evidences any more than we can yet prove the date of the Creation through scientific mean alone."(11)

So we fall back again on the "Challenge the Book of Mormon Makes to the World", that we spoke of earlier. It has to fit its time frame. This is not only reasonable, this is imperative. Yet, while it is the very standard for the Bible, it appears to be impossible for the Book of Mormon.

Dr. Charles Crane has spent most of his lifetime studying the Bible and also the LDS scriptures. He is an active student of both Bible and Mormon Archaeology. He explained the differences to us. "The simple facts", he said, "are that the truth does not match the LDS stories. While the accuracy of the Bible has been vindicated time and again, we have yet to find the first Book of Mormon City.

The Mormon non-scholars keep trying to "associate" with the historic evidences of the Aztec and Mayan Temple builders. Yet, at every corner, warning flags leap up. Recently, on March 26th, 1982, the Utah Museum of Natural History held a presentation by Nicholas M. Hellmuth. His subject; "The Human Sacrificial Practices of the Maya!

In the May 25, 1980 (Section G, page 1) Salt Lake Tribune, an article authored by New York Times writer, Boyce Rensberger, listed recent archaeological findings that push back the Mayan origins to 9000 B.C.

In his book, Christ in Ancient America, Volume II, Dr. Milton R. Hunter, then a member of the First Council of the Seventy, described the Quetzalcoatl god of the Aztecs and the Olmecs as Jesus. He states, "Quetzalcoatl could have been none other than Jesus the Christ, the Lord and God of this earth, and the Savior of the human family. Thus Jesus Christ and Quetzalcoatl are identical."

He further quotes LDS President and Prophet John Taylor, who in 1882 stated, "The story of the life of the Mexican divinity, Quetzalcoatl, closely resembles that of the Savior; so closely, indeed, that we can come to no other conclusion than that Quetzalcoatl and Christ are the same being."(12)

He later explains that Quetzalcoatl was represented as the "Feathered Serpent", which has its identification with the "Plumed Serpent" of Egyptian origin, and the serpent in the Garden of Eden. "The serpent, in early times was also identified with the Crucifixion, and hence was also a symbol of the Son of Man." He goes on to explain, "In this Chapter and throughout the book, the serpent will be presented as a symbol of Quetzalcoatl or Jesus and no further reference will be made to its identification with the Prince of Darkness, or Lucifer."(13)

Dear reader, this is utter nonsense. Quetzalcoatl dates back into the far distance before the Book of Mormon era began. He was the God of learning and civilization, and he appeared in the Olmec religion around 2000 B.C. The Feathered Serpent was a pagan idol requiring blood sacrifice. From this point and all through the temple building eras surrounding the Book of Mormon dating, the Feathered Serpent God Cult began to take over and the once beneficent Quetzalcoatl was incarnated into the bloodthirsty Feathered Serpent. Untold hundreds of thousands of innocent victims died to offer up their still-beating hearts to this bloody idol during the so-called Book of Mormon years. If

this is the American Jesus Christ of Mormonism, they are welcome to him!

It wasn't until many hundreds of years beyond the Nephite era that a Toltec king named Ce Acatl Topiltzin ascended the throne and took the name of Quetzalcoatl and sought to re-establish the gentle theology of the original god as the principle deity of the Toltec nation. This took place in 968 A.D. The bloodthirsty priests disgraced and banished him from the nation. This gentle king promised to return in a "one reed year" (Mayan Calendar), and hence the legend of the return of Quetzalcoatl. By the way, Cortez landed in 1519, a "one reed year"!(14)

Returning again to the task of trying to fit the Book of Mormon into its own background and time frame, let's look at one of literally hundreds of conditions that make it impossible.

Assuming that Lehi was right and Jeremiah wrong, and assuming that these travelers truly did land on the western shores of the Americas somewhere. . .then, let's evaluate one of the major activities of this group in light of history and fact.

In II Nephi, Chapter 5, Nephi separates himself and his family, along with his two brothers and their families, and takes along his two young brothers and his sisters. Bear in mind that this whole story takes place before 30 years have passed since they left Jerusalem. Just getting to the boat took enough time that Jacob and Joseph were born, so we can't be talking about more than 20-25 years at best.

In all, we are talking about three grown men, several young boys and a very small number of women and children. In II Nephi 5:15- 17, Nephi describes how they built a temple constructed after the manner of the Temple of Solomon.

Just try to envision less than a dozen able-bodied people building a temple "like unto Solomon's." Solomon's Temple was built of stone, precious metals and enough cedar to keep 80,000 hewers of wood busy (I Kings 5:13-15). It took Solomon over 7 years (I Kings 6:38), and well over 150,000 full time workers (II Chronicles 2:18).

Then try to ignore the fact that in verse 15 he claims that the temple was built with all manner of wood, iron, steel (not found in the Americas for over another 1500 years), gold, silver and precious ores which "were in great abundance"; then, in verse 16, he claims they could not use these things since they were not to be found upon the land.

At the completion of this great temple, and still within the 30 years since leaving Jerusalem, Nephi reports that the people desired that he should be made king. Remember, this is a small clan of not two dozen people, men, women and children included.

have read about

Again, the Book of Mormon cannot fit into its background and time frame. It is a failure in every sense of what it pretends to be.

There is one final item of significance that I would like to discuss, and it is one that is totally outside anything I have read about the Book of Mormon or any of its promoters' claims or its critics' challenges.

If we were to gather together 4 or 5 families and leave for an unknown land to be able to worship in our own manner, we would probably take our scriptures and our form of worship and develop our religious practices in very fundamentalist manner--a form of worship that would have a lasting effect upon our new society.

One thing for which the Jewish faith is noted for is its tenacity over centuries of time to maintain its own identity. This is not represented by a single shred of evidence anywhere in the Americas of the Book of Mormon. Another unmovable Jewish trait is the utter inability of anyone to destroy the Hebrew language throughout centuries of time. Again, not a shred of an example appears in the Mormon claim. Instead, we are asked to believe that devout Jewish scholars would transcribe their most sacred scriptures in "reformed Egyptian." Bear in mind that the Hebrew people were forbidden to deal with anything Egyptian. To do so would defile the priesthood of God! (Nephi 13:23- 31)

CHECK THE CALENDAR

Lastly, if we were to embark on such a journey, we would take our calendar! This is the final flaw in there being any possibility of the Book of Mormon being true, or Jewish in the slightest.

Did the people who lived in the Americas between 600 B.C. and 420 A.D. have anything even remotely resembling the Jewish 360-day calendar? Did their months and holidays bear any name resemblance? If not, they could not have been Jewish!

In actuality, approximately three thousand years ago, on the coastal plain of southern Mexico, a priest received a revelation from the Sun God that not only determined the course of history for Meso-America, but destroyed the remotest possibility of the Book of Mormon being a true history of these people.

"At precisely noon on the date we call August 13, probably in the year 1358 B.C., the priest noticed that no tree, pillar or post cast a shadow." Counting the days to the next such experience, he finally was rewarded 260 days later, and again after another 105 days, on the next August 13th, it occurred again.

These events took place at Izapa, a ceremonial center on the Mexico-Guatemalan border. And here began a sacred calendar of a 13-unit cycle with 20 day names, known as the "Tzolkin" or "Tonalamatl." Once in place, this almanac became the basis of all religions, art and science in the civilizations that followed.

The Izapans used the sacred calendar names to name their chiefs and nobles. These names were designated by "one of 20 animals important to the local mythology, such as Alligator, Buzzard, Eagle, Jaguar, Snake, Deer, etc." Each 52 years, they would recycle the whole process.

Even after they realized the significance of the 365-day solar calendar, this sacred calendar tied together the nations and religions of this entire part of the world. Under no circumstance could such a complex calendar exist and extend its influence out across the many centuries if the advanced civilization of the 1000 year Book of Mormon era ever existed.(15)

WHAT MORE CAN WE SAY?

What more can we say? The Book of Mormon has had over 4,000 changes to it, and yet, it is supposed to be the "most perfect book in the world," according to its translator. Eleven grown men bore witness to its reality, yet eight of these left the Church as apostates. There has never been a gold plate found of such as was described by Joseph Smith, and brass plates such as the ones described as containing the Jewish scriptures taken from Jerusalem have never been discovered. Not one exists anywhere in the Jewish world.

Further, why would God speak to a nineteenth century American in archaic, seventeenth-century English? Would he speak that way to a Peruvian? Is God limited somehow to King James English as His official language? Where do we stop and account for what has been said?

PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

No discussion of LDS scripture would be complete without touching upon the Pearl of Great Price, and in particular, The Book of Abraham. The Book of Abraham was translated by Joseph Smith from some papyrus fragments that he had purchased from a man claiming to be an Egyptologist traveling through the area with several mummies on display.

Using several of the facsimiles from the papyri, Joseph Smith demonstrated that these were representations of Abraham in Egypt and proceeded to then "translate" the papyri fragments into their English meanings. This was done prior to the general understanding of the Rosetta Stone decoding of the ancient Egyptian language.

In a recent comparison of the papyri to Joseph's notes, it was apparent that the 13th and 14th verses of Abraham 1 were translated from one single character resembling a backward E. Yet, in fact, Joseph Smith translated this into 76 words, with 9 proper names and 8 other nouns. The character for the Egyptian god, Khonso, was translated by Joseph Smith into 177 words in Abraham 1:16-19.

Dealing with this issue has been a major test of faith for Mormon scholars. Three major non-LDS Egyptologists, Klaus Baer, Richard A. Parker and the late John A. Wilson reviewed the fragments and all concluded that Joseph's translation was totally incorrect and his restorations of the facsimiles were a gross injustice to the art of Egyptology.

Parker describes Fascimile 1 as a "well-known scene from the Osiris mysteries, with Anubis, the jackal-headed god on the left, ministering to the dead Osiris on the bier. The penciled restoration (by Smith) is incorrect. Anubis should be jackal-headed. The left arm of Osiris is in reality lying at his side under him. The apparent upper hand is part of a second bird which is hovering over the erect phallus of Osiris (now broken away). The second bird is Isis and she is magically impregnated by the dead Osiris and then later gives birth to Horus who avenges his father and takes over his inheritance."(16)

Klaus Baer basically repeats the same description in his translation of the papyri as the "Breathing Permit of Hor." He states, "The vignette of P. JS I is unusual, but parallels exist on the walls of the Ptolemaic temples of Egypt, the closest being the scenes in the Osiris chapels on the roof of the Temple of Dendera." He specifically describes Facsimile 1: "There are some problems about restoring the missing parts of the body of Osiris. He was almost certainly represented as ithyphallic, ready to beget Horus, as in many of the scenes at Dendera."(17) In all, all three Egyptologists confirm that the Joseph Smith papyri deal exclusively with pagan rituals, pagan gods and the Breathing Permit of Hor.

One of the most revealing and honest "in-house" appraisals of this document was published recently by Dr. Edward H. Ashment, an LDS Egyptologist working with the translation department of the LDS Church. (18)

Throughout Ashment's Appraisal of the Facsimiles, he deals with pagan rituals and pagan gods. At no time does he make a connection to Abraham, Abraham's God or Abraham's religion--just paganism. While Ashment went far out of his way in softening any blows against the prophet, Joseph, no one can read his work and not see the totally illiterate definitions given the pagan works by Joseph Smith. How any intelligent Mormon can hold these pornographic drawings in the Pearl of Great Price as the sacred Word of God is blasphemy and blindness at its highest.

Previously, I described the Mormon scriptures as similar to a pickup truck filled with tangled fishing line. We are still standing in that pickup truck, up to our waists, almost incomprehensibly looking all about us at the unbelievable mess. Where do we go from here? We have hardly begun to clear up the twisted ends.

Our God is not the author of such confusion. I have taken you far enough so that you may never doubt what Proverbs 30:6 means when it says, "Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." What you have seen here is an endless series of lies built upon lies, so compounded that it is an impossible task to work your way back to truth.

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