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"In his humiliation justice was denied him"

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THE MISTAKES OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

The Mormon Church claims that the Book of Mormon is an authentic historical account of the migration of a small number of Israelites from Jerusalem in or about 600 BC and of the subsequent settlement of the descendants of these Israelites in foreign lands.

The Mormon Church claims that the record originally was engraven on a number of plates between 600 BC and 421 AD. This record was then hidden until, sometime after 1823, the original plates were placed in the possession of a United States citizen named Joseph Smith. The intriguing details of how these plates are alleged to have come into Joseph Smith's possession we leave you to discover for yourself. Suffice it to say that the Book of Mormon purports to be a true translation of an original record dating from 600 BC and that the original plates are now no longer available.

AUTHORSHIP

The setting for the opening chapters of the Book of Mormon is the neighbourhood of Jerusalem about the year 600 BC. The author of these chapters is stated to be a member of the Israelite tribe of Joseph.* He claims that his father, a prophet, had lived in Jerusalem for many years.

We might reasonably expect the account to reflect the true conditions of the times. It should reflect an awareness, for instance, of the fact that Jerusalem had been under Babylonian domination since 604 BC and that some of the Jewish nobility were already captive in Babylon. Moreover, as the first year of Zedekiah, king of Judah, is referred to we might expect to find some indication that this Zedekiah had ascended the throne of Judah as a vassal of the Babylonians in 597 BC, and that the name Zedekiah had actually been given to him by the Babylonians in place of his native name of Mattaniah. (2Kings 24:17). But on all these, and many similar, points the Book of Mormon is strangely silent.

It is clear that the real author of these chapters laboured under a number of misapprehensions. We may guess his identity from the nature of the misapprehensions. The account reflects a faulty state of knowledge prevalent in the U.S.A. about 1823. A surmise that the real author lived in that country about that time would not be far from the truth.

Certainly the author could not have been an Israelite in or near Jerusalem in the first year of King Zedekiah. Just as certainly he did not know the Hebrew language.

* Do not confuse the patriarch Joseph, who lived before 1486 BC, and his tribal descendants, with Joseph the foster-father of Jesus who belonged to the tribe of Judah and lived in Palestine in the period around 1 BC.

A REPRESENTATIVE SELECTION OF ERRORS

We shall deal with a selection of errors in 4 main groups —

- Group 1 — errors concerning the meaning of words
- Group 2 — errors concerning dates
- Group 3 — errors concerning Israel's tribal histories
- Group 4 — errors resulting from an attempt to fake the events of Zedekiah's reign from the information available in the biblical book of Jeremiah.

BM — stands in the following as an abbreviation for Book of Mormon.

BM references are given in accordance with the practice in the Book of Mormon

For example: 3/19 = page 3 verse 19
91/18 = page 91 verse 18

GROUP 1 — We take 3 instances of errors which arose from the fact that the writer of the Book of Mormon was not conversant with the Hebrew language and even misunderstood the meaning of Hebrew words and their translations.

BM indicates in a number of places that there is only one messiah —

“For there is save one Messiah spoken of by the prophets, and that Messiah is he who should be rejected of the Jews.” (Refer 91/18. Also 3/19 and 16/4,5).

This misconception concerning the word ‘messiah’ is fairly common even today. There are really many messiahs in the Bible. The Hebrew word ‘messiah’, which means ‘anointed’, was merely left untranslated in English Bibles where it referred to Jesus.

BM states that the word Christ is a name —

“...and according to the words of the prophets, and also the word of the angel of God, his name shall be Jesus Christ...” (91/19).

The error is repeated —

“Wherefore, as I said unto you, it must needs be expedient that Christ – for in the last night the angel spake unto me that this should be his name...” (71/3. See also 71/7, 73/7).

This misconception concerning the word ‘christ’ is also fairly common today. But ‘Christ’ is simply the Greek translation of the Hebrew word ‘messiah’. It means anointed. It is a title, not a name.

BM perpetuates the mistranslation of Isaiah 7:14, a mistake which a real Hebrew could not possibly have made —

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign – Behold a virgin shall conceive and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” (80/14. See also 18/13, 18/18, 19/20, 211/10).

The original Hebrew text does not mean ‘virgin.’

For fuller information on this aspect refer to Pamphlet 11 issued 20/11/1963.

SUMMARY OF GROUP 1 ERRORS: On each of the above points BM is the product of a misapprehension. The writer of the Book of Mormon derived his information from English translations of the Bible and from church doctrine. He was not a Hebrew.

GROUP 2 — The following instance represents a compound of 2 errors.

BM states on a number of occasions that a period of 600 years elapsed between the first year of Zedekiah, king of Judah, and the birth of Jesus. As the narrative of BM progresses so, too, the lapse of time is specifically mentioned.

But the period in question could not have exceeded 594 years. Zedekiah came to the throne in 597 BC. Jesus was born no later than 3 BC.

SUMMARY OF GROUP 2 ERRORS: The writer of BM apparently relied on a history of the kings of Judah which gave unreliable datings and showed Zedekiah commencing his reign in 600 BC. There have been many such works. In addition, he laboured under the misapprehension that Jesus was born somewhere between 1 BC and 1 AD. When the present calendar was introduced, however, the birth year of Jesus was miscalculated. Jesus was born no later than 3 BC. Again we see that BM is unauthoritative and that it is really a compound of misapprehensions.

GROUP 3 — The story of the Book of Mormon demands a link between its supposed author and certain of the tribes of Israel. The following errors reveal that the link given in BM is entirely fictional.

Historical background: To appreciate the errors a little historical background is necessary.

The 12 tribes of Israel descended from the 12 sons of Jacob. These 12 tribes settled in Palestine about 1446 BC after the exodus from Egypt. Subsequently they divided into 2 kingdoms. The 10 tribes in the north became known as Israel. These tribes included the descendants of Joseph. The southern kingdom was known as Judah. It consisted of 2 tribes. The capital of Judah was Jerusalem.

Between 741 BC – 676 BC the tribes of the northern kingdom were taken captive by Assyria. The capital, Samaria, was destroyed. The captive tribes, which included the descendants of Joseph, did not return to Palestine.

Tribal descent – BM claim: The writer of the opening chapters of BM claims to be a descendant of Joseph living in Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, about 600 BC. He claims his father was a prophet. This claim surprises us because most of the biblical prophets belonged to the tribes of the southern kingdom. A prophet descended from Joseph in Jerusalem at the time he claims would have been a most noteworthy individual. Most certainly the prophet Jeremiah would have noticed him. Our suspicions about his authenticity are confirmed when we find no mention of him in the writings of Jeremiah.

Again, we might reasonably expect the writer of BM to substantiate his claim to be a descendant of Joseph. We want to see his credentials. We expect a genealogy. He does not give one. Instead, he takes 205 words to tell us, inter alia, that he omits his credentials because he requires the space on the plates for other things. This reticence compares rather unfavourably with the attitude adopted in the New Testament by Luke. Luke took only 204 words to give a genealogy covering a period twice as long as BM's genealogy would have had to cover.

We may well suspect the authenticity of a writer who declines to present his credentials in the way the BM writer has done.

The Ten Lost Tribes: We noted above that the 10 tribes of Israel were taken captive by the Assyrians and never returned to Palestine.

BM claims that no one living in Jerusalem in 600 BC knew where the tribes of Israel were. BM says —

“Yea, the more part of all the tribes have been led away, and they are scattered to and fro upon the isles of the sea; and wither they are none of us knoweth, save that we know that they have been led away.” (46/4. See also 102/12).

If you refer to 1 Chronicles 5:26; 2 Kings 17:6; 23/24, and 2 Kings 18:11/13 you will see that the chroniclers of Judah knew very well where these tribes were. Furthermore, 700 years later, about 100 AD, the Jewish historian, Josephus, was able to write:

“...but then the entire body of the people remained in that country; wherefore there are but two tribes in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans, while the ten tribes are beyond the Euphrates till now, and are an immense number and not to be estimated by numbers.”

(Antiquities Book 11 chapter 4. See also Book 10 chapter 10).

The statement in BM is ridiculous. It reflects the imperfect state of knowledge that existed when the Book of Mormon was concocted in 1823. The statement could not possibly have been made by an Israelite living in Jerusalem about 600 BC. As the evidence from Josephus shows, it could not even have been made by an Israelite living in Palestine in 100 AD.

SUMMARY OF GROUP 3 ERRORS: In dealing with the tribal history of Israel the writer of BM reveals an ignorance consistent with many misconceptions common in 1823. His statements are inconsistent with the actual state of knowledge in Jerusalem about 600 BC.

GROUP 4 — We have observed above that the biblical prophet Jeremiah was living in Jerusalem at the time the writer of the opening chapters of BM claims to have lived there. In attempting to fake a history of the period, the writer of BM failed to observe that the writings of Jeremiah were not in chronological order. The result is that BM has misplaced historical events of the period.

Jeremiah's imprisonment: Jeremiah was imprisoned shortly before the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. But the BM, referring to the same imprisonment, has him in prison between 2 and 5 years too soon. (12/14. Jeremiah 37:15).

Jeremiah's message: Jeremiah's message changed as the change in circumstances gave rise to a new need. After the accession of Zedekiah as vassal king of Judah in 597 BC his message was one of peace without and work within:

“Serve the king of Babylon and live. Why should Jerusalem be destroyed?” (Jeremiah 27:17, 27:13).

The prophet of BM showed no awareness that this was the essence of Jeremiah's message at the time in question. The message of the BM “prophet” breathes the very spirit of hellfire and destruction —

“Wo, wo, unto Jerusalem, for I have seen thine abominations! Yea, and many things did my father read concerning Jerusalem that it should be destroyed, and the inhabitants thereof; many should perish by the sword and many should be carried away captive into Babylon.” (2/13. See also 6/17).

It is worth noting that Jerusalem was a vassal of Babylon from 604 BC onwards and that, in the time of Zedekiah many of the Jewish nobility were already captive in Babylon.

There is a certain degree of similarity between BM and the remarks of 2 Chronicles chapter 36. It should be noted, however, that 2 Chronicles chapter 36 was an historical retrospect. And so, quite obviously, was the Book of Mormon "prophecy."

SUMMARY OF GROUP 4 ERRORS: On every point of significance where a comparison can be made BM represents a contradiction of Jeremiah. These contradictions arise from the failure by the writer of BM to perceive the lack of chronological order in the book of Jeremiah.

In addition to the above there are a number of other instances where the same principle is in evidence.

CONCLUSIONS SUMMARISED

We have not attempted to give an exhaustive catalogue of the errors which appear in the Book of Mormon. More than enough evidence has been given above to demonstrate that the work is completely spurious.

The evidence could be proliferated. We leave you to the amusement of finding more errors for yourself.

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