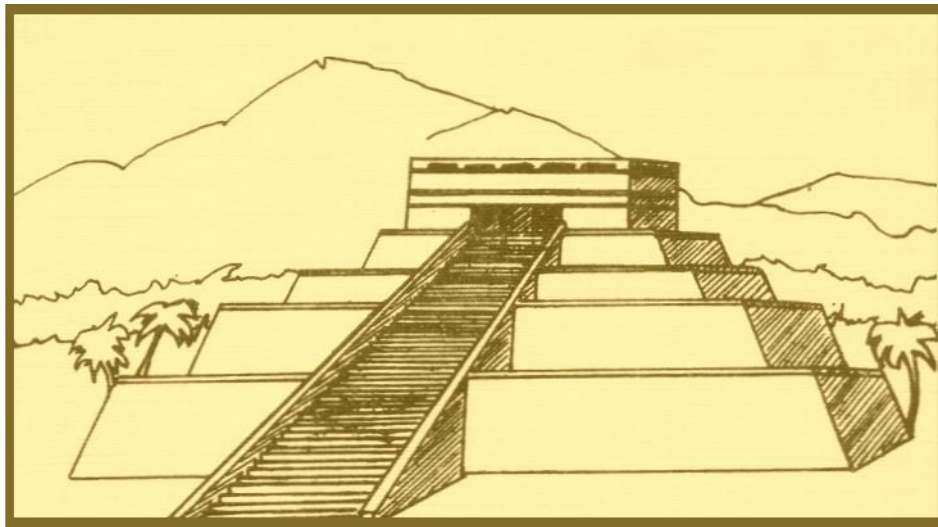


Does The Bible Prophecy Of The Book Of Mormon?



Again the Word of the Lord came to me, saying, "As for you, Son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: 'For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.' Then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions.'" Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand. And when the children of your people speak to you, saying, 'Will you not show us what you mean by these?'--"say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will join them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in my hand.'"

Ezekiel 37:15-19

How Does the Mormon Church See This?

The sticks refer to scrolls, the ancient form of book. The stick of Judah is seen to be the Bible, as it records the history primarily of that tribe. The stick of Joseph is in like manner the Book of Mormon, as it records the history of his descendants in the New World. This then is a prophetic command to make these two records, and then at a later date, combine them into a single record that will tell of the same God--the joining into one stick refers to this.

What's Around it?

This passage, like all other passages and verses in the Bible, doesn't exist in a vacuum. It fits into a chapter, which fits into a book, which fits into the Bible as a whole. In order to interpret this or any other passage, we need to follow the flow of thought, just as we would when reading anything else. This flow of thought is often called "context". In this case, we find that the context involves a specific era of time, and this section fits into it. From chapter 34 through the end of the book, Ezekiel is prophesying of the return of the nation Israel to their land after their captivity-read it and see. This passage is right in the middle of that. We should realize that at the time Ezekiel wrote his book, the Israeli people were divided into two kingdoms, called Judah and Israel (see 1 Kings 12:16-24), each with their own king over them. As we can see by reading beyond the passage quoted above (in other words, examining the context), God was not finished speaking at the end of verse 19. Starting with verse 20, He Himself gives the interpretation of this prophecy. He tells us that, after the captivity, the kingdoms of Judah and Israel (the latter called "Ephraim" here, as it is in Hosea and elsewhere) will no longer be separate, but will be one kingdom with a single king over them. The Mormon interpretation ignores and disagrees with God's.

Is A Stick A Scroll?

Nowhere in the Bible is a stick used to symbolize a scroll. The prophet himself refers to "a roll of the book", meaning a scroll, in Ezekiel 2:9, and this is the normal Biblical phrase used to denote a scroll. The Hebrew word used here is *ates*, which is translated as "stick" only 14 times in the entire Old Testament, 8 of those times right here in this passage. It is the only Hebrew word translated stick in the Bible, but it is also translated by other English words. You will find it translated "planks" in Ezekiel 41:25, and as "timber" in Ezekiel 26:12. It is most often translated as "tree" (163 times), as it is in Ezekiel 36:30. Of the more than 300 times it is used, it never has any reference to scrolls - basically it means a piece of cut wood. Come to think of it, if *ates* had been translated by any one of a number of possible English words other than "stick" (like perhaps "wood", as it is in Ezekiel 24:10 and over 100 other places), the Mormon interpretation of this prophecy would simply not exist. This is because the idea of a second record or Scripture is based solely on the English translation, and has no support from the original Hebrew usage. As a result, it is not a valid interpretation.

The Stick of Judah

In order for the official Mormon interpretation to be seriously considered, the Bible would have to record primarily the history of the Hebrew tribe of Judah. And yet, when we look at the Bible itself, we find it records extensively the history of all the tribes of Israel. You will find the story of the formation of the tribes in Genesis; the history of their escape from Egypt and wanderings in the wilderness in Exodus through Deuteronomy; the account of their conquest of Canaan in Joshua; and the record of their later years up through the captivity in Judges through Kings. In each case, it is all the tribes that are seen, with Judah receiving no special amount of spotlight. It is only in the Chronicles and a few of the prophetic writings that any special focus on the divided kingdom named Judah is seen. And then in the New Testament, Jesus, Paul and James refer to all twelve tribes (Matthew 19:28; Acts 26:7; James 1:1; etc.), since they all are of equal importance,

and they all were still present in Palestine. So, it is apparent the Mormon interpretation doesn't fit the context, the word usage, or even the literary and historical facts. Therefore, there is no real reason to accept Mormonism's interpretation.

But Let's Be Fair About This

What if this is a prophecy of a second book of Scripture like the Book of Mormon claims to be, despite all these problems. In order to be fair, and give the Mormon interpretation a chance to vindicate itself, we need to check and see if the Book of Mormon actually fulfills the specific requirements of the prophecy. So, for the moment, we'll assume the Mormon interpretation of the passage is accurate, and then see if the Book of Mormon fits.

The Stick of Joseph

The funny thing is, the Book of Mormon never calls itself the stick of Joseph. Now, we admit this is a minor point, but it would be logical to expect the Book of Mormon to refer to itself as such at least once. The Bible supposedly calls itself the stick of Judah (although only this one time), and the Book of Mormon should be more than willing to identify itself as the counterpart stick of Joseph. Unless, of course, the "prophecy" (or, more accurately, the Mormon interpretation of the prophecy) is one that was found in a search to provide Biblical support after the Book of Mormon was written - that would answer a lot of these problems.

A Stick is a Scroll

The prophecy as interpreted by the Mormon church requires that the "stick of Joseph which is in the hand of Ephraim" be written on scrolls. If that is what a stick is referring to, the only way it could be fulfilled is if this second record is written on a scroll. However, all reports from the Mormon church indicate the Book of Mormon was written on gold plates, never on scrolls. So, if a stick does mean a scroll, the Book of Mormon is automatically eliminated from consideration.

The Stick of Ephraim

The Bible records Israel's son Joseph as having only two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim (Genesis 41:50-52). If this prophecy is of a second record or Scripture, it must record the history of the second of these sons, Ephraim. This is because if the "stick of Judah" refers to the history of Judah's descendants, and the "stick of Joseph" is the similar record of his descendants, the stick of Ephraim (which is obviously the same record as that of Joseph) must record Joseph's descendants through Ephraim. And yet, the Book of Mormon itself, in Alma 10:3, shows that it is really the supposed history of Manasseh's descendants, not Ephraim's. As can be plainly seen, the Book of Mormon fails on this part of the prophecy as well. So it looks like whether you accept the Mormon interpretation, or reject it because of all the problems with context and all, the Book of Mormon is definitely not prophesied by Ezekiel 37:15-19.

It's time we looked at another "prophecy" of the Book of Mormon. We won't examine this one quite as closely, but a few points do need to be made about it, as will become clear.

"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 of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust." Isaiah 29:4

So, What Does This Mean to Mormonism?

This prophecy refers to how the Book of Mormon was brought out of the ground, a record of an ancient people in that way speaking out of the dust. The Book of Mormon prophet, Moroni, even applies this prophecy to this record in Moroni 10:27. In addition, it should be noted that the Book of Mormon has a familiar spirit for it contains the words of the prophets of the God of Israel, like it's counterpart, the Bible.

Who is He Speaking To?

Once again, let's check the context. Right away, we find this prophecy is being given to the inhabitants of a city called "Ariel" (Isaiah 29:1, 2, 7). With a little investigation, we can determine that "Ariel" (meaning "hearth of God") is actually a reference to Jerusalem, David's capital city and the location of the Temple where sacrifices were offered. It is in no way referring to any distant people, or a record they have buried, since the chapter and those following pronounces severe judgment upon the city by the Lord for trusting in Egypt rather than Him for defense (see chapters 30 and 31). Most of the events described actually happened when Judah went into the Babylonian captivity several years later, so it cannot be applied to another, even later event. So, once again, the context completely rules out the possibility that this refers to a branch of Israel, in a distant land, having their record buried and brought out of the dust.

But What If It's True?

As we did before, in order to be fair, we should operate on the assumption that the prophecy is speaking of the Book of Mormon. About the only thing we'd like to look at closely is the claim that it has a familiar spirit. Nearly any Mormon would be glad to bear his testimony that it does, without a doubt, have a familiar spirit - and perhaps it does. You see, the Bible uses this term other places, and we can learn a lot from how it is used there. Before reading any further, get your Bible and look up Leviticus 19:31; 20:6 27 and Deuteronomy 18:9-12. It is very important you read these in the King James Version before you read any more of this booklet. You have probably reached the obvious conclusion that according to the Word of God, anyone (or in this case, anything) who has a familiar spirit is an abomination before God. This is because we would call a person who has a familiar spirit a medium - in other words, a person who is on friendly terms with demons. The prophet, by the way, uses the phrase with the same meaning in Isaiah 8:19 and 19:3, so it is clear he means the same thing in this passage. So, if the Mormon church wishes to claim the Book of Mormon has a familiar spirit, that's fine by us - but don't be surprised when we don't accept it as the Word of God.

Where Do We Go From Here?

There are a number of similar "prophecies" we could go through (like Genesis 49:11, 12 and Revelation 14:6, 7) that are used by the Mormon church to support the contention that the Book

of Mormon is the Word of God. Each of these falls apart, just like these two -- and for the same reasons when examined closely. Check them out for yourself, and see what we mean - in fact, we strongly encourage you to check out everything you hear people say the Bible teaches to see if it is really there. Having examined what the Bible says by and for ourselves, we find we can confidently say that, except for the prophecies of Mark 13:21-23 and Luke 21:8, the Bible clearly does not prophesy of the Book of Mormon.

-J Steven Smith