

# Is The Book Of Mormon Inspired By God? Was Joseph Smith A Prophet Of God?

## Introduction:

- A. Answering the question, "Was Joseph Smith a prophet of God?" may be the single most important question relating to Mormonism for several reasons.
1. If Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon religion, was a true prophet of God:
    - a) His writings must be obeyed to be saved. Mormons believe that there is no salvation without accepting Joseph Smith as a prophet of God (Doctrines of Salvation, Vol. 1, p. 188).
    - b) A person must be a Mormon to be saved. Smith claims to have been ordained to restore the true church which had been lost. Mormons believe that the Mormon Church is the only true church.
  2. If Joseph Smith was a false prophet:
    - a) His writings must be disobeyed (2 John 1.9). Everyone obeying his writings is lost in sin (Hebrews 5.9).
    - b) The Mormon church is not the Lord's church.
- B. 1 John 4.1; The purpose of this lesson is test Joseph Smith to determine whether or not he was a prophet of God and to test the Book of Mormon to determine whether or not it was inspired by God.
1. In this lesson I am not attempting to cite every contradiction, inconsistency or error found in the Book of Mormon or in the life of Joseph Smith.
  2. This lesson will only touch the hem of the garment relating to the problems with the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith.
  3. After hearing this lesson, if you have any questions concerning the lesson or any Bible subject I will be more than happy to sit down and study the matter with you.
- C. I also want to be very clear that I am not presenting this lesson because I hate Mormons.
1. My desire is simply to present the truth in love (cf. Ephesians 4.15).
  2. In an effort to not misrepresent Joseph Smith or the Book of Mormon, I have done my best to document and cite sources for every point made regarding the Book of Mormon and the life and teaching of Joseph Smith.

## I. Was Joseph Smith A Prophet Of God?

- A. In Deuteronomy 18.21-22, God gives us the standard by which we evaluate a prophet: “‘And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.” If only one of Joseph Smith's prophecies failed to come true, we know that he is a false prophet. He should not be obeyed and should not be feared. Very quickly, let's notice a few of Smith's failed prophecies:
- B. In 1835, Joseph Smith prophesied that the Lord would come in fifty-six years (History of the Church, Vol. 2, p. 182). 1891 has come and gone: this prophecy failed. The Lord has not come as of today.
- C. On May 6, 1834 Joseph Smith prophesied, “I prophesy in the name of the Lord God of Israel, unless the United States redress the wrongs committed upon the Saints in the state of Missouri and punish the crimes committed by her officers that in a few years the government will be utterly overthrown and wasted, and there will not be so much as a potsherd left for their wickedness in permitting the murder of men, women and children, and the wholesale plunder and extermination of thousands of her citizens to go unpunished” (History of the Church, Vol. 5, p. 394). This prophecy failed. As of today, the United States government and Missouri have not been overthrown and still stand strong.
- D. In Missouri, Smith prophesied, “And now I am prepared to say by the authority of Jesus Christ, that not many years shall pass away before the United States shall present such a scene of bloodshed as has not a parallel in the history of our nation; pestilence, hail, famine, and earthquake will sweep the wicked of this generation from off the face of the land, to open and prepare the way for the return of the lost tribes of Israel from the north country. The people of the Lord, those who have complied with the requirements of the new covenant, have already commenced gathering together to Zion, which is in the state of Missouri; therefore I declare unto you the warning which the Lord has commanded to declare unto this generation, remembering that the eyes of my Maker are upon me, and that to him I am accountable for every word I say, wishing nothing worse to my fellow-men than their eternal salvation; therefore, Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come. Repent ye, repent ye, and embrace the everlasting covenant and flee to Zion, before the overflowing scourge overtake you, for there are those now living upon the earth whose eyes shall not be closed in death until they see all these things, which I have spoken, fulfilled”

(History of the Church, Vol. 1, pp. 315-316). This prophecy failed. Missouri is not Zion and Smith eventually moved from Missouri to Nauvoo, Illinois.

E. Joseph Smith said that there are men living on the moon who dress like Quakers and live to be nearly 1000 years old (The Young Woman's Journal, Vol. 3, pp. 263-264. See reprint in Mormonism -- Shadow or Reality? by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, p. 4). This prophecy is false.

F. The test: Deuteronomy 18.21-22.

1. **Joseph Smith fails the test!**

2. **He was not a prophet of God!**

## **II. Over 4,000 Changes To “The Most Correct” Book Ever?**

A. Regarding the accuracy of the first 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon.

1. Descriptions of the translation process:

a) David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, made this statement: “I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English.” (An Address to All Believers in Christ, by David Whitmer, 1887, page 12)

b) Martin Harris (another of the three witnesses) claimed that Joseph Smith received the translation directly from God, and that it was a perfect translation. George Reynolds quotes the following from a letter written to the Deseret News by Edward Stevenson: “Martin explained the translation as follows: By aid of the seer stone, sentences would appear and were read by the prophet and written by Martin, and when finished he would say, “Written,” and if correctly written, that sentence would disappear and another appear in its place, but if not written correctly it remained until corrected, so that the translation was just as it was engraven on the plates, precisely in the language then used.” (Myth of the Manuscript Found, Juvenile Instructor Office, 1883 edition, page 91)

c) George Reynolds, who was a member of the First Council of the Seventy, 1890-1909, made this statement in 1883: “But at the outset it must be recollected that the translation was accomplished by no common method,

by no ordinary means. It was done by divine aid. There were no delays over obscure passages, no difficulties over the choice of words, no stoppages from the ignorance of the translator; no time was wasted in investigation or argument over the value, intent or meaning of certain characters, and there were no references to authorities. These difficulties to human work were removed. All was as simple as when a clerk writes from dictation. The translation of the characters appeared on the Urim and Thummim, sentence by sentence, and as soon as one was correctly transcribed the next would appear.” (Myth of the Manuscript Found, 1883 edition, page 71)

- d) Oliver B. Huntington recorded in his journal that in 1881 Joseph F. Smith, who became the sixth President of the Mormon Church, taught that the Lord gave Joseph Smith the exact English wording and spelling that he should use in the Book of Mormon: “Saturday Feb. 25, 1881, I went to Provo to a quarterly Stake Conference. Heard Joseph F. Smith describe the manner of translating the Book of Mormon by Joseph Smith the Prophet and Seer, which was as follows as near as I can recollect the substance of his description. Joseph did not render the writing on the gold plates into the English language in his own style of language as many people believe, but every word and every letter was given to him by the gift and power of God. So it is the work of God and not of Joseph Smith, and it was done in this way...The Lord caused each word spelled as it is in the book to appear on the stones in short sentences or words, and when Joseph had uttered the sentence or word before him and the scribe had written it properly, that sentence would disappear and another appear. And if there was a word wrongly written or even a letter incorrect the writing on the stones would remain there. Then Joseph would require the scribe to spell the reading of the last spoken and thus find the mistake and when corrected the sentence would disappear as usual.” (Journal of Oliver B. Huntington, page 168 of typed copy at Utah State Historical Society)
2. Joseph Smith:
- a) “...we heard a voice from out of the bright light above us, saying, 'These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been translated by the power of God. The translation of them which you have seen is correct, and I command you to bear record of what you now see and hear.'” (History of the Church, by Joseph Smith, Vol. 1, pp. 54-55)

- b) "I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on the earth..." (History of the Church, Vol. 4, page 461)
3. What do these statements prove?
- a) According to the testimony of the three witnesses and others, the original 1830 edition and translation of the Book of Mormon was brought about completely by the power of God.
    - (1) Every step of the process from the original hand written translation to the completed printed copy was alleged to have been guided by the hand of God.
    - (2) All will surely concede that anything brought about by the will and power of God is perfect in every way and has no need of being changed by any person.
  - b) According to the alleged prophet of God, Joseph Smith, the original 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon was perfect in every way, was more correct than any book that has existed or ever will exist, was okayed by GOD, and was in no way deserving of any changes!
- B. And yet, there have been over 4,000 changes to the original 1830 edition and translation of the Book of Mormon!!!
- 1. Jerald and Sandra Tanner documented nearly 4,000 changes in their book "3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon."
    - a) These changes are those that have occurred between the 1830 and the 1964 editions.
    - b) These changes do not include the capitalization and punctuation changes.
  - 2. In the more recent 1981 edition there were even more changes implemented.
- C. Could these simply be typographical errors?
- 1. In the early years of the Mormon Church (the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) and some still today will brush these off as simply being typographical errors.
  - 2. First of all, common sense should tell us that, while relatively few typographical errors might be expected, 4,000 changes cannot be blamed on typographical errors.
  - 3. Secondly, anyone can take a look at two documents used prior to and for printing purposes to prove that the need for changes was not brought about because of typographical errors.

- a) A photograph of the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon published in the book, *A New Witness For Christ In America*, Vol. 1.
  - b) The original handwritten printer's manuscript of the Book of Mormon, located in the Reorganized LDS Church Historian's Library in Independence, Missouri. (Photos of the printer's manuscript can be seen at the University of Utah Library Special Collections.)
- D. How does this compare with the Bible?
- 1. Original Language.
    - a) 1830 BOM: "Reformed Egyptian" (officially does not exist)
    - b) Bible: Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek (all taught in major universities)
  - 2. Translation Process.
    - a) 1830 BOM: Power of God (allegedly)
    - b) Bible: Skill of men
  - 3. Stated Accuracy in Translation.
    - a) 1830 BOM: No translation errors
    - b) Bible: Translation errors
  - 4. Observed Accuracy in Translation.
    - a) 1830 BOM: Thousands of major errors
    - b) Bible: 99.9% accurate

### **III. What kinds of changes have been made in the Book of Mormon?**

#### **A. The Godhead & The Deity of Christ.**

- 1. Jesus is God the Father or the Son of God?
  - a) 1830 ed., pg. 32: "...These last records...shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Eternal Father and the Savior..." vs. Modern editions, 1 Nephi 13.40: "...These last records...shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is **the Son of** the Eternal Father, and the Savior..."
  - b) 1830 ed, pg. 32: "And the angel said unto me, behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Eternal Father!" vs. Modern editions, 1 Nephi 11.21: "And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even **the Son of** the Eternal Father!"

2. Mary was the mother of God (the Father) or the Son of God? 1830 edition, pg. 25: "...Behold, the virgin which thou seest, is the mother of God, after the manner of the flesh." vs. Modern editions, 1 Nephi 11.18: "...Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh."

#### **B. King Benjamin or King Mosiah?**

1. 1830 ed., pg. 200: "...king Benjamin had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings..." vs. Modern editions, Mosiah 21.28: "...king Mosiah had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings..."
2. 1830 ed., pg. 546: "...for this cause did king Benjamin keep them..." vs. Modern editions, Ether 4.1: "...for this cause did king Mosiah keep them..."
3. According to the chronology of the Book of Mormon (cf. Mosiah 6.5) king Benjamin was already dead when the events of Mosiah 21.28 and Ether 4.1 occurred!

#### **C. Hundreds of grammatical errors.**

#### **D. Numerous additions, deletions or rewordings.**

### **IV. BOM Contradicts Science and History**

#### **A. The Writings of the Indians.**

1. BOM → The Indians had official records and other writings, and they wrote on scrolls (cf. Helaman 3.13; Mormon 5.23; 9.2; 2 Nephi 9.18).
2. FACT → Indians of that time period did not write books; their "writing" consisted of simple pictures.

#### **B. The Racial Ancestry of North American Indians.**

1. BOM → North American Indians descended from the Hebrews (cf. 1 Nephi 12.11-23).
2. FACT → North American Indians are of mongoloid descent.

#### **C. The Curse of Black (or Dark) Skin.**

1. BOM → Anyone who marries an Indian will be cursed with dark skin (cf. 2 Nephi 5.21-23).
2. FACT → A person's skin color is determined by their genes, not because they marry an Indian.

#### **D. Those Who Convert to Mormonism Will Become White.**

1. BOM → When Indians (and black people) become Mormons their skin will become white (cf. 2 Nephi 30.5-7 (pre-1981); 3 Nephi 2.15).
2. FACT → To date, the skin color of an Indian or black person has never become white upon converting to Mormonism.
3. **Note:** *In the previous two examples, black or dark skin is said in the Book of Mormon to be a punishment for sinning (cf. 2 Nephi 5.21-23; Jacob 3.3-9; Mormon 5.15-17; Alma 3.6-10). As a side point, this shows the racial prejudice of Joseph Smith and the early Mormon Church.*

#### **E. Cattle, Beasts of Burden, and Other Animals Are Native to North America.**

1. BOM → Horses, cows, oxen, asses, and domestic goats were all native to North America (cf. 1 Nephi 18.25).
2. FACT → These animals were not introduced to the Americas until after Columbus.

#### **F. The Presence of Wheat and Barley.**

1. BOM → Wheat and barley existed in North America during the time of the Book of Mormon (cf. Mosiah 9.9).
2. FACT → It was much later before the Europeans introduced wheat and barley to North America.

### **V. BOM Contradicts Mormon Doctrines And Other Mormon Books**

#### **A. One God vs. Plurality of Gods.**

1. BOM → One God – Alma 11.27-39, 44; 2 Nephi 31.21; Mormon 7.7; 3 Nephi 11.27.
2. D & C → Plurality of gods - Section 121.32; 132.18-20, 37.

#### **B. God is Spirit vs. God has Physical Body.**

1. BOM → God is spirit – Alma 18.26-28; 22.8-11.
2. D & C → God has a physical body – Section 130.22.

#### **C. Earth Created by One God vs. Earth Created by Multiple Gods.**

1. BOM → Earth created by one God - 2 Nephi 2.14; Jacob 4.9
2. PoGP → Earth created by multiple gods – Abraham chs. 4-5

#### **D. Man Did Not Pre-Exist vs. Man Did Pre-Exist.**

1. BOM → Man did not pre-exist – Jacob 4.9; Alma 18.28, 34-36.

2. D & C; PoGP → Man did pre-exist – Section 93.23, 29-33; Abraham 3.18, 21-23

**E. Heaven and Hell vs. Three Kingdoms of Heaven.**

1. BOM → Heaven and Hell – 2 Nephi 28.22; 1 Nephi 15.35; Mosiah 16.11, 27.31; Alma 41.4-8, 42.16.
2. D & C → Three Kingdoms of Heaven – Section 76.43, 70-112.

**F. Murder Can Be Forgiven vs. No Forgiveness for Murder.**

1. BOM → Murder can be forgiven – 3 Nephi 30.2.
2. D & C → Murder cannot be forgiven – Section 42.18.

**G. Polygamy Condemned vs. Polygamy Commanded.**

1. BOM → Polygamy condemned – Jacob 1.15, 2.24, 3.5; Mosiah 11.2.
2. D & C → Polygamy commanded – Section 132.1, 37-39, 61.

**VI. Other Oddities Surrounding The Book of Mormon**

**A. The Book of Mormon does not contain information regarding 12 essential Mormon doctrines.**

- |                                |                            |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Church organization         | 7. Men may become Gods     |
| 2. Plurality of Gods           | 8. Three degrees of glory  |
| 3. Plurality of wives doctrine | 9. Baptism for the dead    |
| 4. Word of Wisdom              | 10. Eternal progression    |
| 5. God is an exalted man       | 11. The Aaronic Priesthood |
| 6. Celestial marriage          | 12. Melchizedek Priesthood |

**B. A Large Percentage of The Book of Mormon is copied from the KJV; over 15%.**

1. Many lengthy passages are quoted almost verbatim – *e.g.*, Moroni 10 with 1 Corinthians 12.1–11; 2 Nephi 14 with Isaiah 4; 2 Nephi 12 with Isaiah 2; Mosiah 14 with Isaiah 53; 3 Nephi 13 with Matthew 6; *et al.*
2. The Book of Mormon also carries over some the translation errors of the KJV; *e.g.*, 3 Nephi 11.27 with 1 John 5.7; 2 Nephi 14.5 with Isaiah 4.5; 2 Nephi 15.25 with Isaiah 5.25; *et al.*

**C. Written in Elizabethan or Jacobean English.**

1. Which had not been spoken for years prior to the translation of the Book of Mormon.
2. *I.e.*, thee, thy, thou, ye, -eth endings, etc.

**D. There are many parallels and similarities between the Book of Mormon and Ethan Smith's "View of the Hebrews."**

1. Published in 1823.
2. Just a few miles from where Joseph Smith grew up.

**VII. What Must We Do With This Information?**

- A. Based on the test given to us by God in Deuteronomy 18.21-22, Joseph Smith is not a prophet of God.
- B. The book that Joseph Smith said was the most correct of any book on the earth has been shown to not be very correct.
  1. There have been over 4,000 major changes since it's original alleged inspired translation.
  2. The BOM contradicts facts of science and history.
  3. The BOM contradicts other Mormon books and doctrine.
- C. In testing the Book of Mormon to determine whether or not it is from God, it is more obvious than with any book on the earth that it is not inspired by God.
- D. Friends, we **MUST** reject the Book of Mormon and the teachings of Joseph Smith!

**VIII. Concluding Remarks**

- A. I want to thank you for your kind attention this evening as we have discussed the very important matter concerning the lack of inspiration of the Book of Mormon and the failed prophesies of Joseph Smith.
- B. I realize that this has only been a surface study of these matters pertaining to the inspiration of the Book of Mormon.
  1. Again, I do not claim to have covered every contradiction and problem with the Book of Mormon and the life and teachings of Joseph Smith.
  2. If you have any questions about anything I have said this evening or if you would like to study these matters or any Biblical subject, please, let me know and I will be more than happy to sit down and study the matter with you.

- C. If you desire a copy of this lesson, in outline form, on tape or CD, or videotape, please put your name and mailing address on the sheet here in the front. I'll do my best to get that to you as soon as possible.

### **Conclusion: The Invitation of Jesus**

- A. If you desire salvation from your sins and the consequences of your sin – spiritual death and eternal separation from God in Hell (cf. Isaiah 59.2; Romans 6.23; 2 Thessalonians 1.8-9) – Jesus freely offers this salvation to all those who obey Him (Hebrews 5.9; cf. Matthew 7.21-27). All who desire to obey Jesus will...
- B. Hear the gospel – Romans 10.14,17; John 6.44-45
- C. Believe or have faith in Christ – John 8.24; Hebrews 11.6 (cf. Romans 10.17)
- D. Repent of your sins – 2 Peter 3.9; Acts 2.38; 17.30
- E. Publicly confess Jesus as Lord – Matthew 10.32-33; Romans 10.9-10
- F. Be immersed or buried with Christ in baptism – Mark 16.16; 1 Peter 3.21; Acts 2.38; 22.16; Galatians 3.26-27
- G. Remain faithful in all things – Revelation 2.10; Colossians 1.21-23; Galatians 5.4
1. After becoming a child of God by being buried with Christ in baptism (cf. Galatians 3.26-27), if you give into temptation and sin (cf. 1 John 1.10; 2.1-2):
  2. You must repent of our sins, pray to God for forgiveness (cf. Acts 8.22) and confess your sin(s) in order for God to forgive us our sins (1 John 1.9).