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Signs of Christ's Coming, VI. The Book of Joseph

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Abstract: Using the text of Ezekiel concerning the “stick of Joseph,” the author examines Old Testament scriptures and Native American legends to establish that the coming forth of the “stick of Joseph,” the Book of Mormon, was a sign of Christ’s second coming.

SIGNS OF CHRIST'S COMING.

VI.

THE BOOK OF JOSEPH.

"Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven."—*Psalm lxxxv.*

"Great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve; and righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten."—*Pearl of Great Price, p. 21.*

"Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth."—*Judges xviii: 17.*

MUCH evidence has been brought forth to establish, beyond a doubt, the "Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon." We deem it, therefore, out of place to produce any addenda, were we capable of doing so, or to repeat more than is absolutely necessary to show the connection of this article with the subject under consideration. That the coming forth of this record is an unmistakable sign of the near approach of the "Son of Man," we expect to fully prove, and request a patient perusal of the evidence adduced.

David saw the time when "righteousness and peace should kiss each other," and "truth should spring out of the ground, and righteousness look down from heaven." This cannot mean the resurrection of our Savior, as Bible annotators and sectarian divines would have us believe, for the context needs but to be read understandingly to see the falsity of that construction. The Psalmist states that when this event shall take place, "The Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase." The mournful history of the "House of Judah," and the utter desolation that has signally marked that land of her inheritance since it drank in the "blood of the Just One," is a melancholy picture in striking contrast with the great day of reconciliation which the Psalmist so clearly portrays; and we are compelled to turn to a solution other than the one advanced and more congenial to our feelings in our

search after truth. "Thy word is truth"—a clearer, more perspicuous definition could not be applied. God's word is truth. Jesus said so; why look further? Then God's word, whether contained in the Book of Judah, or in the Book of Joseph, is truth. "Thus saith the Lord to my servants the prophets," is the watchword to Israel, and when that is uttered, and implicit obedience rendered to its requirements, "Righteousness shall set us in the way of His steps."

When the Prophet Ezra re-wrote the Pentateuch, and gave to Judah inspired records, the word of God was to them truth, and the various additions made subsequently constituted God's word to Judah, which should lead them and guide them to the Savior, that prophet that "God should raise up unto them of their brethren like unto Moses;" but this by no means was to constitute the whole "word of God," but only that part of it that pertained to them as a people, and who were more immediately concerned. Jesus said he had other sheep than those of Judah, and he must visit them and bring them into the fold, that there might be one fold and one shepherd. He did not mean the Gentiles, as many believe, for they did not "hear His voice" as directed to them; but after His resurrection He did visit those other sheep, and as their shepherd enjoined upon them obedience to His laws, and brought them into the fold which He had created by His atonement. Those "other sheep" were of the house of Joseph, who was sold into Egypt, and were living, by the word of God given to them by the mouths of holy men whom God had raised up to be prophets, seers and revelators to His people, and so long as they kept His laws and walked in His paths, they were a blest people, and God greatly prospered them, and they were made recipients of marked esteem and favor; but when they suffered themselves to be overcome, and fostered iniquity, God withdrew himself from them, and darkness excluded the light

of His Holy Spirit, and their minds became so gross and sensual, that He suffered them to be overcome by their enemies, and finally destroyed as a people, and the records they had so long and faithfully kept were necessarily hid up in the earth until God should deem it wisdom in Him to bring them forth. These records constitute what is termed the "Book of Mormon;" and we will now proceed to render impregnable our, at present, seemingly weak position by evidence unimpeachable, and testimony that cannot be gainsaid. The testimony of Ezekiel, as contained in the thirty-seventh chapter of his prophecies, is as follows: "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand."

From the above quotation it is evident that the record, or writing, or stick of Joseph, is to be restored from its place, wherever that may be, and is to be placed with the record of Judah. Now in our search after these records, we are well content to rest, when we have found the Bible, and are satisfied to receive that as the "stick of Judah," of which Ezekiel speaks. But where shall we find the "stick of Joseph?" and what record have they not incorporated in that of Judah? The writer heard a sectarian divine of some notoriety expounding the above prophecy, and he said the "stick of Judah was the Old, and the "stick of Joseph" the New Testament, and that when the compilers had placed them together in calf, or half roan or library sheep, they became one in the Lord's hand, and thus the prophecy was fulfilled. Any comments upon this absurd way of dealing with God's word are unnecessary.

Joseph and his seed were promised blessings in excess of his brethren, even to his inheritance extending to "the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills." And "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall." This is figurative

language, which signifies that Joseph's posterity should become very numerous, and finally a branch of his seed should pass over the boundaries of their first inheritance into another land, which boundary evidently is the sea, as witnesseth the testimony of Isaiah, xvi: 8: "The fields of Heshbon languish, and the vine of Sibmah: the lords of the heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof; they are come even unto Jazer, they wandered through the wilderness: her branches are stretched out (or, marginal readings, plucked up), they are gone over the sea." This Heshbon and Sibmah (or Shibmah) were cities built and inhabited by the ten tribes or nation of Israel. (See Numbers xxxii: 37, 38.) Now the tribe of Joseph was the first, and chief tribe of this nation, the birthright of Reuben the firstborn, was given to Joseph. (Chron. v: 1, 2.) Isaiah says: "The lords of the heathen had broken down the principal plants of the nation that inhabited Heshbon and Shibmah," which was done at the time the Assyrians broke down the ten tribes in the days of Hosea, king of Israel; notwithstanding this, her branches wander through the wilderness, being "stretched out, or plucked up, they go over the sea." The testimony of Jeremiah (xlviii: 32), on this same subject, is: "O vine of Shibmah, I will weep for thee with the weeping of Jazer: thy plants are gone over the sea."

From the foregoing and very many more scriptures which we might quote, we learn that some of the plants of the "House of Israel" did go over the sea; this, taken in connection with the previous quotation concerning "Joseph's branches running over the wall," and the promise that his possessions should extend "to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills" (Gen. xxxix: 26), we have good reason to believe that these branches or plants were of the tribe of Joseph; and left their inheritance on the Eastern continent, to take possession of the land promised upon the "crown of the head of Joseph," which extended "to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills." If we start from Egypt, where

Jacob then stood, and travel on the thirtieth parallel "to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills," we will land in North America. This, then, is the land conferred upon Jacob as a "blessing above that of his progenitors," and as Jacob conferred this blessing upon "the crown of the head of Joseph," (Gen. xlix: 26), we may safely infer that as no stick or record of Joseph has ever been kept on the eastern continent, that we have cognizance of, it is more than likely our search will not be in vain if we turn our attention to this land of America. But when or how the descendants of Joseph came to this land, we will attempt to ascertain by inductive reasoning. We will quote from "American Antiquities," by Josiah Priest, pp. 200 and 202: "The Indian tradition says that the tongues were distributed by a bird, and were infinitely various, and those receiving them were dispersed over the earth in different directions. But it so happened that fifteen heads of families were permitted to speak the same language. These embodied themselves, and traveled till they came to a country which they called Astelon, or the Lake Country, supposed to be in the region of the now United States, according to Humboldt."

From this tradition we learn that this continent was peopled as early as the confusion of tongues at Babel; and corroborated by the discoveries of many, and extensive ruins of ancient structures and cities, of whose inhabitants the world have but a conjecture. The inference, therefore, to be drawn is that a people came here from Babel, who "dwelt alone" deep in the recesses of the "Lake Country," "without gates or bars," and to whom the inhabitants of Hazor were to go, and whom the Lord "would spoil." (Jer. xlix: 30.)

Mr. Boudinot says, "The language of the natives of America, in its roots, idioms and particular construction, appears to have the whole genius of the Hebrew, and what is very remarkable, and well worthy of serious attention, has most of the peculiarities of the language, especially those in which it

differs from most other languages. There is a tradition related by an Indian of the Stockbridge Tribe that their fathers were once in possession of a sacred book which was handed down from generation to generation, and at last hid in the earth, since which time, they had been under the feet of their enemies. But those oracles were to be restored to them again, and then they would triumph over their enemies, and regain their ancient country, together with their rights and privileges." From the above, and many more evidences we could produce, we can ascertain the fact that America was inhabited by a people of vast superiority to the present aborigines, who had a record or stick of their generations, and which was to be brought forth from its hiding place in the earth, or in the words of our text, "truth is to spring from the earth," and according to Ezekiel, "the stick of Joseph is to be brought forth, and placed with the stick of Judah and become one in the Lord's hand." We will now examine the testimony of the great latter-day Prophet, Joseph Smith (for want of space we will cite the reader to "Remarkable Visions," by Orson Pratt), who has given to the world the Book of Mormon; an ancient record of the inhabitants of this continent, which was hid in the earth for many generations and which purports to be a record of the descendants of Joseph, who was sold into Egypt—the veritable stick of which Ezekiel speaks. This remarkable book has been translated into the principal modern tongues, and is now, in junction with the "stick of Judah—Bible—one in the Lord's hand, and gone forth to accomplish His glorious purposes in "gathering the children of Israel from among the heathen whither they be gone, and bringing them to their own land; that He may make them one nation upon the mountains of Israel." Had not the restoration of this record taken place, the seed of Joseph could not have been gathered, nor would the prescient writings of "Holy Men of God" have been of aught avail, as, "in the dispensation of the fulness of times God

might gather together all things;" all things that are hidden must of necessity be revealed, and God's servants be made aware of His secrets, that He has promised to reveal to them, that they may have their lamps trimmed and burning, and prepared for the great supper of the Lamb.

We have briefly—perhaps too briefly—examined this prophecy and adduced testimony in its support, and as lucidly as space would permit, shown the great importance of the "bringing forth" of this book, or stick, as a sign of Christ's coming, for without this sign, the purposes of Jehovah could not be consummated, for upon it hinges all the "law and the prophets," and the gathering and restoration of "scattered Israel is to be brought about by its agency;" in "the Lord's hand," its potency is being felt, and the time is fast approaching when its internal evidence will be received and its counsels heeded by tens of thousands who, to-day, are blind to its merits and led captive at will by that power who has "blinded men's eyes, and stopped their ears, and hardened their hearts," lest Christ should heal

them and they be made aware of the fact, that "in the dispensation of the fulness of times, the generation when this record comes forth, all things predicted by God's servants shall be fulfilled, and Christ shall come and wield the sceptre of righteousness among His people, and every knee shall bow and confess His most holy name."

Robt. S. Spence.

He that walketh with the wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.—*Bible.*

If wise and virtuous men were to govern a State for a hundred years, they would put an end to tyranny and punishment.—*Confucius.*

We must accept blame from any one, but we should know something of him from whom we would have praise.—*Marie Eschenbach.*

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ASSOCIATION INTELLIGENCE.

QUARTERLY CONFERENCE—BOX ELDER.

There was a good attendance at the quarterly Conference of the Y. M. and Y. L. M. I. Associations of the Box Elder Stake of Zion, on Sunday, April 22, 1883, in the New Tabernacle, Brigham City. The congregation was addressed, in the morning, by President Chas. Kelly (who also read a condensed report from the various associations of the Stake), and by Elders B. M. Young, J. B. McMaster, A. H. Snow, of Brigham City, and J. E. Carlisle, of Logan. The last two have recently returned from missions to the Southern States.

The afternoon was occupied by President Chas. Kelly, who spoke favorably of the report submitted in the morning, also upon a few important questions and answers that were brought up at the

last general Conference of the young men, at Salt Lake City. He was followed by Secretary E. H. Peirce, President Minnie J. Snow, in behalf of the young ladies, Elder M. F. Cowley, of Salt Lake City, from whom we were pleased to receive a visit, and by Apostle Lorenzo Snow, who expressed himself as being well pleased with the excellent spirit that prevailed throughout the conference.

Counselor B. M. Young having been called on a mission to the Sandwich Islands, Elder A. H. Snow was chosen to fill the vacancy of first counselor to President Kelly.

QUARTERLY CONFERENCE—WEBER.

The Quarterly Conference of the Y. M. M. I. A. of Weber Stake was held in the Tabernacle, Ogden, Sunday, April