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## The Book of Mormon and the Book of Isaiah

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## SECOND DAY

### MORNING MEETING

President Heber J. Grant presided at the third session of the conference, which began at 10 o'clock a. m., Saturday, April 6, 1929.

The congregation sang the hymn, "How Firm a Foundation."

The invocation was offered by President T. Clark Callister of the Millard Stake.

The congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

#### ELDER JAMES E. TALMAGE

Speaking of the Book of Mormon, concerning which we heard very valuable instructions yesterday, I venture to emphasize the thought that we apply very diligently in our lives the principles and precepts set forth in that volume of scripture. The Book of Mormon is more than a book in the ordinary sense. It is the best of all the literature written in this Church for missionary work. For many years I have urged, as have my brethren likewise, that our missionaries strive to get the Book of Mormon into the hands of the people, both members and non-members of the Church. I am happy in the realization that while a few years ago we sold copies of the Book of Mormon in lots of tens and scores, sending them out to the missions, we now send them by thousands. The statistics regarding the sale and distribution of that work, particularly as reported by the mission presidents, furnish a testimony beyond all question of the pouring out of the Spirit of the Lord upon the people of the world.

#### AS TO BOOK OF MORMON LANDS

I sometimes think we pay a little undue attention to technicalities, and to questions that cannot be fully answered with respect to the Book of Mormon. It matters not to me just where this city or that camp was located. I have met a few of our Book of Mormon students who claim to be able to put a finger upon the map and indicate every land and city mentioned in the Book of Mormon. The fact is, the Book of Mormon does not give us precise and definite information whereby we can locate those places with certainty. I encourage and recommend all possible investigation, comparison and research in this matter. The more thinkers, investigators, workers we have in the field the better; but our brethren who devote themselves to that kind of research should remember that they must speak with caution and not declare as demonstrated truths points that are not really proved. There is enough truth in the Book of Mormon to occupy you and me for the rest of our lives, without our giving too much time and attention to these debatable matters.

## HOW TO KNOW FOR ONE'S SELF

I speak specifically of the testimony that has come to the Latter-day Saints, and that will come to any members of the Church or other earnest investigator who will read the book rightly—as to its genuineness. The divinely-inspired promise written by Moroni has found literal fulfilment in scores of thousands of cases. I refer to his last word respecting the record which he was about to hide up unto the Lord. It is recorded in the tenth chapter of Moroni: “And when ye shall receive 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 shall ask with a sincere heart, with intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.” Then he very pertinently adds: “And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”

Many of us have received that testimony; but of those who have so received there are some who do not stand by it as they should. I think it well that we speak plainly to one another at times. There are those who forget what the Lord has said through the Book of Mormon, and who are led away into the jungle of error, much of which belongs to the marshy and uncertain ground preempted in the name of higher criticism. Permit me to give you an example; one may suffice.

## THE BOOK OF ISAIAH AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

It has been declared and proclaimed by a certain school of Bible students, commentators and scholars, that the Book of Isaiah was written not entirely by Isaiah the Prophet, the son of Amoz—in many respects the greatest of the prophets of that age—but that the book is the work of at least two men, and perhaps of many, part of it written by Isaiah himself, and the other part by another man, without local habitation or name, who lived somewhere, near the end of the period of the Babylonian captivity or exile, fully a century after the death of Isaiah the Prophet. That idea concerning the duality of the Book of Isaiah has been exploited, and there are learned readers of the Bible, who, with superior air, point out certain chapters of the Book of Isaiah which they say were not written by Isaiah the Prophet, but by this “deutero” or second Isaiah. So he is called in view of even the scholars’ ignorance as to his true name or place of abode. The claim is made that the chapters of Isaiah from the second to the thirty-ninth inclusive, were really written by Isaiah, and that thence on to the end of the sixty-sixth chapter, the last in the book, the subject-matter is not the writing of Isaiah at all, but that of another man, who falsely ascribed the authorship to the Prophet.

Such is the speculation concerning the duality of authorship in that book; but, once started, these learned investigators have undertaken to dissect Isaiah and to spread before the gaze of the people both his gross and minute anatomy, to the extent of denying his authorship of other parts of chapters, and of certain verses, singling them out

from the rest, and they have left to the credit of the Prophet Isaiah only twenty-four and a half chapters of his book.

BOOK OF ISAIAH COMPLETE BEFORE 600 B. C.

I well remember when the positive and emphatic denial of the unity of the Book of Isaiah was put forth by the German school of theologians. So too I remember the many questions that arose among our people regarding it, not a few of such questions coming to me personally. To some of the inquirers I said: "Why trouble yourselves about the matter? I know that the claim is false." "Well, have you looked into it?" I was asked. "Sufficiently so," I replied, "for I have received the testimony promised by the Lord through the Prophet Moroni concerning the integrity and genuineness of the Book of Mormon."

In the Second Book of Nephi, I find transcriptions of several chapters of Isaiah, that is to say, chapters as the material is now divided and designated in our Bible—twelve chapters at least, taken from the brass plates of Laban, which plates were brought from Jerusalem to Lehi in the wilderness, as you know, 600 years before the birth of Christ. Laban was a rich man. He could afford to have books made of metal sheets, while others perhaps were content with poorer and less enduring material—just as some people can now afford to have *de luxe* editions and others are willing to accept poorer paper and bindings. But on those plates of brass, brought from Jerusalem in the year 600 B. C., you will find the writings of Isaiah, not only the early chapters allowed to Isaiah by modern scholars, but the later chapters as well, which are ascribed by the critics to the second or false Isaiah. Let us remember that we have in the Book of Mormon transcriptions from the brass plates of Laban, comprising the record of Isaiah, oft-times word for word the same as the translation appearing in the Bible, chapter after chapter. The entire Book of Isaiah must have been in existence at that time.

Abinadi, a Book of Mormon prophet, quoted from what is now called the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah to the priests of Noah; and the fifty-third chapter comes in that portion which is ascribed to the false Isaiah; but the Nephites had it, Lehi had it, Laban had it six hundred years before Christ; and my testimony as to the genuineness of the Book of Mormon is sufficient to set at rights with me any question as to the authorship of the Book of Isaiah.

INTEGRITY OF ISAIAH AFFIRMED BY THE RESURRECTED LORD

Would you have higher authority than that of mortal prophets of Book of Mormon record? Then take the words of the Lord Jesus Christ himself when he appeared a resurrected being amongst the Nephites. In preaching to them he quoted one entire chapter of Isaiah—as we find recorded in the twenty-second chapter of Third Nephi. That quotation by our Lord is practically identical with the fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah. I speak of the chapters as we now have them. I repeat,

Jesus Christ quoted to the Nephites almost word for word what Isaiah had written in what we now know as the fifty-fourth chapter of his book. Then the Lord said: "And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah."

This is the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. In other places, before his death, he had cited Isaiah. While in the flesh he quoted from that prophet, and from the latter chapters of the book, which modern critics say are not the words of Isaiah. By way of further illustration read John 12:38, wherein we find the citation from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which modern critics affirm was not written by Isaiah the Prophet; and in the fortieth verse of the same chapter appears a citation from the sixth chapter of Isaiah, which part the critics do ascribe to Isaiah himself.

But be it remembered that the critics who thus seek to rend, mutilate and generally discredit the Book of Isaiah are not the only ones whose voice should be heard in so important a matter. They have no monopoly of the truth, and when they die wisdom will not perish with them. A great institution of wide influence, The Philosophical Society of Great Britain, otherwise known as the Victoria Institute, has taken up the matter of the unity of Isaiah, and has pointed out the errors of the critics with respect to the claim of duality, thus registering its decision that the Book of Isaiah is a unit, written by the son of Amoz, the prophet whom the Lord verily loved.

#### STUDENTS AND TEACHERS, BE CONSISTENT AND TRUE TO YOUR TESTIMONY

Regretfully I find that in some of our theological classes, and in our seminaries, not only pupils but teachers are following after that false lead and are segregating the words of the Book of Isaiah, part as being his and other portions as the works of another. Could there be a grosser inconsistency than that of proclaiming a belief in the divine inconsistency than that of proclaiming a belief in the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon while teaching or believing that the Book of Isaiah is other than what it purports to be—the writings of Isaiah the son of Amoz throughout?

I cannot feel those in our Church schools and seminaries who put the theories of men above the revelations of God have any rightful place among the teachers in our theological institutions, whether quorum classes, seminaries, or Church school of any name or grade.

#### DIFFERENCES IN STYLE OF WRITING

On what, you may ask, do these critics base this segregation of chapters and verses, as to authorship, in the Book of Isaiah? On two points: First comes the difference in style of composition. The only part of the Book of Isaiah, which is admitted to have been written by the prophet, is worded generally in a spirit of sadness; the tone or color is that of depression, dark presage, as befits the subject. The author is telling of the calamities that will come upon Israel unless they



repent and turn from their wicked ways. The picture is painted in dark colors. The latter part of the book, from the fortieth chapter on, is more joyous, much more cheerful. The author is speaking of the triumph that shall eventually come to God's people. The critics say that Isaiah could not have written in these strikingly different styles. Do you find any modern writer telling a sorrowful tale in happy and exultant words? Is it so that one writer cannot inscribe a story of grief and at another time a story of surpassing joy? Our literature contradicts the thought! Think of the two splendid poems by Milton, his twin pictures, "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," known to most of our students of literature. One is a picture of pessimism, pensiveness, and gloom; the other a scene of optimism, joy and gaiety. There could not be greater contrast. Milton could adapt his style to his theme and did so splendidly; but Isaiah, preaching and speaking under the inspiration of the living God, could not do it, according to the critics who have assailed his work.

BE TRUE TO YOUR TESTIMONY!

To my younger brothers and sisters, to my student friends, I say stand by your testimony. When you have received it from the Lord, let it be your guide. It will be no handicap to you in your researches, your studies, your explorations and investigations. It will not detract from your reputation for learning, if you deserve any such reputation, provided you stand by the truth. As you know, in the Book of Mormon we have that wonderful story of the iron rod seen by Lehi. To those of you who want to explore I say, in all earnestness, tie fast your guide rope to the rod of iron, which is defined as the Word of God. Hold to it firmly, and you may venture out into the region of the unexplored in search of truth if you will; but do not loosen your hold on the rope; and remember that there is very little safety in holding to a rope that is loose at both ends.

By following this course I have had many satisfying explanations of questions that troubled me. Let me illustrate. It has been the general conception that certain animals known to have existed on the eastern hemisphere were not to be found on the western hemisphere in Nephite times; but in the Book of Mormon I find record, positive and simple, that certain of these animals were found by Lehi and his colony. Now, the testimony that the Lord had given me as to the integrity of the Book of Mormon did not furnish me with all details by which I could confront the evidence that was being gathered, which was all of a negative character, relating to the alleged non-existence of the horse and other animals upon the western continent at the time indicated. Some of you may say that as you do not find, ordinarily at least, the bones of buffaloes in this section, that buffaloes never lived here. But go search in the gravels of City Creek, and you may be lucky enough to find, as I have found, the bones and horns of buffaloes. One shred of positive evidence will nullify a volume of negative assumption; and the declarations made in the Book of Mormon, if not already verified, will surely be verified every whit.

The Book of Mormon is not to be judged according to the canons of criticism applicable to any book professing to be the product of a modern brain, any more than is the Holy Bible to be so judged. Each of these is a volume of scripture, profusely giving the revealed word of God.

#### REJECTION OF PROPHECY

The second objection made by the critics as to accepting Isaiah as a unit is based on the prophet's mention of King Cyrus, the Persian, a century and a half before Cyrus was born. As King Cyrus is named, the record containing the account of him, says the critics, could not have been written until after his birth, reign, and accomplishment of the divinely-appointed work ascribed to him by the prophet; in short, they say, that account must have been written by somebody who lived after Cyrus, the Persian king. Is there no prophecy? Are there no prophets? And, by the way, is Cyrus, the Persian, the only one whose name was given before birth? What of Ishmael, of Isaac, of John the Baptist? What of the Lord Christ himself? Their names were all prescribed and recorded long before their respective births.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, knew nothing of the alleged duality of the Book of Isaiah; for he tells us that Isaiah's prophecy was presented to King Cyrus, named therein, and "that the fact of his own name being in the text greatly encouraged him to carry out the prediction."

Some of us are very apt to be led away by a statement because we find it in a book bearing the name of some man assumed to be great. Let us read in a more discriminating way, and seek for the guidance of the Lord as we read.

I bear you witness, as witness has been borne before, and I speak it to you with all the assurance that the Three Witnesses and the Eight Witnesses put their testimony on record—that the Book of Mormon is just what it claims to be, as set forth by the ancient historian and prophet, the translation of whose words appears on the title page of the current work. There is nothing in the Book of Mormon to be explained away. The Book teaches, explains, and expounds; it will settle many of your problems, it will guide you in the path of truth. I know of what I speak for I have found it to be a reliable guide. Brethren and sisters, hold fast to the iron rod. May God help us so to do, I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

A sacred solo, "Come Ye Blessed," was sung by Miss Rilla Wilson.

#### ELDER STEPHEN L. RICHARDS

##### THE LAW OF TITHING

My subject is tithing. I can scarcely hope to contribute a single new thought to this matter, but I have felt that the importance of it would serve to challenge your interest, and I have hoped that some good might result from a discussion of it. For some things that I may say