

FIRST VOICES

“ . . . in the land of their first inheritance . . . ”

“I speak unto you as the voice of one crying from the dust . . . ”

-prophetic words from the past-



DISCOVERING AMERICA: NATIVE AMERICANS AND THEIR ANCIENT WORLD

A number of years ago I saw a bumper sticker that caught my attention. The sticker read, “Discover America: Read the Book of Mormon.” How unusual! How mysterious! Isn’t the Book of Mormon a religious work? Isn’t it about a church? Isn’t it a modern publication? A lot of people believe one, two or all three of these comments, but actually it is an ancient historical and religious work. Borrowing a line from the Prophet Isaiah, it is a marvelous work and wonder. So before you put this newsletter down, please take a few moments to read the following.

Let’s start with discovering America. Christopher Columbus did not discover America. We all know someone cannot discover a land where people are living. But monuments have been erected and books

written to memorialize the man who supposedly discovered the new world. It was neither lost nor new. Instead, it was rich and vibrant in history and culture. Much of that history and culture was destroyed by the actions of the supposed discoverers. We will credit Columbus for his courage and fortitude to travel from Spain to America taking a course no one else (to our knowledge) had followed.

Going back in time, centuries before Columbus, we can consider other discoveries of America. Is it possible that people wandered to ancient America over the Bearing Strait tens of thousands of years ago? Possible. But Native American author Vine Deloria found that theory (and it’s only a theory) difficult to believe. In his writings he provides compelling arguments against that notion.

So what is possible? Scholars of one discipline or another present theories of ships blown off course and running into America throughout millennia. But

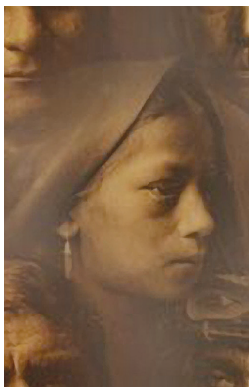
evidence is woefully lacking. So let’s take a different approach. Is there evidence of an actual occurrence of a migration that does not fit those theories? Yes there is. It is found in, of all places, the Book of Mormon. But before you dismiss the idea, consider this example. The Old Testament of the Bible provides some historical accounts that until recently were not provable. For example, in 2011 National Geographic magazine dedicated an issue to the archeological search for King David, a person whose life is well documented in the Bible, and whose good and bad example has filled Sunday School classes, sermons, and rabbinic writings for centuries. But we never doubted his existence or his actions, whether archeologists found evidence or not. To date they have found very little, but we continue to believe all that is in the Word of God.

So would it surprise us that God provided a record similar to the Bible that documents an account of colonies coming to America from the Middle East? We should not be surprised, but

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*The blessings of
thy father have
prevailed above
the blessings of
my progenitors
unto the utmost
bound of the
everlasting hills:*



delighted. Delighted that God would deliver to us a record of colonies traveling under His guidance in ships He designed to a place He had given to their ancestors all the way back in the Book of Genesis.

Jacob, who was also known as Israel, was the son of Isaac and the grandson of Abraham. Before he died he blessed his 12 sons. Of particular interest was his blessing on Joseph, who was the most loved by Jacob. Jacob said,

“Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him. But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel). Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb. The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.” (Genesis 49:22-26)

Let’s rewrite the blessing without the King James English and with explanatory words inserted for the imagery used by Jacob.

“Joseph will have many descendants, of which some will be by the sea and of which some will cross it to another land. There are people who will abuse his descendants and hate them. But the mighty God of Jacob shall be with them, cause them to prosper, and eventually rescue them through the work of a choice servant (or seer). Their blessings from God will be great and will envelope all of their people and those who are associated with them. God’s blessings on Jacob are even greater than those of his father and grandfather, including the receipt of a land that has mountains from one end to another. Great blessings will rest like a crown on Joseph, who was separated from his brothers and on his descendants who were separated from their people.”

The Book of Mormon confirms Jacob’s blessing and prophecy. It provides insight into the ancient customs and history of Native Americans. Yet, it is not an archeological work or an anthropological work. It is a spiritual – cultural work recorded in an ancient time and simply brought to light in modern times. It is a book of journeys,

intrigue, geography, military exploits, politics, and deep and inspiring spirituality, culminating in the visit of Jesus Christ (as found in many ancient Native American accounts). This book could easily have been titled Native Americans in their Ancient World.

As with all books, it has its limitations. It does not cover all eras of time in the Americas, all geographic locations, or all people. Similar to any of us writing a book about the United States, it would not include all politics down to every community and hamlet, cover every church, speak of every military battle, or announce every innovation or invention. (Notice how little is said of the history and culture of Native Americans in typical grade school history books.)

But those limitations do not limit the importance or the impact of what is contained in the Book of Mormon. And even more important is what the book reveals about the Native American of tomorrow, what great things God has in store for them and for America. For example, it confirms Jacob’s blessing on Joseph, as he received the land of America for his people. Look at a globe and see how the mountains stretch from the south to the north, as everlasting hills – mountains from Alaska to Chile.



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Book of
Mormon.*

The book confirms Jacob speaking of a shepherd to come. Not the Messiah, but a servant of choice, a descendant of Joseph. It calls him a choice seer. "For Joseph truly testified, saying: A seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins [descendants]. Yea, Joseph truly said: Thus saith the Lord unto me: A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins [descendants]. And unto him will I give commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins, his brethren, which shall be of great worth unto them, even to the bringing of them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers." (2 Nephi 3:6, 7)

So we see that the Book of Mormon, an ancient record, not only explains a lot about ancient America and who ancient Native Americans are, but also describes their future and the great things God has in store for them. Those interested in the history and religion of ancient Native Americans should read the book and those interested in the future of America and Native Americans are also encouraged to read it. Maybe we should print a second bumper sticker that says, "Discover America's Future: Read the Book of Mormon". [For your

own copy of the Book of Mormon, visit our web page at www.first-voices.org]

ADAIR'S HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN INDIANS – A BRIEF SURVEY PART 2

In the last issue of the journal we took a look at Adair's argument Number 1 (Divided into Tribes) for his belief that Native Americans were related to the Lost Tribes of Israel. Keep in mind that he spent most of his time with the Creek, Cherokee, Shawnee, Catawba, Choctaws, Chickasaws, etc. In this issue we are going to continue with -

Argument Number 2- Belief in One God:

This argument must be one of the most misunderstood of all the arguments. When the Europeans arrived on the shores of what is now North America, they did not believe that the inhabitants worshipped only one God. However, James Adair found some striking differences to what they originally thought due to the fact that he spent so much time among them.

To quote Adair, "... these Indian Americans pay their religious devotion to Loak-Ishtohoollo-Aba, "the great,

beneficent, supreme, holy spirit of fire," who resides (as they think) above the clouds and on earth also with unpolluted people. They do not pay the least perceivable adoration to any images, or to dead persons; neither to the celestial luminaries, nor evil spirits, nor any created being whatsoever."

So we see there is no doubt that upon close examination, going from one tribe to another and that from one coast to the other that if it (God) goes by the Great Spirit or the Great Creator or the Giver of Life or Breath, there is only One Supreme and Eternal God above the Earth somewhere. Over the years people have been mistaken in believing that Native Americans worshipped many gods of wood and stone. There have been misconceptions that they worship spirits. Nothing is further from the truth. Having a respect for nature and worshipping it (nature) are two vastly different perspectives.

Adair recognized the comparison to the Israelite belief as stated by Moses in the 6th Chapter of Deuteronomy, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD". The same thinking of course is carried throughout the New Testament when Jesus stated in the 10th Chapter of John, "I and my Father are one". It should be noted that

in 1829 the writings of Ancient American Prophets were published under the title of the Book of Mormon and there is a very interesting portion that talks about the land of the Americas and its God:

"Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, who hath been manifested by the things which we have written."

Fascinating isn't it – that a record written hundreds of years ago would recognize the fact that Jesus Christ should be known as the God of the Americas! This is something that is certainly worth meditating upon. During one of our conversations with a Native American, we asked how it was that his people readily accepted Jesus Christ? His answer was succinct and sweet, "We always believed in one God."

Here is the conclusion of the matter; two cultures divided by thousands of miles believing in one true and living God. It appears that we cannot dismiss James Adair's belief that there is a relationship between the Native American and Israel. Quite honestly the editors of this newsletter believe it too.

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*...in preparing the
way for the fulfilling
of his covenants,
which he hath made
to his people who are
of the house of Israel.*

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