

Misinterpretation of the Prophecies in Ezekiel 37:19 and John 10:16

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The Sticks of Joseph and Judah

- ❖ “Say unto them, 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” (*Ezek. 37:19*).

This passage is understood by some to refer to the two books that they claim to be inspired and authoritative:

The stick of Joseph = the Book of Mormon

The stick of Judah = the Bible

Legrand Richards (one of the Mormon 12 apostles) explains this interpretation of the prophecy as based on the detail that:

In ancient times it was the custom to write in parchment and roll it on a stick. Therefore, when this command was given, it was the equivalent of directing that two books or records should be kept ... Now, granting that the Bible is the stick of Judah... could this promise be fulfilled in a more simple and perfect manner than it was through the coming forth of the Book of Mormon? ... Now, the two records have been joined together, constituting a complete fulfilment of another great prophecy.

A Marvellous Work and a Wonder, pp. 67-68.

WHY THIS IS A FAULTY INTERPRETATION

This interpretation is simply from an individual’s imagination and is therefore, fanciful. The real meaning of these words comes from the context of this passage. This shows that the two sticks simply represent the **10 tribe nation of Israel (Joseph)** and the **2 tribe nation of Judah** as becoming reunited:

- ❖ “And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and **will gather them** on every side, and bring them into their own land: And **I will make them one nation in the land** upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, **neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all**” (*Ezek. 37: 20-22*).

It is rather like the 20th century Germany having been politically divided for decades into two nations and then eventually becoming reunited. So the sticks do not represent scrolls or books, but rather they represent nations which become reunited. It is simply imaginative to propose that this is a prophecy of the coming of the Book of Mormon.

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Are the “Other Sheep” the Nephites in America?

- ❖ “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must **bring**, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be **one fold**, and one shepherd” (*John 10:16*).

WERE NEPHITES OF THE 12 LOST TRIBES?

There is no mention of Nephi or Nephites in the biblical or secular historical records. (Please see STUDY 2 “British Israelism”).

NO NEED FOR JESUS TO GO PERSONALLY

This faulty interpretation assumes that Jesus had to physically “bring” these “other sheep” into the fold. Yet Jesus was sent only directly to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24). Furthermore, this is not a reference to a future visit by Jesus to any supposed physically ‘lost tribes’ but to those who were spiritually lost at the time of his ministry. However, Jesus made it abundantly clear that, after his ascension he would work with his Jewish disciples by means of God’s spirit (John 14:16, 23, 25-28). So there was no need for Jesus to directly and personally gather the “other sheep.”

THE "OTHER SHEEP" WERE THE GENTILES

Almost all Bible Commentaries recognize that Jesus' phrase "the other sheep" was a reference to the Gentiles. This fits with the statements made by the apostle Paul about the Gentiles:

- ❖ "...he who made the two parties [*Jews and Gentiles*] one and **destroyed the wall** in between that fenced them off" (*Eph. 2:14*).
- ❖ "You are all, in fact, sons of God through your faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither **Jew nor Greek**...for you are **all one** in Christ Jesus" (*Gal. 3:26-28*).

It is fanciful to imagine that the Gentiles are to be split into national groups. It was Jewish custom to speak of all non-Jews as Gentiles or Greeks (*Greeks distinguished themselves from non-Greeks by the term "Barbarians"*). So there is no reason for Jesus to have been speaking of a third group as "other sheep."

PETER AND PAUL WERE SENT TO THE GENTILES

Because there was no need for Jesus to directly and personally gather the "other sheep" Paul stated that Christians are to be "ambassadors for Christ" so that Gentiles might "be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). Furthermore, the book of Acts shows the beginning of this work with the apostle Peter going to Cornelius (Acts 10) and Paul as being:

- ❖ "...a chosen instrument of [*Jesus*] to carry my name **before the Gentiles** and kings and the children of Israel" (*Acts 9:15*).
- ❖ "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) **a teacher of the Gentiles** in faith and verity" (*1Tim. 2:7*).

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