**Lightning Apologetics**

**Mormonism – Part VII**

This article is the next to last discussion on Mormonism. I want to thank everyone for their feedback. I have had an overwhelming response to these past six articles. There were many of you who said they learned many things they were not aware of. God bless and thank you. Please let me know if there are topics I may not have touched on that you would like to see an explanation of. Now, on Part VII of Mormonism, i.e., the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

**…*continuing on the Book of Mormon.***

Mormons run into no small difficulty in reconciling the great apostasy theory and Christ’s promise in Matthew 16:18: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it.

How could it be that Christ, who should have known better, would promise that His Church wouldn’t be overcome if He knew full well a great apostasy would make mincemeat of it in a matter of decades? Was Christ lying? Obviously not. Was he mistaken? No. Did He miscalculate things? No, again. Christ’s divinity precluded such things. What are we left with then? Could it be that Mormons are mistaken in their interpretation of such a crucial passage? This is the only tenable conclusion. If there were no great apostasy, then there could have been no need for a restoration of religious authority on the earth. There would be no “restored gospel,” and the entire premise of the Mormon church would be undercut.

The fact is that the only church with an unbroken historical line to apostolic days is the Catholic Church. Even many Protestants acknowledge this, though they argue there was a need for a Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century.

As non-Catholic historians admit, it can be demonstrated easily that early Church writers, such as Ignatius of Antioch, Eusebius, Clement of Rome, and Polycarp, had no conception of Mormon doctrine, and they knew nothing of a “great apostasy.” Nowhere in their writings can one find references to Christians embracing any of the peculiarly Mormon doctrines, such as polytheism, polygamy, celestial marriage, and temple ceremonies. If the Church of the apostolic age was the prototype of today’s Mormon church, it must have had all these beliefs and practices. But why is there no evidence of them in the early centuries, before the alleged apostasy began? The fact is that there is no historical or archaeological indication of any kind that the early Church was other than the Catholic Church.

The *Book of Mormon* itself suffers from the same fate when it comes to its own historical support. In short, it hasn’t got any. The *Book of Mormon* describes a vast pre-Columbian culture that supposedly existed for centuries in North and South America. It goes into amazingly specific detail describing the civilizations erected by the “Nephites” and “Lamanites,” who were Jews who left Palestine in three installments, built massive cities in the New World, farmed the land, produced works of art, and fought large-scale wars that culminated in the utter destruction of the Nephites in A.D. 421. The Latter-day Saints revere the *Book of Mormon* as the divinely inspired record of those people and of Christ’s appearance to them shortly after his Crucifixion in Jerusalem.

The awkward part for the Mormon church is the total lack of historical and archaeological evidence to support the *Book of Mormon.* For example, after the cataclysmic last battle fought between the Nephites and Lamanites, there was no one left to clean up the mess. Hundreds of thousands of men and beasts allegedly perished in that battle, and the ground was strewn with weapons and armor. A.D. 421 is young in archaeological terms. It should be easy to locate and retrieve evidence of such a battle. The embarrassing truth –embarrassing for Mormons, that is – is that no scientist Mormon or otherwise, has been able to substantiate that such a great battle took place. The Bible tells of similar battles that have been documented by archaeology, battles that took place long before A.D. 421. There are other problems with the *Book of Mormon*. For example, critics of Mormonism have shown convincing proof that the *Book of Mormon* is a synthesis of earlier works (written by other men), the vivid imaginings of Joseph Smith, and simple plagiarisms of the King James Bible.

More on that next week along with our final installment. God bless.