

The Bible: Parts Removed or Wholly Preserved? The Book of Mormon vs. the Bible

Robert M. Bowman Jr.

Does the Book of Mormon contradict the Bible? Yes, and it does so on many matters. Perhaps most notably—though there are several highly significant examples—the Book of Mormon contradicts statements in the Bible itself about the preservation of Scripture.

The Book of Mormon contains a lengthy account of an angel telling Nephi about the Bible having had “many parts” deliberately removed, because of which the Lord was inspiring a new scripture that would contain the full gospel (1 Nephi 13:20–42). “The Book,” the angel says, “is a record of the Jews, which contains the covenants of the Lord which he hath made unto the House of Israel; and it also containeth many of the prophesies of the holy prophets” (13:23). This description clearly refers to what we call the Old Testament. Originally, this Book “contained the fulness of the Gospel of the Lamb, of whom the twelve apostles bare record; and they bare record according to the truth which is in the Lamb of God” (13:24). The point the Book of Mormon is making here is that the twelve apostles also left a record of their testimonies to the gospel, which would be what we call the New Testament.

Unfortunately, according to the same passage in 1 Nephi, sometime after these things went out from the Jews to the Gentiles, a “great and abominable church” formed that “have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb, many parts which are plain and most precious; and also, many covenants of the Lord have they taken away” (13:26). Here Nephi is being told that a Gentile-dominated church, later called “the mother of harlots” (13:34), took away important parts of both the New and the Old Testaments. The standard LDS interpretation of this passage is that it describes “the removal of texts or portions of texts from biblical records” as well as “the corruption of texts through translation and transmission.”¹ In particular, Mormons commonly interpret the passage as explaining why the name of Jesus Christ and explicit details about him are not found in the Old Testament. “Surely the most plain and precious of all truths lost from the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, are the clear and unequivocal declarations of the mission of Jesus Christ.”² Ironically, this claim exposes another contradiction between the Book of Mormon and the Bible: The books of the Book of Mormon dated prior to the coming of Christ refer explicitly to Jesus Christ by name and provide a countdown of the exact number of years left before his coming. By contrast, 1 Peter 1:10–12 indicates that the pre-Christian prophets did not know who the Messiah would be or when he would come.

¹ Robert L. Millet, “Plain and precious things, loss of and restoration of,” in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, edited by Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 2003), 636 (see 636–42).

² Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*. Salt Lake City: Deseret, 2006), 6; see also John M. Madsen, “A Precious and Powerful Witness of Jesus Christ,” in *Sperry Symposium Classics: The Old Testament*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Provo: Religious Studies Center, BYU; Salt Lake City: Deseret, 2005), 18; Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion*, updated ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 37–38.

After describing the severe consequences of this wicked church's decimation of the Bible, the angel informs Nephi that additional records from his "seed" would augment the Bible and, after being hidden, would be made known and brought together with the Bible to give the Gentiles the gospel with the "plain and precious" truths that had been removed from the Bible (13:35–42). Of course, these records from Nephi's descendants would become what we know as the Book of Mormon. Thus, this passage is of critical importance because it lays out the rationale for the Book of Mormon's existence and publication through Joseph Smith.

The New Testament flatly contradicts the claim that any substantial parts of the Old Testament had been or ever would be removed. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets:
I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.
For verily I say unto you,
Till heaven and earth pass,
one jot or one tittle **shall in no wise pass** from the law,
till all be fulfilled (Matthew 5:17–18 KJV).

It is worth noting that Christ's statement here is revised in the Book of Mormon's account of him preaching the Sermon to the Nephites:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets.
I am not come to destroy but to fulfil:
for verily I say unto you,
one jot nor one tittle **hath not passed away** from the law,
but in me it hath all been fulfilled. (3 Nephi 12:17–18)

Notice that the Book of Mormon removes the words "till heaven and earth pass" and changes the future-tense assurance "shall in no wise pass" to a past-tense statement, "hath not passed away." In so doing, the Book of Mormon removes the idea that the law and the prophets (i.e., the Old Testament) would never pass away "till heaven and earth pass." Ironically, it is the Book of Mormon that removes a "plain and precious" truth from Christ's most famous sermon in the New Testament. It does so to be consistent with the claim that many parts were removed from the Old Testament after the era of the apostles.

Note well that we are not nitpicking some incidental "mistake of men" in the Book of Mormon (see its Title Page; also 3 Nephi 8:5). Rather, we are observing a clear contradiction between the Book of Mormon and the New Testament that is of signal importance to the supposed reason for the Book of Mormon's appearance in modern times.

This article is part of a forthcoming series on contradictions between the Book of Mormon and the Bible, to appear at <https://mit.irr.org/category/book-of-mormon/bible-and-book-of-mormon>.
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