

## The Book of Mormon – Is It True?

With all the talk recently about whether The Sealed Portion is true, I decided to go back and see whether the book it is based on, The Book of Mormon, is true.

But, in deciding whether a book is “true” or not, we need to define what “true” means. The Book of Mormon is truly a book, as opposed to being a rock or a tree. It contains bound pages inside a cover. In an electronic format, it is a collection of words, arranged in smaller books, chapters, and verses. So in that sense The Book of Mormon is truly a book – a true book. Therefore, in that very limited sense, The Book of Mormon is true.

### Claims of Truth

What does it mean to say that a book is “true”?

In what ways can a book be “true”?

If certain claims are made about a book, and if we are able to verify some or all of those claims, does that make the book “true”?

Do all the claims need to be true, or is it enough that one claim be true?

If all the claims are false, is the book then false?

What unique claims are made of the Book of Mormon?

Which of these claims is supportable, provable, and plausible?

Seen from an eternal, rather than a temporal perspective, which of these claims really matter?

Can some of these claims be true and verifiable, while others are either false or not verifiable, and yet the Book of Mormon is still “true”? Surrounding the book are claims which few other books dare make:

1. Claims about the original authorship,
2. Claims about how the book was preserved,
3. Claims about how the book was discovered,
4. Claims about how the book was translated,
5. Claims about the historical contents of the book,
6. Claims about the principles taught by the book,
7. And last of all there are claims which have nothing to do with the book itself, but claims which say that if all the above claims are true, then Joseph Smith was a true prophet; everything he said or did is true; the LDS church that he organized in 1830 is true; and, by extension, the LDS church, as it exists today, is just as true.

### The “Oprah” Test

If a book which claims to be non-fiction (i.e. true) contains one falsehood, is the book then fiction? A recent guest of the Oprah Show got in trouble with her because he claimed that his book was a true autobiography, when it actually contained some fiction.

### The Only Claim that Really Matters

Joseph Smith, himself, made a very significant claim about the book.

“I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its **precepts**, than by any other book.”

None of the other claims about the Book of Mormon have only real eternal import. On the day that we stand before Christ, and he gathers His sheep on one hand and the goats on the other, he will say to the goats “Depart .. I

never knew you.” Or in other words, “you never knew me.” Ancient civilizations, gold plates, the Urim & Thummin, the visions of others, and the organizations they founded will all someday have little import when compared to our relationship with God, and whether we have His Name written on our foreheads, or whether we have chosen to follow the beast and take his mark upon our hands and foreheads.

This statement invites a serious student of the Book of Mormon to place a higher priority on examining the **contents** of the books, and especially the claims made about the contents of the book.

Here are some questions we should ask ourselves?

- How would the story about how the Book of Mormon was discovered or revealed or written have any bearing on whether it was true or not?
- If the Book of Mormon came by modern revelation instead of being translated from ancient golden plates, would it be any less true?
- If the Book of Mormon was written by a number of people, through revelation or inspiration, would it be any less true?
- If book of Mormon teachings will bring a man closer to God, and if those teachings are contrary to the current teachings of the LDS church, then will obeying the precepts of the modern-day church take a person away from God?

## Does the LDS Church teach the Precepts of the Book of Mormon?

I first read the Book of Mormon when I was about 12 years old. I had just been ordained a Deacon, and in preparation for receiving the Aaronic Priesthood, I had embarked on a deep study of Church history and doctrine. I was raised in a parental member family, so most of what I learned was completely new to me. But, I couldn't escape the idea that being ordained to the Priesthood was something very important, and something that I took very seriously. I continued my studies by reading the Book of Mormon, recalling the story of the First Vision of the young boy, Joseph Smith, at the age of 14. I read about such Book of Mormon heroes as Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Alma, the other Nephi's, Mormon, and Moroni and was also thrilled to hear about their experiences. I fully felt that by the time I was fourteen years of age, I could have similar experiences to theirs and to the experience that Joseph Smith received.

It wasn't until I was older, and the expected experiences still hadn't come, that I learned that there were certain principles that needed to be understood, before a man could have personal communion with God. But, as I read the Book of Mormon, I felt the overwhelming testimony, not of any of the claims above, except for #6, the truth of the principles taught by the book. I never received the “burning in the bosom” when contemplating a bunch of pre-Columbian authors carving away on gold plates and burying them in the ground. But, what caused the “burning” for me, and also all the other attendant signs of the Spirit at work as outlined by the Book of Mormon (change of heart, mind, and disposition, increase in charity, gifts of the spirit, expanded insights, and on occasion, hearing the actual words of Christ) were learning and living the teachings. But, as I later came to read and understand the Bible and some of its heroes, I began to have the same feelings and insights about them, also. My Biblical heroes, incidentally, are Noah, Joseph, Samuel, Isaiah, Daniel, and John.

This claim tells me that my teenage instincts were right on the money. It was the principles taught in the Book of Mormon – the precepts – that brought me closer to God than anything else I experienced. There was something else that I experienced when reading the Book of Mormon – the teachings I read in that book were not being taught by the church. Is the Book of Mormon still the “keystone” of the LDS religion? Has it ever been the keystone of the LDS religion? Joseph Smith never preached out of the Book of Mormon.

Here are a couple of stories from college. All freshmen at BYU are required to take two semesters studying the Book of Mormon. My professor was a very staunch believer in the content of the Book of Mormon. His motto was “It's what the book says that counts.” On his exams, he expected us to answer every question by giving a direct quote out of the Book of Mormon. He didn't expect us to memorize the book, but we were expected to know about a hundred significant passages from memory. Once, I had a run-in with my Sunday School class. I answered a question by a direct quote from the Book of Mormon, but the teacher and the class laughed at me, saying “That's just old Bankhead's opinion. That's not what the Church teaches.”

Here is another story. The bishop of my BYU ward liked to hold special sacrament meetings on the Sunday evenings following General Conference. The bishopric passed the Sacrament, and the presidency of the Elders blessed the bread and water. This was a living example to us that the “greatest among us should be the servant of all”. After the Sacrament, the bishopric spoke to the ward. On one occasion the Bishop spoke to us for 1 ½ hours out of the Book of Mormon, concerning Christ and his testimony of Christ. The spirit present in those special meetings was greater than all of conference.

## What Does the LDS Church Teach about the Book of Mormon?

The Church seems to claim the exclusive right to teach the Book of Mormon, according to their interpretation, when they teach from it at all. This is similar to other Christian sects claiming the exclusive right to interpret the Bible.

But the LDS church goes on to make another claim. Claim #7.

The new edition of the Book of Mormon contains an "Introduction", introduced by the Church in the new edition: <http://scriptures.lds.org/en/bm/introduction>.

Let's examine this introduction, which is now included in the Book of Mormon, with the implied weight of scripture. It is interesting to note that this section is in the introduction to the Book of Mormon; no date or authorship is provided; and the Church never voted in Conference to accept it as scripture, yet here it is, included along with Moroni's introduction and the testimonies of the three witnesses and the eight witnesses.

“The Book of Mormon is a volume of holy scripture comparable to the Bible. It is a record of God's dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas and contains, as does the Bible, the fullness of the everlasting gospel.”

If each book contains the “fullness of the everlasting gospel”, why do we need two books? This teaching is contrary to the Doctrine & Covenants which states:

42:12. “And again, the elders, priests and teachers of this church shall teach the principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fullness of the gospel.”

Together, these books contain the fullness of the gospel, but they each and alone do not contain the fullness of the gospel.

If the Book of Mormon is now “comparable” to the Bible, and if it, too, contains the “fullness of the everlasting gospel” along with the Bible, why then do we need both books? The answer is to co-opt the Jesus of the Bible and the teachings of the Bible and recast them in an American or Mormon context.

Another answer comes as we continue with this introduction.

“We invite all men everywhere to read the Book of Mormon, to ponder in their hearts the message it contains, and then to ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ if the book is true. Those who pursue this course and ask in faith will gain a testimony of its truth and divinity by the power of the Holy Ghost. (See Moroni 10: 3-5.)

“...Those who gain this divine witness from the Holy Spirit will also come to know by the same power that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, that Joseph Smith is his revelator and prophet in these last days, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord's kingdom once again established on the earth, preparatory to the second coming of the Messiah. “

At last, the Church has honestly and openly stated what it has implied all along – that once you gain a testimony of the principles taught in the Book of Mormon, that you will also have a testimony of Joseph Smith and the Church, all that they have done or will do.

The Church now sees the purpose of the Book of Mormon, not to get closer to God, but to gain a testimony that Joseph Smith is a prophet, and the Church is the true kingdom of God. The church wants you to gain a testimony that the Book of Mormon is true, and then extend that testimony to Joseph Smith and to the Church.

We are taught that “by the Holy Ghost, ye shall know the truth of all things”, but what few ever attempt, is to apply

this test to specifically Joseph Smith and to the Church and to the decisions made by the Church.

But, you can't just apply that test once, and then give the Church a blank check to do all your thinking for you. There is one thing that you, as an individual possess, and that is your free agency. You cannot give it away to somebody else. You may think you are giving it away to another, but it is so much an inherent part of you – no it IS you! – so that even if you bury your head and pretend to give it away, you still have it and will be judged by how you use it. If you bury it, like the man who buried his talent, you will still be held accountable.

So, no blank checks to anybody. Not even to people that you trust. Trust, but verify!, as Ronald Reagan used to say.

Always test.

I promise you this, and I speak from experience: God will never punish you, or cut you off, or value you less because you have questions and seek to verify His word. If a teacher or guru, or a church that claims to represent God, does punish you, or cut you off, or values you less because you seek to verify what they say, then know this: that teacher or that church is far from God. Never mind what Glen Beck says about “social justice”, freedom and free will is the dividing line between light and darkness. Run like hell!

We need to **prove** ALL things, hold fast to that which is good, and **verify** everything by the Spirit, and verify by their fruits.

Remember: the Mormon religion, itself, all began with a simple question.

And, just what are those fruits? The amount of money in the Church treasury? The visible wealth of the Church? The number of members? According to the Book of Mormon, itself, these are not the true fruits of the true church of Jesus Christ, or the true fruits of a disciple of the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon teaches that there were but few members of the true church of Christ, and they were scattered throughout the world. The other church (and there are only two), was also scattered all over the world, and the Book of Mormon condemns it for its wealth, for its ignoring the poor, and for its lack of faith, as evidenced by its lack of miracles and gifts of the Spirit.

### **So, Why are the Words of the Book of Mormon True?**

This is what I really wanted to study with this reading of the Book of Mormon. Are the words true because they simply repeat passages out of the Bible, or are there any new truths which are also taught in the Bible, but are better explained in the Book of Mormon? Also, does the Book of Mormon introduce any new truths?

I approached my study with the view that nothing in the book was true. I just wiped out my mind of any prejudices and approached reading the book as if I had never read it before. This is a useful approach to learning any new truth. It's called “becoming as a little child” because it comes naturally for little children. Adults have to apply some mental discipline, but it is a lesson that will serve you well throughout your life, once you practice it and master it.

One of the meanings of repentance is to turn again in both our deeds and our thoughts -- to change from doing one thing to doing another, and from thinking one way to thinking another. We need not only know the difference between evil and good, but the difference between good and more good. Life is a series of choices. To repent is to “choose again”. We must be constantly aware of our choices and decisions throughout life, not to make a single choice, but to be constantly discerning and choosing.

Another important principle to remember with regard to choice is to choose between the alternatives as they truly ARE, not between the choices you are GIVEN. If you choose only between the alternatives that are given you, you may be given only the illusion of choice, or a false choice. Anybody who has ever voted in a US election knows whereof I speak.

This study is by no means exhaustive. I don't have the time to tabulate every truth, either unique or borrowed, that the Book of Mormon teaches, and you don't have the time or inclination to read it. So, here are a few highlights. I am going to skip those passages and teachings which are simply copied from the Bible without any significant changes. But I will cover several passages which shed greater light on the Bible, teachings unique to the Book of Mormon, and teachings that don't square with “standard” LDS theology.

### **The Quality of Language in the Book of Mormon**

Many people may be attracted to the Book of Mormon by its beauty of language alone.

In looking at the quality of the language of the Book of Mormon, when you compare the Book of Mormon to other Mormon writings, the writing is far superior. There is a greater clarity of thought and expression. The truth seems to ring through clearly in places, some of which I have quoted in this document. However, when you compare the Book of Mormon to the Bible, it falls flat. It appears too contrived, too pat. The characters are more paper cut-outs than the timeless paradigms of human nature in the Bible that most people can relate to.

As a missionary, it was easy to sit down with investors and together read passages out of the Book of Mormon. Why? Because the Book of Mormon was written as a missionary tract, complete with born-again experiences, conversion stories, altar calls, baptismal challenges, and explanations of the common doctrinal disputations of the early 1800's in America. At that time it was quite common for religious societies to produce and sell religious tracts – small booklets. Where there were seeming contradictions between the Old and New Testaments and between the New Testament writers, themselves, the Book of Mormon settles these questions.

Incidentally, many of the doctrinal differences in the New Testament can be understood by realizing that Paul, Peter, James, and John all wrote from different perspectives, and actually taught different doctrines, which some theologians have "wrested to their own destruction" instead of even considering the possibility that these writers actually taught different gospels, and couldn't even reconcile their own differences amongst themselves. Some New Testament historians believed that when Peter wrote of "false teachers", he was writing about Paul. Paul introduces many "unique" Christian teachings not taught by the apostles who were with Jesus and called to the original twelve.

### **The Life and Character of Joseph Smith: Can an evil tree bring forth good fruit?**

We mention Joseph Smith because he claimed to be the original "author and proprietor" of the Book of Mormon. Though the focus is on the contents of the Book and the principles taught therein, we must take a glance at Joseph and Oliver.

Joseph Smith made the statement "No man knows my history." This is certainly true in light of the fact that there are so many conflicting views about his life and character. The RLDS church has a vested interest in proving that Joseph Smith never practiced or taught polygamy, while Brigham Young and his associates were more interested in establishing their doctrines and practices by tying them back to Joseph Smith. The modern day LDS church wants to sweep the ugly portions of his life under the rug. They quickly brush polygamy aside as they ignore the changing accounts of his first vision, his changing views of the godhead, and his changing teachings about the church and priesthood. We could well ask ourselves, did Joseph's views change as he learned and grew, or did they change to meet the ever-increasing challenges to his leadership?

We must not forget that Joseph Smith was a man, and like all men, he had his virtues along with his character flaws. Churchill also had flaws, while Hitler has his virtues. But, it takes the crucible of history to reveal the flaws and the virtues in each of us. There is no argument that Joseph Smith not only lived history, he made history. And, with the history that he made, there came many crises of his own making, which revealed both his strengths and weaknesses.

The LDS church has a vested interest in portraying him as an illiterate farm boy, the better to show that the Book of Mormon and Doctrine & Covenants that came forth from him were none other than the product of a divine intelligence. Joseph Smith was much brighter and more educated than people gave him credit for. He came from a family of preachers and knew the Bible backward and forward. He was in correspondence with many of the popular ministers and knew the doctrinal issues of the day. He was familiar with the popular fancies of the day -- that the Indians were from the ten lost tribes of Israel, and that America was to be the gathering place for Zion. Many religious groups established religious communities throughout the mid-West with varying degrees of success. Furthermore, Joseph Smith surrounded himself with bright and highly-educated (for the times) individuals like Oliver Cowdery and Emma Hale, (not to mention Rigdon, the Whitmers, and numerous scribes who were constantly at his side) who could have assisted him in the work, and helped polish his words and ideas to the point that when viewed through the Mormon lens of history, they glow brighter than they normally would, had they come straight from the lips or pen of Joseph Smith.

In order to make any teaching attract the attention of the public, it needs to be presented with a little glamour and panache. Even Jesus knew that by riling the establishment and by showing signs and wonders, people would be drawn to him and want to hear more. However, the sincere seeker of truth is not impressed by the glitz, but the truths of the teachings resonate with his soul. Peter, for example, when asked whether the disciples would also leave Christ because his teachings were too hard to bear, said that the disciples would not leave, because Christ

taught “the words of eternal life”.

Modern-day teachers and writers follow a similar pattern to attract readers and listeners. Nobody wants to hear an ordinary, but honest man speak the simple truth. The public prefers to hear stories about angels and gold plates, spiced up with sex and controversy; about immortals bearing ancient teachings; about being overshadowed by higher entities; about hidden teachers claiming to be Christ or an eastern master claiming to reveal secret doctrines; about ET's from the Siberian wilderness bringing intergalactic teachings; about people claiming to have conversations with resurrected beings or interstellar beings which contradict the LDS teachings, right under their nose – in the Salt Lake temple of all places! But, this is like opening a fancy restaurant. People will be attracted by all the publicity and the celebrities who turn out. They may return to the restaurant to “see and be seen”, but those who know quality food will return only if the restaurant serves good food. Then there are those quiet “hole in the wall dives” that don't have a nice ambience. They just serve good food and their only publicity is word of mouth. Those seeking glamour will never eat there, but true lovers of food keep the place constantly busy.

I think the discussions of Joseph Smith often get sidetracked on the character of the man – whether he was a charlatan, liar, and deceiver, or whether he simply made a few mistakes – yet not looking at the teachings and whether they accomplish what they claim to do.

## Oliver Cowdery

We take a brief look at the character and background of Oliver Cowdery. Though Oliver did not play a role in obtaining the plates, the translation of the Book of Mormon did not begin in earnest until he appeared on the scene. Also the translation we now have is a product of the collaborative work of Joseph and Oliver, and the manuscript was written almost entirely in Oliver's hand,

People tend to build up Joseph Smith at the expense of Oliver Cowdery. There are only two people whose best interest was furthered by dissing this man. One, was Sidney Rigdon, who coveted a seat on Joseph's right hand and stopped at nothing to get it. Eventually the Saints saw through him and wanted to oust him. Even Joseph wanted to oust Rigdon, but Rigdon had so packed the Church with his supporters, that they overruled the other votes in Conference, and Rigdon stayed. Keep in mind that Church Conferences were much more democratic back then than the LDS conferences are now. The RLDS church (Community of Christ) still runs a true democratic conference: members are informed of the proposal (new revelations and leadership changes) ahead of time, and there is a vigorous debate in conference before a vote takes place. Leadership can even be voted out of office if the membership does not continue to sustain them. A practice like this is unheard of in the modern LDS church.

Though in the beginning Joseph and Oliver were considered equals by the Lord, Joseph also sought to diminish Oliver and grab all the glory for himself. Several revelations that actually came through Oliver were appropriated under the name of Joseph Smith, and Oliver was never given proper credit. Oliver was instructed by revelation to admonish Joseph Smith in his faults, but when he did so, Joseph Smith punished him for speaking out and for fulfilling the duty he was commanded to perform.

Oliver Cowdery had a vision of the gold plates before he ever met the Smith family or came to Palmyra as a school teacher. Cowdery was an educated man. Teaching school was the least of his abilities. He was an attorney and later ran for state office. He offered at one time to be the Church's legal representative in Washington. He established newspapers and printing shops. He had the charge of the Book of Mormon manuscripts before they were translated. He was charged with editing the revelations that were to be published, so it is reasonable to assume that he also edited the Book of Mormon manuscripts before they were published.

Oliver Cowdery and his family came from the same area of Vermont as the Smith family. In fact, there is some evidence that his father knew Joseph Smith Sr. Oliver must certainly have been familiar with the book *A View of the Hebrews* by Ethan Smith. The Cowdery family was members of his congregation. The book claims to exhibit: “The Destruction of Jerusalem, the Certain Restoration of Judah and Israel, the Present State of Judah and Israel, and Address of the Prophet Isaiah relative to their restoration”. Many people had similar ideas at the time, and Joseph and Oliver could not at least have been influenced by some of the ideas in this book.

Oliver Cowdery had been working in the anti-Masonic movement before he met Joseph Smith. He could have been responsible for the anti-Masonic passages in the Book of Mormon, which describes “secret combinations”, the term used by anti-Masonic newspapers in the 1820's. Imagine his disappointment in Joseph Smith when he found out that the church was secretly sponsoring the Danites.

Later, when Oliver Cowdery asked to be rebaptized, he spoke to the people as follows:

I wrote with my own pen, the entire Book of Mormon (save a few pages) as it fell from the lips of the Prophet Joseph Smith, as he translated it by the gift and power of God, by the means of the Urim and Thummim, or, as it is called by that book, "Holy Interpreters."

I beheld with my eyes and handled with my hands the gold plates from which it was translated. I also saw with my eyes and handled with my hands the "Holy Interpreters."

That book is true! Sidney Rigdon did not write it; Mr. Spaulding did not write it; I wrote it myself as it fell from the lips of the Prophet. It contains the everlasting Gospel, and came forth to the children of men in fulfillment of the revelations of John, where he says he saw an angel come with the Everlasting Gospel to preach to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. It contains the principles of salvation; and if you, my hearers, will walk by its light and obey its precepts, you will be saved with an everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God on high.

What more can honest men ask?

Millennial Star, vol. 27, p. 57.

The Book of Mormon constantly refers to lawyers, judges, and forms of government.

3 Nephi 6:4 says that there was "**great order in the land ...formed their laws according to equity and justice**". Please note that we are talking about *equity*, NOT equality.

This concept of equity vs. justice goes back to arguments made by Aristotle. How would people who migrated to America before the time of Aristotle have any concept of "equity and justice", and be familiar with that term? How could anybody who was not a lawyer be familiar and use their term as they wrote the Book of Mormon, or reading from the interpreters, and putting the text in their own words, be familiar with the term "equity and justice"?

It is probable that only Oliver Cowdery, who was an educated man and a lawyer, would be familiar with that term. What would Jewish law know about the concepts of law as understood by the Greeks? There are courts of equity today. Look up "Maxims of Equity" on wiki. The maxims of equity evolved in Latin and eventually translated into English, as the principles applied by courts of equity in deciding cases before them. A court of equity is a court that is authorized to apply principles of equity as opposed to law, to cases brought before it. See "Court of Equity" in Wikipedia. Would Rigdon, Smith, Spaulding, or any other alleged writer of the Book of Mormon understand this difference and set them up as legal opposites?

Would the Hebrews know and understand Latin law? Only Oliver Cowdery, the modern attorney, understood the difference, and would have the phrase come readily to his mind.

## A Possible Explanation of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon

This section is pure speculation on my part, and is an attempt to give several alternative, but logical explanations of how the Book of Mormon came about other than the fanciful story of the golden plates. Some of these alternatives still involve divine or supernatural participation.

There are a number of possible reasons why Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery wanted to organize a church and attract followers to it.

Perhaps they had some inspiration from God to do so. Perhaps they did so simply out of a desire to make the world better by starting a church that more truly patterned itself after the practices and beliefs of the early Christians. Perhaps they just wanted to write down a synthesis of their own views of the Bible – something done by numerous writers in those days. Another possibility is that they wanted to write a book and start an organization simply in the hopes of earning money.

Regardless of the motivations, the two men got together and decided to concoct a book. They felt that people would be more attracted to it if the book ran like a historical narrative, like the Bible, that it was uniquely American in nature, and had a popular appeal by referring to the current theories of the day – that the American Indians were long lost Israelites. They also sought to set straight several of the religious controversies of the day, including the doctrines of personal salvation, and views about the Masons. Or, perhaps they just felt a surge of inspiration and

began to write. Or perhaps, they sought to write a book of fiction, but in their seeking for ideas and inspiration, several inspired ideas from God crept in unawares. They drew on the Bible for much of their inspiration, and it could have happened that amidst their speculation and soul-searching, they tapped into some real spiritual resources and actually did wind up writing the Word of God.

They needed a little back story in order to surround the book with glamour and attract more readers, so rather than just state that they received the book by revelation, either by divine impression or by dictation from higher beings, or by ascending to a higher plane and reading the divine records which were stored there on akashic golden plates, they told the people they received the book on literal, physical, golden plates which they translated by literal, physical crystalline stones.

This is not a far-fetched explanation. Many inspired books have come to light that were inspired from a higher source, but without resorting to using interpretive stones and golden plates, but using simply the power of the intuition to receive the communication, and the mind to interpret it.

These impressions do not necessarily originate in the mind, but could come from an outside, higher source. There are many sources: sub-conscious, higher mind, logic and reasoning, but some actually come from an external source. Some, though probably fewer than people realize, come from a high spiritual source, such as God.

Joseph Smith taught that these impressions were not just given in the form of words, but that the person receiving them must study them out in his mind, work up an interpretation, then ask God if the impression was correct.

These impressions do not usually come in the form of distinct words, but in pictures, or in multi-dimensional impressions, which the receiver must register with the finite human mind and attempt to express a multi-dimensional communication which came in an instant into a one-dimensional string of words that people will then read and study over time. One way to compare it is to an instantaneous Internet download. So, there is a multi-step process. (1) Preparation for and recognition that a higher communication is coming. (2) Receiving the actual communication. (3) Interpreting the communication.

Oliver Cowdery was promised the gift of translation. The record does not say that he failed to receive the soul impressions. In fact, the record shows that God had spoken to him by the impressions of the soul on previous occasions. What Oliver needed to learn, however, was how to correctly **interpret** the impressions he received.

In a revelation given to Oliver Cowdery at the time the Book of Mormon was being translated, he was reminded that he couldn't just expect to be given the words, but must "study it out in his mind", come up with an interpretation, and that ask God if the interpretation be correct.

An effective prophet is not only able to receive divine communication, but it able to clearly interpret the communication in a way that people can understand and receive it, relatively free of his personal influences. This is very difficult. It is also very difficult when the correct interpretation involved concepts which we personally don't believe in, or don't understand, or might be embarrassing to relate to others.

A woman received the book "A Course in Miracles" from a higher source who claimed to be Jesus. She, herself, was a trained clinical psychologist and self-proclaimed atheist. Another woman received a number of books from a source claiming to be a Tibetan master. She was originally a fundamentalist Christian. I know a man who received a revelation that mentioned, among other things, "cave dwellers". He didn't want to publish this, but I told him, he should take what the Lord gave him and not change a thing. Later, when people read the revelation, they had several interpretations as to what "cave dwellers" meant, and it was no longer an embarrassment to him.

To help you understand what I mean by these soul impressions. Here is a view of how I personally experience soul impressions.

You can feel it coming, and building up to a point of tension. You feel it coming and building and building, then the dam will burst whether you are ready for it or not. You had best be ready to record all you receive, or else you may



forget much of it after the moment is gone. During that moment, you feel pure intelligence flowing into you. You feel like you could ask any question of God, and he would answer you. Or even better, it feels as if you could know a thing inside and out simply by casting your attention on it. Everything is so clear. You feel calm, yet excited at the same time. You understand more than you can explain. But, you must try to record as much as you can, while in the Spirit, because, when the moment is gone, the world closes in around you again, the vision closes, and all you have is a memory. And, there is a huge difference between remembering God and experiencing God.

All this can happen while a person is fully awake and aware of his surroundings. There is no hidden control. The receiver has his personal freedom of choice throughout the entire experience.

All of this can be understood by any person who reads the earliest sections of the D&C, or any person who is properly taught in LDS doctrine, and who is experienced in the principle of personal revelation. This principle was not clearly understood by the people in the early 1800's. Oliver needed to be instructed in it before he understood it, but for the average consciousness, it was easier to provide the simpler to understand explanation of the golden plates and the stones. It could also be that even the minds of Joseph and Oliver could not conceive of the idea of writing under direct inspiration from God, so in their minds they fabricated the idea of translating gold plates through the medium of an interpreter.

Joseph Smith claimed that he translated the Book of Mormon. Oliver Cowdery claims that he wrote the entire Book of Mormon, save a few pages, as it fell from the lips of Joseph Smith. They were both correct. Oliver Cowdery was also blessed with the gift of translation, and not only that, with the ability to reveal and expound mysteries.

Could it also be that Oliver and perhaps also Emma helped Joseph Smith in interpreting the words that he received, and in coming up with the best way to express them?

How much difficulty would Joseph have had in interpreting the impressions he received? He was much better educated than Joseph Smith, and probably had a better command of words, though Joseph Smith, as most people in those days, and perhaps better than most, since he came from a family of ministers, knew the Bible backwards and forwards, and could probably easily find the words to express the impressions that came to his mind. But, regardless of whether Joseph interpreted the words himself, or was assisted by Oliver and Emma, the language of the Book of Mormon has a much better quality than the D&C or the other speeches or writings of Joseph Smith. So, it seems apparent that he got some help from somebody who was at least as educated and inspired as he.

## **How the Book of Mormon Contradicts Itself**

But, don't be so lulled to sleep by the beauty of the language, which sounds "familiar", because it sounds like the Bible that you forget to critically examine the words and thoughts expressed in the book. There are some contradictions in the Book of Mormon. Not glaring contradictions, but contradictions nonetheless. This is by no means an exhaustive study of the internal contradictions in the Book of Mormon, but I hope to point out a few examples that haven't been brought up before.

## **The Nature of Man**

With regards to the inherent nature of man, The Book of Mormon not only contradicts other LDS teachings on the subject, but it contradicts itself.

Is the nature of man basically good or basically evil? Most Protestants and Catholics believe that man is inherently evil, citing Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?", while ignoring Ecclesiastes 7:29 "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."

Joseph Smith teaches in the Articles of Faith "We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression." This is a profound truth. The Church insists that every child in Primary memorize this passage, not realizing the profound import of this passage for if a man is separated from the Presence of God, that is his own personal doing, and he cannot lay responsibility on the transgressions of Adam and Eve, which causes them to be shut out from the Presence of God. This places man in a clear position to act for himself.

The D&C clearly teaches this:

93:38-39 "Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, **men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God.**

"And that wicked one cometh and **taketh away light and truth, through disobedience**, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers."

Therefore, a person can be redeemed from the effects of the fall, which were in fact caused by his own sins, through obedience to the laws of God – not the laws of a church or the traditions of men which got him into trouble in the first place.

The Book of Mormon teaches that by following the "doctrine of Christ" (more about this later), we must listen to the words of Christ, and the words of Christ will tell us all things that we must do. Some interpret hearing the "words of Christ" as reading the scriptures or listening to church leaders. No. Those are their words. The general authorities may or may not have heard the actual words of Christ from His mouth to their soul, but the words they give out are their *interpretations* of the words of Christ, **not** the actual words of Christ.

The Book of Mormon teaches that through obedience to the principles of the Gospel, the plan of redemption will immediately swing into action, and we can, even in this life, be brought back into the Presence of God. The Book of Mormon even provides an example of this: the brother of Jared, because of his great faith, was redeemed from the fall and beheld God in the flesh.

Ether 3:13 "And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: **Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence**; therefore I show myself unto you."

I realize that I am taking this much further than the Church officially teaches, but isn't it obvious that both the D&C and the Book of Mormon teach this?

Alma 34:30-32 "And now, my brethren, I would that, after ye have received so many witnesses, seeing that the holy scriptures testify of these things, ye come forth and bring fruit unto repentance."

"Yea, I would that ye would come forth and harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, **immediately** shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you.

"For behold, **this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God**; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors." (Prepare in this life to do what? To meet God. To meet God when? Same answer, in this life.)

Also the Pearl of Great Price:

Moses 5:9 "And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, **that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will.**

Moses 5:10 "And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, **and again in the flesh I shall see God.**

Moses 5:11 "And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and **the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.**"

Because of their fall, Adam and Eve were put in the place where they could, by obeying the laws of the Gospel, be brought back into the Presence of God, see God in the flesh, and know the joy of redemption and eternal life -- in this mortal life. And this privilege was extended not only to Adam and Eve, but because of the atonement of Christ, to all mankind.

Think about Christ's parable about the woman and the lost coin. Before she lost it, she never gave much thought for it, but once she lost it, she turned her house upside down doing everything she could to recover it. When she regained it, how great was her joy in its recovery! While Adam and Eve were in the garden, basking in the Presence of the Father and the Son, they never truly appreciated the experience and how they would feel should they lose it, But because they lost it, and regained it, they experienced not only the joy of redemption (recovery of that which was lost), but the joy of again being in the Presence of God, and appreciating it more than they ever had before.

The Book of Mormon agrees with other latter-day scripture about overcoming the effects of the fall, and together the Book of Mormon, D&C, and P of GP support one another and add light to the many passages in the Gospel of John concerning eternal life.

But, we are talking about the inherent nature of man since the fall, and as a result of the fall, but before any redemption.

In Mosiah 3:19, the Book of Mormon seems to condemn all men, women, and even little children as "enemies to God"

Mosiah 3:19 "For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord..."

But, in other passages, little children seem to be the exception.

Mosiah 3:21 "And behold, when that time cometh, none shall be found blameless before God, except it be little children, only through repentance and faith on the name of the Lord God Omnipotent."

Mosiah 15:25 "And little children also have eternal life."

Notice he says "**have**" not "**will have**". Everywhere else, "eternal life" is spoken of as something to be earned or obtained in the future, but little children have it now.

Moroni 8:8 "Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. Behold, I came into the world not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; **the whole need no physician**, but they that are sick; wherefore, **little children are whole**, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them; and the law of circumcision is done away in me."

So, were little children once under the curse of Adam, but the curse was removed by Christ, or were they never under the curse in the first place, since they were incapable of sin, i.e. incapable of disobedience? This is not clear, but coupling this with D&C 93, we understand that the curse of the fall was removed from ALL of us, but once we began to disobey, our OWN sins kept us out of the Presence of God. So, Mormon's understanding of this principle differs somewhat from that of Joseph Smith.

### Kingcraft and Priestcraft

Many people don't realize it, but Nephi's people wanted him to be their king. He doesn't directly state that he became their king, but he does state that he did what he could do for them, and is constantly speaking of his "reign and ministry".

Future Nephite kings were required to be descendants of Nephi, so Nephi set up a dynasty.

Nephi and his people separated themselves from the people of Laman and Lemuel. Nephi's people wanted him to be their king. He acquiesced in spite of knowing the problems that having a king caused for the people of Israel. In fact, establishing a kingdom proved to be the downfall of the Jews, from which Lehi and family were fleeing. Nephi then set up a theocracy by appointing his brothers Jacob and Joseph as priests. Through kingcraft and priestcraft, Nephi laid the foundation for the destruction of his own people. With his prophetic vision, he saw their destruction coming, but what he didn't see was the Nephi, himself, by giving in to his peoples' demands for a king, was a major cause of it.

Notice that after Nephi established his kingdom, built a temple, and appointed priests, he led most of the teaching

du es to Jacob. Contrast this with Alma, who le t the du es of chief judge to look er the needs of the church. Apparently Nephi prefers to devote most of his me to kingly du es and to recording the secular ac vi es of his people on the large plates, with a few wri ngs on the small plates, and leave the preaching and teaching to others.

Mosiah was a prophet in land of Nephi, warned by God to flee the land. He found the people of Zarahemla and became king over them. Only descendants of Nephi were ever kings, so Mosiah must have been a descendant of Nephi. We read also that Mosiah possessed the interpreters and knew how to translate ancient records.

Mosiah finally does what should have been done in the first place and allows the people to elect judges. For doing this, he was greatly beloved by his people. He gives a great discourse on government and weigh the pros and cons of a democracy vs. a monarchy.

The Book of Mormon introduces the terms *kingcr* and *priestcr* . Kingcr is where a monarch taxes the people to provide him a living and doesn't labor for it with his own hands. Priestcr is ministers ge ng paid to preach – turning what should be a voluntary fulfillment of a calling from God into a paid profession. Also, priestcr is to set oneself up as a light (not as a *representa ve* of the light – i.e. God) and not seek the welfare of the people (Zion).

### **Nephi and Joseph Smith**

Joseph Smith saw himself as a Nephi, the favorite son of a religious father who lords it over his brothers. Nephi angers Laman and Lemuel so they will become his enemies. This justifies him in taking his followers elsewhere so he can be their ruler. Because of the enemy which he has created, Nephi convinces the people that they need him as a protector. Joseph Smith, in his me, created his own enemies and also the need for him to be supreme ruler and protector over his people. He simultaneously held every major civic, religious, military, judicial, and educa onal position over the people of Nauvoo, which he set up and rules as his personal fiefdom in order to protect him from his self-created enemies. When the Mormons came to Utah, Brigham Young set up Joseph Smith's dream, with himself as the head.

### **God can only work by faith**

Christ said he never saw so much faith among the Jews as among the Nephites. The Nephites had prophets who knew the details of Christ's coming 600 years in advance. They had angelic visita ons. They knew many specific details about the mission of Christ. The people witnessed the signs of Christ's birth and death. Though many disbelieved it, many believed it and taught the people. The people were prepared when Christ came to that he could minister to them with many signs and miracles. He taught them things he couldn't teach the Jews. But the Jews didn't have as much prepara on as the Nephites.

Another paradox: it seems, according to the scriptures, that God can cause great evil (natural disasters and earthquakes) among the people without their faith, but in order to do something good for them, they must have faith.

### **Who are the Heathen?**

There is a problem with the American version of the sermon in the Book of Mormon. It men ons "heathen". Who would be the "heathen" in a world where there were only Nephites and Lamanites, all of Israel?

### **Selling Christ for Silver and Gold**

3 Nephi 27:32 contains a reference to the "Son of Perdi on" who sold Christ for silver and gold. How would the Nephites know of this? We have no record that they were told about this. They had to be told about the wri ngs of Malachi, the Sermon on the Mount, and Christ's teaching about "the other sheep". Where were they taught about Judas' betrayal?

### **Distorting Teachings**

In Alma 37, Alma instructs his son Helaman to tell the people about the abomina ons of the Jaredites, but not about the secret oaths which causes them to commit such abomina ons. He is instructed to **incorrectly** teach that the Jaredites were destroyed on account of these abomina ons, and not on account of these oaths, signs, and wonders.

**(end of part 3 – end of what I posted on 4/13/10)**

## **How the Book of Mormon Contradicts LDS Teachings**

## Authority

As we all know, the LDS church claims exclusive Priesthood authority, or the power to act in the name of God. These claims are so exclusive that, according to the claim, no other religious sect, not even the Catholic Church which claims authority through Peter and a line of popes, nor any other restoration church which can trace their lines of authority back through the same lines that the LDS church uses has any claim to authority. They also claim exclusive use of the Priesthood within the church, under the direction of church leaders who have the “keys” to direct the use of said Priesthood. Further, the LDS church claims the right to revoke Priesthood authority from any male who is excommunicated from the Church. This is a false claim because one can only take away that which one has given, and the Church never “gave” anybody the Priesthood; they only ordained and conferred.

Let us see how this claim stacks up against the early revelations of Joseph Smith and the teachings of the Book of Mormon.

Before the church was formally organized in 1830, Joseph Smith was instructed in the First Vision to join none of the churches existing at the time. Some read this to imply that the reason Joseph was told not to join any church was because that none of them were true, and that he would later be instrumental in organizing the true church. An alternative interpretation of these instructions was that none of the churches were true, nor could such an organized church ever be true. This interpretation seems quite unorthodox until it is compared with an early revelation given to Joseph Smith before the church was organized.

D&C 10:67-68 “Behold, this is my doctrine--whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church.

“Whosoever declareth more or less than this, the same is not of me, but is against me; therefore he is not of my church.”

There is no mention of ordaining to priesthood or conferring authority in the early portions of the Book of Mormon. Nephi says that he obtained his authority from the Holy Ghost. No mention is made of any authority that Lehi might have had, other than his direct calling from God as a prophet. (Nephi states that Lehi received power from the Holy Ghost because of his faith on the Son of God.) This is typical of prophetic callings in the Bible. Prophets came not from the ranks of the leading priests, but were called directly by God. For example, Amos was not a prophet, nor a prophet’s son, but God called him.

Lehi, even as a prophet, did not possess the brass plates, the record of his people, and so had to get them from Laban. Later, in the Book of Mormon, the leader of the people was typically a prophet who had claims of authority, and was also in charge of keeping the sacred records. So, apparently, Lehi did not hold a position of authority among the Jews, or even among his own tribe, which we are later told was Manasseh, or else he would have already had custody of the brass plates.

Here is how Nephi claimed his authority.

1Ne 10.17 And it came to pass after I, Nephi, having heard all the words of my father, concerning the things which he saw in a vision, and also the things which he spake by the power of the Holy Ghost, **which power he received by faith on the Son of God** - and the Son of God was the Messiah who should come - I, Nephi, was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him, as well in times of old as in the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men.

1Ne 10.18 For he is the same yesterday, today, and forever and the way is prepared for all men from the foundation of the world, if it is so be that they repent and come unto him.

**1Ne 10.19 For he that diligently seeketh shall find and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round.**

1Ne 10.20 Therefore remember, O man, for all thy doings thou shalt be brought into judgment

1Ne 10.21 Wherefore, if ye have sought to do wickedly in the days of your probation, then ye are found unclean before the judgment seat of God and no unclean thing can dwell with God wherefore, ye must be

cast off forever.

1Ne 10.22 **And the Holy Ghost giveth authority that I should speak these things**, and deny them not.

Today the Church teaches that God is a God of order and that authority is to be obtained only through the recognized channels of authority in the Church. God is indeed a God of order, but that "order" of a God who is the same "yesterday, today, and forever" is laid out by Nephi. **The power and authority of the Holy Ghost is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him, not those who bow and scrape before a church.** Nowhere do we read of Lehi having obtained priesthood authority from God, or having ordained this authority upon Nephi, though Lehi gave Nephi his first blessing, which was a kind of patriarchal blessing.

Priesthood authority is later mentioned in the Book of Mormon as a requirement to administer baptism and to give the Gift of the Holy Ghost. Alma, though he was among the wicked priests of King Noah, was the only one who possessed authority to baptize and found a church during the days of King Mosiah. How could Alma have obtained his authority except in a line going back to Nephi, who obtained it through the Holy Ghost?

Alma speaks of a priesthood "after the Holy Order of God". Alma does not teach that bearers of this priesthood are members of any particular church. Instead, the members of this order are called by God on account of their "faith, repentance, and holy works", and that they are ordained with a holy ordination, after a manner in which men could look forward to the calling and mission of Jesus Christ. Christ, himself, who was and is a High Priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, was called not by man, but by God; not through any organized religious body, but by the Voice of God, speaking directly from the heavens, proclaiming that this was "My beloved Son".

According to Alma, we should expect that all true priests after this "Holy Order of God" to be called and ordained in a similar manner. Contrast this with the practice of the LDS Church today. High Priests are called in a manner no different than that of Deacons or Elders. They serve as Church lay ministers without any of the attendant gifts of the Spirit ascribed the Melchizedek and the ancient members after his order.

The Book of Mormon states that Alma had "authority from God" (Mos. 18:18), but doesn't state specifically how he obtained this authority. He was one of the priests of the wicked King Noah, but who believed the words of the prophet Abinadi. The book later states that Alma was their "high priest, the founder of their church". He also had authority to ordain others to preach and teach. (Mos. 23:1617)

There is no doubt that Alma, as a priest, operated outside of the organization of King Noah and his corrupt priesthood because he was accused of turning the people against the king. It is also evident, that even when operating outside the established organization, that God recognized the work of Alma by evidence of the Holy Ghost falling upon him and his flock, and God blessing and protecting his people.

When Alma brought his church back to the land of King Mosiah, Mosiah granted to Alma the authority to ordain priests and teachers and to establish the church, and be high priest over it. (Mos. 25:19, 26:7) From this we learn, that Alma had authority to operate on his own in the wilderness, but needed to be given authority from King Mosiah to operate within Mosiah's kingdom. Apparently Mosiah had the necessary authority to accomplish this. The real confirmation of Alma's authority comes in Mosiah, chapter 26, when Alma inquires of the Lord concerning how to deal with transgressors in the Church. In a revelation to him, the Lord basically recounts the experiences of Alma in teaching and baptizing the people, and in establishing a church. In Mosiah 26:20, God declared that Alma is his servant and promises him eternal life. At this point, Alma was surely recognized as a member of the "Holy Order of God", since his works and calling were acknowledged by God himself, and he receiving the promise of eternal life, "entered into the rest of God" (Alma 13:6)

It is strange that when Christ appears to the Nephites that he found it necessary to again confer the priesthood and authority to baptize. If the priesthood was already to be had among the Nephites, and was handed down from father to son, along with the records, why was it necessary to do what amounts to a RESTORATION of priesthood authority?

In 3 Nephi chapter 11, Christ descends from heaven and appears before the people.

Verse 21 - he gives them power to baptize and explains how to baptize so that there will be no more disputations. This is at odds with the earlier portion of the Book of Mormon. Nephi says that the Spirit gives his authority. Alma was a priest of King Noah, but he had authority to baptize and form a church and teach the Gospel. In fact, he

claimed to have the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood after the Holy Order of God, and does a commendable job explaining the nature of this priesthood. Also, Christ had to put down disputations and contentions which had arisen. He also re-explains the doctrine of Christ. But, we are told that the purpose of the Book of Mormon was to put to rest all doctrinal contention, but we see constant contention over doctrine and belief from the beginning of the book until now. But, why did he need to re-ordain to the priesthood? Was the chain of authority broken? Did he give them additional authority?

### **Exclusive authority by ordination of man, Exclusive authority by virtue of knowledge. Twin false doctrines.**

There are others who claim "authority" by virtue of the knowledge which has been given to them as a result of following these principles. Yet, they seek to pervert the free gifts of God unto all and set themselves up as exclusive authorities because of the mistaken claim that the "gods do not repeat themselves" i.e. that because God has spoken once to one seeker or disciple, he cannot or will not speak again to another seeker or disciple. So, whether the claims of authority are based on exclusive ordination or exclusive revelation, the result is the same. Man has set up a barrier between true seekers and God.

This is not to say that God does not ordain men to his Holy Order, and does not speak from the heavens. He does. But, he is no respecter of persons and all who will come may come, and the message to those who would claim exclusivity and bar the entrance of the Kingdom to others, the message is: "He who hath ears to hear, LET him hear."

### **The Great and Abominable Church**

In 1Ne 13.4 it reads "And it came to pass that I saw among the nations of the Gentiles the foundation of a great church." The Church changed this to read "the FORMATION of a great church" This changes the meaning. We should also keep in mind that the prophecy does not refer to the Catholic Church, or to Christianity as the "great church", but only as the FOUNDATION of what was to BECOME the great and abominable church.

### **Sacrament**

The LDS Church is not following the model laid out by Christ, himself, in administering the Sacrament. Should the Church of Jesus Christ not follow the model given by Christ himself in passing out **bread in abundance**, so that all could eat **until they were filled**, and should the Church not pass out wine, more symbolic of the blood of Christ, or at least grape juice? Christ taught that this ordinance and the symbols thereof were to be performed in remembrance of Him, and his body which he freely gave, and his blood which he freely spilt. But how can the saints properly remember Christ with "watered down" symbols: with niggardly little portions of stale, lifeless bits of bread that are devoid of all nutrients and many cups full of city tap water?

Read the Book of Mormon account in 3 Nephi 18:3-5

"And when the disciples had come with bread and **wine**, he took of the bread and brake and blessed it; and he gave unto the disciples and commanded that they should eat.

"And when they had eaten and were **filled**, he commanded that they should give unto the multitude.

"And when the multitude had eaten and were **filled**, ..."

Much symbolism is missed in the "sanitized" version of the Sacrament. It is much easier to visualize breaking a body when large, crusty loaves are used, and which can only be broken with much effort. Water is a life-giving substance, but one which we obtain so easily that we do not appreciate the effort going into obtaining it. Wine, on the other hand, is the product of the fruit of the grapevine, carefully tended in a vineyard until the harvest, then violently crushed so as to obtain the juice, which is then aged and fermented in order to impart the special qualities of alcohol, the common ingredient of drinks known as "spirits". These symbols are used freely throughout the scriptures. Why should they be ignored or "watered down" during that ordinance in which we symbolically do that which the Gospel urges us in reality to do: to take upon ourselves the Name of Christ, and all that that entails, and to REMEMBER his sacrifice of his body and blood, as we symbolically eat of that flesh and drink of that blood, and thus have part with him in sharing that great Name?

### **Deliverance from Prison, Modern-day Miracles**

In Helaman 5, Nephi and Lehi, sons of Helaman were cast into prison and were delivered miraculously by an earthquake. The voice of God sounded. The prison was shrouded in darkness, while the brothers were encircled

about in a pillar of fire. They conversed with angels and were freed from prison.

Why couldn't this have happened with Joseph and Hyrum in the Carthage Jail?

The Book of Mormon is very narrowly focused and only gives us part of the information needed. In Alma 37, we aren't told about the secret oaths which brought down the wrath of God about the people. Likewise, in this chapter, we are not taught here, or anywhere else in the Book of Mormon, those principles by which men have experiences such as Nephi and Lehi had, and such as other prophets, teachers, and missionaries in the Book of Mormon had. Is it, as Mormon suggests, because of a lack of faith and all is vain? But even experiences in the early Church are nothing in comparison with what happened in the Book of Mormon. Protecting peoples' free agency is not a valid argument. People had free agency back then. Their faith also needed to be tried, but the rewards which they received for their great faith and far and beyond what is considered to be the norm today. Why aren't people asking how come?

## New Principles Taught by the Book of Mormon

I believe that while the majority of the Book of Mormon is a rehash or a reinterpretation of Biblical principles and verses, mingled with history that archeology cannot verify, there are a number of unique principles and doctrines taught by the Book of Mormon. Here are a few that I have discovered, presented for your consideration. You may be familiar with others. These are either new teachings, or they shed light on prior teachings. The Book of Mormon, itself, teaches that "many plain and precious things" were removed from the Bible, but were added back in the Book of Mormon. In light of that teaching, it is difficult to believe the LDS Church's claim that the two books are "comparable" and that each contains the "fullness of the Gospel".

To claim that the Book of Mormon is just another book of scripture "comparable" to the Bible and it contains no new or unique truths, when it clearly contains new truths, is tantamount to the people in Lehi's dream partaking of the fruit (the love of God), and then feeling ashamed because of the ridicule of the people in the great and spacious building (the pride of the world), who were mocking them.

If the claim that the obeying the precepts Book of Mormon will bring man closer to God, then they will surely bring man closer to experiencing the love of God, as described in Lehi's vision of the Tree of Life.

1 Nephi 8.24-28 :And it came to pass that I behold others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree.

**"And after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast their eyes about as if they were ashamed.**

"And I also cast my eyes round about, and beheld, on the other side of the river of water, a great and spacious building; and it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth.

"And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceeding fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit.

**'And after they had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.'**

## A Choice Seer

Lehi repeats the prophecy of Joseph about one of his descendants being a choice seer. A careful reading reveals that this seer could not be Joseph Smith, as some in the LDS church claims, because the seer is to be a descendant of Lehi. Fundamentalists believe that this seer is clearly to be a Lamanite prophet. This does not eliminate the possibility that Joseph Smith or another ancient prophet will return as a Lamanite, but Lehi's prophecy is clear that the coming seer will come through the loins of Lehi's son Joseph.

## A Righteous Nation is Justified in taking over a Wicked Nation

The doctrine is clearly taught that under the leadership of God a righteous nation is justified in going in and taking over and destroying the inhabitants of a wicked nation.



## Prayer

The Book of Mormon teaches how to pray, where to pray, and what to pray about. It even describes the principle of praying continuously in one's heart, whether one is physically praying or not. When Christ came among the Nephites, he asked them to pray. The record states that they did not wax many words because the Spirit prompted them in how to pray and filled them with desire. This teaches us that we should not only pray for answers to our questions, but to seek inspiration in what to pray for. One of the Nephis in Helaman 10:5 was so in tune with the Spirit that God knew that all his desires were in harmony with God's will, and the Lord promised him that all his prayers would be answered.

We are also taught that even in the performance of our daily tasks, our performance should be sanctified to the glory of God.

2 Nephi 32.9 "But behold, I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul."

## Passions

Alma's advice to one of his missionary sons was to bridle his passions that he might be filled with love. It might not be readily apparent how suppressing one's emotions can lead to an increase in love. However, when the mind controls the emotions, and not the other way around, the emotions are more effectively channeled, and the emotion of love is transformed from lustful passion into godly charity.

## A Sober Lad and Quick to Observe

When Amaron the prophet was looking for somebody to hand the Nephite records over to, he took the boy Mormon aside and told him: "I perceive that thou art a sober lad and quick to observe." In other words the attributes the Mormon possessed that lead Amaron to believe that he could be trusted with the sacred records of his people was that the boy was in control of his emotions, and in tune with the world around him. These are invaluable assets to have at any time, and especially so in the midst of the crisis in which Mormon found himself.

## Baptism / Overshadowing of Christ

Some teach that when Jesus was baptized and the Holy Ghost descended upon him, that this was actually another being known as "the Christ", and that this literal, physical, in-dwelling being was regarded by the man Jesus as his "father". The teaching also says that other superior life-form descended upon Jesus and took up residence in the same body throughout the remaining three years of Jesus' life. There are a number of isolated scriptures that can be construed to support this idea, however weakly. However, here is a passage in 2 Nephi 31:12 which seems to dismiss this notion.

**"Those who are baptized in the name of Christ will the Father give the Holy Ghost - LIKE UNTO ME".**

In other words, to all those who are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, the Father will give them the Holy Ghost, in the same manner in which he gave the Holy Ghost to Jesus, at his baptism. Another fact is that John the Baptist did not recognize the need for Jesus to be baptized except as an outward sign of what had already occurred inwardly. John knew that Christ was clean every whit, and that he had already been baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost. But, Jesus stated that, in order to "fulfill all righteousness", this baptism of water and fire needed to be formally recognized and witnessed. Jesus saw a higher purpose in this baptism than just an empty show to impress people. In order for an act to be completely righteous, it must take place on both an inner, spiritual level, and on an outer, physical level. Also, Jesus saw this as an example to teach people, so that by all mankind following this example, all righteousness would be fulfilled.

Also, here is reference to three distinct personages, not two. If we are to be baptized and receive the Holy Ghost like unto Christ, would that mean that we are all to be overshadowed by the same indwelling entity? No, but we are to have a Companion, or a Comforter – an inner Teacher to teach us the words of Christ, and bring all things to our remembrance.

## Polygamy

Jacob comes down pretty hard on polygamy. This contrasts with the Bible where it almost seems to be a given in the Old Testament, and of course this teaching is as odds with early LDS practices. We might be seeing the influence of Oliver Cowdery here. He hated polygamy.

## The Parable of the Vineyard

We hear little bits about vineyards, grapes, and harvests throughout the Bible. It is a good analogy for God's dealings with mankind. There are many lessons to be learned from understanding this parable, even in part. But, the Book of Mormon presents the parable in full.

## Personal Revelation

The Book of Mormon is full of examples of people obtaining revelations and performing miracles because of their faith. Jacob wrote this:

“Because of the many witnesses of the prophets, and because of our revelations and the spirit of prophecy, we obtain a hope, and our faith is unshaken in so much that we truly command in the name of Jesus and the very trees obey us, or the mountains, or the waves of the sea.”

“Despise not the revelations of God.” “Why not attain to a perfect knowledge of Christ.” “Truth is a knowledge of things as they really are, and as they really will be.”

God takes away plainness because the people desire it.

The story of Enos teaches us how, through prayer, one can gain a remission of their sins, which is in reality redemption from false guilt. Enos, through faith, obtains a knowledge that God cannot lie. This was the same knowledge that redeemed the brother of Jared from the fall, and brought him back into the presence of Christ. As Enos came to be right with God, his sphere of concern broadened from his own personal salvation to the concern for his people down through history. Through faith, one obtains covenants with God.

Jarom wrote that “many have revelations according to their faith”. The gift of revelation was not limited to the chief prophet or church authorities.

In Alma 36 we read that the people, after having been born of God, in fulfillment of Alma 34, many people had seen God and had the same experience as Alma.

Mormon taught that if miracles and gifts of the spirit cease in the Church it is because of lack of faith, and it is as if no atonement had been made.

In the beginning, the LDS church was much more charismatic than it is now. Miracles were common. Many spoke in tongues, among them Brigham Young, while others interpreted. Many members received revelations or heavenly confirmations of the principles taught them.

Where is that today? When was the last time a member of the Church stood up in Sacrament Meeting and told about a dream or a vision they had? And remained a member in good standing? I grew up in a small branch of the Church in the 50's in Washington State. We used to sing “though the world upon us frown”, and meant it. We were different, and we were almost proud of being different. There was much more enthusiasm in church meetings.

And, yes, as a teenager and in college, I heard church leaders speak about dreams and revelations. They spoke about how the future Zion would be established, about the trials of the saints before Zion could be established, and about how to bring a little “Zion” into our lives right now. When was the last time you witnessed a miracle. A *real* miracle, not just something that *seemed* like a miracle. Years ago, I saw them: fevers instantly abated; missing persons were found; bones instantly mended; seizures and spasms instantly calmed; people rose from their sick beds.

## Meaning of Restoration

In Alma 41, he uses the term “restoration”. It's also the definition of, or the law of cause and effect.

## Male Bonding

Alma 53:2. “Now behold, this Lehi was a man who had been with Moroni in the more part of all his battles; and he was a man like unto Moroni, and they rejoiced in each other's safety; yea, they were beloved by each other, and also beloved by all the people of Nephi.”

Sounds a little like David and Jonathan.

## Ripening in Iniquity, Ripe for Destruction

We hear these terms a lot in the Book of Mormon, but how do we know what a people or a church is “ripe for destruction”? What has to happen before the Lord allows destructive forces to come in and effect a long-overdue cleaning?

Samuel the Lamanite has the answer in Helaman 13:14: “But behold, it is for the righteous' sake that it is spared. **But behold, the me cometh, saith the Lord, that when ye shall cast out the righteous from among you, then shall ye be ripe for destruction; yea, wo be unto this great city, because of the wickedness and abominations which are in her.**”

This defines the point at which a city, a nation, or a church is ripe for destruction -- when they cast out the righteous from among them. Could we say that the LDS Church has reached this point where they cast out the righteous from among them – good and faithful members whose only sin is thinking for themselves and questioning the established authorities?

### True Humility

It is easier for people to be humble in poverty than in wealth. It is easier to stay faithful under great trials than under great wealth. But it is best is to be humble in whatsoever circumstance you find yourself in. So teaches Alma to the poor who were cast out of the synagogues of the Zoraites on account of their poverty and ragged appearance.

### Buried Treasure

In Helaman 13:17-20, 33-36, there are several references in Helaman to hiding treasure. This takes on some significance when you consider that both Joseph and Oliver were, from time to time, both treasure seekers and “money diggers”.

### Translation, Like Moses

In Alma 45:18, it says that Alma departed out of the land of Zarahemla and was never heard of again.

In 3 Nephi 1:2-3 Nephi, son of Helaman also "departed" out of the land and was never seen or heard from again. Could it be that these two men were taken up to heaven without tasting death, as was Moses, who was “buried by the hand of the Lord”.

### One of the Greatest Examples of Faith

Nephi had great power and faith. He raised his brother from the dead. He had so much faith that angels ministered to him daily, and people could not disbelieve his words. 3 Nephi 7:18-19. His brother's name was Timothy (3 Nephi 19:4) Nephi and his brother Timothy was among the 12 disciples that Jesus chose. Later, three of these were granted the same wish of John the Beloved -- to remain in the flesh and not taste of death, bring souls unto Christ, and witness the doings of men, until the Savior returned. According to Chris Nemelka, one of the Three Nephites' names was Timothy, although the Book of Mormon doesn't reveal their names. If one of them was named Timothy, he would be the brother of Nephi, son of Nephi, who was raised from the dead by his brother.

### Sermon on the Mount: Book of Mormon Style

There are significant differences in the Sermon on the Mount, which shed new light on these teachings from the Bible.

We are enjoined to be perfect, even as the Father, **and Christ** are perfect. Christ was not perfect in the beginning, but **became** perfected as he completed the work his father sent him to do. A correct definition of the Greek word translated “perfect” in the New Testament refers not to moral perfection, but to being finished, whole, or complete.

The Book of Mormon makes clear that the instruction: "Take no thought for your life ..." was given to the 12 disciples, not to the general crowd.

The Book of Mormon sheds more light on the fulfillment of the Law of Moses. Contrast these verses from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and the sermon given in the New World.

Matthew 5:17 “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”

**3Ne 12:17 “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to**

fulfill;”

Ma 5:18 “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one le shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”

**3Ne 12:18 “For verily I say unto you, one jot nor one le hath not passed away from the law, but in me it hath all been fulfilled.”**

Ma 5:19 “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

**3Ne 12:19 “And behold, I have given you the law and the commandments of my Father, that ye shall believe in me, and that ye shall repent of your sins, and come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Behold, ye have the commandments before you, and the law is fulfilled.”**

Ma 5:20 “For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

**3Ne 12:20 “Therefore come unto me and be ye saved; for verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this me, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”**

The Sermon on the Mount was not just blindly copied from the Bible to the Book of Mormon. The writers considered the differences in Christ’s ministry before and after His crucifixion and recurrec on.

### **The Order of Worship Among the Nephites**

This is described by Moroni . The mee ngs were free-form and lead by the Spirit. They almost sound like Quaker mee ngs

Moroni 6:5-9 “And the church did meet together o , to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls.

“And they did meet together o to partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus.

“And they were strict to observe that there should be no iniquity among them; and whoso was found to commit iniquity, and three witnesses of the church did condemn them before the elders, and if they repented not, and confessed not, their names were blo ed out, and they were not numbered among the people of Christ.

“But as o as they repented and sought forgiveness, with real intent, they were forgiven.

“And their mee ngs were conducted by the church a er the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Ghost; for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done.”

I can picture a small band of saints, mee ng quietly in someone’s home. The mee ng is less a formal gathering than a small discussion group where people teach one another, confess their sins to one another, express forgiveness to one another, and discuss their goals and progress along the path toward the Kingdom. Interspersed with the discussion are prayers, songs, and partaking of the sacrament, as the Spirit directs. The saints come to the mee ng fas ng, and following the mee ng is a group meal I see this func oning similar to a support group, as we know them today. I have been in similar situa ons in small college Chris an groups, where somebody brings a guitar, and the student crowd around on the floor singing the psalms, set to music. The spirit was there much more abundantly than in a sterile LDS mcChapel.

### **Infant Baptism**

Anybody who has read the Book of Mormon is familiar with Mormon’s teachings on infant bap sm. He lays out a rather convincing case which we are probably all familiar with, so I won’t repeat it here.

## Charity is the Pure Love of Christ and a Gift of the Spirit

The King James Bible uses the word “charity”, which is translated in most other Bibles as “love”. But, the Greek recognizes three kinds of love *eros* (erotic lust), *phileo* (brotherly love, or the love which gives in hopes of getting back), and *agape*, which is properly defined in the Book of Mormon as the pure unselfish love of Christ. It is typified by the type of love a mother has for her child, the love Christ has for all, and the type of love a true disciple of Christ ought to cultivate.

The Book of Mormon defines charity as a gift of the spirit and urges us to “pray with all the energy” of our souls that we may be filled with this gift. The Book of Mormon takes the view that by receipt of the Holy Ghost, a person’s nature is changed. A natural man is an enemy to God unless he yields to the workings of the spirit. King Benjamin’s audience received the Spirit *en masse* and had no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually. We read of numerous Lamanite conversions with people who were suddenly touched by the Spirit, going into trances, seeing visions of Christ and angels, and then waking up with a changed nature.

## Shedding Light on Old Principles

### The Doctrine of Christ

The doctrine of Christ includes the first two principles of the Gospel: faith and repentance, and the first two ordinances: baptism and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. But the doctrine also includes the following:

“Do ye not remember that I said unto you that after ye had received the Holy Ghost ye could speak with the tongue of angels? And now, how could ye speak with the tongue of angels save it were by the Holy Ghost?”

“Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, **fast upon the words of Christ**; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.

“Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark.

“For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and **receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do.**

“Behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and there will be no more doctrine given unto him after he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh. And when he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh, the things which he shall say unto you shall be observe to do.”

Not only **can** we receive personal revelation; we **must** receive personal revelation.

This doctrine is explicitly taught by Nephi in 2 Nephi 31, 32, and repeated by Christ himself in 3 Nephi 11:31-41. John the apostle urges believers not to fellowship with any who believe not the doctrine of Christ. ( 2 John 1:9-10)

### The Vision of All

Foreseeing a time when those called “prophets” would have distanced themselves so far from God that they would be unable to discern God’s sweeping plan for the world, Isaiah speaks of “the vision of all”. He compares the vision to a book that is sealed, which even the prophets are unable to open, because they have strayed from God. However, the Book of Mormon presents many prophets in the past who have received this great vision that sweeps from one end of history to the other, implying that this is a “standard” revelation that God gives to all who are prepared to receive it.

Many prophets in Israel during Isaiah’s time, and many Book of Mormon prophets saw this great vision. Lehi received a great revelation, a panorama of history. Nephi prayed to God and received the same revelation. He explained the principles by which all men may come to learn the mysteries of God for themselves. We later learn that this revelation was the same as the revelation of John in The Revelation of St. John. We are later promised in the Book of Mormon, that in the last days, this revelation will be unfolded in the eyes of all the people.

1Ne 10.19 “For he that diligently seeketh shall find and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the

power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round.”

In the Book of Ether, the brother of Jared received this same revelation, and was commanded to write it down, but also to seal it up. The revelation was recorded in a sealed book to be kept until Christ manifested in the flesh, but other prophets were privileged to behold the same revelation before the time it was to be revealed to the public.

Ether 4:7. “And in that day that they shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are.”

Ether 4:16 “And then shall my revelations which I have caused to be written by my servant John be unfolded in the eyes of all the people. Remember, when ye see these things, ye shall know that the time is at hand that they shall be made manifest in very deed.”

The question is this, and this has great bearing on the coming forth of The Sealed Portion, do all the people have to have faith like the brother of Jared, or just the prophet to whom the revelation is given, or to whom is given to translate the sealed portion of the plates? Many would argue that Joseph Smith had faith like unto the Brother of Jared, yet he was commanded to not even touch the sealed portion of the record. So, I am inclined to that that these two passages refer to the general level of faith among all the people, and that when they are ready as a group, or as they are ready as individuals, God will unfold this revelation personally to them.

The Book of Mormon presents the same panorama of history as does the Bible, but from an American perspective. One sees the roles of the Gentiles and the native Americans in playing out the restoration and gathering. Like the book *A View of the Hebrews*, the Book of Mormon constantly quotes and comments on the writings of Isaiah.

## Passages from Isaiah

These passages are copied directly over from the King James bible, taking care to preserve the same language and even the same grammatical errors as the original King James translators. Strange how this was accomplished.

In the passages from Isaiah that were quoted in 2 Nephi, here is an interesting change from the words of Isaiah:

2Ne 8.18 “And there is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand, of all the sons that she hath brought up.

2Ne 8.19 “**These two sons are come unto thee**, who shall be sorry for thee - thy desolation and destruction, and the famine, and the sword - and by whom shall I comfort thee?

2Ne 8.20 “Thy sons have fainted, save these two, they lie at the head of all the streets; as a wild bull in a net, they are full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of thy God.”

Isa 51:18 “[There is] none to guide her among all the sons [whom] she hath brought forth; neither [is there any] that taketh her by the hand of all the sons [that] she hath brought up.

Isa 51:19 “**These two [things] are come unto thee**; who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee?

Isa 51:20 “Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net: they are full of the fury of the LORD, the rebuke of thy God.”

This kind of sounds like the Two Witnesses, mentioned in the Book of Revelations. Note that I left the brackets in the text in order to show that the translation of the bracketed words is either in doubt, or the words were not found in the original manuscript from which the translation was done.

## The True Nature of the Twelve and Their Mission

The true church of Jesus Christ is built on a foundation of apostles and prophets. The wall of the City of New Jerusalem will have twelve foundations, containing the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. But, are we speaking specifically of the original twelve (with the possible substitution of Matthias for Judas), or are we speaking generally of any quorum of twelve apostles?

The Book of Mormon seems to indicate that there is something special about the original twelve, who were with Christ in his ministry and who will return with him to judge the twelve tribes of Israel at the second coming.

In the last days, not only “the world”, but the very House of Israel will be gathered together to fight against these twelve apostles of the lamb.

Of all the men who ever held this office, or claimed to hold this office, these twelve alone had the unique privilege of living and working with Christ, or being eyewitnesses of his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. All of them save John gave their lives as a witness of their unique testimony of Christ. John tarried on the earth and gave his life (lives) as a living sacrifice of service. We have the written testimony of the apostles coming down to us in corrupted form in the Bible, but with the plain and precious truths which were removed have been restored via the Book of Mormon and will be restored in other hidden records which are promised to come forth, among which are the fullness of the record of John.

From 1 Nephi:

1.9 And it came to pass that **he saw one descending out of the midst of heaven**, and he beheld that his luster was above that of the sun at noon-day.

1.10 **And he saw twelve others following him**, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament.

The Twelve (and it is proper to capitalize their name in order to distinguish them from any other quorum of “twelve”), were with Christ in the pre-mortal existence, and if you believe in reincarnation, probably reincarnated with him and served with him many times before on this planet, in various capacities.

11.28 And I beheld that he went forth ministering unto the people, in power and great glory; and the multitudes were gathered together to hear him; and I beheld that they cast him out from among them.

11.29 And I also beheld twelve others following him. And it came to pass that they were carried away in the Spirit from before my face, and I saw them not.

11.34 And after he was slain **I saw the multitudes of the earth, that they were gathered together to fight against the apostles of the Lamb; for thus were the twelve called by the angel of the Lord.**

11.35 And the multitude of the earth was gathered together; and I beheld that they were in a large and spacious building, like unto the building which my father saw. And the angel of the Lord spake unto me again, saying: Behold the world and the wisdom thereof; yea, **behold the house of Israel hath gathered together to fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb.**

I want to especially call attention to this because I missed it in all my early readings of the Book of Mormon. Even the very House of Israel, who should have known better, who of all people should have recognized the Christ, will fight against Him and against his twelve apostles. And how will they fight against them? Obviously, by persecuting them and by rejecting their words. But also by distorting their words, by taking away the plain and precious things that they taught. Also, by making light of them and their mission, or by making light of their testimony. Another way to fight against the twelve apostles of the lamb would be to set up the equivalent of an anti-Christ – an anti-twelve. Or, in other words, set up a quorum of twelve men which claims to be true apostles, as a substitute for the real thing, but lacks the power of their testimony – men who preach on the evils of the lottery, and political issues, instead of being living eyewitnesses of the suffering, death, and resurrection of the Christ.

11.36 And it came to pass that I saw and bear record, that the great and spacious building was the pride of the world; and it fell, and the fall thereof was exceedingly great. And the angel of the Lord spake unto me again, saying: **Thus shall be the destruction of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, that shall fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb.**

12.7 And I also saw and bear record that the Holy Ghost fell upon twelve others; and they were ordained of God, and chosen.

12.8 And the angel spake unto me, saying: Behold the twelve disciples of the Lamb, who are chosen to minister unto thy seed.

12.9 And he said unto me: **Thou rememberest the twelve apostles of the Lamb? Behold they are they who shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel;** wherefore, the twelve ministers of thy seed shall be judged of them; for ye are of the house of Israel.

12.10 And these twelve ministers whom thou beholdest shall judge thy seed. And behold, they are righteous forever; for because of their faith in the Lamb of God their garments are made white in his blood.

13.24 And the angel of the Lord said unto me: **Thou hast beheld that the book proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew; and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the plainness of the gospel of the Lord, of whom the twelve apostles bear record; and they bead record according to the truth which is in the Lamb of God.**

13.25 Wherefore, these things go forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gen les, according to the truth which is in God.

13.26 And a er they go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, from the Jews unto the gen les, thou seest the founda on of a great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they 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.

13.27 And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harder the hearts of the children of men.

13.39 And a er it had come forth unto them I beheld other books, which came forth by the power of the Lamb, from the Gen les unto them, unto the convincing of the Gen les and the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the Jews who were sca ered upon all the face of the earth, that the records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true.

13.40 And the angel spake unto me, saying: **These last records which thou hast seen among the Gen les, shall establish the truth of the first, which are of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them;** and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved.

13.41 And they must come according to the words which shall be established by the mouth of the Lamb; and the words of the Lamb shall be made known in the records of thy seed, as well as in the records of the twelve apostles of the Lamb; wherefore they both shall be established in one; for these is one God and one Shepherd over all the earth.

14.18 And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me saying: Look!

14.19 And I looked and beheld a man, and he was dressed in a white robe.

14.20 And the angel said unto me: **Behold one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.**

14.21 **Behold, he shall see and write the remainder of these things;** yea, and also many things which have been.

14.22 **And he shall also write concerning the end of the world.**

God has a "stock" revela on which he shows to many prophets.

14.23 **Wherefore, the things which he shall write are just and true;** and behold they are wri en in the book which thou beheld proceeding out of the mouth of the Jew; and at the me they proceeded out of the mouth of the Jew, or at the me the book proceeded out of the mouth of the Jew, the things which were wri en were plain and pure, and most precious and easy to the understanding of all men.

It is significant to note that whenever reference is made to the writings of John, the reader is reminded that his wri ngs are "just and true". A commentary, appended to the Gospel of John, a ests to the truthfulness of his record. In the JST version of the Bible, John is called the "the faithful witness", and in all versions of the Bible, the



reader is cautioned not to add to nor take away from the words of his Revelation – the same revelation that Nephi received.

**14.24 And behold, the things which this apostle of the Lamb shall write are many things which thou hast seen; and behold, the remainder shalt thou see.**

14.25 But the things which thou shalt see hereafter thou shalt not write; for the Lord God hath ordained the apostle of the Lamb of God that he should write them.

14.26 And also others who have been, to them hath he shown all things, and they have written them; and they are sealed up to come forth in their purity, according to the truth which is in the Lamb, in the own due time of the Lord, unto the house of Israel.

14.27 And I, Nephi, heard and bear record, that the name of the apostle of the Lamb was John, according to the word of the angel.

14.28 And behold, I, Nephi, am forbidden that I should write the remainder of the things which I saw and heard; wherefore the things which I have written suffice me; and I have written but a small part of the things which I saw.

## Conclusion

So, *is* the Book of Mormon true? As always, that's for the individual to decide. If it isn't true *for you*, then it *isn't* true.

By that, I mean that it doesn't matter what I or anybody else thinks about the Book of Mormon. My testimony, or anybody else's testimony, about the Book of Mormon will not save you or bring you closer to God. Only living the precepts taught in the book can do that, and that is the only sure test of truth that you can rely on. Alma, in chapter 30 of his book, describes this test as an experiment with truth. Only by doing the experiment, planting the seed, and nourishing it can the true fruit be seen.

What is the fruit? Getting "closer to God". How close can you get? According to the Book of Mormon, as close as you want. This book tells of people who experienced a mighty change of heart, experienced the love of God, experienced many gifts of the spirit, experienced many revelations, saw God face to face, overcame death, and were redeemed from the fall and brought back into His Presence. Close enough for you?

The new full title of the Book of Mormon, which was not given by Mormon, Moroni, or Joseph Smith is *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ*.

I would half-heartedly like to propose an alternate title: *The Book of Mormon: Here's how by Who's Who*.

I started this treatise by asking a lot of questions. I'll end it by asking a lot of questions – the same questions that were running through the minds of the people in upstate New York in the 1820's and 1830's – questions which should have been asked then by Joseph Smith, but weren't.

Times have changed a lot since we are told that the Book of Mormon or The New Testament was written. Two thousand years between us and them is a greater distance between the Nephites and the Jews 200 years ago. If God speaks to all peoples, as the Book of Mormon claims, then don't we deserve our own Testament of Jesus Christ today? Where is it? Has it been written? Who is capable of writing it? Who could claim to write it? If their claims are legitimate, why haven't they written it?

When you take a look at the Book of Mormon and study its contents and a little about the people who worked publicly, or possibly behind the scenes, to bring the book about, it seems to say more to us about the real people of America in upstate New York in the 1820's than it does about the fictitious (at least according to modern archeology) inhabitants of America between 600 BC and 421 AD. Perhaps the Book of Mormon *is* "another testament of Jesus Christ", intended for us in our day, but the names and the places have been changed.