

Annotated BOOK OF MORMON

Evaluated According
To My Current Knowledge

Annotated Book of Mormon:

Evaluated According To My Current Knowledge

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Cover Art, *Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden* by Johann Wenzel Peter (1745–1829)

*To those who mourn the loss of their former beliefs and the damage to
relationships that depended so much on sharing those beliefs.
I mourn with you.*

I think a full, free talk is frequently of great use; we want nothing secret nor underhanded, and for one I want no association with things that cannot be talked about and will not bear investigation.

~ John Taylor, while leading the Church as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

If a faith will not bear to be investigated; if its preachers and professors are afraid to have it examined, their foundation must be very weak.

~ George A. Smith, while First Counselor in the First Presidency

The Book of Mormon can and should be tested. It invites criticism.

~ Hugh Nibley, Renown Mormon apologist

Convince us of our errors of Doctrine, if we have any, by reason, by logical arguments, or by the Word of God, and we will be ever grateful for the information, and you will ever have the pleasing reflection that you have been instruments in the hands of God of redeeming your fellow beings from the darkness which you may see enveloping their minds. Come, then, let us reason together, and try to discover the true light upon all subjects, connected with our temporal or eternal happiness.

~ Orson Pratt, while an Apostle of the Church

If we have the truth, it cannot be harmed by investigation. If we have not the truth, it ought to be harmed.

~ J. Reuben Clark, probably before being called as a general authority of the Church

The honest investigator must be prepared to follow wherever the search of truth may lead. Truth is often found in the most unexpected places. He must, with fearless and open mind insist that facts are far more important than any cherished, mistaken beliefs, no matter how unpleasant the facts or how delightful the beliefs.

~ Hugh B. Brown, while Second Counselor in the First Presidency

*There are many other forms of lying. When we speak untruths, we are guilty of lying. We can also intentionally deceive others by a gesture or a look, by silence, or by telling only part of the truth. **Whenever we lead people in any way to believe something that is not true, we are not being honest.***

“Chapter 31: Honesty,” *Gospel Principles*, emphasis added

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Preface

Congratulations! If you are a believing member of the LDS Church, I don't think you'd be here unless you had a confident faith and a firm belief that truth can stand up to scrutiny. If you're here because of doubts or disbelief, I don't think you'd be here unless you were trying to work through the disruption that may have caused in your life. Regardless of where you're coming from, hopefully my *Annotated Book of Mormon* will help you have a better appreciation for some of the difficulties some have with the Book of Mormon.

When I found I could no longer believe the Book of Mormon is what it claims to be, I discovered that I had never received full disclosure about the book. This is my attempt to provide that disclosure for those who may be interested. I have no delusion that I have listed every aspect of information related to the founding or contents of the Book of Mormon. By full disclosure I mean to be truthful and forthcoming about all issues regarding the book that seem relevant to making a reasonable conclusion about Book of Mormon truth claims. That's what I've tried to do, based on what I find relevant and what I wish I had been told when I first studied the book.

Obviously I am biased. Having been a devout, believing Mormon for more than two decades, I'm very familiar with the Book of Mormon and its significance to believers. On the other hand I no longer believe in the truth claims of the Book of Mormon. However, I've tried to temper my biases with honesty and the admission that I could be wrong about any one of my observations.

Understanding the challenges to figuring out what is correct, accurate, or right, I try to make sure my beliefs are justified when it comes to things that have any important impact on my life. The Book of Mormon claims to have important impact and offers evidence and ways to go about determining whether or not its claims are true. If you're interested in some of the challenges to things in the book that are supposed to help you understand the truthfulness of the book, I'd suggest starting with my annotations about:

- Testimony of Three Witnesses
- Testimony of Eight Witnesses
- Alma, chapter 32
- Moroni, chapter 10, verses 3-5

My observations are based on my understanding of the information I've gathered. I don't think these observations are original, but I hope it is useful to have them gathered in one place. I invite correction from anyone who takes issue with any of my annotations, whether the issue is with the accuracy, validity, sources, or tone of my annotations.

If someone is able to show me that what I think or do is not right, I will happily change, for I seek the truth, by which no one was ever truly harmed. It is the person who continues in his self-deception and ignorance who is harmed.

~ Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

Title Page of the Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon

An Account Written by the Hand of Mormon upon Plates
Taken from the Plates of Nephi

The plates were not necessary for the translation of the Book of Mormon. The Church says most accounts of the translation indicate, “Joseph placed either the interpreters or the seer stone in a hat, pressed his face into the hat to block out extraneous light, and read aloud the English words that appeared on the instrument” (www.churchofjesuschrist.org/topics/book-of-mormon-translation).

And, “Joseph Smith soon turned to a method of translation that depended directly on the interpreters alone, so that the plates did not have to be viewed”

(<https://criticaltext.byustudies.byu.edu/translating-book-mormon-evidence-original-manuscript>).

I wonder how Mormon and Moroni would have felt knowing the plates were a completely unnecessary artifact for the translation.

I wonder how Joseph would have responded if asked why he had the plates if he did not need them to do the translation. Think about it. He claimed that when retrieving the plates from one hiding place he was attacked by, fought off, and ran from men seeking the plates all while carrying the plates (www.churchofjesuschrist.org/manual/church-history-in-the-fulness-of-times/chapter-four). And, these plates seemed to have weighed 40-60 lbs. (www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/2006/02/a-golden-opportunity).

The persecution associated with the plates continued, for, “Every stratagem that could be invented was resorted to for that purpose [to get the plates from Joseph]. The persecution became more bitter and severe than before, and multitudes were on the alert continually to get them from me if possible.” And consider the next sentence. “But by the wisdom of God, they remained safe in my hands, until I had accomplished by them what was required at my hand” (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History, verse 60). What had he accomplished by them? Remember, Joseph did not look at them for his translation.

Some argue that Joseph needed the plates as a physical promoter of faith. Yet, prior to this he had seen and spoken with God the Father and Jesus Christ as a 14 or 15-year-old boy, was visited by the angel Moroni various times to receive instruction. Why would a person with sufficient faith for angelic visitation and to have God and Jesus appear to him need a physical prop to increase faith? Did the translation process require more faith than a visit from God?

Wherefore, it is an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites—Written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile—Written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation—Written and sealed up, and hid up unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed—**To come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof—Sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up** unto the Lord, to come forth in due time by way of the Gentile—The interpretation thereof by the gift of God.

An abridgment taken from the Book of Ether also, which is a record of the people of Jared, who were scattered **at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people, when they were building a tower to get to heaven**—Which is to show unto the remnant of the house of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever—And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations—And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ.

When considering that these plates were “to come forth by the gift and power of God” remember that Elder Russell M. Nelson (of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles at the time) explained the process by quoting this from Emma Smith:

“When my husband was translating the Book of Mormon, I wrote a part of it, as he dictated each sentence, word for word, and when he came to proper names he could not pronounce, or long words, he spelled them out, and while I was writing them, if I made any mistake in spelling, he would stop me and correct my spelling although it was impossible for him to see how I was writing them down at the time. Even the word Sarah he could not pronounce at first, but had to spell it, and I would pronounce it for him”
(www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1993/07/a-treasured-testament).

Remember Emma’s words when reading about things identified in the Book of Mormon that were not in the Americas at the time, like horses, elephants, steel, etc.

Regarding the plates being sealed and hid by Moroni, see the above observations about how the plates were not used in the translation.

Joseph Smith explained that “the title-page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation, taken from the very last leaf on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates” (History of the Church, 1:71, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/volume-1-chapter-8>).

The paragraph before this tells us that this was translated by the gift and power of God, and here it claims “the Lord confounded the language of the people, when they were building a tower to get to heaven.”

If this is a reference to the Tower of Babel, it declares the account of that tower a literal and factual event. If true, this would mean that until about 4,200 years ago (according to Bible chronologies I’ve seen including those at www.churchofjesuschrist.org) there was only one language on the earth, then at the Tower of Babel event, all languages were confounded (except for the Jaredites). This is not compatible with what we know about the evolution of language. (See also Omni 1:22, Mosiah 28:17, Helaman 6:28, Ether 1:33)

Translated by Joseph Smith, Jun.

Some critics have pointed out that the original or an early editions of the book indicated on the Title Page that Joseph was the author and proprietor of the Book of Mormon. However, the term “author and proprietor” may have been used to comply with copyright law, rather than to indicate Joseph authored the book. I find this criticism weak and the defense plausible.

By “translated” it means, at least in part, “Joseph placed . . . The seer stone in a hat, pressed his face into the hat to block out extraneous light, and read aloud the English words that appeared on the instrument”

(www.churchofjesuschrist.org/topics/book-of-mormon-translation).

I think this meaning of “translated” is entirely unique to the Mormon restoration movement.

The method of placing a seer stone in a hat is apparently the same method Joseph had used earlier in the 1820s to seek buried treasure for pay. I think there are two possibilities regarding the treasure seeking: (1) that Joseph knew he could not see buried treasure with his stone, or (2) he actually believed he could see treasure with his stone. Either way, what does this say about the credibility of Joseph?

The First Book of Nephi

An account of Lehi and his wife **Sariah**, and his four sons, being called, (beginning at the eldest) Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi. The Lord warns Lehi to depart out of the land of Jerusalem, because he prophesieth unto the people concerning their iniquity and they seek to destroy his life. He taketh three days’ journey into the wilderness with his family. Nephi taketh his brethren and returneth to the land of Jerusalem after the record of the Jews. The account of their sufferings. They take the daughters of Ishmael to wife. They take their families and depart into the wilderness. Their sufferings and afflictions in the wilderness. The course of their travels. They come to the large waters. Nephi’s brethren rebel against him. He confoundeth them, and buildeth a ship. They call the name of the place Bountiful. They cross the large waters into the promised land, and so forth. **This is according to the account of Nephi; or in other words, I, Nephi, wrote this record.**

This is clearly an introduction for what follows, written by Nephi. It is a summary of what’s to come. It is not likely that such a conclusive summary of all these events could have been written previous to Nephi writing down the details. Nephi would have had no reason to write such a summary afterward. This is a modern literary device that seems to me incongruent with engraving such things on plates of metal.

There are only three Book of Mormon women named: Sariah, Abish, and Isabel-the Harlot.
(Biblical women named in the Book of Mormon: Eve, Mary, and Sarah, Abraham’s wife)

Chapter 1

The chapter summaries of the Book of Mormon are not included in this work since they appear to be copyrighted material. Any reference to these summaries will comply with fair use principles. Visit www.churchofjesuschrist.org to read the chapter summaries.

1 I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.

Lehi’s language is Egyptian, yet two verses later (1 Ne 1:4) Nephi tells us Lehi had “dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days.”

2 Yea, I make a record in **the language of my father, which consists of** the learning of the Jews and **the language of the Egyptians.**

3 And I know that the record which I make is true; and I make it with mine own hand; and I make it according to my knowledge.

Lehi dwelt in Jerusalem all his days, but his language was Egyptian according to 1Ne 1:2.

4 For it came to pass in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah, (my father, **Lehi, having dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days**); and in that same year there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed.

5 Wherefore it came to pass that my father, Lehi, as he went forth prayed unto the Lord, yea, even with all his heart, in behalf of his people.

6 And it came to pass as he prayed unto the Lord, there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before him; and he saw and heard much; and because of the things which he saw and heard he did quake and tremble exceedingly.

7 And it came to pass that he returned to his own house at Jerusalem; and he cast himself upon his bed, being overcome with the Spirit and the things which he had seen.

8 And being thus overcome with the Spirit, he was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God.

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.

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

11 And they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth; and the first came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read.

12 And it came to pass that as he read, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord.

13 And he read, saying: Wo, wo, unto Jerusalem, for I have seen thine abominations! Yea, and many things did my father read concerning Jerusalem—that it should be destroyed, and the inhabitants thereof; many should perish by the sword, and many should be carried away captive into Babylon.

14 And it came to pass that when my father had read and seen many great and marvelous things, he did exclaim many things unto the Lord; such as: Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the heavens, and thy power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth; and, because thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee that they shall perish!

15 And after this manner was the language of my father in the praising of his God; for his soul did rejoice, and his whole heart was filled, because of the things which he had seen, yea, which the Lord had shown unto him.

16 And now I, Nephi, do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams; and he also hath written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children, of which I shall not make a full account.

17 But I shall make an account of my proceedings in my days. Behold, I make an abridgment of the record of my father, upon plates which I have made with mine own hands; wherefore, after I have abridged the record of my father then will I make an account of mine own life.

18 Therefore, I would that ye should know, that after the Lord had shown so many marvelous things unto my father, Lehi, yea, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, behold he went forth among the people, and began to prophesy and to declare unto them concerning the things which he had both seen and heard.

19 And it came to pass that the Jews did mock him because of the things which he testified of them; for he truly testified of their wickedness and their abominations; and he testified that the things which he saw and heard, and also the things which he read in the book, manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world.

20 And when the Jews heard these things they were angry with him; yea, even as with the prophets of old, whom they had cast out, and stoned, and slain; and they also sought his life, that they might take it away. But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance.

Chapter 19

This chapter is from Isaiah 9. Considering how hard it would be to transcribe an entire chapter from Isaiah onto metal plates. Wouldn't it make more sense for the author to reference the writings from Isaiah and perhaps provide some commentary?

Preview Copy

1 Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, and afterwards did more grievously afflict by the way of the Red Sea beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations.

This verse seems to have some serious translation problems.

“A more serious translation error affects Isaiah 9:1, copied into the Book of Mormon as II Nephi 19:1 ‘...and afterwards did more grievously afflict by the way of the Red Sea beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations.’ A translation error in this verse of Isaiah has given the text almost the opposite meaning to the original. The phrase ‘did more grievously afflict’ should be rendered as ‘honour’ in English. Thus the New International Version reads ‘...In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles...’.”

“Again, as an aside, the Book of Mormon adds the qualifier ‘Red’ to the King James Version. A glance at a map of Palestine will show why this rendering is impossible. The Red Sea is located on the Southern border of Palestine, over 250 miles from the Sea of Galilee”
https://infidels.org/library/modern/curt_heuvel/bom_kjv.html.

*The shortest driving distance from the Sea of Galilee to the Red Sea per Google Maps is about 245 miles or 394 km; the point still stands.



Figure 3: Map, 12 Tribes

2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

3 Thou hast multiplied the nation, and increased the joy—they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor.

5 For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire.

6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of government and peace there is no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.

8 The Lord sent his word unto Jacob and it hath lighted upon Israel.

9 And all the people shall know, even Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart:

10 The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars.

11 Therefore the Lord shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and join his enemies together;

12 The Syrians before and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

13 For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts.

14 Therefore will the Lord cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush in one day.

15 The ancient, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail.

16 For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed.

17 Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows; for every one of them is a hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

18 For wickedness burneth as the fire; it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forests, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke.

19 Through the wrath of the Lord of Hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire; no man shall spare his brother.

20 And he shall snatch on the right hand and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand and they shall not be satisfied; they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm—

21 Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh; they together shall be against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

The Book of Ether

The record of the Jaredites, taken from the twenty-four plates found by the people of Limhi in the days of King Mosiah.

Chapter 1

1 And now I, Moroni, proceed to give an account of those ancient inhabitants who were destroyed by the hand of the Lord upon the face of this north country.

2 And I take mine **account from the twenty and four plates which were found by the people of Limhi, which is called the Book of Ether.**

Ether 1:2-5

Moroni tells us here that his account of the Book of Ether is from the 24 Jaredite plates, but it is only an abridgement. He is leaving out the “things which transpired from the days of Adam until that time [of the great tower].” He tells us later in Ether 15:33 that he has not written a hundredth part of the record of Ether. The abridged version known as Book of Ether is 15 chapters long and goes from page 487 to page 518 of the current edition of the Book of Mormon, or 31 pages. Some of the 31 pages is commentary by Moroni. There are 16,629 words in the Book of Ether (not counting chapter summaries). Taking out Moroni’s commentary, I come up with 13,293 words. That’s 79.9%. Taking 79.9% of 31 pages gives 24.8 pages of the Book of Ether without Moroni’s commentary.

Summary:
The abridgement of the 24 Jaredite plates which does not contain the first part of the 24 plates (history from Adam until the tower) and is not a hundredth part of the record of Ether, translates to 24.8 pages in the current English version.

Annotation for Ether 1:2-5 above

3 And as I suppose that **the first part of this record, which speaks concerning the creation of the world, and also of Adam, and an account from that time even to the great tower,** and whatsoever things transpired among the children of men until that time, is had among the Jews—

4 Therefore **I do not write those things which transpired from the days of Adam until that time; but they are had upon the plates;** and whoso findeth them, the same will have power that he may get the full account.

Annotation for Ether 1:2-5 above

5 But behold, **I give not the full account, but a part of the account I give, from the tower down until they were destroyed.**

Annotation for Ether 1:2-5 above

6 And on this wise do I give the account. He that wrote this record was Ether, and he was a descendant of Coriantor.

Ether 1:6-32

Moroni is supposedly writing an abridgement, but he takes 27 verses to supply this genealogy, so we can do what with it?

Also consider that there are 29 generations between Ether and Jared. Doing the math from 600 BCE (roughly when Ether put his book together) back to Jared, we'd have to assume an average age difference between the fathers and sons listed of about 55 years in order for the math to work out to place Jared at the tower of Babel at about 2200 BCE.

Now it's possible that in Ether 1:23 where it says "Morianton was a descendant of Riplakish," multiple generations were left out. That's doubtful from the beginning to me, because it would be like saying "It's important to have all these son/father relationships listed, but not for this one span of generations." In addition, in the other two instances in this genealogy, where it says "was a descendant of" we know the author means "was a son of."

Ether 1:6 says Ether "was a descendant of Coriantor." Then in Ether 11:23 we learn that, "Coriantor begat Ether," so we know that in this case "was a descendant of" means "was the son of." Same for Aaron and Heth in Ether 1:16 and Ether 10:31.

7 Coriantor was the son of Moron.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

8 And Moron was the son of Ethem.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

9 And Ethem was the son of Ahah.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

10 And Ahah was the son of Seth.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

11 And Seth was the son of Shiblön.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

12 And Shiblön was the son of Com.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

13 And Com was the son of Coriantum.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

14 And Coriantum was the son of Amnigaddah.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

15 And Amnigaddah was the son of Aaron.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

16 And Aaron was a descendant of Heth, who was the son of Hearthom.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

17 And Hearthom was the son of Lib.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

18 And Lib was the son of Kish.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

19 And Kish was the son of Corom.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

20 And Corom was the son of Levi.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

21 And Levi was the son of Kim.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

22 And Kim was the son of Morianton.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

23 And Morianton was a descendant of Riplakish.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

24 And Riplakish was the son of Shez.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

25 And Shez was the son of Heth.

Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above

26 And Heth was the son of Com.	Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above
27 And Com was the son of Coriantum.	Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above
28 And Coriantum was the son of Emer.	Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above
29 And Emer was the son of Omer.	Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above
30 And Omer was the son of Shule.	Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above
31 And Shule was the son of Kib.	Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above
32 And Kib was the son of Orihah, who was the son of Jared;	Annotation for Ether 1:6-32 above
33 Which Jared came forth with his brother and their families, with some others and their families, from the great tower, at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people , and swore in his wrath that they should be scattered upon all the face of the earth; and according to the word of the Lord the people were scattered.	This declares the Tower of Babel account a literal and factual event. If true, this would mean that until about 4,200 years ago (according to Bible chronologies I've seen including those at www.churchofjesuschrist.org) there was only one language on the earth, then at the Tower of Babel event, all languages were confounded (except for the Jaredites). This is not compatible with what we know about the evolution of language. (See also the second paragraph to the Introduction to the Book of Mormon, Omni 1:22, Mosiah 28:17, Helaman 6:28)
34 And the brother of Jared being a large and mighty man, and a man highly favored of the Lord, Jared, his brother, said unto him: Cry unto the Lord, that he will not confound us that we may not understand our words.	
35 And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did cry unto the Lord, and the Lord had compassion upon Jared; therefore he did not confound the language of Jared; and Jared and his brother were not confounded.	
36 Then Jared said unto his brother: Cry again unto the Lord, and it may be that he will turn away his anger from them who are our friends, that he confound not their language.	
37 And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did cry unto the Lord, and the Lord had compassion upon their friends and their families also, that they were not confounded.	
38 And it came to pass that Jared spake again unto his brother, saying: Go and inquire of the Lord whether he will drive us out of the land, and if he will drive us out of the land, cry unto him whither we shall go. And who knoweth but the Lord will carry us forth into a land which is choice above all the earth? And if it so be, let us be faithful unto the Lord, that we may receive it for our inheritance.	
39 And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did cry unto the Lord according to that which had been spoken by the mouth of Jared.	
40 And it came to pass that the Lord did hear the brother of Jared, and had compassion upon him, and said unto him:	
41 Go to and gather together thy flocks, both male and female, of every kind; and also of the seed of the earth of every kind; and thy families; and also Jared thy brother and his family; and also thy friends and their families, and the friends of Jared and their families.	

42 And when thou hast done this thou shalt go at the head of them down into the valley which is northward. And there will I meet thee, and I will go before thee into a land which is choice above all the lands of the earth.

43 And there will I bless thee and thy seed, and raise up unto me of thy seed, and of the seed of thy brother, and they who shall go with thee, a great nation. And there shall be none greater than the nation which I will raise up unto me of thy seed, upon all the face of the earth. And thus I will do unto thee because this long time ye have cried unto me.

Preview Copy

Chapter 10

1 Now I, Moroni, write somewhat as seemeth me good; and **I write unto my brethren, the Lamanites**; and I would that they should know that more than four hundred and twenty years have passed away since the sign was given of the coming of Christ.

Past LDS leaders and various references in the Doctrine and Covenants make it clear that the Lamanites Moroni is writing to were the Native Americans (as well as Pacific Islanders according to the leaders). Now, LDS leaders won't tell us who the Lamanites are. Just who is it that Moroni is writing to?

2 And I seal up these records, after I have spoken a few words by way of exhortation unto you.

3 Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.

Notice that the author of the verse asks the reader to ponder but not to ponder on the evidence or the merits of the material read. Rather the author exhorts the reader to ponder on how merciful the Lord has been. The reader is reminded of a debt of gratitude. As a social being, a normal human will want to reciprocate the mercy spoken of, so if the reader believes this mercy has been extended, it primes the reader to want to do what the Lord desires, and implicit here is that these things are given to the reader in the wisdom of God—that God wants the reader to accept these things. This desire to reciprocate would tend to lead to a desire to believe regardless of the material being presented and its merits. Reasoning motivated by something other than the desire to understand the truth is called motivated reasoning, and motivated reasoning leads to all sort of beliefs that are not justified by reason or evidence and that often contradict one another.

4 And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

If this process doesn't work to let you know that the Book of Mormon is God's word and will, then it is your fault. Built right into this verse are reasons believers can always use to explain why a person didn't get the "right" answer. The person who doesn't get the accepted answer didn't ask with enough sincerity, real intent, and/or faith. So if you set up any truth claim with this process as the way to gain knowledge of the claim, the believers will always think they know why nonbelievers didn't get the "right" answer. (see diagram below)

This type of situation is often called a double bind—a situation in which you are given a choice or dilemma, but there is no good choice. Either way, you fail.

If someone asks if the Book of Mormon is true and concludes it is not what it claims, according to these verses, they failed to ask with sincerity, real intent, and/or having faith in Christ. The dilemma is that they either stop trying to believe and are accused of these failures, or they continue trying to believe even if they have done their due diligence.

Consider the effect of Jehovah's Witness (JW) missionaries teaching a person they will know the JW Church is Jehovah's only authorized organization if they ask Jehovah with a sincere heart, with real intent, and having faith in Jehovah. What kind of effect or influence might this have on a person studying with the Jehovah's Witnesses?

Which leader said this about asking God if a teaching is true?

I hope for your sake that you at least ponder this—that you go into the privacy of your closet. Don't ask your neighbors, your friends what they think of this. You go see if you can connect with the purest, the highest source that you might consider God and say, "What about this? Is this for real? Is this for me? If it is, then give me the strength," because as soon as you tell anyone else, they will be used as the instruments to have you not believe.

(It was Marshall Applewhite, leader of the UFO cult Heaven's Gate who convinced himself and 38 others to commit suicide in March 1997. The quote starts at about 56:14 in this video, www.youtube.com/watch?v=JC0tqZfMv34&app=desktop)

The LDS Church teaches that prayer is how you can know if it is God's will that you join the Church. But, "A common technique among religious cults is to instruct people to ask God what He wants them to do. Members are exhorted to study and pray in order to know God's will for them" (Steven Hassan, *Combatting Cult Mind Control*, p. 70).

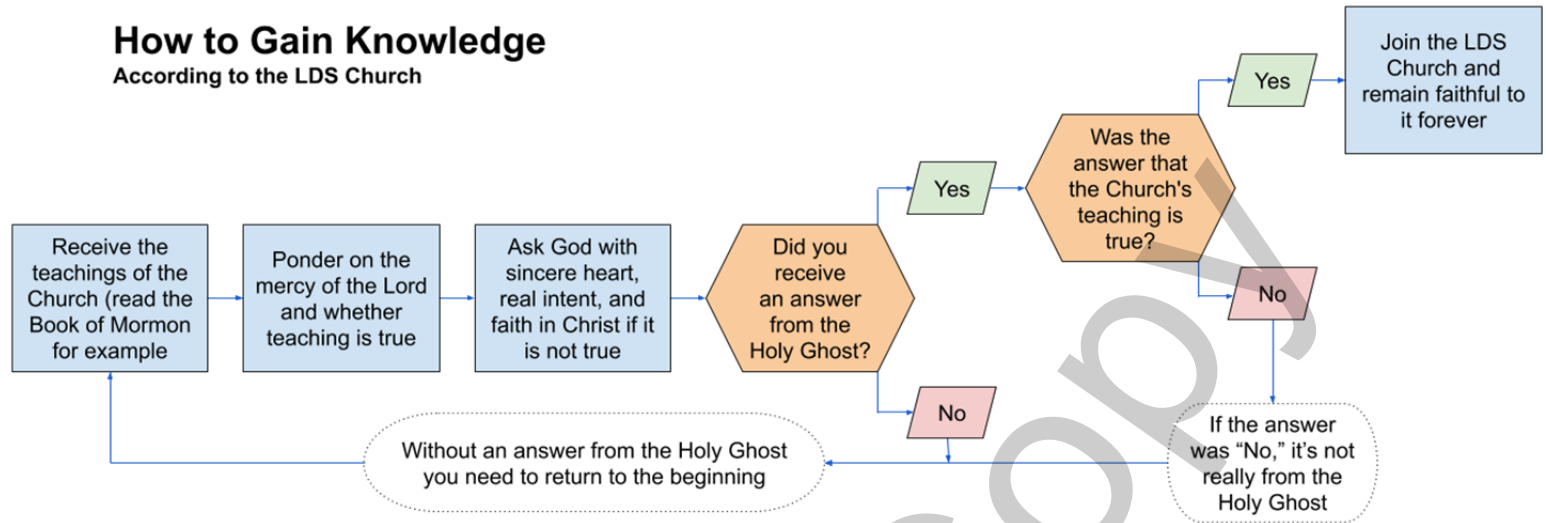


Figure 6: Promise Flow

5 And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.

If the power of the Holy Ghost were a reliable way to discern the truth, why are there many examples of the Spirit of God convincing people that *their* Church is God's only true church; here is just one video with many examples:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ycUvC9s4VYA

6 And whatsoever thing is good is just and true; wherefore, nothing that is good denieth the Christ, but acknowledgeth that he is.

7 And ye may know that he is, by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore I would exhort you that ye deny not the power of God; for he worketh by power, according to the faith of the children of men, the same today and tomorrow, and forever.

8 And again, I exhort you, my brethren, that ye deny not the gifts of God, for they are many; and they come from the same God. And there are different ways that these gifts are administered; but it is the same God who worketh all in all; and they are given by the manifestations of the Spirit of God unto men, to profit them.

9 For behold, to one is given by the Spirit of God, that he may teach the word of wisdom;

10 And to another, that he may teach the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

11 And to another, exceedingly great faith; and to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

12 And again, to another, that he may work mighty miracles;

13 And again, to another, that he may prophesy concerning all things;

14 And again, to another, the beholding of angels and ministering spirits;

15 And again, to another, all kinds of tongues;

This is one of my favorite gifts of the Spirit as far as how its understanding has evolved in the Church. In Joseph Smith's day, it was as described in the Bible, people talking

spontaneously in a language they have no prior knowledge of. Now of days the term is used to describe those who train extensively in a language, speak it, and people may or may not understand what they are saying. Even when I was a true blue Mormon, I had to resist rolling my eyes when other believers would talk about how the missionaries had the gift of tongues when they spoke the language they had been training in for weeks or months.
(See also 3 Ne 29:6-7 and Mormon 9:7)

16 And again, to another, the interpretation of languages and of divers kinds of tongues.

17 And all these gifts come by the Spirit of Christ; and they come unto every man severally, according as he will.

18 And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that every good gift cometh of Christ.

19 And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that he is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and that all these gifts of which I have spoken, which are spiritual, never will be done away, even as long as the world shall stand, only according to the unbelief of the children of men.

20 Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith there must also be hope; and if there must be hope there must also be charity.

21 And except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God; neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God if ye have not faith; neither can ye if ye have no hope.

22 And if ye have no hope ye must needs be in despair; and **despair cometh because of iniquity.**

Sometimes despair comes from bad behavior, but other times despair comes because of mental health conditions which have biological causes or physical catastrophe that no one had control over.

Because this teaching is so simplistic and often presented without further nuance, I think it causes a lot of harm.

23 And Christ truly said unto our fathers: If ye have faith ye can do all things which are expedient unto me.

24 And now I speak unto all the ends of the earth—that **if the day cometh that the power and gifts of God shall be done away among you, it shall be because of unbelief.**

Moroni 10:24-26

This seems to appeal to fear and to blame the observer if no miracle is seen.

25 And **wo be unto the children of men if this be the case; for there shall be none that doeth good among you, no not one.** For if there be one among you that doeth good, he shall work by the power and gifts of God.

Annotation for Moroni 10:24-26 above

26 And **wo unto them who shall do these things away and die, for they die in their sins, and they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God;** and I speak it according to the words of Christ; and I lie not.

Annotation for Moroni 10:24-26 above

27 And I exhort you to remember these things; for the time

speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust?

28 I declare these things unto the fulfilling of the prophecies. And behold, they shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the everlasting God; and his word shall hiss forth from generation to generation.

29 And God shall show unto you, that that which I have written is true.

30 And again I would exhort you that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing.

31 And awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion; and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled.

32 Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God.

33 And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot.

34 And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen.