

Book of Mormon Study

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Part I

Introduction and Title Page

Chapter 1

Title Page

1.1 1st Paragraph

“The Book of Mormon: An account written by the hand of Mormon upon plates taken from the plates of Nephi.”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
Mormon	—	The reader

1.1.1 Definitions

1.1.2 Principles and Tags

- Record keeping

1.1.3 Comments

Mormon summarized the entirety of Lehi’s descendents’ history, and used the plates that Nephi started (approximately 1000 years previously).

1.1.4 Additional References

- *None* (yet)

1.2 2nd Paragraph

“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.”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
Mormon	People of Nephi; Lamanites; Jew; Gentile	Lamanites; Jews; Gentiles

1.2.1 Definitions

Abridge:

- to shorten by omissions while retaining the basic contents
- to reduce or lessen in duration, scope, authority, etc.; diminish; curtail
- to deprive; cut off

1.2.2 Principles and Tags

- Sealing Power

1.2.3 Comments

This book was written because of the spirit of prophecy, which as we find in Revelation 19:10 is the testimony of Christ, but it was also written because it was a commandment. This leads to the thought that as we develop a testimony of Christ, we will be commanded to write our own testimony so that others can learn from our own experience.

1.2.4 Additional References

- Revelation 19:10

1.3 3rd Paragraph

“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 shown 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.”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
Mormon	People of Jared; House of Israel; Jew; Gentile	Lamanites; Jews; Gentiles

1.3.1 Definitions

Confound:

- to perplex or amaze, especially by sudden disturbance or surprise; bewilder; confuse
- to throw into confusion or disorder
- to thrown into increased confusion or disorder
- to treat or regard erroneously as identical; mix or associate by mistake
- to mingle so that the elements cannot be distinguished or separated
- to damn (used in mild imprecations)
- to contradict or refute

1.3.2 Principles and Tags

- Jesus is the Christ
- Remember
- If-Then

1.3.3 Comments

Including the abridgement of the Book of Ether is done to show that God is powerful, and watches out for those that serve Him. Furthermore, this record gives another witness of the importance of the covenants of the Lord - without them, we are cast off forever. The final statement in this paragraph is a warning to those that would find fault with the book. Mormon readily acknowledges that he may have made a mistake, and implores those that read and ponder this book that they learn from his mistakes, rather than condemn the book because of his weakness.

Joseph Smith stated that “The standard of truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done.” We have a work to do, and this book is the way to do it!

1.3.4 Additional References

- Mormon 8:17

1.4 4th Paragraph

“Translated by Joseph Smith, Jun.”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
Joseph Smith Junior	Joseph Smith Junior	The reader

1.4.1 Definitions

Translate:

- to turn from one language into another or from a foreign language into one’s own
- to change the form, condition, nature, etc., of; transform; convert
- to explain in terms that can be more easily understood; interpret
- to bear, carry, or move from one place, position, etc., to another; transfer
- *Mechanics* to cause (a body) to move without rotation or angular displacement
- *Computers* to convert (a program, data, code, etc.) from one form to another
- *Telegraphy* to retransmit or forward (a message), as by a relay.

1.4.2 Principles and Tags

- *None* (yet)

1.4.3 Comments

Joseph Smith Junior was called by God to translate the Book of Mormon - not write it.

1.4.4 Additional References

- Joseph Smith - History 1:67-68

Chapter 2

Introduction

2.1 1st Paragraph

“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 the fulness of the everlasting gospel.”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
—	Ancient inhabitants of the Americas	The reader

2.1.1 Definitions

Comparable:

- capable of being compared; having features in common with something else to permit or suggest comparison
- worthy of comparison
- usable for comparison; similar

Fulness (or *Fullness*):

- completely filled; containing all that can be held; filled to utmost capacity
- complete; entire; maximum
- of the maximum size, amount, extent, volume, etc.

Everlasting (as adjective):

- lasting forever; eternal
- lasting or continuing for an indefinitely long time

- incessant; constantly recurring
- wearisome; tedious

Everlasting (as noun):

- eternal duration; eternity
- the Everlasting, God
- any of various plants that retain their shape or color when dried, as certain composite plants of the genera *Helichrysum*, *Gnaphalium*, and *Helipterum*

2.1.2 Principles and Tags

- Fulness of the gospel

2.1.3 Comments

Just as we say in the eighth Article of Faith, “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.” The Bible does contain the fulness of the gospel - faith, repentance, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end. We use the Book of Mormon as another witness of Jesus Christ and His gospel. In my personal opinion, the Book of Mormon is clearer in its language in describing the gospel and what we must do in order to return to God again. When we speak of the everlasting gospel, if we look at the definitions above, we are in fact saying that we are looking at God’s gospel. The use of the word *comparable* is informative as well. We do not say that the Bible and the Book of Mormon are *the same*. Rather, they share the same information, but do so with two completely different groups of people. Note that the first definition of comparable mentions having features in common – the implication is that not everything is the same.

Another comment on this paragraph is that in recent years the phrase “as does the Bible” was removed from the introduction. I do not think that this removal was done to imply that the Bible does not contain the fulness of the gospel, but rather that the introduction is just a starting point for those who are beginning to read the Book of Mormon. Thus, the introduction focuses on the words contained in the Book of Mormon, without detracting from the importance of the Bible.

2.1.4 Additional References

- Articles of Faith 1:4, 8

2.2 2nd Paragraph

“The book was written by many ancient prophets by the spirit of prophecy and revelation. Their words, written on gold plates, were quoted and abridged

by a prophet-historian named Mormon. The record gives an account of two civilizations. One came from Jerusalem in 600 B.C. and afterward separated into two nations, known as the Nephites and the Lamanites. The other came much earlier when the Lord confounded the tongues at the Tower of Babel. This group is known as the Jaredites. After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are among the ancestors of the American Indians.”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
—	Mormon; Nephites; Lamanites; Jaredites	The reader

2.2.1 Definitions

Historian:

- an expert in history; authority on history
- a writer of history; chronicler
- from Middle French *historien*, from Latin *historia*. As “writer of history in the higher sense” (distinguished from a mere annalist or chronicler), from 1530s

2.2.2 Principles and Tags

- *None* (yet)

2.2.3 Comments

This paragraph once again reaffirms that the Book of Mormon was written by prophets by revelation. This book did not come out of a whim like many of the novels and stories we read today. This book was written as a commandment of God, and as such requires (and should *command*) our deepest attentions and studies. Note that this particular paragraph was updated in recent years. The original paragraph read, at the end “... they are among the principal ancestors of the American Indians.” Why this was changed, I do not know, but one thought that I have on that matter is that the Nephites, Lamanites, and Jaredites may not have been the only ones to settle on the American continent. While we may not have the records of other civilizations, that does not preclude them from having living and intermingling with the groups. After all, there are the lost ten tribes of Israel, and there is a possibility that some of those lost tribes found their way to the Americas and are also among the ancestors of the American Indians. Something that should stick out as a big warning to everyone is the phrase, “all were destroyed except the Lamanites.” Having read the Book of Mormon many times, and knowing how both civilizations were destroyed, this scares me especially because of the parallels I see in the United States today. While I am not sure that the United States alone was the home of these civilizations, it seems quite possible to me that the entirety of both North and South America were well traveled by these groups, and that

the commandment of God that those who dwell in the land shall serve Him applies across the board. Thus, it seems to me, that if we do not repent, there is a strong possibility that destruction will come our way from other groups. I have to be careful in saying this though, because I do not mean to imply that the other countries in North and South America are wicked (as could be implied from the United States being destroyed by them similar to the Nephites). That is certainly not my place to judge, especially as I have absolutely no idea the spiritual state of those peoples. Rather, I mean to say that the Lord in His justice will not wait much longer for His children to repent before wars begin to break out – not in this land alone, but across the world.

2.2.4 Additional References

- Anthony W. Ivins, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 15

2.3 3rd Paragraph

“The crowning event recorded in the Book of Mormon is the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ among the Nephites soon after his resurrection. It puts forth the doctrines of the gospel, outlines the plan of salvation, and tells men what they must do to gain peace in this life and eternal salvation in the life to come.”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
—	Jesus Christ; Nephites	The reader

2.3.1 Definitions

Crowning:

- representing a level of surpassing achievement, attainment, etc.
- forming or providing a crown, top, or summit
- late 12c., from Old French *coroner*, from *corone* Related: *Crowned*; *crowning*. The latter in its sense of “that makes complete” is from 1650s.
- (as *crown*) the top or highest part of anything, as of a hat or a mountain
- (as *crown*) the distinction that comes from a great achievement.

Personal:

- of, relating to, or coming as from a particular person; individual; private
- relating to, directed to, or intended for a particular person

- intended for use by one person
- referring or directed to a particular person in a disparaging or offensive sense or manner, usually involving character, behavior, appearance, etc.
- making personal remarks or attacks
- done, carried out, held, etc., in person
- pertaining to or characteristic of a person or self-conscious being

2.3.2 Principles and Tags

- Christ’s personal ministry

2.3.3 Comments

Something that has always meant a lot to me is just how individually focused Christ is. Throughout the Bible and the Book of Mormon, Christ shows us what it means to truly be selfless. He shows such an infinite capacity for love that has always soothed my soul and driven me to work to become better, and more worthy of His love.

This paragraph emphasizes that Christ is the focal point of this book. His doctrine, His gospel, and the plan that He carried out are explained in greater detail in this book than in any other book. It only makes sense that of all the books that can be studied, this one alone will bring a man closer to God than any other book, because it truly is “the most correct of any book.”

2.3.4 Additional References

- *None* (yet)

2.4 4th Paragraph

“After Mormon completed his writings, he delivered the account to his son Moroni, who added a few words of his own and hid up the plates in the hill Cumorah. On September 21, 1823, the same Moroni, then a glorified, resurrected being, appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith and instructed him relative to the ancient record and its destined translation into the English language.”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
—	Mormon; Moroni; Joseph Smith	The reader

2.4.1 Definitions

Destined:

- bound for a certain destination
- ordained, appointed, or predetermined to be or do something
- liable, planning, or intending to be or do something

2.4.2 Principles and Tags

- Resurrection

2.4.3 Comments

This paragraph covers a lot of ground in such a short space – from Moroni receiving the plates (approximately 400 A.D.) to 1823, a span of nearly a millennium and a half. The use of the word *destined* is interesting to me. While this introduction was written after the translation of the Book of Mormon into English, it is quite clear in the Book of Mormon itself that the authors knew that it would be translated into another language.

Something that has given me pause is the idea that Moroni was a glorified, *resurrected* being. Keep in mind that at the time of Moroni's death, Christ had already started the first resurrection nearly 400 years previous. Alma indicates that there could be one resurrection and a final resurrection, a continuous resurrection, or a series of resurrections (see Alma 40). If there were only two resurrections, that would indicate that both resurrections have already happened (the first being with Christ, the second being some time after the death of Moroni). This does not sit well with me, so we look at the other two possibilities. For the continuous resurrection idea, this seems slightly more plausible. We know that when Christ was resurrected, many of the dead rose as well (see Matthew 27:52). If that first resurrection began a continuous cycle of resurrection, this makes much more sense. There could be an indeterminate amount of time between death and resurrection, as President Joseph F. Smith seems to indicate that Joseph Smith (who had died some 64 years previous) was still in the spirit world, and with others of the last dispensation, "looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage." (see D&C 138(:50)). This brings us to the idea of a series of resurrections. This idea stems from the fact that people simply do not experience death at the same time. In a way, this could be viewed as a parody on the continuous resurrection idea, just with more spacing between resurrection 'events.' One thing that needs to be considered is that we have absolutely *no* idea what the ordinance of resurrection entails (see Section 2.4.4 for further study). Because of this, we can only speculate, but further study by faith and learning may provide further answers.

2.4.4 Additional References

- See Hoskisson, P. Y., *What's in a Name? The Name Cumorah*, *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 13/1-2(2004):158-60, 174-75.

- Alma 40
- Matthew 27:52
- D&C 138 (esp. vs 50)
- Matthew, R.J. *Resurrection*, April 1991 *Ensign*.
- <http://www.templestudy.com/2008/08/13/many-more-ordinances-including-resurrection/>

2.5 5th Paragraph

“In due course the plates were delivered to Joseph Smith, who translated them by the gift and power of God. The record is now published in many languages as a new and additional witness that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God and that all who will come unto him and obey the laws and ordinances of his gospel may be saved.”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
—	Joseph Smith; Jesus Christ	The reader

2.5.1 Definitions

Additional:

- added; more; supplementary

2.5.2 Principles and Tags

- The Gospel of Jesus Christ

2.5.3 Comments

Again, an emphasis on the idea that Joseph Smith *translated* the Book of Mormon through the gift and power of God.

At the time of this writing the Book of Mormon has been translated into over 110 different languages (see May 2015 *Ensign* article). As the gospel continues to spread, and as more and more people share their God-given gifts of language, the Book of Mormon will continue to spread throughout the world to bring everyone to a knowledge that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world!

2.5.4 Additional References

- See Section 1.4
- *Book of Mormon in 110 Languages*, May 2015 *Ensign*

2.6 6th Paragraph

“Concerning this record the Prophet Joseph Smith said: ‘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.’”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
—	Joseph Smith	The reader

2.6.1 Definitions

Keystone:

- the wedge-shaped piece at the summit of an arch, regarded as holding the other pieces in place.
- something on which associated things depend

Abiding:

- continuing without change; enduring; steadfast
- to continue in a particular condition, attitude, relationship, etc.; last
- to endure, sustain, or withstand without yielding or submitting
- to wait for; await
- to act in accord with
- to submit to; agree to
- to remain steadfast or faithful to; keep

Precept:

- a commandment or direction given as a rule of action or conduct
- an injunction as to moral conduct; maxim
- a procedural directive or rule, as for the performance of some technical operation

2.6.2 Principles and Tags

- The Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion.

2.6.3 Comments

The idea of the Book of Mormon being the keystone of our religion is an important one. Without the Book of Mormon, we have absolutely no claim that we are Christ’s church restored to the earth. Without the Book of Mormon, we have absolutely no claim that we have the power of God within our church in the priesthood. We cannot claim to receive revelation, we cannot claim to have a modern prophet, and we cannot claim any of the knowledge that we have is true, if we do not have the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon testifies in its purity of the simple truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of its truth and divinity, we have what we have – prophets, revelation, the priesthood, and a whole host of wonderful blessings that I really need to spend more time thinking about. This book is *precious*!

2.6.4 Additional References

- Benson, E. T. *The Book of Mormon – Keystone of Our Religion*, October 1986 General Conference

2.7 7th Paragraph

“In addition to Joseph Smith, the Lord provided for eleven others to see the gold plates for themselves and to be special witnesses of the truth and divinity of the Book of Mormon. Their written testimonies are included herewith as ‘The Testimony of Three Witnesses’ and ‘The Testimony of Eight Witnesses.’”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
—	Joseph Smith; Three Witnesses; Eight Witnesses	The reader

2.7.1 Definitions

Special:

- of a distinct or particular kind or character
- being a particular one; particular, individual, or certain
- pertaining or peculiar to a particular person, thing, instance, etc.; distinctive; unique
- having a specific or particular function, purpose, etc.
- distinguished or different from what is ordinary or usual
- extraordinary; exceptional, as in amount or degree; especial
- being such in an exceptional degree; particularly valued

2.7.2 Principles and Tags

- Law of Witnesses
- Testimony of the Three and Eight Witnesses, as well as Joseph Smith

2.7.3 Comments

Throughout the history of mankind, God has operated under the Law of Witnesses, which is in essence that at least two testimonies must come forth to establish the truth of something (see Deuteronomy 19:15, 2 Corinthians 13:1 and 1 Timothy 5:19). The Book of Mormon is a part of this law as it, along with the Bible, testifies of the divinity of Christ. The law is that two or three witnesses must establish the truth, so the Book of Mormon itself needs the support of this law. This support is found in the form of the testimonies of the prophet Joseph Smith (1), the testimonies of the Three Witnesses (2), and the testimonies of the Eight Witnesses (3). By these testimonies is the truth and divinity of the Book of Mormon established. Any further testimonies lend further credence to the original statement, but do not change the impact. However, I would point out that our own testimonies can act as a witness of sorts to those that are seeking the truth. If we seek to help those around us to come to know God in a deeper way, we can plant the seed of faith with our testimony. As they hear the testimonies of the missionaries, that can be a second witness of the truth to them. Furthermore, as they gain their own witness from their own study of the Book of Mormon, they experience their own example of the Law of Witnesses.

Something of interest to me is that part of the testimonies of these three sets of witnesses relates to the actual existence of the gold plates. To me, this seems like a non-issue. If God had commanded Joseph Smith to write down these words, seemingly pulling them out of thin air, I suppose that could make it more difficult to believe. But the words themselves offer the challenge (as shown in Section 2.8), which in essence tells us to not take the words of those who have testified before, but to become a witness ourselves.

2.7.4 Additional References

- Ether 5:2-4
- 2 Nephi 11:3
- 2 Nephi 27:12-13
- Doctrine and Covenants 17
- Deuteronomy 19:15
- 2 Corinthians 13:1
- 1 Timothy 5:19
- Encyclopedia of Mormonism, *Witnesses, Law of*

- Steven C. Harper, "Evaluating the Book of Mormon Witnesses" in *Religious Educator* 11, no. 2 (2010): 37-50.

2.8 8th Paragraph

"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.)"

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
—	All men; God; Christ; Holy Ghost	The reader

2.8.1 Definitions

Ponder:

- to consider something deeply and thoroughly; meditate (often followed by over or upon)
- to weigh carefully in the mind; consider thoughtfully
- to estimate the worth of, to appraise

Pursue:

- to strive to gain; seek to attain or accomplish (an end, object, purpose, etc.)
- to proceed in accordance with (a method, plan, etc.)
- to carry on or continue (a course of action, a train of thought, an inquiry, studies, etc.)
- to continue

2.8.2 Principles and Tags

- Prayer
- Ask and ye shall receive
- If-Then

2.8.3 Comments

This book has a powerful promise. It promises that if we ask God, in the name of Christ, if the book is true, then we will know by the power of the Holy Ghost that it is true. This book encourages us to test it, to actually hold it up to the light it professes to have, and determine if it is true, or if it is simply a good story. The promise is that its truth will be revealed to you. The requirement is that you simply put in the effort to know. You can't test something if you don't have the necessary knowledge - a test is a way to determine the difference between what you know and what is (taught to be) right.

2.8.4 Additional References

- Moroni 10:3-5

2.9 9th Paragraph

“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.”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
—	Holy Spirit; Jesus Christ; Joseph Smith	The reader

2.9.1 Definitions

Divine:

- of or relating to a god, especially the Supreme Being
- addressed, appropriated, or devoted to God or a god; religious; sacred
- proceeding from God or a god
- godlike; characteristic of or befitting a deity
- heavenly; celestial
- extremely good; unusually lovely

Revelator:

- a person who makes a revelation

Preparatory:

- serving or designed to prepare
- preliminary; introductory
- of or relating to training that prepares for more advanced education

2.9.2 Principles and Tags

- Witness from God
- Second Coming

2.9.3 Comments

God teaches us in a way that helps us best to understand. If we have learned something from Him in a certain way (i.e. a burning of the bosom, or words spoken into our minds), it is a safe assumption that further light and knowledge from Him will come similarly. The scriptures state that God is not a changeable being (see Moroni 8:18), so He will not suddenly try a method on us that won't work. That being said, God has known us much longer than we currently know ourselves. We existed with Him before the foundation of the world (see Jeremiah 1:5), and since we cannot remember that time in our life, God knows us intimately, and much better than we know ourselves. Because of this knowledge, God knows *exactly* how to teach us. There may be ways that we have to prepare ourselves for, but God doesn't 'experiment' with His children. After all, this existence is a test for us as His children to see whom we will follow: God, or Satan.

It is important to note that the same feelings and testimony that we gain regarding the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon will also apply to Christ being our Savior, Joseph Smith being Christ's prophet on the earth in the last days, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints being the Lord's established kingdom on the earth. In much the same way, the Holy Ghost will testify of the truthfulness of the Bible, and by extension that Christ is our Savior, that prophets were called in those days, and that Christ's kingdom had been established on the earth (and here I will add that His kingdom was taken from the earth due to wickedness). Both the Bible and the Book of Mormon warn of the things to come in the last days. We must prepare now for the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We must be found worthy and prepared at His coming. Only God knows exactly when Christ will return, but until then we must vigilantly watch and pray, and prepare our lamps for the Bridegroom.

2.9.4 Additional References

- Moroni 8:18
- Jeremiah 1:5

Chapter 3

Testimonies of the Witnesses

3.1 Three Witnesses

“Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That we, through the grace of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren, and also of the people of Jared, who came from the tower which hath been spoken. And we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true. And it is marvelous in our eyes. Nevertheless, the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things. And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment-seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
Oliver Cowdery	God	The reader
David Whitmer	Jesus Christ	
Martin Harris	Holy Ghost	

3.1.1 Definitions

3.1.2 Principles and Tags

- Witness of the Book of Mormon
- If-Then
- Testimony

3.1.3 Comments

Something that is interesting to me is looking into the subsequent events that occurred to the three witnesses. After having the incredible experience which they explained, some years later all of them fell away from the church. Some of them did come back, but it astounds me that they did fall away. Even more astonishing is the fact that despite their falling away, they never did deny the testimony written here (see Section 2.7.4). These three men, who saw an angel, who viewed the plates upon which were written the history of the Nephites and the Lamanites, as well as an abridgment of the history of the Jaredites, fell away from the church that they knew to be true. This stands as a warning to me of the need for constant vigilance in keeping my faith strong.

An important point about this witness: the physical senses with which these men testify of the truth are sight and sound - *seen* the engravings... *shown* unto us... laid before our *eyes* ... been *spoken*... *voice* hath declared. They received a commandment from God that they should bear record of the Book of Mormon, and they obediently kept that commandment. This is important! If they had not kept that commandment, they likely would have been destroyed, for “no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing.” That said, that is my *opinion*, and should not be taken as fact.

3.1.4 Additional References

- *None* (yet)

3.2 Eight Witnesses

“Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That Joseph Smith, Jun., the translator of this work, has shown unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shown unto us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen. And we lie not, God bearing witness of it”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
Christian Whitmer Jacob Whitmer Peter Whitmer, Jun. John Whitmer Hiram Page Joseph Smith, Sen. Hyrum Smith Samuel H. Smith	Joseph Smith, Junior	The reader

3.2.1 Definitions

Curious:

- eager to learn or know; inquisitive
- prying; meddlesome
- arousing or exciting speculation, interest, or attention through being inexplicable or highly unusual; odd; strange
- *Archaic*
 - made or prepared skillfully
 - done with painstaking accuracy or attention to detail
 - careful; fastidious
 - marked by intricacy or subtlety

Soberness:

- not intoxicated or drunk
- habitually temperate, especially in the use of liquor
- quiet or sedate in demeanor, as persons
- marked by seriousness, gravity, solemnity, etc., as of demeanor, speech, etc.
- subdued in tone, as color; not colorful or showy, as clothes
- free from excess, extravagance, or exaggeration
- showing self-control

Hefted:

- to test the weight of by lifting and balancing
- to heave; hoist

3.2.2 Principles and Tags

- Testimony

3.2.3 Comments

This witness is slightly different from the witness given by the Three Witnesses. This testimony explicitly states that they held the plates with their hands, and felt it's physical form. The witness given by the Three says they *saw* the plates as shown unto them by an angel. This is a way to verify the witnesses, as one could be said to have had a spiritual experience, while the others had a physical experience.

Important points about this witness: the witness is based on the physical senses of sight and touch, different from the witness given by the Three Witnesses. The words used are: *shown* unto us... *handle* with our hands... we also *saw*... *shown* unto us... we have *seen* and *hefted*.

3.2.4 Additional References

- *None* (yet)

3.3 Testimony of Joseph Smith

3.3.1 1st paragraph

“The Prophet Joseph Smith’s own words about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon are:”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
—	Joseph Smith	The reader

3.3.1.1 Principles and Tags

- *None* (yet)

3.3.1.2 Comments

Not much to say here, other than what follows is the first-hand account of Joseph Smith’s experience with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

3.3.1.3 Additional References

- *None* (yet)

3.3.2 2nd paragraph

“On the evening of the... twenty-first of September [1823]... I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God....”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
Joseph Smith	Joseph Smith; God	The reader

3.3.2.1 Definitions

Betook:

- to cause to go (usually used reflexively)
- (Archaic) to resort or have recourse to.

Supplication:

- an act or instance of supplicating; humble prayer, entreaty, or petition

3.3.2.2 Principles and Tags

- Prayer
- Record Keeping

3.3.2.3 Comments

If supplication is ‘humble prayer,’ this sentence reads that Joseph Smith turned to prayer and humble prayer to God. This indicates a gradation of sorts in the types of prayers we can offer. Prayer, in and of itself, is the act of communicating with God. The Bible Dictionary definition of prayer states that “Prayer is the act by which the will of the Father and the will of the child are brought into correspondence with each other.” Simple prayer (the first prayer that Joseph Smith indicates) may be less focused on aligning our will with God, but rather more focused on saying things that are going on. Humble prayer on the other hand evokes an idea of submissiveness, which aligns well with the idea given in the Bible Dictionary definition.

There is also a subtle reminder of the importance of keeping a personal record. I don’t know when Joseph Smith wrote this particular testimony, but it seems to me like he may have referenced a journal to pull out the specific date. It is absolutely possible that he remembered the day though.

3.3.2.4 Additional References

- See History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- Joseph Smith – History 1:29

3.3.3 3rd paragraph

“While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor.”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
Joseph Smith	—	The reader

3.3.3.1 Definitions

Personage:

- a person of distinction or importance.
- any person.
- a character in a play, story, etc.
- from late Middle English word meaning body or image (statue, portrait) of a person

3.3.3.2 Principles and Tags

- Ministry of Angels

3.3.3.3 Comments

This is an interesting experience. A young man, about 17 years old, decides to pray to God. In so doing, he notices that his room is becoming brighter (whether or not his eyes were open at this point or not doesn't really matter, as light can be sensed even with eyes closed). He may have continued his prayer, perhaps thinking that a family member may have been coming to check on him. Imagine his surprise as the light continues to grow brighter, making it less likely that it's a lamp or candle. Opening his eyes, perhaps he needs to shield his eyes from the light that continues to grow brighter, until his room was brighter than at noon. As noon is generally seen as the height of the sun's travel across the sky, his room must have been painfully bright. At this point of intense light, seemingly out of nowhere a personage appears in the air. In today's culture, we might simply dismiss the experience as one of "aliens" or hallucinogenics. Some may even try to compare this experience to that of a magic show, where sleight of hand and trickery creates the intended effects. Joseph Smith may have been simply awestruck for a moment as he processed what he was seeing (see Section 3.3.5). If I had this experience, I don't know what I would be thinking. Joseph has had the unique experience of having God and Jesus Christ *personally* answer his prayers. While I too have had answers to prayers, none have been so dramatic as the experience of Joseph Smith. Perhaps part of the reason that these experiences are not talked about is

because of the thoughts mentioned above. I almost feel that if I had this experience, I would (rather irreverently) check to make sure it wasn't just some trick, or image. We live in a world that has access to rather remarkable technology that can imitate many things, even sacred, spiritual things. Thus it requires our utmost attention, and the spirit of discernment, to know what is of God, and what is not.

3.3.3.4 Additional References

- See History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- Joseph Smith – History 1:30

3.3.4 4th Paragraph

“He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen; nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant. His hands were naked, and his arms also, a little above the wrists; so, also, were his feet naked, as were his legs, a little above the ankles. His head and neck were also bare. I could discover that he had no other clothing on but this robe, as it was open, so that I could see into his bosom.”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
Joseph Smith	—	The reader

3.3.4.1 Definitions

Exquisite:

- of special beauty or charm, or rare and appealing excellence, as a face, a flower, coloring, music, or poetry.
- extraordinarily fine or admirable; consummate
- intense; acute, or keen, as pleasure or pain
- of rare excellence of production or execution, as works of art or workmanship
- keenly or delicately sensitive or responsive
- of particular refinement or elegance, as taste, manners, etc., or persons
- carefully sought out, chosen, ascertained, devised, etc

Bosom:

- the breast of a human being

- the breasts of a woman
- the part of a garment that covers the breast
- the breast, conceived of as the center of feelings or emotions
- something likened to the human breast
- a state of enclosing intimacy; warm closeness

3.3.4.2 Principles and Tags

- *None* (yet)

3.3.4.3 Comments

An interesting reference to read on this particular experience can be found in the references below (Section 3.3.4.4). There seems to be a decent effort to be neutral, but there also seems to be a tendency (in my opinion) to focus on criticisms, rather than supports. That being said, something that is interesting to me is the apparel of the visiting angle. As a member of the church, I have a better understanding of sacred apparel than those who are not, and I am intrigued at the differences between what a typical, faithful Latter-day Saint member wears, and what this visiting personage from God wears. The garments worn by members of the church are meant to shield and protect the wearer from Satan, insofar as the individual is faithful. I feel that I can safely assume that angels of God would have similar protections. Joseph Smith describes the clothing as white, which according to Western Oregon University symbolizes purity, virginity, innocence and birth, and clarifies that it is “beyond anything earthly [he] had ever seen.” Perhaps the light itself is the protection, as Satan is sometimes referred to as “The Prince of Darkness.”

3.3.4.4 Additional References

- See <http://www.mormonthink.com/moroniweb.htm>
- See Color Symbolism in Christianity
- Joseph Smith – History 1:31

3.3.5 5th Paragraph

“Not only was his robe exceedingly white, but his whole person was glorious beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning. The room was exceedingly light, but not so very bright as immediately around his person. When I first looked upon him, I was afraid; but the fear soon left me.”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
Joseph Smith	—	The reader

3.3.5.1 Definitions

Glorious:

- delightful; wonderful; completely enjoyable
- conferring glory
- full of glory; entitled to great renown
- brilliantly beautiful or magnificent; splendid

Countenance:

- appearance, especially the look or expression of the face
- the face; visage
- calm facial expression; composure
- approval or favor; encouragement; moral support

3.3.5.2 Principles and Tags

- *None* (yet)

3.3.5.3 Comments

I find it interesting that the gradient of light intensity was negative as Joseph looked closer at the angel. Joseph Smith says that the “room was exceedingly light, but not so very bright as immediately around his person.” I could be reading this incorrectly, but it seems like it was less bright around the angel than in the room in general. Perhaps this was simply a courtesy to Joseph Smith? If this was truly a spiritual experience, rather than a physical experience, then why would there be a decrease of light? That being said, having a countenance like lightning is already very bright. While there doesn’t seem to be any hard data on the intensity of light from a lightning strike, lightning is known to be very bright (see Section 3.3.5.4 below). There also doesn’t seem to be any hard facts on what intensity of light the human eye can withstand without damage. Regardless of the mechanism(s), we do know that God has all power, so if Joseph Smith saw what he said he saw, and possibly could have experienced physical disability from it, God could have prevented/healed any possible physical damage.

I appreciate the honesty of Joseph Smith when he said he was initially afraid. I would be confused if he wasn’t afraid - bright lights, ignored laws of physics, and unearthly whiteness all could and would be concerning to a human mind. I wonder what my response would be to an experience like this?

3.3.5.4 Additional References

- See How Bright is Lightning?
- Article on effect of bright light on the eyes here.
- Joseph Smith – History 1:32

3.3.6 6th Paragraph

“He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people.”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
Joseph Smith	Moroni	The reader

3.3.6.1 Principles and Tags

- Persecution of the Righteous
- Personal God

3.3.6.2 Comments

Something significant here is the first five words: Joseph Smith was called *by name*. He had had no prior experiences with said angel (at least that he recorded), and identified that he was initially afraid of this heavenly being. It is only after getting Joseph Smith’s attention that the messenger states that he is sent from God, and that his name is Moroni. He then proceeds to tell Joseph Smith of the work that he will be required to do as he goes forward, and what sort of results he can expect. Doctrine and Covenants 121 states that “many are called, but few are chosen... because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn that... the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.” From this we can infer that Joseph Smith’s heart was *not* set on the things of this world; that he did *not* aspire to the honors of men; and that he *had* learned (at least in some degree) that that powers of heaven were given based on principles of righteousness.

Moroni further explains, and quite clearly, that Joseph’s life will not be easy. Good and evil have been spoken of him, and will continue to be spoken of him for the rest of the existence of the earth (and possibly beyond that). So many people who have gained a testimony thank him as the prophet and seer that brought about the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many other people cry that Joseph Smith was a fraud, and created a church for his own gain. My own personal testimony is that Joseph Smith was God’s chosen

prophet. The Spirit of God has confirmed to me that this is the case many times over, and I have absolute confidence that this will continue throughout my life.

3.3.6.3 Additional References

- D&C 121:34
- Joseph Smith – History 1:33

3.3.7 7th Paragraph

“He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants;”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
Joseph Smith	—	The reader

3.3.7.1 Principles and Tags

- *None* (yet)

3.3.7.2 Comments

Various scholars of the practices of ancient civilizations have affirmed that such a practice as writing on metallic plates existed in such a time as the Book of Mormon is purported to take place. As more discoveries come to light, more and more validation is found for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

How many histories of various peoples do we not have access to (yet)? As we read in the Bible, God is no respecter of persons, and we also know that God loves all of His children. Who is to say that God did not command various peoples across the ages to write of their experiences? Fortunately, we have at least the records contained in the Bible, and a second witness in the Book of Mormon. Beyond that, we have the teachings of the modern prophets and apostles in the form of the Doctrine and Covenants. Messages from General Conference are stored as far back as 1971 on lds.org, and BYU has documents from messages given since around 1850 at lds-general-conference.org/. There is so much to study and learn from these combined resources, and that prospect is exciting!

3.3.7.3 Additional References

- See Ancient Gold Plates in Mesoamerica
- See Book of Mormon Nuggets

- See Conference Talks Since 1971
- See Conference Talks Since 1850
- Joseph Smith – History 1:34

3.3.8 8th Paragraph

“Also that there were two stones in silver bows – and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim – deposited with the plates; and the possession and use of these stones were what constituted *Seers* in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book.”

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
Joseph Smith	—	The reader

3.3.8.1 Definitions

Breastplate:

- a piece of plate armor partially or completely covering the front of the torso: used by itself or as part of a cuirass
- the part of the harness that runs across the chest of a saddle horse
- *Judaism*
 - a square, richly embroidered vestment ornamented with 12 precious stones, each inscribed with the name of one of the 12 tribes of Israel, secured to the ephod of the high priest and worn on the chest. Ex. 28:15-28
 - a rectangular ornament, typically of silver, suspended by a chain over the front of a scroll of the Torah
- a plate opposite the chuck end of a breast drill against which the operator’s chest is placed

Constituted:

- to compose; form
- to appoint to an office or function; make or create
- to establish (laws, an institution, etc.)
- to give legal form to (an assembly, court, etc.)
- to create or be tantamount to
- *Archaic:* to set or place

3.3.8.2 Principles and Tags

- *None* (yet)

3.3.8.3 Comments

I've never thought much on what it means to have access to a Urim and Thummim. The first article below seems to indicate (and various other sources seem to agree) that the Urim and Thummim was a lot-based type of revelation, where sticks or stones, or other similar items were tossed, and the resulting layout determined an answer. The literal meaning is uncertain, but a good consensus is "lights and perfections." From the LDS Bible Dictionary we learn that after the earth has been celestialized, that it will become a Urim and Thummim to its inhabitants. It seems that the purpose of each Urim and Thummim is decided by the Lord, as Joseph Smith is told here that this particular Urim and Thummim was prepared by the Lord for the purpose of translating the Book of Mormon. Other uses of the Urim and Thummim in the Old Testament seemed more focused on the 'yes or no' answers (according to the article).

3.3.8.4 Additional References

- See Urim and Thummim Function
- See LDS Bible Dictionary: Urim and Thummim
- Joseph Smith – History 1:35

3.3.9 9th Paragraph

"Again, he told me, that when I got those plates of which he had spoken – for the time that they should be obtained was not yet fulfilled – I should not show them to any person; neither the breastplate with the Urim and Thummim; only to those to whom I should be commanded to show them; if I did I should be destroyed. While he was conversing with me about the plates, the vision was opened to my mind that I could see the place where the plates were deposited, and that so clearly and distinctly that I knew the place again when I visited it."

Speaker	Important Characters	Target Audience
Joseph Smith	—	The reader

3.3.9.1 Principles and Tags

- If-Then

3.3.9.2 Comments

I have a testimony that God can certainly plant images in our minds that are very clear. It is absolutely no surprise to me that Joseph Smith saw the exact location of where the plates were buried, and distinctly enough that he could easily identify it when he went to get the plates. Something that some people find particularly difficult about the “gold Bible” that Joseph claimed to have is that so few people actually saw it. I feel safe in pointing to this and saying that if God didn’t want others to see it, He made sure it was so. Self-preservation is a natural instinct, and I think it’s important to point out that there would be more eternal consequences than simply being struck dead if Joseph Smith had shown the plates to those who were not meant to see the plates. One question I have for those who question the Book of Mormon’s authenticity: Why did Joseph Smith wait? If he knew exactly where the plates were located (and we find out later that he went to the same spot four years in a row), what was the point in waiting for them? Based on the sources below, I feel I can conclude that there was still much for Joseph to learn in preparation for obtaining a record endorsed by God.

3.3.9.3 Additional References

- Joseph Smith – History 1:42
- See Pearl of Great Price Student Manual, Joseph Smith’s first visit to the Hill Cumorah.
- See Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith – LDS Manual

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