
**THE BOOK OF
MORMON**

=

**THE
KEYSTONE**

**AN
OVERVIEW**

Elder Eric English
November 2024

**The
Book of Mormon**



**The
Keystone
of Our
Religion**

“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.”

~ Joseph Smith, Jr


The Book of Mormon



“Since 1830 the attention of the public has been focused almost entirely upon the manner in which the book was found and translated, rather than upon its content.

Scores of volumes have been written to prove or disprove the “validity” of the book by authors who display such ignorance of the story that one can only conclude they never read the text.”

~ Verneil Simmons
Peoples, Places, and Prophecies



“Hopefully the 21st century will be a moment in time when the Book of Mormon can be heard for its message to the present age. Too much effort has been made trying to “prove” the Book of Mormon. Too little time and too little writing have addressed the message of the book.”


~ John Wolf
Forest of Priests and Prophets

“And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received, which vanity and unbelief hath brought the whole church under condemnation.

And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all; and they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written,

That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father’s kingdom... “

D&C 83:8



“The whole church was brought under condemnation. The Book of Mormon is still treated lightly by many. The success or failure of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is caught up in this scripture. As we explore the purpose of the Book of Mormon in scripture keep in mind the importance God has placed upon this sacred record. It is spoken of as containing the fullness of the gospel.”

~ Walter Weldon

1976, The Purpose of the Book of Mormon

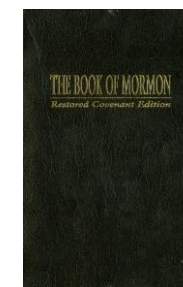
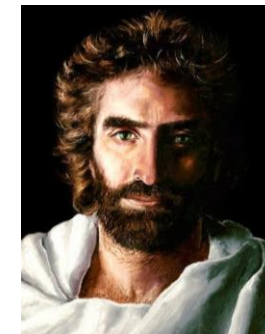
Invitation to join the Journey... before you can teach

Let your life be transformed by the message of the book

Seek a testimony of the book

Read the book

Daily walk with the Author of the book



THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND ALONG THE JOURNEY

- The purpose principle – what's in the book is in it for a reason!
 - Ask why along the way
- Don't take my word for it
- The hero in the story isYou!



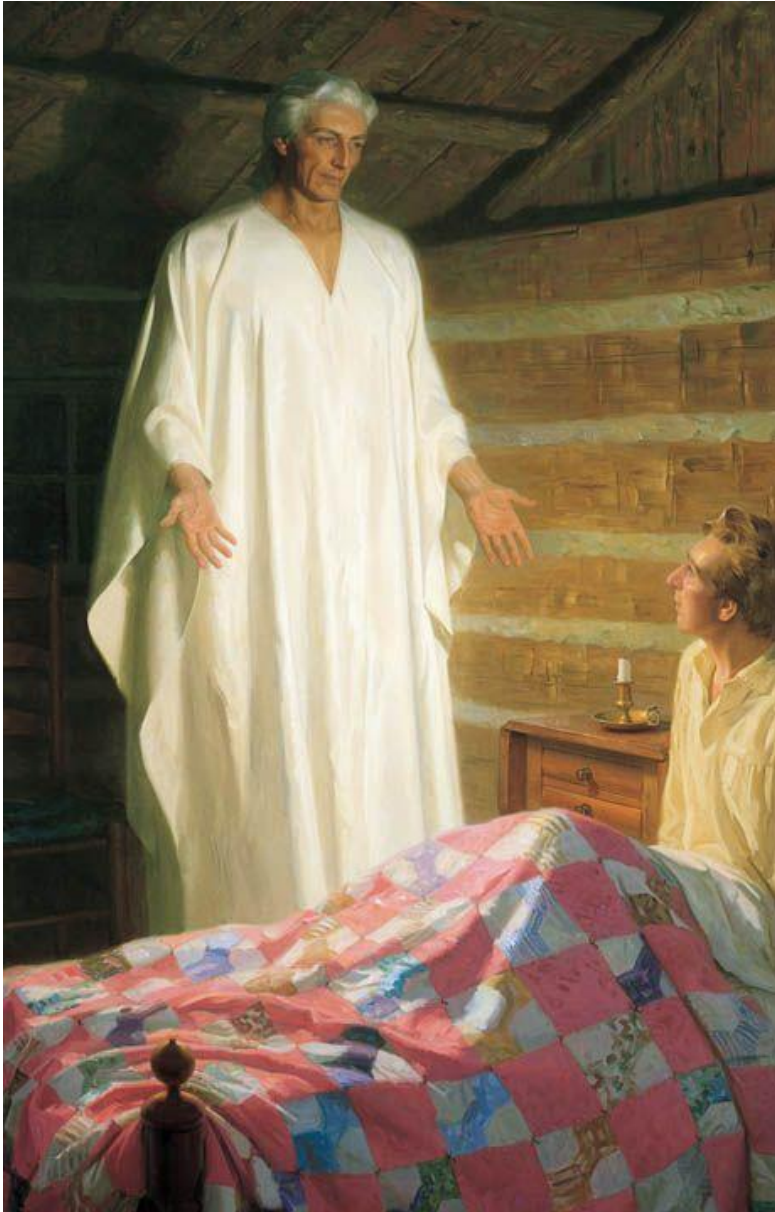
HOMEWORK

- Review the Overview of the Book of Mormon
- Begin reading through the Book of Mormon – title page, witness' statements, Ether
- Begin sharing with someone else what you're learning from the Book or how it's changing your life



HOW DID WE GET THE BOOK?

THE COMING
FORTH OF THE
BOOK OF
MORMON



THE VISION AND VISITATIONS OF MORONI

- Joseph Smith Jr Birth – December 23, 1805
- First Vision in the Grove – Early spring 1820
- Moroni visited 3 times - September 21-22, 1823
- Told his father of the experience on 9/22 and went to find the plates that day
- Visited the same spot and conversed with Moroni each year on anniversary
- Obtained the plates – September 22, 1827

MORONI'S MESSAGE

... on the evening of the ... twenty-first of September, after I had retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God.

... While I was thus in the act of calling upon God ... a personage appeared at my bedside ...

Church History, Volume 1, page 12

MORONI'S MESSAGE

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.

Church History, Volume 1, page 12, 13

MORONI'S MESSAGE

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 fullness of the everlasting gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants.

Church History, Volume 1, page 13

MORONI'S MESSAGE

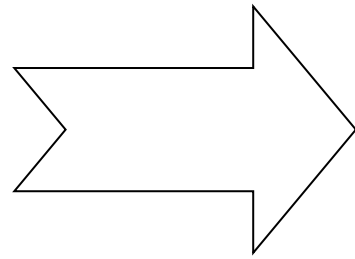
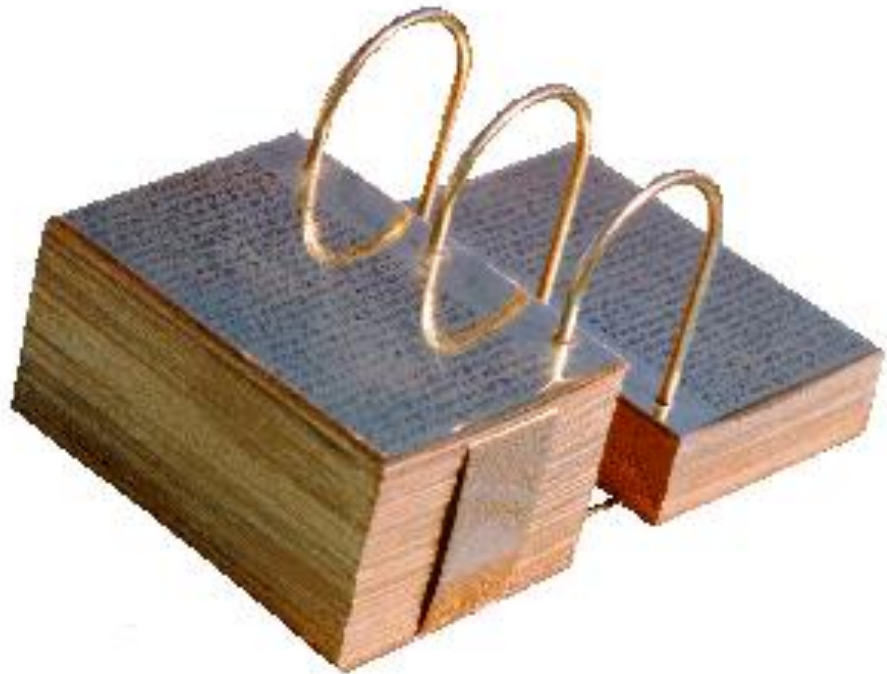
After telling me these things, he commenced quoting the prophecies of the Old Testament ... He also said that this was not yet fulfilled, but was soon to be.

Church History, Volume 1, page 13, 14

1823 - 1827

- Joseph went the next morning to find the plates after telling his father about the experience
- He went back to visit where the plates were buried each year on the anniversary in September
- September 22, 1827 is when he was told to take the plates
- Went to Pennsylvania that fall, transcribed some characters and translated them between Dec 1827 and Feb 1828

PLATES TO PAGES



TRANSLATION TIMELINE

Martin Harris scribes
4/12/1828 – 6/14/1828
(116 pages)

Oliver Cowdery arrives
4/15/1829
Translation resumed
4/17/1829

Joseph, Emma, and Oliver
Cowdery went to the
Whtmer farm for remainder
of translation
May/June 1829

Joseph doesn't
state when
translation was
finished; certificate
of the court for
copyright issued
6/11/1829

1828

1829

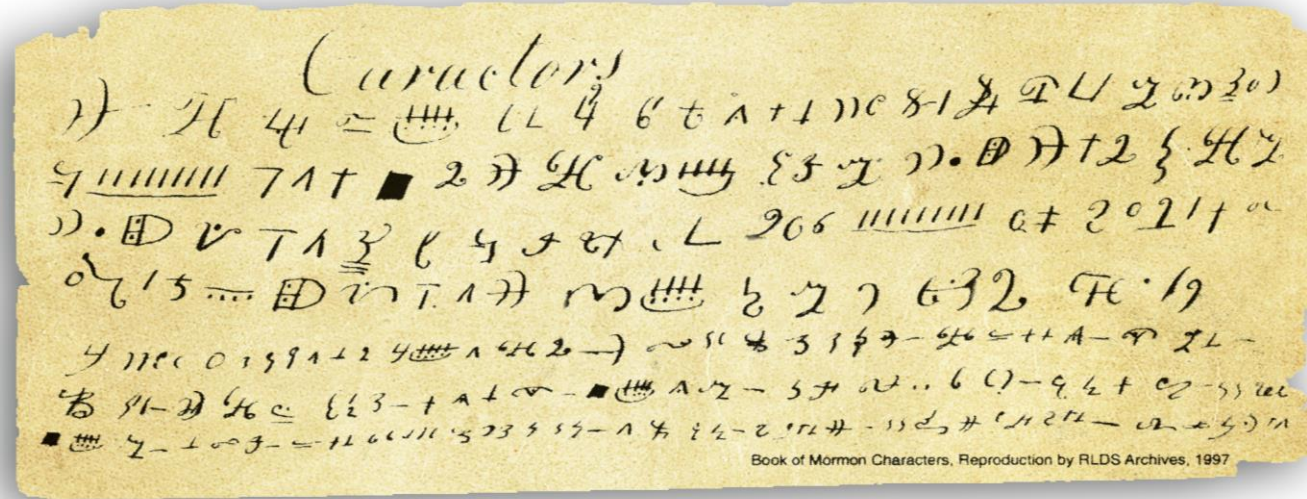
Plates and Urim and
Thummim were taken from
Joseph along with the ability
to translate for a time
Returned 9/22/1828

Translation continued until 5/15/1829
(3 revelations received during this time; Joseph and
Oliver baptized, ordained to Aaronic Priesthood)

The experiences of the
3 and 8 witnesses
occurred
June 1829

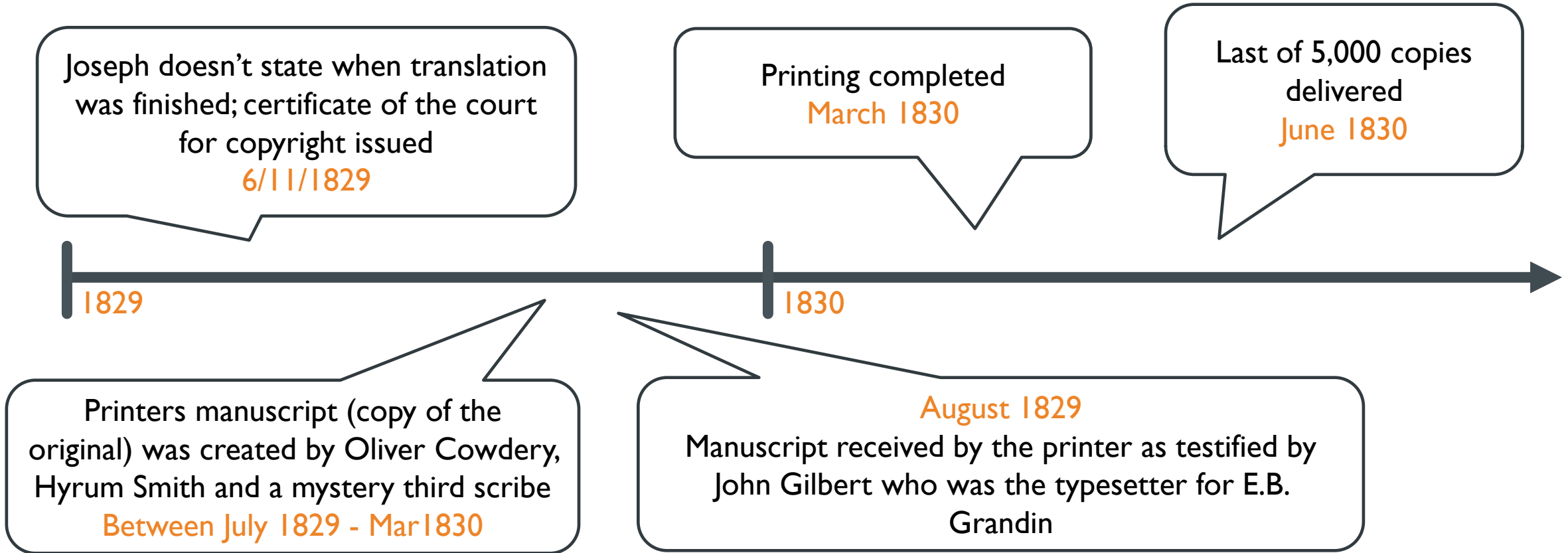
Translation occurred between April – June 1829

PROFESSOR ANTHON & THE “CHARACTERS”



- Joseph copied a set of characters from the plates along with a translation of them and gave to Martin Harris
- Martin traveled to New York City to show them to Professor Anthon – February, 1828
- Martin’s testimony is that Anthon confirmed their authenticity as Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac, and Arabic and provided a certificate stating as much, however he took it back and tore it up upon hearing that an angel had told Joseph where to find the plates

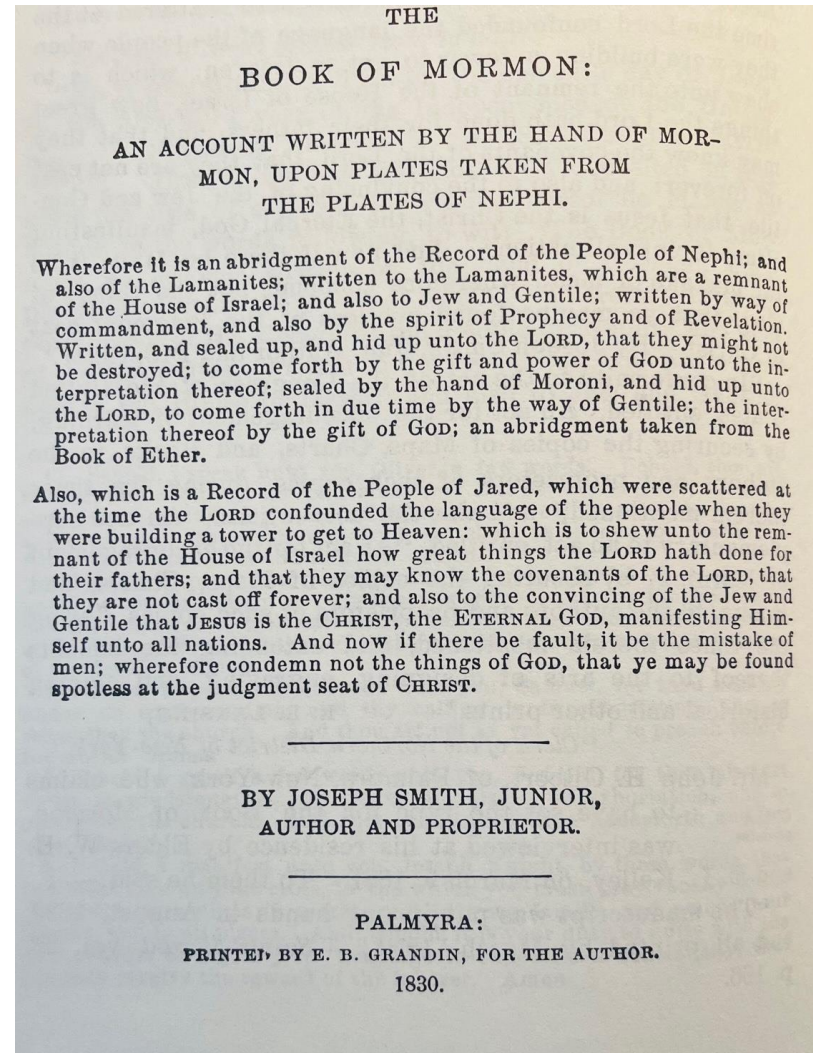
PRINTING TIMELINE



Printing occurred between Aug 1829 – Mar 1830

THE TITLE PAGE AND “AUTHORSHIP”

Ancient
origin

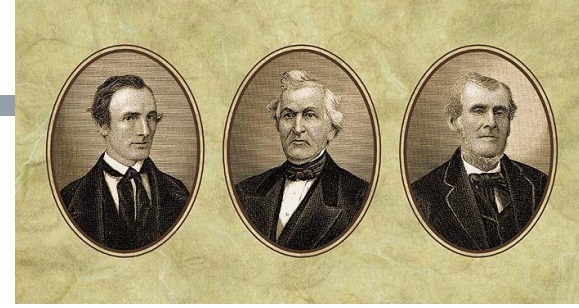


Modern
origin

THE WITNESSES

1. The 3 witnesses were shown the plates by an angel
2. The 8 witnesses were shown the plates by Joseph
3. None of the witnesses are known to have ever denied their testimony afterwards, for the remainder of their lives
4. In fact, most continued to reaffirm their testimonies over and over and over again
5. This, in spite of the fact, that several had falling out with the church or leaders of the church or were even ex-communicated

TESTIMONY OF THE THREE WITNESSES

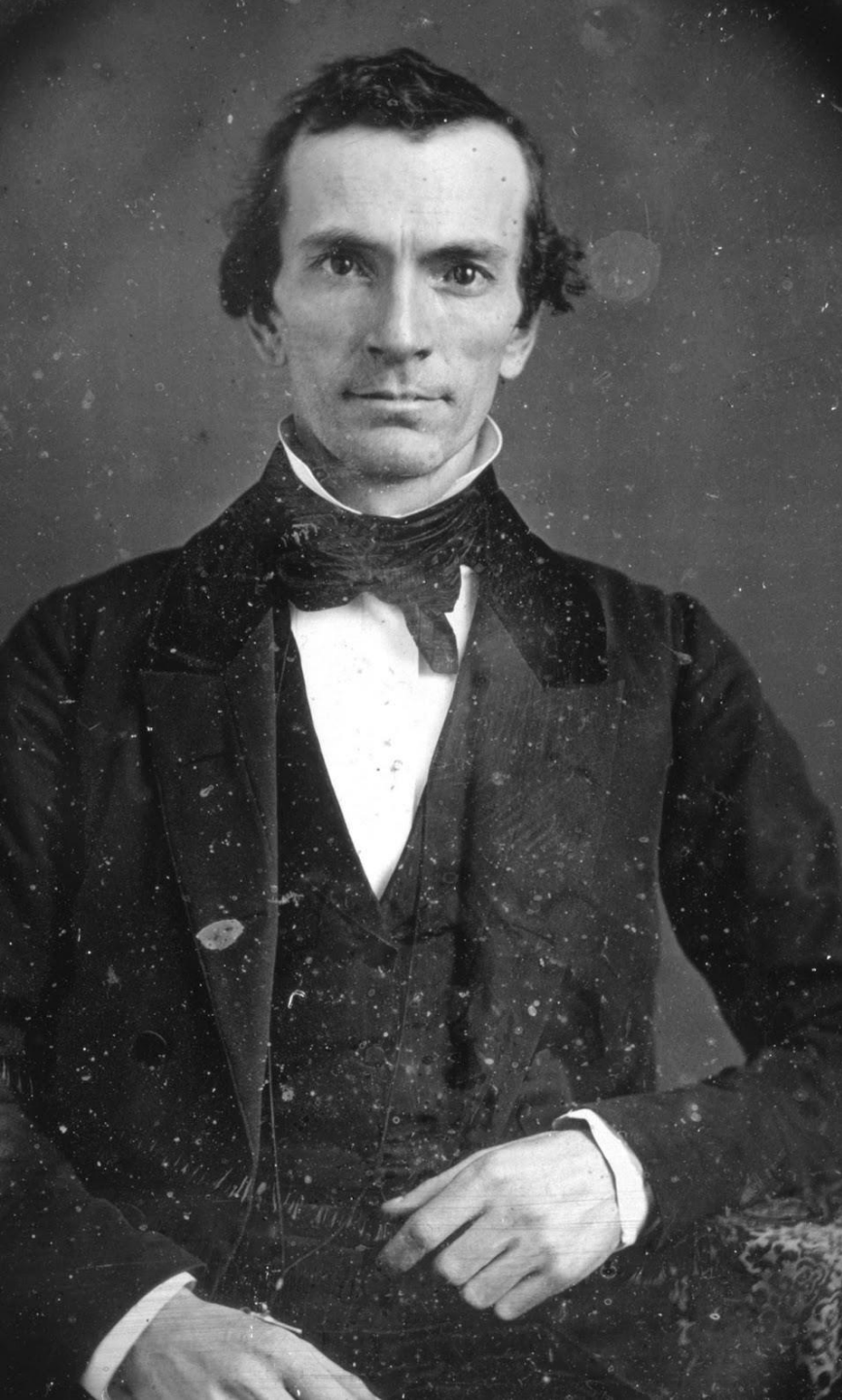


Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren, and also of the people of Jared, who came from the tower of 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.

— Oliver Cowdery

— David Whitmer

— Martin Harris



THE THREE WITNESSES – OLIVER COWDERY

“It was a clear, open beautiful day, far from any inhabitants, in a remote field, at the time we saw the record, of which it has been spoken, brought and laid before us, by an angel, arrayed in glorious light, ascend out of the midst of heaven.”

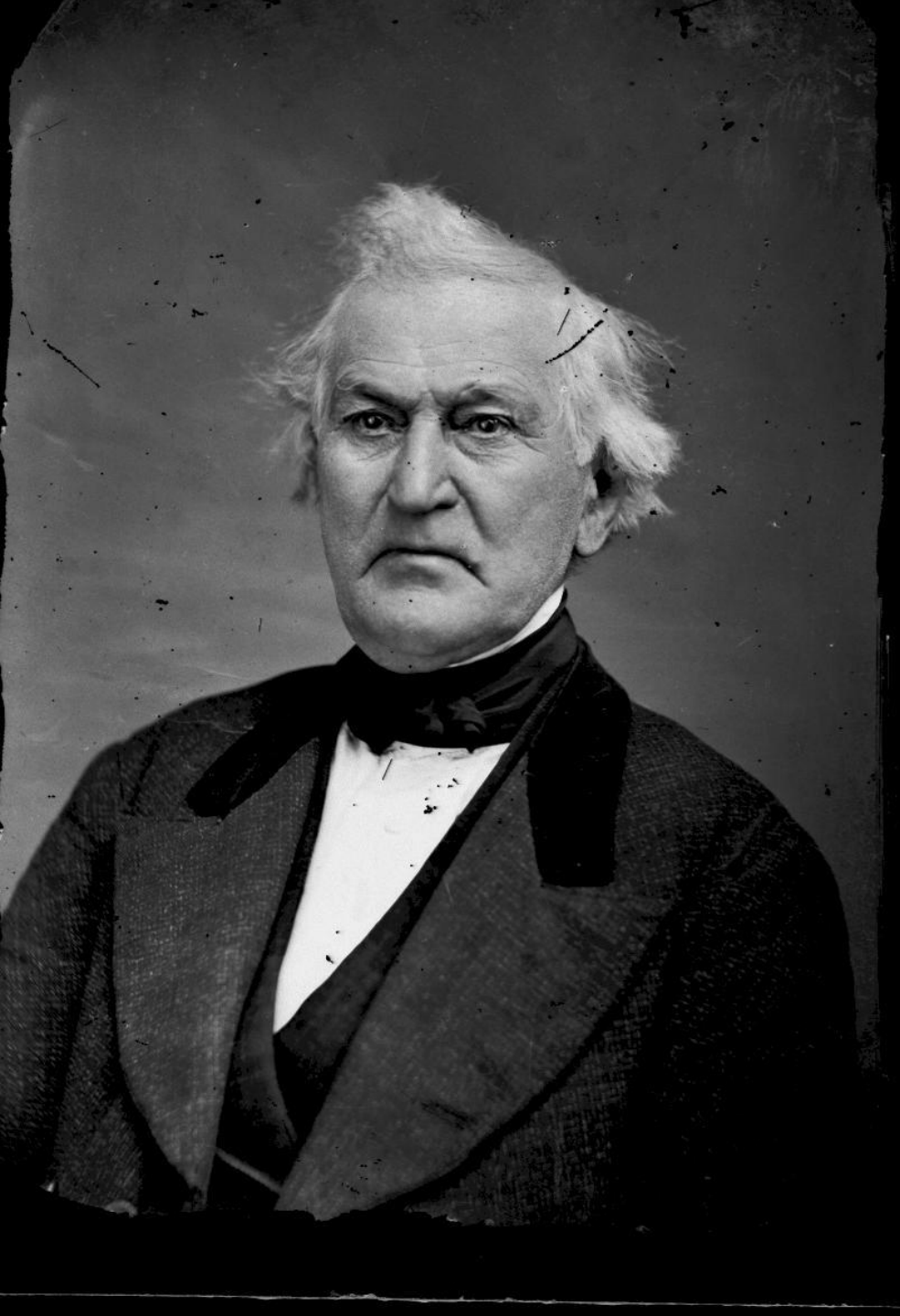
~ Written to a skeptic in Nov 1829 (earliest written corroboration, only few months after the experience)

THE THREE WITNESSES – MARTIN HARRIS

“Young man, do you see that sun shining through that window? Just so sure as that sun shines and gives us light by day, and the moon and stars give us light by night, just so sure I know the Book of Mormon is true. For I saw the angel, I heard his voice, I saw and handled the plates upon which the Book of Mormon was written; and by the power and influence of the Holy Ghost, the translation was made by the Prophet Joseph Smith, whom I know by the power and gift of the Holy Ghost, was a true Prophet of God....” ~ 1869

1783 - 1875





THE THREE WITNESSES – DAVID WHITMER

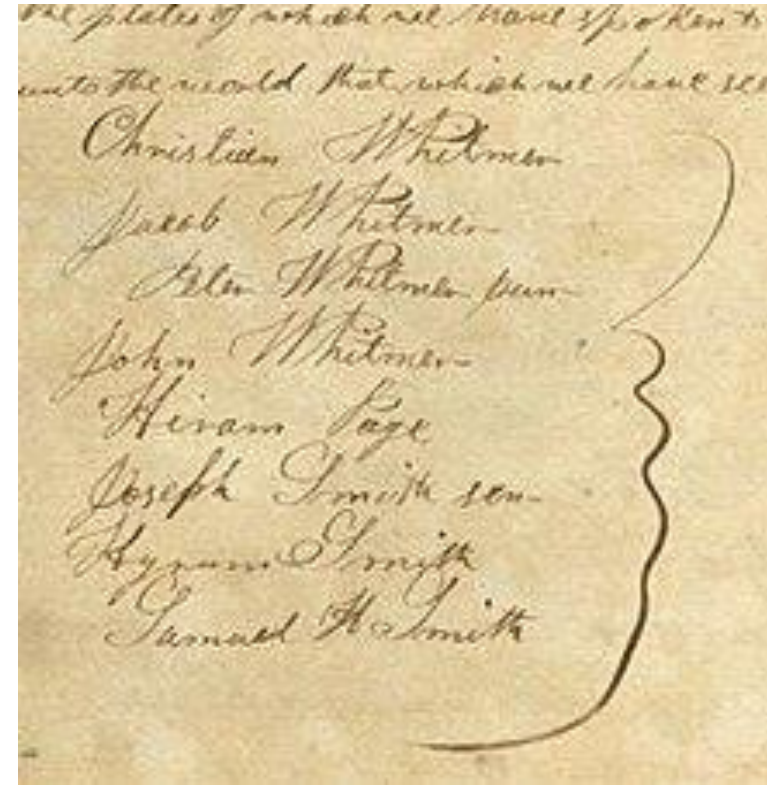
“My testimony to the world is written concerning the Book of Mormon, and it is the same that I gave at first and it is the same as shall stand to my latest hour in life, linger with me in death and shine as Gospel Truth beyond the limits of life.”

THE 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.

THE EIGHT WITNESSES

1. Christian Whitmer
2. Jacob Whitmer
3. Peter Whitmer, Sr
4. John Whitmer
5. Hiram Page
6. Joseph Smith, Sr
7. Hyrum Smith
8. Samuel H. Smith



*** John Whitmer was the last surviving of the 8 and reaffirmed his testimony before his death (1878)**

LAST OF THE EIGHT WITNESSES – JOHN WHITMER

“Oliver Cowdery lived in Richmond, Mo., some 40 miles from here, at the time of his death. I went to see him and was with him for some days previous to his demise. I have never heard him deny the truth of his testimony of the Book of Mormon under any circumstances whatever. . . . Neither do I believe that he would have denied, at the peril of his life; so firm was he that he could not be made to deny what he has affirmed to be a divine revelation from God. . . .

I have never heard that any one of the three or eight witnesses ever denied the testimony that they have borne to the Book as published in the first edition of the Book of Mormon. There are only two of the witnesses to that book now living, to wit., David Whitmer, one of the three, and John Wh[itmer], one of the eight. Our names have gone forth to all nations, tongues and people as a divine revelation from God. And it will bring to pass the designs of God according to the declaration therein contained.”

~ John Whitmer, in a letter to Mark Forscutt, 1876



THE QUESTION OF AUTHORSHIP

Possible explanations of the origin:



1. Joseph Smith, Jr created the book

- Whether completely on his own or via some form of copy, plagiarism, and original content

2. Joseph Smith, Jr was influenced by the Devil or some demonic source to create the book

- To lead millions away from God?

3. The book is exactly what it claims to be, a work of ancient origin, directed by God, and translated into English by Joseph Smith, Jr through the gift and power of God



THE STORY

THE RECORDS



The Book of Mormon is a collection of ancient sacred writings written between about 3000 BC and 420 AD. It tells about God's dealings with three groups of people who He led out of the Old World to a Promised Land in the New World.

In addition, it foretells the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, predating His coming by nearly 3,000 years; records His personal visitation; presents His great plan of salvation and prophecies concerning the restoration of all the house of Israel.

STATISTICS ABOUT THE BOOK

150M
Copies

15
Books

102
Chapters

~300k
Words

>26
Centuries

24
Authors

2
Abridgers

1
Translator

180
New Proper
Nouns

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF MORMON?

1. Nephi

2. Lehi

3. Jacob

4. Enos

5. Jarom

6. Omni

7. Amaron

8. Chemish

9. Abinadom

10. Amaleki

11. Benjamin

12. Mosiah

13. Alma

14. Alma

15. Helaman

16. Shiblön

17. Helaman

18. Nephi

19. Nephi

20. Nephi

21. Amos

22. Ammaron

23. Mormon

24. Moroni



THE PEOPLES

JAREBITES

NEPHITES

MULEKITES

Jaredites

Nephites

Mulekites



The People Groups

Jaredites

Book of Ether



3000BC?

200BC

Origin:
Tower of Babel

Nephites / Lamanites / Mulekites



600BC

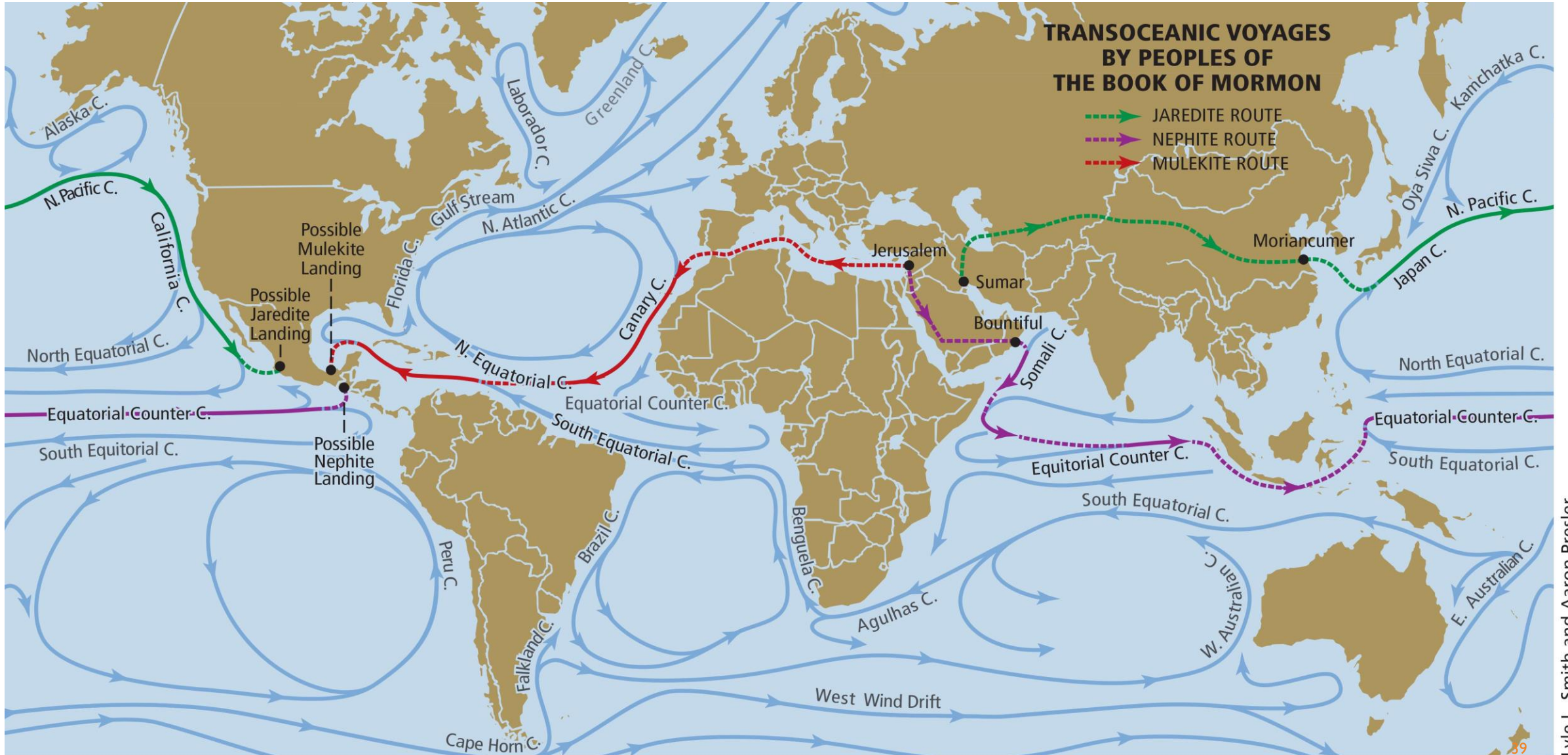
421AD

Destruction of
Jerusalem
~ 586BC



THE TRAVELS

3 GROUPS MAKE
MAJOR JOURNEYS
ACROSS THE
EARTH TO REACH
THE PROMISED
LAND





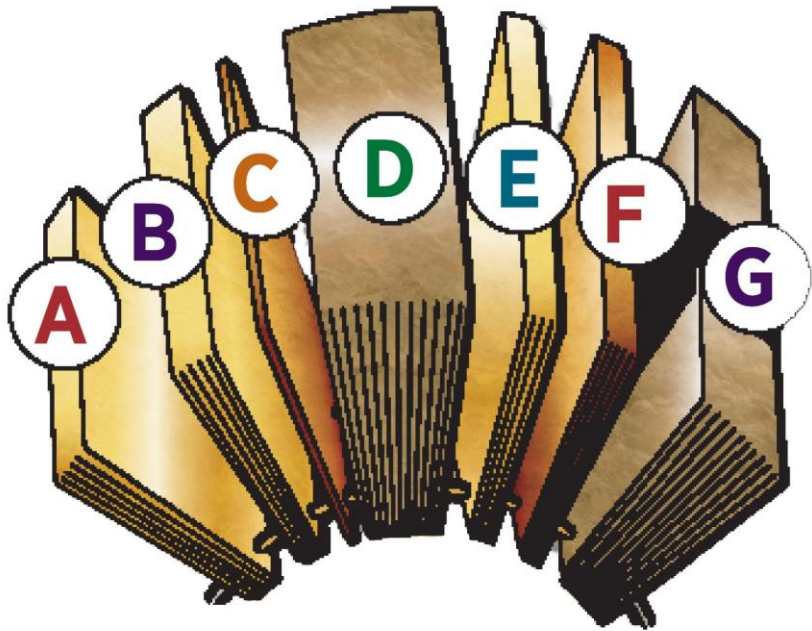
THE RECORDS

THE VARIOUS
RECORDS AND
ABRIDGEMENTS
MADE

&

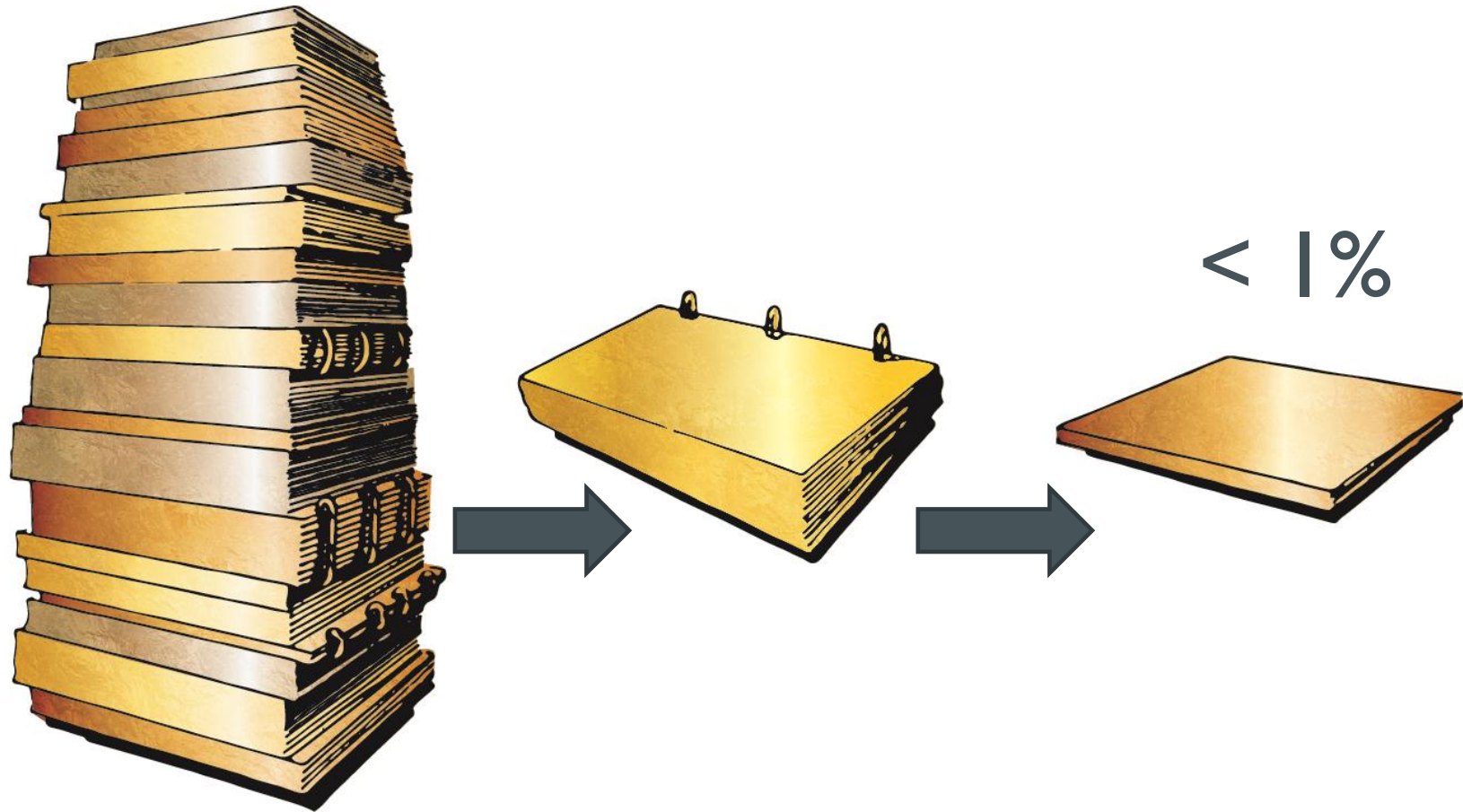
THE LANGUAGE
USED

THE RECORDS INCLUDED IN THE PLATES



- A – Lost abridgement
- B – Small plates of Nephi (unabridged)
- C – Words of Mormon
- D – Large plates of Nephi (abridged)
- E – 24 Gold Plates (abridged)
- F – Moroni's writing
- G – Sealed Portion

ABRIDGEMENTS LEAD TO GREAT CONSOLIDATION



>2500 years of
Jaredite records

24 Gold Plates
of Ether

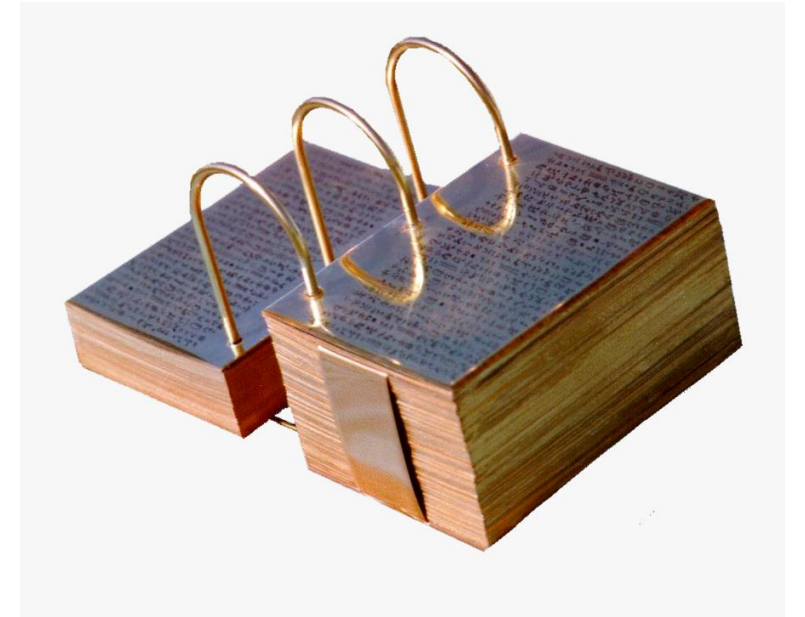
Moroni's abridgement
to the book of Ether

< 1%

Writer	Text	Refers To	Reference
Jacob	And a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people...can not be written	Small Plates	Jacob 2:67
Mormon	...I can not write a hundredth part of the things of my people	Mosiah to IV Nephi	Words of Mormon 1:8
Mormon	But behold a hundredth part of the proceedings...can not be contained	Mosiah to IV Nephi	Helaman 2:13
Mormon	...this book can not contain even a hundredth	AD 1-25	III Nephi 2:92
Mormon	And now there can not be written even a hundredth	The words of Jesus	III Nephi 12:1
Moroni	And the hundredth part I have not written	Ether	Ether 6:108

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLATES

- Joseph's description from Times and Seasons Vol 3, pg 707
- They had the appearance of gold
- They were about 6" X 8", the whole volume was about 6" thick
- Pages or sheets were a little thinner than ordinary tin
- They were held together, like a book, by three rings running through the whole
- They were skillfully engraved with very small characters, on both sides of the plates
- Part of them were sealed



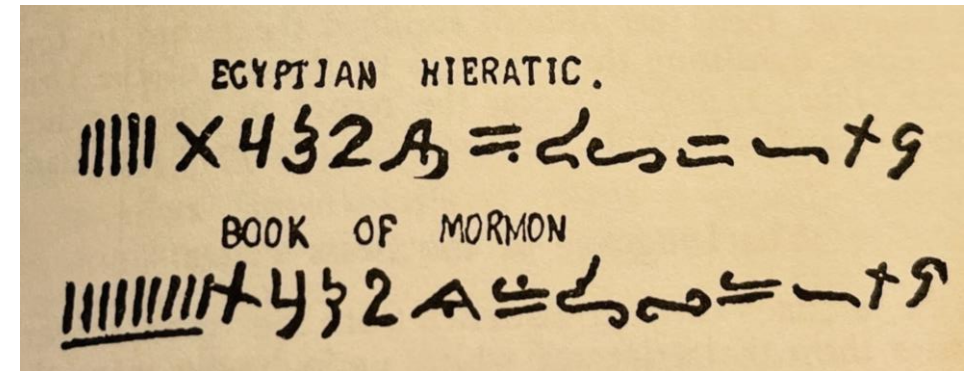
THEIR LANGUAGE

The Nephites

- Spoke Hebrew language (language in Jerusalem at the time that they and the Mulekites left)
- Recorded in reformed Egyptian

The Jaredites

- Their language was NOT reformed Egyptian
- Presumably the language of Adam



Thelona Stevens

LANGUAGE (CONT.) - NEPHI

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; 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.

~ 1 Nephi 1:1

- ① Learning of the Jews = Hebrew
- ② Language of the Egyptians = Egyptian

LANGUAGE (CONT.) – MORMON'S COMMENTS

98 And now behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge in the characters, which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech.

99 And if our plates had been sufficiently large, we should have written in the Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in the Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record.

100 But the Lord knoweth the things which we have written, and also that none other people knoweth our language, and because that none other people knoweth our language, therefore he hath prepared means for the interpretation thereof.

~ Mormon 4:98-100

LANGUAGE (CONT.) – THE JAREDITES

The language of the Jaredites was NOT reformed Egyptian, but presumably the language of Adam.

5 And then began these men to call upon the name of the Lord; and the Lord blessed them; and a book of remembrance was kept in the which was recorded in **the language of Adam**, for it was given unto as many as called upon God, to write by the Spirit of inspiration;

6 And by them their children were taught to read and write, having a language which was pure and undefiled.

Genesis 6:5,6

RECORDS BROUGHT TO THE PROMISED LAND

The Brass Plates

- Brought by the Nephites after obtaining in Jerusalem
- Written in Egyptian
- Contain 5 books of Moses
- Includes law of Moses but also MUCH more
- 1 Nephi 1:158-166; 6:2,3

Ancient records from the very beginning

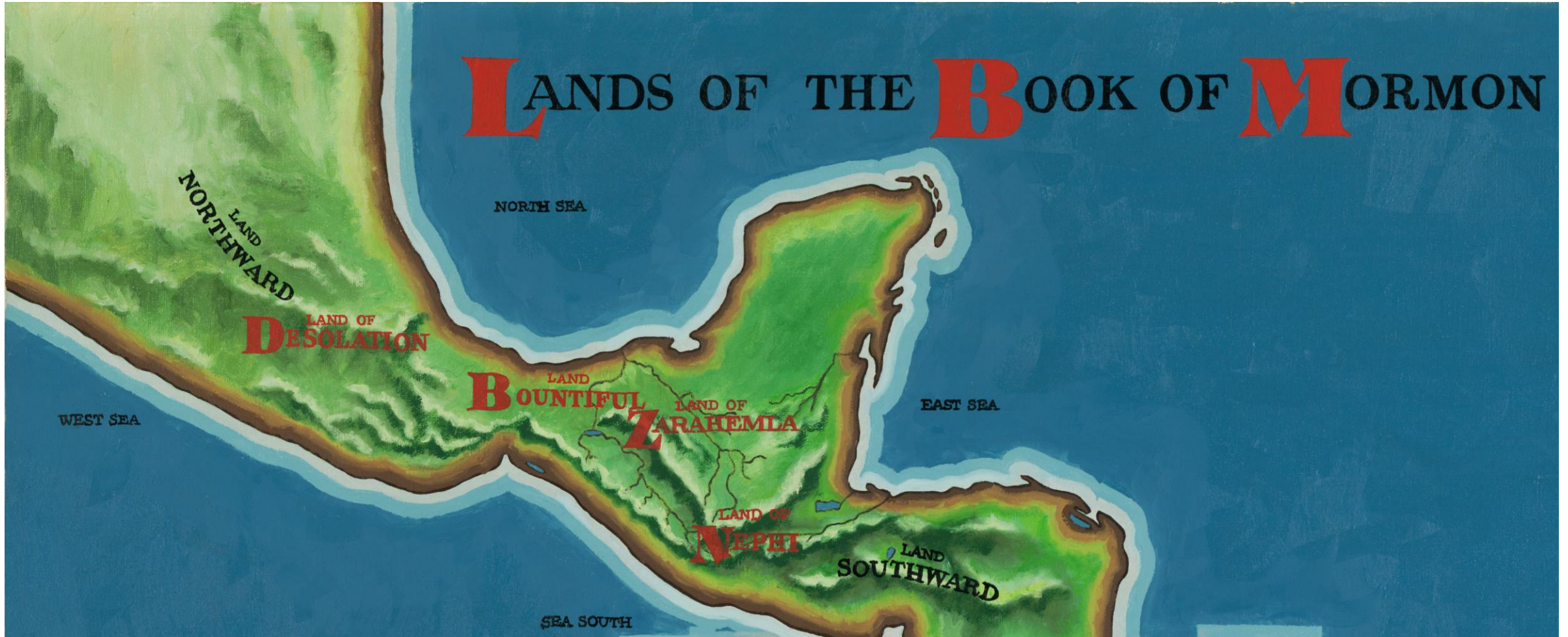
- Brought by the Jaredites
- Ether 3:80
- Likely Book of Remembrance and original Book of Generations of Adam (Gen 6:5,9)
- Enoch also wrote a book (D&C 104:29)
- If you accept this, it explains the context for D&C 22 and why Moses was given the original information directly from God for the first books of the Bible



THE LANDS

LANDS OF THE
BOOK OF
MORMON

LANDS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON



- Land of Desolation
- Land Bountiful
- Land of Zarahemla
- Land of Nephi

Peoples of Mesoamerica (Book of Mormon Lands)



According to archaeological evidence, there were pre-Olmec people scattered all over the Land Northward beginning as early as 3000 B.C. They had domesticated crops and pottery. We know them as the early Jaredite culture. Archaeologists call them pre-Olmec because not enough archaeological evidence has been found from those early dates to identify them as a culture. Starting about 2000 B.C. the archaeologists recognize the people in the area as the Olmec. This change from pre-Olmec to Olmec took place just after the great death indicated in the book of Ether, about 2000 B.C. Shortly after the death the Jaredites prospered greatly and built a great city by the "narrow neck of land."

Over the years, archaeologists have identified more than 10,000 Maya cities or towns. LIDAR technology has recently identified thousands more. Now population estimates are up to 20 million. This confirms "...the people were as numerous almost, as it were the sand of the sea" (Mormon 1:87). No where else in the Americas is this even faintly possible.

The Maya ruins of the ancient city of Kaminaljuyu has been swallowed up by Guatemala City. It was the largest Maya city in the highlands beginning about 600 B.C. through the time of Christ. It fits the description of the city of Nephi. Although we have little history in The Book of Mormon about the Lamanite culture, it appears they were not city builders.

- LEGEND**
- Book of Mormon Names
 - Archeological Site Names (light)
 - Current Place Names (bold)
 - Olmec Heartland Area (Jaredite)
 - Maya Area (Lamanite/Nephite/Mulekite)



Lyle L. Smith and Aaron Presler

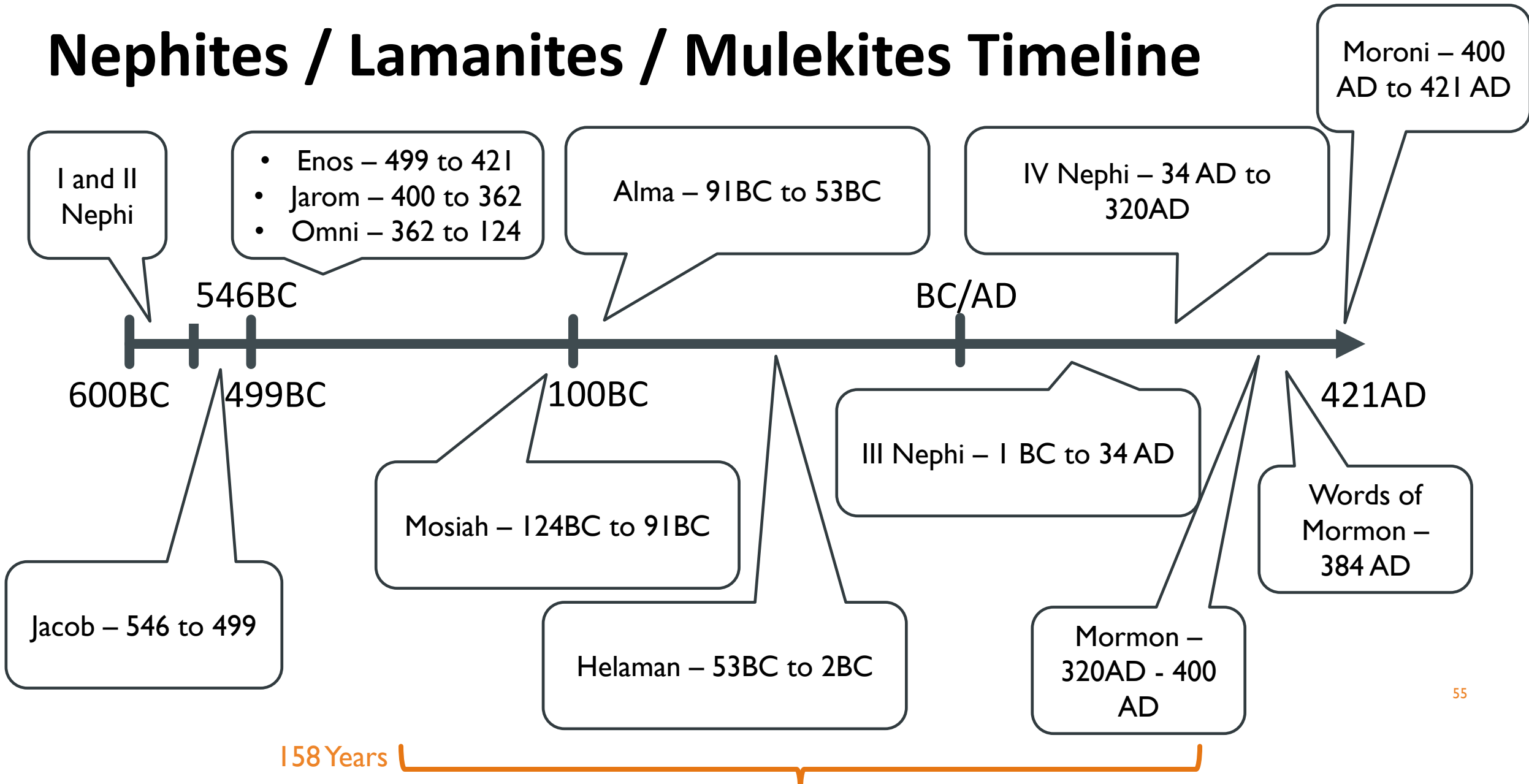


THE TIMELINE

TIMELINE OF THE BOOK OF MORMON



Nephites / Lamanites / Mulekites Timeline





THE TEST

COULD YOU
WRITE THE BOOK
OF MORMON?

COULD YOU WRITE THE BOOK OF MORMON?

1. You must be between twenty-three and twenty-four years of age.
2. You cannot be a college graduate. In fact, you can have only three years of formal schooling.
3. Whatever you write must be on the basis of what you know and not what you learn through research.
4. You must write a history of an ancient country, such as Tibet, covering a period from 2200 B.C. to 421 A.D.
5. You must write a book with 102 chapters, twenty-five of them about wars, ten about history, twenty-one about prophecy, thirty-two about doctrines, five about missionaries, and nine about the mission of Christ.

COULD YOU WRITE THE BOOK OF MORMON?

6. You must include in your writings the history of two distinct and separate nations, along with histories of different contemporary nations or groups of people.
7. Your writings must describe the religious, economic, social, and political cultures and institutions of these two nations.
8. You must weave into your history the religion of Jesus Christ and the pattern for Christian living.
9. When you start to produce this record covering a period of over twenty-six hundred years, you must finish in approximately eighty days.
10. When you have finished, you must not make any changes in the text. The first edition must stand forever (this does not include grammatical errors, etc).

COULD YOU WRITE THE BOOK OF MORMON?

11. After pauses for sleep and food, if you are dictating to a stenographer, you must never ask to have the last paragraph or last sentence read back to you. You must start right where you stopped previously.
12. Your history or record must be long, approximately 777 pages with over 500 words per page.
13. You must add 180 proper nouns to the English language (William Shakespeare added thirty).
14. You must announce that your "smooth narrative" is not fiction, but true—yes, a sacred history.
15. In fact, your narrative must fulfill the Bible prophecies; even in the exact manner in which it shall come forth, to whom given, and its purpose and accomplishments.

COULD YOU WRITE THE BOOK OF MORMON?

16. You must publish it to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, declaring it to be the Word of God.
17. You must include with the record itself this marvelous promise: "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."
18. Tens of thousands must bear record to the world for the next 178 years that they know the record to be true. Because they put the promise to the test, the truth is manifested to them by the power of the Holy Ghost.

COULD YOU WRITE THE BOOK OF MORMON?

19. Thousands of great men, intellectual giants, and scholars, must subscribe discipleship to the record of its movement, even to the point of laying down their lives.
20. There can be no flaw, whatever, in the entire book (except in grammar, or other errors of man in transcribing, etc.).
21. Your descriptions of the cultures in these civilizations, of which you will write about, is not known when you publish your manuscript.

COULD YOU WRITE THE BOOK OF MORMON?

22. Yet, you must not make any absurd, impossible, or contradictory statements.
23. Even so, many of the facts, ideas, and statements given as true in your record must be entirely inconsistent with, even the direct opposite of, the prevailing belief of the world. Yet very little is even claimed to be known about these civilizations and their thousands of years of history.
24. You must invite the ablest scholars and experts to examine the text with care. You must strive diligently to see that your book gets into the hands of all those most eager to prove it a forgery and who are most competent to expose any flaws in it.
25. After 178 years of extensive analysis, no claim or fact in the book is disproven, but all are vindicated. Other theories and ideas as to its origin rise and fall, leaving your claims as the only possible ones.

COULD YOU WRITE THE BOOK OF MORMON?

26. Thorough investigation, scientific evidence, and archaeological discoveries for the next 178 years must verify your claims and prove even the minutest details of your history to be perfectly true.
27. Internal and external prophecies must be confirmed and fulfilled in the next 178 years.
28. Three honest, accreditable witnesses must testify to the whole world that an angel from heaven appeared to them and showed them the ancient records from which you claim your record was translated.
29. You must hear out of heaven the voice of the Redeemer declaring to you and those three witnesses that your record is true, and that it is their responsibility to bear testimony of it—and that they do.

COULD YOU WRITE THE BOOK OF MORMON?

30. Eight other witnesses must testify to the world that they saw the ancient records in broad daylight, and that they handled them and felt the engravings thereon.
31. The first three and the second eight witnesses must bear their testimony, not for profit or gain, but under great personal sacrifice and severe persecution, even to their deaths.
32. You must talk a friend into financing your book with the understanding that he or you will never receive any monetary remuneration from it. This person must mortgage his farm to have it printed. You must sell the book at cost or less.
33. Finally, after suffering persecution and revilement for twenty-four years in the process of producing and defending this book, you must give, willingly, your own life for your testimony that the record is of God.