

Witnesses of The Book of Mormon

H. Roice Nelson, Jr.

High Priest Instruction Visuals

11 May 2014

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From the Life of Joseph Fielding Smith

President Joseph Fielding Smith served as the Church Historian and Recorder from March 1921 to February 1970. In this position, he was instrumental in procuring original documents of historical significance to the Church. One of these documents was a handwritten testimony signed by David Whitmer, one of the three special witnesses of the Book of Mormon. President Smith was also privileged to handle a handwritten testimony of Oliver Cowdery, another of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon. After copying these two documents by hand, President Smith read them in at least two public discourses—once in March 1939 and again in the October 1956 general conference of the Church.

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Witnesses of the Book of Mormon

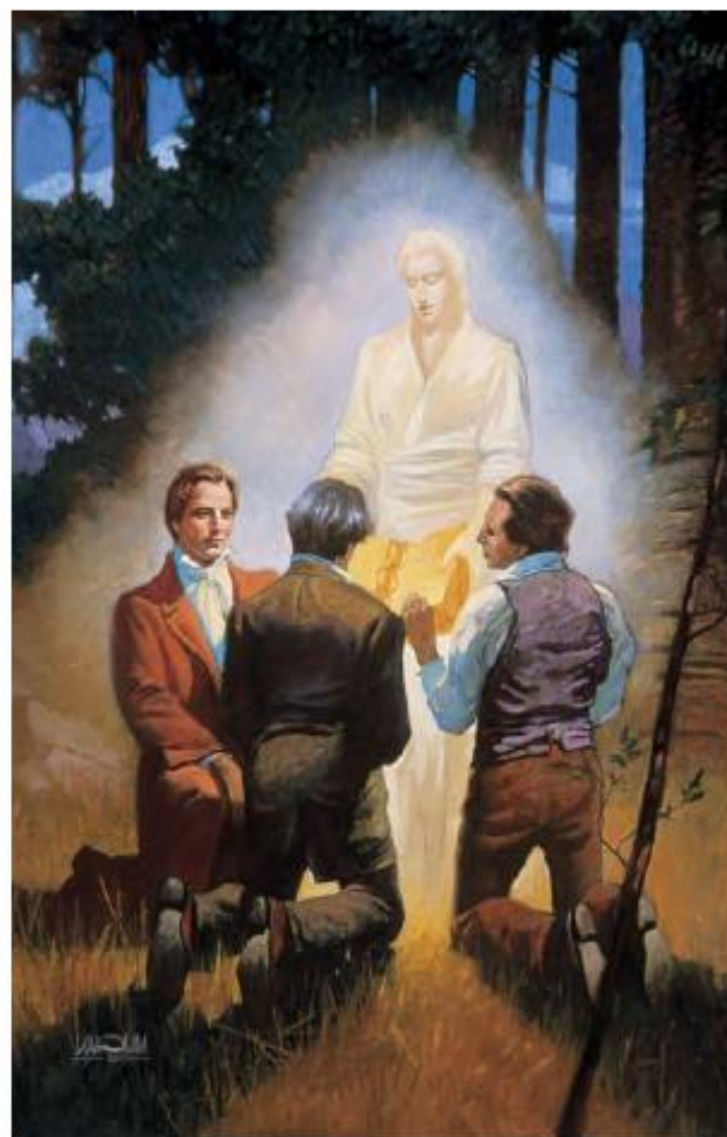
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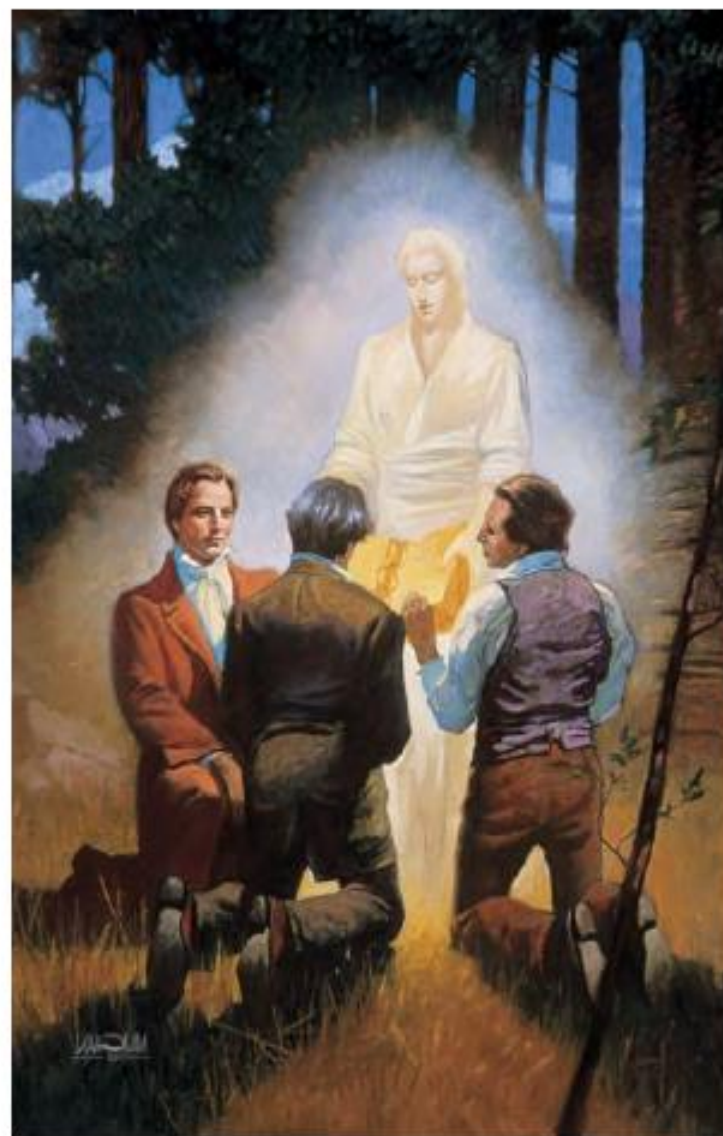
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Colby's first
Temple baptisms

Whose testimony do we stand on?

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■ GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY OF THE BIBLE LANDS

ANCIENT MAPS

Archaeologists have uncovered many ancient maps of the Bible lands. One of the best comes from the ancient Mesopotamian city of Nippur, where someone had sketched a fairly accurate map of the city onto a tablet. Another ancient map is the Medeba Map (part of which is shown at right), a large mosaic of the Holy Land found in an ancient church in Jordan. The exact date of the mosaic is debated, but it played a decorative role in the church where it was found. The map shows the Jordan River, Jerusalem, and other important Christian sites. Based on these finds, as well as from references in the Bible, it is clear

that ancient people oriented their directions differently from the way we do. When we look at a map, unless stated otherwise, we assume that north is at the top. For Ancient Near Eastern cartographers, the top of the map was east. So when we are told in Genesis 42:3, “So ten of Joseph’s brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt,” this reflects an ancient orientation where the western trek across the Sinai Peninsula from Israel would have looked like going down on a map. Likewise, when Joseph’s brothers return in Genesis 45:25, it is said that “they went up out of Egypt,” reflecting the same orientation.



Whose testimony do we stand on?

Maya were preoccupied with demonstrating historical action as the inevitable result of cosmic and ancestral necessity. It was within this great matrix of belief that the Maya enacted the triumphs, defeats, drama, humor, and pathos of their history and strove to create the greatest and most lasting memorials to their lives.

The World They Conceived

The Maya world was made up of three layered domains: the starry arch of heaven, the stony Middleworld of earth made to flower and bear fruit by the blood of kings, and the dark waters of the Underworld below.³ To say that the Maya considered these to be three distinct regions, however, is to give a false impression, for they believed all dimensions of existence were interrelated. Furthermore, all three domains were thought to be alive and imbued with sacred power, including the sky, which was represented by a great crocodilian monster. This Cosmic Monster made the rains when it shed its blood in supernatural counterpoint to the royal sacrifices on the earth below.

The Underworld was sometimes called Xibalba,⁴ but it is perhaps closer to the original Maya understanding to think of Xibalba as the parallel unseen Otherworld into which the Maya kings and other shamans could pass in ecstatic trance. Like the world of human beings, Xibalba⁵ had animals, plants, inhabitants of various kinds, and a landscape with both natural and constructed features. At sundown Xibalba rotated above the earth to become the night sky.

The human plane of existence, like the Otherworld, was a sacred place. The Maya conceived of the human world as a region floating in the primordial sea. Sometimes they represented the earth as the back of a caiman and sometimes as the back of a turtle.⁶ The four cardinal directions provided the fundamental grid for the Maya community and for the surface of the world. But for the Maya, the principal axis of the Middleworld was the path of the sun as it moved from east to west on its daily journey. Each direction of the compass had a special tree, a bird, a color, gods associated with its domain, and rituals associated with those gods. East was red and the most important direction since it was where the sun was born. North, sometimes called the "side of heaven," was white and the direction from which the cooling rains of winter came. It was also the direction of the north star around which the sky pivots. West, the leaving or dying place of the sun, was black. South was yellow and was considered to be the right-hand or great side of the sun.⁷ In the Maya conception east, not north, should always be at the top of maps.

This model of the world, however, was concentric as well as quadrangular. The four cardinal directions were also seen in relationship to the center, which also had its color (blue-green), its gods, its bird, and its tree (Fig. 2:1). Running through this center, the Maya envisioned an axis called *Wacah Chan* ("six sky" or "raised up sky").⁸ The tree which symbolized this axis coexisted in all three vertical domains. Its trunk went

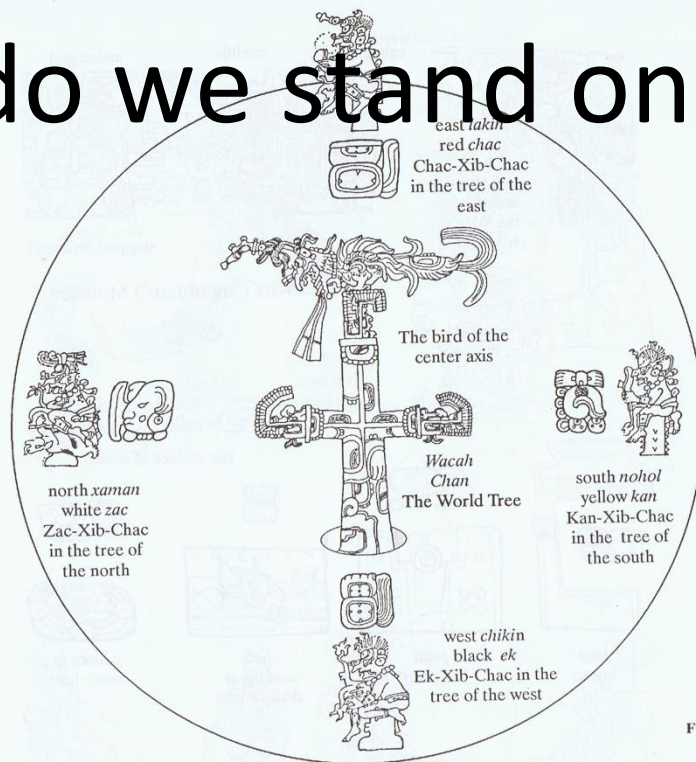


FIG. 2:1

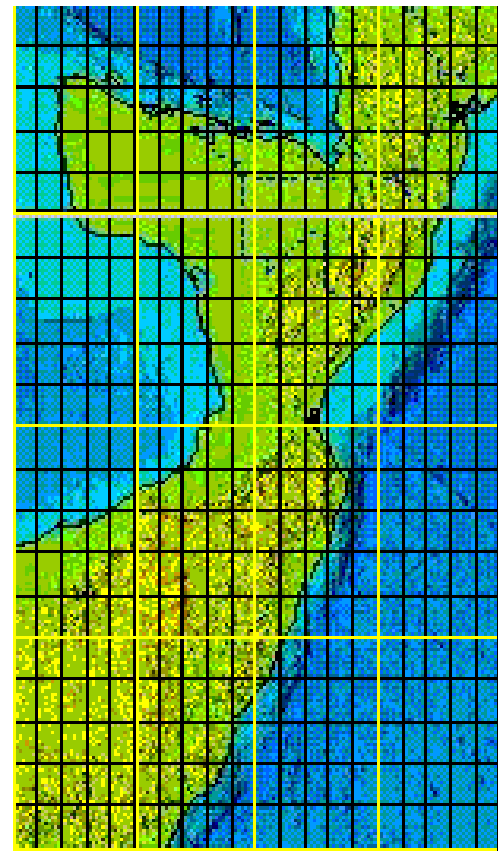
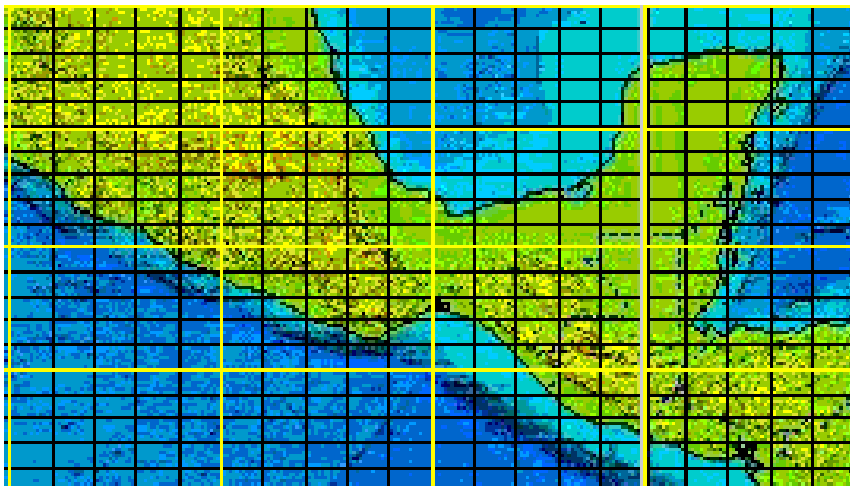
through the Middleworld; its roots plunged to the nadir in the watery Underworld region of the Otherworld, and its branches soared to the zenith in the highest layer of the heavenly region of the Otherworld.

The geography of the human world included plains, mountains, caves, cenotes, rivers, lakes, and swamps, and the places and buildings made by people—cities and towns with their houses, palaces, temples, and ballcourts (Fig. 2:2). To the Maya, this world was alive and imbued with a sacredness that was especially concentrated at special points, like caves and mountains. The principal pattern of power points had been established by the gods when the cosmos was created. Within this matrix of sacred landscape, human beings built communities that both merged with the god-generated patterns and created a second human-made matrix of power points. These two systems were perceived to be complementary, not separate.

As we mentioned above, the world of human beings was connected to the Otherworld along the *wacah chan* axis which ran through the center of existence. This axis was not located in any one earthly place, but could be materialized through ritual at any point in the natural and human-made landscape. Most important, it was materialized in the person of the king,

SACRED
SPACE,
HOLY TIME,
AND THE
MAYA
WORLD

Whose testimony do we stand on?



Rotating East to Top of Map

Whose testimony do we stand on?

27 And it came to pass that the king sent a proclamation throughout all the land, amongst all his people who were in all his land, who were in all the regions round about, which was bordering even to the sea, on the east and on the west, and which was divided from the land of Zarahemla by a narrow strip of wilderness, which ran from the sea east even to the sea west, and round about on the borders of the seashore, and the borders of the wilderness which was on the north by the land of Zarahemla, through the borders of Manti, by the head of the river Sidon, running from the east towards the west—and thus were the Lamanites and the Nephites divided.

28 Now, the more idle part of the Lamanites lived in the wilderness, and dwelt in tents; and they were spread through the wilderness on the west, in the land of Nephi; yea, and also on the west of the land of Zarahemla, in the borders by the seashore, and on the west in the land of Nephi, in the place of their fathers' first inheritance, and thus bordering along by the seashore.

29 And also there were many Lamanites on the east by the seashore, whither the Nephites had driven them. And thus the Nephites were nearly surrounded by the Lamanites; nevertheless the Nephites had taken possession of all the northern parts of the land bordering on the wilderness, at the head of the river Sidon, from the east to the west, round about on the wilderness side; on the north, even until they came to the land which they called Bountiful.

30 And it bordered upon the land which they called Desolation, it being so far northward that it came into the land which had been peopled and been destroyed, of whose bones we have spoken, which was discovered by the people of Zarahemla, it being the place of their first landing.

31 And they came from there up into the south wilderness. Thus the land on the northward was called Desolation, and the land on the southward was called Bountiful, it being the wilderness which is filled with all manner of wild animals of every kind, a part of which had come from the land northward for food.

32 And now, it was only the distance of a day and a half's journey for a Nephite, on the line Bountiful and the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea; and thus the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla were nearly surrounded by water, there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward.

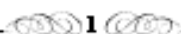
Whose testimony do we stand on?



Then what happens to our testimony if someone argues
for Book of Mormon locations near New York Hill Cumorah?

In sharing these testimonies of the Book of Mormon, President Smith's purpose was to encourage others to receive their own testimonies. He declared, "I bear witness to you that the Lord has made it very clear to me by revelation which I have received, and many of you who are here present can bear witness likewise, that these things are true, and that is the privilege of any sincere person who will endeavor to read with a prayerful spirit and a desire to know whether the book is true or not; and he will receive that testimony according to the promise that was made by Moroni, who sealed the record to come forth in the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times."³

Teachings of Joseph Fielding Smith



The Book of Mormon is a sacred record that contains the everlasting gospel and bears witness of Jesus Christ.

The Book of Mormon is the sacred history of the ancient inhabitants of the American continent, and contains the predictions of their prophets, the commandments of the Lord to them, and the history and destiny of those ancient peoples. It is the American volume of scripture, and is just as sacred and inspired as is the Bible, which contains the sacred records of the Hebrew race on the eastern hemisphere.⁴

The Nephite prophets in prayer earnestly sought that their writings should be preserved to come forth and to speak as from the dead, to bear witness to the remnant of Lehi, and also to Jew and Gentile, that God had revealed to them the fulness of the Gospel. Their anxiety was that in these last days men might be brought to repentance and faith in God through the testimony given many centuries before to these Nephite prophets. In fact, we learn from the Book of Mormon that this is the main object of the Book of Mormon, as stated in many of its passages. . . .

. . . The Lord made it very clear to the Nephite prophets that their history and prophecies would be preserved to come forth in the latter days as a witness for Jesus Christ and to establish among the people his Gospel. Nephi prophesied to the Gentiles and the Jews of our day and left for them his testimony in a most emphatic

and telling manner. (2 Nephi 33.) Moroni did the same. (Moroni 10:24–34).⁵

Nephi, one of the earliest prophets of the Israelitish colony, predicted nearly six hundred years before the Christian era, that when the records containing the history of his people should be revealed from the dust, it would be in a day when the people would "deny the power of God, the Holy One of Israel," and they would say: "Hearken unto us, and hear ye our precept; for behold there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done His work, and He hath given His power unto men." [2 Nephi 28:5.] Again, many among them would say when presented with a new volume of scripture containing the history of the people of this western world: "A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible." [2 Nephi 29:3.]

. . . This new volume of scripture was to be a witness, not only for Christ and to contain the everlasting Gospel, but was also to be a witness for the Jewish scriptures—the Bible; and these two records—according to the prophesying of Nephi, his father, and also Joseph, son of Israel—were to grow together bearing testimony of the everlasting gospel [see 2 Nephi 3:11–13; 29:10–14]. As such a witness these records stand today testifying of the truth to the condemnation of all who reject their teachings.⁶

I know that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God, and that it has come forth "to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations." [Title page of the Book of Mormon.]⁷



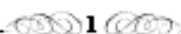
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All down through the ages this law [the law of witnesses] has been a fixed and definite one. If we had perfect records of all ages, we would find that whenever the Lord has established a

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Alma 12

I generalized this pattern more to include 18 key concepts, to which I subsequently assigned colors:

 www.walden3d.com/bom/word_pattern/

1. the creation

25 Now, if it had not been for the plan of redemption, which was laid from the foundation of the world, there could have been no resurrection of the dead; but there was a plan of redemption laid, which shall bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, of which has been spoken.

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24 And we see that death comes upon mankind, yea, the death which has been spoken of by Amulek, which is the temporal death; nevertheless there was a space granted unto man in which he might repent; therefore this life became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God; a time to prepare for that endless state which has been spoken of by us, which is after the resurrection of the dead.

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5. **repentance**

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20 But there was one Antionah, who was a chief ruler among them, came forth and said unto him: What is this that thou hast said, that man should rise from the dead and be changed from this mortal to an immortal state, that the soul can never die?

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22 Now Alma said unto him: This is the thing which I was about to explain. Now we see that Adam did fall by the partaking of the forbidden fruit, according to the word of God; and thus we see, that by his fall, all mankind became a lost and fallen people.

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5. **repentance**

6. **baptism**

7. **The Holy Ghost**

8. **authority**

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Alma 12

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9. the alter

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29 Therefore he sent angels to converse with them, who caused men to behold of his glory.

Alma 12

continued

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11. Satan

12. pride

21 What does the scripture mean, which saith that God placed cherubim and a flaming sword on the east of the garden of Eden, lest our first parents should enter and partake of the fruit of the tree of life, and live forever? And thus we see that there was no possible chance that they should live forever.

26 And now behold, if it were possible that our first parents could have gone forth and partaken of the tree of life they would have been forever miserable, having no preparatory state; and thus the plan of redemption would have been frustrated, and the word of God would have been void, taking none effect.

27 But behold, it was not so; but it was appointed unto men that they must die; and after death, they must come to judgment, even that same judgment of which we have spoken, which is the end.

28 And after God had appointed that these things should come unto man, behold, then he saw that it was expedient that man should know concerning the things whereof he had appointed unto them;

29 Therefore he sent angels to converse with them, who caused men to behold of his glory.

30 And they began from that time forth to call on his name; therefore God conversed with men, and made known unto them the plan of redemption, which had been prepared from the foundation of the world; and this he made known unto them according to their faith and repentance and their holy works.

Alma 12

continued

9. the alter

10. the temple

11. Satan

12. pride

13. chastity

31 Wherefore, he gave commandments unto men, they having first transgressed the first commandments as to things which were temporal, and becoming as gods, knowing good from evil, placing themselves in a state to act, or being placed in a state to act according to their wills and pleasures, whether to do evil or to do good—

Alma 12 continued

14. commandments

31 Wherefore, he gave commandments unto men, they having first transgressed the first commandments as to things which were temporal, and becoming as gods, knowing good from evil, placing themselves in a state to act, or being placed in a state to act according to their wills and pleasures, whether to do evil or to do good—

32 Therefore God gave unto them commandments, after having made known unto them the plan of redemption, that they should not do evil, the penalty thereof being a second death, which was an everlasting death as to things pertaining unto righteousness; for on such the plan of redemption could have no power, for the works of justice could not be destroyed, according to the supreme goodness of God.

Alma 12

continued

14. commandments

15. redemption

31 Wherefore, he gave commandments unto men, they having first transgressed the first commandments as to things which were temporal, and becoming as gods, knowing good from evil, placing themselves in a state to act, or being placed in a state to act according to their wills and pleasures, whether to do evil or to do good—

32 Therefore God gave unto them commandments, after having made known unto them the plan of redemption, that they should not do evil, the penalty thereof being a second death, which was an everlasting death as to things pertaining unto righteousness; for on such the plan of redemption could have no power, for the works of justice could not be destroyed, according to the supreme goodness of God.

33 But God did call on men, in the name of his Son, (this being the plan of redemption which was laid) saying: If ye will repent, and harden not your hearts, then will I have mercy upon you, through mine Only Begotten Son;

Alma 12

continued

14. commandments

15. redemption

16. Christ's atonement

31 Wherefore, he gave commandments unto men, they having first transgressed the first commandments as to things which were temporal, and becoming as gods, knowing good from evil, placing themselves in a state to act, or being placed in a state to act according to their wills and pleasures, whether to do evil or to do good—

32 Therefore God gave unto them commandments, after having made known unto them the plan of redemption, that they should not do evil, the penalty thereof being a second death, which was an everlasting death as to things pertaining unto righteousness; for on such the plan of redemption could have no power, for the works of justice could not be destroyed, according to the supreme goodness of God.

33 But God did call on men, in the name of his Son, (this being the plan of redemption which was laid) saying: If ye will repent, and harden not your hearts, then will I have mercy upon you, through mine Only Begotten Son;

34 Therefore, whosoever repenteth, and hardeneth not his heart, he shall have claim on mercy through mine Only Begotten Son, unto a remission of his sins; and these shall enter into my rest.

Alma 12

continued

14. **commandments**

15. **redemption**

16. **Christ's atonement**

17. **God's rest**

18. **prayer**

Example

Reference: I Nephi 1:19, 2:1-3, 6-7, 11-14, 16, 20, 23-24

[1] [2]he testified the things which he saw and heard manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah the redemption of the world. [3]the Lord spake unto my father, yea, even in a dream [4]he should take his family and depart into the wilderness [5]he was obedient unto the word of the Lord [6]he pitched his tent in a valley by the side of a river of water. [7] [8] [9]he built an altar of stones ... (he) made an offering unto the Lord [10](he) had led them out of the land of Jerusalem, to leave the land of their inheritance, and their gold, and their silver, and their precious things [11]And they did murmur because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them. Neither did they believe that Jerusalem, that great city could be destroyed according to the words of the prophets. And they were like unto the Jews, which were at Jerusalem, which sought to take away the life of my father. [12]my father did speak unto them in the valley of Lemuel, with power, being filled with the Spirit, until their frames did shake before him. [13] [14]having great desires to know of the mysteries of God I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise [15] [16]in that day that they shall rebel against me, I will curse them even with a sore curse ... they shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in the ways of remembrance. [17] [18]

1. the creation

2. Adam and Eve

3. scriptures

4. faith

5. repentance

6. baptism

7. The Holy Ghost

8. authority

9. the altar

10. the temple

11. Satan

12. pride

13. chastity

14. commandments

15. redemption

16. Christ's atonement

17. God's rest

18. prayer

The summer of 1994, I read a reprint of the original publication of The Book of Mormon, without the distraction of verses. This time I found portions of the pattern repeated in order 553 times. These web pages document in color my exploring a word pattern. On the day I finished the Burgerer Book of Mormon reading challenge in 1994, I sat down and wrote out the following summary of my discovery:

Summary

03 September 1994

To whom it may concern,

I testify that **the creation** of this work was not by man. The origin of these words is as old as our first parents, **Adam an Eve**. The pattern is eternal and permeates all **scripture**. **Faith on the Lord Jesus Christ**, **repentance**, **baptism by immersion for the remission of sins**, and **the laying on of hands for the gift of The Holy Ghost by those who hold the authority or priesthood of God**. Wo be to those who have come to **the alter of the temple** and then let **Satan** lead them to **pride**, **adultry**, or disregarding the **commandments** lest they lose their **redemption** through **Christ's atonement**. May we find **His rest** our pattern I **pray**.

H. Roice Nelson, Jr.
rnelson@walden3d.com

| Title Page | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | Total |
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www.walden3d.com/bom/word_pattern/statistics.html

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In sharing these testimonies of the Book of Mormon, President Smith's purpose was to encourage others to receive their own testimonies. He declared, "I bear witness to you that the Lord has made it very clear to me by revelation which I have received, and many of you who are here present can bear witness likewise, that these things are true, and that is the privilege of any sincere person who will endeavor to read with a prayerful spirit and a desire to know whether the book is true or not; and he will receive that testimony according to the promise that was made by Moroni, who sealed the record to come forth in the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times."³

Teachings of Joseph Fielding Smith



The Book of Mormon is a sacred record that contains the everlasting gospel and bears witness of Jesus Christ.

The Book of Mormon is the sacred history of the ancient inhabitants of the American continent, and contains the predictions of their prophets, the commandments of the Lord to them, and the history and destiny of those ancient peoples. It is the American volume of scripture, and is just as sacred and inspired as is the Bible, which contains the sacred records of the Hebrew race on the eastern hemisphere.⁴

The Nephite prophets in prayer earnestly sought that their writings should be preserved to come forth and to speak as from the dead, to bear witness to the remnant of Lehi, and also to Jew and Gentile, that God had revealed to them the fulness of the Gospel. Their anxiety was that in these last days men might be brought to repentance and faith in God through the testimony given many centuries before to these Nephite prophets. In fact, we learn from the Book of Mormon that this is the main object of the Book of Mormon, as stated in many of its passages. . . .

. . . The Lord made it very clear to the Nephite prophets that their history and prophecies would be preserved to come forth in the latter days as a witness for Jesus Christ and to establish among the people his Gospel. Nephi prophesied to the Gentiles and the Jews of our day and left for them his testimony in a most emphatic

and telling manner. (2 Nephi 33.) Moroni did the same. (Moroni 10:24–34)⁵

Nephi, one of the earliest prophets of the Israelitish colony, predicted nearly six hundred years before the Christian era, that when the records containing the history of his people should be revealed from the dust, it would be in a day when the people would "deny the power of God, the Holy One of Israel," and they would say: "Hearken unto us, and hear ye our precept; for behold there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done His work, and He hath given His power unto men." [2 Nephi 28:5.] Again, many among them would say when presented with a new volume of scripture containing the history of the people of this western world: "A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible." [2 Nephi 29:3.]

. . . This new volume of scripture was to be a witness, not only for Christ and to contain the everlasting Gospel, but was also to be a witness for the Jewish scriptures—the Bible; and these two records—according to the prophesying of Nephi, his father, and also Joseph, son of Israel—were to grow together bearing testimony of the everlasting gospel [see 2 Nephi 3:11–13; 29:10–14]. As such a witness these records stand today testifying of the truth to the condemnation of all who reject their teachings.⁶

I know that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God, and that it has come forth "to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations." [Title page of the Book of Mormon.]⁷



In accordance with the law of witnesses, the Lord called special witnesses to testify of the Book of Mormon.

There is a law definitely stated in the scriptures governing testimony and the appointment of witnesses. This law the Lord has always followed in granting new revelation to the people.⁸

All down through the ages this law [the law of witnesses] has been a fixed and definite one. If we had perfect records of all ages, we would find that whenever the Lord has established a

#2

#3

dispensation, there has been more than one witness to testify for him. Paul in writing to the Corinthians said: "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." [2 Corinthians 13:1.]⁹

In regard to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the Lord said that he would choose witnesses. There should be three special witnesses that should bear record to the world, and said he:

"And there is none other which shall view it, save it be a few according to the will of God, to bear testimony of his word unto the children of men; for the Lord God hath said that the words of the faithful should speak as if it were from the dead.

"Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed to bring forth the words of the book; and in the mouth of as many witnesses as seemeth him good will he establish his word; and wo be unto him that rejecteth the word of God!" (2 Ne. 27:13–14)¹⁰

The three men called to serve as special witnesses of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon by the power of God, are Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris. . . . They were associated with Joseph Smith in the establishing of this marvelous work in this dispensation. . . .

Their testimony is that they received a visitation of an angel from the presence of the Lord, who laid before them the golden record from whence the Book of Mormon was translated and instructed them. They beheld the engravings upon the plates as the leaves were turned one by one before them, and the voice of God was heard by them declaring from the heavens that the translation was by the gift and power of God, and commanding them to bear record of it to all the world. These three witnesses, through adversity, persecution, and all the vicissitudes of life, always remained true to their testimony that they beheld the plates in the presence of an angel and heard the voice of God speaking to them from the heavens.

There were eight other witnesses who also beheld the plates, handled them, examined carefully the engravings upon them as they were shown them by Joseph Smith. Their testimony is also given to the world and appears in each issue of the Book of



Joseph Smith showed the gold plates to the Eight Witnesses.

Mormon. All of these eight men remained true to this testimony until death.

These twelve witnesses [including Joseph Smith], four of whom beheld angels and had heavenly visions, and eight who beheld the record as it was shown to them by Joseph Smith, are all, it appears, that the Lord deemed necessary to establish the truth of the Book of Mormon, as he promised through Nephi that he would do. "And wo be unto him that rejecteth the word of God!" The testimonies of these men more than satisfy the law.¹¹

Joseph Smith . . . was alone in the first vision, alone when Moroni brought the message to him, alone when he received the plates; but after that he was not alone. The Lord called other witnesses.

Grandmother Smith [Joseph Smith's mother, Lucy Mack Smith] in her history says that the Prophet came home weeping for joy after the witnesses had beheld the plates under the direction of an angel of God, because, he said, "The load has been lifted and I am no longer alone."¹²

#5

The Three Witnesses remained faithful to their testimonies of the Book of Mormon.

All three [special] witnesses became estranged and left the Church. Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris came back humbly seeking membership in the Church and both died in full fellowship. David Whitmer remained out of the Church; however, all three of these men remained faithful to the testimony they gave to the world which is found in each copy of the Book of Mormon.¹³

This is a testimony of David Whitmer, given in Richmond, Missouri, March 19, 1881—copied from the original document, which was published in the *Richmond Conservator* on that date.

"Unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people unto whom these presence shall come—

"It having been represented by one John Murphy of Polo [Caldwell County], Missouri, that I had in a conversation with him last summer, denied my testimony as one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon—

"To the end thereof, that he may understand me now if he did not then, and that the world may know the truth, I wish now, standing as it were, in the very sunset of life, and in the fear of God, once for all to make this public statement:

"That I have never at any time, denied that testimony or any part thereof, which has so long since been published with that book, as one of the three witnesses.

"Those who know me best, will know that I have always adhered to that testimony—And that no man may be misled or doubt my

present views in regard to the same, I do now again affirm the truth of all my statements as then made and published."¹⁴

Now let me say something about Martin Harris. . . . While continuing true to his testimony of the Book of Mormon he was for many years disgruntled with the Church. But some time after the saints came to Utah some of our good brethren went after him, found him and warned him up, and brought him back. He came out here [to Utah], was re-baptized, and lived here for a number of years, bearing witness of his testimony among the settlements. He died here and was buried [in Clarkston, Utah].

Now we come to Oliver Cowdery. What about Oliver Cowdery, the most important of the three, who was with Joseph Smith so many times at the appearing of angels and the restoration of keys? What about him? He left the Church and became extremely bitter, but never denied the testimony. Some people have said he did, but he did not. Always he was true to that testimony. . . .

. . . After the saints were driven from Nauvoo and were out on the plains and everything looked the darkest (Sidney Rigdon said they had gone to their destruction and there was no hope for them, and the newspapers said they could not survive!), under those conditions, Oliver Cowdery . . . asked to come back to the Church. . . . He was received back, and was preparing to take a mission to Great Britain when he was taken ill and died. He died at the home of David Whitmer, bearing testimony to the truth.¹⁵

Each member of the Church can be a witness of the Book of Mormon.

These are not all the witnesses who can speak of the divine mission of Joseph Smith, or of the truth of the Book of Mormon. The promise is made in the Book of Mormon that all who desire to know whether it is true and contains the word of the Lord may know that it is true if they will ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, for he will reveal it to them by the power of the Holy Ghost [see Moroni 10:3–5]. There are hundreds of thousands who have put this promise to the test and can in all sincerity say that they have received that knowledge.¹⁶

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. . . After the saints were driven from Nauvoo and were out on the plains and everything looked the darkest (Sidney Rigdon said they had gone to their destruction and there was no hope for them, and the newspapers said they could not survive!), under those conditions, Oliver Cowdery . . . asked to come back to the Church. . . . He was received back, and was preparing to take a mission to Great Britain when he was taken ill and died. He died at the home of David Whitmer, bearing testimony to the truth.¹⁵

Each member of the Church can be a witness of the Book of Mormon.

These are not all the witnesses who can speak of the divine mission of Joseph Smith, or of the truth of the Book of Mormon. The promise is made in the Book of Mormon that all who desire to know whether it is true and contains the word of the Lord may know that it is true if they will ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, for he will reveal it to them by the power of the Holy Ghost [see Moroni 10:3–5]. There are hundreds of thousands who have put this promise to the test and can in all sincerity say that they have received that knowledge.¹⁶

Joseph Smith . . . was alone in the first vision, alone when Moroni brought the message to him, alone when he received the plates; but after that he was not alone. The Lord called other witnesses.

Grandmother Smith [Joseph Smith's mother, Lucy Mack Smith] in her history says that the Prophet came home weeping for joy after the witnesses had beheld the plates under the direction of an angel of God, because, he said, "The load has been lifted and I am no longer alone."¹²

#5

The Three Witnesses remained faithful to their testimonies of the Book of Mormon.

All three [special] witnesses became estranged and left the Church. Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris came back humbly seeking membership in the Church and both died in full fellowship. David Whitmer remained out of the Church; however, all three of these men remained faithful to the testimony they gave to the world which is found in each copy of the Book of Mormon.¹³

#6

This is a testimony of David Whitmer, given in Richmond, Missouri, March 19, 1881—copied from the original document, which was published in the *Richmond Conservator* on that date.

"Unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people unto whom these presence shall come—

"It having been represented by one John Murphy of Polo [Caldwell County], Missouri, that I had in a conversation with him last summer, denied my testimony as one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon—

"To the end thereof, that he may understand me now if he did not then, and that the world may know the truth, I wish now, standing as it were, in the very sunset of life, and in the fear of God, once for all to make this public statement:

"That I have never at any time, denied that testimony or any part thereof, which has so long since been published with that book, as one of the three witnesses.

"Those who know me best, will know that I have always adhered to that testimony—And that no man may be misled or doubt my

present views in regard to the same, I do now again affirm the truth of all my statements as then made and published."¹⁴

Now let me say something about Martin Harris. . . . While continuing true to his testimony of the Book of Mormon he was for many years disgruntled with the Church. But some time after the saints came to Utah some of our good brethren went after him, found him and warned him up, and brought him back. He came out here [to Utah], was re-baptized, and lived here for a number of years, bearing witness of his testimony among the settlements. He died here and was buried [in Clarkston, Utah].

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#7

Empirical Proof

- Scientists hypothesize something is true, then they do everything they can to disprove the hypothesis. During this due diligence, new discoveries which support the hypothesis are deemed empirical proof.
- Likewise, if something written in the Book of Mormon was not known at the time of its publication in 1830, and is later discovered, this new discovery is an empirical proof of claims surrounding the book.
- For instance:

“Beyond the 11 Qumran caves that yielded the Dead Sea Scrolls, there are a number of ancient Hebrew inscriptions from the Holy Land that have a connection to the Book of Mormon,” [Dr. Donald W. Perry, professor of Hebrew Bible and Dead Sea Scrolls at Brigham Young University] noted. “These include the following Book of Mormon names: Aha, Alma, Ammonihah, Chemish, Hagoth, Himni, Isabel, Jarom, Josh, Luram, Mathoni, Mathonihah, Muloki, Sam, and Sariah. The names were unknown to the world at the time that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon.” Dead Sea Scrolls visit, Church News, Week of March 2, 2014, pages 3 & 13.

Volcanic Lightning

“And it came to pass that I saw a mist of darkness on the face of the land of promise: and I saw lightnings, and I heard thunderings, and earthquakes, and all manner of tumultuous noises; and I saw the earth and the rocks, that they rent; and I saw mountains tumbling into pieces; and I saw the plains of the earth that they were broken up; and I saw many cities that they were sunk; and I saw many that they were burned with fire; and I saw many that did tumble to the earth, because of the quaking thereof.”

Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 12:4

Volcanic Lightning

“For thus spake the prophet: The Lord God surely shall visit all the house of Israel at that day, some with his voice, because of their righteousness, unto their great joy and salvation, and others with the thunderings and the lightnings of his power, by tempest, by fire, and by smoke, and vapor of darkness, and by the opening of the earth, and by mountains which shall be carried up.”

Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 19:11

Volcanic Lightning



“And they shall be visited with thunderings, and lightnings, and earthquakes, and all manner of destructions, for the fire of the anger of the Lord shall be kindled against them, and they shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall consume them, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

Book of Mormon, II Nephi 26:6

Volcanic Lightning

“Yea, at the time that he shall yield up the ghost there shall be thunderings and lightnings for the space of many hours , and the earth shall shake and tremble; and the rocks which are upon the face of this earth, which are both above the earth and beneath, which ye know at this time are solid, or the more part of it is one solid mass, shall be broken up.”

Book of Mormon, Helaman 14:21

Volcanic Lightning

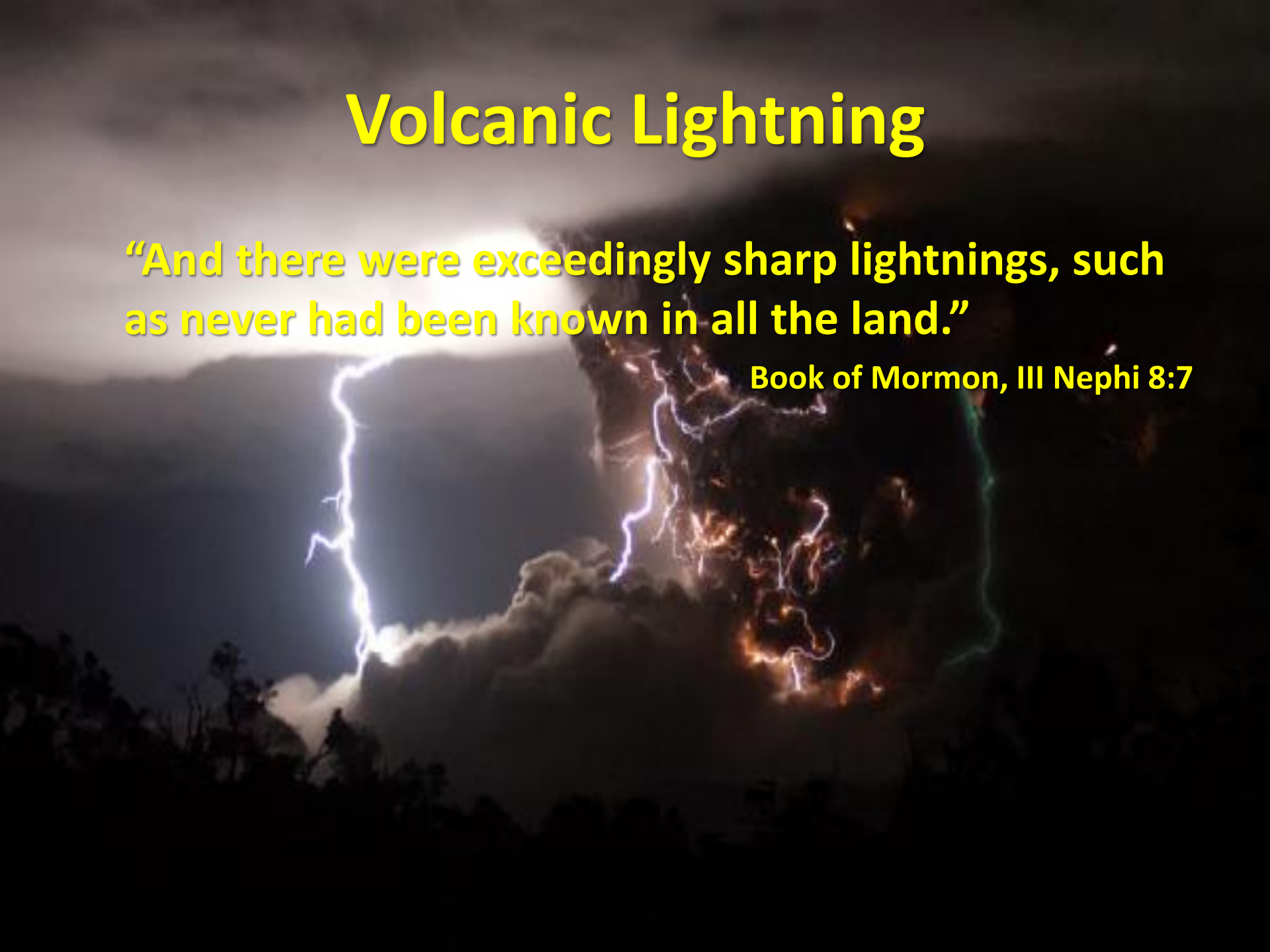
“And he said unto me that while the thunder and the lightning lasted, and the tempest, that these things should be, and that darkness should cover the face of the whole earth for the space of three days.”

Book of Mormon, Helaman 14:27

Volcanic Lightning

“And there were exceedingly sharp lightnings, such as never had been known in all the land.”

Book of Mormon, III Nephi 8:7













Volcanic Lightning was not known in Upstate New York in 1830

“... My circumstances in life such as to make a boy of no consequence in the world . . . I continued to pursue my common vocations in life . . . As my father’s worldly circumstances were very limited, we were under the necessity of laboring with our hands, hiring out by day’s work and otherwise as we could get opportunity. Sometimes we were at home, and sometimes abroad, and by continuous labor were enabled to get a comfortable maintenance.”

Joseph Smith – History 22, 27, & 55



"There is an inspiration and feeling of peaceful joy and satisfaction which accompany the sincere and prayerful reading of this book."

I am just as firmly convinced that this Book of Mormon from which I have read is the word of God and was revealed, as Joseph Smith declared it was revealed, as I am that I stand here looking into your faces. Every soul on the face of the earth who has intelligence enough to understand may know that truth. How can he know it? All he has to do is to follow the formula that was given by the Lord himself when he declared to the Jews that they who would do the will of his Father should know of the doctrine, whether it was of God or whether he spoke of himself [see John 7:17]. My witness to all the world is that this book is true. . . .

I know that the testimony of these [three] witnesses recorded in each copy of the Book of Mormon is true, that they stood in the presence of an angel of God who declared unto them that the record as it was translated was correct, that their testimony that God spoke to them from the heavens calling upon them to bear witness of that fact is true, and there is not a soul who cannot receive that testimony if he desires to receive it, by reading this book prayerfully and faithfully, with a desire to know the truth as Moroni has declared by revelation. He shall know the truth regarding the

restoration of this scripture given to the ancient inhabitants of this continent.¹⁷

It seems to me that any member of this Church would never be satisfied until he or she had read the Book of Mormon time and time again, and thoroughly considered it so that he or she could bear witness that it is in very deed a record with the inspiration of the Almighty upon it, and that its history is true. . . .

. . . No member of this Church can stand approved in the presence of God who has not seriously and carefully read the Book of Mormon.¹⁸

When you read the Book of Mormon you know you are reading the truth. Why? Because God directed men to write events as they occurred and He gave them the wisdom and inspiration to do this. Thus records were written by men who believed in God. These records never fell into the hands of apostates; but the historians wrote and spoke as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost, and we know that what they wrote is true because the Lord has put His stamp of approval upon it [see D&C 17:6].¹⁹

#8

5

As we continue to read the Book of Mormon sincerely and prayerfully, it endears itself to us more and more.

All who have sincerely read the Book of Mormon have been impressed with the inspired contents of its pages. . . . There is an inspiration and feeling of peaceful joy and satisfaction which accompany the sincere and prayerful reading of this book.²⁰

As I read [the Book of Mormon] I am impressed more and more with its sacredness, with the message which it contains in defense of the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the gospel which has been restored in the dispensation of the fulness of times for the salvation of souls. This record endears itself to me more and more day by day as I see unfolded the fulfillment of prophecies uttered by these prophets who now speak from the dead, and from the dust to the nations of the earth, crying unto them repentance, and calling upon them to believe in Christ.²¹

Physical Proofs

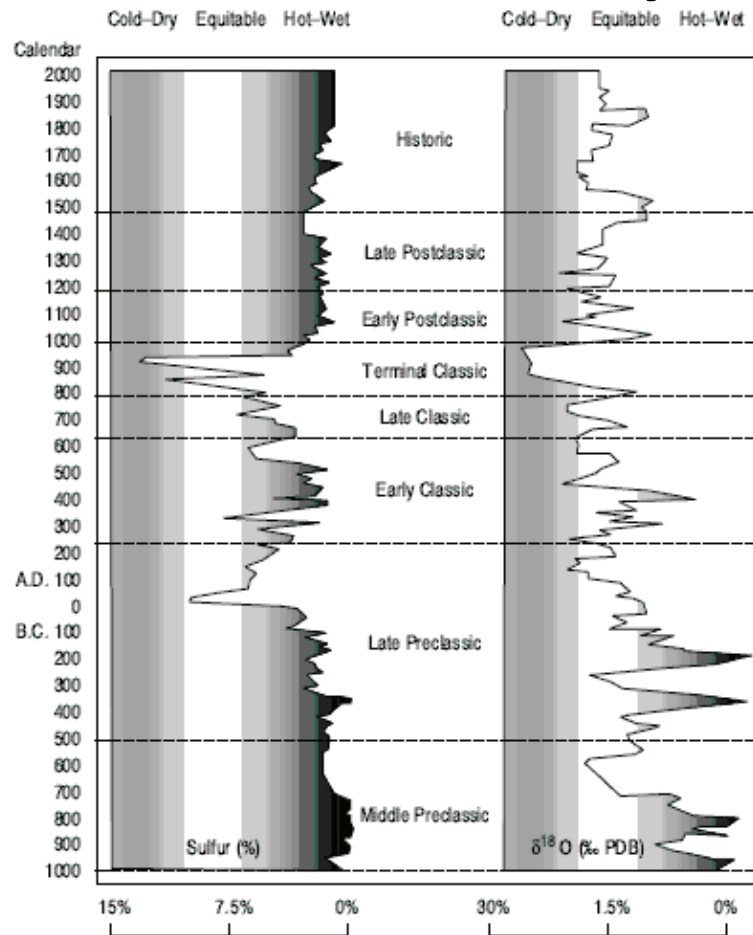


Figure 1.5. Climate conditions during the last 3,000 years as measured by sediment core chemistry from Lake Chichancanab, northeastern Yucatán peninsula. High sulfur (left) and ostracod oxygen 18 isotope (right) during the Terminal Classic and other periods indicate extreme evaporation or drought. Maya civilization appears to have flourished during equitable (center of each profile) episodes, and periodically retracted during periods of extreme drought (left of each profile) or moisture (right of each profile). Source: Gunn *et al.*, 1994, 1995; Chichancanab chemistry adapted from Hodell *et al.*, 1995:393.

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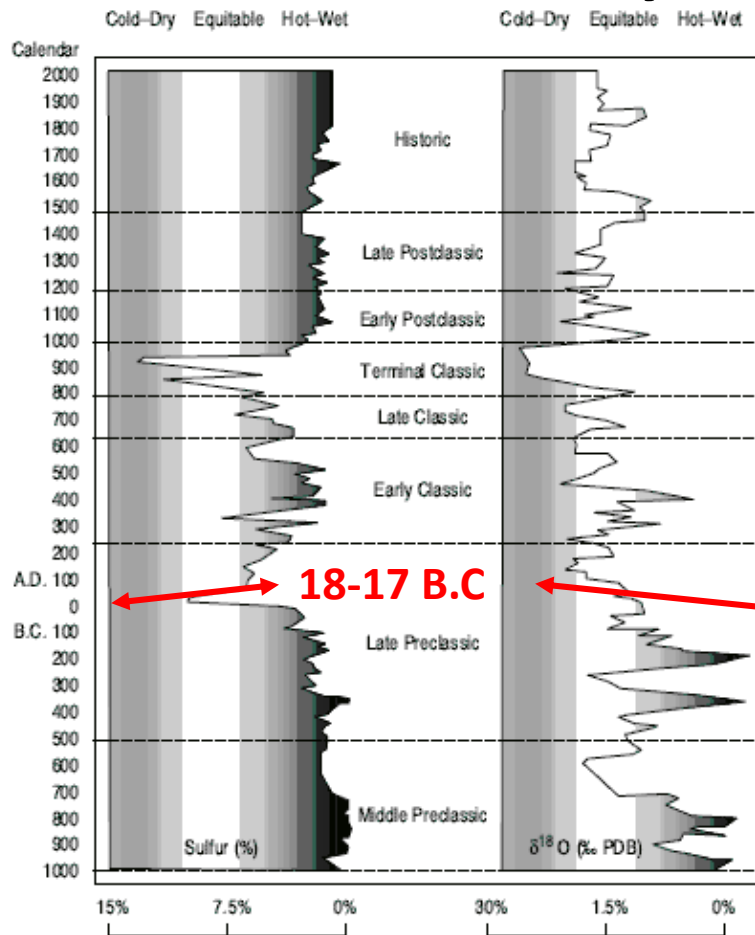


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3 And it came to pass that in this year Nephi did cry unto the Lord, saying:

4 O Lord, do not suffer that this people shall be destroyed by the sword; but O Lord, rather let there be a famine in the land, to stir them up in remembrance of the Lord their God, and perhaps they will repent and turn unto thee.

5 And so it was done, according to the words of Nephi. And there was a great famine upon the land, among all the people of Nephi. And thus in the seventy and fourth year the famine did continue, and the work of destruction did cease by the sword but became sore by famine.

6 And this work of destruction did also continue in the seventy and fifth year. For the earth was smitten that it was dry, and did not yield forth grain in the season of grain; and the whole earth was smitten, even among the Lamanites as well as among the Nephites, so that they were smitten that they did perish by thousands in the more wicked parts of the land.

7 And it came to pass that the people saw that they were about to perish by famine, and they began to remember the Lord their God; and they began to remember the words of Nephi.

Spiritual or Internal Proofs

| I Nephi 1:1 | | |
|--|--|---|
| I, Nephi | having been born of goodly parents, | therefore I was taught somewhat in 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 of the Lord in all my days; |
| and the mysteries of God, | therefore, I make a record of my proceedings | in my days. |
| I Nephi 1:2-3 | | |
| 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. | 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. |

| I Nephi 1:4 | | |
|---|--|---|
| 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. |
| I Nephi 1:5-6 | | |
| 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. | 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; |

| I Nephi 1:6-7 | | |
|--|---|------------------------------------|
| and because of the things which he saw | and heard | he did quake |
| and tremble exceedingly. | 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. |
| I Nephi 1:8 | | |
| 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. |

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Questions

- President Smith said that he had not read the Book of Mormon enough (see “From the Life of Joseph Fielding Smith”). What can we learn from this observation?
- In this chapter, section 1 includes some of President Smith’s teachings about the purposes of the Book of Mormon. How have these purposes been fulfilled in your life?
- Although Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, and David Whitmer left the Church, not one of them ever denied his testimony of the Book of Mormon (see sections 2 and 3). Why is this fact significant as we consider their testimonies?
- President Smith said that all people can be witnesses of the Book of Mormon (see section 4). How have you gained a testimony of the book? What can you do to share this witness?
- Of the Book of Mormon, President Smith said, “This record endears itself to me more and more day by day” (section 5). How have you seen this to be true for you? What can a person do to strengthen his or her testimony of the Book of Mormon?

Related Scriptures

1 Nephi 6:3–5; 2 Nephi 29:7–8; Jacob 4:1–4; Enos 1:13; D&C 20:8–12

Teaching Help

“Testify whenever the Spirit prompts you to do so, not just at the end of each lesson. Provide opportunities for those you teach to bear their testimonies” (*Teaching, No Greater Call* [1999], 45).

Notes

1. In Conference Report, Oct. 1961, 18.
2. In Conference Report, Oct. 1949, 89; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 3:251.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1956, 20; see also *Mormon* 10:3–5.
4. “Origin of the First Vision,” *Improvement Era*, Apr. 1920, 90; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:209.
5. *Church History and Modern Revelation* (1973), 1:31–32.
6. “Traditions in the Bible Concerning the Book of Mormon,” *Improvement Era*, Sept. 1925, 958–59; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:228–29.
7. In Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 8.
8. “Testimonies of the Witnesses to the Book of Mormon,” *Improvement Era*, Sept. 1925, 950; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, rev. ed., 1:203.

9. *Doctrines of Salvation*, rev. ed., 1:203; italics deleted from original.
10. In Conference Report, Oct. 1936, 19–20.
11. “Testimonies of the Witnesses to the Book of Mormon,” 958–59; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:229–30.
12. *Doctrines of Salvation*, rev. ed., 1:210–11.
13. “Testimonies of the Witnesses to the Book of Mormon,” 958; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:229–30.
14. In Conference Report, Oct. 1936, 20.
15. *Doctrines of Salvation*, rev. ed., 1:226–28.
16. “Testimonies of the Witnesses to the Book of Mormon,” 958; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:251.
17. In Conference Report, Oct. 1949, 89; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:251–52.
18. In Conference Report, Oct. 1961, 18.
19. “History and History Recorders,” *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1925, 55; see also *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:202.
20. “Origin of the First Vision,” 90.
21. In Conference Report, Apr. 1925, 73.

http://www.walden3d.com/bom/pdf/140511_Witnesses_of_the_BOM.pdf