

# COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BOOK OF MORMON



## **What is the Book of Mormon, and how does it compare to the Bible?**

The Book of Mormon is a book of scripture similar to the Bible. It is another testament of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> The Bible principally discusses the lives and teachings of ancient Israel. The Book of Mormon contains the writings of several groups who came to the Americas, including a family who left Jerusalem in 600 B.C. These people were also descendants of the house of Israel. Thus the Bible and Book of Mormon were written by people of the same heritage but in different parts of the world.

Like the Bible, the Book of Mormon is more than

a historical account. It contains “the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (D&C 20:9): the teachings, doctrines, and prophecies that testify of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that the Book of Mormon “tells us that our Savior made His appearance upon this continent [the Americas] after His resurrection; that He planted the Gospel here in all its fulness, and richness, and power, and blessing; that they had Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Teachers, and Evangelists, the same order, the same priesthood, the same ordinances, gifts, powers,

*Whether from friends, family, the truly interested, or the antagonistic, we all get asked questions about the Book of Mormon. Here are some possible responses.*



and blessings, as were enjoyed on the eastern continent; . . . that the last of their prophets who existed among them was commanded to write an abridgment of their prophecies, history, etc., and to hide it up in the earth, and that it should come forth and be united with the Bible for the accomplishment of the purposes of God in the last days.”<sup>2</sup>

Members of the Church study both the Bible and the Book of Mormon. In fact, two out of four years of our Sunday School curriculum are devoted to studying the Bible. (For more on this topic, see pages 16, 24, and 52 in this issue.)



## Who wrote the Book of Mormon?

Ancient prophets, such as Nephi, Jacob, Mormon, and Mormon's son Moroni, were its primary authors. Mormon compiled and abridged the records kept by prophets about their history, prophecies, and teachings. He also included some of his own experiences. Mormon engraved this record on bound sheets of metal—gold in color—which are often referred to as the golden plates.

After Mormon's death, Moroni finished the record and buried it in a hill to preserve it for our day. In 1823 Moroni appeared as an angel to Joseph Smith and showed him where the record was buried. Four years later Joseph was permitted to obtain the records. He "translated the record through the gift and power of God" into English from the ancient language it was written in.<sup>3</sup> He then published and distributed the Book of Mormon. (For more on this topic, see pages 22 and 72 in this issue.)

## Who else saw the golden plates?

### What happened to the original record—the golden plates?

Joseph Smith obtained the plates in September 1827 and had them until the spring of 1829. When he wrote his history in 1838, he explained what happened to the plates: "When, according to arrangements, the messenger [Moroni] called for them, I delivered them up to him; and he has them in his charge until this day, being the second day of May, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight" (Joseph Smith—History 1:60).

### Who else saw the golden plates?

In addition to Joseph Smith, several other men and women saw the plates and testified of their existence. Eleven men in particular, known as the Three Witnesses and the Eight Witnesses, recorded their testimonies of seeing the plates and, in the case of the Eight Witnesses, of holding the



plates. Their testimonies are included at the front of each copy of the Book of Mormon.

These men stand as powerful witnesses of the Book of Mormon, perhaps even more so because some of them became "for a time hostile to Joseph," affirms Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Nevertheless, they "testified to their death that they had seen an angel and had handled the plates. 'They have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man,' they declared. 'Wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true.'"<sup>4</sup>



### Is there physical evidence that the Book of Mormon is true?

Although we don't base our faith on physical evidence, there is linguistic, historical, and archaeological evidence for the Book of Mormon. For example, the idea of writing on metal plates was once ridiculed, but in recent years numerous examples of sacred writings on metal plates—some hidden in stone boxes—have been found.

Linguists have noted Book of Mormon words and phrases that sound awkward in English but make perfect sense in Hebrew and related languages that would have been known by the people of the Book

of Mormon—languages young Joseph Smith did not know.

But these kinds of evidences are not what convince us of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. It is a matter of faith and personal revelation.

### How can I know the Book of Mormon is true?

The only sure way to know for yourself is through the power of the Holy Ghost. The last chapter in the Book of Mormon invites anyone who reads it, ponders it, and sincerely wants to know if it is true to ask Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ. Those who take this approach will know by the power of the Holy Ghost that the book is true (see Moroni 10:3–5). Millions of members of the Church have prayed and know through the witness of the Holy Ghost that the Book of Mormon is true. (For more on this topic, see pages 4, 60, and 80 in this issue.)



### TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BOOK OF MORMON

There is a wealth of information online in several languages that can help you learn more about the Book of Mormon and share that information with your family and friends.

- To read the Book of Mormon online, visit [scriptures.lds.org/bm](http://scriptures.lds.org/bm).
- To learn more about the Book of Mormon, to ask questions, or to chat with missionaries, go to [mormon.org/book-of-mormon](http://mormon.org/book-of-mormon).
- To request a free copy, visit [mormon.org/free-book-of-mormon](http://mormon.org/free-book-of-mormon).
- For more information, articles, and explanations, see [lds.org/study/topics/book-of-mormon?lang=eng](http://lds.org/study/topics/book-of-mormon?lang=eng).

### I'm confused by Revelation 22:18–19, which tells us not to add anything to the word of God.

One of our key beliefs is that God has always revealed His will to His children on earth and always will. We believe the Bible to be the word of God but don't believe it contains all the revelation that God has given or will give His prophets. Even today He continues to reveal His will through living prophets and apostles, the foundation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see Ephesians 2:20).

When the Apostle John penned the book of Revelation, it was not the last book of the Bible. The Old and New Testaments were not bound in a single book of scripture—now called the Bible—until the third century A.D.

In the same way, Deuteronomy 4:2 tells us not to add to the words of Moses. Of course, this verse, early in the Old Testament, does not

invalidate the rest of the Bible. Neither Moses nor John could have referred to altering a volume that did not exist yet; instead they warned against altering the true teachings of the gospel.

The Book of Mormon, which contains the fulness of the gospel, does not alter God's word but reaffirms it. (For more on this topic, see pages 24 and 38 in this issue.)

### **I have heard that changes have been made to the Book of Mormon since it was first published. What was changed and why?**

The answer to this question depends on understanding a little about the Book of Mormon translation and publication process.

1. As Joseph Smith translated the golden plates by the power of God, he dictated the words to a scribe. The scribes occasionally made spelling and grammatical mistakes as they wrote down his words. For



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example, in 1 Nephi 7:20 the words “were sorrowful” were transcribed as “ware sarraful.” The scribes weren’t uneducated, but spelling hadn’t been standardized at the time.

2. The original handwritten manuscript of the translation was then copied to make a new handwritten manuscript for the printer. At this stage, some spelling and grammatical errors were corrected, and punctuation was added. But some new errors also crept in as words were miscopied.

3. The printer did his best to accurately set the type. However, he occasionally introduced still other errors. For example, in Alma 57:25 he misread the word “joy” and instead typeset “foes.”

4. The Prophet Joseph Smith looked carefully at the first three editions of the Book of Mormon, and he continued to help make refinements and adjustments. But some errors weren’t found until later editions. In 1981 a printer’s

error in Alma 16:5 was finally corrected, changing “whether” to “whither”—making it conform to the original manuscript as the Prophet had translated it from the golden plates.

5. Other changes included new chapter and verse breaks and footnotes with cross-references.

### **Share a Copy**

No matter what questions people ask about the Book of Mormon, the book is its own best defender. You can testify of the book, share a copy, and invite others to pray about it for themselves. If a person has a sincere heart and truly desires to know if the book is true, the Lord “will manifest the truth of it unto [that person] by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:4). ■

#### **NOTES**

1. See, for example, Boyd K. Packer, “The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2002, 71; *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 62.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 64.
3. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 60.
4. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Safety for the Soul,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 90.