

The First Book of Nephi

600 BC to 588 BC

from Plates Inscribed by Nephi¹
then Abridged and Later Inscribed onto *The Book of Mormon* Plates by Mormon

An account of the exodus of the family of Lehi¹ from Jerusalem in 600 BC and their transoceanic emigration to the American Hemisphere in 589 BC. Both Lehi and his son, Nephi¹, receive numerous visions from God.

THE FIRST BOOK OF NEPHI SUMMARY

The First Book of Nephi is the story of Nephi's family emigration to the American Hemisphere beginning with his family's exodus from Jerusalem while Nephi¹ was still an adolescent. Nephi's father Lehi¹ had a vision in which God warned him that Jerusalem was about to be conquered and destroyed. In this vision, Lehi and his family were commanded to leave their home and set out on a journey, having been told that God would guide them to a promised land that was the choicest place on earth.

Shortly after their departure Nephi and his older brothers were sent back to Jerusalem twice on assignments from God. They returned the first time to acquire the records of their ancestors that were inscribed on brass plates. On this trip Nephi had to murder Laban, the recordkeeper, in order to fulfill his mission. The records that were retrieved are known to us as those portions of the Old Testament that were written prior to 600 BC.

On their second trip back to Jerusalem they gathered together the family of Ishmael to accompany them in their exodus. The inclusion of this second family provided wives for Nephi and his brothers.

When Nephi and his party departed on their journey through the wilderness, God provided Lehi with a magical brass ball, called the "Liahona," which worked as a divine compass and as a conveyance of God's words. The Liahona pointed the way as long as they observed God's will. Over the course of the next eight years, the party traveled 1,500 miles through the uninhabited wilderness of the Arabian Peninsula, suffered hardship, and had children before finally reaching the shores of the Indian Ocean.

When they arrived on the coastline, Nephi received another vision from God where he was commanded to build a boat in which the group could cross the ocean to the promised land. With the reluctant help of his brothers Nephi managed the construction through regular instructions from God. Upon completion, the party boarded the ship and set sail for America via the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

After a hazardous and mutinous, 19,000-mile, ocean journey they arrived safely on the west coast of the North American Continent and began to farm the land. They easily domesticated cows, oxen, horses, and goats that they found in the forest.

Interwoven with this story of their journey is an account of the growing conflict between Nephi and his two, wicked, older brothers, Laman¹ and Lemuel. On several occasions Laman and Lemuel conspired to kill Nephi, only to back down when God revealed his protective powers and support for Nephi.

Also woven into the story are the many dreams and visions of both Nephi and Lehi in which God shows them the correct path for life, the heavenly rewards for obedience to God, and the punishment of eternal hell for disobeying God's words. In one of Nephi's visions an angel of God showed him the birth, mission, and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and the arrival and visitation of Jesus Christ to Nephi's descendants in America 600 years in the future. Nephi was shown the unfortunate destruction of his own descendants at the hands of his brothers' descendants in America, the discovery of the New World by Christopher Columbus, the arrival of European immigrants, the American Revolutionary War, and the founding of The United States of America more than 2,300 years in the future.

In his visions Nephi is also shown the formation of the Roman Catholic Church by his angel guide, who described it as the "great and abominable church" and "the whore of all the earth." The angel told Nephi that this abominable church would be led by the devil, and that this church would deliberately corrupt the Old Testament gospels, and also corrupt the New Testament gospels after they'd been written, hundreds of years in the future. He is told that the reason for this corruption is to purposefully lead men astray so that the devil can more easily capture them. Nephi is told that the records that he and his descendants kept would be critical in the restoration of the true gospels, and ultimately in the salvation of the world. The angel told of a final conflict between the true church of Jesus Christ and the devil's abominable church. In this climactic battle, the devil's church would be destroyed, and Jesus Christ would reign supreme.

Chapters 20 and 21 of the First Book of Nephi match up nearly identically, word for word, with Chapters 48 and 49 of Isaiah in the Old Testament, from the *King James Version of The Bible*. In the context of the story, Nephi read these two chapters to his brothers from the brass plates he retrieved from Jerusalem, as evidence of the truth of Jesus Christ's coming. Afterwards he liberally interpreted Isaiah's words to reinforce the visions he had received concerning the destiny of his brothers' descendants, and the end of the world.

The Second Book of Nephi

587 BC to 545 BC

from Plates Inscribed by Nephi¹

then Abridged and Later Inscribed onto *The Book of Mormon* Plates by Mormon

An account of Nephi's life in the American Hemisphere from 587 BC until the time of his death around 545 BC. After Nephi's father Lehi¹ dies, the family breaks into two opposing factions, the Nephites and the Lamanites. God becomes so displeased with the Lamanites that he curses them and turns their skin color from white to dark. Lehi's and Nephi's visions and prophecies continue.

SUMMARY OF THE SECOND BOOK OF NEPHI

The Second Book of Nephi continues directly from The First Book of Nephi's conclusion and completes the story of Nephi's life in the American Hemisphere. This book represents Nephi's account of three groups of people: the Lehites, the Nephites, and the Lamanites. The Lehites are comprised of the whole party that followed Lehi's command from God to migrate from Jerusalem to the New World. After Lehi's death the Lehites broke into two splinter groups led by Lehi's son Nephi¹ (the Nephites) and Nephi's older brother Laman¹ (the Lamanites). These Lamanite people are identified by *The Book of Mormon* as the principal ancestors of the Native American Indians.

Nephi begins this book by describing another of Lehi's visions. God showed Lehi that Jerusalem had, in fact, been destroyed since their departure as had been predicted.* He prophesied that their new land would be a protected place of liberty as long as people lived by God's commandments. If they didn't follow God's laws, they would be destroyed. He predicted the eventual discovery and bloody conquest of their new land by European immigrants after the people's faith in God failed.

Before he died, an aging and weakened Lehi gave the Lehite people, both individually and collectively, warnings and blessings. He passed the mantle of spiritual authority on to his son Nephi, who had diligently observed God's commandments. He asked the entire party to listen to Nephi and to obey his commands as if they were the word of God. Lehi predicted the trials and tribulations of his sons and their descendants, and prophesied the coming of Jesus Christ and Joseph Smith. Lehi predicted that his descendants would write *The Book of Mormon*, and that Joseph Smith would eventually discover and reveal this knowledge to the world. He used these blessings as a platform for reviewing and describing the theology that he wanted his party to follow. His religious discourses covered the range of time from the fall of Adam, through the future resurrection of Jesus Christ, and continued with prophecies into

* In 599 BC, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar's army took the city of Jerusalem with little destruction. Afterwards, around 10,000 of Jerusalem's most prominent citizens were removed as captives to Babylon. This removal of and displacement of local peoples was a common practice of conquest at the time. It was believed that the conquered people were less likely to rebel if they were removed from their homelands and scattered elsewhere among the conqueror's empire. Several years later the new kings rebelled, and Nebuchadnezzar sent an army to reconquer Jerusalem. In 586 BC, after a two-year siege, the Babylonian army prevailed, destroyed the city of Jerusalem and its temple. Almost all of its surviving citizens were taken away as slaves. The first conquest would have occurred the year following the Lehi family departure from Jerusalem. The second conquest and destruction would have occurred three years after the Lehi family arrived in the New World.

contemporary times. Lehi's central message to his people was to obey God's commandments, devote themselves to Jesus Christ, and be saved. Failure to do this, he said, would result in their destruction.

During his blessings Lehi quoted Abraham's grandson, Joseph¹ of Egypt, who was one of Israel's 12 sons. Joseph of Egypt prophesied the coming of Moses and also a descendant, Joseph Smith, in the latter days. He predicted that Joseph Smith would bring forth great knowledge, convince people of its truth, and preserve Joseph of Egypt's descendants forever.

Shortly after he conferred all of his blessings, Lehi died. After his death the Lehites lacked a central unifying figure, and conflict followed.

Nephi's older brothers conspired again to kill him and take control of the Lehites, but God warned Nephi to take his followers and flee into the wilderness. After packing some minimal possessions, including the brass plates from Jerusalem and the magic compass Liahona, the Nephites departed to establish a new nation elsewhere. Due to their unity and hard work, the Nephites were immediately successful in growing crops, producing metals, and building a city. Their numbers multiplied quickly and the new community thrived. Knowing that the Lamanites bore his people great hatred, Nephi began producing weaponry and prepared to defend his people against the inevitable and anticipated attacks from the Lamanites.

After Nephi's departure the Lamanites rejected God, who in turn cursed them. He miraculously transformed their physical appearance from handsome, white people, into loathsome people, permanently marked with God's curse by dark skin color. They became increasingly lazy and mischievous, and abandoned their cultural habit and identity as a civilized people.

God warned Nephi that the Lamanites would become the enemy of the Nephites, and that should the Nephites ever waver in their devotion to him, his people would be destroyed by them. Approximately 40 years after leaving Jerusalem and 30 years after their arrival in the New World, the first of the ongoing Lamanite wars began.

Nephi and his brother Jacob² preached to the Nephites. They told them that God had affirmed the destruction and conquest of Jerusalem, as had been prophesied. Had they stayed behind, they too would either be dead or enslaved. Consequently, their people owed everything they now had to God. They spoke of living in alignment with God's plan, and finding salvation, or alternately discovering the eternal hellish torment if God was refused.

Nephi prophesied more about the coming of Jesus Christ, his death, and his visitation with the Nephite people after his resurrection. He foretold of the time, four generations after Jesus Christ's visitation to the Nephites, when the Nephites would fall into apostasy and be destroyed by the Lamanites. Nephi prophesied about the latter days, when the Gentiles would come to America. He talked about the conquest of the Lamanite's descendants (the Native American Indians) by these Gentile immigrants. He foretold of the discovery, translation, and distribution of *The Book of Mormon* by Joseph Smith, which would bring the gospel of the Nephites to all the people of the world, long after the Nephites had passed away.

Nephi told of a day when many false churches would be established that competed with each other, to proclaim themselves as the true church of God. Most of these churches, he said, would teach false doctrines, corrupt the words of God, engage in secret conspiracies with the devil, build fine churches, act in their own special interests, and pursue material wealth. In the last days, Nephi predicted that the "great and abominable church, the whore of all the earth" (the Roman Catholic Church) would fall to the ground. God told Nephi that in the latter days two testimonies of his word from two separate nations (the Bible and *The Book of Mormon*), would run together to form his complete and true gospel.

Nephi prophesied that after *The Book of Mormon* was delivered to the world by future Gentiles who were converted to its truth, his words would be carried to the Native American Indians. Those Native American Indians who believed in Jesus Christ would, after several generations, be transformed from dark and loathsome people back into white and beautiful people again, by the power of God.

Nephi prophesied that God would do a marvelous thing in the last days, and deliver his believers from darkness into peace and light. Nephi told how God had shown him of Jesus Christ's baptism in water by John the Baptist, and advised his people to follow this future example to achieve a remission of their sins. First, God told Nephi to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then Jesus Christ told Nephi that whoever is baptized in his name would receive the Holy Ghost, and commanded Nephi to follow this example.

In closing, Nephi testified that his words were true, and that this truth would be clear to everyone when they stood before God on the day of judgment.

Sixteen of the 33 chapters of The Second Book of Nephi are direct recitals of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, whom Nephi and his younger brother Jacob quote from the brass plates that Nephi retrieved from Jerusalem. Fifteen of the 16 chapters of Isaiah match up nearly identically, word for word, with their counterparts from *The King James Version of The Bible*.

The 16th of these Isaiah chapters (Chapter 27 of The Second Book of Nephi) is similar to, but significantly different from, the text of Chapter 29 of Isaiah found in the Bible. In this chapter, Isaiah prophesied that during the last days a book whose words have long been hidden in the ground (presumably *The Book of Mormon*) would be delivered to a man (presumably Joseph Smith). Isaiah prophesied that this sealed book would be unsealed and translated by the power of God and then broadcast to the people of the world. He foretold that after this book was discovered by the designated man it would remain hidden, except to three witnesses who would be allowed to see it and testify to its truth. Through this book the faithful from the past would speak as if they had arisen from the dead. The book would contain revelations from God, and those who rejected this word of God, Isaiah said, would be cursed.

Further chapters in The Second Book of Nephi are devoted to Nephi and his younger brother Jacob's liberal interpretation and commentary on Isaiah's words.

By the time that The Second Book of Nephi has reached its conclusion *The Book of Mormon* and Joseph Smith have been prophesied by Joseph of Egypt, the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, Lehi, and Nephi.

The Book of Jacob

544 BC to 500 BC

from Plates Inscribed by Jacob², the Brother of Nephi¹
then Abridged and Later Inscribed onto *The Book of Mormon* Plates by Mormon

Jacob² succeeds Nephi as the Nephites' main prophet and preaches to them about the future coming of Jesus Christ. He recites a parable comparing the family of Israel to an olive tree, works to restore his people's declining righteousness, and describes the continuing conflict between the Nephite and Lamanite peoples.

SUMMARY OF THE BOOK OF JACOB

Nephi's younger brother, Jacob², was born while Lehi's family traveled in the wilderness on their journey from Jerusalem to the American Hemisphere. Jacob described how Nephi¹ assigned him the task of keeping a sacred record for future generations, so that there would be an awareness among the Nephites of the coming of Jesus Christ hundreds of years in the future and a record of Jacob's ministry to Nephite people.

When Nephi died new political leaders were chosen and Jacob succeeded Nephi as the primary prophet for the Nephites. After Nephi's death the Nephites forgot about God's commandments and lapsed into sins of pride, pursuit of wealth, self-importance, and fornication. Jacob was commanded by God to admonish them for their immorality and sins. He warned them of the price they would pay if they rejected the words of God, and he encouraged them to repent their abominable ways while they still could. He reminded them about the coming of Jesus Christ, the opportunity for eternal life in the kingdom of God, and the possibility of eternal torment in hell.

Jacob reminded the Nephites of "The Parable of the Olive Tree," as written by the martyred Old World prophet Zenos (about whom no reference outside *The Book of Mormon* exists). In the parable an old olive tree in a vineyard struggled to thrive against adversity with the help of a master and his servants. Branches were grafted onto the tree and also cut from it to be planted elsewhere. Later, the cut branches were grafted on to the original tree and its life was renewed. Ultimately, Jacob told his people, the restored olive tree symbolized the family of Israel with its many branches scattered across the earth, that would be gathered together in the last days.

Jacob recorded an incident involving a stranger named Sherem, who visited the Nephites and told them false stories to dissuade them from believing in Jesus Christ. When God struck Sherem down, the Nephites repented and were restored to God's good will.

The Book of Jacob concludes with the futile attempts of the Nephites to reconcile their differences with the Lamanites and the passing on of Nephi's legacy as prophet and scribe to Jacob's son Enos.

The Book of Enos

499 BC to 421 BC

from Plates Inscribed by Enos, the Son of Jacob²
then Abridged and Later Inscribed onto *The Book of Mormon* Plates by Mormon

Enos' faith in Jesus Christ is affirmed by God. The Nephites become increasingly successful farmers while the Lamanites become increasingly bloodthirsty and savage. The ongoing wars with the Lamanites intensify.

SUMMARY OF THE BOOK OF ENOS

When Jacob² died, the legacy of the records was passed on to his son Enos, the grandson of Lehi¹. Enos was among the first generation of Nephites to be born in America. He told of his personal revelations from God about the coming of Jesus Christ and the preservation of the Nephite record, which would later become *The Book of Mormon*.

By the time of Enos the Nephites had become proficient at farming, growing abundant grains and fruit, and raising up herds of cattle, goats, and horses.

Futile attempts were made to restore the fierce and savage Lamanites to the one true faith in God, while the ceaseless wars between the Lamanites and Nephites continued. Enos describes how the Nephites continued to develop their agricultural-based civilization and his struggles against his people's inherently stubborn nature.

At the end of his life, Enos passed the tradition of the engraved plates on to his son, Jarom.

The Book of Jarom

419 BC to 361 BC

from Plates Inscribed by Jarom, Son of Enos
then Abridged and Later Inscribed onto *The Book of Mormon* Plates by Mormon

The Nephites dramatically increase in population, build great fortified cities to protect themselves from the warring Lamanites, and become skilled metal workers. Many Nephites receive revelations of Jesus Christ's coming.

SUMMARY OF THE BOOK OF JAROM

Jarom was the son of Enos, grandson of Jacob², and great-grandson of Lehi¹. He was among the second generation of Nephites to be born in America. Two-hundred-thirty-eight years after the Lehites left Jerusalem, Jarom wrote of their exponential increase in numbers and prosperity. The Nephites built great fortified cities to resist the endless Lamanite attacks, and developed highly refined metalworking technologies in steel, iron, gold, silver, brass and copper.

Jarom testified that he and many others had also received revelations regarding the future coming of Jesus Christ. The Nephites during Jarom's time had maintained the commandments of God, and so God had protected them from destruction at the hands of the Lamanites, as had been promised.

At the end of his life Jarom passed on the keeping and recording of the metal plates to his son, Omni.

The Book of Omni

359 BC to 130 BC

from Plates Inscribed by Omni, Amaron, Chemish, Abindom, and Amaleki
then Abridged and Later Inscribed onto *The Book of Mormon* Plates by Mormon

The Nephites discover the Mulekite people, another group of emigrants who had escaped the destruction of Jerusalem. The Nephites also learn of the past presence of the Jaredite people in the American Hemisphere.

SUMMARY OF THE BOOK OF OMNI

Omni was the son of Jarom, grandson of Enos, and great-grandson of Jacob². Omni declared that he had practically nothing to add to the story before passing the records on to a succession of other heirs who also declared that they had nothing significant to say. Four generations later the records ended up in the hands of Amaleki.

Amaleki related the story of King Mosiah¹ and his time, when God warned the Nephites to leave the land of Nephi and escape the Lamanites, or be destroyed. They journeyed through the wilderness to a land called Zarahemla where they encountered another group of people known as the Mulekites, who were also refugees from Jerusalem. Under the leadership of Mulek, this group had been contemporaries of Lehi's and had traveled separately to the American Hemisphere hundreds of years earlier under God's guidance. Although the Mulekites were more numerous than the Nephites they lacked a written record of their history and thus welcomed the Nephites. Both groups united under King Mosiah's rule.

The Mulekites brought a large stone engraved with an unknown language to King Mosiah, who with the gift and power of God translated it. It told of the story of a previous people, the Jaredites, who had also journeyed across the ocean to America during the time when the tower of Babel was being constructed. The stone described a man named Coriantumr¹ and the destruction of his people. The Mulekites knew of Coriantumr because their ancestors had met and sheltered him until he died.

When King Mosiah died he was succeeded by his son King Benjamin. Amaleki affirmed the truth of Jesus Christ and the power of revelation, then passed the records on to King Benjamin before he died.

The Words of Mormon

AD 385

Inscribed and Added to *The Book of Mormon* Plates by Mormon

Mormon explains his abridgement of the Nephite records and adds some missing parts from the story of King Benjamin.

SUMMARY OF THE WORDS OF MORMON

Writing in AD 385, Mormon described the near destruction of his people that he'd witnessed, and predicted their complete and imminent destruction at the hands of the Lamanites. He acknowledged that he had put his soul into completing the records that are destined for the Lamanite's descendants in the future. Mormon described how he had merged and abridged the records from Nephi through King Benjamin. Two sets of plates were handed down to him across many hundreds of years, during which time the prophesied arrival of Jesus Christ had come and gone.

Mormon also completed the story of King Benjamin's reign that was left untold following Amaleki's death in *The Book of Omni*.

The Book of Mosiah

200 BC to 91 BC

from Plates Inscribed by Zeniff, Limhi, Alma¹, Benjamin, and Mosiah²
then Abridged and Later Inscribed onto *The Book of Mormon* Plates by Mormon

All of King Benjamin's Nephite subjects assemble, accept Jesus Christ as their savior in a mass conversion, and adopt the name "Children of Christ." The Nephites discover and translate the written record of the destroyed Jaredite civilization. Alma¹ repents and reforms himself, founds the Church of Christ, and leads his people out of slavery to the Lamanites. King Mosiah² institutes a political system ruled by democratically elected judges. Alma² experiences a miraculous conversion to Christ and becomes the first democratically elected leader of the Nephite people.

THE BOOK OF MOSIAH SUMMARY

Mosiah², after whom this book was named, was the son and heir of King Benjamin and the Grandson of Mosiah¹ mentioned in The Book of Omni. The Book of Mosiah tracks the intricate and interrelated choreography between five different groups of Nephite peoples. It also connects the record of the Jaredite people from the Book of Ether with the Nephites' history. The Book of Mosiah is abridged and written by Mormon from the writings of five different authors. Parts of the Book of Mosiah overlap with the part of the Book of Omni that was written by the prophet Amaleki.

The first group of Nephite people chronicled in this book are the ones living in the land of Zarahemla. The Book of Mosiah begins with an account of King Benjamin's final sermon to his people regarding the future coming of Jesus Christ as told to him in a vision, by an angel of God. The angel tells King Benjamin of the importance of believing in Jesus Christ, of repentance for sin, and of following the laws of God in order to be redeemed and live eternally in heaven. The angel tells Benjamin that whosoever believes in Jesus Christ will receive remission for their sins as if Jesus Christ had already come. Following this sermon all of King Benjamin's subjects accept Jesus Christ as their savior and accept a new name for themselves, the Children of Christ. King Benjamin passes the crown and the keeping of the sacred records on to his son Mosiah. King Benjamin dies several years later, about 125 years before the birth of Jesus Christ.

At the time of King Benjamin's death King Mosiah became curious about a legendary party of lost Nephites who had traveled back to the land of Nephi long before Mosiah's birth. The land of Nephi was the land from which their Nephite ancestors had come before being driven into the land of Zarahemla by hostile Lamanites. This party, mentioned by Amaleki in the Book of Omni, had left Zarahemla about 80 years earlier under the leadership of a man named Zeniff. King Mosiah directed a man named Ammon¹ to go search the land of Nephi and determine the fate of Zeniff's group. Ammon's party is the second group of Nephites described in the Book of Mosiah.

Ammon finds Zeniff's descendants enslaved by the Lamanites in the land of Nephi and full of stories to tell. The lineage of these people under the leadership of Zeniff's grandson, King Limhi, are the third group of Nephite people recorded in the Book of Mosiah. In their records, Zeniff describes how his group established themselves in the land of Nephi and of

their difficult relationship with the Lamanites. Zeniff was succeeded by his son, Noah, who turned his back on God and led the kingdom into corruption. A prophet of God named Abinadi arose in Noah's time and prophesied that unless the king and his people repented their sins, and restored their relations with God, they would all be destroyed. When King Noah heard this, he and his corrupt priests had Abinadi burned to death.

One of King Noah's priests, Alma¹, knew that Abinadi was telling the truth, and led a group of people into the wilderness to establish a new church based on the laws of God. This fourth group of Nephites named themselves the "Church of Christ."

Soon after Abinadi's death a destroying Lamanite army attacked Noah's kingdom. In their retreat from the Lamanites the people of King Noah separated into two groups. One group was comprised of King Noah, his priests, and men interested in their own survival. The other group was comprised of women and children who weren't strong enough to make the escape, and of those men who preferred to die with their families than survive at any cost. When the Lamanite army overtook this second faction of Nephite refugees, they agreed to spare those who would become willing slaves of the Lamanites.

After escaping from the Lamanites the first faction divided again into the men who regretted having left their families behind, and King Noah and his priests. When King Noah attempted to interfere with the men's decision to return and avenge their families, the men turned on King Noah and burned him to death. His renegade priests fled before the same fate befell them, and became the fifth group of Nephite people in the story.

King Noah's son Limhi became the nominal king of the enslaved Nephite people. King Limhi recognized that their destruction and enslavement were the result of the kingdom's corruption. So he repented and asked God to deliver his people from slavery. God, of course, was still angry with these people and was slow to answer their prayers. Meanwhile, King Limhi authorized an expedition to attempt finding the way back to Zarahemla, so they could escape their enslavement. Instead of finding Zarahemla the expedition discovered the ruins of the Jaredite civilization that had destroyed itself 430 years earlier. At these ruins they found the golden plates on which the Jaredite prophet Ether had previously written the history of the Jaredite people. However, these plates were inscribed in a language that was unreadable to the Nephites. The expedition returned to King Limhi and reported, mistakenly, that Zarahemla had been destroyed.

Shortly after that, Ammon and his group arrived. The king and his people then learned that the people of Zarahemla were actually alive and well and that the ruins that had been found were not those of Zarahemla. Ammon and King Limhi then organized an escape and returned safely to the land of Zarahemla. In their exodus they were pursued unsuccessfully by an army of Lamanites who got lost.

The lost army of Lamanites found and absorbed the renegade priests, and then found and enslaved Alma and his Church of Christ people. The renegade priests became cruel jailers and the overseers of Alma's people on behalf of the Lamanites. In answer to their prayers God delivered Alma's people from the Lamanite slavery and guided them to Zarahemla.

King Mosiah welcomed first Limhi's, and then Alma's people to his kingdom. Alma's Church of Christ took hold and became firmly established in the kingdom.

Through the gift of God, King Mosiah translated Ether's golden plates with the aid of magical translation devices in his possession. Through the golden plates he learned of, and told his people about the Jaredites' history (*see The Book of Ether, pages 301-311*).

King Mosiah's four sons and Alma's son, Alma², experienced a miraculous conversion from their sinful and destructive ways. Afterwards Mosiah's sons asked for and received permission from their father to return to the land of Nephi in hopes of converting the Lamanites to the Church of Christ. This left the kingdom without royal heirs. So King Mosiah instituted a new form of democratic government ruled by elected judges. Alma's son, Alma², became the first chief judge and also the keeper of the sacred records.

The Book of Alma

92 BC to 52 BC

from Plates Inscribed by Alma², the Son of Alma¹,
and his sons, Helaman², and Shiblon

then Abridged and Later Inscribed onto *The Book of Mormon* Plates by Mormon

The newly established practice of electing rulers struggles to meet the challenges it faces. Alma² and the four sons of King Mosiah² evangelize among the Nephites and the Lamanites. The term “Christian” is used for the first time to describe followers of Jesus Christ. The wars between the Nephites and Lamanites intensify, claiming hundreds of thousands of casualties.

THE BOOK OF ALMA SUMMARY

The Book of Alma chronicles a 40-year period of upheaval and change for the Nephites. Upon King Mosiah’s death, Alma² became the head of the church, the elected chief judge, leader of the government, chief warrior of the Nephite army, and keeper of the sacred records. Persecutions of devout church members became rampant. Shortly after the king’s death, individuals and groups arose who challenged the rule of the judges. They tried to use the newly established democratic process to subvert the law of God and weaken the church. Failing that, they tried rebellion in an attempt to restore leadership by imperial rule. This too was defeated.

Alma appointed a new chief judge to succeed him as political leader, and devoted himself to the role of spiritual leader. He worked to heal the fractures and divisions within the church. Alma traveled broadly, repeating his Christian evangelist theme in one community after another. He preached tirelessly to the Nephite people, and tried to convince them of the importance of following God’s laws.

After a 14-year absence, Mosiah’s four sons returned to Zarahemla from their mission to convert the Lamanites. They told stories of successes, failures, miracles, and baptisms. They also brought with them a band of Lamanite converts who became Nephites.

The Nephite population expanded greatly and splintered into many special interests and factions in different areas of settlement. Some of the Nephite people fell out of righteousness, some maintained their righteousness, and some restored their righteousness through repentance.

The progression of prosperity, peace, sinful living, rejection of God’s laws, and repentance ebbed and flowed across the land like tides along a ragged coastline. This upheaval was a backdrop for repeated sermons imploring the Nephite people to follow God’s laws or be destroyed, and to maintain faith in the imminent coming of the savior Jesus Christ. Miracles were performed to demonstrate God’s power. People who defied or ignored God’s laws were destroyed. There is a tremendous repetition of the sermons heard in previous times imploring people to follow the will of God and believe in Jesus Christ. In 72 BC the term “Christian” is first coined and used as a descriptive name for the people who follow the future teachings of Jesus Christ.

It was a period of intense, and repeated, wars between the Lamanites and the Nephites, and conflicts between competing Nephite factions. It was a time of Nephite defections to the Lamanites and conflicts between different Lamanite factions. Some former Nephites became Lamanite kings and leaders through deception and cunning. In general, the Nephites wanted peace and prosperity, while the Lamanites wanted warfare and bloodshed. These two related peoples were in constant conflict. Throughout this period armies are repeatedly mobilized and hundreds of thousands of people were killed, in alternating periods of peace and war.

The Nephites continued to build great cities and an extensive civilization. The Nephite armies used armor, swords, scimitars, bows and arrows. They organized themselves into military units with a hierarchical chain of command. The Nephites continued their extensive agricultural and animal husbandry practices.

The Lamanites used horse-drawn chariots for transportation and possessed the same sort of weapons and armor as the Nephites. The Lamanites also adopted the practice of tending domesticated livestock and possessed large flocks of animals.

Alma passed custodianship of the records on to his son Helaman², and departed on another of his solitary missions to evangelize among the Nephite people. On the way to this last mission, he vanished, never to be heard from again, and legends arose around his disappearance. Some said that he was taken directly up into heaven by the Spirit of God. After his disappearance, Helaman took over as head of a weakened and struggling church.

Around 55 BC a large northward migration of the Nephite people began. Surrounded by an ever expanding Lamanite population, thousands of men, women, and children left Zarahemla on foot. Thousands more sailed north on ocean-going vessels that were constructed for this purpose.

Helaman passed custodianship of the records to his brother Shiblon. Before Shiblon died, he passed the original set of records on to his nephew, Helaman's son, Helaman³. Multiple sets of the sacred records were made and distributed across the land so that all Nephites would be able to remember the words of God.

The Book of Helaman

52 BC to 1 BC

from Plates Inscribed by Helaman's Son, Helaman³,
and His Sons, Nephi² and Lehi³

then Abridged and Later Inscribed onto *The Book of Mormon* Plates by Mormon

The Nephites are endangered by the ceaseless Lamanite wars and by the emergence of a new Nephite enemy, the Gadianton Robbers. Large numbers of Lamanites are converted to Christianity. A Lamanite prophet named Samuel announces that Jesus Christ will arrive in five years, and describes the signs that will accompany his arrival.

THE BOOK OF HELAMAN SUMMARY

Helaman³, who authored part of this book, was the grandson of Alma², the son of Helaman², and the nephew of Shiblon, who were the authors of The Book of Alma. This book was also authored in part by Helaman's sons Nephi² and Lehi³. Helaman³ was 25 years old when the legacy of the records was passed on to him in the 40th year of elected judges [52 BC].

The 50-year period spanned by The Book of Helaman starts with the death of the chief judge, followed by intrigue and murder over the succession of the next chief judge and ruler of the Nephite people. While the Nephites were preoccupied and consumed with this succession of leadership, the Lamanites raised an enormous and well-equipped army.

Led by a renegade Nephite who was a powerful military commander, the Lamanites attacked and conquered the capital Nephite city of Zarahemla and set out to conquer the rest of the Nephite lands. With the help of God, the Nephites defeated the Lamanite army and took back Zarahemla.

The Gadianton Robbers, a band of renegade Nephite outlaws, perpetuated governmental intrigue and murder, and became an even greater threat than the Lamanites. When Helaman became chief judge the robbers attempted to murder him also. Times of relative peace came and went as the Nephite and Lamanite people spread out and populated the continents to the south and to the north, from the sea on the east to the sea on the west. Much of the northern land in the American continent was badly deforested by the previous Jaredite civilization and became known as the "land of desolation." To supply lumber for the construction of new cities in these areas a great shipping industry arose to transport materials from the areas that were still well forested.

As the Nephites prospered many of them forgot about God and become Lamanites because of their sinfulness. Others were baptized in the church and redeemed.

Helaman died at a young age and was succeeded as the chief judge by his son, Nephi². Like his father, Nephi had to contend with the conquering Lamanite armies and the internal dissension among the Nephites. During the good times the people forgot God's laws. During the bad times they begged for God's help. When the Lamanite armies took over parts of the Nephite lands the people remembered the prophecies of Alma and Mosiah. As the pendulum swung between peace and war, the Nephites swung between sinfulness and repentance.

Nephi, like his great-grandfather Alma², decided to step down as the chief judge and spend his time preaching to the people, instead of trying to rule them. When a majority of the Nephite people turned sinful, they inevitably elected corrupt leaders. Nephi taught God's laws, and of the imminent arrival of Jesus Christ. Nephi's words were so strong that he successfully converted thousands of Lamanites to the church and baptized them.

Nephi and his brother Lehi³ were captured by hostile Lamanites while out preaching in the Lamanite lands, and were imprisoned. Just before they were put to death God intervened and miraculously saved them. This miracle spurred on further mass conversions of the Lamanites, and the voluntary return of the Nephite's conquered lands by the Lamanite forces.

So many Lamanites were converted to the church and were convinced of the power of God and Jesus Christ that they became more righteous than the Nephites. The Gadianton Robbers, and their secret conspirators, thrived like a cancer on the general prosperity and poisoned the Nephites from within.

When another chief judge was murdered Nephi was accused of complicity. Using his power of prophecy he correctly identified the murderer as the chief judge's brother, who hoped to succeed him. Afterwards, God was so impressed with Nephi that he promised to do anything Nephi asked of him. God also assigned Nephi the role as his spokesman to the Nephite people. "Tell them that they must repent and reform their ways, or I will destroy them," God said.

The endless conflict, dissension, and wars form a backdrop against which the path to God and Jesus Christ is repeated again and again. The people's wickedness became so great that Nephi asked God for a great famine. As the people starved they remembered God again, and the famine ended.

In the 86th year of elected judges [6 BC] a converted Lamanite prophet named Samuel came to Zarahemla to preach and prophesy about repentance and the coming of Jesus Christ. Samuel wasn't allowed to enter the city, so he climbed up on the city walls and delivered his sermon to the people below. He prophesied about the future destruction of the Nephites because of their Godlessness and foretold that Jesus Christ would be born in five years, to redeem those who believed in him.

"The people will know of his arrival," Samuel said, "by the fact that an entire night will pass without darkness and afterward a brilliant new star will rise in the sky that has never been seen before. I have come to tell you of his arrival so that you will know the signs of his coming. If you repent, you will not be destroyed. If you don't repent, there will be no hope for you. When Jesus Christ dies, there will be great storms and earthquakes. Cities will be destroyed and many will die. For three days afterwards, there will be total darkness until the time of his resurrection. I urge you to repent now, while you still have the chance."

The people who heard Samuel were either afraid or angry. Many were moved to repent and be baptized. The angry people tried to kill Samuel with stones and arrows, but nothing touched him because the Spirit of God was with him. When the city guards tried to apprehend Samuel, he slipped away and was never heard from again.

When the time of Jesus Christ's arrival approached, the sinful grew more wicked. Among the godly, angels appeared, and let the people know that Jesus Christ was coming very, very soon.

The Third Book of Nephi

1 BC to AD 35

from Plates Inscribed by Nephi³, the Son of Nephi²
then Abridged and Later Inscribed onto *The Book of Mormon* plates by Mormon

Jesus Christ is born in Bethlehem and signs of his birth appear to the Nephites. When Jesus Christ dies, earthquakes, floods, fires, and storms destroy the Nephites' cities and kill most of the people. This destruction is followed by three days of total darkness until Jesus Christ is resurrected. After his resurrection, Jesus Christ visits and ministers to the Nephites, giving them his true gospel.

THE THIRD BOOK OF NEPHI SUMMARY

Nephi³ lived in the American Hemisphere during the time of Jesus Christ's birth and death in Israel. This book chronicles the events of the Nephite people during the life of Jesus Christ, and his visitation to the Nephites after his resurrection from death.

Nephi³ who authored this book is the grandson of Helaman², the son of Nephi², and the nephew of Lehi², authors of the Book of Helaman; and is also a distant descendant of Nephi¹ who was born in Jerusalem six-hundred years earlier.

The Third Book of Nephi opens with the departure of Nephi², who left the land of Zarahemla and mysteriously disappeared. Before leaving he put the records in the custody of his son Nephi³.

When Nephi³ began his record, miracles and fulfilled prophecies seemed to signal the immediate arrival of Jesus Christ. When the prophesied time arrived and the sign of Jesus' coming hadn't happened, the people who were hostile to the church threatened to start killing those who continued to believe. Just before the scheduled execution of believers the prophesied night happened. When that night's darkness failed to come everyone knew that something unprecedented was approaching. A new star appeared in the sky and people who were sitting on the fence, waiting, chose to believe and converted to the church of God. These events became a new basis from which the passing years were counted. Great numbers of people were baptized and peace descended upon the land.

When several more years passed and Jesus Christ still hadn't come to the Nephites, the people again began to doubt the validity of the prophecies and the truth of the signs. Then something truly remarkable happened. The converted Lamanites' skin turned as white as the skin of the Nephites. The converted Lamanites became Nephites in appearance as well as in name.

Meanwhile, the Gadianton Robbers became increasingly brazen in their efforts to plunder and overthrow the Nephites. These robbers had far surpassed the Lamanites as the greatest threat to the civilized Nephite people. When they demanded that the Nephites surrender or be destroyed, the Nephites gathered their horses, chariots, livestock, and food supplies in one place to defend themselves. Tens of thousands of people gathered in Zarahemla for the coming battle. Because the Nephites were now solid in their service to God they defeated the

robbers, killed their leaders, and restored the peace. Even though he hadn't come to Zarahemla yet, the Nephites knew that Jesus Christ had come into the world.

In the peace that followed, the people prospered and again became vain and unequal in their relative wealth. Within 30 years of the events signaling the birth of Jesus Christ the church of God became so badly corroded that only small bands of Nephites and Lamanite converts remained faithful. Murder, instead of law, became the rule of the land. Within a span of just six years after their great victory over the Gadianton Robbers the people of Zarahemla had gone the distance from being mostly righteous to mostly sinful. After the prophets and chief judge were killed a conspirator named Jacob³ declared himself king.

Because Nephi remained faithful to his belief in Jesus Christ he became the pillar of the church, and angels appeared to him daily. People either resented him or honored him as he traveled the land calling for repentance. His efforts resulted in numerous baptisms, miracles, and a strengthening of the faith in the year AD 33.

In AD 34 cataclysmic events occurred. First, a great storm arose that was more destructive than any storm ever known. Then the city of Zarahemla burst into flames. The city of Moroni sank into the sea, and the people drowned. The city of Moronihah and its people were buried alive beneath a mountain, and general destruction spread its reach southward. To the north, tornadoes and earthquakes broke the land to pieces, killed the people, and destroyed the cities. The result was a wasteland everywhere.

Three hours after it began the environmental violence ended and absolute darkness fell. No fires could be lit, nor could light of any kind be made. Then came the three days of total darkness that Samuel the Lamanite prophet had foretold. The survivors wept and cried, wishing that they'd repented and kept their faith.

The voice of God fell upon them, affirming that his power had caused this vast destruction as punishment for the people's sinfulness. The survivors, God said, were spared because they were less sinful and deserved an opportunity to repent and receive eternal life. "I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God," the people were told. "I have come to redeem the world and save it from sin. If you come to me, you will be received. For this, I have sacrificed my own life and been raised up again. So repent now, and be saved." After three days of darkness, the light returned and the people looked out across their ruined land.

The people gathered and marveled at all that had happened, and a soft voice came from the sky, heralding the arrival of the Son of God. Jesus Christ descended slowly from the clouds, clothed in blinding whiteness, until he stood before them.

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets foretold," he said. "I have redeemed the sins of the world and suffered the will of God from the beginning." He invited the people who'd fallen at his feet to come and touch him, and to witness the wounds from his crucifixion.

Jesus Christ asked Nephi to come forward as his first chosen disciple. He also chose 11 other disciples to help serve him. He showed the 12 disciples how people must be baptized in his name in order to be redeemed.

"You must repent and become as little children, believe in me, and be baptized in my name or you cannot receive my blessings or inherit the kingdom of God," said Jesus Christ. "This is my doctrine."

He then preached to the people about repentance, baptism, and the path of righteousness. Just as he had done in the Old World, Jesus Christ delivered his celebrated Sermon on the Mount to the Nephite crowd.

Jesus Christ explained to the Nephites that Gentiles in the future would come to torment, kill and dominate the Nephites' descendants, the Native American Indians. He told how these Gentiles would bring the knowledge of the Nephite history to all the world because of their faith in Jesus Christ. He prophesied that those Gentiles who did not hold true to him would

be trampled by the Native American Indians, who would return to God in the latter days.

Jesus Christ then called the sick, the blind, and the crippled to come forward and be healed. He blessed the people generally, and blessed the children individually, after which the heavens opened and angels came down to instruct the children about God's love.

Jesus Christ then took his 12 disciples aside and asked them to bring him wine and bread. He showed them the sacrament of giving broken bread to eat, and wine to drink, in remembrance of him, so that his spirit would always be with them. He instructed them in prayer, in ministering to the people of the church, and about avoidance of the devil.

Before departing for heaven he gave the disciples one last commandment. "Do not let anyone who is unworthy of the sacrament, partake of it," he said. "Those who do so, will be damned." He also instructed the disciples on how to accept the unworthy, allow them to repent, be baptized, and become worthy of the sacrament. In parting he touched each of the 12 disciples individually and gave them the blessing of the Holy Ghost.

The clouds then descended and enveloped Jesus Christ as he ascended to heaven. That night the word went out that Jesus Christ would appear again the following day. People from across the land traveled all night to witness Jesus Christ for themselves.

The following day, after Nephi was baptized by the disciples and after he then baptized each of them, Jesus Christ came down from heaven in the company of angels. After witnessing their prayer and devotion, Jesus Christ gave thanks to God for their faith in him. He explained the sacrament to the people, and the promises made by God to the family of Israel, of which they were a part. He told of the future in which the Gentiles would come to dominate their descendants.

Jesus Christ told the Nephites that he would give them a sign that their descendants could watch for that would let them know when the day of judgment was near. "When these words about your descendants' ancestry through the family of Israel are made known to the Gentiles," Jesus Christ told the Nephites, "through the power of the Holy Ghost and my Father, the time is near. At that time, these same Gentiles will have conquered and scattered your descendants. Through the wisdom of my Father, this knowledge shall be reestablished in this land where the people are governed in freedom, and your remnant descendants will learn of their ancestry through these Gentiles."

Jesus Christ promised that one of his servants would be the recipient of a great and amazing work. He told how some would not believe it even though his servant would declare it to be the truth. (Presumably, this great work is *The Book of Mormon*, and his servant is Joseph Smith.) "My servant will be tormented because of those who do not believe him," said Jesus Christ. "When this time comes, I will cause my words to come to the Gentiles through this man."

Jesus Christ told of the terrible destruction that would come to those who did not believe and repent. He told how those future people who converted to his church would build the New Jerusalem, and all of Israel's descendants would be gathered together again. "The power of heaven will come down among them and I will be in their midst," he promised.

Jesus Christ quoted the prophecies of Isaiah from the Old Testament and told the Nephites that these prophecies would be fulfilled. He asked to see the Nephite's records, and when he read them, pointed out errors and omissions that he directed the disciples to correct. He dictated words from the Old Testament prophet Malachi, and directed the disciples to include these words also in their written records.

For three days, Jesus Christ ministered to, taught, and healed the Nephite people before he ascended to heaven a second time.

Jesus Christ appeared one more time to the disciples and advised them to name their church after him. He told them that church members must repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. He instructed his disciples to write down what they had seen and heard.

He let them know that he was pleased with this generation of Nephites, and that they would be saved. He explained that after four generations had passed their descendants would turn away from him in pursuit of material wealth, and would be lost.

Before he left for the final time Jesus Christ asked his disciples what they wanted of him. Nine of them asked for, and were granted, a place in heaven after their mortal lives had ended. The other three were given immortal life on earth, until the time that Jesus Christ returned on the final day of judgment. They were allowed to remain on earth, unchanged, so that they could stand witness to the unfolding events of the world. All of the disciples then became devoted missionaries, who spread the word of Jesus Christ and made converts among the people for as long as they lived.

The Fourth Book of Nephi

AD 34 to AD 320

from Plates Inscribed by Nephi³ a Disciple of Jesus Christ,
by Nephi⁴, the Son of Nephi³,
by Amos¹, Son of Nephi⁴,
and by Amos² and Ammaron, the Sons of Amos¹,
then Abridged and Later Inscribed onto *The Book of Mormon* Plates by Mormon

Not a single Lamanite is left in the American Hemisphere after all of them convert to the Church of Christ and become Nephites. It is a time of miracles. The people who personally saw Jesus Christ die and pass on. As the people again become wicked, Nephites are again converted to Lamanites.

THE FOURTH BOOK OF NEPHI SUMMARY

The Fourth Book of Nephi quickly covers the 286 years of Nephite history following the New World visitation of Jesus Christ after his resurrection in Jerusalem. The keeping of the Nephite records was passed from Nephi³, to his son Nephi⁴, to his son, Amos¹, to his son, Amos², and then finally to his brother, Ammaron.

After Jesus Christ left the Nephites and returned to heaven his disciples established the Church of Christ throughout the land. By the year AD 36 they had converted and baptized all the Nephites and Lamanites in the land. These conversions transformed all the Lamanites into Nephites, and there were no criminals, sinners, or Lamanites left. It was a time of peace and justice, a time without poverty or wealth. The disciples of Jesus Christ performed healings, brought the dead back to life, and performed miracles in his name. The Nephites' destroyed cities were rebuilt.

By AD 110, nine of the disciples had died and gone to heaven, and new disciples were ordained to replace them. Except for the three immortal disciples, the generation that had witnessed Jesus Christ also died away. The long peace began to fracture when a small band of people revolted against the Church of Christ and called themselves Lamanites, the first of their kind in 74 years.

Two centuries passed and the Nephites became populous and wealthy again with divisions of class, and divisions in degree of devotion to God. In time new churches arose, purporting to follow Jesus Christ, but failed to follow his precepts and teachings. False churches began to persecute the true followers and disciples of Jesus Christ. Attempts to imprison and kill the followers of Jesus Christ failed, and the Nephite people declined into sin and corruption.

By AD 100 the people again divided into two groups. The Nephites believed in and followed the teachings of Jesus Christ. The Lamanites opposed the gospel of Jesus Christ and taught their children to hate the Nephites. As time passed, the Lamanites grew strong at the expense of the Nephites.

By AD 244 the Lamanites far outnumbered the Nephites, and the faith of the Nephites dwindled as they sought wealth and vanity more than the word of Jesus Christ.

By AD 300 the Nephites were so wicked that it became difficult to distinguish them from the Lamanites. The faithful followers of Jesus Christ were reduced to the disciples themselves and a small group of true believers.

In AD 320 God instructed Ammaron to hide the sacred records away so that they could be preserved for future generations.

The Book of Mormon

AD 321 to AD 400

Inscribed and Written onto *The Book of Mormon* Plates by Mormon,
and his Son, Moroni²,
who are Distant Descendants of Nephi¹

At the age of 10, Mormon is given custody of the Nephite records. At the age of 16, Mormon is drafted as the Nephites' military leader. Throughout his life, Mormon leads the Nephites in battle and writes The Book of Mormon upon golden plates.

THE BOOK OF MORMON SUMMARY

The Book of Mormon section, within the larger *Book of Mormon*, is authored by Mormon, for whom the entire book is named. Mormon led a diverse life as a military leader, spiritual leader, and as tireless writer, who edited and abridged a thousand years of Nephite records since the time of Lehi's exodus from Jerusalem. He inscribed this abridgement onto a set of golden plates that are formally known as *The Book of Mormon*. When Mormon was killed by the Lamanites, his son Moroni² continued Mormon's book.

The Nephites' years during this period were counted from the time of Jesus Christ's birth and the occurrence of the night without darkness, described in The Third Book of Nephi. For example, the 320th year after Christ's arrival is the same year that we identify as AD 320.

In the year AD 320 the Nephite record custodian, Ammaron, identified the ten-year-old Mormon as a worthy person to be a future custodian of the records. Ammaron told Mormon that when he reached the age of 24 he should unearth the hidden plates of Nephi, and begin his own account of the Nephites based on what he had seen and heard.

When Mormon was 11, he and his father moved to Zarahemla during a time of intense warfare between the Lamanites and Nephites in which the huge Nephite army ultimately emerged victorious. But because of the Nephites' sinfulness God had withdrawn his blessings, and his disciples, from among the Nephite people. On his journey south to Zarahemla, Mormon observed buildings spread across the land and people as numerous as grains of sand in the sea.

Mormon received a personal visitation from God and an affirmation of Jesus Christ's goodness at the age of 15.

When Mormon was 16, new Lamanite wars erupted, and he was conscripted to lead the entire Nephite army because of his great size and strength. The Nephites were driven ever northward by the huge Lamanite armies. Year after year the Lamanites attacked and killed the Nephites. Sometimes, each of the two opposing armies prevailed and sometimes, they were defeated. Tens of thousands were killed. Without the support of God the Nephite victories were only temporary. When Mormon begged his people to repent and rebuild the church, they turned away. They wanted him as a military commander, not as a spiritual leader.

In the year AD 350 a treaty was reached in which the Nephites received the North American lands to the north of the Central American isthmus, and the Lamanites received the

lands of South America. For 10 years after this treaty there was peace, until the year AD 361, when the Lamanites attacked yet again.

As the wars came and went it became evident to Mormon that the Nephites were doomed because God's judgment ran against them. To the degree that the Nephites turned away from God, Mormon also turned away from them and resigned his command. Mormon went to the hill where Ammaron had buried the records, gathered them up, and took them with him for safekeeping.

After a series of successive defeats in which the Lamanites drove the Nephites ever northward, Mormon relented and again assumed command of the Nephite army in spite of the Nephites' unrepentant sinfulness. By the year AD 384 the Nephites had been chased northward to the hill Cumorah in what is now western New York State. Mormon hid all of the records there, including those that he'd abridged and inscribed himself. He was now in his seventies, weary, and sad. In the ensuing battle, 200,000 Nephites were killed by the Lamanite army by swords, axes, bows, and arrows. Only two-dozen men from the once mighty Nephite people survived the climactic battle. These survivors included both Mormon and his son Moroni.

Recognizing the futility of fighting any further, Mormon addressed the dead, the living, and the yet to be born. He inscribed his final words on the golden plates lamenting for the past, present, and future Nephites, Lamanites, and Gentiles. If they had lived by God, he knew, this tragedy would never have happened. To the Lamanite descendants he urged repentance, belief in Jesus Christ, and baptism in Jesus Christ's name. He prophesied that these records he'd preserved would be the future salvation of his people's descendants, the Native American Indians. "You are," he told them, "descendants of the family of Israel."

After the great battle, Mormon, and all the other survivors except Moroni, were hunted down and killed. Moroni was then left alone to complete his father's records.

Moroni told how the Nephite civilization had been destroyed leaving only Lamanites and robbers behind. Now the Lamanites had no one left to satisfy their blood lust except each other. Their legacy had become one of endless warfare.

The three immortal disciples still lived, somewhere, but were not there to witness the Nephites' final ending. Moroni testified that he and Mormon had personally seen them and had been ministered to by them.

Moroni testified that whoever found the hidden records, *The Book of Mormon*, would be blessed by God. "Nothing could prevent their future discovery," he said, "because it is God's will that they be revealed. They will come out at a time when the world is in great trouble, and stand as proof that God's miracles still exist. I will speak to you as if I were speaking from the grave because I know that you will receive my words. Anyone who condemns this record is in grave danger of hell fire."

Moroni explained that the Nephite records had been written in a language called "reformed Egyptian," unknown to any other people but his. "Knowing this," he said, "God has prepared a means by which our record can be interpreted."

In conclusion, Moroni instructed his future readers to repent, to believe in Jesus Christ, to be baptized in his name, to partake of his sacrament, and to believe in God's miracles. "Failure to do so," he said, "would result in their eternal damnation."

The Book of Ether

2200 BC to 550 BC

from Golden Plates Inscribed by Ether in 550 BC
and later Transcribed, Abridged, Annotated, and Added to
The Book of Mormon Plates by Mormon's son, Moroni², in AD 420

*An account of the Jaredite people's transoceanic emigration from Babylon to the American Hemisphere in 2200 BC,
and the proliferation of their extensive civilization until the time of their total destruction in 550 BC.*

THE BOOK OF ETHER SUMMARY

The Book of Ether spans a sweeping 1,650-year time period. It covers the history of the Jaredite people between the time of their exodus from Babylon in 2200 BC until their complete destruction in the New World around 550 BC. Chronologically, this book precedes all of the other books in *The Book of Mormon*. The Book of Ether is based on a set of 24 golden plates inscribed, and then hidden away by the ancient prophet Ether around 550 BC. Although Ether's plates were written in an unknown language, the Nephites were able to translate them into their language with magical translation devices. The Book of Ether is a synopsis that was edited, transcribed, annotated, and then added to *The Book of Mormon* plates by Mormon's son Moroni² around AD 420. This is the same Moroni who appeared to Joseph Smith as an angel in a series of multiple visions between 1823 and 1827, and who revealed to him the golden plates on which *The Book of Mormon* was written. In 121 BC, 540 years before Moroni's time, Ether's 24 golden plates were discovered, translated, and kept thereafter by Moroni's predecessor scribes (see *The Book of Mosiah*, pages 151-174).

Moroni made note that Ether's records were a hundred times more involved and lengthy than his transcription of them. Part of this omitted record included an account of the world's history from the time of its creation through the building of the tower of Babel (*Old Testament, Genesis, Chapters 1 through 11*). Moroni excused himself from including these stories in his transcription of The Book of Ether because God told him those stories had been faithfully kept by the Jews, and that the person (Joseph Smith) who would eventually find *The Book of Mormon* plates would already have this account of the world's beginning. Moroni tells his future readers that Ether's message is a warning and example of what will happen to people and nations who ignore or defy God's will.

Jared¹ (after whom the Jaredites are named) and his brother Mahonri lived with their families in the city of Babylon, in present-day Iraq. The Tower of Babel mentioned in the Old Testament's Book of Genesis was being constructed at that time, and God was not at all happy with it. To disrupt this construction he confused the languages of the workers so that no one could understand anyone else. Further construction of the tower then became impossible. Because of Mahonri's closeness to God, his family and group of friends were spared from the language confusion that God angrily inflicted upon the people of Babylon. God guided Mahonri's people, the Jaredites, across 5,000 miles of northern Africa, to the Atlantic Ocean. There he instructed them to make eight shell-like boats in which to cross the sea to the vacant American Hemisphere.

God appeared to Mahonri in a vision upon completion of the boats and identified himself as Jesus Christ. To illuminate the darkness inside the enclosed boats during their ocean crossing, Jesus Christ magically transformed 16 stones, provided by Mahonri, into luminous sources of light. In this vision Jesus Christ also revealed the pageantry of the human drama. Mahonri was shown the lives and events of all the people who had ever lived, or ever would live on earth, from its beginning to its end.

After the Jaredites loaded themselves and their livestock onto the boats, God drove them another 6,000 miles across the Atlantic Ocean with powerful, unrelenting winds, while the people and animals huddled inside. After nearly a year at sea they arrived on the east coast of the New World. Jared¹ and Mahonri grew old and died but produced generations of descendants who were sometimes good and sometimes not. A great civilization emerged near a narrow neck of land that separated oceans to the east and west, and lands to the north and south. The Jaredites built cities and made steel. They raised livestock, including domesticated elephants, cows, horses, sheep, goats, oxen, asses, and pigs from the Old World. They farmed domesticated fruits and grains that they'd brought with them from Babylon. They produced fine linen and silk clothing. Eventually their population grew to many millions of people.

For most of the Jaredite people's history the details of their civilization are highly summarized and shallow. The historical detail provided in *The Book of Ether* deals primarily with the beginning and end of the Jaredite's story line.

By Ether's time the Jaredites were corrupt and had fallen from their lofty relationship with God. Earlier prophets had warned them to renew their faith in God or be destroyed and swept away from their lands. Unless they repented, the prophets said, God would usher in a new wave of favored people and replace them as heirs to this choicest of lands that they'd been given. When the prophets were ignored the destruction that was foretold began to unfold.

Ether witnessed and recorded the total destruction of the Jaredite people as they fell into war and ruin. Eventually all of the Jaredite people, except for Ether, divided into two factions who fought and killed one another until only he and one other combatant king were left alive. In the end, God told Ether to go out and witness the fulfillment of his prophecies.

The Book of Moroni

AD 401 to AD 421

Inscribed and Written onto *The Book of Mormon* Plates by Mormon's Son, Moroni²

All the Nephites except for Moroni² are killed by the Lamanites. Moroni describes how to confer the power of the Holy Ghost, ordain priests, and administer the sacrament. Baptism of young children is revealed as an evil practice. Moroni seals and hides the records for a future time when they will be found, translated, and made known to the world.

THE BOOK OF MORONI SUMMARY

The Book of Moroni is authored by Mormon's son Moroni². This is the same Moroni, in flesh and blood, who appeared as an angel in Joseph's Smith's bedroom on the night of September 21, 1823, and told him about *The Book of Mormon* buried on Cumorah Hill outside Palmyra, New York. The Book of Moroni reads like a combined appendix, epilogue, and conclusion to the stories and doctrine presented in *The Book of Mormon*.

Moroni hid from the Lamanite war parties after surviving the great battle on the hill Cumorah. He then watched as the Lamanites hunted down and killed all Nephites who would not renounce Jesus Christ, and then continued their warfare against each other.

Knowing that he wrote for the benefit of future generations of Lamanites and Gentiles, Moroni inscribed further instructions that Jesus Christ had given to his disciples. He knew that it was important that these details should not be lost. He carefully described how the power of the Holy Ghost could be conferred by the laying on of hands, how priests were to be ordained in the name of Jesus Christ, and how priests should administer the sacrament of bread and wine.

Moroni described how the truly repentant should be baptized and cleansed of their sins to become members of the Church of Christ. After having been baptized he wrote of the importance of meeting often to fast, pray, take sacrament together, and sing praises to God. Moroni also described how church members who persisted in sinful behavior could be expunged from the church's membership roles.

Moroni then recounted his father's words from a sermon in which Mormon had described how to distinguish deeds and actions done on behalf of God from deeds and actions done on behalf of the devil, and of the importance of faith, hope, and charity.

"God has said that you will know good people by the good lives they lead," said Mormon. "He has also said that an evil man can do no good. All good things come from God, and all evil things come from the devil. It is up to you to know and distinguish good from evil, and the way to judge is as simple as knowing daylight from the dark of night. And I will show you the way to judge for yourselves. Anything that brings you closer to Jesus Christ is good, and anything that pulls you away is evil." Mormon pleaded with his people to judge carefully and to choose the light and goodness of Jesus Christ.

"How do you act in accordance with the good?" asked Mormon. "This is where faith comes in. If you have faith in Jesus Christ you will have the power to embrace the good. God's

miracles have never ended, and it is by faith that God's miracles continue to happen. According to the words of Jesus Christ no man can be saved unless they have faith in his name. If miracles have ended, then faith has also ended, and the state of man would be beyond repair. How can you ever attain faith unless you also have hope? And what is it you should hope for? You should have hope, through Jesus Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised into eternal life. Man also needs to have charity, because without it, he is nothing. Charity involves patience in suffering, being kind, not envying others, or inflating yourself with self-importance. Charity means not being easily provoked, absence of evil thoughts, and never taking pleasure in sinful behavior. Charity is the pure love of Jesus Christ. It endures forever. Whoever possesses charity on judgment day will find that all is well."

Moroni's recital of Mormon's sermon is followed by the inclusion of two letters to Moroni from Mormon. The first of these two letters answers questions concerning the baptism of little children. Apparently, the Nephites had argued as to whether or not it was appropriate and necessary to baptize little children. Mormon consulted with God and, in this letter to Moroni, spoke definitively with God's authority on the subject. Mormon told Moroni that it is a mockery of God's laws to baptize little children because they have not yet had the opportunity to sin. Consequently they have no need to repent or be baptized. He goes on to say that the baptism of children is such a great evil that people who persist in holding this belief without repenting of it will be guaranteed a trip straight to hell on judgment day. Little children who die before they have an opportunity to sin are already guaranteed salvation. It is the people who are old enough to sin who need to repent and be baptized.

In the second letter Mormon described earlier battles in the Lamanite war and the deplorable state of the Nephite people. He lamented that no one would repent, or listen any longer to the word of God. He told of Nephite defeats and Lamanite atrocities, that were followed by even greater Nephite atrocities. He mentioned a specific incident in which, after a Nephite city had fallen, the Lamanites had murdered all the men, and then forced the surviving wives and daughters to eat the flesh of their former husbands and fathers. He described another incident in which Nephite soldiers raped Lamanite women, tortured them to death, and then ate their flesh as a token of their bravery. "How could our great civilization ever have come to this," he asks. "How can we expect God not to destroy us when we act like this?"

In this letter Mormon foresaw the destruction of the Nephites, because of their pride, sinfulness, and renunciation of Jesus Christ. When that finally happened the ancient prophecies would be fulfilled and the Nephites' fate would be the same as that of the ancient Jaredite people.

In his conclusion Moroni reminded future readers of God's mercy and goodness to mankind since the time of Adam. He said that readers could know for themselves that these records were true, by asking God. He asked his readers to remember that all good things have come to them as gifts through Jesus Christ.

"On the final day of judgment," Moroni concluded, "God will say to everyone, 'Didn't I declare my words to you, written by this man Moroni, as if he were crying out to you from the grave?' Whoever puts this knowledge aside and dies in their sins cannot be saved in the kingdom of God. At that time, the covenants and prophecies will be fulfilled. So come to Jesus Christ and be perfected. Give up your sinfulness, and love God with all your might, so that your sins will be cleansed."

Moroni then said goodbye to his readers (AD 421), sealed up the records, and hid them away until such time as they were found, translated, and published.