

2 Nephi Header

2 Nephi: Header

An account of the death of Lehi. Nephi's brethren rebel against him. The Lord warns Nephi to depart into the wilderness. His journeyings in the wilderness, and so forth.

Comments

Nephi included an introductory header for each of the two books he wrote. Jacob continued the practice, but after Jacob it disappears from the small plates. Although we do not have direct evidence, it is probable that Nephi also created a book header for the first book he wrote on the large plates. That tradition probably continued, because we will see Mormon continuing the tradition, much as Nephi had begun it.

What is interesting in the header for 2 Nephi is what it does not contain. Second Nephi, in our current edition, has thirty-three chapters. The header only covers the information contained up to Chapter 5. There is a distinct change in Nephi's writing between chapters 5 and 6 which we will examine at that point, but at this point the question is what we might learn from this header that doesn't cover the entire book of 2 Nephi.

A synoptic header could be written at two different times, either before the writing begins or after it is completed. If it were done afterward, then the header would be able to cover what had actually been written in the book. If it is done before, then it is descriptive of the plan for writing rather than a description of what was actually written.

The incomplete nature of this header would appear to confirm that it was written before the text of the book itself, and reflects Nephi's plan for 2 Nephi, not what actually became its contents. This confirms the other textual evidence that Nephi had a plan in mind before writing.

What happens in the plan for 2 Nephi is that it catches Nephi up to the time he begins writing. He has no plan further than what is mentioned because he is writing a more historical narrative, and he has reached his present time. He has no plan for more historical narrative because it hasn't happened yet. What will happen, is that his plan changes and the book of 2 Nephi will become a different text than what he had originally planned.

But why did he create a second book? There is a logical division between the Old World story and the New World story. The whole was conceived as the story of the beginnings of the Nephite people, and the second book was the genesis of the Nephites in the New World. The Old World genesis began with Lehi's prophecies. The New World genesis also begins with Lehi's prophecies.