

# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM

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Edited by  
Daniel H. Ludlow

*The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure  
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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limited to four consecutive Nephite months. These months can be approximately correlated with our calendar because even today warfare in Mesoamerica (the probable area of BOOK OF MORMON GEOGRAPHY for most of Nephite history) is conducted mostly during the dry season after the fall harvest. This correlation implies that the Nephite year at that time began in December (*see* BOOK OF MORMON, HISTORY OF WARFARE IN). This would mean that because the crucifixion of Christ (presumably in early April) occurred in the first Nephite month, the Nephites probably shifted their calendar to begin the first month in April at the same time they began reckoning time from the birth of Christ. This conclusion is consistent with the Nephite record that Christ was born some time after the end of the Nephite year (3 Ne. 1:1–9).

**EXTERNAL CHRONOLOGY.** Evidence supports two possible lengths for Nephite years: 365 days and 360 days. Each can be correlated to external history. The internal chronology is consistent, so that if the exact nature of the Nephite calendar were known, only one reference point in external history would be needed to fix the entire Nephite chronology. However, at least two such dates would be required to determine the length of the Nephite year. Three principal events are common to both Nephite and Old World sources: (1) the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, King of Judah; (2) the birth of Christ; and (3) the death of Christ. Because there are varying degrees of uncertainty about these three reference points, alternative correlation methods have been proposed, each using two of these dates.

First, Orson PRATT proposed that the Nephites used a 365-day year, as had the Egyptians previously and as did the Mesoamericans afterward (*Millennial Star* 28 [Dec. 22, 1866]:810). It has been noted (Lefgren) that such a year agrees, to the very day, with one choice for the birth and death dates of Christ—namely, Thursday, APRIL 6, 1 B.C., and Friday, April 1, A.D. 33, respectively (Gregorian calendar). Both of these dates are supported by other arguments (J. Pratt, 1985 and 1990). This theory assumes that the third system of Nephite reckoning began on the very day of the birth of Christ, which is not explicitly stated in the Book of Mormon but is consistent with Sorenson's conclusions above.

Second, most historians believe that the first year of King Zedekiah began in 598–96 B.C. Lehi

left Jerusalem shortly afterward (1 Ne. 1:4; 2:4). The date of the birth of Christ is not known directly from historical sources, but it is believed that King Herod died in 5–4 B.C., implying that Christ was born shortly before (Matt. 2:1). Using these two events as reference points, Huber has proposed a 360-day Nephite year because 600 such years fit the interval from Lehi to Christ (3 Ne. 1:1); such a system has historical precedent, and apparently underlies certain prophecies in which the word “time” may equal 360 days (e.g., Rev. 12:6, 14).

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JOHN P. PRATT

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## BOOK OF MORMON COMMENTARIES

Because the Book of Mormon is the best known and most widely circulated LDS book, many commentaries on and reference books about it have been written to assist readers. Inasmuch as its historical timeline spans from c. 2200 B.C. to A.D. 421 and its doctrinal content is extensive, it is difficult for a one-volume work to meet the many needs and interests. The references cited herein contain bibliographies that will provide readers with additional sources.

George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl coauthored a *Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (1955–1961), a seven-volume work (published posthumously to both authors) that has been widely circulated. Hugh Nibley’s *Lehi in the*

*Desert and the World of the Jaredites* (1952; rev. 1988) provides insightful historical material on the travels of Lehi's party from Jerusalem, which occurred about c. 600 B.C., through the Arabian Peninsula, to the Western Hemisphere, and also on the journey of the Jaredite colony at about c. 2200 B.C. from the Near East to the Western Hemisphere. Francis W. Kirkham wrote a two-volume work entitled *A New Witness for Christ in America* (rev. ed. 1959–1960) that discusses the coming forth and the translation and printing of the Book of Mormon and non-LDS explanations of the same topics. B. H. Roberts authored a three-volume work titled *New Witnesses for God* (1909). Volumes 2 and 3 addressed four topics: the Book of Mormon as a witness of the Bible; the discovery, translation, and people of the Book of Mormon; evidence of its truth; and Roberts's responses to various objections to the book. Sidney B. Sperry authored *Our Book of Mormon* (1947); *The Book of Mormon Testifies* (1952); and *Book of Mormon Compendium* (1968). Daniel H. Ludlow wrote a popular one-volume work, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon* (1976).

The Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University sponsors an annual symposium on the Book of Mormon. Beginning in 1985, it has published a volume of selected lectures for each symposium. Both doctrinal and historical materials are included. Other volumes are planned as additional symposia are held. A volume entitled *A Book of Mormon Treasury* (1959), taken from the pages of the *Improvement Era*, contains thirty-six articles by General Authorities and other respected students of the Book of Mormon on historical, geographical, and doctrinal matters, as well as biblical relationships. Following a similar format, Kent P. Jackson compiled a two-volume work, *Studies in Scripture Volume Seven—1st Nephi—Alma 29* (1987) and *Studies in Scripture Volume Eight—Alma 30—Moroni* (1988). Jackson also edited a special Book of Mormon issue of *BYU Studies* 30 (Summer 1990):1–140. Other scholarly materials related to Book of Mormon topics are available through F.A.R.M.S. (Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies).

Others who have contributed to the literature about the Book of Mormon are Paul R. Cheesman, whose works include *The World of the Book of Mormon* (1984), and Monte S. Nyman, whose publications include *An Ensign to All People: The Sa-*

*cred Message and Mission of the Book of Mormon* (1987).

Church headquarters publishes materials for use in weekly priesthood quorum meetings, Relief Society meetings, Sunday School classes, and Institute and Seminary classes to assist members in better understanding the Book of Mormon.

Several authors have written on Book of Mormon archaeology and geology. Two popular books with an archaeological approach are Dewey and Edith Farnsworth, *The Americas Before Columbus* (1947), and Milton R. Hunter and Thomas Stuart Ferguson, *Ancient America and the Book of Mormon* (1950). More recent studies on Book of Mormon geography include John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (1985); F. Richard Hauck, *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon* (1988); and Joseph L. Allen, *Exploring the Lands of the Book of Mormon* (1989). The Nephites, Lamanites, Mulekites, and Jaredites were historical cultures that occupied time and space; however, Church leaders have declared no official position as to where the Book of Mormon civilizations were situated other than that they were in the Western Hemisphere.

[See also other Book of Mormon entries.]

H. DONL PETERSON

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## BOOK OF MORMON ECONOMY AND TECHNOLOGY

The Book of Mormon reports information about three pre-Hispanic American peoples. Although its writers do not offer a detailed picture of the economic and material culture of their societies, numerous incidental details are preserved in the account. In many cases, though not in every instance, archaeology confirms the general details. The problems that remain in matching the Book of Mormon to its presumed ancient setting are no doubt due both to the scant information given in the book itself and to incompleteness in the archaeological record.

Testing what the Book of Mormon says about pre-Columbian material culture is more difficult than it might at first appear to be. For instance, it is a historically well-established fact that craft techniques can be lost; thus one cannot confidently assume that technologies mentioned for limited