

# 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*

Macmillan Publishing Company  
New York

Maxwell Macmillan Canada  
Toronto

Maxwell Macmillan International  
New York Oxford Singapore Sydney



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prophets in biblical times directed their unpopular message of repentance toward individuals or the community, thus placing the prophet in opposition to the prevailing social, political, and religious values, practices, and institutions of his time and place. Some prophets were killed or persecuted by those whose beliefs and behavior they condemned.

From the beginning, the Lord has set no limit on his ability to send prophets at his discretion. “And I do this that I may prove unto many that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; . . . and because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever” (2 Ne. 29:9). Biblical prophecy did not end with MALACHI but continued with the coming of John the Baptist (Matt. 13:57; Luke 7:39; 1 Ne. 10:4). In addition, the prophetic tradition continued in the Western Hemisphere until the destruction of the NEPHITES around A.D. 400. Joel prophesied the future restoration of prophecy: “I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions” (Joel 2:28). The fulfillment of this prophecy was acknowledged by PETER on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16–18) and again by the angel MORONI to the Prophet Joseph SMITH (JS—H 1:41).

Latter-day scriptures cite, interpret, and allude to ancient prophecy, emphasizing its relevance to the restored Church. For example, important prophecies not in the biblical canon, such as those of JOSEPH OF EGYPT (2 Ne. 3) and ZENOS (Jacob 5), are preserved in the Book of Mormon. NEPHI<sub>1</sub> (e.g., 1 Ne. 20–22; 2 Ne. 11–24), JACOB (2 Ne. 7–8), ABINADI (Mosiah 14–15), and Christ (3 Ne. 20–25) cite Isaiah extensively and provide inspired interpretation (see ISAIAH: TEXTS IN THE BOOK OF MORMON). In the Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith addressed specific questions about Isaiah 11 (D&C 113) and the book of Revelation (D&C 77) and through revelation confirmed the fulfillment of several biblical prophecies in the latter days, including Daniel’s vision of “the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands” as the restoration of the gospel (D&C 65:2) and the coming of ELIJAH in Malachi 4:5–6 by his appearance in the KIRTLAND TEMPLE in 1836 (D&C 110).

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DAVID R. SEELY

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## PROPHECY IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

The Book of Mormon reports prophecies made during a thousand-year period concerning the future of the NEPHITES and LAMANITES, the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, his visit to the Western Hemisphere, the future RESTORATION of the gospel to the GENTILES, and related events of the LAST DAYS. While this record includes the fulfillment of some prophecies, Latter-day Saints see fulfillment of other prophecies in the restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph SMITH and expect yet others to be fulfilled in the future.

Messianic prophecies include the number of years until Jesus’ birth (1 Ne. 10:4; Hel. 14:2), conditions surrounding his birth (1 Ne. 11:13–21), his mother’s identity (Mosiah 3:8), the manner and location of his baptism by John the Baptist (1 Ne. 10:7–10), his miracles and teachings (1 Ne. 11:28–31), and his atonement, resurrection, and second coming. PROPHETS foretold details concerning Christ’s crucifixion and his atoning sacrifice, one stating that “blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people” (Mosiah 3:7). Furthermore, he would rise on the third day (2 Ne. 25:13) and appear to many (Alma 16:20). SAMUEL THE LAMANITE prophesied specific signs of Christ’s birth and death to be experienced among BOOK OF MORMON PEOPLES (Hel. 14).

During his visit to the Americas, the risen Jesus attested to the authenticity of these prophecies by stating that “the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled” (3 Ne. 9:16). Later, he reminded NEPHI<sub>3</sub> of a prophecy of his resurrection, the fulfillment of which had not been recorded. The details were promptly added to Nephite records (3 Ne. 23:6–13; cf. Hel. 14:25).

The Book of Mormon relates the fulfillment of other prophecies foretelling events among Book of Mormon peoples. Besides many Messianic prophecies, examples include ALMA<sub>2</sub> prophesying that the Nephites, dwindling in unbelief, would eventually become extinct (Alma 45:9–14; Morm. 6:11–

15) and ABINADI forecasting the destiny of his captors and their descendants (Mosiah 11:20–25; 17:15–18). Other prophecies anticipated more immediate events. For example, on the eve of Jesus' birth, when lives of believers were threatened by unbelievers, Nephi<sub>3</sub> received divine assurance that "on the morrow" the signs of Christ's birth would be seen (3 Ne. 1:9–15).

Book of Mormon prophets also forecast events of the latter days. They foretold the European exploration of America (1 Ne. 13:12–15), the American Revolution (1 Ne. 13:16–19), and the gathering of Israel (1 Ne. 22; 3 Ne. 20–22). They warned of deceptive practices among religionists, including priestcraft, secret combinations, and neglect of the poor. They foretold the impact of the Book of Mormon on latter-day people and the destruction of the wicked. The prophecies of MORONI<sub>2</sub> included admonitions addressed to those who would live in the last days: "Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, . . . behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing" (Morm. 8:35).

Under inspiration, prophets in the Book of Mormon frequently quoted previous prophets in support of their teachings. They warned that in rejecting the living prophet's witness, their hearers were rejecting the testimonies of such revered prophets as Isaiah, Moses, and ZENOS (Hel. 8:11–20).

Prophesying falsely was viewed as a crime among the Nephites (W of M 1:15–16). Agreement with past prophets was a test of a prophet's authenticity. For instance, during a debate, JACOB exposed Sherem as a false prophet by showing that his testimony contradicted previous prophecy. Jacob then demonstrated that his own teachings agreed with former prophets, thus sealing Sherem's conviction as a false prophet (Jacob 7:9–12).

Prophecy sometimes came in dreams or visions after pondering and prayer. Lehi and NEPHI<sub>1</sub> were caught up in the Spirit (1 Ne. 1:7–8, 11:1). King BENJAMIN and Samuel the Lamanite were visited by angels (Mosiah 3:2; Hel. 13:7). Prophecy was delivered variously, as in a psalm by Nephi<sub>1</sub> (2 Ne. 4:20–35), in Zenos' allegory (Jacob 5), or in Jacob's chastisements (2 Ne. 9:30–38).

Besides their service to God, as his messengers, prophets served as religious leaders (ALMA<sub>1</sub>), kings (Benjamin; MOSIAH<sub>2</sub>), military leaders (Helaman<sub>1</sub>), and historians (Nephi<sub>3</sub>). They were

also social and moral critics of their society. Jacob denounced wickedness among his people not only because of its effects on that generation but also for wounds inflicted on the next (Jacob 2–3). Samuel the Lamanite foretold dire future consequences of the Nephites' lifestyle, criticizing their state of degradation (Hel. 13).

The presence of prophets and of contemporary prophecies were important to the Book of Mormon people. MORMON testified, "I also know that as many things as have been prophesied concerning us . . . have been fulfilled, and as many as go beyond this day must surely come to pass" (W of M 1:4).

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CAMILLE FRONK

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## PROPHET

[This entry consists of two articles: Prophets presents the LDS belief in prophets, both past and present, as an integral part of the Church, and Biblical Prophets discusses the phenomenon of prophets and prophecy as a distinctive feature of biblical religion.]

### PROPHETS

A belief in prophets and their messages lies at the heart of LDS doctrine (A of F 4, 5, 6, 7, 9). Latter-day Saints recognize the biblical and Book of Mormon prophets, as well as latter-day prophets, as servants of Jesus Christ and accept as scripture the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Doctrine and Covenants. They believe that Joseph SMITH and all subsequent PRESIDENTS OF THE CHURCH were and are prophets and representatives of Jesus Christ.

The word "prophet" comes from the Greek *prophetes*, which means "inspired teacher." Although neither the Greek term nor its Hebrew equivalent, *nabi*, initially required the function of foretelling (Smith, p. 3), all prophecy looks to the future. Since the Lord has chosen some of his servants to be foretellers—to disclose, sometimes in specific terms, momentous events that are to occur—the predictive element often overshadows