

A Detailed Response to the Brazilian Testimonies

By the Quorum of Restoration Apostles
December 1, 2017

Table of Contents

Response of the Quorum of Restoration Apostles	1
The Brazilian Testimonies	3
The Brazilians	4
Mission to the Restoration	5
Examining the Testimonies	7
As it Was in the Days of Amos	8
The Time Line of Daniel	10
The Interpretation of 2 Nephi 2	12
Mauricio's Experiences	13
The Angel Ministry	14
Raphael	16
Moroni	17
Three Nephites	22
The Artifacts of Brazil	22
The Book of Mormon Plates	23
The Sword of Laban	30
The Interpreters	31
The Sealed Portion	33
A Proper Invitation?	35
A Sincere Testimony	36
Warnings	37
Conclusions	41

Note: Due to frequent references to the names of Bob Moore and Joseph F. Smith in this record the initials BM and JFS are often used to refer to these brethren.

November 8, 2017

Response of the Quorum of Restoration Apostles to the Brazilian Testimonies

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Restoration,

Nothing stirs the heart of the Saints more than the Book of Mormon. Recently, in Blue Springs, Missouri, at the Zarahemla Restoration Branch, Bob Moore and Joseph F. Smith presented testimonies about the Book of Mormon which have captivated the minds and hearts of many people. On October 22 and October 29, 2017, these brethren testified of activities in Brazil that included angel visitations, the Book of Mormon plates, the Sword of Laban and the Interpreters.

The testimonies of these men are posted online¹ and can be viewed there. Their testimonies have created both hope and concern in the hearts of many. Some are experiencing a confusion of spirit as they have attempted to discern the Lord's testimony regarding these things.

We, the Quorum of Restoration Apostles, met together on November 4 and 5, 2017, with prayer and fasting, to seek the Lord's will about the matter presented by Brother Moore and Brother Joseph F. Smith. We carefully reviewed the matter in the light of scripture and history.

Many aspects of the Brazilian testimonies are exciting and stimulating. The reappearance of the Book of Mormon plates and other artifacts associated with the plates, the reports of Moroni actively teaching men on the earth, the promise of the words of the Sealed Portion of the Book of Mormon all stir the hearts of the Saints with hope.

Based on the information presented in the testimonies of Bob Moore and Joseph F. Smith on the dates given above, we warn the Saints to use extreme caution before acknowledging the hand of God's blessing on these testimonies. We have received no evidence of divine affirmation that these testimonies are from God or that the Saints should exercise faith in the promises and prophecies declared. There are indications of spiritual deception in the revelations received by the men in Brazil as they are described in the testimonies of Brothers Moore and Smith. We cannot recommend this testimony to be the word of the Lord.

Every person will need to judge for himself/herself the merits of these testimonies. Each of us will need to give an account to the Lord for where we place our faith. We remind the Saints of the Lord's warning in Matthew 24:

And again, after the tribulation of those days which shall come upon Jerusalem if any man shall say unto you Lo! here is Christ, or there; believe him not, For in those days, there shall also arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if possible, they shall deceive the very

¹<http://www.ustream.tv/channel/zarahemla-branch>

elect, who are the elect according to the covenant. Behold, I speak these things unto you for the elect's sake ... And whoso treasureth up my words, shall not be deceived (Matthew 24:22-24, 39 I.V.).

God has given us clear instruction that his word, the Rod of Iron (see 1 Nephi 3:68) is able to guide us safely through this life to our rest with God and all of our holy fathers. Nephi also wrote that our hope and strength lie in placing our reliance wholly upon the merits of Jesus Christ, who is mighty to save. We must, therefore, press forward, feasting on the words of Christ, because they will tell us everything we should do.

Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life. And now behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven, whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. Amen ... Wherefore, I said unto you, Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do. Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye can not understand them, it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark. For behold, again I say unto you, that if ye will enter in by the way and receive the Holy Ghost, it will shew unto you all things what ye should do (2 Nephi 13:29-32, 14:4-6).

We offer this counsel to help you to choose wisely by seeking the Lord's wisdom, relying on the things written in the revealed word of God and in Jesus Christ, the very word of God made flesh and who lived among us. We plan further prayerful consideration and discussion of the specifics regarding the difficulties we discern in the testimony of these brethren which we will publish later.

Your Servants in the Lord Jesus Christ,

The Quorum of Restoration Apostles
Gary R. Whiting, President of the Quorum

The Brazilian Testimonies

On October 22 and 29, 2017, Bob Moore and Joseph F. Smith gave their testimonies about the experiences of four men in Brazil and their own testimonies of their visit to Brazil. It was an amazing report.

Bob Moore spoke at the Zarahemla Branch on October 22, 2017. He gave some information on the journey to Brazil and spoke about the disaster of the “spiritual condition of this people.” He expounded on Micah 4:12-5:5, beginning with Micah 5:1 in support of what he understood to be God’s response to the spiritual ills in the Restoration Branches.

He mentioned the trip to Brazil with Joseph F. Smith, but did not give details about the visit or what they saw. He said Joseph F. Smith was the chief witness and he (Moore) was the supportive witness. He did mention going to Brazil with a definite plan in mind. They intended to make sure the men in Brazil understood the Restored Gospel, especially as it is presented in 3 Nephi 12. They intended to baptize the men and give them the gift of the Holy Ghost. Furthermore, if they felt led to do so, they would ordain those with calls and organize the people there into a branch.

Moore also said while in Brazil, he and Joseph received a mission for the Centerplace. Their mission was to bear testimony of the things they saw, heard and knew, to unite those who believed their testimony, find a way to build the temple on the consecrated spot which will prepare the way for Jesus to return and read the untranslated portion of the Sealed Portion of the Book of Mormon in the temple.

Joseph F. Smith preached at Zarahemla Branch on October 29, 2017. He began by reading an email, or parts of more than one email, to review the history of the events in Brazil. On April 6, 2007, the eve of Easter, Mauricio went to a mountain to pray. It was nighttime and he became lost. In this condition he felt fear and a sense of a dark force around him. Suddenly, a light appeared above him and out of the light appeared a being who announced himself as Raphael, an angel.

Mauricio reported he was visited because of his great faith. A second angel appeared who said he was Moroni. Mauricio was instructed to return to the same place every year with three other men, who were apparently identified. They returned every year for 10 years. Moroni taught them. About four or five years ago, Moroni delivered the Book of Mormon plates, the Interpreters and the Sword of Laban to Mauricio.

The men were also visited by three men who were identified by Moore and Smith as the Three Nephites. These men demonstrated amazing power and also taught the Brazilians.

In January 2017, the Brazilians returned to the mountain and were given the email contact information for Joseph F. Smith by the angel. In their message to Smith, they invited him to come to Brazil. They desired to have a congregation under the direction of Joseph F. Smith and to receive baptism by his hand. Smith was told he would be their leader as long as he lives.

A Sunday evening meeting was held to allow for more discussion about the events in Brazil and to allow people to ask questions. During this meeting more details were revealed. There was a review of a few scriptures whose interpretation was key to supporting the testimony of what was happening in Brazil. Both BM and JFS gave more details about the artifacts held by the Brazilians.

The Brazilians

The man who first met with the angels is named Mauricio. Three other men were involved in visits to the mountains and experiences with the angels and the Three Nephites. One other name was mentioned, Joney (sp?). Of these four men, one eventually joined with the Mormons and remains active with them.

We were told the men have no attachment to any church. A detailed spiritual history for them is not known. They call themselves “seekers.” Mauricio’s testimony is he was seeking spiritual guidance when he went into the mountain to pray. They investigated the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS), but did not join. They reported being told not to join that church, although, one man did eventually join. The seekers were told that they would receive great spiritual power when they were ordained to the priesthood. It was one of their desires to have this ordination under the hands of JFS.

The group in Brazil is composed of five families. Two baptismal services were held while the Americans were there. A total of 15 people were baptized and later confirmed. JFS baptized some or all of the people (Nine in the first service and six in the second). Three men were ordained. Mauricio and Joney (sp??) were ordained as elders and a third man, who is unnamed, was also ordained.

These people are described as a very caring and close group. Both BM and JFS often remarked on the love these people have for each other and the closeness of their relationship.

BM reported the group was forming a United Order of Enoch. When the American brethren left Brazil, no branch had yet been organized. BM stated there was not sufficient time to attend to that detail. The Brazilians were given instructions on how to organize a branch and that is expected to be completed shortly, if it has not already been done (as of October 29, 2017).

Mission to the Restoration

BM and JFS had a specific mission in mind when they traveled to Brazil. It appears that it was accomplished save the actual act of organizing a branch among those people. While in Brazil, the American brethren were given a mission among the Restoration Saints. Their mission is directly related to what the Brazilians were taught by their spiritual mentors about the status of the Restoration Saints.

Mauricio reported that Moroni taught him there was no leader who is pure in heart among the Restoration Saints today. This, he said, parallels with the calling of Amos. In the days of Amos, Israel, the Northern Kingdom, had corrupt leadership and the people were in a state of disobedience. God could not find anyone among the tribes of Israel who could speak his word, so he called Amos, a Jew from the Southern Kingdom (Judah) to be God's prophet among the northern tribes.

BM said Moroni taught Mauricio and the others:

In the days of the prophet Amos, the Lord met no pure-hearted man among his people to warn the leaders of Israel. The pure heart means not be contaminated by the traditions that infiltrated the Lord's people with the precepts of men. That is why he sought the prophet Amos elsewhere (BM sermon, Zarahemla Branch, October 22, 2017).

This is why God chose to move through the men in Brazil and not through anyone in Independence, Missouri. Mauricio is God's Amos for today to speak to us who are the spiritual equivalent of Israel before their destruction. According to BM's application of multiple scriptures in his sermon on October 22, 2017, the Restoration is all unclean (see Isaiah 28:7-8). The threshing of the Restoration has begun (Micah 4:12-13).

JFS has been given the task of being the Spokesman and Chief Witness for the work God is doing through Mauricio. Bob Moore is the first supporting witness of JFS's witness.

BM (10-29-2017 evening) said the message out of Brazil to us is that the bondage is over. It is time to come together. It is a time of redemption. The Saints are released, the Lord will pour out his Spirit upon them.

He does not anticipate or desire any type of a formal organization. This act of coming together is a dedication to living together in righteousness. The message is that we must repent of our divisions and lay down differences and focus on the things upon which we can agree. He used the analogy of each person being a rough hewn stone. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit received by conversion and baptism, we are shaped and placed together to form a spiritual house. Being thus united, we will move to build the temple on the consecrated spot. Jesus can then come to the

temple and read the parts of the Sealed Portion of the Book of Mormon that are not already translated and published.

While the Restoration Saints are working on the above tasks, the work in Brazil will focus on the translation of a portion of the Sealed Portion of the Book of Mormon. The translated parts will be sent “here” (Center Place) for publication. The translated parts of the Sealed Portion will tell the Saints what they must do and how to do them. It will assist in the work of unification and building the temple.

No date for the translation of the Sealed Portion was announced. BM did say he anticipated that it would be soon.

As these events will transpire, events in the world will continue to degrade. People will come to Zion as part of the gathering. BM said they received a promise that God will protect Zion. It will have a bubble of protection over it and it will be a place of protection and a refuge of peace.

What is the role of the Book of Mormon artifacts? BM said they were provided as signs that the testimony of the men in Brazil and the prophecies attached to them are true. The artifacts include the Plates of the Book of Mormon, the Sword of Laban and the Interpreters.

This is a brief review of the events described by BM and JFS in their testimonies. These testimonies may be viewed at <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/zarahemla-branch>. Readers are encouraged to view the presentations for themselves.

Examining the Testimonies

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea; who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so (Acts 17:10-11).

The Restoration, especially in the Reorganization, has highly prized the right and responsibility exercised by the Bereans. The people of Berea were called noble because they willingly searched the scriptures and compared what they heard Paul and Silas teach with the written record of the scriptures.

The Quorum of Restoration Apostles spent seven hours together, and many hours individually, praying, fasting and studying to know if these things are as Brothers Moore and Smith have reported them. Are these things from God? Do they stand up under the scrutiny of scripture? What is the testimony of the Holy Spirit about these things?

This is not a witch hunt or a pogrom. In the last days, we are told in Matthew 24, there will arise false prophets and false Christs who will show miraculous signs and wonders (see verse 23). So wonderful will these things appear, that many will be deceived and even the elect according to the covenant will need to be very careful lest they also be deceived. Something as marvelous as these brethren have reported deserves a rigorous examination.

We have conducted our examination of the testimonies given by BM and JFS in as fair a manner as possible. Great care has been taken to note the words used by the witnesses so as not to misrepresent them. It is important that the Saints, and other interested persons, have access to the reasons why we chose not to recommend these testimonies or the work represented by the testimonies from Brazil to be from God.

Evidence from historical sources will be compared to the details given in the Brazilian Testimonies. We will also examine it against the testimony of scripture and offer our best understanding of these things in order to confirm the position we hold on these matters.

When Joseph Smith Jr. reported the visit of the angel Moroni to the world he was soundly criticized for his testimony. Most of the opposition in the 1820s was related to the belief that God does not reveal himself as Joseph described his experiences. There are no angel visitations and visions of deity in the world anymore, his critics said. The general Christian community questioned the need and validity of another book of scripture. The general teaching then, as now, was the Bible is a closed canon of scripture. God spoke in old times through prophets and the apostles, but no more. By this reasoning, they argued, the Book of Mormon is an impossibility.

Our concern with the testimonies of BM and JFS about the events in Brazil are not those of the Christians in the 1800s. We anticipate angelic ministry to increase. We anticipate more records to

come forth by the gift and power of God. Many of us have prayed for years that the Lord would allow the Sealed Portion of the Book of Mormon to come forth. We hope for the Brass Plates and the testimony of Zenos and other prophets to be fully available to us. It is not the possibility of these things which concern us about the Brazilian Testimony. Our concerns are in the manner of their presentation, the instruction of the angels in Brazil and the ability of these testimonies to match what is already known in Scripture and the history of the Restoration.

We find many inconsistencies in the testimonies and the evidence described as signs to confirm the validity of those claims. When those claims are compared to historical evidence and the witness of scripture, we find the Brazilian claims to be lacking. These foundational problems cause us to question the testimony that these things are the revelation of God's word to us today.

We know that God rules in all things over the affairs of mankind. As Daniel stated in his thanksgiving prayer to God when the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar was revealed to him,

Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God forever and ever; for wisdom and might are his; And he changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings, and setteth up kings; he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding; He revealeth the deep and secret things; he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him (Daniel 2:20-22).

Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels; praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon; praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded, and they were created. He hath also stablished them forever and ever; he hath made a decree which shall not pass. Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps. Fire, and hail; snow, and vapor; stormy wind fulfilling his word; Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars; Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl; Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth; Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children; Let them praise the name of the Lord; for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven. He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the Lord (Psalm 148:1-14).

As it Was in the Days of Amos

BM quoted the teaching of the angel Moroni in Brazil saying,

In the days of the prophet Amos the Lord met no pure-hearted man among his people to warn the leaders of Israel. The pure heart means not be contaminated by

the traditions that infiltrated the Lord's people with the precepts of men. That is why he sought the prophet Amos elsewhere (Bob Moore sermon, October 22, 2017).

This revelation is intended to show that the work appearing in Brazil is justified because of the rampant sin among the people of the United States and the Restoration. There is no one worthy among the people of the Restoration to be given a prophetic mission and God found a suitable person in Brazil.

Amos, however, is not the final word in the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Two other prophets ministered after Amos and prior to the destruction of the Northern Kingdom or Ephraim. One is Obed (2 Chronicles 28:9-11) and the other is Hosea.

Obed was in Samaria when the victorious Israelite army returned from battle with Judah. He prophesied that God's fierce wrath was upon Israel for fighting against Judah and warned them to set the 200,000 Jewish prisoners free and allow them to return to Judah.

The scripture does not say Obed went to Samaria—it says he was in Samaria when the troops arrived. It is probable he was a native of the Northern Kingdom and a prophet of God. Chronologically, Obed's ministry came after the ministry of Amos.

Hosea, author of the Book of Hosea, is also a prophet to the Northern Kingdom. The only thing known about his origins is the name of his father. There is nothing in the book Hosea wrote to suggest that Hosea was from the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The context of the book would be consistent with Hosea being of the Northern Kingdom. He married there and it was common practice for married sons to live near or as part of their father's estate. Hosea's ministry followed the ministry of Amos, i.e., Amos ministered first and later came Hosea.

It appears the Lord was able to find at least two Northern Kingdom natives, after Amos, to declare his word to the Northern Kingdom's kings and inhabitants.

It is clear that bringing a prophet up from Judah to Israel was out of the ordinary, but it does not necessarily support the concept that no citizen of Israel was available to be a prophet. Hosea and Obed followed the ministry of Amos. It does suggest that Amos was especially prepared to be a prophet to Israel in the day in which the Lord called upon him.

If Mauricio is called to be the Amos to the Restoration, especially, the Center Place, why didn't the Lord call him to leave Brazil and personally come to the Center Place to preach repentance to the Restoration? That is the model of Amos. Amos was called to leave his home and go to the Northern Kingdom to deliver his message.

The scriptural record does not easily support the conclusion BM taught.

The Time Line of Daniel

On the evening of October 29, 2017, BM gave some introductory remarks at the start of the meeting. One of the things he covered was an interpretation of Daniel chapter 12. This is an important item to consider in the overall testimony. If this is correctly explained by BM, their position is more plausible.

BM said these interpretations were taught to the men in Brazil by the Three Nephites and those men taught them to BM and JFS. Bob said these interpretations were not what he previously understood about these things, nevertheless, he seemed convinced they were correct.

Chapter 12 of Daniel includes an instruction to Daniel to close and seal a book that is to be kept sealed until the “time of the end” (Daniel 12:4). BM said the book in Daniel is the Book of Mormon. He offered no supportive testimony or scripture, but expects people to simply believe it is true.

Is that book in Daniel 12 a reference to the Book of Mormon? In verse one, the book is also referenced as a record of the names of the people who will be delivered at the time Michael intervenes for them. In verse two of the chapter it refers to many who sleep in the dust who shall awaken; some to shame and others to everlasting life.

The Book of Mormon is an important record. Certainly how we receive the testimony of Jesus Christ it proclaims will determine if we are resurrected to everlasting life or to shame and everlasting contempt, but the Book of Mormon is not a roll of names identifying the judgement one will receive. There are other books referenced in scripture which serve the same purpose and are mentioned in Revelation. John mentioned the book of life of the Lamb (Revelation 13:8; 21:27); the book of life (Revelation 17:8; 20:12, 15). The book mentioned in Daniel 12 seems to be more akin to these books than the Book of Mormon.

Another troubling thing about this testimony is that BM’s interpretation requires an explanation of how Daniel came to be in the line of stewards and scribes for the Book of Mormon records. Certainly, God can do marvelous things, but why would Daniel have stewardship of records that were in the careful care of Nephi and Jacob at the time Daniel was written?

BM explains that Daniel chapter 12 speaks of three different time periods. These are prophetic descriptions about when certain things will take place. The first is found in Daniel 12:7, “... it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.” This curious use of the word “time” is a reference to calendar years. This reference is understood to refer to one year, two years and ½ a year. Using the Jewish lunar calendar this calculates to 1260 days which are understood prophetically to represent years, or 1260 years. This calculation has been taught by the church missionaries for years. The classic texts on this subject are, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* by

Daniel McGregor; *The Fall of Babylon and the Triumph of the Kingdom of God* by Walter J. Haworth and *Restoration: A Study in Prophecy* by Elbert A. Smith.

The beginning of the 1260 years is measured from a date representing the total apostasy of the New Testament church or the final dissolution of the Roman Empire into the ten toes of the image seen by Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:31-45) and interpreted by Daniel. Both calculations result in the date 570 A.D. as the beginning of the apostasy. The date 570 added to 1260 gives the date 1830. Of course, 1830 is significant because it was the year the Book of Mormon came forth (March), the church was organized (April 6), and the first mission to the Lamanites began (October).

BM says the Three Nephites used a different calculation than has been classically taught in the Reorganization, but the 1260 years stills ends in 1830. The Nephite way of figuring this time was not explained.

The second time period of 1290 days begins at a different point than does the 1260 days. Daniel records:

And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days (Daniel 12:11).

According to BM, the Three Nephites taught this period of 1290 years ended on April 6, 2007. This is the date of Mauricio's first experience with the angels. BM says this is the beginning of the Second Invitation.

Brother Moore never offered a starting date for the 1290 years or why that date is a significant event that qualifies as the time when the daily sacrifice is taken away and the abomination of desolation occurs. He only said the time period ends on April 6, 2007. The Second Invitation is not clearly defined except that it is good news for the Saints. It is an unexpected salvation, because it did not come through someone of the Restorationists, but it started in Brazil. The Second Invitation has been going in Brazil for 10 years and we are just now aware of it.

The third period of time mentioned in Daniel 12 is found in verse 12. It is a period of 1335 years.

Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days (Daniel 12:12).

The 1335 years are a measure of when Jesus will appear in the temple on the consecrated spot in Independence, Missouri and reads the remainder of the Sealed Portion of the Book of Mormon. There is no indication of how this was calculated. BM said there was no indication of a date for its fulfillment.

Prophetic interpretation of things in scripture can be challenging, even to the experienced student. We have very little to go on to judge the validity of the interpretations offered by Brother Moore.

The Interpretation of 2 Nephi 2

On the subject of the choice seer and the interpretation of the prophecy in 2 Nephi 2, Richard Rupe wrote, “Lehi’s blessing of his youngest son Joseph (2 Nephi 2 and LDS 3) has been a fruitful source of confusion for all who venture therein” (Richard Rupe, *God’s Plan of Salvation*, 2016, pg 265).

The interpretation offered by BM on the evening of October 29, 2017, has increased the possibility of confusion even more. His presentation was given quickly without the aid of scripture or references. Since then, BM has posted a three-page explanation of this interpretation with reference to the applicable portions of 2 Nephi 2. This explanation can be seen on the blog, secondinvitation.org.

This interpretation is, we are told, the one taught by Moroni to the men in Brazil and which was communicated to BM. This is part of what he referred to when he turned to JFS and said, “We really went to school down there.”

The prophecy reveals three different men named Joseph who are foretold. The first is Joseph Smith Jr who is called the “choice seer.” The second Joseph is Joseph Smith III who is identified as the one who will bring forth the Lord’s word and convince others of the word already given. God will bless him by preventing his enemies from destroying him and he will extend peace and salvation to the Lord’s people.

Verses 32-40 speak of “a Moses” and a “spokesman” for Moses. BM reported that Mauricio is the man called “a Moses” and Joseph F. Smith is the spokesman. Joseph is so identified because he is of the loins of Joseph, which BM was taught refers to Joseph Smith Jr and not any other Joseph.

A book length review of all of the possible interpretations of this single chapter might not do justice to the many theories and ideas about who is spoken of in these verses. Richard Rupe’s review of the question of the choice seer question in, *God’s Plan of Salvation*, quotes Bob Moore, from an unpublished study, saying a possible interpretation of the passage is the promise was to Joseph Smith Jr. and his seed. What Joseph, as the choice seer, did not accomplish could be done by his progeny in the future (*God’s Plan of Salvation*, pg 271).

Whether the interpretation supplied by the Brazilian Testimony is a valid one or not will require significant study. Many disagree with it based on their previous study of this question, but few interpreters agree on all aspects of the message of this prophecy.

It is interesting that many of the interpretations which have been published look for a Native American to rise up as, at least, a mighty prophet in the latter days. The interpretation as expounded by Brother Moore does not include such a possibility.

Furthermore, the interpretation offered by BM separates the role of a seer from the line of Joseph Smith Jr. Mauricio is certainly not related to Joseph Smith and he is not of Lamanite heritage. We were told that Mauricio and the others are from German and Italian descent.

Mauricio's Experiences

The testimony of Mauricio is a fascinating and curious account. JFS read some of the testimony as written by Mauricio. There is an interesting parallel between the account related by Mauricio and the original grove experience recounted by Joseph Smith Jr. As read by JFS on October 29, 2017, Mauricio went into a mountain to pray, became lost in the dark, was surrounded by a dark force and was delivered by a light that appeared overhead.

In the account of Joseph Smith's first vision in 1820, he wrote:

After I had retired into the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction. But exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction, (not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world who had such a marvelous power as I had never before felt in my being,) just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun; which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two personages (whose brightness and glory defy all description) standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name, and said, (pointing to the other,) "This is my beloved Son, hear him" (RLDS Church History 1:9).

The similar components of these testimonies are easily seen. The desire to call on God, being alone in a solitary place, facing a dark opposition, deliverance by light and receiving a message by a heavenly being. Obviously, there are some differences such as the era of time, type of location (grove of trees near a field vs a mountain), the country, and the source of the heavenly message (God/Christ vs angels). An additional item of similarity is the commandment to return to the same place annually for instruction.

The experience related by Mauricio certainly sparks a sense of familiarity to Latter Day Saints. This alone is not sufficient evidence to judge the validity of the overall testimony about what is going on in Brazil. The ultimate test is to judge the doctrine taught in Brazil by what is written in scripture and by the testimony of the Holy Spirit through prayer associated with diligent study about all these matters.

The Angel Ministry

Beginning with the first experience reported by Mauricio, angelic ministry has been a regular part of the activity in Brazil. The angel ministry is characterized by two angelic beings and by three men who presented evidence of great power and who provided teaching or instruction. They are introduced in the testimonies in this order:

1. Raphael
2. Moroni
3. Three Nephites

The identity of these messengers is essential to understanding the authenticity of the testimonies arising out of Brazil. The second thing is the message they deliver and the doctrine they teach.

No one in the Restoration should have any concerns about the theological or doctrinal validity about the ministry of angels. Angels have been the messengers of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the covenants of the Lord since the very beginning. A teaching angel was sent to Adam (Genesis 4:6, IV only); to Abraham to announce the imminent coming of his covenant son (Genesis 18); to Joshua on the eve of the Jericho battle (Joshua 5:13-15); to the parents of Samson (Judges 13); to King Benjamin before his final sermon (Mosiah 1) and many others.

The calling and ministry of the Lord's angels is clearly and concisely described in Moroni 7.

Wherefore, by the ministering of angels, and by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God, men began to exercise faith in Christ; and thus by faith, they did lay hold upon every good thing; and thus it was until the coming of Christ (Moroni 7:24).

Behold, I say unto you, Nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men. For behold, they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, shewing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind, in every form of godliness. And the office of their ministry is, to call men unto repentance, and to fulfill and to do the work of the covenants of the Father which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him; And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy

Ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof; And after this manner bringeth to pass the Father the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men (Moroni 7:30-34).

Angels sent from God will teach faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance and the covenants of the Lord. The righteous angels teach by the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Nephi 14:2-3). What they teach is from God and they are his messengers.

The adversary also has a cadre of angels. They are deceivers and liars. They seek to seduce a person away from light and truth. The tools of their trade are imitation, the appearance of truth and a denial of the things of God. Like the serpent in the Garden of Eden, they are subtle.

The Corinthian Saints were warned against false teachers and apostles who transform themselves into the apostles of Christ, which he said was no surprise:

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:13-14).

It was no surprise that Satan himself can take on the appearance of an angel of light. He is a fallen angel and he knows about angels of light, but his imitations are never as good as the genuine thing because his inner being is darkness and the darkness will seep out. There is no truth in him. That is why Jacob said,

Yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents; Who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder, and all manner of secret works of darkness (2 Nephi 6:22-23).

Nigh unto means almost, but not quite. To the unaware, however, nigh unto is close enough and Satan can steal the heart of a person and do significant damage to others by the lies that are taught. Korihor was one of the anti-Christ's that troubled the Nephites. After the power of the Lord closed his mouth and he knew God had done it, he confessed that he had been deceived.

And Korihor put forth his hand, and wrote, saying: I know that I am dumb, for I can not speak; and I know that nothing, save it were the power of God, could bring this upon me; yea, and I also knew that there was a God. But, behold the devil hath deceived me; for he appeared unto me in the form of an angel, and said unto me, Go and reclaim this people, for they have all gone astray after an unknown God. And he said unto me, There is no God; yea, and he taught me that which I should say. And I have taught his words; and I taught them, because they were pleasing unto the carnal mind; And I taught them, even until I had much success, insomuch that I verily believed that they were true; and for this cause, I

withstood the truth, even until I have brought this great curse upon me (Alma 16:66-69).

Therefore, it is vital the Saints use great care and discernment while evaluating the claims reported by BM and JFS. We do not suggest that these men are willingly seeking to deceive or even to work against the purposes of God, but the subtleties of the evil one are great and we are often the most vulnerable to deception about things we greatly desire to occur.

Raphael

The first angel that appeared to Mauricio is Raphael. This is an angelic name which is probably not well known to most Saints. It is a name that only appears once in all of Restoration scripture, and depending upon the version of the Doctrine and Covenants you own, it may not appear at all.

Joseph Smith Jr. referred to the voice of Raphael being heard along with the voice of Michael, Gabriel and others “in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette ...” (D&C 110:21b). These messengers spoke about their dispensation and rights.

This section is a letter that deals primarily with the ordinance of baptism for the dead. This ordinance is not practiced by the Reorganization and for that reason, this section was removed by action of General Conferences in 1970 and 1990. This section was never adopted as scripture in the Reorganization.

No other reference to Raphael exists in any scripture we use. A search of LDS and RLDS literature shows no other reference to Raphael. There is only this obscure single reference in the letter from Liberty Jail. Raphael’s significance and place in the Restoration is unknown. Why then, was this angel used to make first contact with Mauricio?

An angel named Raphael is mentioned in several apocryphal books. He is mentioned in Enoch 10:4-6 binding one named Azazel and sending him into outer darkness until the great day of judgment.

In Roman Catholic doctrine, Raphael is one of the Seven Archangels who stand before the throne of God. He is mentioned in Catholic and Orthodox bibles in the apocryphal book of Tobit. In Tobit 12 he demonstrated healing powers on behalf of two people. He is called St. Raphael and is associated with healing. The name Raphael in Hebrew means “It is God who heals.”

In the mystic and occult world, an angel called Raphael is honored. He is associated with several things. Evidences of his presence are said to include visions, dreams, especially about health or healing relationships, feeling heat, tingling or vibrations, or messages in car license plates.

The fact that an angel named Raphael made the first contact with Mauricio is most unusual. He is nowhere associated with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the House

of Israel or the covenants of the Lord. There is significant reason to be concerned about an angel with such a legacy of superstition and mysticism. In these tales, the angel acts quite independently and is not shown to be submissive to or under the direction of God.

Based on the testimonies and the information provided, this angel said he had come because of Mauricio's great faith. He is the one who introduced or preceded the next angel, identified as Moroni. At the very least, a being by the name of Raphael being associated with these experiences gives one pause to seriously inquire of the Lord what the role of that angel is and a sense of caution is justified.

Moroni

The second angel who appeared to Mauricio is identified as Moroni. Restoration Saints are very familiar with the name Moroni. He was the last prophet to keep the plates upon which the Book of Mormon was recorded. He was the one who introduced Joseph Smith Jr. to the Book of Mormon and safeguarded the plates during the translation process.

The Moroni of scripture is well known and there is sufficient data about his teaching and prophesying to allow a careful comparison with the teaching of the one identified as Moroni in Brazil.

BM and JFS have said that Moroni was the chief instructor of the Brazilians and he has been seen by Mauricio and the three witnesses there. Joseph described these aspects of Moroni's teaching:

1. "The Lord was moving his hand to restore Zion to its place determined by him in a place chosen to be the New Jerusalem in Missouri."
2. Churches bearing his name had strayed from their covenant, making flesh their arm
 - a. Isaiah 1:9 remnant referred to branches of the Restoration
 - b. "Certain divergences of opinion" among the Restoration branches
 - c. They are not all together one of heart and mind
 - d. Churches are divided into many
3. Lord looks with appreciation on JFS for his labor and the intent of his heart
4. God will do his work in Brazil then through Central America and finally into the north country where there is a great multitude of covenant people (Revelation 7:9).

We also know the tasks which were assigned to BM and JFS. BM said the message of the spokesman is to declare glad tidings in the land of Zion that the time of its redemption is come and to say that the time of bondage is over. It is time to come together. The Saints are released, the Lord will pour out his spirit upon them.

This spokesman's reports concerning the writings of this Moses, who is appointed to translate part of the sealed portion, will reclaim Joseph's descendants who

remain perplexed 187 years after the Restoration broke forth (Bob Moore, "Moroni's Interpretation of the Prophecy of Joseph of Egypt", posted on secondinvitation.org, pg 3).

This Brazilian Moroni is proclaiming a restoration of the Saints of the latter days. It is not the same message or task that was proclaimed for the Book of Mormon or the Restored Church. The first message was to seek the scattered of the House of Israel. This new message, as presented by BM and JFS in their October presentations, is to the scattered latter day saints. In many ways, the language and the tone of this message sounds the same as in 1820. The familiar sound attempts to stir our souls in allegiance, but it is not quite the same tune as the original.

People who believe this testimony are invited to come together and the Lord will pour out his Spirit upon them. In the newsletter by Joseph Smith Ministries for November 2017, this statement is found:

In the meantime, part of the sealed portion will be translated in Brazil. Those who gather in faith and unite around Joseph F. Smith's testimony will be cleansed by the Spirit as they then learn to obey the celestial law. They will receive and publish part of the sealed portion. It will reveal all things to live in Zion, as well as be an ensign to gather the rest.

We are told by BM that no organization is anticipated in the coming together. No organization is desired. It will be a coming together as a people living together in righteousness. The people who can do this will lay down their differences, live and worship together, and love each other. These brethren told us this is what it means to rally around the testimony of Joseph F. Smith.

Scripture commands us to come unto Christ. This is what the original Moroni wrote:

Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in no wise deny the power of God. And again, if ye, by the grace of God, are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father, unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy without spot (Moroni 10:29-30).

The Book of Mormon's Moroni invites us to rally around Jesus Christ and the testimony that he is our Savior and Redeemer. This is significantly different than the call to rally around the testimony of a man.

BM also explained that we need to allow the Spirit to shape the believers and fit them together as a spiritual house. This united people will build the temple and then Jesus can come to the temple and read the Sealed Portion.

How does this message compare to the words of Moroni recorded in the Book of Mormon? How do they match up against the words spoken by the angel Moroni when he appeared to Joseph Smith Jr.?

Unfortunately, not very well. From one of Joseph's accounts in the Wentworth Letter is written:

On the evening of the 21st of September, A. D. 1823, while I was praying unto God and endeavoring to exercise faith in the precious promises of Scripture, on a sudden a light like that of day, only of a far purer and more glorious appearance and brightness, burst into the room—indeed the first sight was as though the house was filled with consuming fire; the appearance produced a shock that affected the whole body. In a moment a personage stood before me surrounded with a glory yet greater than that with which I was already surrounded. **This messenger proclaimed himself to be an angel of God, sent to bring the joyful tidings that the covenant which God made with ancient Israel was at hand to be fulfilled; that the preparatory work for the second coming of the Messiah was speedily to commence; that the time was at hand for the gospel in all its fulness to be preached in power unto all nations, that a people might be prepared for the Millennial reign.** I was informed that I was chosen to be an instrument in the hands of God to bring about some of his purposes in this glorious dispensation (emphasis added).

According to Joseph, the angel appeared and immediately reported on the “glad tidings that the covenant which God made with ancient Israel was at hand to be fulfilled.” The most important thing Moroni said to Joseph Smith was that the time for fulfilling the covenants of the Lord to Israel were at hand.

After two sermons and a two hour question and answer period, there was no testimony that the work had anything to do with restoring the house of Israel. It was a very church-centric, fix the Center Place message that was taught. There was nothing about taking the gospel into all the world in power to all nations.

How is it that Moroni's message could have changed so much, when it is so very badly needed today? Did Moroni forget his work and calling? Has God changed in regard to his promises to Israel?

In an email to Hugh Caldwell, BM does give attention to the mission to Israel. On November 7, 2017 BM responded to a question about the gathering of Israel. He said in that email that there are descendants of Lehi and people of Israel which were scattered among the nations and are in

the New World. The work of JFS is in the Center Place and the work of Mauricio is to begin in Brazil and to gradually bring the gospel north through South and Central America to the Center Place. BM does have an answer for how he understands the Brazilian Testimonies impacting the restoration of the House of Israel (email to Hugh Caldwell, November 7, 2017 from Bob Moore is on file).

The reader can judge if BM answers the question about the work of restoring the House of Israel to their covenants, their lands of inheritance, and the call to take the gospel into all the world.

Oliver Cowdery wrote a series of letters which were published in the *Messenger and Advocate*, an early church publication, in 1835. In the letters, he wrote a great deal about Moroni's visit to Joseph Smith in 1823. These are the most detailed accounts we have of this experience and they are very enlightening on the message of Moroni.

God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are, that no flesh should glory in his presence. Therefore, says the Lord, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder; the wisdom, of their wise shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent shall be hid; **for according to his covenant which he made with his ancient saints, his people, the house of Israel, must come to a knowledge of the gospel, and own that Messiah whom their fathers rejected, and with them the fulness of the Gentiles be gathered in, to rejoice in one fold under one Shepherd.**" (Oliver Cowdery, *Messenger and Advocate*, Letter 4, February, 1835, emphasis added)

Moroni told Joseph Smith Jr. that the covenants of the Lord must be honored and the house of Israel must come to a knowledge of the gospel and the Messiah. This is the key thing. Yes, the Gentiles will be gathered as well, but the emphasis in the 1823 Moroni's message is covenants and restoring the House of Israel to the Messiah.

The message of covenants and restoring the House of Israel was absent from any of the testimony given in the original presentations, but BM did provide some insight on his view as discussed above. What was taught, and attributed to the 2017 Moroni, is the need to teach people to surrender their differences and build a temple so Jesus can visit there and read the Sealed Portion. There is a sufficient contrast between the voice or message of the 1823 and 2017 Moroni to cause one to wonder if they are the same being.

But the time has now arrived, in which, **according to his covenants**, the Lord will manifest to the faithful that **he is the same today and forever, and that the cup of suffering of his people, the house of Israel, is nearly fulfilled**; and that the way may be prepared before their face he will bring to the knowledge of the people the gospel as it was preached by his servants on this land, and manifest to

the obedient the truth of the same, by the power of the Holy Spirit; for the time is near when his sons and daughters will prophesy, old men dream dreams, and young men see visions, and those who are thus favored will be such as embrace the gospel as it was delivered in old times; and they shall be blessed with signs following ((Oliver Cowdery, *Messenger and Advocate*, Letter 5, March 1835, emphasis added).

In this installment of Oliver's testimony, Moroni continues with the same theme. God's covenants, his unchangeable character and the recovery of the House of Israel are the theme. Where is this theme in the message of the 2017 Moroni? It is not there.

The final witness in this comparison are the words written by Moroni to close the Book of Mormon. From the tenth chapter is found:

Now I, Moroni, write somewhat as seemeth me good; and I write unto my brethren the Lamanites, and I would that they should know that more than four hundred and twenty years have passed away, since the sign was given of the coming of Christ. And I seal up these records, after I have spoken a few words by way of exhortation unto you. Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam, even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts. And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; And if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost; and by the power of the Holy Ghost, ye may know the truth of all things. And whatsoever thing is good, is just and true; wherefore, nothing that is good denieth the Christ, but acknowledgeth that he is. And ye may know that he is, by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore I would exhort you, that ye deny not the power of God; for he worketh by power, according to the faith of the children of men, the same to-day and to-morrow, and for ever. And again I exhort you, my brethren, that ye deny not the gifts of God, for they are many; and they come from the same God (Moroni 10:1-8).

Moroni is writing to the Lamanites. He calls the Lamanites to a remembrance of the mercies of God and bids them to call on God in the name of Christ. Moroni is calling the Lamanites to come to Christ.

Moroni called the Lamanites to come to Christ when he closed the record and when it was time to reopen that same record, he told Joseph, the times of the Lamanites and all the House of Israel has come. Moroni stayed on key over the years from about A.D. 400 until A.D. 1823, but we are asked to believe that in 2017, he has a different message. How can this be?

If this Moroni from Brazil is indeed the same Moroni, how can his message be so different? If the Moroni manifesting and teaching in Brazil is not the Moroni of the Book of Mormon or that visited Joseph Smith in the 1820s, then the new Moroni is an imposter, attempting to sway the Saints with flattering words and a peaceful message which is designed to turn us from the genuine call of God for the latter days.

The Three Nephites

BM and JFS reported that Mauricio and the other men in Brazil had at least two encounters with a group of three men. These men exhibited wonderful power which was illustrated by an ability to interrupt and redirect a storm. They also taught things to the Brazilians. The interpretation of Daniel presented by BM is one of those teachings.

According to BM, the Brazilians did not refer to the three men as the three Nephites at first. JFS suggested the three men could be the Three Nephites spoken of in the Book of Mormon. In all the talks, this group of three men are called the Three Nephites.

There is little to review regarding the doctrine of these men referred to as the Three Nephites. The only doctrinal teaching we know came from them is the interpretation of Daniel 12, which has already been reviewed.

In the Book of Mormon, the Three Nephites are always called the three disciples. The Nephite title is assumed by many to be accurate, but it is not. When these brethren offered a ministry that resulted in a condition which was free of “ites” (see 4 Nephi 1:17-20). They were identified by Jesus Christ as disciples with the other nine who were chosen. They are the children of Christ and ministers of righteousness. Jesus said that they should be like him

Yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fullness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one; And the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and the Father giveth the Holy Ghost unto the children of men, because of me (3 Nephi 13:22-23).

What is remarkable about the testimonies recounted from Brazil is the absence of testimonies about the powerful witness of Jesus Christ and his work of salvation to save those who believe in him. One would imagine that the ministry of the three disciples would make an impression based on their testimony of Jesus Christ more than the manipulation of the weather.

The Artifacts of Brazil

The idea that the Book of Mormon plates are back on the earth and the Sealed Portion is soon to be available is an exciting thought. Add to that the Sword of Laban and the Interpreters which were also seen by BM and JFS, the days of the early Restoration come to mind. This is heady stuff.

BM and JFS have given a great deal of testimony about these things and there are many details to examine. Each of the items will be examined on the basis of the testimony that has been given.

Why have these things come forth? Mauricio told the Americans the plates, sword and interpreters were signs to show his testimony was true. Of course, if the Lord is about to allow the Sealed Portion to be translated, even if in part for now, the seer would have to have the plates and the Interpreters to do the work. Does it not seem odd that these sacred objects have now come to be the lesser part of the testimony to be declared?

In 1829, the witnesses saw the plates as part of the testimony of the Book of Mormon. The witnesses bore testimony that they saw the plates, either by the hand of the angel or by Joseph, in support of the claim that the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God. It was the primary witness.

The plates were not a witness that Joseph Smith Jr. was a prophet or had spiritual experiences. Yet, in Brazil we are told that BM and JFS were shown the items so they would believe the testimony of Mauricio and believe in his calling and the tasks given to the American brethren. BM, on October 29, 2017, when answering questions at the evening session mentioned that the artifacts were signs to confirm their mission. Specifically, he said, the artifacts are signs — “the evidence of our mission.” A little later, he said,

We were then given signs we can share with you that are verifications that our mission is divine. And those signs were the privilege of seeing and handling the Interpreters, the Sword of Laban, and the Book of Mormon plates.

This seems to be a reversal of roles from 1829 and a worrisome elevation of man over the word of God. According to the testimony, the ancient artifacts are signs or verifications that the mission of the American brethren and their testimonies are divine. Thus, we would expect that the artifacts would show evidence of being genuine and ancient. Fortunately, history provides us with multiple descriptions of these artifacts against which the current descriptions may be matched.

Saints, be careful to avoid being caught up in the artifacts and the outward signs. The kingdom of God is not outward signs and works, “but it is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17).

Book of Mormon Plates

The plates were delivered to Mauricio about four or five years ago according to JFS. BM said he thought they received them in 2011 or 2012. He has had possession of them much of that time, but apparently Moroni has taken possession of them once in a while and then returns the plates from time to time.

The plates have been stored in various ways while with Mauricio. He has kept them buried in a stone box outside or sometimes in a box inside his dwelling. One testimony is that on one occasion Moroni miraculously opened the ground and constructed a stone box and gave Mauricio instructions how to hide the items. It sounds as if the other artifacts are kept with the plates.

There have been threats against the plates. They are sure that some people have tried to steal them, but Moroni has given protection for them (one night as a ball of light outside the second floor apartment). Members of the LDS (Mormon) church were specifically mentioned as trying to steal the artifacts.

Mauricio gave a description of when the plates were given to him. Moroni was present and moved his hands in a way which sounds like an invisible curtain was opened and a storage location was suddenly visible which was like a shelf or cabinet. Various items were stored in this location and from it, Moroni withdrew the plates of the Book of Mormon, the Sword of Laban and the Interpreters. After these were delivered, the storage area disappeared and normal space returned.

When the Book of Mormon plates were delivered to Mauricio, they had a “black sludge” on them. The plates needed to be cleaned and it was accomplished with acetone. The plates were clean when BM and JFS saw them.

The report of a black sludge on the plates which needed to be cleaned from the plates was surprising. There is no report in church history by Joseph Smith Jr., or any of the people around him, about the plates requiring cleaning. The scriptural record suggests that this would not be the case. Alma reminded his son, Helaman, of the prophecy that the Plates of Brass would retain their brightness. He said:

And now, my son Helaman, I command you that ye take the records which have been entrusted with me; and I also command you that ye keep a record of this people, according as I have done, upon the plates of Nephi, and keep all these things sacred which I have kept, even as I have kept them—for it is for a wise purpose that they are kept— And these plates of brass which contain these engravings, which have the records of the holy scriptures upon them, which have the genealogy of our forefathers, even from the beginning. And behold, it has been prophesied by our fathers that they should be kept, and handed down from one generation to another, and be kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord until they should go forth unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, that they shall know of the mysteries contained thereon. **And now, behold, if they are kept, they must retain their brightness; yea, and they will retain their brightness, yea, and also shall all the plates which do contain that which is holy writ.** Now ye may suppose that this is foolishness in me; but behold, I say unto you that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth confound the wise. And the Lord God doth work by means to

bring about his great and eternal purposes; and by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls. **And now, it has hitherto been wisdom in God that these things should be preserved;** for behold, they have enlarged the memory of this people, yea, and convinced many of the error of their ways, and brought them to the knowledge of their God, unto the salvation of their souls (Alma 17:31-37, emphasis added).

Alma was primarily speaking about the Brass Plates in the passage above, but he adds a mention of “all the plates which do contain that which is holy writ (Alma 17:34)” By this prophecy, it seems reasonable to say the power of God to preserve the plates would have continued unto this time as it did for Alma, Helaman and for Joseph Smith Jr. Moroni allowing the plates containing holy writ to become covered with sludge and transmitting them to human care in that condition goes against the testimony of history and prophecy.

Of the two witnesses, BM gave the most detailed report about the plates. They are made of some type of metal which is non-magnetic. The plates or leaves are connected by U-shaped rings that are shiny and magnetic. Part of the plates were sealed by two bands which were loose. The leaves had the appearance of being beaten in their manufacture. The first page of this sealed part was visible, but the rest of the pages could not be opened because there was a pin inserted through the pages that kept them sealed.

There are 68 loose leaves which they could handle and turn like pages in a book. The leaves were less than 1/16th thick. The leaves or plates were rigid and inflexible. They did not lie exactly flat against one another.

The dimensions of the plates were estimated to be 5-6 inches by 8-9 inches and about 4.5 inches thick. The plates were estimated to weigh 50-60 pounds. Joseph Smith Jr., and others reported the Book of Mormon plates to be 6 x 9 inches and 6 inches thick. There is no known report with a measurement of the thickness of the individual plates or how many leaves were translated to become the Book of Mormon.

BM and JFS both testified (October 29, 2017) that the plates were smooth. The characters were plainly seen. BM said they were not permitted to take pictures of the plates or the characters, however, Mauricio took pictures of the Americans holding the plates. BM has some pictures, but he writes on Secondinvaition.org (see FAQ section) the pictures are private.

BM reported that each character represents a phrase. He said this accounts for the relatively few loose leaves on the plates he viewed. This concept challenges some of the research work being done with the characters of the Anthon Transcript.

Patrick McKay reported on (November 15, 2017) his concern about the testimony that a character

represented a phrase (a small group of words). I remembered Sr Faye Shaw mentioned the characters in her talk at our last BoM Symposium. I decided to write her and asked her about Brother Moore's statement. She passed the question on to her friend Mary Jo Yakel who has been translating the Anthon Transcript and has most of it completed. Here was her response.

"Faye, the characters are like other Egyptian writing. They are ideograms which depict the things they represent, phonograms that represent a sound that matches the sound of a word, and determinatives which indicate the general subject of a word that could have more than one meaning. The glyphs are NOT phrases."

"Sister Faye then added 'the glyphs weren't joined by connecting words like sentences. Translators needed to "fill in the blanks" for words missing. In my presentation I used "Scribe perfect in house-His" in which two translators came up with "The scribe perfect of Pharaoh in his house" and "The perfect scribe of the king is in his house." This makes it even more obvious that Joseph Smith needed the "gift and power 'of God to translate.'" (Patrick McKay, email to Gary Whiting, November 15, 2017).

The report about the plates being smooth, i.e., a smooth surface was very surprising. As noted, both of the brethren mentioned this fact during the presentations on October 29, 2017. BM said the characters were "etched, but not engraved" (Evening October 29, 2017). He said he could not feel the characters on the plates. An additional statement of clarification has been posted on Secondinvitation.org under the FAQ section. The statement is:

Q. Joseph stated that the characters on the plates feel smooth. According to the accounts of Joseph Smith Jr. and the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, they are "engraved". Why the discrepancy?

A. Bob further describes the characters as being "etched"—"composed of tiny parallel lines"—but of a very small depth. Since this method of engraving very shallow lines was quite common in the 1800s, it would be reasonable for the witnesses to use the word "engraved" to describe such etchings.

Technically, there is a difference between etchings and engravings. Sometimes the words can be interchanged, but BM was specific saying etched, not engraved. Dictionaries define the terms.

Etch: transitive verb. 1a :to produce (something, such as a pattern or design) on a hard material by eating into the material's surface (as by acid or laser beam) b :to subject to such etching (Websters Online).

Engrave: transitive verb 1a :to impress deeply as if with a graver; b :to form by incision (as on wood or metal) 2a :to cut figures, letters, or designs on for printing; also :to print from an engraved plate (Websters Online).

Etching is a process by which material is removed by some chemical or energy. Engraving is the process of cutting away metal with a tool to form the characters or design. In the Book of Mormon the word engrave, engraved and engraven are used multiple times to describe the process of writing on the metal plates.

And it came to pass that the Lord commanded me, wherefore I did make plates of ore, that I might **engraven** upon them the record of my people. And upon the plates which I made, I did **engrave** the record of my father, and also our journeyings in the wilderness, and the prophecies of my father; and also many of mine own prophecies have I **engraven** upon them (1 Nephi 5:219).

Wherefore, I, Nephi, to be obedient to the commandments of the Lord, went and made these plates upon which I have **engraven** these things. And I engraved that which is pleasing unto God. And if my people are pleased with the things of God, they will be pleased with mine **engravings** which are upon these plates (2 Nephi 4:47-49).

Now behold, it came to pass that I, Jacob, having ministered much unto my people, in word, (and I can not write but little of my words, because of the difficulty of engraving our words upon plates,) and we know that the things which we write upon plates must remain ... Now in this thing we do rejoice; and we labor diligently **to engraven these words upon plates**, hoping that our beloved brethren, and our children, will receive them with thankful hearts, and look upon them, that they may learn with joy, and not with sorrow, neither with contempt concerning their first parents (Jacob 3:1, 3).

And behold, ye shall take the plates of Nephi unto yourself, and the remainder shall ye leave in the place where they are: and ye shall **engrave** upon the plates of Nephi, all the things that ye have observed concerning this people (Mormon 1:5).

When Moroni described the Book of Mormon plates to Joseph Smith Jr., he specifically used the term engravings when describing the writings on the plates. This is what Joseph wrote in the Wentworth Letter (emphasis added):

I was also informed concerning the aboriginal inhabitants of this country [America] and shown who they were, and from whence they came; a brief sketch of their origin, progress, civilization, laws, governments; of their righteousness and iniquity, and the blessings of God being finally withdrawn from them as a people, was made known unto me. **I was also told where were deposited some plates on which were engraven an abridgment of the Records of the ancient prophets that had existed on this continent.** The angel appeared to me three times the same night and unfolded the same things. After having received many visits from the angels of God unfolding the majesty and glory of the events that

should transpire in the last days, on the morning of the 22nd of September, A. D. 1827, the angel of the Lord delivered the Records into my hands.

These Records were engraven on plates which had the appearance of gold; each plate was six inches wide and eight inches long, and not quite so thick as common tin. **They were filled with engravings, in Egyptian characters, and bound together in a volume as the leaves of a book, with three rings running through the whole.** The volume was something near six inches in thickness, a part of which was sealed. **The characters on the unsealed part were small and beautifully engraved. The whole book exhibited many marks of antiquity in its construction and much skill in the art of engraving.** With the Records was found a curious instrument which the ancients called 'Urim and Thummim' which consisted of two transparent stones set in the rim of a bow fastened to a breastplate. Through the medium of the Urim and Thummim I translated the record by the gift and power of God.

The witnesses of the Book of Mormon all describe seeing the plates and the engravings. This testimony is found in the Reorganized Church official history:

Joseph: "He [Martin Harris] accordingly withdrew from us, and we knelt down again, and had not been many minutes engaged in prayer, when presently we beheld a light above us in the air of exceeding brightness, and behold, an angel stood before us. In his hands he held the plates which we had been praying for these to have a view of. **He turned over the leaves one by one, so that we could see them, and discover the engravings thereon distinctly.**" Church History (volume 1, pp 46-47).

From the testimony of the three witnesses and the eight witnesses come the following descriptions of the plates (emphasis added):

The Three Witnesses: "...we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record...And we also testify that **we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates;** and they have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, **that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon;** and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true ..."

The Eight Witnesses: Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come, that Joseph Smith, Jr., the translator of this work, has shewn unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated, **we**

did handle with our hands: and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shewn unto us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety, that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names to the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen; and we lie not, God bearing witness of it.

Late in his life, William Smith, the last surviving son of Joseph Smith Senior preached a sermon in which he gave testimony about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. He spoke very distinctly about the characters on the plates. He said the characters:

Were cut into the plates with some sharp instrument ...” (*The Saints' Herald*, October 4, 1884, p. 644).

William was not one of the witnesses of the plates, but he was immediate family and would have known a great deal from the firsthand testimony of family and the other witnesses. He was a teenager when his brother Joseph was translating the plates. Once he actually lifted the plates and felt them through the cloth. In the *Saints' Herald* sermon of 1884, he said he had spoken to and questioned the three witnesses "closely." He had sufficient access to know this information.

John Whitmer, one of the eight witnesses, offered this testimony about the plates, “I handled those plates; there were **fine engravings** on both sides. I handled them” (Daniel C. Peterson, "Not Joseph's, and Not Modern," in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, edited by Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), page 207. Emphasis added).

The overwhelming weight of historical and scriptural testimony is that the characters were indeed engraved, or as William Smith stated it, cut into the plates with a sharp instrument. It is difficult to conceive how characters thus written on metal plates could not be palpable by an individual handling the plates at leisure.

Another aspect of the description provided by Bob Moore is somewhat troubling in light of historical testimony of those who handled the set of plates used by Joseph Smith in the translation of the Book of Mormon in the 1820s. On October 29, 2017, Bob stated the pages of the plates that he examined were much thinner than 1/16 of an inch, but he could not provide any additional description of their thickness. He describes the plates as “rigid, they do not bend in any way, shape or form.” They had the appearance of being hammered flat but had some amount of waviness in them and the pages did not lie perfectly flat against each other, but a small gap was present between the pages.

There are a number of historical testimonies of individuals who handled the plates. Most of these testimonies come from people other than the witnesses who saw and handled the plates. The

testimonies below are from people who did not see, but handled the plates through the cloth covering. On page 15 of the book *From Darkness unto Light* by Michael Hubbard MacKay and Gerrett J Dirkmaat (Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, Provo Utah: 2015) are the testimonies of Katherine Smith, Joseph's sister, and his brother, William Smith. Both of them had opportunity to handle the plates while they were in the Smith home. Katherine Smith said that she:

Rippled her fingers up the edge of the plates and felt that they were separate metal plates and heard the tinkle of sound that they made.

William Smith, a teenager at the time that his brother was translating the book, stated that he had:

Hefted the plates as they lay on the table wrapped in an old frock or jacket in which Joseph had brought them home ... He had thumbed them through the cloth and ascertained that they were thin sheets of some kind of metal.

Emma Smith, Joseph's wife, in an interview with Joseph Smith III said,

The plates often lay on the table without any attempt at concealment, wrapped in a small linen table cloth, which I had given him to fold them in. I once felt of the plates as they thus lay on the table, tracing their outline and shape. They seemed to be pliable like thick paper, and would rustle with a metallic sound when the edges were moved by the thumb, as one does sometimes thumb the edges of a book (Daniel C. Peterson, "Not Joseph's, and Not Modern," in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, edited by Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), page 209).

The physical description of the plates examined by Bob Moore and Joseph F. Smith does not compare well to the historical description of the Book of Mormon plates used in the translation of that book by Joseph Smith Jr in the 1820s.

The Sword of Laban

The Sword of Laban is the sword worn by the man in Jerusalem who was the record keeper. He lost his life for obstructing the will of God. He had tried to kill Nephi and his brothers and his own sword was used to kill him (1 Nephi 1:107-120).

Nephi kept the sword with him. In the promised land, Nephi used Laban's sword as a pattern to make self-defense arms for his people (2 Nephi 4:19). The sword was used by Nephi in the defense of his people (Jacob 1:10) and later by King Benjamin (Words of Mormon 1:20). It was passed to King Mosiah by his father Benjamin along with the plates of Nephi, the Brass Plates, and the Liahona (Mosiah 1:23-24).

The sword is described by Nephi on the occasion he first took it out of Laban's possession (1 Nephi 1:109). The sword had a hilt of pure gold, the blade made from a very fine steel. No dimensions are given in the Book of Mormon.

BM and JFS were able to see and handle a sword they believe is the Sword of Laban. They estimated the length of the sword to be three feet and the blade is about three inches wide. BM said the handle of hilt looks like "cast brass." Three unknown characters are on either side of the sword's hilt and they appear to BM to have been formed in the casting process. The blade is double edged and shows evidence of battle with multiple nicks and dings. The edges of the blade have retained their sharpness. There is gold gilding down the center of the blade on both sides.

The men in Brazil felt a need to clean the sword and used the same acetone used on the plates. This, we are told, caused the sword to deteriorate, causing damage. Moroni told them to keep it wrapped in plastic to help prevent further damage. The blade is cracked at the base.

There is no record that Joseph Smith Jr. had possession of the Sword of Laban during the translation process. David Whitmer reported that during the experience of the three witnesses, they saw the Sword of Laban, the Liahona and the Interpreters. In addition, he said they saw the Brass Plates, the plates of the Book of Ether and many other plates (Michael Hubbard MacKay and Gerrett J Dirkmaat, *From Darkness Unto Light*, (Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, Provo Utah: 2015) pg 151).

There are not enough data points to easily compare the Sword of Laban in the Book of Mormon to the sword in Brazil. The physical description of the Brazilian sword is troubling. The sword was apparently in fine shape when viewed by Joseph Smith and the Three Witnesses, but the sword in Brazil sounds as if it is showing its age dramatically. One wonders why the Lord could preserve it for centuries only to have it now start falling apart. The angel visitants in Brazil have given very detailed instructions about other things, why not about how to care for the artifacts to keep them from damage?

The Interpreters

In the Book of Mormon, the Interpreters were used by seers to translate records from unknown languages. King Mosiah had Interpreters which permitted him to translate records. He is thus called a seer as Ammon explained to King Limhi.

Now Ammon said unto him, I can assuredly tell thee, O king, of a man that can translate the records: for he has wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date: and it is a gift from God. And the things are called interpreters; and no man can look in them, except he be commanded, lest he should look for that he ought not, and he should perish. And whosoever is commanded to look in them, the same is called seer (Mosiah 5:72-74).

The Interpreters were given to Mauricio when the other artifacts were delivered. Mauricio used them for a time and had done some translation of the Book of Lehi (the portion lost in the 116 pages Martin Harris borrowed and lost).

The Interpreters in Brazil are described by BM as two stones, one clear and the other is a crystal-like stone. Sometime after he received the stones, Mauricio was warned by a friend that he may be deceived. We are told that after this warning, Mauricio used the Interpreters and saw evil things, which are not described. Worried that he was being deceived, he broke the Interpreters using either a stone or a rod or both. BM and JFS saw the broken pieces, not a functioning, intact device.

Moroni in Brazil, told Mauricio how to make new stones. He has done this and now Moroni has the stones to make the inscriptions that will cause them to function as Interpreters.

According to scripture, no man made the first Interpreters. God provided them to the Brother of Jared and told him to seal them up with the records he would write.

And behold, these two stones will I give unto thee, and ye shall seal them up also, with the things which ye shall write (Ether 1:88).

It seems unlikely that a man could reproduce the Interpreters as Mauricio has reportedly been instructed to do. It is another problem that casts doubt on the testimony as reported.

Of the many early descriptions, Lucy Mack Smith's may be the most famous. She described two stones mounted in a wire frame much like a pair of glasses. She said she examined the "Urim and Thummim" and

found that it consisted of two smooth three-cornered diamonds set in glass, and the glasses were set in silver bows, which were connected with each other in much the same way as old fashioned spectacles (Daniel C. Peterson, "Not Joseph's, and Not Modern," in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, edited by Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), page 209).

Joseph had the Interpreters, but also the breastplate which was designed to hold the Interpreters while they were in use. The breastplate is not mentioned among the artifacts in Brazil.

As was the case with the Sword of Laban, the Brazilians were permitted to do things which caused significant harm to these ancient artifacts. This seems quite unlike the diligent stewardship and care Moroni exercised over them over the centuries and the strict commandments of God to Joseph in the care of these sacred items.

The Sealed Portion

When Joseph Smith received the plates of the Book of Mormon part of the book of plates was sealed by a band. This portion of the record is commonly called the Sealed Portion of the Book of Mormon. It is significant because of its timing (last days) and the message it contains. Oliver Cowdery, in his series of letters to W. W. Phelps wrote:

A part of the book was sealed, and was not to be opened yet. The sealed part, said he, contains the same revelation which was given to John upon the isle of Patmos, and when the people of the Lord are prepared, and found worthy, then it will be unfolded unto them" (Oliver Cowdery, *Messenger and Advocate*, Letter 4, February, 1835).

There is no agreement among witnesses of the early church about how much of the Book of Mormon plates were translated to become the Book of Mormon and how much was sealed.

Several witnesses described a physical sealing placed on part of the plates by Mormon or Moroni. David Whitmer said that when an angel showed him the plates in 1829, "a large portion of the leaves were so securely bound together that it was impossible to separate them," that the "sealed" part of the plates were held together as a solid mass "stationary and immovable," "as solid to my view as wood," and that there were "perceptible marks where the plates appeared to be sealed" with leaves "so securely bound that it was impossible to separate them." In 1842, Lucy Mack Smith said that some of the plates were "sealed together" while others were "loose." The account of the Eight Witnesses says they saw the plates in 1829 and handled "as many of the leaves as Smith has translated," implying that they did not examine untranslated parts, such as the sealed portion. In one interview, David Whitmer said that "about half" the book was unsealed; in 1881, he said "about one-third" was unsealed. Whitmer's 1881 statement is consistent with an 1856 statement by Orson Pratt, an associate of Smith's who never saw the plates himself but who had spoken with witnesses, that "about two-thirds" of the plates were "sealed up" (Wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_plates).²

A curious note mentioned by Kirk B Henrichsen in an article in *New Era* magazine (July 2007). He said,

The plates were sealed by Moroni after he had separated from the rest of his people. He would have used materials that were readily available to him at that time. The descriptions say they were "securely bound" and "appeared solid." The statements indicate a complete encapsulation of the plates to protect and preserve them for the future. None of the witnesses mentions metal bands around the

² See the Wikipedia page for original sources.

plates. This seems to be an artistic creation of the mid-twentieth century that has no documentary basis.

The timing of the Sealed Portion's appearance is significant. According to the Book of Mormon, this record is to come forth in the Lord's timing unto the house of Israel. Nephi's testimony seems to support what Oliver wrote:

And behold, the things which this apostle of the Lamb shall write, are many things which thou hast seen; And behold, the remainder shalt thou see; But the things which thou shalt see hereafter, thou shalt not write; for the Lord God hath ordained the apostle of the Lamb of God that he should write them. And also others who have been, to them hath he shown all things, and they have written them; And they are sealed up to come forth in their purity according to the truth which is in the Lamb, in the own due time of the Lord, unto the house of Israel. And I, Nephi, heard and bear record, that the name of the apostle of the Lamb was John, according to the word of the angel. And behold, I, Nephi, am forbidden that I should write the remainder of the things which I saw and heard; wherefore, the things which I have written sufficeth me; And I have not written but a small part of the things which I saw. And I bear record, that I saw the things which my father saw, and the angel of the Lord did make them known unto me. And now I make an end of speaking concerning the things which I saw, while I was carried away in the Spirit; And if all the things which I saw are not written, the things which I have written are true. And thus it is. Amen (1 Nephi 3:246-256).

The timing for the coming forth of the Sealed Portion is entirely dependent upon the Lord. Note these things are to come forth "in their purity according to the truth which is in the Lamb, in the own due time of the Lord, unto the house of Israel." In other scriptures, the Lord has mentioned some of the criteria necessary for the release of the Sealed Portion. Moroni described these in Ether 1.

For the Lord said unto me, They shall not go forth unto the Gentiles until the day that they shall repent of their iniquity, and become clean before the Lord; And in that day that they shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the Brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the Brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are. And he that will contend against the word of the Lord, let him be accursed; and he that shall deny these things, let him be accursed; for unto them will I shew no greater things, saith Jesus Christ, for I am he who speaketh (Ether 1:100-102).

Nephi wrote about a sealed book and said when they are read, they will be read upon the housetops by the power of Christ in the due time of the Lord.

And the day cometh that the words of the book which were sealed, shall be read upon the housetops; and they shall be read by the power of Christ; And all things shall be revealed unto the children of men which ever have been among the children of men, and which ever will be, even unto the end of the earth ... Touch not the things which are sealed, for I will bring them forth in mine own due time: for I will shew unto the children of men, that I am able to do mine own work. Wherefore, when thou hast read the words which I have commanded thee, and obtained the witnesses which I have promised unto thee, then shalt thou seal up the book again, and hide it up unto me, that I may preserve the words which thou hast not read, until I shall see fit in mine own wisdom, to reveal all things unto the children of men (2 Nephi 11:131-132; 143-144).

There are a number of ideas among Restoration believers about likely times for the coming forth of the words of the Sealed Portion. Some feel there must be a new prophet/seer in the church. Others look for a Lamanite prophet to translate them. Some think the Sealed Portion must come before Zion can be established and some believe the scriptures teach they will not be revealed until after the Millennium begins. This is not the place to discuss these various ideas. However, there is no scriptural evidence requiring a temple and none that says Jesus will read them to his people in the temple.

Here, as in other aspects of the Brazilian Testimonies, there are significant points of the testimonies that do not match the record of history or the scriptures we now have. There is enough of a variation in the Brazilian Testimonies to suggest that investigators ought to carefully examine these matters before giving their allegiance to it.

A Proper Invitation?

From the Joseph Smith Ministries Newsletter November 2017, Volume 6, No. 10, pg 1:

In the meantime, part of the sealed portion will be translated in Brazil. Those who gather in faith and unite around Joseph F. Smith's testimony will be cleansed by the Spirit as they then learn to obey the celestial law. They will receive and publish part of the sealed portion. It will reveal all things to live in Zion, as well as be an ensign to gather the rest.

When Jesus ministered on the earth, he preached a very specific doctrine. It was clearly defined as he spoke to his 12 disciples before the crowd gathered at the temple in Bountiful,

Behold, verily, verily I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine. And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; And I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me, and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me; And whoso believeth in me, and

is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned. Verily, verily I say unto you, that this is my doctrine; and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me, believeth in the Father also; And unto him will the Father bear record of me; for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost (3 Nephi 5:32-37).

A revelation which previews and declares the return of Jesus Christ would carry the same message. It would not be a call to gather around a man or a man's testimony. The gospel is a call to repent of all of our sins, not just to lay down our differences as we heard from the witnesses of the events in Brazil.

The ministers of the Restored Gospel are given a commandment to bear witness of Jesus Christ and the salvation he has wrought for us by his life, suffering, death and resurrection. In the Brazilian testimony, where is the call to come to Christ and rally around him? Rather than this word, we are invited to rally around a man and his testimony. Is this the proper call to be issued by the servants of the Living God?

We must remind the Saints of the word of God through Nephi:

He commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain, and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion. Behold, the Lord hath forbidden this thing (2 Nephi 11:106-107a).

Priestcraft is often a very subtle thing and it is possible for good men, in their zeal, to wander into forbidden paths if they are not careful. Here we all must use caution and beware.

A Sincere Testimony

Many people are convinced that BM and JFS are absolutely sincere in their belief that God is doing some special work in Brazil. Is sincerity sufficient to carry the day when crucial choices must be made? In the first chapter of Evan Fry's book, *Restoration Faith* he writes:

Years ago a friend of mine told me the story of a young man who believed quite sincerely that God had a special work for him to do. He reasoned that if God wanted him to do this work, he would protect him and spare his life until it was finished. With this sincere belief firmly in mind he entered into a place of very great danger, refusing to take the very obvious precautions suggested by his fellow workmen for his safety. A few minutes later he was dead—a martyr to sincere but erroneous belief.

Years ago I personally knew a young man who believed that there couldn't possibly be any gas left in an abandoned gas well, and who therefore lit a match to look down the dark hole. He died too—a martyr to sincere but erroneous belief.

They are simple illustrations, yet they make the point. Sincerity in something false is still a mistake and it could cost you everything. Sincerity, clarity of presentation and even logic may make something seem better than it really is.

In the case of the Brazilian testimonies, an eternal reward is at stake. It behooves every person to carefully examine these testimonies with prayer, fasting and study.

Warnings

There are points in the Brazilian testimony that resonate with the Saints. We do believe we are living in the latter day. We believe the world is moving to its climax that precedes the coming of Zion and the return of Jesus Christ. We do not all agree on exactly where we are in this process, but we see the signs of the end approaching.

We believe God will bring the record of the Sealed Portion to light in the end times, but not just those records, but the Brass Plates and many others as the people of Israel return with their sacred records. But, as the Lord said in Isaiah 29, it will be “in mine own due time” (Isaiah 29:23). We must not fret that the Lord will miss his own deadlines.

We ought to be aware of the efforts of the enemy to deceive and distort the revealed plan of God. Those things that resonate with us are known abroad and the enemy knows them also. What could be more a convenient way to mask a deception than to clothe it in Restoration clothing. It is the wolf in sheep's clothing ploy. This is not new and we should not be surprised by such behavior by the enemy. Yet, how often we allow the counterfeit to grab our attention and divert us from the love of the truth!

Long before the righteous city of Enoch, known as Zion came into existence, Cain built a city and named it for his son, Enoch (Genesis 5:27). This, we can assume, was not a city of righteousness. Compare it with the description of the Zion of the Lord.

And from that time forth, there were wars, and bloodshed among them; but the Lord came and dwelt with his people, and they dwelt in righteousness. And the fear of the Lord was upon all nations, so great was the glory of the Lord which was upon his people. And the Lord blessed the land, and they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish And the Lord called his people, Zion, because they were of one heart and of one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there were no poor among them. And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the city of Holiness, even Zion. And it

came to pass, that Enoch talked with the Lord, and he said unto the Lord, Surely, Zion shall dwell in safety forever. But the Lord said unto Enoch, Zion have I blessed, but the residue of the people have I cursed (Genesis 7:20-26).

The Saints ought to take note of the words of Jesus as he described the events to come in the latter days.

And again, after the tribulation of those days which shall come upon Jerusalem if any man shall say unto you Lo! here is Christ, or there; believe him not, For in those days, there shall also arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if possible, they shall deceive the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant. Behold, I speak these things unto you for the elect's sake. And ye also shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled; for all I have told you must come to pass. But the end is not yet. Behold, I have told you before, Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth. Behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not (Matthew 24:22-26).

Notice that Satan will use false claims associated with “great signs and wonders” that are capable of deceiving many and almost deceiving the elect according to the covenant. He employs seducing and lying spirits to deceive people. These flatter people and distort the truth. The Saints must be watchful unto prayer in order to avoid temptation.

But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe to keep the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish (Mosiah 2:49).

And that ye live in thanksgiving daily, for the many mercies and blessings which he doth bestow upon you; yea, and **I also exhort you my brethren, that ye be watchful unto prayer continually, that ye may not be led away by the temptation of the devil, that he may not overpower you**, that ye may not become his subjects at the last day: for behold, he rewardeth you no good thing.(Alma 16:238, emphasis added).

We must pray to avoid the temptations of the devil, but we must also be nourished by the good word of God. This is how the elect are kept from deception, despite the signs and wonders employed by the enemy. Jesus told his apostles in the New Testament, and had Joseph Smith Jr. restore this teaching in the Inspired Version, these words: “And whoso treasureth up my words, shall not be deceived” (Matthew 24:39).

This is also the counsel given through Lehi/Nephi's vision of the Tree of Life. Holding to the Rod of Iron allowed people in the vision to move through the mists of darkness without falling into the filthy river or wandering off the path. And thus it is for us today. This is why Nephi later wrote:

Wherefore, I said unto you, Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do. Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye can not understand them, it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark. For behold, again I say unto you, that if ye will enter in by the way and receive the Holy Ghost, it will shew unto you all things what ye should do. Behold, this is the doctrine of Christ (2 Nephi 14:4-7a)

In August 1833, the Lord spoke to the church through the Prophet Joseph Smith. He said,

And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, that ye shall live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God; for he will give unto the faithful, line upon line, precept upon precept (D&C 95:3a).

This is the commandment, forsake evil, cleave to all good and live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. The inherent promise is, if you will keep this commandment, I (the Lord) will teach you a little at a time and you will grow in knowledge and understanding and in stature before God. But, if you refuse to keep this commandment, I will withhold light and truth from you. It is an invitation and a question.

The Lord will provide opportunities for his people to choose to live by God's word or by some other source of life. He says,

and I will try you, and prove you herewith; and whoso layeth down his life in my cause, for my name's sake, shall find it again; even life eternal (D&C 95:3b).

God will prove his people. What does this mean? We use the term bulletproof to describe something that is tough and impenetrable. When firearms were first invented, some armies were wearing armor. Soldiers wanted good armor that would prevent a bullet from penetrating the armor and killing its wearer. Manufacturers would literally fire a bullet at the suit of armor. If the bullet went through it was bad, but if it only suffered a dent, it was bulletproof. Soldiers wanted the armor with the dent.

In like fashion, the Lord wants to know if we are deception proof. He does this by allowing temptations and deceptions into our life "to prove" us. Who do we love the most? Are we willing to abide by the word that proceeds out of the mouth of God or by some other way? Paul says it this way:

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work, and he it is who now worketh, and Christ suffereth him to work, until the time is fulfilled that he shall be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. Yea, the Lord, even Jesus, whose coming is not until after there cometh a falling away, by the working of Satan with all power, and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work (2 Thessalonians 2:7-17).

If we refuse to be nourished by the eternal, living word of God, we must seek our sustenance somewhere else. If we will not love the truth, God allows us to select a delusion and follow what we are willing to love. This is to our condemnation and proves the words of Alma to his son, Coreanton,

... and thus they stand or fall, for behold they are their own judges, whether to do good or do evil. Now the decrees of God are unalterable; therefore the way is prepared, that whosoever will, may walk therein and be saved (Alma 19:70b-71).

Lastly, brethren, hear the words of Mormon:

And when ye shall see these sayings coming forth among you, then ye need not any longer spurn at the doings of the Lord, for the sword of his justice is in his right hand, and behold at that day, if ye shall spurn at his doings, he will cause that it shall soon overtake you. Wo unto him that spurneth at the doings of the Lord; yea, wo unto him that shall deny the Christ and his works; Yea, wo unto him that shall deny the revelations of the Lord, and that shall say, The Lord no longer worketh by revelation, or by prophecy, or by gifts, or by tongues, or by healings, or by the power of the Holy Ghost (3 Nephi 13:57-59).

Conclusions

Many details of the Brazil Testimonies have been examined in the discussion above. There are significant problems scripturally and doctrinally with the testimonies. The artifacts are problematic. The chief issues to consider are:

1. There is a distinct absence of the call to repentance and holiness according to the gospel and the conditions of repentance taught in scripture, especially in the Book of Mormon (Helaman 2:71-75). The repentance declared is the repentance of our divisions with each other and the peace declared is with each other. Rejecting the testimony from Brazil is not a rejection of the need for the Saints to humble themselves before God and repent of their sins. Rather, it emphasizes the need we have to repent of our sins and to be holy people.
2. The entire subject of restoring the House of Israel was absent from any of the written or spoken explanations of the testimonies from Brazil until the November 7, 2017 email from BM to Hugh Caldwell. What we hear is that God is setting his hand a second time to heal the church and he is doing a work in the Americas and he started that work in Brazil. Scripture teaches God will set his hand a second time to recover all of the House of Israel out of all the nations where God has scattered them.
3. The Book of Mormon artifacts being used as signs to prove the authenticity and divinity of the testimonies and the calls for Bob Moore and Joseph F. Smith is without precedent in scripture or history. They appear to be used as distractions to draw the eye and heart of the hearer and allow bad doctrine and deception among the Saints.
4. The testimonies of the angels are not plausible. Raphael is unknown to us except that his name is associated with a doctrine rejected by the Reorganization. He is known among others, but not in the Restored Gospel. The testimony reported to be from Moroni and the Three Nephites is foreign to what we know they taught in life and now as the servants of God. The angels of God speak by the power of the Holy Ghost (2 Nephi 13:17-18 and 14:3). The genuine Moroni and the genuine Three Disciples speak by the power of the Holy Ghost, therefore, their testimony cannot change. If the message is different from what angels teach, they are not speaking by the power of the Holy Ghost. It means those entities are not speaking the truth, so by what power do they teach?
5. To believe the testimonies out of Brazil to be the word of God would require us to disregard aspects of the testimony of the Book of Mormon. The Brazilian Testimonies ignore the conditions of repentance (Helaman 2:71-75) and the covenantal principles of the Father (D&C 83:7). This would be to treat lightly, even disrespectfully the Book of Mormon, or the New Covenant, which the Lord has given into our hands (D&C 83:8). This only increases our condemnation before God, it will not improve it.

Oliver Cowdery said this:

Man may deceive his fellow-man; deception may follow deception, and the children of the wicked one may have power to seduce the foolish and untaught, till naught but fiction feeds the many, and the fruit of falsehood carries in its current the giddy to the grave; but one touch with the finger of his love, yes, one ray of glory from the upper world, or one word from the mouth of the Savior, from the bosom of eternity, strikes it all into insignificance, and blots it forever from the mind (*RLDS Church History*, Vol 1, p. 38)!

This discussion outlines the major reasons why we cannot recommend the Brazilian Testimonies to the Saints as the word of God. Now it is up to you to decide if you will feast on the Brazilian word or the word of God.

Emotions, burnings in the breast and warm fuzzy feelings can be counterfeited by the enemy. As Saints we are counseled to rely upon the things that are written, to feast upon the word of God, and to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

When Nephi was writing about the sealed records which would later come forth, he wrote, “And they are sealed up to come forth in their purity according to the truth which is in the Lamb, in the own due time of the Lord, unto the house of Israel (1 Nephi 3:250). It is important for the Saints to recognize that any event involving the Sealed Portion of the records must meet the above criteria, i.e., it must come in purity and according to the truth which is in the Lamb. You must carefully judge if the events in Brazil qualify as the word of God according to the criteria provided by God himself through the prophet Nephi. Our judgment is that, despite the testimony in its favor from others, the Brazilian Testimonies do not meet the criteria of truth and light.

The Holy Spirit guided Joseph Smith Jr. to bend the knee and pray to God with his questions so he could obtain wisdom (James 1:5)—to ask of God. This counsel is especially valid for us in this situation. It is the exercise of faith to which we are called, not warm feelings or emotions. We are called to love the truth.

And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to hear from the dead? To the law and to the testimony; and if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them (Isaiah 8:19-20).