

CASE FILE: 3 NEPHI  
EVIDENCE LOG: 12-14



## The Sermon at the Temple: A Case Study in Textual Origins

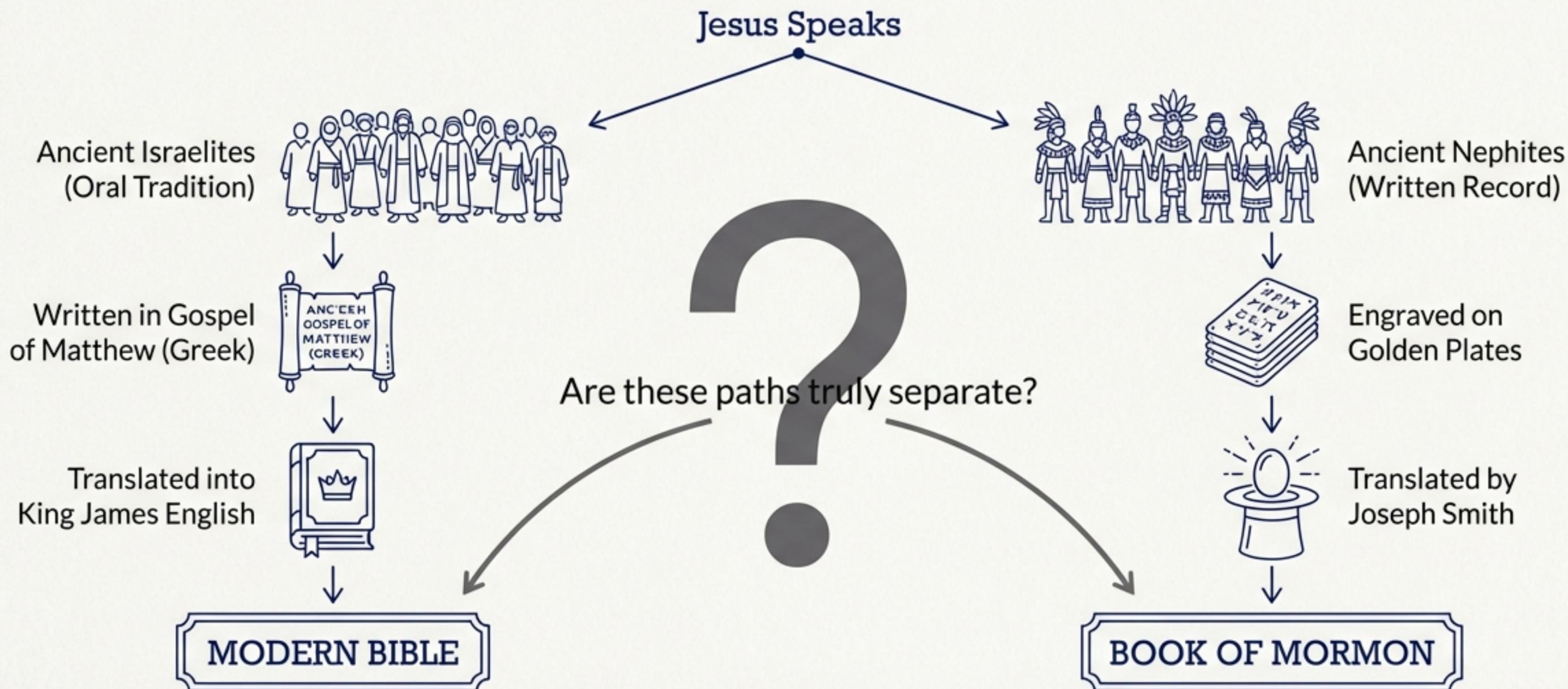


Analyzing the Book of Mormon's most famous sermon through a forensic lens.



# Two Sermons, One Source?

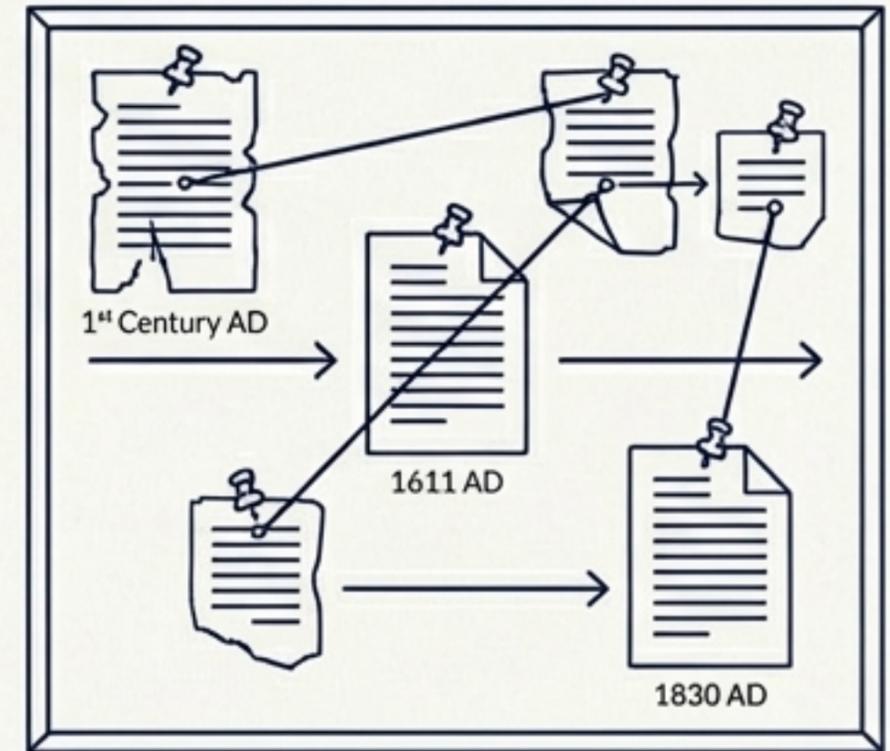
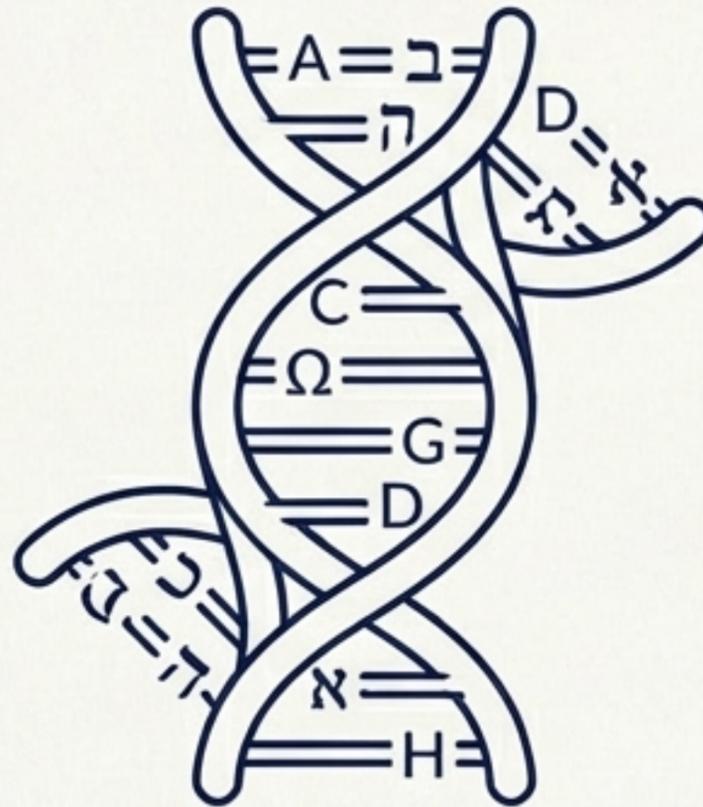
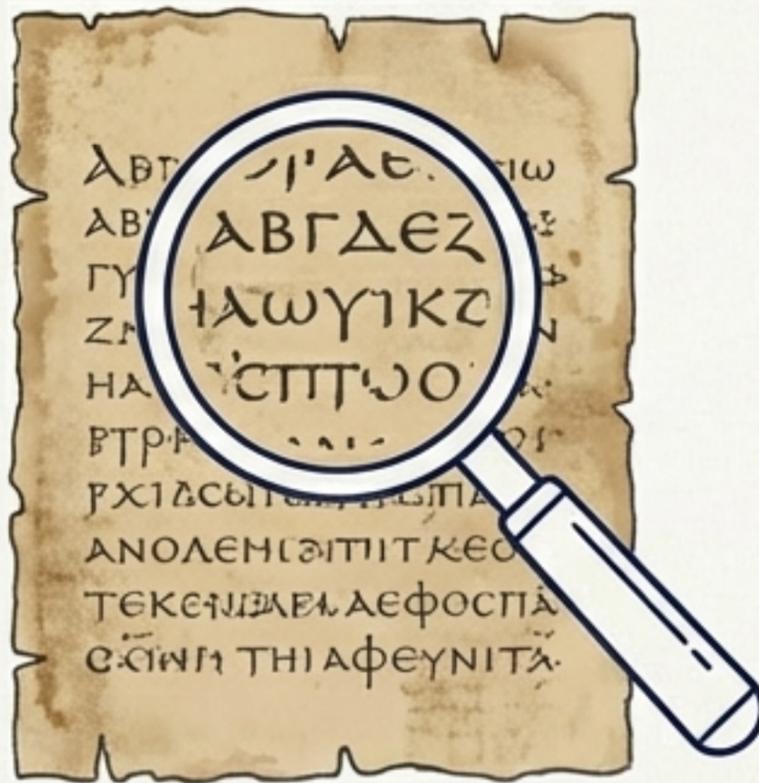
Jesus delivers a famous sermon in the New Testament's Gospel of Matthew. He delivers a nearly identical sermon in the Book of Mormon's 3rd Nephi. This presentation investigates the claim that these are independent, ancient accounts. We will examine the textual evidence—the “fingerprints”—to determine the true origin of the “Sermon at the Temple.”



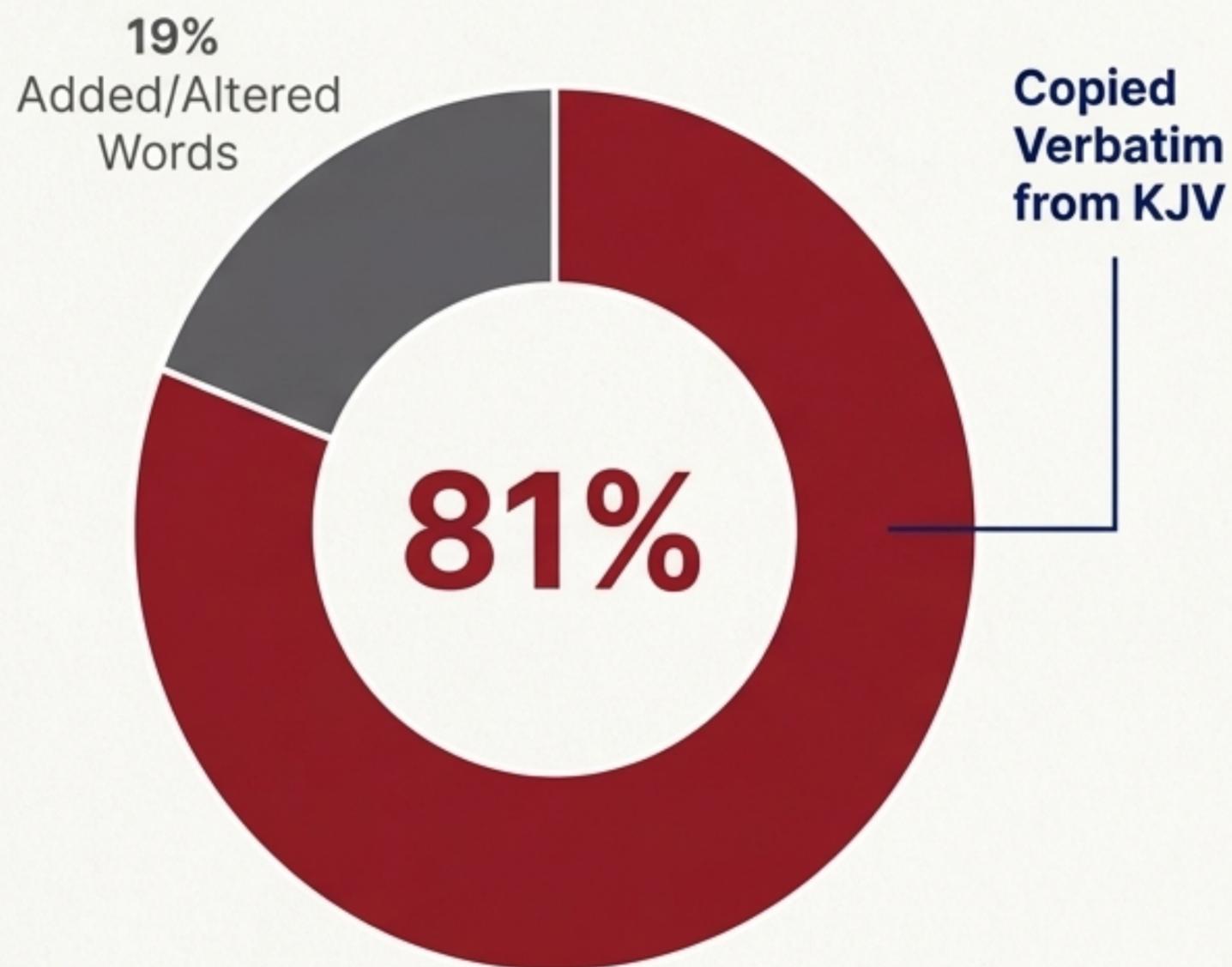
# Following the Fingerprints in the Text

Textual criticism is the scholarly method of analyzing historical documents. Like forensics, it examines language, translation history, and textual changes to uncover a document's origins. As biblical scholar Bart Ehrman and others demonstrate, this is a scientific process, not a faith-based one. We are looking for clues left in the text itself. The goal is not to attack belief, but to achieve what Mormon Stories calls “informed consent” by understanding the evidence.

## The Investigator's Toolkit



# Exhibit A: The Sermon is an 81% Verbatim Copy of the King James Bible.



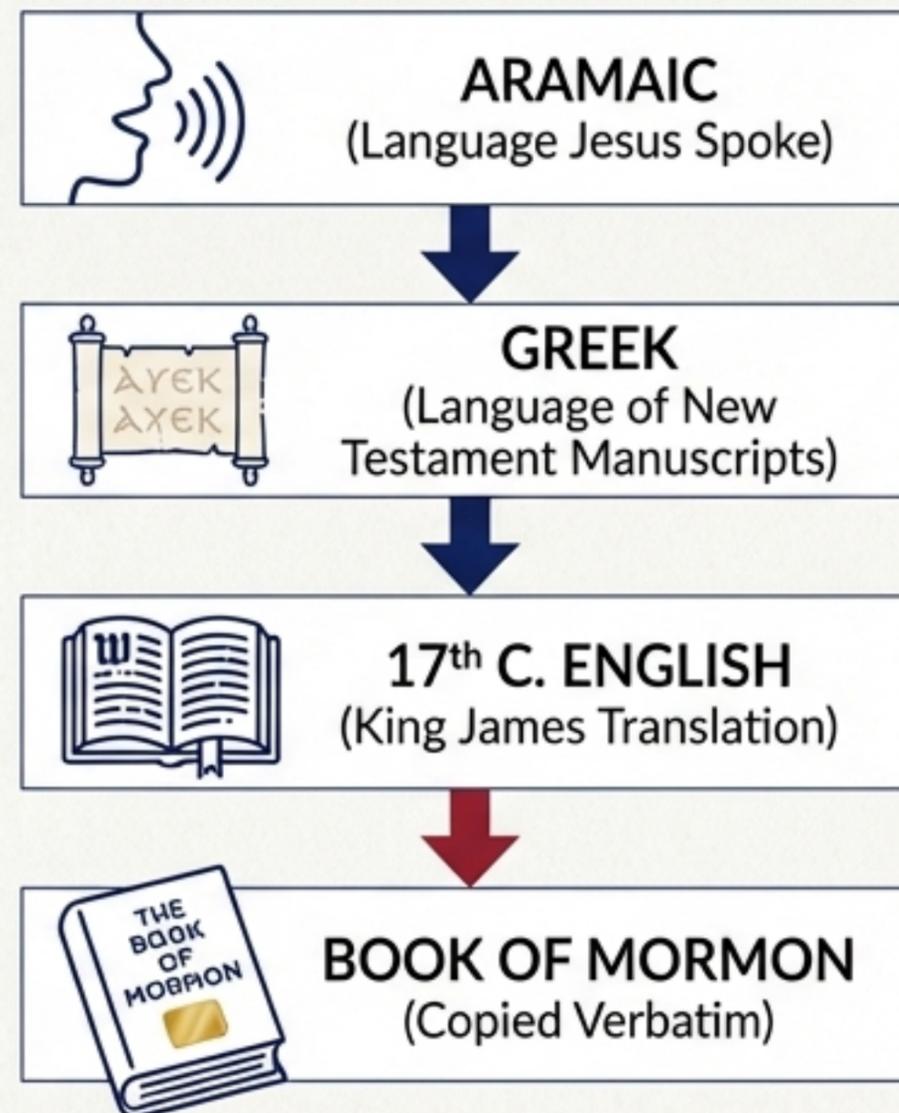
An analysis by Jonathan Streeter ("Thoughts on Things and Stuff") comparing Matthew 5-7 (KJV) with 3 Nephi 12-14 reveals the following:

- **Matthew 6** vs. 3 Nephi 13: **90%** verbatim copy.
- **Matthew 7** vs. 3 Nephi 14: **94%** verbatim copy.

An oral tradition retold for 50 years before being written down, as Matthew was, would never retain this level of precision. An independent ancient record from a different continent certainly would not. This points to a single source document: **the King James Bible.**

# The Book of Mormon Inherits a Multi-Layered Translation History

The KJV text is not a direct transcript of Jesus's words. It has undergone multiple translations. The Book of Mormon, claimed to be the "most correct book," inexplicably imports this entire translation chain, complete with any errors introduced along the the way. **This contradicts the claim by Joseph Smith that there was "absolutely no Greek on the gold plates."**



**Official Claim:  
"No Greek" was  
on the plates.**

# The Smoking Gun: The Author Changed What He Knew Was Wrong, But Left What He Didn't

The author actively edited the text but was limited by his own knowledge. This pattern of “hits” and “misses” is a clear fingerprint.

## KJV MATTHEW 5

“...thou hast paid the uttermost **farthing.**”

An English currency, anachronistic for ancient America.

“...whosoever shall compel thee to go a **mile...**”

A specific reference to Roman occupation law.

## 3 NEPHI 12

“...thou hast paid the uttermost **senine.**”

THE HIT

“...whosoever shall compel thee to go a **mile...**”

THE MISS



# Exhibit C: An Aramaic Anomaly Appears in the Nephite Record

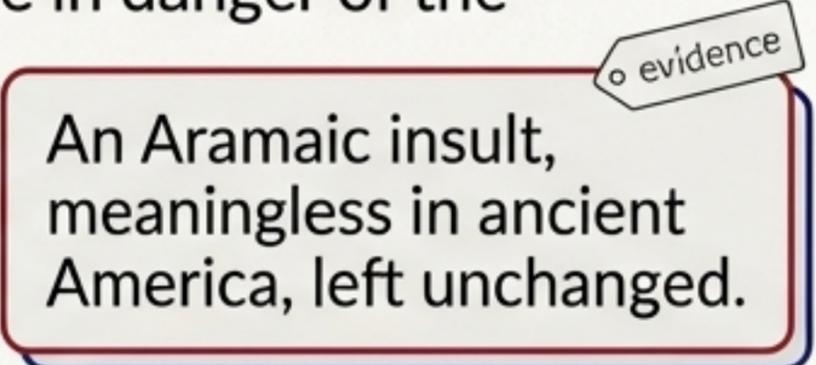
In Matthew 5:22, the untranslated Aramaic word “Raca” (an insult meaning “fool” or “empty-headed”) is used. Joseph Smith copies this verse directly into 3 Nephi 12:22. He even makes a small edit to the same verse (removing “without a cause”), showing he is actively engaging with the text. However, he leaves in the foreign word, which would have been meaningless to an ancient American audience, indicating his reliance on the KJV source.

## Matthew 5:22

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother ~~without a cause~~ shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, **Raca**, shall be in danger of the council...

## 3 Nephi 12:22

But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of his judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, **Raca**, shall be in danger of the council...

 evidence  
An Aramaic insult, meaningless in ancient America, left unchanged.

## Investigative Case File

# Exhibit D: The Sermon Includes Includes a Phrase Added to the Bible Centuries After Christ

The conclusion of the Lord's Prayer ("For thine is the kingdom...") is a known later addition to the Gospel of Matthew. Biblical scholars identify this as a doxology, a hymn of praise, which is absent from the earliest Greek manuscripts.

Because this phrase was present in the 1769 King James Bible that Joseph Smith used, it appears verbatim in the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 13:13). This cements the Book of Mormon's origin in the 19th century, not 34 AD.

### Matthew 6

...And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.<sup>1</sup>

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.**

<sup>1</sup> Other ancient authorities add, in some form, *For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen.*

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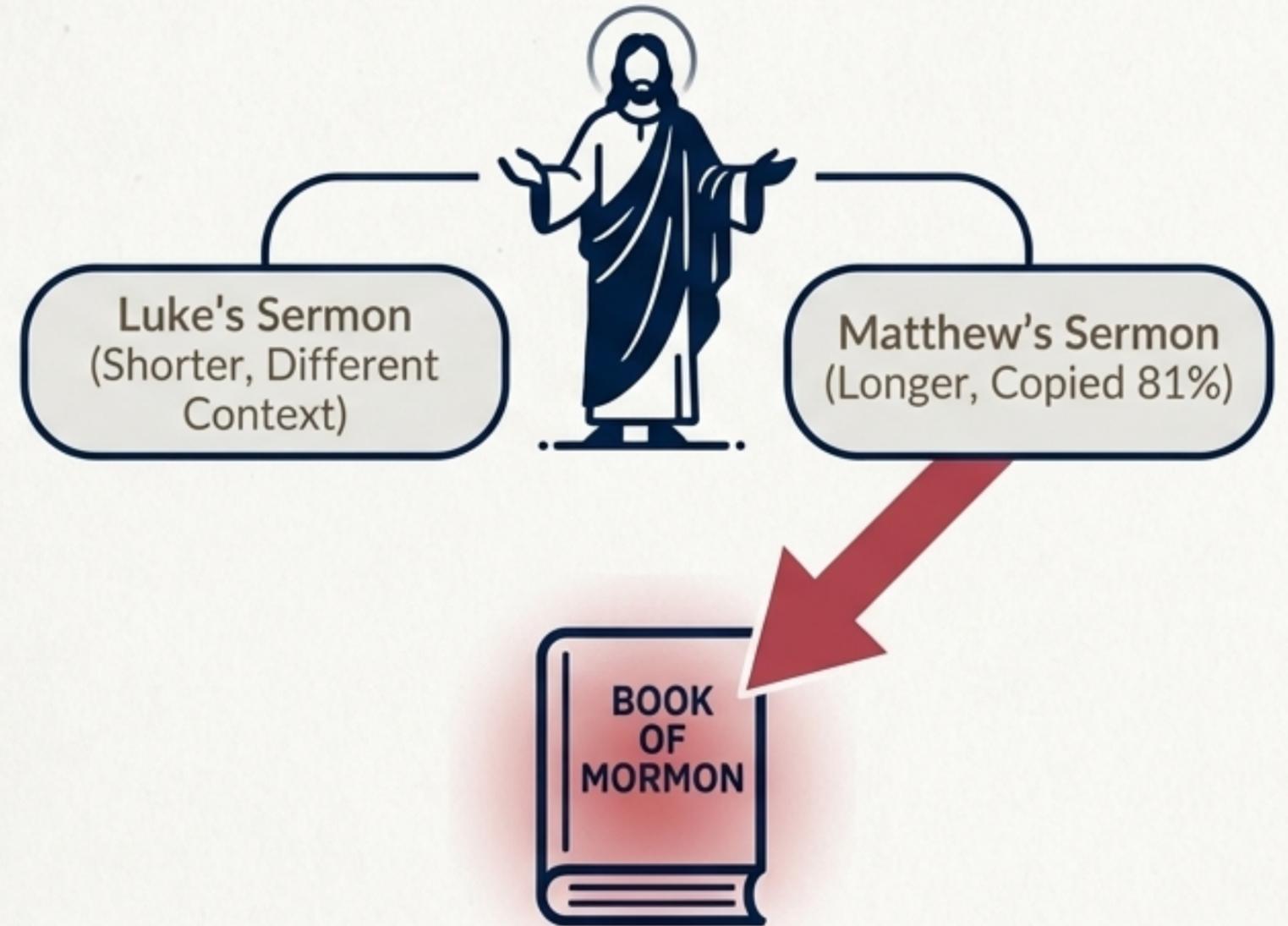
# Argument: “Jesus simply gave the same stump speech in America.”

## The Apologetic Claim

The common defense is that Jesus, like a politician, delivered a standard sermon everywhere he went.

## The Rebuttal

This fails to explain the evidence. Why is the Book of Mormon’s sermon a near-perfect copy of *Matthew’s* specific KJV text, complete with its translation history, late additions, and KJV-era language? Why doesn’t it resemble Luke’s shorter, different version (“Sermon on the Plain”) or, more importantly, stand as a unique, original account from a pure source? A “pure” record from God would not be a flawed copy.





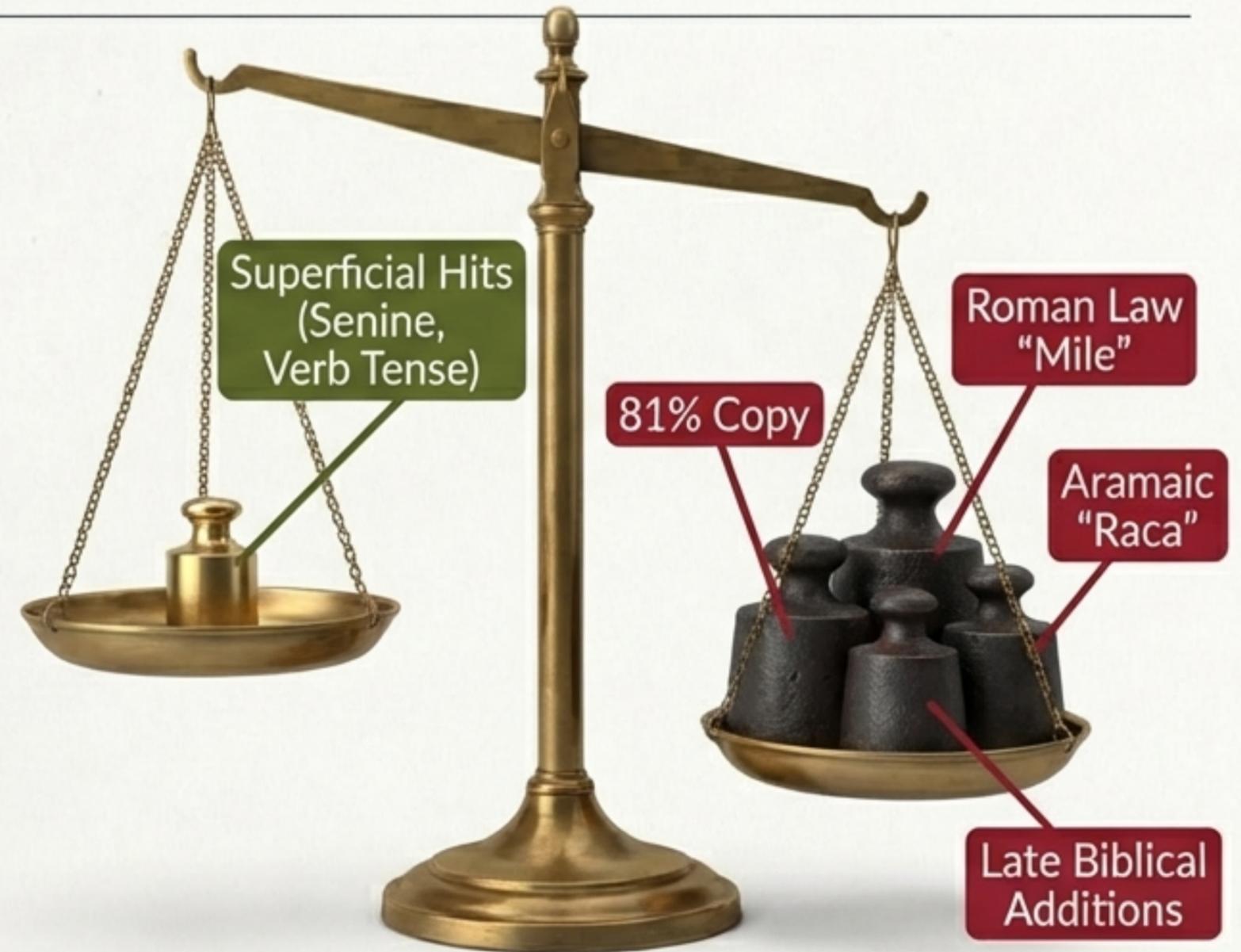
# Argument: “The changes Joseph Smith made prove inspiration.”

## The Apologetic Claim

Defenders point to changes like “farthing” to “senine” or updating verb tenses (e.g., “the law *is* fulfilled”) as evidence of a divine, corrective hand at work.

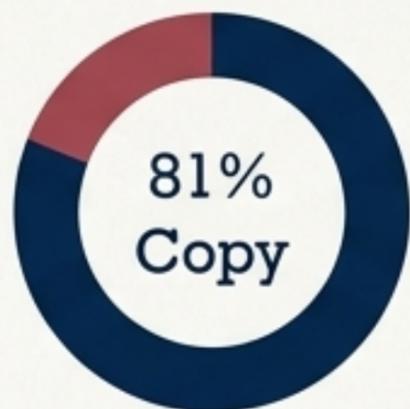
## The Rebuttal

These are superficial, common-sense edits any 19th-century author would make when adapting an existing text for a new context. Citing these “hits” while ignoring the profound misses (the 81% copy rate, “mile,” “Raca,” the late doxology) is deceptive. The misses reveal the author’s limitations and prove his reliance on the KJV.



# The Weight of the Evidence

A review of the forensic findings points to a clear conclusion. The Sermon at the Temple contains the unmistakable fingerprints of a 19th-century author working from the King James Bible.



## Overwhelming Verbatim Text:

81% of the sermon is a direct copy.

1<sup>1</sup>

## Inherited Errors:

Includes known late biblical additions (the doxology) not found in early manuscripts.



## Cultural Anachronisms:

Contains culturally specific terms (Roman "mile," Aramaic "Raca") meaningless in ancient America.



## Selective Awareness:

Superficial changes highlight a failure to correct obscure historical errors, revealing the author's 19th-century knowledge base.

# The Sermon at the Temple Is a Reworking of the King James Bible

When viewed through the lens of textual forensics, the conclusion is clear. The Sermon at the Temple is not an independent, ancient account of Jesus in the Americas. It is a creative but flawed adaptation of the Gospel of Matthew by a 19th-century author whose methods and source text are now identifiable. The puzzle pieces, when assembled, reveal Joseph Smith as the author.

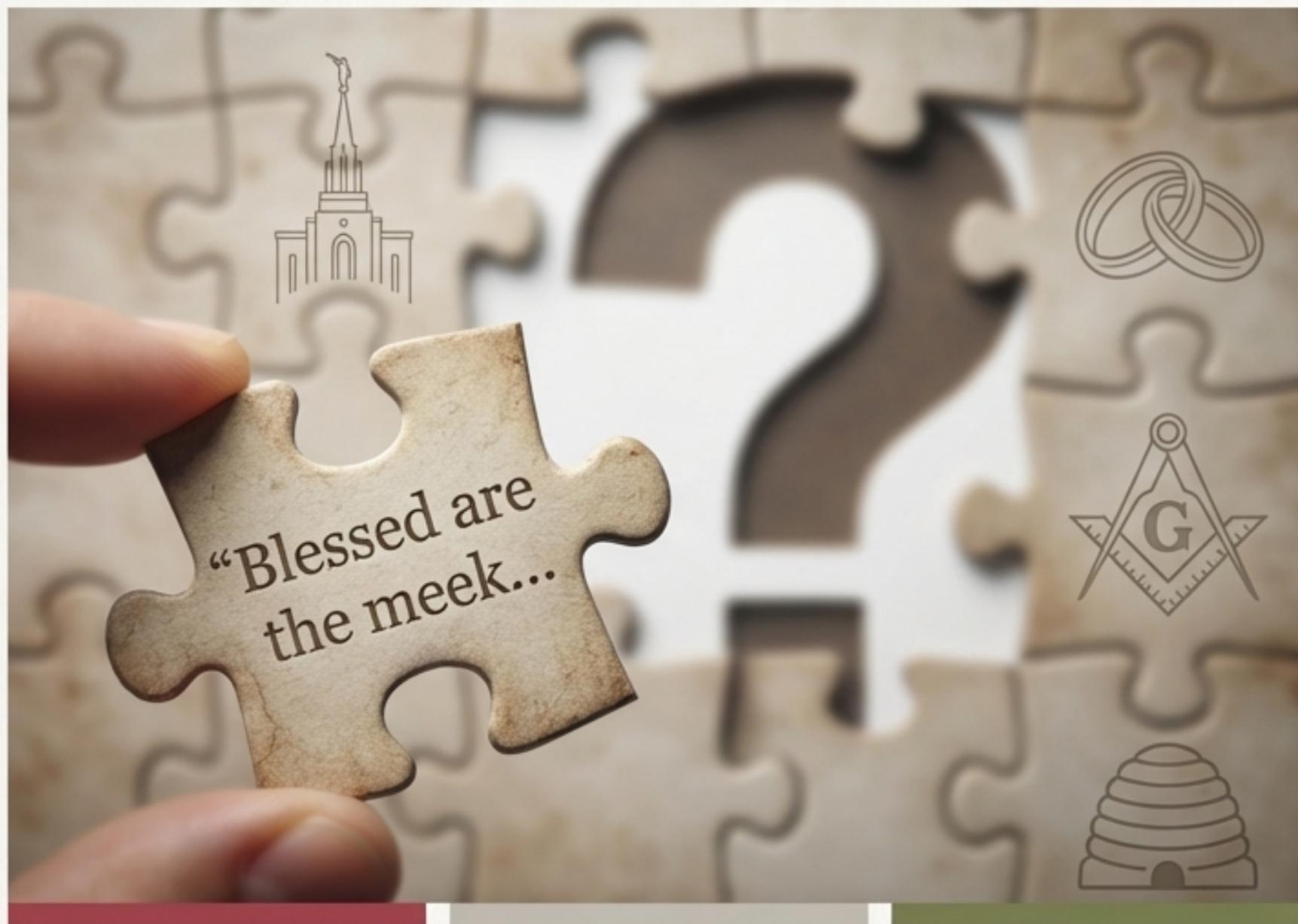


## 🔍 Investigative Case File

# What Is Not There Matters as Much as What Is

This case study is a microcosm of a larger pattern. But consider what is missing: if this was God's chance to give a pure, unadulterated gospel to the Americas, why is there nothing new, cool, or meaningfully different? Why is there no mention of the unique, later doctrines of Mormonism like eternal marriage, temple endowments, or priesthood restoration?

The sermon is not just a copy; it's a missed opportunity for revelation, which further points to a human, not divine, author.



# Continue Your Investigation

The evidence presented here is based on publicly available research and data. For a deeper analysis, we recommend the following resources:

## Primary Source:

- Mormon Stories Podcast, Ep. 1629: “The Sermon on the Mount in the Book of Mormon”

## In-Depth Essays:

- [LDSDiscussions.com](https://ldsdiscussions.com)

## Relevant Scholarship:

- Bart Ehrman (on the Synoptic Gospels and New Testament textual criticism)
- David Bokovoy (on biblical scholarship and the Book of Mormon)
- Brent Metcalfe (on Book of Mormon origins)

# Informed Consent