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The Book of Mormon Revealed to Joseph the Prophet

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Abstract: This article recounts the events of the night of September 21, 1823, when the angel Moroni visited with the Prophet Joseph Smith and first revealed the hiding place of the divine records.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is itself a testimony of the divinity of the heavenly messages given to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Hundreds of thousands of faithful men and women are convinced of this truth; and I join my testimony with theirs that the revelations of the Lord to Joseph are true, and that this Church, through divine source, bears legitimately the name of Jesus Christ and his divine authority.

Heber J. Grant.

The Book of Mormon Revealed to Joseph the Prophet

Circumstances Attending the Miraculous Incident

The prophet Joseph Smith, at the age of 15 years, received his first vision in 1820. He then was instructed in answer to his question, Which of all the sects is right? that they were all wrong, and that he must join none of them. His mind became satisfied so far as the sectarian world was concerned, that he must join none of the sects, but was to continue as he was until further direction.

He continued thus for an interval of about three years and a half, occupying his time with the common vocations of life, suffering persecutions constantly from all classes of men because he insisted he had seen a vision. During this time he fell into many minor errors, as a young man of his age naturally would; not grievous sins at all, however, but minor errors such as levity and the association of jovial company, not consistent with the character which he thought ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as he had been.

Feeling condemned because of these things, he retired to his bed on the night of September 21, 1823, and prayed the Lord to be forgiven of his sins, and in full confidence also that it might be made known to him how he stood before the Lord.

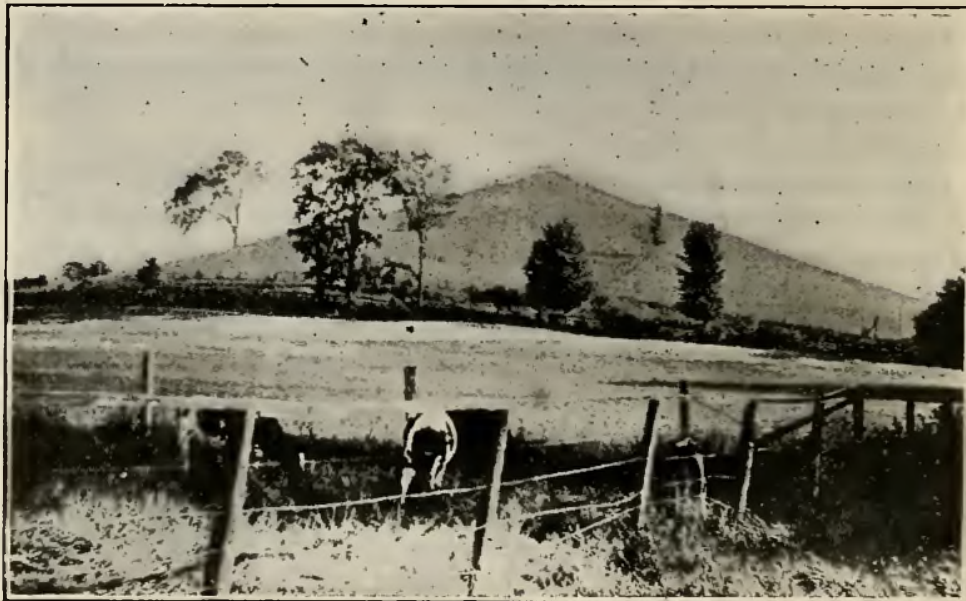
It was then that the Angel Moroni, a resurrected being, son of Mormon, and the last representative of the ancient Nephite race on the American continent, who had been given charge of the records by his father, appeared to him three times during the night and once on the following day. Moroni's message to the Prophet was that he was sent as a messenger from God, and that God had a work for Joseph to do, that his name should be good and evil spoken of among all nations, kindreds, tongues and people. Also, "he said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fulness of the everlasting gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants; also, that there were two stones in silver

bows—and these stones, fastened to a breast plate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim—deposited with the plates; and the possession and use of these stones were what constituted 'Seers' in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book."

He then quoted to Joseph certain very important prophecies from Malachi (3d and 4th chapters), Isaiah (11th chapter), The Acts (3:22-23), and many other passages of Scripture.

Moroni appeared the second time and repeated the same things over again; in addition, informing Joseph "of great judgments which were coming upon the earth, with great desolations by famine, sword, and pestilence; and that these grievous judgments would come on the earth in this generation."

Again Moroni appeared the third time repeating what he had previously said. He cautioned Joseph, in addition, owing



A view of the Hill Cumorah

to the indigent circumstances of the family, that Satan would try to tempt him to get the plates for the purpose of getting rich. "This he forbade me," says Joseph, "saying I must have no other object in view in getting the plates but to glorify God, and must not be influenced by any other motive than that of building his kingdom; otherwise I could not get them."

Day was now approaching. The interviews had lasted the whole of that night. On the 22nd Joseph went to his labors as usual, but his strength failed him. His father, seeing something wrong with him, told him to go home. Joseph started, but in crossing the fence out of the field where he was working, he fell unconscious to the ground. The first

he remembers was a voice calling him by name. "I looked up, and beheld the same messenger standing over my head, surrounded by light as before. He then again related unto me all that he had related to me the previous night, and commanded me to go to my father and tell him of the vision and the commandments which I had received. I obeyed; I returned to my father in the field, and rehearsed the whole matter to him. He replied to me that it was of God, and told me to go and do as commanded by the messenger. I left the field, and went to the place where the messenger had told me the plates were deposited; and owing to the distinctness of the vision which I had had concerning it, I knew the place the instant that I arrived there.

"Convenient to the village of Manchester, Ontario (now Wayne) county, New York, stands a hill of considerable size, and the most elevated of any in the neighborhood. On the west side of this hill, not far from the top, under a stone of considerable size, lay the plates, deposited in a stone box. This stone was thick and rounding in the middle on the upper side, and thinner towards the edges, so that the middle part of it was visible above the ground, but the edge all around was covered with earth.

"Having removed the earth, I obtained a lever which I got fixed under the edge of the stone, and with a little exertion raised it up. I looked in and there indeed I beheld the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breastplate, as stated by the messenger. The box in which they lay was formed by laying stones together in some kind of cement. In the bottom of the box were laid two stones crossways of the box, and on these stones lay the plates and the other things with them.

"I made an attempt to take them out, but was forbidden by the messenger; and was again informed that the time for bringing them forth had not yet arrived. Neither would it, until four years from that time; but he told me that I should come to that place precisely in one year from that time, and that he would there meet with me, and that I should continue to do so until the time should come for obtaining the plates. Accordingly, as I had been commanded, I went at the end of each year, and at each time I found the messenger there, and received instruction and intelligence from him at each of our interviews, respecting what the Lord was going to do, and how and in what manner his kingdom was to be conducted in the last days."

On the 22nd day of September, 1827, the Prophet received the plates of the Book of Mormon. The heavenly messenger delivered them up to him with this charge: "That I should be responsible for them, that if I should let them go carelessly

or through any neglect of mine, I should be cut off; but that if I should use all my endeavors to preserve them until he, the messenger, should call for them, they should be protected."

From this time on, every effort was made to get the plates from Joseph. He says that, "Every stratagem that could be invented was resorted to for that purpose. "But," says the prophet, "by the wisdom of God, they remained safe in my hands until I had accomplished by them what was required at my hand. When, according to arrangements, the messenger called for them, I delivered them up to him; and he has them in charge until this day."

The translation of the Book of Mormon proceeded; finally, in March, 1830, the book was printed in an edition of 3,000. Its contents, its further career and circulation, the credibility of the testimony of its witnesses, the predictions in the Bible of its coming forth, and some of the new and marvelous doctrines contained therein, and other facts concerning it, are further treated in the articles in this number of the *Era*, as contributions in memory of the hundredth anniversary of the day when the sacred plates of the Book of Mormon were first shown to Joseph Smith in the Hill Cumorah.—A.



A scene near the sacred grove