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## Lesson 101: One of Joseph Smith's Contributions— Translation of the Book of Mormon

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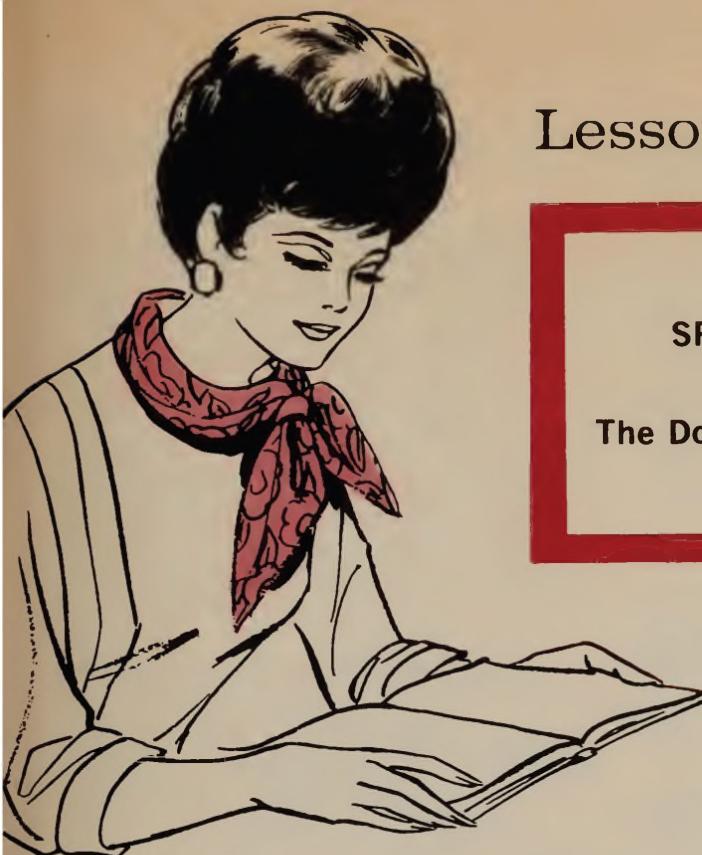
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**Abstract:** The Book of Mormon is a witness to the Bible's truthfulness, proclaims the reality of Christ's resurrection, imparts and clarifies gospel truths, and is an instrument for salvation. Having faith in the Book of Mormon increases faith in Christ.

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# Lesson Department

## SPIRITUAL LIVING

### The Doctrine and Covenants

#### Lesson 101

#### One of Joseph Smith's Contributions—Translation of The Book of Mormon

Elder Roy W. Doxey

(Reading Assignment: Doctrine and Covenants, Section 135.)

Northern Hemisphere: First Meeting, February 1970  
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**OBJECTIVE:** The Latter-day Saint woman, knowing that The Book of Mormon was translated by the Prophet Joseph Smith through the power of God, gains increased faith in Jesus Christ as her Savior.

#### INTRODUCTION

One of Joseph Smith's contributions to the salvation of men in this world was the bringing forth of ". . . the Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God. . . ." (D&C 135:3.)

The Book of Mormon, translated from gold plates received from the resurrected Moroni, an ancient American prophet, is a condensed history of people from the old world who were divinely directed to America. The first of these peoples was the Jaredites from the Tower of Babel. (The

Book of Ether.) Toward the end of their existence, a colony of Israelites, under the leadership of the prophet Lehi, came from Jerusalem about 600 B.C. In time the Israelites divided into two factions known as Nephites and Lamanites, the former being white and the latter becoming dark-skinned. Another group, known as Mulekites, came from Palestine about the time of the overthrow of the kingdom of Judah in 589 B.C. A merger of this people, with other inhabitants of the land occurred several

centuries after Lehi's colony landed in what is now America. (Omni 12:22.)

Prophets of God taught principles of salvation to The Book of Mormon people, warning them of temporal and spiritual destruction if they became unrighteous. The predictions of the prophets were literally fulfilled. The Jaredites destroyed themselves by civil war, and the Nephites were later swept off the earth by the Lamanites. North and South American Indian tribes of today are probably descendants of the Lamanites.

#### PURPOSES OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

Moroni recorded some purposes of The Book of Mormon as follows: (1) to show unto the house of Israel what the Lord has done for their fathers, (2) to inform latter-day Israel of the covenants of the Lord that they might not be cast off forever, and (3) ". . . to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God. . ." (Title page, Book of Mormon.)

The Book of Mormon prophet Nephi saw in vision other ways in which this book of scripture would be of utmost value to people in the last days. First, it would constitute another witness with the Bible that God's purposes would be fulfilled in behalf of his covenanted people. (2 Ne. 29:8.) Second, it would establish the truth of the Bible. (1 Ne. 13:40.)

#### Class Discussion

If you were to select the most important purpose of the coming forth of The Book of Mormon, which one would it be?

#### THE BIBLE AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

Not only does The Book of Mormon witness to the truth of the Bible, but the Bible testifies to the truth of the Nephite record. This testimony came to many Bible prophets who were inspired to prophesy concerning The Book of Mormon. Ezekiel foresaw that the "stick of Judah" (Bible) would in the last days be joined with the "stick of Ephraim" or "Joseph" (Book of Mormon) when the gathering of Israel would take place. These two records of different continents would be one in bringing people to an acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Savior. (Ezek. 37:16-21.)

Significant among the prophecies regarding The Book of Mormon is the one recorded in chapter 29 of Isaiah. A "book," or the writings of a people who should speak from the dust, would be ". . . delivered to him that is not learned. . ." (Joseph Smith.) The words of the book, however, would be taken ". . . to one that is learned. . ." (Prof. Charles Anthon), who would fulfill Isaiah's prophecy that he could not read a sealed book. (vs. 11-12.) The "book" would be in the world and then the Holy Land would ". . . be turned into a fruitful field. . ." (v. 17.)

The Bible and The Book of Mormon testify of each other as God's people recorded scripture on the eastern and western continents.

#### Class Discussion

What does it mean to you that the Bible testifies of The Book of Mormon?

## CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

The Book of Mormon shows men the way to salvation in the following three ways:

1. It imparts a knowledge of the true gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. It proclaims the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and of the future life for all men.
3. It assists men to live the gospel plan by witnessing to them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that the book is true.

### THE BOOK IMPARTS KNOWLEDGE

The Prophet Joseph Smith gave the following evaluation of The Book of Mormon:

. . . I told the brethren [Twelve Apostles] that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith, p. 194.)

The Three Witnesses to the truth of this book testified that it had been ". . . translated by the gift and power of God. . . ." and that ". . . we know of a surety that the work is true." (*The Book of Mormon, The Testimony of Three Witnesses*, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris.)

The Lord revealed that The Book of Mormon contains the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. (D&C 20:9; 27:5.) What is the gospel? It is the principles, doctrines, and ordinances revealed from God for the salvation of those who will accept them. The Book of Mormon contains the fulness of the gospel because it is a record of God's dealings with a people who had the gospel

fulness and because it records what men must do to gain salvation.

A brief summary of some fundamental Book of Mormon doctrines, found in the Doctrine and Covenants is as follows: (1) The existence, eternal nature, and creative power of God. (2) The creation of man in God's image and likeness. (3) Man should love, serve, and worship the only living and true God and no other being. (4) The fall of man came by transgression of God's commandments. (5) Because of the fall, Christ's sacrifice was made as foretold in scriptures. (6) Jesus, though tempted, was sinless. (7) Jesus was crucified, resurrected, and ascended into heaven. (8) Salvation in the kingdom of God is dependent upon acceptance of the gospel and endurance in faith to the end. (9) Salvation is for faithful believers who lived before as well as during and after the earthly ministry of Jesus. (10) The ". . . Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God, infinite and eternal, without end." (D&C 20:28.) (11) Justification and sanctification through the grace of Jesus Christ are just and true. (12) Man may fall from grace and depart from God. (D&C 20:17-34.)

### CLARIFICATION OF GOSPEL TRUTHS

The Book of Mormon adds to our understanding of Bible teachings. The following Beatitudes from Jesus' discourse to the Nephites compared with the rendition in the Bible are examples. First read the verses without the italicized words as given in the Bible and then the entire verse as it appears in The Book of Mormon.

Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (3 Ne. 12:3; c. f. Matt. 5:3.) (emphasis added)

And blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost. (3 Ne. 12:6; c. f. Matt. 5:6.) (emphasis added)

### Class Discussion

Do you know of other clarifications of truths from The Book of Mormon?

### PROPHECIES OF THE LAST DAYS

The condition of the apostate religious world is clearly depicted in prophecy, a condition which will eventually bring great destruction at the time of the second coming of Christ. (2 Ne. 28.)

The role of the house of Israel in the last days as an instrument in bringing about God's purposes for man, and the gathering of the Jewish people to the Holy Land are other parts of these events. (2 Ne. 30:2-10; 3 Ne. 20:29-36; 1 Ne. 22:1-12.)

### THE REALITY OF THE FUTURE LIFE

#### Class Discussion

What is the principal message of The Book of Mormon for the people of today?

The title page of The Book of Mormon states that it is to convince every man that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God. What does this mean? Essentially, it means that Jesus Christ is divine, the literal Son of God, who has provided the means through his atonement that man may be saved. It also provides the answer to the principal need of the world today—a faith in the reality of the future existence. The Book of Mormon stands as a

witness of the divinity of Jesus Christ as the Being who made it possible for all people to be resurrected from the dead. Moroni, the last historian-prophet of the Nephite nation, having died about 1500 years before, came to the Prophet Joseph Smith as a resurrected being. Of him, the Prophet wrote:

Moroni, the person who deposited the plates, from whence the Book of Mormon was translated, in a hill in Manchester, Ontario County, New York, being dead, and raised again therefrom, appeared unto me. . . . (*Elders' Journal*, Far West, Mo., July 1838.)

Nephite prophets upon the American continent were inspired to witness to the continued conscious existence of man. The spirit world or the place where the departed dead live as conscious, living beings, prior to the resurrection, is described and attested to. Alma testifies that at death the spirit enters the world of spirits where the righteous enter paradise and the wicked are in prison. Happiness is the reward of those who have accepted the atonement of Christ, while those who chose evil works are in a state of sorrow because of their iniquity. (Alma 40:11-14.) The last testimony of the prophet Moroni was that at death his spirit would ". . . rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite. . ." (Moroni 10:34.)

The resurrection of Jesus, as the first to receive this blessing on this earth, is related in The Book of Mormon. His dramatic appearance to the Nephites begins with the people hearing a voice from heaven which pierced them to the center, causing their hearts

to burn. They heard these words:

Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him. (3 Ne. 11:7.)

They saw a man descending out of heaven, clothed in a white robe, who said:

Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning. (3 Ne. 11:10-11.)

Thereafter, the multitude felt the prints of the nails in his hands and the wound in his side, witnessing the reality of his resurrection with flesh and bones.

Man lives as a spirit entity at death awaiting the resurrection of his body and a uniting with his spirit never to be divided again in death. This message the world needs today. Unbelief in the reality of life after death does not alter the truth.

### **Class Discussion**

Discuss the ways in which The Book of Mormon is a testator of the reality of the future life.

### **A POWER FOR SALVATION**

The greatest evidence of religious truth is the knowledge which comes through the Holy Ghost. This power not only affects the mind but also the heart. The process of testimony is the Spirit speaking to man's spirit. The impression of the Spirit upon man's soul is so powerful that the knowledge continues as long as the person is worthy.

To seal the validity of The Book of Mormon for those to whom this record would come, the prophet Moroni gave the following promise:

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. (Moroni 10:4-5.)

The fulfillment of this promise is known to thousands of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Savior promised that if one would accept his doctrine, he would know of its truth. (John 7:16-17.) The Holy Ghost has operated in the lives of those who seek diligently as they strive to keep the commandments.

### **Discuss**

The testimony of the truth from the Holy Ghost is more powerful in a person's life than a vision.

### **THE BOOK OF MORMON AND SALVATION**

What place does the testimony of The Book of Mormon have in one's personal salvation? The answer to this question is found both in the scriptures and in the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Basically, when one learns by the power of the Holy Ghost that the Book of Mormon is true, he also receives the knowledge that Jesus Christ lives as an immortal and resurrected being. (Moroni 10:7.)

## Class Discussion

In view of the contents of this lesson, why would you believe that The Book of Mormon contributes to the evaluation of Joseph Smith, namely, that he had done "more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it"?

## IMPLEMENTATION

The Book of Mormon stands as a convincing witness that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. Not only do its teachings bear testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ, but they impress their divinity by the spirit which accompanies scripture. There is power in truth which the spiritually minded recognize. (Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Vol. 6, p. 273 [commonly called *Documentary History of the Church*; hereafter referred to as *DHC*.])

The Book of Mormon is a powerful book. It convinces men of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ through its clarification of the doctrines and ordinances which save. Great truths that affect the intellect and the heart are found throughout its pages.

The Book of Mormon is a witness for Jesus Christ as the literal Son of God who was the firstborn from the dead. Not only does it attest to his divinity and resurrection, but to the truth

that all men shall receive their bodies again never to be separated in death. Faith in the reality of this experience—conscious existence forever, eternally—is the present need of an unbelieving world. The Book of Mormon is in the world for this express purpose—a testifier.

This divine record has stood the test of time and will continue to stand as a bulwark of strength for those who have learned from its pages eternal truth by which they guide their lives.

Above all else, this book of scripture has instilled faith in God and in his Son Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost has borne testimony of the truth of The Book of Mormon, making it one of the greatest of all books in influencing the lives of people. They have endured hardships, trials, and great difficulties because the Spirit has continued to motivate them through the truths of this ancient record.

All men may know the truth for themselves. To know what the Lord requires of man and then to apply that knowledge from the scriptures is a rewarding experience for the faithful. Elder John A. Widtsoe expressed it this way:

The degree of faith possessed by any man depends not upon the extent of his knowledge, but upon the certainty of his knowledge, which leads to the proper use of his knowledge. . . . (John A. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith*, p. 163.)

## PRECIOUS JEWEL

Life has  
Many facets,  
Like a fine-cut diamond,  
And in its heart the sparkling fire  
Is love.

—Vesta N. Fairbairn